

Menendez Blasts Azerbaijan and Erdogan At Tekeyan NJ 75th Anniversary Gala

PARAMUS, N. J. — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of Greater New York celebrated the 75th anniversary of the organization worldwide with a gala



From left, Edmond Azadian, Senator Robert Menendez, Hilda Hartounian, Saro Hartounian

on October 15 with dignitaries and guests from various parts of the United States. That evening, TCA honored Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, for his success in passing a bill through Congress enshrining the US recognition of the Armenian Genocide after several decades of unrelenting effort, as well as for his work in defense of human rights in general.

Menendez reiterated his call for the Biden Administration to halt all assistance to Azerbaijan and sanction the Aliyev regime. He condemned Azerbaijani forces unprovoked and illegal assault on Armenian territory, blasted Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s human rights abuses, and called for everyone to keep fighting for human dignity and speak the truth. Those committing genocide today, he said, must be held accountable.

The vibrant event was attended by nearly 200 people of all ages, including a significant youth presence, and was skillfully organized by a special gala committee headed by Hilda Hartounian, chair both of the organizing committee and of the TCA Greater New York Chapter as well as member of the Central Board of the TCA of the United States and Canada.

A more complete account of the evening will be presented in next week’s issue.

Pashinyan in Astana Takes Azerbaijan To Task

ASTANA, Kazakhstan — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan took part in the regular session of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Heads of State Council here.

On October 14, the Foreign Ministers of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan met. The sides discussed the implementation process of the agreements reached by the trilateral statements of November 9, 2020, January 11 and November 26, 2021, touched upon the work within the



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Astana

framework of the commissions on border delimitation and border security, as well as in the direction of unblocking economic communications and transport infrastructures in the region.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on the development of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty and the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Armenia’s Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan emphasized the need for the withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops from the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, the immediate release of all Armenian prisoners of war and the unconditional observance of the ceasefire regime. The introduction of international mechanisms for monitoring and controlling the border situation was highlighted in terms of preventing new aggressions.

Pashinyan expressed his anger at the Azerbaijani argument, supported by Russia, that the borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan are fluid.

“As you know, we are working towards normalization of our relations with Azerbaijan. I consider it necessary to mention the importance of the role of the CIS in this context. The work of border delimitation and border security commissions is important in the settlement process, the formation of which was agreed upon on November 26, 2021, during the trilateral see ASTANA, page 2

Sayat Nova Dance Company Celebrates 35th Anniversary With Weekend of Events

By **Melanie Tuysuzian**
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — On the weekend of October 7-8, the Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston (SNDC) celebrated its 35th anniversary with a performance on Saturday night and a gala banquet on Sunday. Both of these events were fueled by nostalgia and memories, as well as the excitement of performing again.

“One, two, three, and four,” Alina Palanjian loudly repeated on the stage of the Regis College Theatre in Weston during one of the last rehearsals for Saturday night’s show. Eyes on the ground during sad songs, a smile on the face when the music is joyful: the women’s instructor precisely led the steps. In a few hours, the curtain would be thrown wide open, so everyone needed to be ready.

Alina is the daughter of Apo Ashjian, the company’s director who founded it in 1986 and who has been active in Armenian



Men and women of SNDC reunited on stage at the October 8 performance

dance for more than 40 years. SNDC is a family affair and it is not just Apo Ashjian’s daughter who is teaching, but so is his brother, Hagop, SNDC co-founder and current assistant director. see ANNIVERSARY, page 14

FRANCE
France Accuses Russia of Stoking Conflict



NEW YORK
Bringing Solar Energy Education To Armenia



MASSACHUSETTS
New Jazz Quartet In Antwerp Has Roots in Mass.





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia Defense Dhief Travels to India

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan left for India on Tuesday, October 18, the press service of the Defense Ministry said.

The trip comes two weeks after reports suggesting that India has signed a “significant export order” for missiles, rockets and ammunition to Armenia. The government to government route was reportedly used to sign a number of contracts for the supply of Indian arms and ammunition to Armenia earlier in September.

While the value of the contracts has not been revealed, it is estimated that weapons worth over Rs 2,000 crore (apx. \$244 million) will be supplied to the country over the coming months. India has been making significant efforts to increase weapons exports, with policy reforms and active support of the government to secure overseas orders.

Brusov State University Students Protest Merger

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Students and lecturers from the Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences on Monday, October 17, staged a protest against its planned merger with two other universities.

The protest comes after the Armenian government announced plans to merge the Brusov State University and the State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport into the Pedagogical University.

The protesters marched from the university to Republic Square in downtown Yerevan.

Shirak Goalkeeper Karen Karapetyan Killed in Azerbaijani Attacks

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — SC Shirak goalkeeper Karen Karapetyan was killed repelling Azerbaijan’s massive attacks on Armenia in September, the football club announced on Facebook on October 17.

“It’s with deep sorrow that we have learned our brother, goalkeeper Karen Karapetyan, died a hero’s death in the Azerbaijani aggression on September 12,” the club said in a [statement](#).

“Karen fought the enemy to the bitter end, keeping the country’s borders impregnable. God bless his soul!” it added.

Over 200 Armenian servicemen were killed in Azerbaijani attacks in two days.

Azerbaijan Fires on Armenian Positions Again

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Azerbaijani military again fired from various caliber firearms to target Armenian positions in the eastern section of the border in the wee hours of Saturday, October 15.

The Defense Ministry said the situation was relatively stable as of Friday morning.

Pashinyan in Astana Takes Azerbaijan to Task

ASTANA, from page 1

eral meeting of the President of Russia, the President of Azerbaijan, and the Prime Minister of Armenia in Sochi.

“As a result of our meeting with the President of Azerbaijan held in Prague on October 6 with the mediation of the President of France and the President of the European Council, an agreement was reached that in the delimitation process we will rely on the fundamental documents of the CIS, according to which the former administrative borders of the Soviet republics became state borders between the already independent states, including between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“Does the CSTO recognize the state borders of the CIS countries established in 1991 as fundamental documents of the CIS? This is an important issue, because it is about the zone of responsibility of the CSTO and, let me say, the functionality of the organization itself. If we rely on comments according to which there are no borders between the CIS countries, because these borders are not delimited, it means that the zone of responsibility of the CSTO is not determined, that is, it does not exist. And that blurs the CSTO’s functionality.”

Pashinyan also called out Azerbaijan for unprovoked attacks on Armenia.

“On September 13, Azerbaijan launched a totally unprovoked military aggression against Armenia. Using heavy artillery, rocket launchers and attack drones, the Azerbaijani military shelled 36 settlements and communities of the sovereign territory of Armenia, including the cities of Goris, Jermuk, Vardenis, Kapan, and Geghamsar settlement. I would like to clearly state that this was not a border conflict or clash, but a direct, unquestionable attack against Armenia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. This aggression of Azerbaijan was discussed in the UN Security Council, the majority of whose members condemned Azerbaijan’s illegal military operations. The aggression was also condemned by the international community.

“The Azerbaijani attack was deliberately directed against the civilian population and vital civil infrastructures. The total number of temporarily displaced persons from Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor and Syunik provinces of Armenia was more than 7,600, mostly women and old people, as well as 1,437 children and 99 disabled people.

“About 192 residential buildings, 3 hotels, 2 schools, 1 medical facility were partially or completely destroyed. 7 electricity supply facilities, 5 water supply facilities, 3 gas pipelines, 1 bridge were damaged. 2 ambulances and 4 private cars were targeted. The Kechut reservoir was also shelled.

“The number of victims and missing persons as a result of the aggression has now exceeded 210, of which 3 civilians were killed and 2 are missing. 293 servicemen and 8 civilians were injured. The number of missing soldiers is 28,” he said.

He also noted that it was Azerbaijan itself which boasted of the torture it has inflicted on Armenian civilians and soldiers. “The Azerbaijani side itself spread shocking videos of torture, mutilation of the bodies of captured persons or already dead soldiers, numerous cases of extrajudicial reprisals and cruel treatment of Armenian prisoners of war, murders, as well as humiliating treatment of the bodies of the dead. The bodies of Armenian female servicemen were mutilated with particular brutality, and then ‘proudly’ filmed by Azerbaijani soldiers. The footages of these apparent war crimes and crimes against humanity are being shared and praised by a number of Azerbaijani social media users.

“Undoubtedly, the perpetration of such indescribable atrocities is a direct conse-

quence of the long-lasting policy of the political leadership of instilling hatred against Armenians and enmity in the Azerbaijani society,” he noted.

And, he stressed, the danger is far from over for Armenia.

“After this attack, the rhetoric of official Baku and other Azerbaijani sources shows that Azerbaijan has intentions to occupy more territories of Armenia, which must be prevented. I would like to emphasize that the risk of new aggression by Azerbaijan remains very high, especially considering that Azerbaijan continues to consistently violate the ceasefire regime, trying to attribute their provocative actions to the Armenian side. Another factor of further escalation may be the inadequate response of the regional security organizations to the created situation, which has caused very sharp questions in the Armenian society,” he said.

Azerbaijan, he stressed, played by its own rules, sacrificing Armenian POWs in the process.

“Since the signing of the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020, Azerbaijan has constantly speculated over the issue of repatriation of prisoners of war in order to achieve political interests,” Pashinyan said.

“In the post-war period, Azerbaijan linked the release of prisoners with the provision of maps of minefields, although

talking about the military crimes carried out by the Azerbaijani military, or about Armenian prisoners of war held illegally in Azerbaijan.”

And lastly, he lashed out against the repeated calls by Azerbaijan and Turkey for access through Armenia, to link Nakhichevan with Turkey.

“In the context of the unblocking of all regional communications, Azerbaijan’s constant circulation of the ‘corridor topic’ is nothing but a distortion and sabotage of the implementation of the trilateral declaration of November 9, 2020. I would like to emphasize that the word ‘corridor’ is not mentioned anywhere and in any way in Article 9 of this statement. In the statement of November 9, 2020, the word corridor is used only in connection with the Lachin corridor in the context of ensuring the security of Nagorno-Karabakh and has nothing to do with the topic of unblocking transport links, and we consider drawing any parallels between these agreements to be manipulative.

“Manipulation of the text of the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020 has unfortunately become Azerbaijan’s policy, and this is also reflected in that despite the fact that the statement clearly mentions the existence of Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan claims that Nagorno Karabakh does not exist,” he said.



Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, left, meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov

the obligation arising from the trilateral declaration consisted in the immediate exchange of absolutely all prisoners. Armenia provided Azerbaijan with all the minefield maps it had, but it was a gesture for our part. After receiving all minefield maps, Azerbaijan stated that the accuracy of these maps is only 25 percent. Armenia has expressed readiness to verify this statement with the involvement of international experts. On the other hand, even if this claim is true, the Republic of Armenia has given all of its maps to Azerbaijan and has no ‘better or more accurate’ maps left behind,” he complained.

“Now, after receiving the maps, Azerbaijan is trying to condition the return of prisoners of war, captives and other detained persons with the clarification of the fate of those missing as a result of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. I would like to mention that after the first and second Artsakh wars, there were also missing persons from the Armenian side. 777 people are considered missing after the first war, and 217 people are considered missing from the second war, of which 196 are military personnel and 21 are civilians,” he added.

The Karabakh mines were placed by Azerbaijan for the 1990s war. Said Pashinyan, “Unfortunately, the Azerbaijani side, which for 30 years rejected offers of cooperation in the field of demining or any other humanitarian activities, remembered its missing citizens or mines only after the aggression against Nagorno Karabakh and after that the whole civilized world started

He concluded, “I officially announce that we are ready to open the roads as soon as possible on this basis. Moreover, the draft decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia to open three checkpoints to ensure the transport connection between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan has been in official circulation for a long time, but the president of Azerbaijan himself speaks against such a decision. ... Azerbaijan is trying to create the impression that the construction of new roads is the obligation of Armenia, but the trilateral statement says that the parties must agree on this issue. And we are ready for such an agreement, moreover, we are interested in it, and the only thing we expect from Azerbaijan in this matter is constructiveness.”

He concluded, “I would like to say that Armenia is really sincerely aiming for peace in the region. Of course, this is not a simple issue, it is a very deep issue, but it seems to me that based on the results of several meetings we had with both the mediation of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, and other international leaders, we have come to a common understanding that we should strive and undertake concrete steps to establish peace and stability in our region. It is obvious that actions are needed for this, and the Republic of Armenia, I think we have shown it, our government is ready for such actions. I want to say once again that the only expectation from Azerbaijan in that process is constructiveness.”



ARMENIA



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan meets with the delegation led by Rep. David Price.

Pashinyan Hosts Congressional Delegation in Armenia

YEREVA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan hosted the delegation led by the Chairman of the House Democracy Partnership of the US House of Representatives, Rep. David Price, on Tuesday, October 18.

Pashinyan welcomed the delegation's visit to Armenia and emphasized the importance of Armenian-American cooperation in the consistent implementation of democratic reforms in our country. Pashinyan noted that Armenian citizens have unequivocally chosen the path of democracy and the Government of Armenia will steadfastly continue to implement the rich agenda of democratic reforms. According to the Prime Minister, the recent intensive Armenian-American contacts and high-level mutual visits significantly contribute to the continuous development of the strategic dialogue.

Pashinyan referred to Azerbaijan's aggression against the sovereign territory of Armenia and emphasized the adequate and appropriate response of the United States and the international community in general. At the same time, the Prime Minister emphasized the importance of ensuring the security and rights of our compatriots in Nagorno-Karabakh. Pashinyan also highly appreciated the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the USA.



David Price and his delegation visit the Armenian Genocide Monument.

Price thanked for the warm reception and welcomed the consistent steps towards the development of democratic institutions in Armenia. He also emphasized the importance of expanding the close partnership between Armenia and the U.S. for developing and strengthening ties in various fields. The Chairman of the House Democracy Partner-

ship considered the invasion into the sovereign territory of Armenia by Azerbaijan as unacceptable and noted the necessity for the immediate return of Azerbaijani units to their initial positions. Price condemned the inhuman treatment and actions of the representatives of the Azerbaijani armed forces towards the Armenian soldiers. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of ensuring the return of prisoners of war who are still being held in Azerbaijan.

He praised US efforts in this regard. The two exchanged thoughts on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, as well as the processes taking place in the region.

Price and his delegation visited the Armenian Genocide memorial in Yerevan on October 18. The members of Congress were accompanied by the Chair of the Armenian parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Relations Eduard Aghajanyan and member of the Armenia-U.S Friendship Group Maria Karapetyan.

The guests laid flowers and a wreath at the Eternal Fire honoring the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims, observed a minute of silence to pay tribute to the memory of the Holy Martyrs.

Members of the House of Representatives Diana DeGette, Jim Cooper and Andy Levin are in Armenia too.

Armenian Government Critic Assaulted

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A vocal critic of the Armenian government who campaigned for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's removal from power was beaten up outside his Yerevan home on October 18.

The activist, Edgar Ghazaryan, said he was assaulted by two young men unknown to him. He said they swore at him but voiced no demands or warnings while kicking and punching him in the courtyard of his apartment block.

Ghazaryan suffered injuries to his head and other parts of his body and was taken to a hospital following the incident. He left the hospital after receiving first aid there.

Speaking to journalists, Ghazaryan accused the Armenian authorities and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in particular of organizing the violent attack in retaliation for his political activities.

Some opposition groups echoed the allegation. Former President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) claimed that the assault was part of the authorities' efforts to stifle dissent in the country.

During Sarkisian's decade-long rule, Ghazaryan served as a provincial governor and Armenia's ambassador to Poland. He became the chief of the Constitutional Court

staff after the ex-president was toppled in the 2018 "velvet revolution" led by Pashinyan. He has harshly criticized the prime minister since losing that post in 2020.

Ghazaryan, who is currently not affiliated with any party, set up a fringe opposition group this summer. It rallied several hundred supporters in August in a failed

attempt to force Pashinyan to resign. Ghazaryan said at the time that Pashinyan should be impeached by the Armenian parliament or prosecuted for high treason.

Law-enforcement authorities pledged to investigate his beating. They reported no arrests in the immediate aftermath of the incident.



Edgar Ghazaryan

Swiss MPs Visit Azerbaijani-Hit Jermuk

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Lawmakers from the National Council of the Swiss Confederation on Sunday, October 16, visited the resort town of Jermuk, which was heavily bombarded in Azerbaijan's recent aggression against Armenia.

"It hurt to see what the Azerbaijanis did here in Jermuk. It used to be a peaceful place and now it spreads terror among the people. It's horrible for me to see all this," said Stefan Müller-Altermatt, the Co-Chair of the Switzerland-Armenia Parliamentary Group.

The Azerbaijanis, using weapons of different caliber and distance, damaged the infrastructure of the city. Jermuk Re-



Swiss Members of Parliament in Jermuk

sort, guest houses and roads were damaged too. The enemy also used cluster

munitions, which are prohibited by the international Conventions.

