

EU Envoy, US Call For Probes into Videos Exacerbating Tensions Between Armenia, Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The European Union’s envoy for the South Caucasus and Georgia has called for investigations into videos that appear to show potential war crimes being committed by Azerbaijan and Armenia in recent clashes that have threatened a fragile cease-fire agreement ending the worst fighting between the two



EU Special Representative Toivo Klaar

neighbors since a 2020 war over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Toivo Klaar, the EU special representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, said in two tweets on October 3 that the videos he received, which have not been independently verified, need to be investigated and, “if authentic” the perpetrators “need to be held responsible.”

“The conflict has left deep wounds on both sides and to heal accountability is needed,” he said.

The latest claims started on October 2 when gruesome video posted on social media appeared to show Azerbaijani

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California Governor Newsom Signs Bill Making April 24 Statewide Holiday

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill on September 30, making April 24 a California statewide holiday. The measure was spearheaded by Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian.



Gov. Gavin Newsom

On April 24, all community colleges and public schools throughout California will be allowed to close. State employees will be given time off with pay.

The text of the bill explains: “The Legislature finds and declares that Genocide Remembrance Day would be a day for all to reflect on past and present genocides, but especially those that have felt

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The Lifelong Friendship Behind Astonishing \$100 Million Gift to BU’s Medical School

BOSTON — Two Armenian families finding freedom in America. Two boys growing up poor a few doors apart in hardscrabble Pawtucket, R.I. Two successful men — one a renowned cardiologist and former president of Boston University, the other a celebrated clarinetist for the Boston Pops — changing the course of Boston University history.

Lifelong friends Aram V. Chobanian and Edward Avedisian will now be connected forever as the namesakes of BU’s medical school. Thanks to a \$100 million gift from Avedisian (CFA’59, CFA’61) that will support scholarships, endowed faculty chairs, and cutting-edge research and teaching, the school is being renamed the Boston University



The newly named building

JACKIE RICCIARDI FOR BOSTON UNIVERSITY



Edward Avedisian (left) and Aram Chobanian.

Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine.

University President Robert A. Brown called it “one of the most remarkable grants in the history of higher education” at a private signing

ceremony at his residence in late August to accept the gift and formalize the school’s name change.

Avedisian is retired after nearly four decades of playing the clarinet with the Boston Pops and Boston Ballet Orchestra. see GIFT, page 10



Armenian Heritage Park 10th Anniversary Gala Honors Stephen Kurkjian, Celebrates Immigrant Contributions, Funds Park Maintenance

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — One of the fanciest hotel banquet halls in Boston was filled to the brim with some 460 guests on September 21 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Armenian Heritage Park. The goal of the gala benefit at the InterContinental Hotel, titled “Celebrating Contributions of our Nation’s Immigrants,” was to further endow a legacy fund to care for and maintain the park – and it not only met but exceeded its targeted goal of \$1 million. The evening honored three-time Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Boston Globe* journalist Stephen Kurkjian and recognized



Stephen Kurkjian, 2022 honoree during the toast (photo Leo Gozbekian)

various organizations which serve immigrants and refugees in the Boston area. see PARK, page 8

Caucasus Heritage Watch Continues to Monitor Ongoing Destruction of Monuments

By Harry Kezelian ITHACA, N.Y. —
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Given the increasing danger of the Azerbaijani government’s aggressive actions toward Karabakh and Armenia, and the penchant for falsifying history at the highest state levels of the Republics of Turkey and Azerbaijan, concerns have been raised in many quarters about the fate of Armenian cultural monuments that fall into Azerbaijani-held territory.

The threat of “cultural genocide,” in the Caucasus or as it is less-controversially termed, cultural destruction and cultural erasure, is the purview of the Caucasus Heritage Watch, a research initiative led by archaeologists at Cornell and Purdue universities.

Caucasus Heritage Watch (CHW) issued a new report on September 12, detailing the wholesale destruction of Armenian heritage monuments in the Nakhchivan (more commonly known as Nakhichevan/Nakhijevan in Armenian) region of Azerbaijan during the past 25 years.

The results of the report are no surprise to anyone knowledgeable of the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict, but had yet to be thoroughly documented in a scientific and clear way.

Simultaneously, other developments in the region over the past year, and the Azerbaijani assault on Armenia on the very same day that the report was released, gave the

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Russian Ambassador Meets With Prosecutor General

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prosecutor-General of Armenia Anna Vardapetyan met with Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergei Kopyrkin on October 4.

Vardapetyan briefed the Russian ambassador on the aftermath of the large-scale Azerbaijani aggression against sovereign territory of Armenia on September 13, emphasizing the necessity for immediately withdrawing the Azerbaijani troops from sovereign Armenian territory, repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war and unconditional preservation of the ceasefire.

Vardapetyan also spoke about the war crimes committed by the Azerbaijani military: the killings of Armenian prisoners of war, the torture of Armenian servicemembers, including female troops, and emphasized the need to bring to justice the perpetrators and organizers of war crimes committed both in the past and during this period.

Partially Collapsed Yerevan Market Cleared

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — It was only after the partial collapse of the building that exploded at the Surmalu market in Yerevan that the management of this market had petitioned to the Yerevan Municipality to obtain a permit to dismantle this partially-collapsed building. And on September 30, the city hall issued that permit.

The cleaning of the debris and dismantling the aforesaid building started 1.5 months after the deadly explosion there, on August 14.

The area of the building that exploded at the Surmalu market is still closed due to safety norms.

Other stalls at this shopping market are working, but according to merchants, the flow of people has decreased since the explosion.

A total of 16 died, and one person is considered missing as a result of the explosion on August 14.

Billionaire Vardanian Named NKR Minister

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russian-Armenian entrepreneur and billionaire Ruben Vardanyan, who recently moved to Karabakh (Artsakh), has been appointed State Minister of Republic.

“I have proposed to Ruben Vardanyan – a philanthropist and public figure with great experience knowledge, I was one of the first people to welcome his decision to move to Artsakh – to accept the position of State Minister of the Republic of Artsakh, and I am ready to give him broad powers to make decisions and implement them,” Karabakh President Arayik Harutyunyan said on Tuesday, October 4.

“Of course, this does not mean that I consider the work of the current state minister Artak Beglaryan to be ineffective, but given today’s challenges, I believe that it is necessary to consolidate national efforts.”

Vardanyan announced on September 1 that he was giving up his Russian citizenship and moving to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Highland Hostel Provides Home Away from Home for Russians Fleeing War, Draft

By Paul Vartan Sookiasian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Hostels are known to budget travelers and digital nomads as cheap and convenient places to stay while traveling abroad. Tens of thousands of Russians have come to Armenia since the start of the war in Ukraine, and hostels have played an important role in helping them settle here, often serving as affordable long-term housing while apartment rents skyrocket. A new wave is currently arriving daily escaping Vladimir Putin’s mobilization announced on September 21, while travel sites like Booking.com indicate every single hostel in Yerevan is completely full. We will explore the story of one of those hostels and a few of the Russian émigrés who now call it home.

Highland Hostel was opened in April 2019 near the corner of Mashtots and Amiryan Streets in Yerevan’s center. Its founder, Tigran Khachaturyan, had spent many years in the automotive industry, including in a grueling position at a large car company in Moscow, which gave him the desire to become his own boss and combine his lifelong passions for hiking and tourism into a business. He returned to Yerevan and renovated a top-floor apartment into a homey living space for up to ten guests at a time, while also leading tours for his guests who were eager to experience Armenia’s beautiful nature. Just as the hostel was gaining traction, the 2020 pandemic obliterated the tourist industry, but Khachaturyan was focused on keeping it open, if only for a single guest at a time. “There were fears at times that life would never come back to normal, the future was so uncertain,” Khachaturyan said, but with Armenia never enforcing strict lockdown rules, unlike many other European countries, things started to improve by 2021 with an increase in guests looking for an

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine changed everything. With Russians moving in, the hostel has been more or less booked solid ever since. With some of the March émigrés still living at the hostel, there’s just no room at the inn for the latest ones. “Even though the booking websites are full, newcomers still find Highland through Google and I get 20 to 30 calls a day trying to get a bed here. Unfortunately there’s nothing I

However, when that trip finished with no sign of things returning to normal in Russia, he was told in order to keep his job he’d need to remain abroad, and he stayed in Armenia rather than move to another country because of its familiarity and relative inexpensiveness. He had only gotten this particular job a few months prior, and if he hadn’t, he never would have left Russia because he loves his hometown. Now,



Young Russian emigres gather outside TUF bar, one of a growing number of social spots which have opened by and for their community

can do for them right now,” said Khachaturyan. Unlike the IT professionals typical of the first wave, those coming now are young, sometimes unskilled men who are only in Armenia by the chance of it being the destination they were able to get a ticket to first, with no plan of what comes next. As one of Highland’s guests, Andrey, explained about the latest arrivals, “their plan

he’s on the outside able to help his friends get out and to navigate their new life in Yerevan.

Yerevan is already full, but those looking for a refuge will not let up. It is still early days since the mobilization. At first, prices for a ticket to Yerevan soared to over \$10,000, but flights still filled up. Many looking to get out still must wait a week or two until their first available flight. However, they have no idea if they’ll actually be able to leave, as the possibility looms that Putin may close the borders to all men of mobilization age at any time. Time is of the essence, and many are thinking of contingency plans if it comes to that.

Another one of Highland’s guests is Nikolai, 24, who like Andrey, became familiar with Armenia when he visited as a tourist last year. Back in Russia, he went to a protest on the first day of the Ukraine war, where he says he was caught by police and spent a night on a station floor. “I started to think, how can I be prepared for what is going on in my country? What will happen to my family? I decided that if I can move somewhere outside it, I can be more valuable to my friends and family as I will be in a position to help in the case of something really bad — like this mobilization, for example.”

Having stayed at Highland during his visit to Armenia, he knew where to go and arrived in March. Nikolai’s first step was to get bank accounts in Armenia to transfer money to support himself here, and then to find a job. Being an IT professional, he received great offers from local companies and happily accepted one. While he feels fortunate that his father and brothers are not currently in line to be called up to fight, that could change. He describes how those he knows in Russia are “living in an atmosphere of chaos and uncertainty which really affects them. You can’t rely on tomorrow, anything could happen.”

Adds Andrey, “Since mobilization every day has been horrible. I’ve been unable to



Russians speak to the press during a September 17 protest, during which they gathered with local Armenians to call for Armenia leaving the Russian-dominated CSTO military alliance after it failed to respond to the attack on Armenia by Azerbaijan days before

escape from those restrictions. “Many of these guests told me they would have never thought of visiting Armenia until they saw it on a list of affordable places which had opened up, and they were surprised by what they found here, telling me that if they had known how great Armenia was earlier, they definitely would have visited.”

Business was back on track and was going through its typical February lull when

was just to get out of Russia. They have no idea what to do now that they are here. Some don’t have much money. They’re trying to find jobs or a way to support themselves. I’m glad that we have a community of Russians here who help each other out with money and places to stay.”

Andrey had been sent on a paid business trip by his international IT company to Armenia for a month when the war started.



ARMENIA

sleep, worrying about every single relative and friend and their families.”

The Russians have found that, like all places, life in Armenia has its benefits and difficulties. The thing which strikes Nikolai the most is the Armenians’ warmth and hospitality. “Here you feel like a guest of your relatives. It’s the same feeling I get when I go back to my grandmother’s village. It’s not your home, but you are included and welcome to take part in it.”

This is in contrast to Georgia, where Russians have moved in even greater numbers than Armenia because it is perceived as a more cosmopolitan and “hip” place to be, but there is a lot of resentment about the Russian presence there from the local populace because of conflicts such as the 2008 war between them.

As for difficulties in Armenia, as IT professionals, one of the biggest for both men is sub-optimal internet speeds and the fact that the electricity can suddenly briefly go out from time to time. Armenia is also a place, however, which affords special opportunities not available in Russia. For example, Nikolai had long wanted to teach in a university, and now gets to do just that, heading a computer programming class at Yerevan’s Slavonic University. Living in a hostel also has its benefits, as while there is a Russian social scene in Yerevan, he doesn’t really feel the need to take part because he has so much built-in camaraderie with his fellow hostel residents.

Andrey feels spoiled living at Highland, because he’s come to find that many other hostels have similar prices but are not nearly of the same quality and comfort level. He intends to return to Russia as soon as the war and mobilization end, but that will also depend on the political situation. Nobody knows when that will be or what life will be like in Russia at that point, but regardless he wants to return, and bring some of the aspects of social



IT workers who have relocated to Armenia often spend their weekends taking in the country’s incredible nature, such as these along a ridgeline on Mt. Azhdahak in Kotayk Province, led by tour guide Tigran Khachatryan of Highland Hostel and Expedition Tours

life he’s experienced in Yerevan back with him to make his city more interesting and entertaining too.

Armenia has supported these Russians as a welcoming place of refuge, but the benefits have been mutual. Andrey observed: “Russians are pushing Armenia forward, because I can already feel how things are changing. They’ve opened a lot of new places, like bars, restaurants, and coffee shops.”



Not just about tourism anymore, Highland Hostel’s kitchen table now doubles as a workplace for Nikolai (left) and Andrey

Companies are hiring Russian programmers and designers, who are some of the best in the business, and they are helping Armenian companies to develop both internally and externally as new customers. These Russian IT professionals are key for Armenia because many of them make their salaries

from international companies but spend it in Armenia, injecting money into the Armenian economy. Andrey considers this to be an exchange, pointing out how for decades people from Armenia went to Russia to seek out a better life. “Now that life is better in Armenia, it is natural that Russians come here.”

The influx has created problems for the average Armenian too, however, such as, most notoriously, the soaring of rents. They have more than doubled in many cases, with Russians willing and able to pay more to secure a place. Despite many landlords opportunistically raising rents, Khachatryan has refused to do that for guests at his hostel. “I appreciate every Russian who decides to come here rather than fighting and dying in an unjust war. I don’t want to benefit from people’s misfortune, especially from those who by being here and not at war are saving the lives of both others and their own.”

He does point out however that the latest rush of less affluent and less skilled Russians could lead to societal pressure, since they aren’t of the same quality as the ear-

lier émigrés who were able to settle in relatively easier. “Many of them just won’t fit here, which could cause internal problems for Armenia.” There are already accounts this past week of young Russians without a place to stay sleeping on the street.