"In Geneva we adopted a Resolution to condemn the Azerbaijani aggression of September 13-14. This is one level. Now, we must go further to the Federal Assembly: this is important. This is not only Switzerland, but also the whole Europe, because we share the same values – democracy, human rights and international law," said lawmaker Michel Matter.

Müller-Altermatt highlighted the fact that they are in Jermuk shortly after the attacks. According to him, they stand not only with the colleagues of the parliament, but also with all Armenian people.



ARMENIA

AGBU Holds General Assembly in Armenia

YEREVAN — More than 200 AGBU delegates from 25 countries gathered on October 8, 2022 at the AGBU Armenia headquarters for the organization's 92nd General Assembly. The two-hour proceeding was the culmination of a five-day program, highlights of which included a private meeting with Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II at Holy Echmiadzin, a group visit to the Yerablur Military Pantheon and an all-day conference organized by the recently launched Applied Policy Research Institute (APRI Armenia). Workshops, strategy sessions, and cultural excursions were also organized around the formal GA session, creating opportunities for AGBU delegates, members, and friends to interact in person after a long hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Given that Armenia is in the middle of critical regional developments with significant implications for its national viability, the decision to hold the biennial General Assembly in Armenia proved to be an opportune moment to physically demonstrate to the homeland and its citizens that AGBU stands in solidarity with them, as a cloud of uncertainty hangs over their daily lives. AGBU leadership repeatedly called for unity and resilience as key to a sustainable independent Armenia.

Highlights of 92nd General Assembly

Two hundred and fifty delegates and guests assembled for the formal presentations of the AGBU Central Board. The audience represented a broad swath of countries from Argentina, Australia and Brazil to Thailand, Qatar and Iraq and many more locations across AGBU's five-continent global network. Among the guest speakers were Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, and President of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturyan. The High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan was also in attendance along with other distinguished guests both local and international.

AGBU President Berge Setrakian delivered an emphatic speech about the urgency of the moment, acknowledging the serious and existential threats to Armenia's sovereignty that hang in the balance. "This is an uphill battle that requires us to use every lever, advantage, skill set, and area of expertise to protect our right to exist as a free and independent nation. That means putting aside our differences and uniting our efforts for maximum impact. We do not have the luxury of partisanship or vindictiveness. Rather we must pool our resources. And paramount to all that is developing a healthy and reciprocal relationship between homeland and Diaspora," stated Setrakian, who earlier this year marked his 20th year as president of the organization. However, he was also quick to add: "As sure as I am standing here today, I am convinced that we can overcome this doomsday mentality by reminding ourselves of who we are. That our story of survival is unbroken through millennia," he proclaimed to a spontaneous eruption of applause.

In the spirit of unity and solidarity with the nation, Karekin II offered a prayer to the attendees and addressed the delegates, stressing the close relationship between AGBU and the Armenian Apostolic Church since AGBU's founding and the joint initiatives the two institutions have carried out together.

Representatives of different AGBU constituent groups, such as Georgi Ambarzumjan, co-founding chair of the newest AGBU Chapter in Germany, AGBU YP Zurich Co-Chair Elizabeth Istanbouli, as well as Natalie Gabrelian, the new director of AGBU Chapters and Central Board Administration, expressed statements of commitment reinforcing a readiness to mobilize and act for the benefit of the global Armenian nation.

The biennial General Assembly meeting formalized financial, auditing, and activities reports for the years 2020-2021, all of which reflected a substantial surge in donations, volunteers and new program launches related to the trifecta of crises that befell Armenians during these two turbulent years. Many of the bold initiatives taken by AGBU in those years exemplified the Diaspora's faith in the people of Armenia and capacity to coordinate and support the massive relief work that fell on the shoulders of AGBU local offices during the height of the global pandemic, the devastating Beirut Blast of 2020 and the 2020 Artsakh War.

2022 AGBU Honorees

As part of the proceedings of each General Assembly, certain groups are recognized for their outstanding achievements. This time, the Central Board chose to confer the AGBU Outstanding Service Awards to AGBU Montreal and AGBU Uruguay Chapters for their innovative and meticulous application of programming that has evolved their community and expanded their work locally.

During these presentations, AGBU Young Professionals groups from Yerevan and Madrid also received the Outstanding Service Awards for their admirable efforts to mobilize the younger generation during times of crisis, particularly the 44-day Artsakh War. YP Yerevan raised \$84,000 in a month for humanitarian relief and YP Madrid reached out to mainstream journalists to counter false information in the media, in addition to launching a media training program to help local Armenian journalists build trust with the international media through unbiased war reporting. The program concluded its second cohort this past summer.

Staff members were also cited for their many years of outstanding performance, receiving Presidential Awards, including AGBU Armenia's Finance Director Lena Baghdasaryan, who was lauded for her two decades of dedicated service to the organization. In an emotional tribute, Sasoun



Anita Anserian, right, recognized with the AGBU Presidential Award for her 35 years with the organization, with AGBU President Berge Setrakian

Baghdasaryan, the AGBU Program Manager for Artsakh, was singled out for his unwavering dedication to the people of Artsakh, especially during the 44-day war and its aftermath.

The final honoree was AGBU Managing Director Anita Anserian, who received high praise from Setrakian for her 35 years of leadership at the AGBU Central Office. Setrakian predicted that although she was officially ending her tenure as an officer of the organization, she would continue as a volunteer leader for many years to come, adding: "Her legacy will belong to all communities. That's how far and wide Anita has touched the Armenian world." The heartwarming tribute was received with extended applause and a standing ovation by the audience, affirming the universal admiration for Anita Anserian across the global AGBU family and the Armenian world writ large.

In a final surprise moment of emotional gratitude, AGBU Council of Trustees Member Sam Simonian thanked Setrakian for his vision and impact during his 20 years of presidency, reflecting on the role he played in AGBU's history during his tenure as president in addition to his 25 years of service as a member of AGBU Central Board.

Promoting Open Dialogues

One of the priorities of the General Assembly is to create spaces for open dialogues between various stakeholders to address internal and external issues. To this end, various workshops, dialogues, and discussions were part of the week's agenda. AGBU Central Board members engaged with AGBU representatives from South and North America, Europe and the Middle East to discuss the vision of AGBU for the future and how to adjust strategies to meet the evolving needs of the global Armenian nation.

By extension, Young Professionals held a YP Executive Committee meeting to discuss the vision of the global network, strategic priorities of the coming two years, as well as the challenges of the time with their possible solutions.

A centerpiece of these dialogues was the private session with Karekin II at the Reception Hall of the Pontifical Residence in Echmiadzin. Moderated by Central Board Member Sarkis Jebejian, it was a rare opportunity for the community to discuss the spiritual care of the nation and raise questions about the relationship between the Armenian Apostolic

Church and the Armenian Diocese abroad, as well as the many humanitarian initiatives the Church carries out under the joint guardianship of the Mother See and AGBU, particularly noting the Senior Dining Centers and three Children's Centers. He also discussed the Church's role in preserving Artsakh's religious heritage during the Artsakh War of 2020.

While on the premises, the group was given a guided tour of the Mother See and, with the Catholicos presiding, offered a prayer for the peace of the souls of AGBU's fifth president Alex Manoogian, his wife Marie Manoogian, and daughter Louise Manoogian Simone, as well as the blessed memory of other late AGBU benefactors.

APRI Armenia Fall Meeting

Earlier this year, AGBU launched the Applied Policy Research Institute of Armenia (APRI Armenia), as an independent, nonpartisan think tank and policy accelerator focused on advancing regional stability and sustainable prosperity in Armenia. The APRI Armenia Fall Meeting held last week offered AGBU delegates, invited guests and media a full day of panel discussions of critical importance for transforming Armenia's policy culture. This comprehensive conference hosted diverse panelists from the Armenian and Artsakh governments, the United Nations in Armenia, experts and analysts of other independent think tanks, various local and international universities, and NGOs with related missions.

The conference touched upon such critical topics as how to cultivate new mindsets in leadership and policy making; how decision-makers in Armenia can navigate the uncertain times; what specific role the Diaspora can play in unlocking the full socio-economic potential of Armenia; the prospects for developing solar energy and green infrastructure in the country; and pathways to overcome the severe challenges that emerged in the aftermath of the 2020 Artsakh War. The conference also addressed the volatile and rapidly changing security environment in the South Caucasus, the need for rethinking foreign policy objectives and the long-term risks Armenia faces due to the unresolved conflicts. This full-day meeting was the second large-scale set of discussions since the founding of APRI Armenia with future forums scheduled for 2023.

With global Young Professionals making up at least half of the attendees who traveled to Yerevan, the week was an opportunity to unite in many formats. YP Yerevan hosted an international forum of panelists and guests for their YP Connect event. With 120 YPs in attendance to highlight the power of networking, panelists included emerging leaders from Armenia's and the Diaspora's private and public sector. The panelists included AGBU Central Board Member Camilio Azzouz, Deputy Mayor of Paris and Acting Director of AGBU Europe Anouch Toranian, Deputy Minister of Economy Armen Arzumanyan, Deputy Governor of the RA Central Bank Hovhannes Khachatryan, and Co-Founder and CEO of SoloLearn Yeva Hyusyan.

Throughout the week delegates participated in a number of events and visits. From a private tour of the Matenadaran and a viewing of the works of artist Jean Boghossian to a Solidarity Concert at Arno Babajanyan Concert Hall, featuring the Hover State Chamber Choir and the Vahagn Hayrapetyan Jazz Trio, Armenian culture was honored through the arts. In addition, a Sunday Badarak Service at Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral included a special Hokehankist prayer (a Requiem Mass) for AGBU benefactors and members who lost their lives during the difficult past two years.

In a poignant day including the visit to the Mother See Holy Echmiadzin, delegates paid respects to the memory of Armenia's fallen heroes at Yerablur Military Pantheon in Yerevan. Taking time, as a united delegation, to honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice was deeply impactful for those in attendance. By the end of the day, the group visited the construction site of the AGBU Children's Center in the Yerevan district of Malatya, where young students performed with passion and energy. Those in attendance could not help but be moved, and recommit themselves to this young generation.

AGBU Armenia President Vasken Yacoubian noted, "Today, Armenia is again facing serious and existential threats and AGBU again is ready and committed to assume its national duties to face these challenges. But we need unity amongst ourselves and solidarity from our friends. We can express solidarity by being here, by doing here, by coming to Armenia, by activating our network in the Diaspora and engaging our resources and talents in meaningful ways, and, finally, by bridging them with those we have in the homeland. I am deeply touched that you are here today and more than ever believe that in unity is strength."



INTERNATIONAL

France Accuses Russia of Stoking Conflict

Pledges Support for Armenia

PARIS (Reuters) — France's President Emmanuel Macron accused Russia on Wednesday, October 12, of purposefully provoking the recent clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan as part of an effort to destabilize the Caucasus region and beyond.

The worst fighting between the two ex-Soviet countries since 2020 broke out in late September, killing more than 200 people. Moscow, which has a defense pact with Armenia and a military base there, deployed thousands of peacekeepers to Karabakh after a ceasefire in 2020.

That reaffirmed its role as policeman and chief power broker in the volatile part of the former Soviet Union where Turkey also wields increasing influence thanks to its close alliance with Azerbaijan.

However, speaking to France 2 television, Macron said Moscow had stoked tensions in recent months in favor of Azerbaijan.

"What's been happening on the border

the last two years ... 5,000 Russian soldiers are allegedly there to guarantee the border, (but) the Russians have used this conflict which dated back several centuries and played Azerbaijan's game with Turkish complicity and came back to weaken Armenia which was once a country it was



President Emmanuel Macron with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

close to," Macron said.

"You see what's happening? It's an effort by Russia to destabilize. It wants to create

disorder in the Caucasus to destabilize all of us."

He added, "France will not leave Armenia alone. Our values and principles cannot be bought neither with gas nor oil, said Emmanuel Macron in an interview with France 2. French President said, France has special ties with Armenia because Armenia has always fought for tolerance and peace in the region."

France, along with the United States and Russia are co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Minsk Group that mediates over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Macron last week sat down with Azeri President Ilham Aliyev, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and European Council President

Charles Michel to flesh out an agreement that will see a civilian EU mission head to the countries' border to assess the situation.

INTERNATIONAL

Turkey May Use 'Football Diplomacy,' MP Says

ANAKRA (Panorama.am)

— Turkey may once again resort to "football diplomacy" in the normalization of relations with Armenia, [RIA Novosti](#) reported on October 17, citing Turkish MP Akif Cagatay Kilic.

In September 2008, then Turkish President Abdullah Gul visited Yerevan at the invitation of his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan to attend a qualifying match for the 2010 World Cup finals between the two nations in Yerevan.

The two leaders watched the return leg of the match in the Turkish city of Bursa a year later.

Negotiations between the Armenian and Turkish delegations were held there, followed by a meeting of the presidents. The normalization process, which fizzled out in the following months due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, was dubbed "football diplomacy."

The Armenian and Turkish national football teams are set to face again in the Euro 2024 qualifiers.

"Euro 2024 qualifying matches between the national teams of the two countries will be held in Armenia on March 25 and in Turkey in September. Our team will go there, maybe we will go too. The normalization process is going well. Positive dynamics is observed in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations as well. This must be done without resorting to provocations," Star quoted Kilic as saying.

President Khachaturyan Pays State Visit to Bulgaria

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net)

— President Vahagn Khachaturyan paid a state visit to Bulgaria on Monday, October 17, his office announced.

Khachaturyan met the President of Bulgaria Rumen Radev. The tête-à-tête between the two countries was followed by an extended meeting.

During the trip, the President with Prime Minister of Bulgaria Galab Donev, Mayor of Sofia Yordanka Fandakova, and Mayor of Plovdiv Zdravko Dimitrov were scheduled to take place. Khachaturyan was also scheduled to deliver a lecture at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

Minasyan Wins Asian Championships, Sets Continental Records

MANAMA, Bahrain (PanARMENIAN.Net)

— Armenian lifter Gor Minasyan, who currently represents Bahrain, earned the biggest win of his career on the final day of the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Manama and claimed a second victory for host nation Bahrain, Inside the Games reports.

The move from one continent to another paid off immediately for Minasyan, 27, who switched nationality in July from Armenia to Bahrain. It took Minasyan only five minutes to make his mark in his new continent by setting an Asian snatch record with his second lift of 205 kilograms.

Jamila Afghani Receives 2022 Aurora Prize

VENICE — The seventh annual Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity was awarded to Jamila Afghani, an educator, human rights defender, and founder of the Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO), on October 15. Afghani has dedicated 25 years to the women of Afghanistan access to education. She was commemorated during a series of high-level philanthropy-focused events hosted by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative in Venice, Italy on October 14-16.

Before August 2021, NECDO had more than 100,000 women enrolled in literacy programs, thanks to the establishment of small centers in many communities led by local women. The organization also provides legal aid and psychosocial support to more than 10,000 women victims of abuse from a family member or a partner. Forced to flee Afghanistan, Jamila is continuing to help others at distance.

After the Taliban took over her country, Afghani had to leave her homeland, but she has not given up on its people. NEDCO is still supporting women of Afghanistan and



Jamila Afghani

itarians like Jamila Afghani around the world. Today's modern-day heroes inspire and guide us and show us how to persevere in the face of seemingly overwhelming challenges. They remind us of our common humanity and encourage us to show the same commitment to serving the poor and marginalized. They remind us, too, of our duty to give everyone an equal chance," said Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee and Co-Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London.

Every year, the Aurora Prize is granted by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors. The Laureate receives a \$1,000,000 grant and a chance to continue the cycle of giving by supporting organizations that help people in need. As 2022 Aurora Prize Laureate, Jamila Afghani has chosen to

support Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO). WILPF is a membership-led international organization that seeks to promote world peace by advocating for disarmament, abolition of violence, women's human rights, and gender equality,

ty, and NECDO is a non-governmental organization that provides humanitarian and development assistance to women, youth, and children in Afghanistan.

"From my professional experience, I know that the human rights issue is a struggle. We go through these periods, and this is one of them, when it's not very clear how we are going to see the way forward on so many issues, when we are running out of time. People like Jamila Afghani shine a light of hope on the future and show us all a way out of the darkness," noted Aurora Prize Selection Committee member Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Since its launch, the Aurora Prize has changed the lives of over 1,000,000 people affected by war, conflict, persecution, and other humanitarian issues, with a special focus on helping children, displaced people, and women and girls. This action-based philanthropy, focused on tangible results, is possible thanks to the supporters whose contribution allows the Prize to continue empowering modern-day heroes.

The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is the vision of philanthropists Vartan Gregorian, Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan who have been joined by thousands of supporters and partners. Aurora's Chair, Dr. Tom Catena, draws on his experience as a surgeon, veteran, humanitarian and the 2017 Aurora Prize laureate to spread the message of Gratitude in Action to a global audience.



Noubar Afeyan

vulnerable families, shedding light on lack of access to education, domestic violence, and other contemporary issues faced by women today, while providing financial aid to the human rights defenders, journalists, and advocates.

"Our mission at Aurora is to recognize, celebrate and spread the work of human-

Exhibition about Armenian Refugees In Bulgaria Opens in Sofia

By Ani and Philippe Pilibossian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

SOFIA, Bulgaria — On October 4, the Sofia Regional History Museum inaugurated an exhibition called “Pamet” [Memory] in the presence of a large crowd of over 100, including some Bulgarian state officials and Fr. Hrach Mouradian, parish priest of the Armenian church of Plovdiv. This exhibition in the Bulgarian capital is dedicated to the welcoming of Armenian refugees 100 years ago by the Bulgarian state. Organized by the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations, it coincides with the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Bulgarian Republic and the Republic of Armenia. The event took place under the patronage of the ambassador of the Armenian Republic to Bulgaria, Armen Yedigaryan.

The exhibition contains rare handcrafted items, books, and personal memoirs presented in the showcases at the entrance to the museum. Many were lent by individuals whose ancestors fled the Greco-Turkish war in the years 1918-1922.

Finely chiseled and sculpted religious objects are presented in the center of the showroom. They are from the Armenian church Sourp Kevork in Plovdiv (the second biggest city of Bulgaria), which is a cosponsor of the exhibition. The museum adjoining this church preserves various objects brought in oxcarts by Armenians fleeing the war from different cities such as Rodosto, Edirne, or Malgara.



The exhibition hall (photo Tanche Petrova, Sofia Regional History Museum)

The exhibition's opening started with a performance by the singer and songwriter Haygashot Aghasian, the grandson of the Armenian translator of the novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. He sang several Armenian and Bulgarian songs, accompanied on piano. Ambassador Yedigaryan gave a speech in English, which was simultaneously interpreted into Bulgarian. The director of the Sofia History Museum, Dr. Venneta Handziiska-Yankulova, spoke, as did Lazar Lazarov, Bulgarian deputy minister and chairman of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Is-

sues, which is part of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers. The latter congratulated the Armenian community on the excellent organization of the exposition.

The last speech was by Vartanoush Topakbashian, former editor of the weekly *Yerevan Press*, which has become an e-newspaper. She is the current president of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of Sofia.

The Armenian exhibition can be viewed until November 30. For more information on the museum itself, see <https://sofiahistorymuseum.bg/en/>.



The singer and songwriter Haigashot Aghasian performing Bulgarian and Armenian songs (photo Philippe Pilibossian)



At the exhibition's inauguration (photo Philippe Pilibossian)

Human Rights Watch Condemns Execution Of Armenian POWs

NEW YORK (Azatutyun) — The New York-based watchdog Human Rights Watch (HRW) has added its voice to international condemnation of the apparent execution by Azerbaijani troops of Armenian soldiers taken prisoner during last month's border clashes.

A 40-second video posted on Azerbaijani social media accounts on October 2 shows at least seven Armenian servicemen being shot dead by their captors at what looks like a frontline position.

The video caused shock and indignation in Armenia, with the authorities in Yerevan accusing the Azerbaijani army of committing yet another war crime. The office of Armenia's human rights ombudswoman believes that it was filmed on September 13 hours after Azerbaijani forces attacked and seized some of the Armenian army positions along the border between the two states.

HRW condemned the killings as a “heinous war crime” after examining their footage through a variety of techniques, including by consulting with weapons and medical experts. In a weekend report, it said Azerbaijani authorities must ensure that an investigation announced by them “leads to accountability for the soldiers and commanders responsible.”

“These soldiers had been captured and laid down their arms,” the report quoted Hugh Williamson, HRW's Europe and Central Asia director, as saying.

“Their captors had an obligation to treat them humanely, and instead it appears that Azerbaijani forces shot them in cold blood,” added Williamson. “Now they need to be held accountable.”

The US State Department said on October 3 that it is “deeply disturbed” by the executions and urged Baku to conduct a “full and impartial investigation.” Similar statements have also been made by other Western powers.

Azerbaijani law-enforcement authorities have not reported any arrests in their purported investigation of the killings.

Armenian officials have accused the Azerbaijani military of also killing several other Armenian soldiers captured during the September 13-14 hostilities.

Iran Holds ‘Massive’ War Games Near Armenian, Azeri Borders

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Iran's Revolutionary Guards began on Monday, October 17, major military exercises along the country's borders with Armenia and Azerbaijan amid lingering fears of renewed fighting between the two South Caucasus states.

The war games, described by Iranian news agencies as “massive,” are taking place near a stretch of the Arax river that separates northwestern Iran from Armenia's Syunik province as well as Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan exclave and districts south of Nagorno-Karabakh recaptured by the Azerbaijani army during the 2020 war.

News reports quoted Brigadier-General Mohammad Pakpour of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) as saying that his elite troops will practice building a bridge over the river and seizing strategically important hills.

The exercises are meant to send a message of “peace and friendship” to Iran's neighbors, Pakpour said, according to the Mehr news agency. The Islamic Republic also wants to show its enemies that it is ready to “respond decisively to any threat,” added the commander of the IRGC's Ground Forces.

Over the past year, Iranian leaders have repeatedly warned against attempts to change their country's “historical” border with Armenia. They stepped up those warnings following the September 13-14 large-scale fighting at various sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. One of those sections is in Syunik, the only Armenian province bordering Iran.

Baku has been pressuring Yerevan to open a special land corridor connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan through Syunik. The Armenian government rejects these de-

mands while expressing readiness to restore conventional transport links between the two South Caucasus states.

Armenian officials say that Baku could try to forcibly open such an “extraterritorial corridor” through further military action against Armenia.

“We will not tolerate changes in the borders of the countries of the region,” Iran's top army general, Mohammad Bagheri, said on September 22.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi reportedly made this clear to his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev when they met in Kazakhstan last week.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan praised Iran's “resolute and explicit position on regional issues” on September 30 when he met with the newly appointed Iranian consul in Kapan, the capital of Syunik. He again welcomed Tehran's decision last

December to open the consulate there.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said afterwards that the consulate will help to deepen Armenian-Iranian ties.

Syunik connects the rest of Armenia to Iran through mountainous roads used not only for Armenian-Iranian trade but also cargo shipments to and from other parts of the world. Armenia lost control over one of those roads after a controversial troop withdrawal ordered by Prime Minister Pashinian following the 2020 war with Azerbaijan.

In September 2021, Azerbaijan set up checkpoints there to tax Iranian vehicles, triggering unprecedented tensions with Iran. Some Iranian officials accused Baku of seeking to effectively strip the Islamic Republic of a common border with Armenia. The Iranian army held exercises near Nakhichevan in October 2021.



Community News

Vartanian in Race For U-Mich Board Of Regents

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — On Election Day, November 8, among the many nationwide and local elections, is a race for the University of Michigan Board of Regents. Sevag Vartanian is running as a Republican on a platform of fiscal responsibility. In a recent interview he said his goal is to bring responsible leadership back to the institution, which has recently been plagued with scandals and, according to Vartanian, financial irresponsibility.

U-M's Importance to the Armenian Community

While accurate statistics are difficult to come by, according to recent US Census data, Michigan comes in fifth among US states for the size of its Armenian community, after California, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. The community is



Sevag Vartanian, candidate for U-M Board of Regents

centered in the Metro Detroit area which is widely considered the 4th or 5th largest Armenian community in the US, regionally speaking (after the greater Los Angeles, Boston, and New York / New Jersey areas, and comparable to Fresno, CA).

At the same time, U-M is a world-class institution ranked 25th among American universities by the *US News and World Report*. Among public universities, it is ranked third, according to the same outlet, behind University of California, Berkeley and University of California, Los Angeles. Michigan's Law School is ranked 10th while its medical school is ranked 17th.

A combination of a large Armenian community in the area, big number of university students of Armenian descent, and the relative affluence of the local Armenian community, has made U-M a major center of Armenian Studies. The school has two endowed chairs in Armenian studies: the Alex Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History, currently held by Professor Hakem Al-Rustom, and the Marie Manoogian Chair in Armenian Language and Literature, currently held by Prof. Michael Pifer, himself a graduate of U-M who studied under his predecessor, Dr. Kevork Bardakjian. Other major figures in Armenian studies such as Dr. Jirair Libaridian and Dr. Ron Suny have been a part of U-M's Armenian programs throughout its history and currently. Regular classes are given in the Western Armenian language and on various aspects of Armenian history and see VARTANIAN, page 8



Students at Restart Ijevan NGO experimenting with their solar cells

From Great Neck To Ijevan

Bringing Solar Energy Education to Armenia

By Cristopher Patvakian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GREAT NECK, N.Y. — Designing, writing, and preparing to teach students is usually something reserved for teachers during the summer, but South High senior Antranig Baghdassarian flipped the script this year.

An Armenian-American hailing from Great Neck, he has always had a passion for science and technology - and also his Armenian ancestry. The combination of these interests led him to create his very own workshop on solar energy which he taught virtually to students in Armenia this past summer.

Great Neck may be thousands of miles away from Armenia, but Baghdassarian did not let the distance, nor numerous other difficulties, prevent him from bringing the workshop to other young adults in the homeland. The idea came to be when, after an interview with an Armenian repatriate from Syria, he learned that solar energy in Armenia was only a fraction of its full potential. Beyond having his own childhood intellectual curiosity in solar energy, based on research Antranig did, he also found that Armenia had a lot of potential for that form of renewable energy, but the infrastructure, awareness, and education needed to bring that change was lacking. Furthermore, the International Energy Association showed that Armenia was an ideal candidate for solar energy (producing 720 kWh more than the average annual solar energy flow per square meter of horizontal surface of the Europe average). From thereon, seeing both the void and potential, he brainstormed several ideas on what could be done.

“At first I just wanted to see if we could get and install solar panels... though that would help Armenia get some solar energy but wouldn't be a long term solution, so I thought that would be a bad idea.” Instead, Baghdassarian thought it might be more beneficial to simply start teaching children in Armenia about solar energy so that the younger generation was more informed and could eventually themselves decide how, where, and if solar energy should be implemented in the country.

Now set with the idea to teach about solar energy, Antranig got to work preparing his workshop materials. Though he planned on teaching virtually, Baghdassarian see SOLAR, page 9

Two Distinguished Columnists from Yerevan Join the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is happy to welcome Benyamin Poghosyan and Suren Sargsyan, two distinguished columnists from Yerevan, who have already begun writing regularly on various issues of Armenia's international relations and political science in these pages.



Benyamin Poghosyan is the chairman of the Yerevan-based Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies.

He was Vice President for Research – Head of the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense Research University in Armenia from August 2016 to February 2019. He joined the Institute for National Strategic Studies (predecessor of NDRU) in March 2009 as a Research Fellow and was appointed as INSS Deputy Director for research in November 2010. In 2013 Dr. Poghosyan was a Distinguished Research Fellow at the US National Defense University College of International Security Affairs and is a graduate of the US State Department Study of the US Institutes for Scholars 2012 Program on US National Security Policy Making. He holds a candidate of science degree in history and is a graduate of the 2006 Tavitian Program on International Relations at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.



Suren Sargsyan is an expert on US foreign policy, researcher and author. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University,

American University of Armenia and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Suren Sargsyan is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan established in 2017. He teaches US foreign policy and Armenian foreign policy courses at Brusov State University in Yerevan. Throughout his career in public service, Sargsyan served in all three branches of government of Armenia, holding the positions of adviser to the Prime Minister of Armenia, adviser to the Speaker of the Parliament of Armenia as well as adviser to the chairman of the Constitutional Court. He spent 8 years working at the Office of the President of Armenia, under two different administrations. Sargsyan is a Rumsfeld fellow and PhD candidate in American studies. He is an author of the book *Armenia and Bush Himself* about US foreign policy towards Armenia under President George H. W. Bush. Currently he is working on his second book about Clinton administration policy towards Armenia.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Vartanian in Race For U-Mich Board of Regents

VARTANIAN, from page 7

culture, Classical and Eastern Armenian language is also offered as are frequent lectures and academic conferences. The school also boasts a very large and active Armenian Students' Cultural Association.

The satellite campus, U-M Dearborn, attracts many local Armenian-American students as well; it is the home of the Armenian Research Center (ARC), whose current director is Prof. Ara Sanjian. The ARC, which was founded by Dr. Dennis Papazian and funded by the Knights of Vartan, is more closely connected to the local community as well as having a special focus on Armenian Genocide history; Armenian history and language classes are also given at Dearborn. The Dearborn campus, as well as the Flint campus, are administered by the same Board of Regents that run the main Ann Arbor campus.

Board of Regents

The Board of Regents acts as a board of trustees for the University, which is funded by taxpayer dollars. The constitution of the State of Michigan provides for the statewide election of U-M's Board of Regents along with the Board of Trustees of Michigan State University and the Board of Governors of Wayne State University.

The eight members of the Board of Regents serve in an unpaid position for an eight-year term. Currently, there are six Democrats and two Republicans on the Board of Regents. Two of the Democrat incumbents are up for reelection; both are running again, along with two nominees from the Republican party, Vartanian being one of them, as well as third-party candidates.

The board has the power to approve the annual budget of the university, which in practice means they get to dictate much of the university's policies and particularly spending. They also have the power to hire and fire the President of the University, who administers the institution on a day to day basis, and attends all Board of Regents meetings as presiding officer, without having a vote on the board.

Recently, the President of U-M, Mark Schlissel, was fired by the Regents, following revelations of an inappropriate relationship with a subordinate female colleague, at the same time that investigations were pending into the case of Dr. Robert Anderson, an athletic doctor who allegedly molested over 1,000 student athletes in his 40-year career at the university. Anderson died in 2008, but the University announced a \$490 million settlement with victims last month.

With former U-M President Mary Sue Coleman filling Schlissel's role temporarily, a new president, Dr. Santa J. Ono, was chosen by the Regents on July 13 of this year and assumed office on October 13.

Fiscal Conservative

Vartanian, who was born and raised in Dearborn, has been an active member of the Armenian-American community all his life. His father, an obstetrician-gynecologist, was a native of Abadan, Iran, whom Vartanian describes as a hayaser, a supporter of the community and the culture who was fond of reciting Armenian poetry he learned as a child. Vartanian's mother was from Cleveland, Ohio, and was the American-born daughter of Genocide survivors who fled Ottoman Turkey like so many others. Vartanian was raised at St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Dearborn and was a member of the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) as a young man. He was an Eagle Scout and in keeping with that, focuses on

issues of integrity and responsibility.

Graduating from the University of Michigan in 1991 with a degree in actuarial mathematics, he then worked at Ford Credit. (His "trivia fact" is that while he was unable to make the football team, he was a male cheerleader in his college days in Ann Arbor, and remains a staunch fan of the Michigan Wolverines.) He earned an MBA in finance and statistics from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business in 2000, and then moved to Manhattan where he worked for such firms as Citibank and Bank of America.

In 2012, Vartanian decided to return to Michigan where he wanted to raise his family, and he now runs his own asset management firm. He and his wife, Knar, a native of New Jersey, are parents to three boys, one of whom is currently a student at U-M. Vartanian's interest in running for the Board of Regents stems from his concern for the education of his children and the well-being of the people of the state of Michigan. He feels that the University is being mismanaged from a financial standpoint and that as a fiscal conservative who is highly experienced and trained in finance, he can contribute to fixing that problem.

"One, I'm an alumnus, and I had a great experience at the University of Michigan. It is the crown jewel of education, not just in Michigan but across the world, one of the top public research universities in the world," Vartanian said. "As a taxpayer in the state of Michigan, we fund the school and we expect a return on our investment. The number of students that we accept from the State of Michigan residents has been dropping for a long time."

Vartanian explained further: "The 'return' comes from students, upon graduation, taking jobs in Michigan, becoming inventors in Michigan, becoming business creators in Michigan, to help the economy. We all benefit from an educated workforce. If you keep more of your educated workforce in the state, the economy grows. You don't want to export your best talent."

Vartanian stated that only about 52 percent of the undergraduates in Ann Arbor are in-state residents. If the numbers are combined with the graduate students, less than half of all U-M students are from Michigan. While valuing U-M's status as a world-class research university, meaning graduate students will be coming from all over, Vartanian would like to see the percentage of in-state undergrads more in the 60-70 percent range. Meanwhile, as he points out, "U-M has had 38 consecutive years of tuition increases and most of it was at double the rate of inflation. Now that we have the highest inflation in over 40 years, what's the school going to do to balance its budget?"