Overall though, Khachatryan is excited about the prospects the Russians bring for Armenia. “Even if most of them don’t intend to remain here, some will inevitably settle down, starting families and businesses and having a positive impact here.” He already knows some of them are buying property with a long-term mindset. Highland Hostel has been growing too, as it has a new section set to open next year which will double its capacity and have options for greater privacy. Khachatryan also acquired a brand new 11-person off-roading vehicle for his company’s tour branch, making it the only one of its kind in Armenia. It can carry adventurers most of the way up Kotayk Province’s 3,600-meter-tall volcano Azhdahak for breathtaking views of Lake Sevan, Mounts Ararat and Aragats, and for relaxing by the mountain’s crater lake. Word has spread about the tours and 90 percent of his customers are from the Russian IT community, who make up a long wait list.

“These people are even more impactful than regular tourists,” said Khachatryan, “because they are already being integrated into society, telling their friends and family about Armenia, and attracting more people to at least visit here. I think they are also having a social impact, because having so many different kinds of people now living even in some small villages throughout Armenia is bringing local people into contact with new kinds of people and opening their minds. I think it passes a new energy into Armenia and invigorates our society.” Even though going into 2022 nobody could have imagined what changes the year would bring, and it remains to be seen how long the stay of most Russians in Armenia will last, there’s little doubt a transformation is underway. “I even see a changing fashion trend. More local Armenians are starting to wear many more colors instead of the typical black,” said Khachatryan. “This might sound trivial, but it’s also a representation of our internal mindset: an increase of imagination, and different ways of thinking are starting to grow here.”



ARMENIA

Artsakh's Government Boosts Private Sector Economy but Needs Diaspora's Help

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

STEPANAKERT — As a result of the 44-day long Azerbaijani aggression in 2020, Armen Amiryanyan lost all his greenhouses and his own house in the Ughtasar



Armen Amiryanyan, right, with author Haykaram Nahapetyan

village of Artsakh, now occupied by the Azerbaijani forces. But on December 10, 2020, exactly one month and one day after the combats were over, he planted seeds at his new greenhouse in a new village. "I participated in all three wars, but when we have peacetime, I have to work. I can't not work. I cannot leave my motherland," said Armen when we met near his newly constructed greenhouse in the suburbs of Stepanakert. He grows organic and pesticide-free tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, and other vegetables on his new greenhouse farm.

He even plays classical music for the plants. Armen has observed that Mozart or Gomidas is good for plants. "The government assisted me in jumpstarting my new business after I left my home, greenhouses, and acres of land," Armen added.

In the capital, Artak Beglaryan, the State Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, said that since combat was halted two years

ago, lots of work has been done to develop the irrigation system and energy security of Artsakh. The Republic of Nagorno Karabakh, however, lacks resources for private entrepreneurship.

"Indeed, security is our main concern. It is not something that the diaspora could help directly, even though the political work that diaspora communities may pursue in

their countries in favor of Artsakh and justice might contribute to a better security environment for Artsakh. What is more directly related to our communities is investments in



Artak Beglaryan

our economy and their professional expertise," noted Beglaryan.

The government chair defines the Arme-



Vladimir Balayan

nian diaspora as the window of Artsakh to the world. "We do not expect investment as an act of patriotism but as a business activity. And we need the diaspora's expertise for capacity building," said Beglaryan.

Before the last war, Metaks-kombinat Stepanakert (*kombinat* is a Russian word for manufacturing plant) was set up with the help of the government. Before the Covid pandemic hit, it had 550 employees producing rugs, carpets, garments, and silk products. Vladimir Balayan, the director, said the government provided the building where several private sector companies set up manufacturing. He serves as the liaison officer between the private offices that are parts of Metaks-Kombinat and the authorities.

"When the war ended, we were left with 200 employees only. Now it's back to 350. It is getting better slowly," said Balayan pointing to beautiful hand-made rugs on the walls. Artsakh's traditional carpets and tapestries have always been famous. But they need markets to secure economic growth.

Armenians Decry CSTO Inaction

By Ashaluis Mghdesyan

YEREVAN (IWPR) — Anger is mounting in Armenia at the refusal by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to answer its plea for military aid following renewed fighting with Azerbaijan.

Prime minister Nikol Pashinyan, the CSTO's current chair, turned to the Russia-led security alliance on September 14 in the wake of the deadliest fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan since the 2020 war over the Armenian-populated Nagorno Karabakh region.

A fact-finding mission, led by the CSTO chief of the joint staff Anatoly Sidorov, arrived on September 15.

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves," Sidorov said in a media briefing. "On September 13, the heads of our states unanimously declared that political and diplomatic methods should solve this problem that exists between Armenia and Azerbaijan."

Five days later, a CSTO monitoring mission, led by the CSTO's Belarusian secretary general Stanislav Zas, also visited Yerevan, again falling far short of the military assistance Pashinyan had requested.

Zas' delegation was met with public protests and calls for Armenia to withdraw from the security bloc.

Some politicians expressed open criticism, with parliament speaker Alen Simonyan branding the alliance a "gun that does not shoot."

Fighting broke out on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border on September 12, resulting in nearly 300 dead over the next 48 hours. On September 13 Pashinyan initiated an extraordinary video session to call for military assistance as Yerevan accused Baku of attacking its sovereign territory. Azerbaijan stated that its forces reacted to Armenia's "wide-scale provocation."

On September 14, Pashinyan formally invoked the CSTO's Article 4 for mutual defence, which is akin to NATO's Article 5.

"The clause states that 'if one of the States Parties is subjected to aggression by any state or group of states, then this will be considered as aggression against all States Parties to this Treaty,'" Armen Khachatryan, deputy chair of the parliamentary commission on defense and secu-

rity, told IWPR. "In such a situation, which completely corresponds with the recent aggression of Azerbaijan against Armenia, it is necessary to activate, including the military mechanisms of the bloc."

Effectively led by Moscow, the inter-governmental military alliance comprises six post-Soviet states: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Azerbaijan is not a member of the bloc.

In its 30-year history, the bloc has exercised the collective security provision only once. In January 2022, in response to a call for military assistance by Kazak president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev "to help Kazakhstan overcome this terrorist threat," CSTO troops were deployed in a matter of hours.

In his speech to the UN general assembly on September 22, Pashinyan said that "the risk of new aggression from Azerbaijan remains very high." In a clear reference to the lack of support from the CSTO, he added that "another reason for the escalation is the inadequate reaction of the regional security structures to the current situation, which raises serious questions in Armenian society."

Officials lambasted the CSTO's political and diplomatic mechanism as a tool to de-escalate the situation on the border.

"Armenia is expecting clear actions from the CSTO on the restoration of the territorial integrity of Armenia, [which] is a member state of the CSTO, as well on preventing new escalations," deputy minister of foreign affairs Vahe Gevorgyan said at a meeting with the Zas delegation.

Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia's security council, put it more bluntly. "There is no more hope for CSTO," he said.

Some experts maintained that Yerevan should exit the bloc and deepen ties with the US. In contrast with the CSTO's guarded statements, US house speaker Nancy Pelosi, who visited Yerevan on September 17, said that she was there "to understand what Armenia needs."

Others see Pelosi's comments as intended to attract the votes of the influential Armenian diaspora ahead of the ballot for the US congress in November.

For political scientist Areg Galstyan, the CSTO was "clearly not a security system

for Armenia."

"Russia also does not react to Azerbaijan's encroachments as it has its own interests," he told IWPR. "[Moscow] wants Baku to achieve, by force, the opening of the so-called Zangezur Corridor to connect Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan [an enclave sandwiched between Armenia and Turkey] through the territory of Armenia.

According to the ceasefire agreement of November 9, 2020, Moscow must provide the security and basically take control of this communication route. This is huge leverage in the hands of the Kremlin."

Yet despite the discontent, Yerevan has no real alternatives. The authorities know they need to see the CSTO proposals on reducing the border escalation.

"We are waiting for the results," Khachatryan, a lawmaker with the ruling Civic Contract party, told IWPR.

Opposition figures are also cautious.

"Yes, the CSTO is not perfect and not the best security system, but unfortunately, Armenia has nothing else. Leaving the CSTO can only aggravate the problems and create a security vacuum," Armen Ashotyan, vice-chairman of the Republican Party's I have Honor faction, explained to IWPR.

Political scientist Alexander Iskandaryan maintained that withdrawing from the CSTO would trigger a change in Yerevan's relations with Moscow.

"This will seriously deteriorate the security landscape around Armenia," he continued. "There is no alternative system visible on the horizon. It is necessary not to seek security from outside, but to increase Armenia's capacity as a state, to restore the army, to strengthen defense capability."

Public opinion is less patient. Rallies calling for the government to exit the CSTO have been held in Yerevan with protesters carrying placards with slogans reading "CSTO, where is your security?" or "CSTO, is there anybody home?" among others.

"We are protesting against the inactivity of this organization, which does not react to the aggression of Azerbaijan," 25-year-old Nvard told IWPR during a demonstration in Yerevan. "The CSTO did not even condemn the attack of the Azerbaijani military. After that, how can we say that it is our ally?"

EU Envoy, US Call for Probes Into Videos Exacerbating Tensions between Armenia, Azerbaijan

INVESTIGATION, from page 1 soldiers executing several Armenian prisoners of war at close range.

The United States on Monday called for a "full and impartial investigation" into the apparent killing by Azerbaijani troops of Armenian soldiers taken prisoner during recent border clashes.

"The United States is deeply disturbed by recent reports of Azerbaijani soldiers executing unarmed Armenian prisoners," said Ned Price, the spokesman for the US State Department.

"We call for a full and impartial investigation. Those responsible for any atrocities must be held to account," he wrote on Twitter.

Price clearly reacted to a video posted on Azerbaijani social media accounts on Sunday. It shows several 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.

Armenia's human rights ombudswoman said later on Sunday 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.

Azerbaijan's Office of the Prosecutor-General said on Monday that it has ordered an inquiry into the gruesome footage.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian, Azerbaijani FMs Hold Fresh Talks

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan met late on Sunday, October 2, for a second time after last month's large-scale fighting on the border between their countries.

The direct talks held in Geneva appeared to focus on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty sought by Baku. Neither side reported concrete agreements on this issue.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov "brought the Armenian side's attention" to five key elements which Baku wants to be at the heart of the peace accord. They include a mutual recognition of each other's territorial integrity, something which would presumably uphold Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan insisted on Friday that despite championing the territorial integrity of states, Azerbaijan remains reluctant to recognize Armenia's current borders. He said at the same time that the Geneva meeting will mark the beginning of substantive negotiations on the peace treaty.

According to the Armenian readout of the meeting, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan also spoke with Bayramov about "ensuring the rights and security guarantees of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians, including through the creation of a mech-



Foreign Ministers Ararat Mirzoyan of Armenia and Jeyhun Bayramov of Azerbaijan met in Geneva, October 2, 2022

anism for discussions between Baku and Stepanakert."

Mirzoyan also demanded the withdrawal of Azerbaijani forces from Armenian border areas occupied during the September 13-14 hostilities and last year.

Bayramov claimed, for his part, that Armenia has failed to fully pull its troops out of Karabakh in breach of the Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war. Yerevan maintains that no Armenian soldiers remain

deployed there.

Citing lingering tensions at various sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, Bayramov was also reported to propose that the next meeting of a bilateral commission on border demarcation be brought forward from November to October.

Bayramov further called for a prompt launch of transport links between the two South Caucasus states, which is also envisaged by the 2020 ceasefire and follow-up agreements brokered by Moscow.

Israeli Defense Minister Visits Azerbaijan

By Ash Obel

TEL AVIV (*Times of Israel*) — Defense Minister Benny Gantz on October 3 wrapped up an official visit to Azerbaijan, where he met with the country's President Ilham Aliyev and his Azeri counterpart, Zakir Hasanov.

Gantz's visit focused on security and policy issues, with the aim of fostering defense cooperation between Jerusalem and

Baku, according to his office.

During the visit, Gantz also met with the Chief of the State Border Service Colonel General Elchin Guliyev and visited a State Border Service headquarters.

Gantz used his visit to "emphasize the importance of maintaining strategic relations between the State of Israel and the Republic of Azerbaijan," and "reflected on the changes in the Middle East region following the signing of the Abraham Ac-

cords," a statement from his office said.

He and officials in Azerbaijan also "discussed Israel's developing ties with Turkey and additional countries in the region and the world."

The defense minister's visit comes just two weeks after the latest round of fighting between Azerbaijan and its neighbor Armenia, over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Israel has large weapons deals with Azerbaijan, however, it does not disclose details of the agreements.

In 2016, Aliyev said his country had bought \$4.85 billion in defense equipment from the Jewish state, but Israel has never confirmed that figure.

Franco-Armenian Association Issues Call for Documents Regarding Azerbaijan Attacks

By Jean Eckian

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

PARIS — Faced with the proliferation of false information disseminated every day by Azerbaijan and its networks around the world, the Franco-Armenian Association (Union Franco-Arménienne), a non-profit cultural non-governmental organization, calls upon all persons, organizations and media outlets possessing documents (videos, photos, recordings, etc.) related to the territories of Zangezur, Gegharkunik and Artsakh to send it copies in order to assemble material to be presented to the world community on the true history and evidence related to these regions of Armenia. The association has the contacts of the world media networks.

For this purpose, please send your documents urgently to unionfarm@gmail.com and also through WhatsApp/Zangi applications - No. +33695147767.

Badge for Armenia

PARIS — Faced with the abysmal silence of the international community on the attack of Azerbaijan in Armenia, the French-Armenian actress Corinne Zarzavatjian initiated the launch of a pin in the colors of the Armenian flag, with the inscription "I stand with Armenia."

This badge is currently being distributed and worn by artists, politicians and French TV presenters. It aims to raise awareness of the bloody events caused by Azerbaijan in Armenia.

The actress encourages all Armenian communities around the world to do the same in their respective countries.



Corinne Zarzavatjian

INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Sends Azerbaijan's War Crimes Video to ECHR, ICJ

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A video showing the execution of Armenian servicemen and spreading on social networks since October 2 was submitted to the European Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice on Tuesday, October 4.

The video was included in claims submitted to said courts, seeking the protection of the rights of Armenian prisoners of war.

"The violation of fundamental rights of ethnic Armenians by Azerbaijan" has been emphasized once again, said Armenia's Representative on international legal matters in a statement on Tuesday.

In footage published online over the weekend, Azerbaijani troops are seen murdering several unarmed Armenian prisoners of war.

Azerbaijan Wants to Open 'Corridor' through Armenia for Energy Trade, Warns Iranian Official

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Azerbaijan seeks to have a corridor toward Nakhijevan "out of Armenia's control" and seeks to set an energy-trade corridor directly from the Caspian Sea to Turkey, the Director General of Transit of Road and Road Transport Organization of Iran Javad Hedayati told the Iranian [ILNA](#) on October 4.

Hedayati said Iran should be ready for any situation because the current situation is unlikely to remain.