Vartanian explained that the school attempts to solve this problem by raising out-of-state tuition, but this is not sustainable. For one thing, the free market will eventually cause out-of-state students to lose interest in such an expensive school, so they can't be relied on to sustain the university. For another, the school now has an incentive to reject in-state students in favor of out-of-state students, which ultimately is bad for the state. "If residents are paying \$17,000 a year in tuition and non-residents are paying \$55,000 a year in tuition, the school prefers non-residents. These are the people who are not likely to stay in Michigan afterwards, but they fulfill the budgetary requirements," said Vartanian. He has a problem with this type of thinking, based on looking for revenue rather than looking to cut spending. What should be done dif-

ferently? "We need to allocate the resources better," he says. "They [the administration] get addicted to this out-of-state tuition."

'This Race Is Not About Politics'

Political divisiveness and the so-called "cancel culture" are also on Vartanian's mind. "Back then it isn't nearly as political as it is now. What I'm finding is that the 'cancel culture' is so strong in the university system now, where people are afraid to exercise their freedom of speech. I have faculty members coming up to me quietly saying, 'I've got to be careful to be seen talking to you, because it's really bad here.' It's really not how science should be conducted; we should be able to speak freely and debate in a respectful manner." He also mentions that when students are writing their entrance essays, "they aren't writing what they actually think; they're writing what they think the school wants to hear," noting that this environment "squashes academic freedom."

Vartanian downplays the political divides and he speaks highly of friends that are on the opposite end of the political spectrum from him, like Prof. Ron Suny, whose children he babysat for as a teenager, and with whom he recently had lunch. "For me this race isn't about politics, it's about good governance, and ensuring the university maintain its standards and stay a leader in research," he said.

To questions about abortion, which is currently a hot topic in Michigan, Vartanian said that his personal opinions are irrelevant, and that he will endeavor to follow the law. As the son of an OB-GYN, Vartanian said he understands that abortion is not a cut-and-dry issue. "Of course there should be exceptions, especially for the health of the mother," he stated.

Instead of hot-button culture war issues, Vartanian wants to focus on fiscal conservatism. He has spoken a lot about U-M's \$17-billion endowment fund, stating that it is not a "slush fund" that can be used for whatever the administration wants. He cites wasteful spending, like the \$15-million renovation of the President's House, the official residence of the U-M President, which is also used for formal affairs.

"From a finance background I can look at the balance sheets, income statements, and know the right questions to ask. I was shocked, a couple weeks ago I was looking at the balance sheet and the change from 2020-2021 in one liability struck me as very odd. The liability for post-employment expenses went up by close to a billion dollars."

According to Vartanian, there was an approximately \$950-million increase in just one year, attributed to "post-employment expenses," presumably pensions and retirement plans for faculty and staff, but no real explanation was offered for such a dramatic increase.

He also mentioned that in relation to the large endowment fund, "one of the things that bothers me from a fiduciary perspective, they are layering in political objectives to the management of the assets as opposed to just getting a maximum return on the assets." The University takes a pro-environmental and social justice approach to investing, said Vartanian, which is not responsible money management. He gives the example that although we all know cigarettes are bad for us, a responsible investor will invest in a cigarette company if it is the financially sound decision.

On the other hand, Vartanian is in support of using university resources for some initiatives that would please his colleagues on the left, such as promoting STEM ca-

reers and education to young people of color. He ties this into his vision of making U-M an institution that truly serves the citizens and in particular the children of the State of Michigan.

Vartanian is also concerned with the growing student loan crisis. He points out that in his opinion, the government should not be bailing out anyone, not even the Big Banks that he once worked for. He feels that student loan forgiveness is not doing right by the taxpayers, people who have paid off student loans already, or workers who went to trade school and don't benefit from the forgiveness program. On the other hand, his solution is that federal law must be changed so that student loans can be forgiven in bankruptcy proceedings, which is currently possible with other types of loans, but not student loans.

But beyond all the economic conservatism, he more importantly points to the fact that one of the reasons for the crisis is that humanities majors have a hard time finding jobs. Therefore, he would push for more inclusion of finance, business, accounting, and/or tech requirements for humanities/liberal arts majors, and more guidance for them to find careers that are remunerative. "You don't have to be an engineer to run an engineering firm," he stated. Students who study German or anthropology, for instance, should be steered toward careers in business-related fields where the type of valuable critical thinking and writing skills they learned in undergrad can be useful.

Responsible Leadership and Integrity

Another highly important concern of Vartanian's is the mishandling of the sex abuse case at the university.

"What happened to those student-athletes is horrible, absolutely horrible that a physician would molest them like that," says Vartanian. "A lot of these athletes were there on scholarship, and presumably they put up with it for fear of losing their scholarship. And this happened for a long period of time, and it's not because they didn't have the proper policies in place, it's because they didn't follow those policies, they swept it under the rug. I believe sunlight is the best disinfectant. Throw the light of day on it all, and wherever it ends up, it ends up. You have to get rid of the people that contributed to that instead of rewarding them." Vartanian feels Schlissel's being given a tenured position is unacceptable.

Finally, Vartanian stresses his Armenian connection and his ability to protect the Armenian presence at the university. "We are blessed that UM has an endowed Armenian chair. But there will come a time when the Turks try to silence us. And how wonderful would it be to have an Armenian sitting on the board of one of the greatest universities in the world, that refused to be silenced, that will stand up for us, that will take the barbs, that will take the slings and the arrows, because he knows the history," he stated.

While Vartanian feels he has a good chance to win his election, and Michigan is considered a moderate "swing" state, nevertheless the University is seen as a very liberal institution and Ann Arbor one of the most liberal towns in Michigan and indeed the country. If elected, he will have to work with people far to the left of him on many issues, but he does not seem concerned by this.

"Every decision I make will be based on 'is this good for our students?'" Vartanian stated, stressing that as the father of a U-M student, "It's a little bit different, I think, when you hear about things at the kitchen table as opposed to in the board room."



COMMUNITY NEWS

Semonian Family Honors Robert Semonian with Gift to ATP

WOBURN, Mass. — The Armenia Tree Project (ATP) announced recently the sponsorship of Ashtarak Park by the family of the late Robert “Bob” Semonian. This sponsorship is the realization of Bob Semonian’s legacy of cultivating stronger ties between Armenia and the Diaspora.

Leon Semonian said, “my brother Robert Semonian — as an Armenian patriot — was a decades-long supporter of the Armenian Tree Project and always admired Carolyn Mugar’s leadership of ATP. Bob was a firm believer in Armenia’s future and particularly enjoyed visits to ATP’s tree farms when visiting Armenia.”

Nephew Paul Semonian added: “The entire Semonian family is pleased to provide ATP with this gift in Bob’s name and to be a benefactor to the future growth of ATP and its unique mission in contributing to the growth and prosperity of Armenia.”

Located 40 minutes northwest of Yerevan, Ashtarak Park is cradled between three mountains, Ararat, Aragats and Ara. The 2.5-hectare public park is adjacent to ATP’s Karin Nursery and was established in 2018 to provide recreation for the community of Karin Village and beyond.

Over the course of two decades, the community has been challenged by a lack of green space, waste management, and water management issues. This park allows the community to have the benefits of a local, verdant park for use by individuals and families. Fruit trees planted throughout the park will

mature to provide a source of nourishment to those who visit. Species are selected for their diversity in size, and foliage color, including birch, koelreuteria, ash, oak, Japanese pagoda, apricot and poplar trees as well as spiraea, forsythia, common boxwood and arborvitae shrubs.

Since 2018, more than 1,400 trees and shrubs at Ashtarak Park have been planted by local and diasporan schoolchildren, volunteers, visitors and guests from around the world through ATP’s supervision.

Implemented at Ashtarak Park, ATP developed the Building Bridges Program as an initiative to educate students outside Armenia, while providing them the opportunity to meet students in Armenia — and work together to create solutions. A key component of the program is when diasporan students visit Armenia, they plant trees at Ashtarak Park, together with their local peers.

Bob was gifted in connecting people as he was welcoming, engaging and curious to get to know whomever he met. The family’s sponsorship supporting the Armenia Tree Project’s work of bringing people from all around the world together to plant trees for a strong and healthy Armenia is truly meaningful and a celebration of his legacy.

Since 1994, ATP has been using trees to improve the standard of living in Armenia and Artsakh, focusing on aiding those with the fewest resources. If you would like to support ATP’s work please visit www.ArmeniaTreeProject.org/en/donation.



BOB WAS A FIRM BELIEVER IN ARMENIA’S FUTURE AND PARTICULARLY ENJOYED VISITS TO ATP’S TREE FARMS WHEN VISITING ARMENIA.”

—LEON SEMONIAN, BROTHER

Bringing Solar Energy Education to Armenia

SOLAR, from page 7

still wanted to have it be an engaging and hands-on experience for the younger generation, so that it could create a spark in their minds about the power of solar. As such he decided to have a two part presentation, one virtual and the other an interactive, hands-on portion for the students.

“I wanted to focus on the making and function of the solar panel... you hear all the time about it working but until you really see the mechanism and use it, you might not believe its capabilities,” he said.

Thus, Baghdassarian explored several options of prebuilt solar panel kits and in an unfortunate twist of fate, the only suitable kit he found at the time which would ex-

plain with the level of granularity he hoped to teach about was no longer being manufactured.

But this was not a roadblock for long. Baghdassarian, who also happened to be enrolled in a pre-college program at Columbia University, consulted his advisor there on how to build his own solar energy cells. Baghdassarian bought all of the parts he could find readily available (improvising in some cases), and ultimately after days of tinkering, was unsuccessful due to the inability to find the electrolyte necessary for the experiment. Not giving up, Baghdassarian found another kit which he modified so the students in Armenia could complete the exercise with the available resources.

With that solution in place, Antranig modified the instructions given by the kit for creating a solar cell, created his presentation, and arranged for the materials to be sent to the students in Armenia. The classroom he taught was a mix in age but primarily high school students, with their group based out of the Restart Ijevan NGO, located in Ijevan (a town in northern Armenia). Baghdassarian does not speak fluent Armenian, however, he was able to have an interpreter on the ground translate the course as he walked them through the science behind solar energy and instructed them on how to build their very own solar cells.

“Even through Zoom, it was so exciting to see kids standing on their tip toes trying to get more sun and actually seeing energy being produced and measured through a multimeter [an instrument used for measuring electricity which was connected to the solar cell].”

Baghdassarian feels his class was a suc-

cess and his suspicions about the need for increased awareness on solar energy were confirmed. When he asked how many students had ever heard of solar energy, he explained that “... [v]ery few students raised their hands, and that’s when I realized what I was doing is important.”

Given the success and need, he plans on continuing to host the workshop in future iterations. This first experience, despite its challenges, helped Baghdassarian discover what it took to prepare the workshop, decide to continue teaching it, and also tweak elements of the existing presentation to better suit students’ needs in Armenia. As for his own future, Baghdassarian is interested in furthering his studies in science, and exploring opportunities to help people on a grand scale through innovation and technology. Though this summer he led only one classroom, the lasting impact on those students and many more is only the beginning of what is to come from Baghdassarian.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Mary Vartanian Continues to Inspire at 108 Years Old

By Raffi V. Arkun and Aram Arkun
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. — While there may seem to be more and more people living to their 90s, and even 100, anything over that is still considered uncommon. A study in 2015 by the Gerontology Research Group, for example, only validated the claims of 782 people in the entire United States to be 110 or over. Mary Vartanian, born in August 1914, recently celebrated her 108th birthday and is approaching that rare category of supercentenarian. Despite a life full of change, moving several times to different countries before ending up in the United States, and enduring various hardships, she remains steadfast in her faith, industrious and sociable. Living now at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain, she recently reflected on her experiences over many decades.

Childhood and Family Life

She was born as Mary Ouzghoushian in Aintab in what then was the Ottoman Empire just before the outbreak of World War I. Her family was not deported during the Armenian Genocide, in part because of the protection of a paternal cousin, Garabed Yesayan, who was a doctor. The same family also helped the Vartanians escape to Aleppo sometime in the early 1920s. They had to leave behind their home and most of their belongings.

Aintab after World War I was temporarily



Four generations of Vartanians: Mary Vartanian being kissed by her granddaughter Jeanine Shememian at left and great-granddaughter Lianna Shememian at right, with daughter Lisa Darian standing behind her (photo Aram Arkun)

occupied by British and then French troops, but Turkish Nationalist forces began fighting to expel the French, and though they initially were defeated, they obtained control of the city in 1921 and local Armenians fled.

Mary was too young when she left Aintab to remember much about life there, but she did know that her father was a miller who made cracked wheat. She had two sisters and one brother, and they all made it to Aleppo. She went to the Grtasirats ["Education-Lovers"] Armenian School in Aintab, which was founded in 1924, through sixth grade, and recalled that she liked it a lot. In fact, she said this was the best time in her life.

She studied Armenian in school, knew the Turkish language from Aintab (where many Armenians also spoke Turkish), and learned Arabic because her family eventually rented a house from Arabs. She said that the Arabs were good people.

When asked what she would do for fun as a child, she said she did not dance or sing, but would crochet.

She also learned rug weaving and would make Aintab-style rugs later for a living while in Aleppo. There were notebooks with popular designs of the rugs which she would copy. She also sewed the clothing of children who were going to be baptized.

Decades later, samples of her handiwork were placed on display at the museum of the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon.

Mary was introduced by her doctor cousin to Hovhannes Vartanian, also born in Aintab (in 1905), whose family was protected from the deportations there because his father was a violinist beloved by the Turks.



Mary and Hovhannes Vartanian's wedding portrait

They married in 1935. Hovhannes was also a composer. He performed for the Armenian Radio of Aleppo and eventually received the Syrian National Medal of Recognition for his talent.

He would travel all over the Middle East to perform. Together Mary and Hovhannes had four sons and two daughters. While her husband did not know much Armenian when they got married, and primarily spoke Turkish, Mary eventually taught him.

In Aleppo, Mary explained, she never rode horses or learned to drive a car, but she did use horse-driven carriages to go places too distant to walk. Her husband eventually began driving a car in Aleppo to go to his concerts.

Mary's parents had a telephone for important matters, and then her husband got one too. She said he needed it for his work, to book performances for special occasions such as weddings, engagements and baptisms.

Moving to the United States

In 1965, the Vartanians moved to Beirut, Lebanon in order to avoid compulsory military service in the Syrian army for their four sons. Four years later, Hovhannes passed away, when Mary was 55 years old. She never remarried. One of their sons, Zaven, soon emigrated to the United States and settled in Watertown, Mass., and Mary and another son decided to join him in 1972. Over the next few years, the rest of her children also came to the US, with the exception of one daughter and her family, who remained in Beirut, but in the United States her children soon became scattered.

She said that she was sad and always sought the past because her children lived in different places. The same was true of her siblings, as her brother emigrated to Venezuela, a sister to Armenia, and one remained in Beirut.

In Watertown, she worked for a year at a factory assembling parts for an electrical company, and afterwards only did babysitting occasionally. She lived close to St. James Armenian Church and became an active member of its Ladies Guild. She cooked for all the luncheons as well as for the annual church bazaar. She was recognized by the Ladies Guild in June 1997 as "Mother of the Year."

She also was involved in the Armenian General Benevolent Union and had many friends. She would always go to commemorations of the Armenian Genocide, and said that the one thing she does not want people to forget is April 24.

Aside from moving several times in her long life, Mary traveled a lot to see her scattered family. In the 1960s, she visited her sister Alice in Soviet Armenia. She went twice to Venezuela, to visit her brother Kevork. Age did not hamper her. She traveled through Europe in her 90s on a group tour, and when she was 100 years old, she went to Beirut.

Always active, she lived independently in an apartment until she was 101. She fell,

broke her hip and had to go to a rehabilitation center. This led to her moving when she was 102 years old to the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain, where she continues to live today.

Frontispiece to the song Hovhannes Vartanian composed and wrote, *Yerk Gars ev Ardahani*, published in Aleppo

scared because there were many deaths in her nursing home.

Secrets to a Long Life?

It's hard not to wonder whether there is anything special she did to be able to live so long or whether it largely is genetic destiny. There is at least some aspect of the latter, since while her own mother died in her upper 80s, she related that her grandmother reached at least 100 years of age. The latter was very industrious and always remained active.

Mary said that she did not ever smoke or drink alcohol – although when her husband would drink *oghi* [a licorice flavored strong alcoholic drink] every once in a while for a celebration, she would drink "a drop or two."



Mary Vartanian with baby son Sarkis and her little brother Kevork at right, in Aleppo, circa 1938-9



Mary Vartanian with her Ouzghoushian siblings in Aleppo, circa 1953: Kevork, standing at rear, with his hands on sister Alice, then to the right, Mary and Ani, with Mary's daughter Lisa at far right



COMMUNITY NEWS

Her mother taught her to cook traditional Armenian meals and she did not eat a lot of meat. She ate legumes and vegetables and loved foods made with olive oil, she said. She also liked *lahmajun* (Armenian meat pizza) and drank coffee once a day until she moved to the nursing home, which for some reason does not offer it.

She said if there was a secret to her long life, it was that she always did two things: work and read the bible. She never exercised but always was a hard worker, cleaning, cooking and helping her sisters with their children along with raising her own. Whenever she encountered difficulties in life, she would deal with the emotions by working harder. She would read anything in Armenian, but primarily the bible. She is very religious, prays every day, and used to go to church often.

She stressed that it was her prayers and religious beliefs which sustained her through many tough periods of life, such as having malaria when she was 18 years old, being widowed with six children, or later, her daughters marrying and moving.

She enjoys Armenian music, and her favorite song is *Eem Yerevan*. With 13 grandchildren and even more great-grandchildren,



Mary Vartanian at far left in the St. James Armenian Church kitchen, with Fr. Arsen Barsamian blessing the food to be cooked, sometime in the 1990s

dren, Mary advised parents not to be harsh with their children but treat them with love and sweetness.

Mary Vartanian's counsel to readers is "to strengthen the Armenian nation, not emulate foreigners and always read the bible."

With her warmth and humility, Vartanian

continues to inspire those around her and give hope that it is indeed possible to lead a life with meaning decades past what is considered the norm.

(Raffi V. Arkun is a sophomore at Lynnfield High School in Lynnfield, MA.)

ATP Welcomes Christine Jerian As Chief Development Officer

LOS ANGELES — With nearly 30 years of experience working in the public sector, including serving in the administration of Los Angeles City Mayor Eric Garcetti, and most recently as Chief of Staff to Los Angeles City Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez, Christine Jerian will serve as the Chief Development Officer for Armenia Tree Project.

"We are thrilled to welcome Christine to the ATP team," said Jeanmarie Papelian, executive director of Armenia Tree Project. "Christine's involvement and proven leadership amongst Armenian communities both domestically and internationally will help fuel our organization's important mission to educate about and grow our programs in Armenia. We look forward to expanding our reach with the addition of Christine to our team."

In this capacity, Jerian will lead donor relations, development efforts for programs and grants, sponsorship opportunities, and community events. Christine's appointment comes at an



Christine Jerian

important time for ATP, as the organization looks to continue providing hope for the future of Armenia and its people amongst the tragic consequences post-war in Artsakh and Armenia.

She has worked with the Cascadia Quest King County Conservation Corps in Seattle, now known as EarthCorps, and the Los Angeles Conservation Corp. During her time she served as a corps member conducting hands-on environmental restoration projects in King County Washington, and later served as the Education Coordinator for the Clean and Green Program for the Los Angeles Conservation Corps before joining local government and developing her professional career in public policy and executive leadership.

"I am thrilled to be joining the Armenia Tree Project at this moment in time. ATP has an established track record as one of the leading nonprofit organizations in Armenia, and I look forward to helping them grow their impact and reach to further create economic opportunities for the country's people and to preserve the environment of Armenia," Jerian said.

Christine grew up in Chicago and Los Angeles where she has been actively involved in many Armenian organizations and has served on multiple boards in the Greater Los Angeles region.

Christine holds an Executive Master's Degree in Leadership from the University of Southern California and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Urban Studies and Planning from the California State University Northridge. A Chicago native, she resides in Los Angeles with her family.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

ABMDR's 17th Annual Walkathon in Glendale Draws Strong Community Support

LOS ANGELES — On October 8, more than 350 supporters converged on the plaza of the Glendale City building, in Glendale, California, to take part in the 17th annual walkathon of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR). The pan-Armenian event benefited ABMDR's life-saving mission.

With its humanitarian message and festive community atmosphere, featuring music and food, the 17th annual Walk of Life drew strong youth participation. Large teams representing local schools included those of Clark Magnet High School and Providence High School. Also present were members of NextGen, ABMDR's recently-launched youth group.

At the event's opening ceremony, remarks were delivered by Walkathon Committee co-chairs Dr. Christina Ashjian and Hutch Postik. Ashjian welcomed the attendees, who included local elected officials, community leaders, and several teams representing schools, community organizations, and individual supporters. "Thank you for coming and for being believers in our organization," Ashjian said. "Our mission is simple: to help save lives of patients all over the world. As we walk



Cancer survivor Scarlet and supporters in front of the walkathon's memory banner.

who, in addition to sponsoring the event, donated gift cards for the ABMDR lottery; Dr. Alen Mirzaian; Dr. Vergine Madelian, who donated her personally-designed and hand-made glass ornaments for selling and raising funds during the walkathon; Andre

taking part in a global humanitarian project through which you're able to help save lives, Armenian and non-Armenian alike."

Following Dr. Jordan's remarks, State Senator Anthony Portantino addressed the attendees. A longtime supporter of ABMDR, he conveyed his deep admiration for the work of the registry. Subsequently Senator Portantino presented a Certificate of Recognition on behalf of the California Senate to Dr. Jordan, Dr. Ashjian, and Hutch Postik, commending ABMDR for its

17th annual Walk of Life and for continuing to fulfill its life-saving mission.

Also delivering remarks was longtime ABMDR volunteer and supporter Arpine Zohrabyan, who 11 years ago has helped save a child's life by donating bone marrow stem cells for his transplant operation. As she thanked the attendees for walking in support of all ABMDR patients, Zohrabyan said that soon, for the first time, she was going to meet the person she had donated to.

As in the past few years, a prominent feature of the walkathon was a large banner, displayed in the plaza of the Glendale City building, on which supporters wrote down their individual reasons for participating in the event, whether in honor of loved ones or in support of those who need a life-saving donor match.

Following the ribbon-cutting, the 5-K walk-run looped through central Glendale. The walkathon concluded at the plaza of the Glendale City building, where the festivities continued into the day. The event also gave participants the opportunity to join the ranks of ABMDR as potential bone marrow stem cell donors, as volunteers were on hand to answer questions and welcome new recruits.

Likewise during the event, Providence High School was recognized as the team that had the biggest number of walkathon participants; and the team led by Arpine Zohrabyan was recognized as the one that had raised the most funds.



Clark Magnet High School Team

today, I want you to remember the number 39. ABMDR has facilitated 39 successful transplants. Although that number is remarkable, we need to continue our efforts. We walk for those 39 patients and for the patients we hope to save in the future."

Postik acknowledged dignitaries and special guests in attendance, including California State Sen. Anthony Portantino; Glendale City Council member Paula Devine; and Mary Hovagimian, representing US Congressman Adam Schiff.

Postik acknowledged the walkathon's major sponsor, Foundation Lab, as well as other sponsors including Avalon Surgery Center; Softline Solutions; Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger; Paulette Malekian of Dilbeck Real Estate,

and Ivette Sinani; Beautify by Karin; and Porto's Bakery.

Ashjian and Postik also thanked the many volunteers who had made the event possible. Ashjian added: "I'd like to convey our special thanks to Providence High School for participating again with big numbers; and a special thank-you to Eric Markarian, a current freshman at Stanford and our youngest Board member, for establishing ABMDR's NextGen to encourage youth participation in our activities. Without our volunteers, we would not be here today."

The event's invocation was performed by Father Yeghia Isayan of the Western Diocese.

Next, remarks were delivered by ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan. "Every year, we see more and more supporters participating in this event," Dr. Jordan said. "This is not just a walk, but, literally, a walk of life. By being here, by participating in this walk, you are giving hope to all our patients throughout the world."

Jordan continued: "I am particularly delighted that we're joined today by Scarlet and Christian, who have survived their illnesses; as well as our virtual walker, Alex, who just had his transplant and promised to be at our walk next year, with his mom, Rosie."

"Just remember," Dr. Jordan concluded, "with every step you take today, you are not only giving hope to so many, but are



Arpine Zohrabyan.



Navona records announces the release of a new CD that includes Grammy Nominee composer Hayg Boyadjian's composition "Variations on a Theme by Bach" for piano solo recorded in Germany by Armenian pianist Armen-Levon Manaseryan. The CD is available on Amazon, Spotify and other internet music sites.

<https://www.navonarecords.com/catalog/>



Arts & Culture

Inaugural 'Kef Time LA' Showcases Armenian Folk Music

GLENDAL — "Kef Time LA" took place on September 9 featuring a special performance of Armenian folk music and line dancing. Classics such as the "Tamzara" and "Pompouri" and various other favorites filled the air performed live by a master cast of musicians on the oud, violin, bass and percussion. Enthusiasts enjoyed these cherished folk songs, dancing the night away set against the backdrop of a unique venue at Miaseen Studios in Glendale.

The organizers' goal is to preserve the sacred and endangered tradition of Western Armenian folk music. Oud player Antranig Kzirian, along with violinist Yervand Kalajian, bassist Viken Momjian and percussionist Aram Malkhassian spent the evening entertaining the capacity crowd with energizing and virtuosic interpretations of numerous folk numbers.

"This was our first time putting this kind of event together," stated Kzirian. "And we were humbled and honored that the evening completely exceeded our expectations — especially in the Los Angeles area where this kind of music is not quite as prominent in the community. With what is happening in Armenia, it's even more important to protect and preserve our culture. I'm happy to say that based on how well received and well attended this event was, our plan to spread the word about this music is off and running," he added.

Throughout the night excited attendees filled the space with winding line dances in what quickly became a festive gathering, at the same time enjoying the atmosphere of Miaseen studios.

"When putting this together, we wanted to re-introduce the kef music style in a new setting, and the Miaseen team provided an interesting option where attendees could enjoy the performance and dance in a distinctive and different atmosphere from a traditional banquet hall or restaurant setting, and that allowed for a truly special experience," added Kzirian.

"Armenians of all ages, from toddlers to elders and everybody in between were dancing and sharing a positive time together," said Harout Arakelian.

"Kef time was incredible music for multi-generational community, and a taste of home," said Glendale City Clerk Dr. Suzie Abajian.

"It was so much fun at Kef Time LA this year. I am very grateful to have been able to share this experience with my family and children and in such a modern and unique way. Big shout out to the musicians and dancers and Miaseen," said Khoren Sahagian.

Whether it was an improvisation on the oud or violin, the sonically rich depth of the bass or upbeat grooves of percussion, dancers joined the band in an energetic celebration of Armenian folk music and the kef continued for hours late into the evening.

"Kef time is a wholesome experience elevating the global Armenian heritage with talented high-quality see KEF, page 14



Aram Satyan at the Aram Satunts Music School of Khndzoresk Village in 2022. Satunts was Aram Satyan's father and was himself a noted composer. The display in the background provides information and photos of various members of the Satyan family who were all involved in music. Aram Satyan's uncle Ashot Satyan, for example, was the author, among other things, of the famous song "Yes im anush Hayastani."

Armenian Composers' Union President Takes Measure of Group on 90th Anniversary

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Composer Aram Satyan is reaching the end of the second term of his presidency of the Composers Union of Armenia. First elected in October 2013, and reelected in 2017 for a five-year term, he discussed some of his major achievements and the current state of the union.

This was prefaced with a discussion of the use of the loanword composer in Armenian, *kompozitor*, used in the name of the union. Satyan explained that there was no appropriate word in Armenian covering all its meanings. There are words like *yergahan*

(songwriter) which are too narrow in meaning — "We cannot call Beethoven a songwriter, for example!" he exclaimed, and others like *steghtzagortsogh* (creator) that are too broad because they apply to many fields. Instead, he said, "The word composer is used throughout the world, and I think it is not possible to translate it. If the whole world uses this word, why should we not use it too? Many nations use words taken from other languages and thus enrich their own



Aram Satyan speaking to reporters at the opening of the 90th anniversary exhibition at the Yeritasardakan Metro station in Yerevan on October 7

language. With the word *kompozitor* we thus enrich our language."

The union was founded in 1932 to promote the compositions and scholarly musicological works of its members and the international knowledge of Armenian music and musicology.

Supporting the Membership

The membership of the union, professional musicians and musicologists, has remained stable in recent years at approximately 140 members, of whom 25-30 percent live outside of Armenia. There are five active branches or sections, which specialize in different types of music: folk, jazz and pop, classical chamber and symphonic, choral, and children's. Each branch has its own leader and committees which select compositions.

The largest branch is the one devoted to classical music. The children or young people's branch has printed three collections of children's songs, which then are performed by choirs and groups on television and radio. "We do this so that in a short period of time children will be exposed to and begin to like Armenian music," Satyan said. There is also the Young Composers Forum of the Composers Union, reorganized in 2018. It recently has presented two concerts of its members' compositions, including a performance of chamber music compositions by young composers in the Aram Khachaturian Museum in Yerevan.

see COMPOSERS, page 15

Literary Alliance, h-pem Announce Young Armenian Poets Awards Winners, Emerging Writers Showcase

YEREVAN — The winners of the International Armenian Literary Alliance's second Young Armenian Poets Awards were named earlier this fall. They are Ani Apresyan, Juliette Hagobian, and Taleen Sahakian, and their winning poems have been published in *h-pem* magazine.

This year's contest asked students, how can poetry serve as a bridge between Armenia and the over five million persons of full or partial Armenian ancestry living outside it today? What kinds of conversations might be necessary between Armenians and the world or across the diaspora itself? The prompt used Yerevan poet Marine Petrossian's "Let's Build a Bridge," in which she tells her intended and imaginary readers, "my country is not your country but maybe some of my dreams are your dreams also."

In his introduction, founder and director of the awards Alan Semerdjian writes, "This thought—that we may be connected despite our distances and language fissures and political inclinations and cliffs and divides—is more critical to our survival and prosperity than it is a radical aesthetic." Of the winners and other applicants, Semerdjian writes, "They are extending the brave hand of empathy and lacing it in intellect and invention and serving us hope for the future — stunningly, bravely — as they speak to the other side of the imaginary bridge. They are inspirations for us all. Hello, other side, they seem to say, here I am, and if it appears I am just as lost as you, then together we are found."

Ani Apresyan: "In memory of the country we once recalled"

Juliette Hagobian: "my letter to the missed armenian"

Taleen Sahakian: "The Once-Man"

The contest was judged by IALA Advisory Board members Gregory Djanikian, Armine Iknadossian, and Raffi Joe Wartanian.

AHCP Announces New Residency for Armenian Artists

NEW YORK — Atamian Hovsepian Curatorial Practice (AHCP) announces a unique residency program for Armenian artists. For the first iteration of the program, AHCP has chosen the Ashot Johannisyan Research Institute in Humanities as a partner in this new venture.

The residency lasts eight weeks in total. The first two weeks in New York City are designed to give Armenian artists an opportunity to experience the New York art scene, and to network with other artists and professionals in the field. Upon returning to Armenia, the artist will see RESIDENCY, page 14



ARTS & CULTURE

Sayat Nova Dance Company Celebrates 35th Anniversary

ANNIVERSARY, from page 1

The two brothers founded the organization with Shaghig Palanjian, also an assistant director now. Shaghig is not just a colleague, but an in-law: Alina is married to Shaghig's son, Sevag Palanjian.

Before the creation of SNDC, Apo had directed other Armenian dance companies and that is how he met Shaghig and the two decided to launch their own group. At that time, they wanted to dance for an independent and non-profit dance ensemble, not affiliated with any Armenian association.

Alina and Hagop have trained a group of 50 folk dancers for several years. Most of them started in the children's dance school of the company, Abaka, which re-opened last year, after the Covid-19 shut down. Abaka graduates are allowed to dance in the troupe. Auditioning isn't mandatory to be a member of the dance troupe, howev-

performed in the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade (November 2017).

Tales from Armenia

The instructors hope to capture something greater than movement for the audience.

"It's not just dancing, it's telling a story," Hagop Ashjian said. In their choreographies, each dance recreates a part of the Armenian history and major events. Noted Hagop, "Apo mostly created all the choreographies. He has a genuine mind. He would go to Armenia once a year to meet his mentor, the ethnographer Artousha Karapetian. They would talk about dance and exchanged ideas."

On Saturday night, however, the company brought to life some tragic and powerful images of the Artsakh war. While Kilikia was playing, the dance reenacted the plight of several widows and survivors on the

performed had 680 seats and was completely sold out.

According to Taline Sarian, who has been dancing for 18 years, this performance was a sort of reunion, not only with the dancers, but with the manager, Garen Avetissyan, and the stage crew: "It was amazing to be able to be on stage after 3 years, we really missed it," she said.

"It's a very group effort; there are so many people involved in the company," Adelaida Balagyozyan, another dancer, highlighted. The rehearsal atmosphere has always been special for Lara Varjabedian, who has been dancing for 6 years. "It's nice because it's not political, it's just purely music and dance. You can feel it. Everything is more about feeling," she explained. Plus, she followed in her mother's footsteps, as she used to dance for the company and became the beginners' instructor.