"Apparently, Azerbaijan seeks to have a corridor toward Nakhchivan out of Armenian's control to keep its connection with Nakhchivan without any obstacle and long-term guarantee and it seeks to establish an energy-trade corridor directly from the Caspian Sea to Turkey with the coordination of its allies," ILNA quoted the Iranian official as saying. "We should pay attention that the current situation will unlikely be maintained and continued and because of that we should be ready for any situation," he added.

The Iranian government has numerous said that it strongly opposes the Azeri-Turkish aspirations on opening a "corridor" through Armenian territory.

France Calls for Punishment of Executioners of Armenian Soldiers

PARIS (Panorama.am) — The French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs calls for punishment for the gruesome executions of Armenian prisoners of war by Azerbaijani troops.

"The videos showing summary executions of Armenian prisoners by the Azerbaijani military are deeply shocking," the ministry said in a [statement](#) on October 3.

"France takes note of the launch of an investigation into these acts announced by Azerbaijan and calls for the perpetrators to be brought to justice."

Community News

Detroit Community Kicks off Nationwide Paros Fundraising Effort

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich. — On September 15, an enthusiastic crowd gathered at the Birmingham Athletic Club to learn more about and to support the Paros Foundation's Housing, After-school and vocational center building in Gyumri, Armenia. The event was hosted by Dr. Gary and Linda Assarian and Howard and Catherine Atesian.

"I am very pleased that our community joined us to enthusiastically support this exciting project," said Dr. Gary Assarian. "Once completed, this project will continue to help impoverished families in Gyumri break their cycle of poverty and become contributing members of society."

The Municipality of Gyumri voted to give the Paros Foundation a 18,000 square foot, three-story building that was built in the late 1980s, and was never completed. Eliminating these types of eyesores from the city is a priority of the Mayor, Vardges Samsonian, who proposed this large project to The Paros Foundation. Once completed, the building's second and third floor will be occupied by 18 families currently living in one of Gyumri's domik communities in one- and two-bedroom apartments. The first floor will be home to a second branch of the Debi Arach Children's Center, a vocational training space and space for a social enterprise/training center. Construction on this building will begin in the coming weeks.

To raise the standard of living and make meaningful improvements to people's lives in Gyumri, three major components must be addressed. First, people must have a normal home in which to live. Currently, almost 2,000 domiks are occupied in Gyumri. As families are selected and moved into their new homes, their domiks will be destroyed. Secondly, children must be educated, mentored, and motivated to develop and achieve employment goals for a successful future. Currently, 180 children attend programming at the Debi Arach Children's Center and are benefiting from their services. A second location will impact an even greater number of children that will receive Debi Arach's holistic care. Thirdly, people need a skill so they can work and earn money to care for themselves and their families. Currently, Gyumri has a shortage of skilled labor in both the high-tech and low-tech fields. Once launched, this expanded training program will allow people to be trained, secure work and earn money.

"I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the Assarian and Atesian Families who sponsored this successful kickoff event," said Peter Abajian, executive director of the Paros Foundation. "Our goal is to raise the entire \$500,000 necessary to complete work on this building in the next few months in order to complete construction and move in the new families prior to the onset of next winter."

see DETROIT, page 9



Following the opening ceremony and prayers, the ribbon was cut by (from left) Fr. Antranig Baljian, Bishop Mikael Mouradian, and Fr. Arakel Aljalian.

ABMDR Hosts 11th Annual New England Walk of Life

WATERTOWN — On September 24, supporters from throughout New England converged on Watertown to take part in the 11th annual Walk of Life of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR). Every year, the celebrated pan-Armenian event draws enthusiastic youth participation, with numerous students from area schools and colleges. The walkathon is also supported by local organizations, businesses, and community leaders.

Since its inception 11 years ago, Walk of Life New England has received support and sponsorship from several large and small businesses, including PROMETRIKA, LLC, of Cambridge; the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute; the Armenian-American Pharmacists' Association; Watertown Savings Bank; ThermOil, Inc.; Quebrada Baking Company; and Anoush'ella (Saj Kitchen); as well as the Armenia Tree Project, Amaras Art Alliance, St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, and the Armenian Museum of America.

At the opening ceremony of the walkathon, which took place on the grounds of the Charles Mosesian Center, Shant Der Torossian of the ABMDR New England Walkathon Organizing Committee welcomed the participants. "We're touched to again see many community organizations and individuals that have come together today to participate and collaborate for this walkathon," Der Torossian said. "Some of you have been with us since day 1. A big thank-you to those who assisted with promoting this event among their co-workers, friends, and family. We couldn't do this without you!"

Der Torossian conveyed the committee's gratitude to St. James Armenian Apostolic Church, Rev. Arakel Aljalian, and Yn. Natasha for hosting the commencement of this year's walkathon. Der Torossian went on to acknowledge Arax Badalian and members of the Amaras Art Alliance, as the recipients of the ABMDR New England Volunteer of the Year Award. "Arax Badalian and members of the Amaras Art Alliance have been among the very first volunteers of ABMDR New England," Der Torossian said. "We appreciate their support and dedication to ABMDR."

Prior to the start, participants held a moment of silence in honor of fallen soldiers in Armenia and Artsakh.

The walk concluded at Saltonstall Park, where participants celebrated the day's achievements and enjoyed great music, dancing and food, along with those attending the annual Faire on the Square festival.

In her remarks during the closing ceremony, Tamar Minassian Melkonian of the Walkathon Organizing Committee extended its appreciation to the event's sponsors for their continued support year after year, and brought the participants' attention to

continued on next page



Walkers and supporters.

Attorney General Healey Runs for Governor, Condemns Azerbaijani Attacks, Genocide Denial

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — According to a recent poll, Maura Healey is the favored candidate to win the November election for governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The 51-year-old Democratic two-term attorney general, in the course of her career, served as chief of various divisions of the same office, worked as a Special Assistant District Attorney in Middlesex County, and at an international law firm, and even played professional basketball for a few years after graduating Harvard University. She now is poised to become not only the first woman governor of the state but also the first openly lesbian one. She is facing off against Republican Geoff Diehl.

She has met with members of the Armenian community during her campaign (see *Mirror-Spectator*, September 24) and in an interview at the end of September, spoke of her support of that community. She said, "In Massachusetts we have such a vibrant and rich Armenian community. I have come to know that community and come to really appreciate and respect the Armenian Americans who are living here in Massachusetts....I have tried to be there both as a civil rights lawyer and as attorney general in support of the Armenian community, and I will continue to be there as governor."

Healey repeated the gist of her September 19 statement concerning the recent Azerbaijani attacks on the Republic of Armenia, declaring: "I want to be clear that I am standing with the Armenian community. I strongly condemn these attacks, and certainly pray for the safety of all of these involved and an end to conflict."

She has participated in a number of ceremonies of recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Massachusetts over the years, and in this regard, she stated, "The Armenian Genocide is one of the darkest chapters in world history, and I think it is shameful for anyone or any country to refuse to recognize the Armenian Genocide....I can tell you that just as I did as attorney general, as governor I will always take action and speak out against hate, discrimination and intolerance, and I will always support Massachusetts's wonderful Armenian community." She also spoke of the importance of genocide education, and her pleasure that Massachusetts has passed a law mandating it. She continued: "I want students in Massachusetts to receive an accurate education about world history and that includes making sure that we have the curricular as well as the instructors in place to support teaching about the Armenian Genocide."

Healey recalled that as attorney general she sent two attorneys from her office to the Republic of Armenia to discuss combatting corruption as

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COMMUNITY NEWS

ABMDR Hosts 11th Annual Walk of Life

from previous page

all the logos and names of the sponsors on their T-shirts.

“This year, we have a special treat for you,” Melkonian said. “The Armenian Museum of America has graciously offered open admission to anyone wearing an ABMDR walkathon T-shirt! So, after our closing ceremony, please take advantage of this offer and visit their one-of-a-kind exhibits and artifacts.”

Subsequently Alec Der Sirakian, Telo Ghazarians, and Miganush Stepanians of PROMETRIKA, LLC were awarded the Gold, Silver, and Bronze top-fundraiser

awards, respectively. For the tenth consecutive year, the Armenia Tree Project will plant commemorative trees in Armenia in honor of the walkathon winners, as part of the #LivingCentury Initiative.

Commenting on the significance of the event, Der Torossian later said, “Funds raised through the walkathon and all other donations go a long way in ensuring that ABMDR is able to continue to fulfill its mission, by educating the public, recruiting donors, and facilitating bone marrow stem cell transplants for patients throughout the world.”

For more information about the group, visit abmdr.am.



Alec Der Sirakian accepting the Gold Fundraising Award.

Healey Runs for Governor, Condemns Azerbaijani Attacks

HEALEY, from page 6

part of a US State Department program. She said that after becoming aware of the program, she discussed it with some members of her team and decided that it would be a way as an office that they could be helpful to Armenia. She said, “My team was really excited about the experience and invigorated, and we certainly would want to continue those relations.”

Another potential avenue of relations with Armenia might be economic. She said, “As governor, support for trade is something I would be most interested in. Anything that we could do to support the Armenian people in Massachusetts and the Armenians in Armenia is something that I want to do as governor. Hopefully that might involve a trip or trade mission, and the continued building of a relationship.”

Campaign for Governor

There have been periodic mentions in the press of the so-called curse of the attorney general, which refers to the failed campaigns of six prior attorneys general for governor in Massachusetts, all Democrats. Healey dismissed any inherent reason for difficulty in transitioning from attorney general to governor, stating, “I think every race is different and candidates are different. All I know is that I bring the right experience, having led and managed an office of 600 people, having delivered real results for people across the state, whether it was bringing back 7 billion dollars to taxpayers and rate payers and residents of the state, whether it was finding basic support for small businesses, or work for their cities and towns, whether it was holding big pharma and corporations accountable for all they did to fuel the opioid epidemic.”

She said, “I realize that the job of governor is different but I think the formula remains the same in terms of the ability to build teams, to collaborate and to get things done.” She spoke about the need to grow the state economy and make Massachusetts affordable by tackling difficult housing and transportation issues. While creating jobs, she said it was necessary to “make sure that we are doing it in a way that brings people together, because I think that so many people are turned off right now by the noise, the politics and the vitriol, and the attacks that are out there.” She noted concerns about the rise of xenophobia and white supremacists in the country at large, and said, “I think we have to be clear about our principles and make clear that we are going to fight to end discrimination and to support opportunities for people here in this state. I look forward to that challenge.”

She concluded, “I am known as someone who will listen, who will collaborate, and who will find ways to solve problems and work to move us forward...I am the person who brings the experience, having managed and led a state agency, and having worked closely with cities and towns and with our federal partners all the way up to the White House. We are going to need that kind of experienced leadership, given the challenges that we are facing.”



Maura Healey speaking at a vigil commemorating the 2015 centennial of the Armenian Genocide (photo Ken Martin)



Armenians Together

September 21, 2022

The Greater Boston Armenian-American community strongly supports:

- The inalienable right of the Armenians of the Republic of Artsakh to self-determination and a peaceful life in their ancestral homeland
- The inviolability of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia.

Our community vehemently condemns the unprovoked invasion of the territories of Armenia by Azerbaijan's armed forces, subsequent targeting and loss of civilian life, and torture and humiliation of POWs, in clear violation of the Geneva War Convention.

We Armenians of Boston call on all leaders of the democratic world to stand in solidarity with the people of Armenia and Artsakh to condemn the current Turkish-Azerbaijani attacks and prevent another genocide. Stop military aid to the autocratic regime in Azerbaijan and call for the immediate release of all Armenian POWs.

The Greater Boston Armenian-American Community

Sponsored by in alphabetical order

Armenian Assembly of America

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation
Sardarabad Gomideh of Boston

Tekeyan Cultural Association of the
United States and Canada

Armenian General Benevolent Union
New England District

Armenian American Medical Association
Armenian American Pharmacists' Association
Armenian Business Network
The Armenian Cultural and Educational Center
Armenian General Benevolent Union, Young Professionals of Boston
Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Eastern District Committee
Armenian Heritage Foundation
Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA)
Armenian Museum of America
Armenia Tree Project
Armenian Women's Welfare Association
Armenian Youth Federation, Greater Boston "Nejdeh" Chapter
Daughters of Vartan Arpie Otyag
The Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts
St Stephen's Armenian School
The Armenian Relief Society Leola Sasouni Chapter, Watertown
The Armenian Relief Society Shushi Chapter, Cambridge
Erebuni Armenian School
The Hairenik Association
Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society of Boston
Homenetmen Armenian General Athletic Union, Greater Boston Chapter
Knights of Vartan, Ararat Lodge
National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR)
Sayat Nova Dance Company

Armenian Churches of Boston
Armenian Memorial Church
First Armenian Church
Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church
Holy Trinity Armenian Church
St. James Armenian Church
St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Heritage Park 10th Anniversary Gala Honors Stephen Kurkjian, Celebrates Immigrant Contributions, Funds Park Maintenance

PARK, from page 1

Cindy Fitzgibbon, the chief meteorologist at WCVB-TV (Channel 5 Boston), served as the master of ceremonies, and in her opening remarks revealed that while she did not have an Armenian last name, she was half-Armenian on her mother's side. She spoke of the immigrant stories which are retold in the park each spring in the abstract sculpture's annual reconfiguration to create a new sculptural shape, while the labyrinth in the park is symbolic of life's journey, with the message of hope and rebirth in the form of the single jet of water in the center.

Bruce Bagdasarian, vice president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, which is the sponsor of the park, and also a partner at Sheehan, Phinney, Bass and Green, explained that the park has many purposes, including to remember the Armenian Genocide and those who came before us, and to recognize Armenians as a "tribe" in Massachusetts. As part of the park's broader connection to the immigrant experience, Bagdasarian then introduced five organizations doing exemplary work in this field,



Bruce Bagdasarian, partner, Sheehan Phinney Bass & Green and vice president, Armenian Heritage Foundation recognizing the organizations serving immigrants and refugees (photo Leo Gozbekian)

including the Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund, the International Institute of New England, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, RefugePoint and the Rian Immigration Center, and pointed out their leaders who were present. Each organization, he said, would receive a gift in support of their work. More information about their missions was presented in the program booklet for the evening, which also provided basic information about the park and its programs, Kurkjian, and a list of benefactors of the park.

James Kalustian, president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, spoke next, and prefaced his remarks with a call for a quick, peaceful, and just resolution to the conflict that Azerbaijan had again revived through unprovoked attacks on Armenian soil. He asked that those present contact their government representatives to let them know of their concerns.