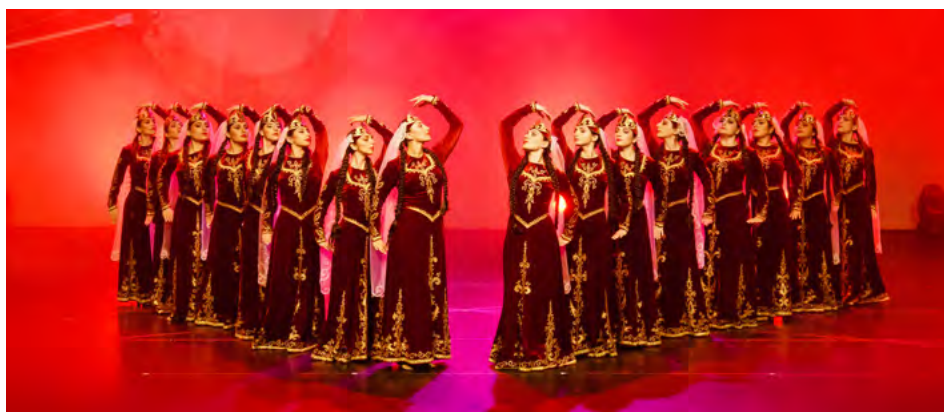
Gala

This anniversary was also an opportunity to celebrate the company through a gala, at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel. About 280 SNDC alumni and their family

endure for years, and Hagop jumping up and down, supposedly warming up. There was a buzz like never felt before. Suddenly, someone peeked through the curtain and news came from the front lobby: this is a sold-out performance, there is not one



Levon Brunson, a dancer of SNDC, giving his speech during the gala on Sunday, October 9th



Women's dance at the October 8th performance

er dancers need to start in the beginner's class.

The members of the SNDC have done several performances throughout the United States and even in Armenia. Because of COVID-19, they weren't able to perform for 3 years. Therefore, while rehearsing, they felt tired for sure, but most of all, they experienced excitement on the stage.

This most recent show started the same way the troupe had started its first performance, 35 years ago. On Saturday, October 8, in order to make the audience feel the passage of the year and the ensuring nostalgia, they showed a recording of Joseph Ashjian, Apo and Hagop's father, playing the music of Sayat Nova and explaining in Armenian the purpose of the company.

Araz, Hagop's son, is set to become the new men's instructor, thanks to his father's assistance. Through the years, the company has never stopped teaching, dancing, and performing. The dancers went to Armenia several times to perform, often attended the Peabody International Festival and even



Men's dance at the October 8th performance

stage. The dancers also moved to rhythmic and enthusiastic music, surrounded by videos of Armenian landscapes. The men were vigorously dancing at Arunod Trosh, a tribute to the heroism of Armenian freedom fighters, and the ground was almost grooving. The women then embodied love in a different tone with the love song *Yaman Yar*, full of elegance and proud moves. The teenage dancers from Abaka also performed gracefully to share the story of the song *Hayi Achker*. The hall in which they

and friends gathered for the gala. For each generation, an alumna or alumnus gave a speech. "My vivid memory of waiting on stage with Arlet [Ashjian, Apo's wife], squeezing my hand, something I had to

empty seat," Pearlene Varjabedian remembered. She danced as part of the very first performance and was one of the first dancers of the company.

Vahe Ohanessian shared his most emotional memory. He remembered the highlight of their Armenian tour during the 1990s, when a group of Armenian soldiers came to attend their show: "It was my first time in Armenia, and it was so emotional. I felt in love with the country," he added.

Levon Brunson, a current dancer, pointed out the idea that dancing is a crucial key to the survival of Armenia. "We will dance *Kilikia* again in Artsakh," he stressed.

They also took time to pay tribute to every member of SNDC and acclaimed the Ashjian family. Singer Gohar Hovannisyan and her band also performed at the gala. Besides that, the company raised funds by selling raffle tickets and Armenian dolls dressed in traditional Armenian dance costumes. While the figure raised was not released, the SNDC guaranteed that 100% of the proceeds from the doll sales will go to families who lost their homes and children in the war in Karabakh.

Liana Avetian (a dancer from the 2000s) said in her speech at the gala, "If I danced again, it would be in Sayat Nova. We can never leave, it's always with us."

The dance troupe hopes to return to Armenia in 2025.

Inaugural 'Kef Time LA' Showcases Folk Music

KEF, from page 13

musicians, fantastic dancers, and fun dances and of course wonderful company — everyone should check it out!" said Lilo Rost.

The oud is an ancient pear-shaped fretless string instrument with a rich tradition of mastery by Armenians, and surviving refugees from the Armenian Genocide area brought this sacred treasure with them to the United States. In this new American diasporan environment, the oud thrived within the American Armenian communities of the Eastern United States and Fresno as a mainstay instrument delighting music lovers, and in many cases, serving as a torch bearer of Armenian music and culture. Over 100 years later, due to the thankless contributions of scores of Armenian oud players, the oud is not only still an essential instrument in ensembles well into the 21st

century, but it has re-established itself as a respected and critical element of Armenian music after the dark cultural period of the post-Genocide era. The instrument, and the music it represents continues to evolve and develop as a living, breathing art form.

"The oud speaks to the Armenian soul," said Kzirian. "And it emotionally tells stories of joy, loss, persistence, and of course, tales of the spirit of Armenians spreading their wings and enjoying the soulfulness of this music together in a night of fraternalism — this music must continue to be preserved and developed and the more opportunities to do so the better," he added.

The organizers are currently recording new music for release and are also already planning another event in the near future. Make sure to follow Kef Time LA's social media pages to stay tuned in on the latest developments.

Meet Intern Mélanie Tuyssuzian

WATERTOWN — The newest intern for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* has come from across the ocean to experience life at an Armenian-American newspaper.

Mélanie Tuyssuzian, 22, is from Paris, where she lives with her parents and younger sister.

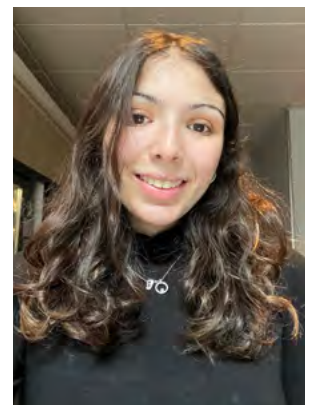
She recently graduated with a degree in journalism from the European Institute of Journalism (IEJ) in Paris.

"I have never been to the United States as an intern before. After my internship at the French news channel LCI last June, I wanted to open up to the world and to discover a new country. As a French person, I had always wished to work abroad, particularly on the east coast of the United States. As an Armenian, I have a huge interest in the Armenian diaspora around the world and more specifically in Watertown and Boston, where the diaspora is so vital. It's an honor and a great opportunity for to do this internship, surrounded by inspiring people like Managing Editor Aram Arkun and Editor Alin Gregorian," Tuyssuzian said.

(The feeling is mutual, Arkun and Gregorian note.)

She added, "I want to add to my journalism skills and improve my English, as well as my knowledge of the area. It is also a chance for me to see Massachusetts and get to know the Armenian community from this part of the globe."

Tuyssuzian has already written stories and made videos for the *Mirror*, including a story this week on the Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston, as well as a video on the St. James Armenian Church annual bazaar.





ARTS & CULTURE

Composers' Union President Takes Measure on 90th Anniversary

COMPOSERS, from page 13

The Composers Union in the Soviet era was able to help many members. Today, it gives some financial assistance to 6 young composers who need support, as well as to 12 composers over 80 years old. He said, "It is both to show the senior members that they have not been forgotten and to inspire them, as well as to help the young composers so that they can at least take care of themselves." The amount, 20,000 drams (approximately \$50) is not that much, he said, but this is all that the union can afford at present through its own means.

To put things in perspective, he pointed out that at one point the union could not even pay the salaries of the 15 people on staff at its two buildings. They are guards, cleaners, and administrative workers. Now it can pay them regularly, he said, and he hoped that it would also be in a position to increase the assistance it provided to members in the future.

The union does everything possible to defend the copyright of composers to their works. He said that there is an Armenian state agency, the Intellectual Property Office (a division of the Ministry of Economy), which works to assure the rights of authors in the creative realm. It is connected to various international US and European organizations in the same sphere.

In Armenia, Satyan said, "There may be incidents when people unknowingly use a melody without payment in exchange. We first apply to the Intellectual Property Office, which sends letters, and then if necessary, applies to court according to the relevant clauses of the law."

In Satyan's period as president, the union created for the first time its own website, <http://composers.am/>, as well as a Facebook page, in order to spread the news of the accomplishments of its members and its own activities.

Performance Halls and Properties

The union has its headquarters in Yerevan on Derenik Demirchyan Street, where there is a recording studio and a hall which can hold an audience of 150. Painted directly on the wall of the hall is Martiros Satyan's well known mural called "Hayastan," which dates from 1958. Satyan explained that this year the union renovated the hall, but the entire building lacks heating. Negotiations are taking place to explore costs for the latter.

The union also has a resort in Dilijan founded in 1963 called the Edvard Mirzoyan Composers House of Creativity, which extends over 11 hectares and includes guest cottages. All sorts of famous musicians, composers and writers have visited this historic resort, including Aram Khachaturyan, Benjamin Britten, Krzysztof Meyer, Giya Kancheli, Philip Glonti, Mstislav Rostropovich, Galina Vishnevskaya, Rodion Shchedrin, Anna Zegers and Hans Buchholz.

Satyan said that since its opening, very few changes took place there for nearly 60 years, but today, practically the whole

place is being renovated to provide a comfortable place for composers as well as guests from abroad. He said that now there is also a restaurant with affordable prices, and music festivals can be held there with pride. The majority of the renovations have been completed already, and in three to four months the remainder will be done.

The Mirzoyan resort has a large hall with excellent acoustics for performances in Dilijan, which can hold up to 600 people. The renovation of this hall, Satyan said, is a much greater expense compared to that of Yerevan. It will cost around 400 million dram, which is the equivalent of close to \$1 million. The union cannot do this alone so it is attempting now to find people who can assist in this restoration project.

90th Anniversary Celebrations

The 90th anniversary of the founding of the Composers Union has been celebrated this year in a number of ways.

An extensive series of music festivals was held in various parts of Armenia at which around 50 compositions, symphonic, chamber music, choral and songs were presented, of which 25 were premieres, Satyan said.

The union organized 12 concerts with songwriters in border areas of Armenia and Artsakh, first going to Zangezur and then Artsakh this May, and then in August to the Tavush area. Satyan said that what is important is that the Composers Union stands in solidarity with its homeland and has assumed a certain cultural responsibility accordingly. During each visit, the musicians met with local schoolchildren and adults, and donated 10 different handbooks of the compositions of Armenian composers, which were largely published with the aid of the Composers Union.

In Aghavno, Artsakh, the concert was



Aram Satyan at the start of the series of concerts dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the Composers Union of Armenia

During these trips, in addition to musical scores and manuals, instruments were donated. For example, a grand piano was donated to the musical school of Khndzoresk Village.

Satyan exclaimed: "Our people living on the borders must understand that we are at their side. Armenia itself is a borderland, and Yerevan is a borderland too. Each person must understand that only by standing together can we overcome all difficulties."

A special exhibition was inaugurated on October 7 in what for Armenia was an unusual space – a subway station, as part of the Art in the Metro series. The Yeritasardakan [Youth] Metro is particularly used by youth, as indicated by its very name, and this October it is festooned with an exhibition of posters presenting the history of the union and the achievements of its composers. Archival materials were provided by the Armenian National Archives, and Yerevan's state subway and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport contributed in its preparation. Satyan said that the venue inspired great interest in the public.



Aram Satyan hands over musical publications for the House of Culture at Nerkin Karmir Aghpyur Village in the Bert area at the Armenian border

the last one to be given in this town. Satyan said during the visit, the musicians learned about why the residents did not want to leave. Patriotic songs were performed as well as newly composed songs about Aghavno itself, and this, he said, played a big role in bolstering the local population.

Beyond domestic productions, Satyan said that over the past seven or eight years, a number of the works of composers in the union were performed in Canada, United States, France, Greece, Russia, and Beirut, Lebanon. In other words, the union was able as much as possible to make Armenian mu-

sic known and heard abroad.

Satyan said, "During all this time, I was able to bring the Composers Union to the level that we can fund competitions with the money that we earn, and do our music festivals." The Armenian state has aided individual programs, he said, and this has continued through the various

changes in regime.

For example, he said next year the union will organize a big jazz festival to be called "Pan Armenian Jam," with the participation of Armenians living in some 60 different countries who are active in this field. The union is doing this on its own but asks the state to add its logo and show that it too is happy with what is being done. Satyan said that during collaboration with the jazz college in Armenia and the youth symphonic orchestra, "they perceive what is necessary for us, and we at the same time give them the product of the work of the composers. This collaboration also appears during working with the state. There are various proposals and grants, and the state on its part attempts to help, but we remain independent."

Satyan's Plans

Satyan said that he continues to work on his own compositions as much as possible while in office. He has written an opera based on Ernst Theodor Hoffmann's works called "Little Zaches," which he hopes will be published one day, and also has finished a symphonic poem, "Macbeth." He has composed a trilogy including the latter piece as well as a waltz in memory of Maurice Ravel, and another piece inspired by "Hamlet." However, Satyan, who is the author of the rock opera "Lilit," various concertos and symphonies, works for chamber orchestra, hundreds of pop songs and music for film and theater, said that the majority of his time remains devoted to the work of the Composers Union.

The next election for president of the union will take place on October 30. Satyan said that if he is elected, he plans to finish the projects he has started as much as possible, and then leave administrative work in order to turn back to his creative world. Among his plans for the union are to complete the expensive renovation of the Dilijan resort hall, fix the Dilijan roads, and raise funds for the heating system for the union headquarters in Yerevan. He also wishes to create what he calls a "musical *matenadaran*," by putting the musical library of the union in order. This means both the physical preservation of scores and books as well as renovations of the library itself. Digitalization is part of this project of making Armenian music accessible, along with continued efforts at having the works of Armenian composers performed and heard.

Satyan emphasized that "what is most important is that our music can go before an international public, so that all understand that after Komitas and Khachaturyan a new generation has been born which represents Armenian music. We are all one team in international musical development. No one must think that Armenian music has fallen behind or does not accomplish anything. We want more people to listen to pure Armenian music. Today our members create values which can become lasting not only for Armenia but the entire world."

AHCP Announces New Residency for Armenian Artists

RESIDENCY, from page 13

continue the residency for six more weeks with the Johannissyan Institute. During this time the artist may create new work, conduct research, or focus on other related projects.

The selected artist will receive airfare, housing in NYC, and a weekly stipend. Residency organizers will facilitate visits to museums, galleries, artist studios, art fairs, lectures, and other art-related events.

Tamar Hovsepian noted: "We believe it

is important for artists to travel, make new connections, explore and exchange ideas, so they may continue developing their artistic practice in critical dialogue with these experiences. We hope to welcome the first resident in NYC in the Spring of 2023." Atamian added that: "Together with a growing number of opportunities such as Creative Armenia's Villa Empain Residency in Brussels, we can help to form a dynamic future for Armenian artists."

Application deadline for the inaugural

2023 Residency: November 25, 2022.

For more information or to apply please visit www.atamianhovsepian.art/residency.

Atamian Hovsepian Curatorial Practice was established in 2022 with a focus on contemporary, experimental, and conceptual art. Its mission is to represent extraordinary contemporary art created by underrepresented voices. The practice is based in New York City, with a network of artists from around the world.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Batchig Restaurant's Famous Za'atar Man'ouche

Elise Kazanjian's Armenian Beet Leaves With Rice (Jaguntegh Yev Purintz)

Elise Kazanjian is a member of the Wednesday Women Writers in San Francisco, a group of writers who have been meeting for over a decade. From September through November, many Bay Area Armenian churches present fall bazaars and festivals, featuring a dazzling variety of Armenian foods and desserts, the result of months of dedicated effort and capacious freezer space in homes across the area. She is also a member of St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco. She prepared traditional dishes, including her family's Armenian Beet Leaves with Rice recipe at a sumptuous multi-course dinner event for KQED News in 2013, celebrating "Food & Spirituality: Fall Feast with Armenians in San Francisco."

A poet/writer, Elise grew up in Tientsin (now Tianjin), China, where her father managed an Armenian rug factory. She worked at Sunset Magazine, at CCTV in Beijing, China, for August Coppola's Audio Vision Project at San Francisco State University, and has been a pawnbroker. Her poems/essays have appeared in Fog And Light, San Francisco Through The Eyes of the Poets Who Live Here. (Elise was honored to be in this anthology, which begins with a poem by the great poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti.) Other publications include: Poets Eleven, New Millennium Writings, A Kind of Hurricane Press, and SF Chronicle and the Marin Poetry Center Anthology. She serves as a Co-Judge in the Prose Poetry Category, Soul-Making Keats Literary Competition, and has a collection of over 150 fountain pens and mechanical pencils.