Kalustian thanked the gala committee chaired by Barbara Tellalian and the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park, the executive committee of the Armenian Heritage Foundation and various other contributors to the work of the park, as well as benefactors such as Peter Palandjian. Reflecting on the past 18 years of the park and prior preparations, Kalustian expressed pride in the generosity of the Armenian community and what it collectively achieved: "We did first of all what we said we would do. We gifted and endowed a beautiful and engaging park to the city and the commonwealth."

Not stopping there, he continued: "We



From left, Cindy Fitzgibbon, emcee, WCVB TV chief meteorologist; James Kalustian, president, Armenian Heritage Foundation; Stephen Kurkjian and Brian McGrory, editor, *The Boston Globe* (photo Leo Gozbekian)

have done so much more than that. We have established a respectful but uplifting remembrance of the attempted genocide of the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks, and all the horrific genocides that followed, and it is the first of its kind built on US federal government land... Armenian Heritage Park has become a gathering community for our community in greater Boston, Massachusetts and New England, but it has also become a beacon and example for other Armenian communities around the world." It has become a focal point for celebration for many other communities, and a site of celebration for new citizens, he added.

He then segued into the inspirational role Stephen Kurkjian, the main honoree of the evening, has played for countless Armenians and non-Armenians, and called on a special guest to give a toast in Kurkjian's honor. Noubar Afeyan, entrepreneur and philanthropist, came up and spoke about Kurkjian's reputation as a fierce investigative reporter and his service as a goodwill ambassador for the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative for many years. He characterized



Noubar Afeyan, founder & CEO, Flagship Pioneering and 2019 Heritage Park honoree, offering the toast to Stephen Kurkjian, 2022 honoree, at Celebrating Contributions of our Nation's Immigrants (photo Leo Gozbekian)



Avak Kahvejian, general partner, Flagship Pioneering; Board chair, International Institute of New England (photo Leo Gozbekian)

Kurkjian as a true example of the "salt of the earth" and then toasted Kurkjian, and his parents too, in the Armenian way.

Boston Globe Editor McGrory

Pulitzer Prize winner Brian McGrory, editor of the *Boston Globe* since December 2012 and author of three bestselling thrillers and a memoir, prior to introducing Kurkjian, expressed gratitude for the Armenian Heritage Park as a place of beauty, reflection and joy. He said to the Armenian community: "I also want to express my appreciation for your guidance, for many of your advocates, over the ten years that I have been in the role that I hold now. We live in an odd moment of searing political

divisions, in which the goal always seems to be to take someone else down and not to build up a cause. People too often feel better by making somebody else or some other group feel worse. But not you, not with your legacy, not with your history, not with the vital contributions of the Armenian-American people that you made, and the struggles that your forebearers have faced, particularly with the Armenian Genocide. I have heard from many of you in the most productive ways possible and it is deeply appreciated. Your cause in many ways has been a *Globe* cause and that is deeply appreciated."

In a witty manner at times peppered with humor, he went on to speak about Kurkjian, asserting, "It is not hyperbolic to say that you chose the most beloved and respected journalist to come from the *Globe* newsroom in the last half-century." He said that Kurkjian had become a mentor and friend to hundreds or even thousands of people.

As an investigative journalist, Kurkjian got public officials indicted, convicted and imprisoned, chased down stolen masterpieces in the world of art, and cajoled a confession from a pedophilic priest. All this, he said, "suggests that he is a tough as nails journalist who walks a very rigid line through what is right and what is wrong. And all of that is true. But there is a lot more to Steve than that, as all of us who worked with him at the *Globe* well know. He is the quickest guy in the newsroom with that cackle of a laugh, even if he is rarely as funny as he thinks he is."

Kurkjian exulted in taking down powerful people who did wrong things, but Mc-



From left, Marion Semonian, Bill Eppich, Wendy Semonian Eppich, Leon Semonian, Noël Atamian (photo Leo Gozbekian)



From left, Christine Garabedian, James Batmasian, Marta Batmasian (photo Leo Gozbekian)



COMMUNITY NEWS

Grory said, “He wasn’t driven just by the story. He was driven by a sense of fairness and justice, the likes of which I have never seen in our business before. Steve exudes fairness and exudes justice, to the point that even the people who he has written about and held to account, tend to like him in a really strange way.”

His great talent combined with fervor served the Armenian community well along with the rest of American society. McGrory said: “This sophisticated sense of fairness and justice is never more important than in Steve’s passionate and clear-eyed advocacy for Armenians. He is a deeply respected voice in the ears of so many *Globe* reporters and editors. He wants everyone to see history for exactly what it is and to acknowledge that a genocide is genocide. He wants to make sure that a great country, and her people who came to the United States, get proper credit for the massive contributions that you have made to Boston and beyond.”

McGrory concluded his introduction with even more words of praise, underscoring that “You have chosen a really, really great honoree.”

Kurkjian at the Podium

Kurkjian took the podium and in turn extolled McGrory’s crucial role in holding up the *Globe*’s standard of excellence. He gratefully recognized other *Globe* reporters in the audience, including the founder of the *Globe* Spotlight Team, Tim Leland. Janet O’Neill, the wife of Kurkjian’s late great friend the reporter and editor Gerry O’Neill, and editors Walter Robinson, Patty Wen, Ben Bradlee Jr. and Mark Morrow were mentioned, along with Tom Farragher, who was not present that night.

Kurkjian recalled that he always told journalism classes over the years, there might be the Second Amendment to the US Constitution saying that you can rule by the barrel of a gun, but the First Amendment which comes before that says that despite

the Second Amendment, you can rule by the institutions of democracy. “Having that Constitutional power behind us,” Kurkjian exclaimed, “energizes you, makes you feel that you are really working for the people



The Kasparians circa 1945, on the front steps of a home in Codman Square, Dorchester, welcoming youngest brother Dr Karl Kasparian, home from the war (soon to begin his career as surgeon at Mt Auburn Hospital). Stephen Kurkjian is in short pants in front row (photo courtesy Stephen Kurkjian)

– and from the first day that I came into the *Globe*, I felt that.”

His Armenian background did not go unrecognized at his job. When he answered the phone at the *Globe* in the multiethnic and tribal Boston of the 1960s and stated

his name, he reminisced that after callers understood he was an Armenian, this invariably led them to recall various good deeds done by Armenians. “Hearing those voices over the phone,” Kurkjian said, “telling me about what their experiences had been with Armenians, gave me the sense that we are doing okay, we are making our way in this world.”

As part of an Armenian family, Kurkjian also inherited a connection with the park. His four Kasparian uncles, all genocide survivors, operated the most popular grocery store at Codman Square in Dorchester, he related. Some Saturdays he would accompany them on their early morning drives to the Faneuil Hall meat markets and Haymarket, where they would get fresh fruits and vegetables. Here he said he saw how one of his uncles who did not speak much English still was able to make himself understood, and in turn was honored and respected. The lesson remained with him, he said,

that, “you may not have money, you may not have the largest number of people, but you still can make your way in this world.” For this reason, Kurkjian realized, it felt right for him when he was asked to be the headliner for the park event this year.

His father and his contemporaries came to the US escaping the Armenian Genocide, and benefited from all that this country offered to blossom and flourish due to the protection and the economic opportunity that American provided. “It was an immense, immense gift that we got from this country, which I will never, ever forget,” he said. The children of that first generation, like Kurkjian’s late cousin Chuck Bilizekian and his wife Doreen, were able to contribute materially to what Kurkjian likes to call “our Champs d’Elysee,” the Rose Kennedy Greenway. The park in this sense is an expression of gratitude from the Armenians.

This is an extraordinary story, he pointed out, which is happening again with new groups of immigrants.

Kurkjian thanked the *Boston Globe* and Comcast for making possible a video which was screened earlier during the evening about the park. He said: “It is presenting what I hope to be the ultimate goal for us: having Boston, at the center of the town, embrace us and our purposes – not just to remember the genocide of the Armenians, which cost us so dearly, but also the second purpose, which is ... to find a place in the center of town where all immigrant groups can be welcome.”

He thanked the audience for coming to the benefit, and concluded, “The cycle of life is happening here in Boston, and the park is embracing it. ... You are making sure that the Armenian experience will never be forgotten in this city.”

Fitzgibbon then closed the formal portion of the evening, cheerily calling out, “Someday soon, let’s meet at the park!”

The event was a success in many ways. Aside from the enthusiastic cheering for those honored, Kalustian announced that with the recent fundraising, the Heritage Park Foundation had raised a total of approximately \$3 million for the park’s legacy fund, to date. For more information, or to donate, visit armenianheritagepark.org.

Principal

Administrator / Full-Time

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

Responsibilities

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

Minimum Qualifications

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

Benefits

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

How to Apply

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

Detroit Community Kicks off Nationwide Paros Fundraising Effort

DETROIT, from page 6

More than \$75,000 was raised at this kickoff event in Detroit. Similar events will take place in communities around the country in the coming months. A special thanks to the following families for their major support: Dr. Gary and Linda Assarian, Howard and Catherine Atesian, Ara and Christine Atesian, Darren Atesian, Gregory

and Sandra Jamian, Edward and Yvonne Korkoian, Peter and Marilyn Sarkesian, Dietrich and Marianna Sneideraitis and the Terchoonian Home Foundation.

Launched in 2006, The Paros Foundation has implemented more than \$12 million worth of projects in Armenia and Artsakh. To learn more or to support this project, visit www.parosfoundation.org.



Event Co-Hosts, the Atesian and Assarian families, gather for a photo with The Paros Foundation’s Executive Director. Pictured left to right: Mrs. Catherine Atesian, Mr. Howard Atesian, Mrs. Linda Assarian, Dr. Gary Assarian and Mr. Peter Abajian.

COMMUNITY NEWS

The Lifelong Friendship Behind Astonishing \$100 Million Gift to BU's Medical School

GIFT, from page 1

But it was the stunning success of his personal investments that afforded him the opportunity to give back to others. He has never forgotten his parents' hard work and sacrifice, or the emphasis they placed on education, and he became a generous philanthropist to both the US and Armenia in his later years. "I felt very fortunate, for BU and others that helped along the way," he says.

Even still, in all of his donations to colleges and hospitals and schools, Avedisian never named anything after himself, and he didn't want his gift to MED to be any different. But when he proposed that his donation instead honor his childhood friend, Chobanian (Hon.'06), president emeritus of BU and dean emeritus of the School of Medicine as well as a nationally renowned cardiologist, the plan hit a bump. Chobanian, showing the same humility as Avedisian, firmly declined the honor when first asked—and a few more times after. Neither man, it seemed, wanted his own name up in lights.

"Both men are very, very, humble," Brown says. "Really old school."

Brown persisted with the pair, until finally they agreed as long as both their names were included. Brown calls it "the grand compromise."

"How could I obstruct a gift of \$100 million to the medical school that I spent my life at?" Chobanian says. "That was obviously a big factor, but I still felt it should be named after him, and my name didn't have to go on there."

"I didn't want anything named after me," Avedisian says. "But he said, 'I'll only do this if your name is attached.' So, we're attached."

Students, Scholarships, and Research All Benefit

The gift "will transform the medical school," says Karen Antman, dean of the School of Medicine and provost of the Medical Campus. The Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine Endowed Fund will provide: \$50 million to support scholarships for medical students; \$25 million to support endowed professorships and \$25 million to the Avedisian Fund for Excellence to keep the school at the forefront of research and teaching.

"I am glad that much of the support will support scholarships," says Antman. "Medical school debt is a problem across the United States."

A study by the Association of American Medical Colleges on the Class of 2021 found the average medical school debt among students attending a public school was \$194,280. That contributes to the growing shortage of primary care doctors in the US, because the much higher salaries for specialists make it possible to pay off student loans more rapidly. Some aspiring pediatricians and primary care doctors simply may not be able to afford to do so.

The cost also affects who can choose medical school, Antman says. "If you are first-generation American or first-generation in college, the idea that you are going to graduate with \$200,000-plus in debt is unconscionable. They are afraid to take on that much debt."

Avedisian's gift, she says, "will approximately double the endowed scholarship aid we can offer." The funds will come in over a period of at least five years.

One of the endowed professorships from the fund will be created in the name of Richard K. Babayan, professor and chair



Aram V. Chobanian (from left), BU President Robert A. Brown, and Edward Avedisian at the signing ceremony for the renaming of the Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine at the Sloane House on August 15, 2022 (Photo Dave Green)

emeritus of urology at Boston University School of Medicine and former chief of urology at Boston Medical Center, BU's primary teaching hospital and Boston's safety net hospital. A friend of the Avedisians, Babayan is the former director of MED's Armenia Medical Partnership Program, a post now held by Aram Kaligian, an assistant professor of family medicine.

Another endowed chair will support the director of the National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL), who will be a professor in the School of Medicine.

"The endowed chairs will help us recruit the best and the brightest faculty," Antman says, "which also helps attract the best students. The best students really resonate with the best faculty. The two together are synergistic—and then getting better equipment for both of them."

Expensive equipment such as a cryogenic electronic microscope or a research MRI suite can cost millions. Granting agencies that support such purchases, such as the NIH [National Institutes of Health], often like to see matching dollars, Antman says.

"Then they're more likely to give us the grant, so again we can attract the best faculty and students doing the most exciting cutting-edge research," she says. "With these funds, we can renovate labs and attract students who might have gone elsewhere."

The Stories behind the Name

Both men's ties to BU date back more than half a century.

Chobanian joined the MED faculty in 1962 and made an impact as a professor, dean, and Medical Campus provost, taking a lead role when Boston City Hospital and Boston University Medical Center Hospital merged to create Boston Medical Center in 1996. He then stepped in during a tumultuous time as BU president ad interim after John Silber stepped down as president for good in 2003; the trustees removed the "ad interim" from his title in 2005.

"At a time of turmoil," says Brown, who

succeeded Chobanian in 2005, "his calming influence held the University together and advanced it."

Avedisian, in addition to being an alum, has made a number of previous donations to BU, including to scholarship funds in Chobanian's name. And, in addition to his MED gift, he is giving an additional \$1 million to BU's College of Fine Arts in the names of their wives (see sidebar). His other BU connections include his niece and nephew: Laurie Onanian, who worked in BU's development office for nine years, and Craig Avedisian (LAW'93), a commercial litigator. Both were deeply involved in arranging the gift.

But long before their BU days, their friendship was forged on the streets of Pawtucket.

"I first met Ed when he was a little squirt," Chobanian says with a grin.

Both families suffered tragic losses in the Armenian Genocide, in which it's estimated that as many as 1.5 million people died. Both men's parents met and married after emigrating to the United States, and settled down to raise their children in Pawtucket, where there were plenty of jobs in the textile mills. The Chobanians lived at 549 Broadway, the Avedisians a few doors down at 575.