"This is a lovely vegetable dish my mother, Alice Artinian Shabas, often made," says Elise. "She was born in 1906 in the Kadikoy district of Istanbul, and always called the city Constantinople. In 1918, because of the Armenian Genocide, her father sent her and her sister to Vienna, Austria to their uncle's home. She and my father (Hagop) were friends at that time, and their relationship blossomed in Vienna. My father went to Tientsin, China, in 1925 to work for his brother-in-law, Arshak Karagheusian, who ran a hugely successful rug production company, A. & M. Karagheusian, Inc. My father often said that the US Freehold factory and the China operation combined employed close to 7,000 people..."

"My mother spoke seven languages, dressed elegantly, and had an aura of gentility," says Elise. "She had a collection of over hundred handkerchiefs, many delicately embroidered in Tientsin during an era when honor, respect, dignity were the essential cornerstones of society. Her yalanchi dolmas, koftas, and bourma were acclaimed among her many non-Armenian friends. She was equally adept at vegetarian dishes like roasted beets, vospov kheyima, fassoulia, and bamia stews. During World War II, our family were prisoners of war under the Japanese. In 1946, we came to San Francisco where my mother was a devoted member of the St. John Armenian Church Ladies, and contributed her vast culinary skills and service at church events and dinners for many years."



Elise Kazanjian manages a multi-course meal in her San Francisco kitchen. Photo: Gina Scialabba

Elise adds, "My memories of living in China are based on the senses. I like the Chinese opera, always have; I love the Chinese discordant music; I like tactile things that were part of my life. China also means my nanny (amah), who was a second mother to me. She had bound feet. "China means bound feet to me in more ways than just the binding of the feet..."

"Beets are relatively inexpensive and often used in soups and salads. The root can be made into beet juice, which is popular for detoxification. Beets need to be washed and the greens removed prior to cooking; they don't have to be peeled. There were always vegetables on our family table, beet salad, tomato and green bean salad, olives, and a rice pilaf with beet stalks. Kazanjian adds, "Growing up, we used everything on the vegetable, sort of like the Chinese eat. You know, even the oink on the pig."

Beet Leaves with Rice (Jaguntegh Yev Purintz)

Serves 4 (as a side dish)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch beets with leaves and stems, washed (Select smaller size beets as the leaves will be younger and more tender. And beets will be more succulent.)
- 1 medium white onion, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup long grain rice
- 1 cup boiling water
- Fresh ground black pepper

PREPARATION

First, take the beets, don't cut off root end, leave the stem tail, wrap beets in heavy duty aluminum foil, and roast in a 350° oven for about 45 minutes. Turn off heat, leave the packages in the oven for another 15 minutes, then take out, open packages and cool. When cool, hold each beet with a fork to avoid getting beet juice on hands, and the skin should peel off easily when you gently scrape with a knife.

Slice and serve cold with thinly sliced onions, chopped parsley, fresh basil leaves, a sprinkle of olive oil, and a splash of balsamic red vinegar.

Preparation for the leaves, rice, and onions:

Heat olive oil in a 2-quart saucepan. Add onions and sauté for about 5 minutes over medium heat, stirring. Don't brown or burn the onions.

Add beet stems and layer over the onions. Add chopped leaves. Cover and cook for about 5 minutes over low heat.

Add salt and rice, tenderly mixing ingredients. Add the boiling water making sure the rice is covered by water, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes or until rice is tender.

Remove rice from stove, keep covered and let rest for a few minutes. Stir gently, sprinkle with pepper and serve.

Optional: Serve with a dollop of Armenian yogurt (madzoon) on the dish with the beets.

*This recipe is adapted from a recipe in The 40 Days of Lent by Alice Antreassian, St. Vartan Press, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern).

For Elise's recipe, go to: "Food & Spirituality: Fall Feast with Armenians in San Francisco," October 16, 2013: <https://www.kqed.org/bayareabites/70323/food-spirituality-fall-feast-with-armenians-in-san-francisco>

Alice Shabas's Armenian Cheese Beoreg

Filo (or phyllo) is a very thin unleavened dough used for making pastries such as baklava and boreg (beoreg) in Middle Eastern and Balkan cuisines.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. filo dough (24 sheets)
- 1-1/2 lb. Monterey Jack Cheese, grated
- 1 medium bunch parsley, washed, finely chopped
- 2 large eggs
- 1 lb. butter, clarified, melted

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

In a bowl, mix together the grated cheese, eggs, and parsley until the eggs are well blended.

Filo dough: use a full a sheet for entrée size or cut in half for appetizer size.

Note: Unroll filo sheets and lay them flat on a dry surface. Immediately cover with plastic wrap and then a damp towel. Keep filo covered when not working with it, and don't leave it uncovered for more than a minute at a time.

Take one sheet of filo, brush with butter, fold edges to middle. Place one heaping teaspoon of filling in one corner of dough and fold into a triangle. Keep folding like folding a flag to form a triangle package.

Tuck left over piece into the last fold. Place on baking sheet, butter the top. Bake for 15 minutes or until golden brown. (Oven temperatures vary so do not let beoregs turn very brown.)

*A. & M. Karagheusian, Inc. was a rug manufacturer headquartered at 295 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Manufacturing was located in Freehold Borough, New Jersey and operated for 60 years before closing in 1964. It employed 1,700 people at its peak operation in the 1930s. Bruce Springsteen wrote about the Karagheusian Rug Mill's closing in his 1984 song "My Hometown." They developed, and were the only manufacturers of "Gulistan Rug" carpets. They made the carpet for Radio City Music Hall in 1932 and for the United States Supreme Court building in 1933. They stopped manufacturing oriental carpets in 1953.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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, annakesablian10@gmail.com; or Isabelle, 978-459-7315, ihame@aol.com.

OCTOBER 26 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter invites those interested in cultural activities to an open house to discuss future plans. Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA. Light refreshments offered. For info, email bostontca@gmail.com

NOVEMBER 7 — St. James Armenian Church Men's Club Dinner and Fellowship meeting. Speaker ; Zack Armen, Co-Founder and President of Storica Wines. Storica Wines is the leading US importer of fine wines from Armenia. The company was formed two years ago with the mission to spread awareness of the beauty and heritage of wine from Armenia, the oldest producing wine region in history now experiencing a modern day wine-making resurgence. For more information, call St. James Armenian Church.

DECEMBER 11 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church presents a Christmas Holiday Concert by Erevan Choral Society in memory of Fr. Oshagan Minassian on what would have been his 90th birthday, at the Sanctuary of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St, Cambridge, MA. Sunday, 7 p.m. Conductor will be conductor/composer Konstantin Petrossian and will feature soloists Rosy Anoush Svazlian, soprano, and Giovanni Formisano, tenor. The free concert is open to the public.

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. GIVIING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION. Sunday at 2pm. Meet & Greet. Refreshments. Share the Warmth: Bring a winter hat, scarve or gloves . RSVP 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

NEW YORK

NOVEMBER 6 — The 13th Annual United Solo Theatre Festival. Theatre Row 410 West 42nd Street, New York City. "Mercedes and Zaruhi" at p.m. Performed as part of the United Solo Theatre Festival on Theatre Row, in Nora Armani's English translation of the Armenian original by Anush Aslibekyan. A solo play starring Nora Armani, about life behind the Iron Curtain during Stalin, told through the correspondence of two sisters, one of whom repatriated to the Soviet Union in the late 1940s from post-WW II Greece. It is about patriotism, shattered ideals, flickers of hope, and the joy of creating a new home and rebuilding a new Homeland. Ticket price: 42.50\$ - 46.50\$. Tickets may be booked: <https://bfany.org/theatre-row/shows/united-solo-theatre-festival-2022/>

RHODE ISLAND

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

•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/>

New Jazz Quartet in Antwerp Has Roots in Massachusetts

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Staff

ANTWERP, Belgium — On Sunday, October 2, a new jazz ensemble performed at the Beestenbos café in Antwerp, founded and led by jazz guitarist and composer Alexander Baboian, originally from Belmont, Mass. The quartet is composed of graduating master's students from the Royal Conservatoire in Antwerp, Belgium. Their aim, Baboian explained, is "to bring the classic American Jazz and Blues sound of the '40s – '60s to new life through reviving some of the under-represented repertoire from several great Jazz composers."

Among them are Horace Silver, Herbie Hancock, Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk, Billy Strayhorn, Duke Ellington, Wayne Shorter, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

Baboian, born in Boston to a third-fourth generation Armenian family, began making music as a child, encouraged by his father and grandfather, both musicians. After completing undergraduate studies at Berklee College of Music in Boston in 2015 with a major in guitar performance, he spent three years in Berlin, as a freelance teacher and performer in various artistic projects. He then travelled to Armenia for graduate study at Yerevan State Conservatory. As a composition student with Artur Avanesov, he taught a course on Jazz improvisation. In 2020, he returned to Europe to pursue his education in music, this time at the conservatory in Antwerp.

And there, he decided to launch a new project with other three other graduate students. After the successful inaugural performance, the group intends to organize more shows.



Simon Van Brandt (Drums), Alexander Baboian (Guitar), Jef Manderveld (Bass), Milan Verbist (Piano), left to right (Photo by Dries Pasteels)

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

The Political Whirlwind in Astana



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

a loose federation of former Soviet republics.

In each case, not only is the locale different, but so are the participants, with diverse political perspectives and agendas, all competing for spoils from the situation.

The October 6 meeting in Prague took place within the platform of the European Political Community, where the major actor was France, and its president the most vocal figure.

Europe and the West, in general, are focused on the war in Ukraine and they will use any opportunity to put Russia on the defensive and try to undermine its position in the Caucasus. By contrast, in Astana, on October 14, Russia and its president were the major players and their aim was to keep the former Soviet republics in line with that nation's imperial ambitions.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are only pawns on the chessboard to be utilized by the major powers. That is the nature of politics. As minor actors, they will try to find loopholes in the main political scenes to intersect their interests with the movers and shakers and extract the maximum benefits.

During the 44-Day War, in 2020, the world community was almost entirely silent, allowing Turkey and Azerbaijan to defeat Armenia, with the collusion of Russia. This time around, something seems to have shifted and Armenia has found some supporters on the world scene, even though it is through soft power only at the moment.

When the speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi visited Armenia, her main challenge and message were directed towards Russia and Iran, rendering the Yerevan visit into a sideshow. Nonetheless, it had a powerful impact on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations by averting further immediate aggression from Baku, which has become increasingly bolder.

This time around, France has been taking aim at Moscow, highlighting Armenia's case as the underdog in the war.

The Prague meeting moved the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict forward with the decision to dispatch 40 European civilian observers to the borders of the two countries. Although Azerbaijan refused to host the monitors on its territory, their presence will certainly play a restraining role to curb Ilham Aliyev's belligerence for at least two months, when their mandate expires. Those monitors are already in place now, engaged in their own duties.

The Astana meeting ended up being much more fiery than usual. The first confrontation occurred in Astana between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Russia, Ararat Mirzoyan and Sergey Lavrov, respectively, when the latter sarcastically asked what business Armenian leaders had in Europe when the key to solving the conflict lay in Russia's hand through the November 9 declaration it had overseen. For the first time, Armenia's representative dared to ask Moscow what its true position was and criticized the Russian-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), for its inaction. That touched a raw nerve with Mr. Lavrov, who made a mockery of the CSTO by stating that the latter could have sent observers to the border for a report if and when Armenia, which is rotationally presiding over the organization's current session, goes through the appropriate channels – never mind that such red tape was not needed when Moscow requested troops from Armenia after trouble erupted in Kazakhstan.

But the main altercation occurred later between Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Ilham Aliyev in the presence of the representatives of the CIS, who are supposed to be Armenia's allies but are supporting Azerbaijan. This confrontation took place in the shadow of President Emmanuel Macron's scathing remarks against Azerbaijan and Russia.

Efforts to solve the Armenia and Azerbaijan issue are moving from one capital to another in rapid succession, causing a whirlwind effect for the players and observers.

On October 6, Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders met in Prague to discuss the peace treaty between the two countries. On October 14, they met in Astana, Kazakhstan, within the forum of the Heads of States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),

In an interview on France 2 channel on TV, President Macron squarely blamed Azerbaijan as the aggressor who had occupied the sovereign territory of Armenia and he continued, "What's happening on the border the last two years ... 5,000 Russian soldiers are allegedly there to guarantee the border [but] the Russians have used this conflict, which dated back several centuries, and played Azerbaijan's game with Turkish complicity and came back to weaken Armenia, which was once a country it was close to."

But most importantly, referring to Armenia, Mr. Macron stated, "France will not leave Armenia alone. Our values and principles cannot be bought neither with gas nor with oil. France has special ties with Armenia because Armenia has always fought for tolerance and peace in the region."

France is a country with historic memory. French leaders still remember that in 1921, they abandoned Armenians in Cilicia to face the marauding hordes of Ataturk's forces. That will haunt their political conscience forever and perhaps, now they can try to make up for that dreadful act.

This statement, in the first place, was 180 degrees away from the statement of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who had rushed to visit Baku last month, to assure the dictator Aliyev that he was becoming a "reliable ally." But



it went beyond that to ruffle some feathers in Moscow.

In Astana, Pashinyan also was able to make his points cohesively. In a long speech, Pashinyan presented the entire narrative on the war, the atrocities, the state of the Armenian POWs still in Azerbaijani captivity and he made a strong case against Aliyev's demand for the "Zangezur Corridor."

Armenia has been offering three checkpoints for Azerbaijan to have access to the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan but Azerbaijan rejects that offer, only agreeing to settle for a swathe of land through Armenia. Thus, he concluded, what Azerbaijan sought was not a way to increase trade, but a method to carve up Armenia.

Pashinyan also accused the CSTO of inaction in response to Armenia's appeal after the Azerbaijan aggression on its land.

Interestingly, both the Azerbaijani and Russian leaders directed their ire toward Macron, rather than Pashinyan, fearing that his remarks and policies intend to push Russia out of the region.

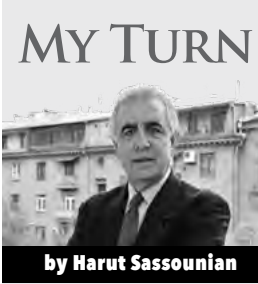
The main response to Pashinyan came from Ankara, where Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu continued harping on the issue of the "corridor," which in his estimation, will make or break a peace treaty with Azerbaijan. And normalization of relations with Turkey, he remarked, is conditioned on signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan. If the treaty is not signed, he stated ominously, "troubles will continue" for Armenia.

Mr. Putin blamed President Macron for failing "to understand the Karabakh issue." Reaction from the Russian Foreign Ministry was even harsher, when Spokesperson Maria Zakharova blamed the Western actors for muddying up the politics of the Caucasus.

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



Aliyev vs. Pashinyan: War Of Words at CIS Summit in Kazakhstan

Last week, the nine leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), composed of former Soviet Republics, met in Astana, Kazakhstan. In attendance were the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and the heads of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

At this meeting, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan confronted each other about the conflict between their countries in front of the other participants, primarily Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Aliyev’s remarks were full of falsehoods. He alleged that after the 2020 war, Armenia planted “1,400 anti-personnel mines made in Armenia...near the border with Lachin district in 2021. The roads leading from one Azerbaijani military position to another were also mined.” He claimed that “the clashes, their active phase, lasted a maximum of eight hours,” even though Azerbaijan continues violating the ceasefire to this day. He lied, saying that “Azerbaijan had no intention of occupying the territory of Armenia, as some may assume.” He ignored the fact that the Azeri army continues to remain inside Armenia’s borders since its earlier incursion on May 12, 2021.

Aliyev tried to ingratiate himself to Putin, by claiming that “As a result of the mediation efforts of the Russian side, I would like to emphasize that it was the Russian side that came up with a ceasefire proposal. Some attribute this to other countries which is completely unfounded. As a result of the mediation efforts of the Russian side, the clashes, as I said, were stopped.” Aliyev was thus contradicting reports that the United States brokered the ceasefire. He also acknowledged that Azerbaijan “resolutely rejected” the offer by the European Union to place a civilian mission on the Azerbaijani side of the border. “Therefore, the mission will be located on the territory of Armenia,” he said.

Aliyev harshly criticized French President Emmanuel Macron who had made sympathetic remarks about Armenia. Aliyev complained that Macron “made insulting, unacceptable, false and provocative statements.... He accused Azerbaijan of engaging in a horrific war....” Once again, Aliyev tried to ingratiate himself to Putin by telling him that Micron made “biased statements...against the Russian Federation, namely, that ‘Russia played the Azerbaijani game.’” As a result, Aliyev said he rejected any future mediating role for France in the Karabagh conflict. He also complained about “anti-Azerbaijan statements” made by the French foreign minister, the French Senate recognizing Karabagh, and a second resolution “being prepared in the French Senate in mid-November.” He blamed these developments on the influence of “the Armenian Diaspora in France.”

Aliyev accused Armenia of organizing ‘provocations’ against the Embassies of Azerbaijan in France, Lebanon and the United States. He falsely claimed that: “we have no doubts that the acts of terror and vandalism were organized by Armenia. Why am I saying this? Because in the 1990’s, Armenian special

services carried out [in Azerbaijan] 32 terrorist acts -- explosions in the subway, buses, ferries and trains. As a result of those heinous terrorist acts, more than 2,000 Azerbaijan civilians were killed!”

Aliyev then tried to turn the Karabagh conflict into a religious war accusing Armenians of “extreme degree of hatred for the Azerbaijani people and the entire Muslim world,” forgetting that Armenia and Armenians enjoy the most cordial relations with many Islamic countries.

Aliyev lied once again by claiming that Azerbaijan has fulfilled “all the provisions of the November 2020 agreement after the war.” Dozens of Armenian prisoners of war remain in Baku jails, two years after the war. He also lied about Armenia not providing “unhindered access from Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan.” However, Armenia repeatedly announced its readiness to provide such a road, while Azerbaijan has not reciprocated.

Aliyev concluded his speech by stating that his “patience” is “not unlimited,” and threatened that unless he gets what he demands from Armenia, “we will be left with no other option but to act accordingly.”

Prime Minister Pashinyan spoke next, countering Aliyev’s lies. Calling Azerbaijan’s September attack “an unprovoked military aggression against Armenia,” Pashinyan condemned Azeri soldiers for committing war crimes by executing Armenian prisoners of war in contravention of the Geneva Convention.

Pashinyan also accused Azerbaijan of intending “to occupy more territories of Armenia.” He blamed “the inadequate response of the regional security organizations [Collective Security Treaty Organization] ... which has caused very sharp questions in the Armenian society.” He asked if the CSTO recognized the borders of the former Soviet Republics.

Pashinyan said that Azerbaijan is only now demanding to know the fate of missing Azeri soldiers in the Karabagh war of 1990’s, revealing that 777 Armenians are missing from that war and 217 from the 2020 war.

Pashinyan criticized Azerbaijan for falsely describing as “corridor” the agreed upon road between Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan. He said that despite the fact that the 2020 agreement “clearly mentions” Karabagh, Azerbaijan claims that it “does not exist.”

Pashinyan also responded to Aliyev’s false claim that Armenia had mined Azeri territories after the 2020 war. Pashinyan stated that “such mining has taken place entirely within the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. And it is our right to take some security steps to protect the territorial integrity of our country.”

Pashinyan also contradicted Aliyev’s false claim that the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was of religious nature. Pashinyan reiterated Armenia’s close relations with many Muslim countries.

Pashinyan denied that Armenia had organized any attacks on Azerbaijani embassies in foreign countries. Where is the evidence, he asked.

Concluding his remarks, Pashinyan once again spoke about his baseless expectation of peace with Azerbaijan and Turkey, given their ongoing hostility toward Armenia. Peace cannot be achieved by one side while the other side is trying to kill you.

An enemy who is constantly attacking you and pointing a gun to your head cannot be considered a reliable partner for peace.

The Political Whirlwind in Astana

from previous page

To divert attention from the Western players, Mr. Putin invited Pashinyan and Aliyev to Moscow to negotiate a peace treaty. He was not in the mood to alienate Turkey and Azerbaijan, since in the Astana meeting he had offered President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to make Turkey a hub for the distribution of Russian gas, even letting it decide the price jointly. And this before a nuclear deal is signed between Iran and the US, flooding the Western markets with Iranian gas.

While the Astana summit was taking place, Iran organized its third war games on the border with Nakhichevan, alarmed by the plot being hatched by Israel, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia whose defense ministers had met the week before in Baku.

Thus far, Iran has observed strict neutrality between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This time around, the commander of the war games Brigadier-General Mohammad Pakpour delivered a speech reiterating warnings by the spiritual leader of the country, Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi, that Iran would consider border changes a red line. Pakpour went one step further by announcing, “Iran will not remain neutral,” should any border changes take place.

Iran is already further exposed to Azerbaijan and Israeli spying by the expansion of Azerbaijan’s border with Iran after the 44-Day War.

As we can see, independent of Armenia’s wish and plans, policies are developing in the region favoring its case. Europe, and in particular France, have grand designs in the region and they consider Armenia as one of the building blocks of those designs. Iran, for the first time, has tilted from its neutral position towards Armenia. Each side is motivated by its own political interests but those intersect in Armenia. There is no coherence or coordination between the interest of the West and Iran. Therefore, the challenge is on Armenia’s foreign policy establishment to shape international politics on its own and take advantage of the positive developments evolving independently from each other.

Does Armenia Have a Foreign Policy?

By Suren Sargsyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Each and every country in the modern world has a foreign policy. This is the basic rules and conditions of its relations with the world. Foreign policy specifically is designed taking into account the characteristics of the state, geography, and the nature and content of relations with neighbors, regional and global geopolitical players. An important circumstance is what kind of state it is and in which political “league” it plays. Superpowers naturally have their own type of foreign policy and agenda, just as medium and small states have their own. Even states declaring political neutrality as their basic principle have their own type of foreign policy, which is as difficult to implement as that of any other type of state.

Since the adoption of the declaration of independence, Armenia formed its foreign policy based on the main principles of international law as well as realities, taking into account regional and global factors. Regional factors included the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, Armenian-Turkish relations (or absence of relations) and geography (being landlocked and blockaded by two out of four neighbors). At the same time, Armenia had to take into consideration the relations between the US and Iran, US and Russia, and the strategic partnership between NATO allies US and Turkey, as well as the “one nation two

countries” concept of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem. With those realities, Armenia did not have too much room for maneuver.

Turkey became the main ally of Azerbaijan, the US for Georgia and Russia for Armenia. This was a division of the South Caucasus region between the superpowers and the main players. Since the early 1990s Armenia has had four heads of state. In the case of the first three, with some exceptions, the principles and approaches of foreign policy coincided. All three of them, understanding the realities of their times, tried to regulate Armenian-Turkish relations and the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh. It was from these important factors that the priorities of foreign policy and security were derived.

The situation changed dramatically in 2018 when the revolution took place in Armenia and a group of people with a lack of experience in foreign policy and national security came to power. This group of people responsible for foreign policy managed to spoil relations with Russia by making various contradictory statements and concrete steps against Russian interests. The government managed to spoil relations with the US by sending a peacekeeping mission under the Russian flag to Syria. Relations with China were spoiled too, as Armenia joined the religious freedom alliance and invited one of the high-ranking officials of Taiwan to Armenia. Finally, if we take into account that the member of the ruling party called Iran a dictatorship and the prime minister himself said that the Armenian-Iranian border can be closed anytime, then the global picture becomes more clear.

It was as a result of these and other processes that Armenia faced the 2020 war and lost not only Nagorno-Karabakh but also some lands of Armenia itself. Armenia became a state that lost sovereignty over its own territorial integrity. And now, without see POLICY, page 20



Putin’s ‘Gas Hub’ Plan Aims To Bolster Erdogan’s Image

By David O’Byrne

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s offer to set up a “gas hub” in northern Turkey grabbed headlines following his meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but the offer, which has been under discussion for over a decade, amounts to little more than window dressing.

Exports of Russian gas to Europe have dropped to a fraction of normal levels, and with Moscow warning, or more accurately threatening, further cuts, much of Europe is facing the likelihood of widespread gas and power cuts.

Turkey, however, is not only not facing such cuts, but it has also been praised by Putin for being Russia’s “most reliable partner” for Russian gas exports to Europe as a reward for which it has been offered the chance of hosting a gas hub.

The idea of Turkey as a hub for gas exports from regional gas producers has been under discussion for over a decade.

Back then, efforts to transit gas from countries like Azerbaijan, Iraq, Iran and Israel to Turkey for possible onward transit to Europe coincided with plans to open Turkey’s long mooted energy trading market — now operating as EPIAS.

Why the issue should suddenly come back on the agenda now is not difficult to understand.

Russia has cut or hugely reduced gas exports to countries that have imposed sanctions in response to its continuing invasion of Ukraine while signally continuing to supply those countries that haven’t — Hungary, Serbia and Turkey.

At the same time, Turkey is facing twin parliamentary and presidential elections next year at a time when high inflation, a weak Turkish lira and other issues have caused poll ratings for Erdogan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) to fall to a level where for the first time in some 20 years an opposition victory appears possible.

When Iran, which supplied just 16.1% of Turkey’s gas last year, cut exports without warning in January, the result was widespread gas and power cuts for the Turkish industrial sector and record low poll ratings for Erdogan.

Russia last year supplied 44.8% of Turkey’s gas, and any disagreement with Putin that led to gas cuts over winter would certainly impact next year’s elections.

Conversely, good relations with Moscow offer the promise of none of the gas shortages Europe is facing, and the offer of a hub suggests Turkey will be getting some control over the gas it transits to Europe and over gas prices.

“This hub proposal is designed to appeal to Turkish voters who think that having a hub will earn the country money and make it a more important player, which is not the case,” said Arif Akturk, a former head of the gas department at Turkey’s state-owned gas importer and transit pipeline operator Botas.

The question is: What exactly constitutes a hub?

On a physical level, a hub is a place where pipelines carrying gas from different sources and belonging to different companies converge, allowing the gas to be transited on to other places.

In that respect, Turkey already is, to a certain extent, a hub. Pipelines bring gas from Russia via the TurkStream pipeline and from Azerbaijan via the TANAP and South Caucasus pipelines, which is then transited to buyers in Europe via pipeline connections to Greece and Bulgaria.

On a commercial level, a hub is a point

in a gas transit network where pipelines converge and diverge, creating a fixed point where gas can be traded — otherwise known as a Virtual Trading Point, of which Europe already has many.

However, not all gas is traded at hubs, which is the case with the Russian and Azerbaijani gas that transits Turkey to customers who have already contracted to buy it with the companies producing the gas — a fact that makes Putin’s hub offer somewhat meaningless.

“They say they will transit gas to Turkey and sell it from here to European gas traders, but that’s exactly what they do already,” Akturk told Al-Monitor, pointing out that the existing TurkStream pipeline carries Russian gas through Thrace to Bulgaria and on to buyers in Southeast Europe without any commercial Turkish involvement required.

Even if Russia’s state gas producer and exporter Gazprom was to change its sales strategy to utilize a new hub in Turkey, there would still be a major obstacle.

“To be a hub requires surplus volumes, storage and a competitive local gas market,” explained David Tonge, director of Istanbul-based energy consultancy IBS, pointing out that with Ankara currently subsidizing domestic Turkish gas prices, there is no “competitive market” — a situation that may appeal to voters but rules out Turkey becoming a gas trading hub.

What hasn’t been so clearly spelled out in statements about the hub plans is the fact that Putin’s offer also envisages greatly increasing the volume of Russian gas to be transited through Turkey to Europe.

TurkStream currently consists of two lines, each of which can carry 15.75 billion cubic meters a year. One supplies gas to Turkey; the other to Europe.

In an interview on Oct. 14, Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister and former Energy Minister Aleksandr Novak pointed out that the original plan was for “four lines with a capacity of approximately 63 billion cubic meters,” suggesting that an expanded TurkStream could supply more European consumers via Turkey.

On paper that might be possible if European countries still trusted Russia sufficiently enough — in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine — to allow a new and expanded TurkStream to deliver gas and most importantly to end the current sanctions regime.

“Laying two more lines of TurkStream would require specialist steel pipe and pipe-laying equipment that sanctions will make difficult to obtain,” said Tonge.

Doubling the capacity of TurkStream would also take up to five years to complete and, if realized, create a potentially more serious problem.

“Increasing the volume of Russian gas reaching Southeast Europe makes it more difficult for Caspian gas producers to compete,” said Akturk.

Such a development would be unlikely to appeal to Turkey’s closest ally, Azerbaijan, which already exports gas to Europe via Turkey and plans to export more to European countries desperate to diversify from their dependency on Russian gas.

Read more: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/10/putins-gas-hub-plan-aims-bolster-erdogans-image#ixzz7i6ymAU00>

LETTERS

World Needs to Acknowledge Destruction Of Cultural Monuments in Karabakh

To the Editor:

Currently, Azerbaijan is in a powerful position that was unprecedented just months ago. After the conflict in Ukraine, the European Union decided to turn away from getting its oil from Russia. That left Azerbaijan, a country with an abundance of oil, and a few other countries to be their new suppliers.

In fact, the European Parliament voted to condemn Azerbaijan’s denying of Armenian heritage in Artsakh with an overwhelming majority of 635-2. However, their priorities became transparent when they ceased to condemn Azerbaijan after more talks about energy. Now, according to *Foreign Policy*, Azerbaijan has a projected 30 percent increase in oil distribution to Europe in the next year. Not only is the European Union putting money into a country that has clearly violated human rights, they recognized it, and then denied it once they realized they wanted Azerbaijani oil.

Azerbaijan has been lording their power over Armenians at this unique position. With newfound allies in the European Union and Armenia’s neighbor, Turkey, they have the upper hand. While Armenians have a newfound ally in the United States, they face an insuperable battle in preserving their culture in Artsakh.

It is evident that Azerbaijan has an agenda to destroy Armenian culture. The Azerbaijani Minister of Culture actually announced that all traces of Armenian heritage will be removed from Artsakh. The UN International court of Justice then outlawed any erasure of Armenian culture. Unfortunately, the Azerbaijanis continue to violate this law.

Cornell University’s Caucasian Heritage Watch research has shown many Armenian historical sites have already been erased in Azerbaijan. St. Sargis church in Mokhrenes was destroyed sometime between March and July of 2022. A report for the Caucasus Heritage Watch states that out of 110 Armenian monasteries, churches and cemeteries identified, 108 were destroyed between 1997 and 2011 in what the authors describe as “a systematic, state-sponsored program of cultural erasure.” Azerbaijanis deny that those sacred sites ever existed. This problem has worsened ever since the 2021 conflict over Artsakh, and the recent violation of the ceasefire between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. According to the Smithsonian Magazine, 89 of the destroyed sites were in Nakhichevan, Artsakh. Not just the sites, but 5,840 *khachkars* (Armenian cross stones) and 22,000 historical tombstones were destroyed. Today, Karabakh still holds a treasury of churches, monasteries, *khachkars* and sacred sites, many of them inscribed in Armenian with the names, stories, and prayers of people from ages past.

Armenia has had roots in the Nagorno-Karabakh region since the fourth century, and Azerbaijan has set out to remove all traces of them. The satellite imagery has shown many Armenian historical sites have already been erased in Azerbaijan. One of the most sacred sites to Armenians is in Shushi or Shusha, a city in Artsakh. The Ghazanchetsots Cathedral was put under “renovation,” as Azerbaijani officials stated. Clearly a part of an anti-Armenian campaign, they claimed the reconstruction was “carried out in accordance with the original architectural style in order to restore the historical image of Shusha.” The dome of the church was destroyed in 1920 during the massacre of the Armenians in Shushi. This important place of worship was reconstructed until Shushi (or Shusha) was liberated from Azerbaijani forces in 1992.

There are parallels between the erasure in the last twenty years and the destruction of Armenian traces in Turkey around the time of the Armenian Genocide (1915). Turkey destroyed a large percentage of Armenian historical sites, and the Azeris are destroying the scarce few we have left. Armenia is subject to this erasure because this heritage is such a powerful exhibition of their culture, so those opposed to it do not want it to exist. Armenia is the oldest Christian nation in the world, and its history is being wiped out. The even sadder fact is that only the United States is recognizing this heinous truth.

While Europeans are in the midst of a major energy crisis, it is important to recognize Azerbaijanis’ mistreatment of the Armenian people and their culture. As the oldest Christian nation, Armenia’s history is not only significant to its constituents, but to the entire Armenian diaspora and Christians worldwide. The United States recognizing these atrocities is very meaningful in the global communities, but Armenia needs all of the allies it can get. The Armenian community is dispersed around the world, as we watch our homeland destroyed and heritage wiped right under our noses. It is heartbreaking to see our past, present and future taken from us. This is why Armenians need the international community to follow suit after the United States, and recognize the unethical actions of Azerbaijan so Armenians can preserve their culture. As Azerbaijanis will continue to deny that Armenian culture ever existed on their lands, a worldwide remembrance of our rich culture and heritage will help to refute these brutal actions. Our culture cannot be erased. The passion that Armenians have for their culture should motivate the international community to help preserve it while we still can.

Beatrice Larkin
New York City

Does Armenia Have a Foreign Policy?

POLICY, from page 19

taking into account the interests of Armenia, the main players are making concessions to each other at Armenia’s expense, including at the expense of Armenia’s territorial integrity.

However, even in this catastrophic situation, there is still a small chance to save Armenia and one of the most important prerequisites is the formation of a new government in Armenia and the adoption of a pragmatic foreign policy agenda, which includes aligning our interests with the interests of the main

players such as Iran, Russia and the US. No matter how paradoxical it may sound, such opportunities still exist and this opportunity is the only way to save Armenia.

(Suren Sargsyan is an expert on US foreign policy, researcher and author. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University, American University of Armenia and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Sargsyan is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan.)