With eight years between them (Chobanian was born in 1929, Avedisian in 1937), the boys weren't that close—Chobanian knew Avedisian's older brother, Paramaz, better, as they were only two years apart. "Ed was very small, but a very active individual," Chobanian says. "He hung around, and we didn't know what to do with him."

But Avedisian says Chobanian was indirectly responsible for his eventual distinguished career in music.

"Aram was the pace car. Whatever Aram did, my brother did," Avedisian says. "Aram studied clarinet, my brother studied clarinet. Then they both gave it up, and there was a clarinet in the house, and I said, 'OK, I'll take that on.'"

Soon Chobanian went off to college and medical school. Avedisian found his calling in the woodwind instrument.

He chose BU after becoming entranced with the clarinetist on a recording of the Boston Symphony Orchestra he heard on the radio. "Who is this guy?" the teenage Avedisian asked himself. "I want to study with him." The musician was Manuel Valerio, a professor at CFA.

At BU, Avedisian earned bachelor's and master's degrees in music — with a \$350 scholarship his first year, he says, and more later. He went on to play for decades with both the Pops and the Boston Ballet Orchestra, appearing with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera, among many others, and backing greats like Luciano Pavarotti and Leontyne Price.

Good Fortune Leads to Another Path

As his music career was thriving, it was Avedisian's "sideline" as an investor, beginning in the 1970s, that ultimately made his generous philanthropy possible. He was self-taught, an avid reader of books on the topic as well as *Investor's Business Daily*, and eventually became a regular viewer of CNBC and Bloomberg on cable.

"You think about the deep discipline that's required to be a high-level professional musician, the years of self-study and attention to detail — he applied that same skill set to become a masterful investor," CFA Dean Harvey Young says.

From previous gifts that he'd made, many people knew Avedisian had done well — but hardly anyone knew just *how* well until the magnitude of the MED gift was revealed. A clarinetist donating \$100 million?

"Ed has done just phenomenally as an investor," Brown says with a smile. "And as in most cases for investors, unless they're dot-com founders, so you can see their founder stock, you really don't know. You just do not know. He's done phenomenally well, and when you think about the gener-

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

Brockton Holds Flag-Raising Ceremony in Honor of Armenia's Independence Anniversary

KEN MARTIN PHOTOS

By Ken Martin

BROCKTON, Mass. — A small but vital group of New England Armenians, many old friends and activists, attended the 31st Anniversary of Armenia's independence on September 21 at City Hall Plaza in the small post-industrial city of Brockton.

Mayor Robert Sullivan opened the ceremony and spoke about the history of the multifaceted city and its immigrants' contributions, especially the Armenians and their role in improving the city through good and bad times. The Armenians' ethic of dedication to family and hard work and their determination to survive after the massacres and genocide in their homeland was admirable, he stated.

The mayor introduced John Merian, a prominent businessman and lifelong Brockton resident, who had organized the Armenian Independence Day event.

In an emotional presentation Merian spoke about his grandparents and their con-

temporaries who could only dream about a free and independent country named the Republic of Armenia. They are gone now, but Merian said he feels that the ancestors were looking over the gathering with pride. John spoke about his recent visit to Armenia with his family and the wonder of the ancient and beautiful people and land and their devotion to the ideas of freedom, liberty, and democracy in a sea of authoritarian countries harboring ill will towards them. Azerbaijan and Turkey were willing to attack the sovereign country's borders and beyond in a continuation of a more than 100 year old policy continuing Genocide and aggrandizing the land and property of others.

John Merian and his brother Paul and their families are proud of living in Brockton with more than 50 nationalities represented among the residents. John said that he has met most of them and one thing that he has discovered is they all share similar stories and experiences in the United States.



Mayor Robert Sullivan



John Merian with the proclamation he got from the mayor

from previous page

osity of giving \$100 million and the other gifts he's given, he's just an incredibly generous human being."

The two men's friendship blossomed slowly in recent years. As adults, they saw each other occasionally—a wave or a friendly word when Chobanian attended a Boston Ballet performance, for example. They began to talk more in the 1990s, after Avedisian sent a donation for the Armenia Medical Partnership Program, along with a note to Chobanian.

Chobanian says that when he retired from the BU presidency in 2005, they grew closer.

"I had more time and we started to socialize, and we became very good friends, and our wives became friends, as well," he says. "He's done unbelievable amounts in his lifetime. It's amazing how he's such a fine musician of the highest caliber, but still is able to become a philanthropist—I don't think there are many musicians who can say that."

The admiration goes both ways.

"[Aram] can't do enough for people, and does it all with great ease and graciousness, really exemplary," Avedisian says of Chobanian. "His personality has never changed, that's just the way he is."

Both men have been particularly deter-

mined to help their families' homeland.

Chobanian joined the board of directors of the Fund for Armenian Relief. He also focused on improving medical education and care through a variety of programs, including training physicians, nurses, and other health professionals in emergency medicine and healthcare management, and the development of medical residency and postgraduate educational programs in Armenia.

For his part, Avedisian became a trustee of the American University of Armenia, supported construction of its Paramaz Avedisian Building, named for his brother, and the new Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center, named for his parents. Recipient of an honorary doctorate from the University of Rhode Island in 2019, he is also a trustee for the Armenian Missionary Association of America, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research.

Shoulder to Shoulder

At the late afternoon signing event last month, Chobanian and Avedisian arrived separately and greeted BU officials and others cheerfully. But they both lit up simultaneously when they saw each other, grinning as they bantered, lifelong friends making a difference in the world—together.

A few days later, after Chobanian had time to reflect on the naming gift, he said that he was beginning to appreciate the significance of it: "I think it's wonderful for the medical school and the University. It's still uncomfortable for me, but very satisfying at the same time, very beautiful."

One last note about that new name for the medical school: That's a lot of syllables to stitch onto the traditional spot on all those white coats that MED graduates receive. "We were trying to figure out how to fit it on the pocket," Antman says with a smile. "It would have to be very tiny print." The plan for now: move it to the other side of the chest.

Richard Reidy (Questrom '82), vice chair of the Board of Trustees, who attended the signing event, told the small gathering that Avedisian's gift is "a spectacular milestone in the history of Boston University."

"There is an Armenian aphorism that says, 'Once we give shoulder to shoulder we can turn mountains,'" Reidy said. "The members of the BU medical community are going to wake up every morning and

turn mountains to reach the underserved, to innovate new treatments and breakthrough cures, and to never stop learning."

\$1 Million for BU College of Fine Arts

In addition to his gift to the BU School of Medicine, Edward Avedisian is giving \$1 million to the College of Fine Arts, to endow scholarships in music and visual arts: the Jasmine Chobanian Endowed Fellowship Fund for Visual Arts and the Pamela Avedisian Endowed Fellowship Fund for Performance Music.

The late Jasmine Chobanian was regarded as the "First Lady" of Boston University during her husband's tenure in BU leadership. They knew each other casually growing up in Pawtucket, R.I., but didn't become a couple until both were studying at Brown University. She was a patron of the arts who served on the board of the Boston Ballet and a talented painter who studied at what is now the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. She shared her husband's Armenian heritage. They were married for 59 years until she died after a brief illness in 2014.

Pamela Avedisian is a talented pianist who spent a year as a piano major at Stetson University School of Music in Florida, but transferred to Endicott College after deciding not to make music her career. She became a legal secretary and worked for 20 years for the head of the litigation department at a top Boston law firm. She had met Avedisian when he was directing a chorus at Endicott and she asked if he needed a pianist. They started dating a few years later and married in 1994. She has learned to read, write, and speak Armenian.

Both of their husbands are also immersed in the arts, says CFA Dean Harvey Young, noting Avedisian's orchestra career alongside his investing.

"Mr. Chobanian, although he led the medical school, he is a person who is highly invested in the arts personally," says Young. "In his retirement, he has moved into composition, working with members of the CFA music faculty. That love for medicine and love for the performing arts is distinctive about him.

"Too often we create a false divide between the sciences and the arts, as if people come from totally different worlds or inhabit different planets," Young says, "and what these two individuals demonstrate is that those are essentially one and the same."

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OBITUARY

Mary (Berberian) Humber Richard F. Humber

WINCHESTER, Mass. — Mary (Berberian) Humber of Winchester passed away at home on July 19, 2022 with her husband by her side. Mary was born on February 8, 1926, in Somerville, to the late Harotune and Angele (Nishanian) Berberian.

Her husband, Richard F. Humber, passed away on August 12, 2022 with family by his side. Richard was born in Boston, MA on January 7, 1931.

The two leave son/step-son Richard W. Humber and Kimberly of Lemont, PA, nephew Thomas Garabedian of Falmouth, MA, niece Andrea G. Karanian and Robert of Avon, CT, nephew Kenneth Toomajian and Gail of Reading, MA, niece Audrey G. Urbanik and the late Edward of Wethersfield, CT, and Patty, wife of her nephew the

late Steven Toomajian of Nahant, MA. She also leaves behind many loving nieces and nephews. The family extends thanks to Grace Naluwu and Abieyuwa Erhunmwunsee of Angel Care VNA who provided loving care to Mary. She will be missed by her beloved cat Precious.

Mary was predeceased by her loving sisters and brother-in-laws Dora and Haige Garabedian and Emma and Sarkis Toomajian.

Mary graduated from Watertown High and Burdett College, Boston. She worked as Group Secretary at MIT Lincoln Laboratory and was promoted to Senior Buyer in the Purchasing Department. She retired in 1993 after 43 years of service with MIT. Her main hobby and love was travel.



Mary (Berberian) Humber

She visited many countries all over the world. She loved animals and imagined a second career caring for animals.

Mary studied voice at the N.E. Conservatory of Music and was an avid lover of opera and theater. She was a soloist and member of the St. James Choir and was a longtime member of the Armenian Students Association (ASA). Mary served as a volunteer at the Wang Theater for many years and also volunteered at Children's Hospital, the Museum of Science, and the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown.

Her funeral service was held at St. James Armenian Church, on July 25, 2022. Interment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown.

Richard attended Northeastern University and the University of Maine. He worked at Bath Iron Works as a Senior Buyer. While living in Maine, he opened the Maine Shore Art Gallery in his 200 year-old carriage house in North Edgecomb. He also was a consultant for Spery Marine and traveled to many parts of the



Richard F. Humber

world to oversee the installation of updated Integrated Bridge Radar Systems for the Navy. He always enjoyed working and was relied upon to create solutions in so many fields.

In 1979 he moved back to Massachusetts and married Mary Berberian and together they led a happy and fulfilling life. They visited many countries all over the world. Richard was a trustee emeritus of the Wang Theater and conducted many tours of the majestic theater. He volunteered at the information desk at the Museum of Science in Boston for many years. He skillfully crafted a boat and was well known for the beautiful bird houses he made. Since 1955, Richard was a devoted member of the Bethesda Lodge AF&AM formerly of Brighton and currently in Watertown and served as a Past Master in 1963. On January 26, 2021 officers and members of Bethesda Lodge recognized Richard for 65 years of service as a freemason. He was also a member of the Shriners.

Funeral services for Richard were held at Giragosian Funeral Home, on August 18, 2022. Interment was at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown.

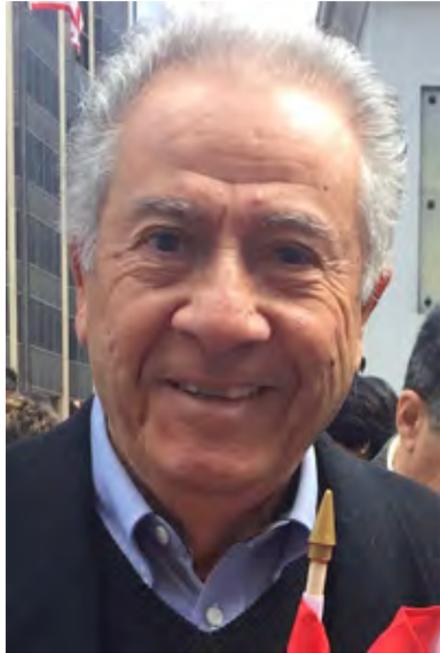
Stephen Stepanian

Descendent of Genocide Survivors, Dedicated to Armenia

NEEDHAM, Mass. — Stephen Stepanian of Needham, formerly of Lexington, died on September 29, 2022

Born in Aleppo, Syria, "Steve" was the son of Armenian Genocide survivors, Antranig and Asghig Stepanian, originally from Dikranagert.

Speaking five languages, Steve was culturally rich and ambitious. Immigrating to the US in 1955 was a move that changed



his life and the lives of the family members who followed.

Within 6 months, he met and married Esther Sarmanian, daughter of Haroutiun and Lousapar, also Genocide survivors, from Marash.

He worked hard to build a life and family.

In 1964 he joined Printed Circuit Corporation as their accounting manager. Steadily advancing, he ultimately became president, as the company grew from 22 to 500 employees.

During this time, Steve's family grew. They had 3 daughters and a son. Together they enjoyed traveling in the U.S. and abroad, and summering in Wolfeboro NH.

Throughout his life, Steve felt deep love for Armenia, fostering children, supporting several initiatives in the homeland, and pursuing justice for Armenia. He imbued his home with this love and dedication.

He was the husband of Esther; father of Andrea Southard, and her husband Ken; Lisa Stepanian and her husband Robert; Stephanie Stepanian and her husband Tom; and the late Paul Stepanian and his wife Julie. He was the grandfather of Rachel Jackson, Daniel Farrohi and his wife Tanya, Alexandra Farrohi, Ella and Paul Stepanian. He was the brother of Marie Kouyoumjian, (Karnig), Rev. Aram Stepanian, (Margaret), Margo Kozelian (Arsen) and Koko Stepanian, (Armine); brother-in-law of, JoAnn and Dick Janjigian, the late Peter and Agnes Sarmanian, and Sandy and the late Hagop Sarmanian. He is also survived by many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Funeral service were held at St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown on Tuesday, October 4. Interment followed at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

Yevnig Heghinian

Lifelong Watertown Resident

WATERTOWN — Yevnig Heghinian, of Watertown, died on September 28, 2022.

She was the daughter of the late Manase and Ovsanna (Cholakian) Heghinian. She was the sister of Araxie Bedoyan and her late husband Aram, Sylva Collins and her husband John, Jasmine Heghinian and Peter, Sirarpi Heghinian-Walzer and Frederic and the late Krikor M. Heghinian. She was the aunt of Suzan, Tamar and Kirk, Susan and Chris, Johnny and Laurie, Michael, Philipp and Anna, and Tania and Joe and great-aunt of Kaleb and Lukas; Madeline, Isabelle and Julianna; Julia, Charlie and Eliza; and Avery.

Funeral services were held at the Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave, Watertown, on Monday, October 3. Inter-



ment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

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Arts & Culture

TCA Award Winners Announced For 2022

By Kristine Melkonyan

YEREVAN — The 28th Vahan Tekeyan Awards ceremony of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of Armenia, supported by the Shake Tekeyan-Ghazarian Fund of the TCA of the United States and Canada, took place on September 23 at its center on Khanjyan Street. These annual awards, the first of which took place in 1991, recognize and encourage the best work in various fields of Armenian culture. This year, there were 75 applicants in the seven categories of awards: literature, Armenology, drama, visual arts, sculpture, journalism, and fine art photography.

Archbishop Natan Hovhannisyan opened the event with his blessing and remarked that in these difficult times, it was heartwarming to be able to have such uplifting occasions. He



Archbishop Natan Hovhannisyan spoke about the importance of such uplifting occasions (photo Arto Manoukian)

hoped the talented recipients would be able to continue to create for the future. His words were followed by a minute of silence for our fallen soldiers.

Prior to the Tekeyan Awards ceremony, special lifetime achievement awards in the form of the Diamond-Studded Ararat Medal were bestowed upon scientist and Armenian Academician Edvard Ghazaryan and to famous jazz musician and Armenian People's Artist Levon Malkhasyan ("Malkhas"). The latter performed an impromptu piece to the delight of the audience.

Prof. Rouben Mirzakhanyan, president of the TCA of Armenia, congratulated this year's awardees and thanked the presidents of the various awards committees for their unbiased work in choosing this year's award recipients. He noted that cumulatively over 100 awards have been given out to artists and scholars by now.

The Central Board of the TCA of the US and Canada was represented in person by its president, Edmond Y. Azadian, who is also a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences see AWARDS, page 14



Joe Fay in his Livingston studio by Emily Fay

Los Angeles Art to be Explored in Panel at Armenian Museum of America

WATERTOWN — Following a successful opening of "On the Edge: Los Angeles Art 1970s-1990s from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection," the Armenian Museum of America will host a panel discussion with three prominent artists in the exhibition — Laddie John Dill, Gregory Wiley Edwards and Joe Fay — on Saturday, October 29. Bolton Colburn will serve as moderator.

The panel begins at 2 p.m. and will be followed by a gallery reception at 3:30 p.m. The collectors Joan Agajanian Quinn and her daughter, Amanda Quinn Olivar, will also be present.

"On the Edge" includes more than 75 works by leading artists including Lita Albuquerque, John Altoon, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Lynda Benglis, Vija Celmins, Claire Falkenstein, Frank Gehry, David Hockney, Helmut Newton, Ed Ruscha, and Andy Warhol. The exhibit opened in June and is scheduled to go through November 30.

"Our new contemporary show has excited visitors and art critics in Boston so we are pleased to offer this program to the public," said Executive Director Jason Sohigian. WBUR called the show one of the top five things to do in Boston and it was reviewed by Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Mark Feeney in the *Boston Globe*. WGBH Arts Editor Jared Bowen has featured the exhibit on NPR's "Morning Edition," "Boston Public Radio" and "Open Studio."

"On the Edge" was curated by Rachel McCullah Wainwright. "The work and artists on display represent a period of history that transformed art making," states Wainwright. "Art made in Los Angeles during the late 1960s and 1970s onward is defined by a unique spirit of anti-conformity, a play of new materials, a celebration of light, and the California cool ethos."

The panelists have several works in the exhibition. Laddie John Dill's neon "portrait" of collector and muse Joan Agajanian Quinn sits on a narrow wall in the center of the large gallery. Dill gained notoriety with materials such as glass, metal, neon, and cement, and his work embodies gesture and dynamic physical presence through its use of industrial materials.

Gregory Wiley Edwards' large abstract expressionist canvas "Expanded Resonance" captures your attention immediately upon entering in the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries. His style is influenced by performance, activism, and his investigations into African art and philosophy.

Joe Fay has two pieces in the current exhibition including a colorful portrait of Joan Quinn. Inspired by the natural world, Fay gleaned a philosophy of experimentation that motivates his practice.

The moderator of this event will be Bolton Colburn, Curator of Collections and Exhibitions at Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art at Utah State University. He is a former director of the Laguna Art Museum, senior curator of the Laguna Art Museum, and senior curator of the Orange County Museum of Art.

The exhibition and this panel discussion are presented by the JHM Foundation. The suggested donation to attend is \$15, and it is free for students and members of the Armenian Museum.

The Armenian Museum of America's galleries are open Thursday through Sunday from noon to 6 pm and it is located at 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA. To RSVP for the October 29 event, visit www.tinyurl.com/oct29ama.

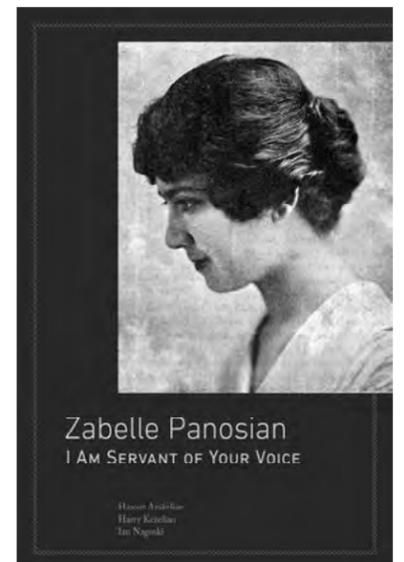


Gregory Wiley Edwards by Robert Hale

Authors Ian Nagoski and Harout Arakelian To Discuss New Book on Soprano Zabelle Panosian

FRESNO — Music researcher and producer Ian Nagoski and music collector and researcher Harout Arakelian will present an in-person lecture titled "I am Servant of Your Voice: Armenian-American Soprano Zabelle Panosian, 1891-1986" on Thursday, October 13, at 7 p.m., in the Industrial Technology Building, Room 101 (corner of Barstow and Campus Dr.) in the Fresno State campus.

The soprano Zabelle Panosian (b. Bardizag 1891; d. New York City 1986) was among the most significant voices of the genocide generation of Armenian-Americans. She recorded 11 songs from March 1917 to June 1918 for Columbia Records in New York City and personally raised millions of dollars for the relief of Armenians through benefit



concerts in the late '10s, regularly collaborating with the tenor Arme-nag Shah-Mouradian. Her recordings resonated with audiences for decades. She toured Europe successfully and sought out Komitas Vardapet in Paris, publishing a first-hand account of her meeting with him as a devotee of his work.

Panosian's music and story underwent a period of forgetting during her lifetime and especially since then. But through recent listening to her breathtakingly beautiful, century-old recordings a revival of her legacy is taking place. Non-Armenians all over the world are learning her name and her music and, through them, a story of the Armenian-American audience who cared for her during the wake of the genocide, awakening a previously neglected story of a great American singer.

A newly published biography of Panosian, *Zabelle Panosian: I am a Servant of your Voice*, undertaken by three independent researchers, presents her story along with new, careful restorations of her complete recordings providing an opportunity to look deeply into the life and music

see BOOK, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

TCA Award Winners Announced For 2022

AWARDS, from page 13

of the Republic of Armenia, and Central Board member Arto Manoukian of Montreal.

Azadian, serving as the chairman of the literature committee, gave Feliks Bakhchinyan the Vahan Tekeyan award for literature in honor of his novel *Verjin mankutyun* [Last Childhood]. Azadian declared that it was very difficult to choose the best among books of equivalent value. He said, “Despite all the extant difficulties, the field of literature in Armenia is very fertile. We have figures who work at the



Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the Central Board of the TCA of the US and Canada (photo Arto Manoukian)

level of international literature.” He added that the winning novel is distinguished by its appealing narrative language.

Lalikh Khachatryan, a doctor of philology and professor at the Abovyan Armenian State Pedagogical University, was the winner of the Armenology category for the work *Lezvabanakan terminneri usumnakan bararan* [Educational Dictionary of Linguistic Terms]. Armenology committee head Davit Gyurjinyan, candidate in philology, said that the selection process took into account Khachatryan’s prolific academic and pedagogical work.

The award for journalism went to Sara Petrosyan of Hetq Online, published by the Investigative Journalists



Hagop Avedikian (photo Arto Manoukian)



Academician Edvard Ghazaryan, left, receives the Diamond-Studded Ararat Medal from Prof. Rouben Mirzakhanyan



Group picture of the 2022 Tekeyan Award winners: from left, Hayk Israyelyan, Aram Isabekyan, Ashot Baghdasaryan, Anna Grigoryan, Lalikh Khachatryan, Feliks Bakhchinyan, Sara Petrosyan



Jazz legend Malkhas, left, receives the Diamond-Studded Ararat Medal from Prof. Rouben Mirzakhanyan

NGO. Prof. Hakob Avedikyan, president of the journalism selection committee, praised Petrosyan’s many years of experience in the field of investigative journalism and stated that her work served to defend Armenian national values. Avedikyan noted, “With an irregular, ragtag and often polarized press working all the time, investigative journalism is weak, since it is time consuming and often dangerous.” He said that if there would be government support, Petrosyan’s investigative reporting could form the basis for legal prosecution.

In the field of drama, the winner was the Forma Pantomime Theater for its presentation of the play “Vay-vay,”



Armenology committee head Davit Gyurjinyan, at podium, gives a Tekeyan award to Professor Lalikh Khachatryan (photo Arto Manoukian)



Jazz legend Malkhas plays for the awards audience

while People’s Artist of the Republic of Armenia Aram Isabekyan was the winner in the field of visual arts with his work “Tpavorutyun” [Impression]. Ashot Baghdasaryan won in the field of sculpture for his series “Atoner” [Chairs]. Anna Grigoryan’s series “Kaghakayin grafik” [City Schedule] won in the category of fine arts photography.



Armen Elbakyan, left, gives Tekeyan Award to Hayk Israyelyan of the Forma Pantomime Theater (photo Arto Manoukian)

The Public Radio and Television Symphonic Pop Orchestra performed during the ceremonies. The TCA awards have been given in the past to many noted poets, like Silva Kaputikyan, Lyudvig Duryan, Hrachya Tamrazyan; painters like Varuzhan Vardanyan, Ruben Abovyan, Gevorg Yeghiazaryan; sculptors like Emil Kazaz and Levon Tokmajyan; composer Tigran Mansuryan; song composer Ruben Hakhverdyan; musician Jivan Gasparyan; conductors Hovhannes Chekijyan, Kostandin Orbelyan, Eduard Topchyan; actors Vardan Petrosyan, Yervand Manaryan; journalists Hagop Avedikian, Artur Bakhtamyan; writers Levon Khechoyan and Sarkis Vahakn.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Mouhalabiye (Mouhalabieh) Photo and recipes courtesy of Robyn Kalajian

From The Armenian Kitchen: Mouhalabiye (Mouhalabieh)

This traditional Middle Eastern dessert recipe is from the late Alice Bezjian's bestselling *The Complete Armenian Cookbook* published in 1983, and is reprinted courtesy of influential Armenian food blogger Robyn Kalajian at thearmeniankitchen.com.

Alice was born in 1913 in Cairo, Egypt, of Armenian parents. Her family moved to Asia Minor for a short time and later to Syria before finally settling down in Beirut, Lebanon. At an early age, she was introduced to the joy of cooking by her maternal grandfather. He was a widely traveled man, who had been around the world at a time when traveling was neither easy nor fashionable. He used to bring new recipes from faraway places and cook large dinners for the whole family. He often said that cooking was fun, but the greatest pleasure was sharing one's creative dishes with appreciative friends.



In Beirut, Alice took cooking lessons from the best known chefs in the country. She later gave cooking lessons and taught her students how to make and present food in creative, colorful, and appetizing ways. See: <http://www.abrilbooks.com/alice-bezjian>

In 1964, Alice moved to Los Angeles with her family where she and her husband, Hagop Garouj Bezjian, started a gourmet delicatessen store. The store was highly successful, and became a landmark location for many gourmet cooks, chefs, and food lovers in Southern California. Hagop passed away in 1990 in Los Angeles.

It is often said that Alice was always at her store, graciously dispensing her favorite recipes and culinary expertise with her friends and customers. *Sunset Magazine* and *New West* wrote articles about the store, and Alice's traditional recipes were published in those

magazines. She went to her store frequently to meet her customers and exchange ideas and recipes before she passed away in 2003 in Los Angeles.

"Mouhalabiye is a classic, simple Lebanese pudding, similar to a blancmange in France or the Italian panna cotta. This is a light, fresh dessert coming straight from Lebanon, it is easy to prepare, and requires very few ingredients. It is similar to Haytaliyeh, a Syrian dessert," adds Robyn. "The texture is almost like a flan, it's soft and smooth but holds its shape well. Haytaliyeh is very refreshing during the hot summer days. It consists of whole milk cooked with cornstarch. When cold, the mixture is served with clotted cream or ice cream, and then rose petal jam or orange-blossom-infused syrup is poured over it."

INGREDIENTS:

3 cups milk
1/3 cup sugar
1 cup water
1/3 cup cornstarch
1 cup water
1 teaspoon rose water or 1 teaspoon vanilla
Optional toppings: rose petal jam, orange blossom water, ground pistachios, walnuts, pine nuts or hazelnuts

PREPARATION:

In a medium pan, bring the milk, sugar and one cup of water to a boil; stir occasionally.

Dissolve cornstarch in one cup of water then add it into the milk-sugar mixture, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat and simmer until mixture bubbles, about 15 minutes, stirring from time to time. Finally, add rose water or vanilla for flavoring.

Pour into individual serving cups and chill. Serve with sprinkled ground pistachio nuts (or walnuts, pine nuts, hazelnuts). Decorate with rose petal jam, if desired.

(Easier) Grape Juice Rojig (Roejig)

Alice Bezjian's Roejig Recipe from *The Complete Armenian Cookbook* "Making roejig is a tedious, time-consuming process," says Robyn. "I wondered if there could possibly be an easier way to make this sweet delight. From Alice Bezjian's *The Complete Armenian Cookbook*, I discovered a less labor-intensive version of making roejig, but be warned, it still requires time and patience to prepare."

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 cups cornstarch
4 cups water, divided
5 cups sugar
1 cup concentrated grape juice
1/2 pound walnuts halves, shelled

PREPARATION:

Combine the cornstarch with the 1 cup of water in a mixing bowl and stir to dissolve. Add 1 more cup of water and stir.

Pour the mixture through a strainer to remove any lumps. Set aside.

In a saucepan combine the sugar and concentrated grape juice in the remaining 2 cups of the water. Over medium heat, stir until sugar is dissolved.

Gently stir one-half of the sugar mixture into the cornstarch mixture. Then add the remaining sugar mixture and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, for 20 minutes, or until the mixture thickens. Reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring, about 1 hour, or until the mixture forms threadlike pieces when dropped into cold water.

Pour half the mixture into an 11" x 17" baking pan liberally dusted with cornstarch. Press walnut halves into the mixture in 3 or 4 close rows. Pour the remaining mixture over the nuts. Sprinkle with more cornstarch.

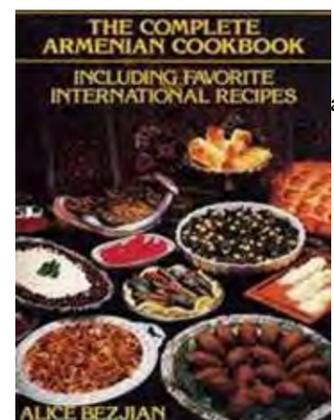
Cover with plastic wrap for at least 10 hours. Using the walnut rows as your guide, cut the roejig into 3 or 4 rows. Generously roll each strip into cornstarch. Wrap each roll separately in wax paper and freeze until you are ready to serve. Then unwrap, bring to room temperature, and cut into slices about a quarter inch thick.

See: <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/easy-roejig-is-that-even-possible/>

THE COMPLETE ARMENIAN COOKBOOK INCLUDING FAVORITE INTERNATIONAL RECIPES

Hardcover – Originally published in 1983 by Rosekeer Press:

"The Middle Eastern recipes in Mrs. Bezjian's book are not easily found in other cookbooks. I had not anywhere encountered a recipe for Ayesh-el-Sa-rya, bread baked in syrup and topped with clotted cream. There is even a workable recipe for lokoom, a fruit paste, for which I had been searching for years. There are Armenian dishes which may perhaps surprise many Armenians, such as paska, the Russian-Armenian Easter bread, snail shaped fritters with syrup, or a pudding made with chicken breasts. Certainly, any Westerner will be fascinated with the variety, as I was."



ORDER TODAY:

<https://www.amazon.com/Complete-Armenian-Cookbook-Alice-Bezjian/dp/0915033003>

<http://www.abrilbooks.com/complete-armenian-cookbook-the.html>

<https://agbubookstore.org/products/pre-order-here-the-complete-armenian-cookbook>

Robyn Kalajian is a retired culinary teacher who has a passion for cooking Armenian and Middle Eastern cuisine. Her husband Douglas is an author and retired journalist who has written extensively about Armenian food and culture. Visit their website for more recipes and how-to-make videos, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/c/dkalajianTAK/videos>

Caucasus Heritage Watch Continues to Monitor Ongoing Destruction of Monuments

MONUMENTS, from page 1

Mirror-Spectator good reason to check in with archaeologist Dr. Adam Smith of Cornell, one of the primary members of the CHW team, who graciously answered our questions on the organization's recent work.

Documenting Prior Cultural Erasure

In addition to their continuous monitoring of sites in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding areas, CHW has for the past year been compiling an extensive report on the Nakhchivan region.

The region is an exclave of Azerbaijan that lies for the most part between Armenia and Iran. The Arax River divides it from the far northwestern corner of Iran (the Maku region) while to the east of Nakhichevan is the southern section of today's Republic of Armenia, the province of Syunik, bordering on Iran at the Armenian town Meghri, also on the Arax River. The border between Iran and the Agri Province of Turkey (the former Surmalu District of the Russian Empire, ceded by the Soviets in the 1921 Treaty of Kars), which includes Mt. Ararat, follows a tiny tributary stream on the west side of the Arax known as the Karasu, and due to the resulting panhandle, Turkey has an 11-mile border with Nakhichevan which can be accessed by a bridge over the Arax. It is this connection which gives Turkey and Azerbaijan the motivation to push for a similar "Zangezur Corridor" through southern Armenia, which would make it possible to travel by land directly from Baku to Ankara.

The above description shows why the Nakhichevan region is extremely important from the perspective of geopolitics. However, it is also important for understanding the history of Azerbaijan's campaign of cultural erasure. Nakhichevan has been home to large Armenian communities for thousands of years and made up a part of several historical Armenian kingdoms and principalities. Famed sites such as the medieval wine-producing region of Goghhtn, and the early modern mercantile cities of Agulis and Julfa were also located within its borders. (The far-flung Persian-Armenian community largely traces its roots to merchant families deported from Nakhichevan's town of Julfa by Shah Abbas I of Persia beginning in 1604 and resettled in the "New Julfa" neighborhood of Isfahan, Iran as a way to bolster the Persian economy). The Nakhichevan region was depopulated of Armenians during the 20th century, but the last 25 years has seen the additional destruction of any proof that they were ever there; mass disappearance of the remains of churches, monasteries, cemeteries, monuments, and other traces of the Armenian past.

Without being able to demonstrate Azerbaijan's recent history of engaging in this extreme erasure, CHW's stated mission of monitoring the current risks to Armenian monuments might fall on deaf ears in an international community that has little understanding of the region's history and dynamics.

"When we first started this," Smith states, "the reason behind our monitoring program was an understanding of the historical situation in the South Caucasus. Without a clear understanding there wouldn't be a justification for the monitoring."

"The work in Nakhichevan seemed to be the most pressing issue," he continues. "There had been extensive reports on Julfa and it had reached into the Western press.

[in this piece in *The Guardian*, for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/01/monumental-loss-azerbaijan-cultural-genocide-khachkars>] But we lacked the solid empirical materials to define what had actually been destroyed. Could we demonstrate, through the data, a clear program of state sponsored cultural erasure?" That was the question one the group's mind a year ago when they started their work on Nakhichevan.

Smith goes on to detail the fact that the Azerbaijani and Turkish sponsored system of denial has included also denial of the existence of historic sites, making his job that much harder. Nakhichevan's nearly total inaccessibility to the outside world doesn't make it any easier, of course.

"It is extremely difficult to find these locations when they've been destroyed, and at the same time their existence was previously denied," Smith stated.

The official documents of the Azerbaijani government, which administers the region, deny that the sites existed or that they were Armenian, in other words. Therefore, the group naturally turns to other, more reliable sources.

"We used American spy satellite imagery, Soviet topographic maps, and some media sources as well," he said

Smith also mentioned that the group made use of the work of Argam Ayyvazian, an Armenian native of Nakhichevan who became a scholar in Yerevan in the Soviet era and published several books on the region, describing the multitude of historical sites in detail. An English translation of one of his books, *The Historical Monuments of Nakhichevan*, was published in 1990 by Wayne State University Press. [Available at Abril Books, among other places: <http://www.abrilbooks.com/books/historical-monuments-of-nakhichevan-the.html>]

Of Ayyvazian's books, Smith says, "That's also an extremely important resource, more an ethnographic description, great as a place to start, but when you are dealing with satellite imagery, you have to have precision location data."

For that, the group uses closeups of declassified US spy satellite photos of the Soviet Transcaucasus, along with Soviet-produced topographic maps. In other words, the best geographical data on the region are from the competing superpowers of the Cold War era.

"Between these 3 sources, we were able to geo-locate a significant portion of the monuments," Smith noted.

Out of 159 monuments under consideration, 127 were located. "We were able to do before-and-after comparisons with American spy satellite imagery with the modern commercially available satellite imagery," said Smith.

These "commercially available satellite imagery" programs are something like a professional-grade version of Google Earth.

Out of the 127 sites, Smith says the group was able to assess 110. Out of the 110 sites (churches, monasteries, chapels, and cemeteries), 108 were destroyed.

The two that were left over? Smith guesses that because they were so small and seemingly insignificant, authorities may not even have realized that they were Armenian.

Silent Erasure

According to Smith and his colleagues, Lori Khatchadourian of Cornell and Ian Lindsay of Purdue, the evidence they collected shows that the destruction was inten-

tional.

"What this showed us," Smith noted, "was we weren't dealing with occasional vandalism or looting, we are dealing with something bureaucratic and systematic that the state must have done."

"The whole site had been scrubbed clean," he continued. "The very memory that something had been there was very difficult to maintain."

For that reason, he says, the report was entitled "Silent Erasure." This type of cultural destruction is a departure from what has been depicted in other parts of the world through the Western media. Azerbaijan's erasure is perhaps even more complete.

"It has the potential to truly devastate monuments of the human past. The typical image has been spectacular destruction, such as by the Taliban or ISIS [i.e. the Buddha statues in Afghanistan which the Taliban essentially bragged about destroying]. The type [of destruction] in Nakhichevan is silent, not spectacular; total, not opportunistic; and its state sponsored. It's a worrying and deeply devastating prospect for our human cultural heritage," Smith concluded.

What To Do With The Evidence

Asked at whom this research was aimed, Smith replied, "Our first audience is the communities whose heritage is impacted. The descendant communities are taken very seriously."

Smith continued, "We also recognize this is a much larger problem. What institutions globally are prepared to handle this? UNESCO is not built for this kind of program. It is organized by member states, and if the member states are conducting erasure there is nothing [UNESCO, the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization] can do."

It has been widely reported that Azerbaijan has gained massive influence in UNESCO. But Smith's point is well-taken. The structure of UNESCO is set up so that countries, as member states, gain international support for preservation of cultural heritage that they nominate within their own country. There is no mechanism for an ethnic group or another country to nominate heritage sites that exist in another country against that country's desires.

However, Smith noted that, "The new emergent silver lining is the emergence of the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice for crimes against heritage and accountability."

Referring to the ongoing Armenia v. Azerbaijan case, Smith mentions that one of the planks in the lawsuit is destruction of cultural heritage. The CHW's reports were admitted into evidence at the ICJ in that case.

"The lawyers for Armenia submitted our evidence in support of their briefs," Smith said. As a professional academic enterprise, the CHW doesn't directly get involved in political advocacy. "Our goal is to speak for the monuments, and to speak for the human past. I don't know how effective that injunction will be," Smith said, referring to the ICJ's order to Azerbaijan to desist from cultural destruction as well as torture of POWs and inflaming racism.

"That is the worrisome part of our documentation last week — of the first clear evidence since the ICJ ruling [of cultural destruction on the part of Azerbaijan]"

Last week, CHW released documentation that the St. Sargis Church in the Mokhrens (Susanliq) village in the Hadrut (Khojave-

nd) region of Karabakh, has been completely destroyed. Hadrut is one of the areas of Nagorno-Karabakh that was captured by the Azeri forces in the 2020 war.

Because they were busy completing the full report on Nakhichevan, CHW is still working through their monitoring report that had been scheduled for July, which will now include the Mokhrens church.

Academic Integrity

CHW, though it may be viewed as a partisan of the "Armenian side" by some, is avowedly a professional, objective, and non-political organization. Their focus is on protecting historical sites from the ravages of current geopolitical conflicts, regardless of the aggressor.

Said Smith, "Part of our overall goal is to get heritage out of the front lines of the conflict. Our goals cannot be the resolution of the conflict, but it would be a worthy success to get heritage off the front lines."

In that vein, they are also preparing information and have in the past prepared information on Islamic monuments in Karabakh.

"Our next report that will come out, sometime around February is on the fate of Islamic Persian and Azerbaijani heritage on territories under Armenian administration after the first [Nagorno-Karabakh] war."

Smith credits his institution, Cornell University, with supporting the project wholeheartedly.

"The University has been fabulous and supportive. Cornell takes academic freedom and integrity of data very seriously. Purdue [where Bocceriyan works] has also been supportive. This is the kind of work that universities are supposed to do. Policy makers can debate, but this is an ideal case of what academic research can provide," he says.

Smith also wants to give credit to his graduate students, who have helped a great deal in the research. "Our students have been fabulous too. We keep most of them anonymous. We are ready to be the face of the project," for the safety of the students, Smith explains.

The current uptick in the conflict has increased the anxiety about at-risk heritage sites.

"We have an extraordinarily large database of heritage sites. We would hope the ones we say are at risk would drop. But it seems that these are even more at risk," Smith relates.

"We are always ready to monitor sites. We are very fortunate to have funding from our sponsors so far," Smith says, adding that the group is still looking to raise funds.

In regard to the events of the past few weeks in Karabakh, Smith agrees that "The conflicts renew the need for vigilance," but warns that "the Nakhichevan report shows that the cessation of conflict doesn't mean [the sites will then be safe]."

In conclusion, Smith noted that "the CHW is ready for a long haul of monitoring. A lot happened over the course of the summer. It's certainly disheartening to be releasing a report that we think is going to the truth, and have the events of this week unfold [the Nakhichevan report was released the same day as the renewed attacks]. That should be devastating to any human."

In conclusion, said Smith, "We at CHW look forward to a time when there can one day be peace in the region."

(Visit "Story Map" about St. Karapet Monastery of Abrakunis, one of the most prominent monuments to be destroyed: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/78d95ebb8ff44bfaa5398e202a3f7979>)



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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

OCTOBER 9 — Sayat Nova Dance Company's 35TH ANNIVERSARY GALA, celebrating 35 years of preserving and promoting Armenian culture. To be held at The Castle at Sheraton, 1657 Worcester Rd., Framingham, MA. 6 pm – Reception; 7 pm – Dinner and Program. Entertainment by popular singer GOHAR HOVHANNISYAN & BAND. Donation: \$150 for adults; \$100 for 18 and under. RSVP by September 30. Tables of 10 guests highly encouraged. www.sayatnova.com/35th-anniversary

OCTOBER 14-15 — St. James Armenian Church 75th Annual Bazaar – Our traditional two-day Bazaar is back! Fri 12-8 pm, Sat 11 am-7 pm. Delicious Armenian Food, Mezze, Pastries, and Baked Goods. Silent Auction, Raffle, Children's Activities, Booths and Vendors. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or info@sthagop.com or visit www.stjameswatertown.org/bazaar.

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

OCTOBER 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, annakesablyan10@gmail.com; or Isabelle, 978-459-7315, ihame@aol.com.

OCTOBER 29 — A conversation with artists from "On the Edge: Los Angeles Art 1970s-1990s from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection" current-

ly 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>

NEW JERSEY

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

RHODE ISLAND

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

•October 14 - "Mer Anoush Ayrenik" Grigor Haroutyunyan Conductor, Chorale of Ghazaraos Saryan Art School, Yerevan, Armenia, 7.30 p.m.

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

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

•December 9 - Christmas concert at Church sanctuary, Friday at 7.30 p.m.

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

2022 TCA Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund Award Winners Announced

WATERTOWN — The management of Tekeyan Cultural Association's "Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund" this week announced the names of Armenian students awarded in 2022 for their academic studies.

They are:

•Davut Azizyan, a student at University of Minnesota Twin Cities, majoring in political science and minoring in pre-law, due to graduate in 2025. He was born in the village of Dzovaper,



Armenia.

•Ani Mkrtchyan, a student at the University of Maryland, majoring in International Law and minoring in international business, due to graduate in 2026. She was born in Yerevan, Armenia.

Noted journalist and Armenian activist Dr. Nubar Berberian passed away on November 23, 2016. His entire estate was bequeathed to the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.. The Board of Directors of TCA decided to establish the "Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund," given annually to two college students of



Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.

Another goal accomplished this year was publishing this year a collected edition of his Armenian language articles and editorials under the title ՌԱԿԻ ԱՆԽՈՆՁ ԽՄԲԱԳՐԱՊԵՏԸ (Dr. Nubar Berberian, Editor, Publisher, National Figure), compiled and edited by Hagop Vartivarian.

This year is the fifth time the awards were given out.

To apply for 2023 sixth year awards, please email TCADirector@aol.com.



Authors Ian Nagoski and Harout Arakelian to Discuss New Book on Soprano Zabelle Panosian

BOOK, from page 13 of a unique and serious artist who left an amazing body of work.

Ian Nagoski who published Panosian's biography will talk about her life and music along with comments by his co-author Harout Arakelian who will speak directly to her relationship to the Fresno area.

Nagoski is a music researcher and record producer in Baltimore, Md. For more

than a decade, he has produced scores of reissues of early 20th-century recordings in languages other than English for labels including "Dust-to-Digital," "Tompkins Square," his own "Canary Records," and others. His enthusiastic talks have been hosted at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., the Onassis Cultural Center in Athens Greece, the University of Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, and New

York University.

Arakelian is a video editor, music collector and researcher based in Los Angeles, California. His focus is the Armenian contribution to the landscape of art and culture, with a specific lens on the American experience. He is actively working on collecting every known commercial recording from the 78 rpm era. He contributes articles for the Armenian Museum of

America's "Sound Archive." He began a series of live presentations at Abril Bookstore, which only ended due to the Covid pandemic. He has been a guest lecturer at UCLA and has delivered presentations for the Armenian Institute in London.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

For more information about the lecture visit <https://cah.fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies/news-events/index.html>.



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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Armenia, Once Again, Caught in a Tug of War



By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenia is currently in the throes of a dilemma, pondering who will sign the fateful peace treaty with Azerbaijan, which may amputate Armenia's territory, in exchange for the elusive hope that security may return to its borders. Azerbaijan's policy, with regards to Armenia, is fueled by the hatred shown recently to the world through videos of the barbaric torture, murder and dismemberment of an Armenian woman soldier and the group execution of Armenian POWs, recently released in a grisly clip, which warrants a legal response as war crimes.

The situation is very fluid in the Caucasus political sphere, favoring the Baku-Ankara tandem, at the moment. Turkey and Azerbaijan are not seeking stability and peace in the region; rather, they are banking on the balance of power which fluctuates daily, to extract maximal concessions from Armenia. Turkey, in particular, has long tentacles reaching the region. One goal is to coerce Armenia to provide an extraterritorial land passage to serve the former's pan-Turanian project, while a greater one is to eliminate Armenia from the face of the globe altogether, and thus render the case of the Genocide defenseless.

The issue of the Armenian Genocide is a monumental legal hurdle on Turkey's path to achieve its global ambitions, which include membership in the European Union and on the United Nations Security Council. As long as there is an Armenian state which can espouse legally the cause of the Genocide, Turkey will be haunted by that hurdle. There is no clearer example than the case of the Assyrians to show what a big difference a state backing claims makes in the global scene. Wrongfully, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has relegated the matter to the diaspora, in the hope of appeasing Turkey. However, the Genocide is the legal burden of the Armenian state.

At this point, Armenia is caught in the turbulence of the Caucasus, which Russia considers its zone of influence, while the West is trying to dislodge the latter, using the conflicting interests in the region to its advantage.

For a long time, Moscow took for granted that it had Armenia in its fold, no matter what, particularly using the historical fears engendered by Turkey. Russia is so engrained in Armenia's political, social and military life that it would be almost impossible to extricate the country from its embrace; and there would be no reason to part from Moscow's sphere, were it not for Russia's abandonment of its treaty obligations vis-à-vis Azerbaijan's aggression. Perhaps Russia expected some sympathy from Armenia about its own current predicament, in exchange for its historic support of Armenia, but the latter no longer can afford that sympathy, when it has been facing an existential threat without receiving any help.

Russian statesmen, from President Vladimir Putin down to Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin, continue to tout the smokescreen of Russia's role in halting the 44-Day War or the recent Azerbaijani aggression on September 13. Such talk may satisfy their desire for political cover but does not help the 4,800 victims of the 2022 war or the 207 casualties of the recent flareup.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the various Armenian-Russian treaty obligations required the prevention of such aggression rather than the expectation that Armenia be grateful for the prevention of further wholesale massacre.

When the Velvet Revolution took place in 2018, Russian commentators and their Armenian cohorts in Yerevan tried to present the political movement as another color revolution aimed against Russian influence. Yet, as time passed, leaders in Yerevan were very cautious not to tread on the paws of the "bear" in the north.

As political events unfolded, Russia's delinquency in its commitments encouraged Armenia to voice its resentments and seek alternative source of political support and arms.

In the aftermath of the September 13 attack, three members of the United Nations Security Council — France, the US and the UK — clearly pointed to Azerbaijan as the aggressor and demanded the removal of Azerbaijani forces from the sovereign territory of Armenia, while Russia continued dilly-dallying and covering up the aggression under the guise of a "border dispute," advocating that there is no clear demarcation of borders.

Armenia appealed to the CSTO for military support, triggering Article 4 of the organization, which says that attack on the territory of one member is an attack on all members. Instead of taking action, however, the organization sent CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas to Armenia with a delegation.

The Chief of Staff of CSTO Anatoly Sidorov, after arriving in Yerevan, warned: "Let's not get ahead of ourselves. On September 13, the heads of our states unanimously declared that political and diplomatic methods should solve the problems that the exist between Armenia and Azerbaijan."

That kind of statement sounds like a joke when blood is flowing.

In the first place, Pashinyan refused to meet with the Zas delegation, to express his displeasure, and announced that in recent contacts with a number of colleagues from CSTO, he stated that public sentiments in Armenia towards the organization are developing and changing rapidly. Pashinyan continued: "During the conversation, it was said that there are fears that Armenia will leave the CSTO. I formulated the opposite, that there are fears the CSTO will leave Armenia."

Prior to that statement, Pashinyan had called for international monitoring forces on the border, setting fear in the hearts of the Kremlin policymakers, that soil would be taken from under Russian feet in the Caucasus. Maria Zakharova, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson, reacted furiously, saying it is a fantasy to invite international forces.

Following Zakharova's outburst, Foreign Minister Lavrov, in a sterner voice, heralded that "we have to await the results of Zas' visit." That added insult to

injury, as if the unburied bodies of Armenian soldiers — paraded by Azerbaijan — were not enough of a statement about the situation.

There is an ambivalence in Armenia about the prospect of leaving the CSTO. Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister Vahe Gevorgyan states, "Armenia is expecting clear actions from the CSTO on the restoration of territorial integrity of Armenia as a member state of CSTO, as well as the prevention of new escalations." In reply, the Vice President of the Republican Party's I Have Honor faction Armen Ashotyan stated, "Yes, the CSTO is not perfect and not the best security system. But unfortunately, Armenia has nothing else. Leaving the CSTO can only aggravate the problems and create a security vacuum."

An almost identical statement was issued by political scientist Alexander Iskandaryan. Western-leaning political groups are pushing for leaving the CSTO in the hopes that the West will fill in the political vacuum. That fear is real also in Moscow.

If nothing else, Armenia's initiative has already sensitized the Kremlin's policy makers to take the perceived danger as real and they have reacted accordingly. Thus, until recently, Moscow kept complete silence every time Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu or Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev insisted on the Zangezur Corridor and they sounded as if that was a done deal. But recently, the Russian member of the Trilateral Commission of Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk stated firmly that the transportation routes to be opened, including the Zangezur Corridor, will remain under Armenia's sovereign territory.

Thus, at least one threat is eliminated temporarily, as Aliyev was insisting on a peace treaty where Armenia would sign away Karabakh's existence and its rights over the proposed corridor.

As the fateful moment of the peace treaty approaches, we will find out what Moscow's stand would be on the issue of Karabakh.





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Turkish Denialists Cannot Defeat Armenians in California

Last week, two Azeris arrogantly declared themselves to Turkish denialists found out last week that they can't defeat Armenians in California.

Contrary to extensive Turkish lobbying efforts, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law on Sept. 29, 2022, a bill designating April 24, Genocide Remembrance Day, as a State Holiday. The bill, initiated by California Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian on February 7, 2022, was adopted unanimously by both legislative chambers of the State at the end of August. It had earlier passed unanimously through three separate committees in each of the chambers.

Assembly Bill 1801 mandates the closing of all community colleges and public schools throughout California on April 24 of every year. State employees will be given time off with pay. The bill states: "The Legislature finds and declares that Genocide Remembrance Day would be a day for all to reflect on past and present genocides, but especially those that have felt the impact of these atrocities and groups that have found refuge in California, including, but not limited to, the Holocaust, Holodomor, and the Genocides of the Armenian, Assyrian, Greek, Cambodian, and Rwandan communities. Genocide Remembrance Day would be observed annually on April 24, also known as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, during the week the state of California traditionally recognizes Genocide Awareness Week."

The bill further states: "Public schools and educational institutions throughout this state may include exercises, funded through existing resources, remembering and honoring the many contributions that survivors of genocide have made to this country. The State Board of Education may adopt a model curriculum guide to be available for use by public schools for exercises related to Genocide Remembrance Day."

In a belated and failed attempt, the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), issued on Sept. 6, an Action Alert asking Gov. Newsom to block the bill after it was adopted unanimously by the California Legislature. The Turkish Action Alert was also posted on websites in Turkey, urging millions of Turks around the world to send messages to Gov. Newsom. The Action Alert contained two sample letters addressed to Gov. Newsom, along with his email, postal address and fax number. The Turkish messages contained the usual denials about the Armenian Genocide, ignoring the fact that all U.S. 50 states had acknowledged the Armenian Genocide, along with both Houses of Congress, and Pres. Joe Biden.

On the eve of Gov. Newsom's Sept. 30 decision on the bill, the ATAA posted a second Action Alert in the afternoon of Sept. 29 urging him to veto it. Unfortunately for ATAA, the Governor signed the bill on that same day. The ATAA posted a sheepish message on its Facebook page on Sept. 30 with a typing error:

"Regretfully sharing the devastating Mrs. [probably meant to write 'news'] for Turks in state of California. CA Governor Newsom signs."

After signing the Genocide bill, Gov. Newsom declared: "Genocide commemoration is more than a history lesson. It is a powerful tool to engage people across generations in the sanctity of human rights, the enormity of crimes, and how to prevent future atrocities. Establishing a state holiday that commemorates genocides -- both past and present -- provides space for groups to heal and sends a powerful signal about our California values. Importantly, California continues to lead by example, with a strong record of providing refuge to countless groups suffering through the atrocity of genocide."

California Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian, the sponsor of the bill, stated: "As a member of a community impacted by genocide, it's hard to describe how much this means to those of us who have endured the often intentional denial of our pain and history for so long. Today, the largest state in the union and the 5th largest economy in the world has taken a stand to annually recognize the impacts of genocide. To all those who have been lost to genocide, we remember you. To all those who live with the impacts of genocide, we stand with you."

California Assemblymember Laura Friedman told The California Courier: "In recognizing 'Genocide Remembrance Day' on April 24th as a state holiday in California, we're acknowledging the tragedy and horrors of the Armenian Genocide and the devastation of genocides that followed. We're also honoring the victims and survivors throughout history, and educating future generations so that we can prevent such atrocities from occurring again."

The Turkish Action Alerts were futile because they had the impossible goal of blocking a widely-acknowledged historic fact, the Armenian Genocide.

The only thing that Turkish denialists and their government should now do, after over 100 years of lies, is acknowledge the truth and make appropriate amends to descendants of the Armenian Genocide. Such an action would be in the best interest of Turkey itself. After that, Turkish citizens would no longer live with a guilty conscience and resort to embarrassing cover ups whenever they are reminded of the Armenian Genocide.

As I wrote in my December 2006 article, Ahmet Ertegun, the Founder and CEO of Atlantic Records and son of Mehmet Ertegun, Turkey's Ambassador to the U.S., had told me in a meeting in Los Angeles prior to his death that he could not understand why Turkish officials kept denying the Armenian Genocide -- a fact known to the entire world. He made it clear that his purpose in acknowledging the Genocide was not to appease Armenians. He believed that it was, first of all, in Turkey's interest to acknowledge the Genocide, because doing so would help Ankara's application for membership in the European Union and get rid of the stigma that had haunted his native land for so many years.

It is now up to Turkey and Turkish denialists to decide what course to take. They can either acknowledge the obvious truth of the Armenian Genocide or continue denying an undeniable historic fact and become the laughing stock of the world.

LETTERS

Hurdles Abound for Western Arms To Reach Armenia

To the Editor:

(The following letter is addressed to senior editorial columnist Edmond Y. Azadian.)

This is in regard to your editorial published in the Saturday, September 17, 2022 issue of *Mirror-Spectator* and your comments regarding Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan visit to Washington.

In your editorial you, very rightly, quote "Of course, there could not be any talk about supplying Armenia with any military hardware, since Armenia is part of a competing military bloc, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), headed by Russia."

Beside the issue of CSTO, another very important issue that prohibits Armenia from requesting and US from providing, any military hardware to Armenia, is the Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act of 1992, which was lobbied and supported by the Armenian lobby in Washington. It was meant to constrict US assistance to Azerbaijan. For political considerations, regrettably, US DOD added Armenia to the Section 907, in addition to Azerbaijan.

For Armenia to request military hardware from USA, one of the following steps or procedures should be requested and completed; either a waiver to section 907 (as Azerbaijan got one) or modification or cancellation of Section 907.

On this occasion, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for your weekly editorials. Besides being educational and instructive they are very interesting to read.

Wish you good health and long life in your endeavors in serving our nation.

Avedis Boyamian
Massachusetts

Estonia vs. Armenia

By Mihran Aroian

Last week, I had an opportunity to attend a lecture by Alar Karis, the president of Estonia. After attending meetings at the United Nations, President Karis came to Austin, Texas, for the opening of the U.S. headquarters of two Estonian companies, Clevon and EyeVi Technology.

As a former Soviet Republic, Estonia has become the greatest economic success story since the dissolution of the USSR. I wanted to learn why Estonia, with a population of 1.3 million, half the population of Armenia, has a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is three times that of Armenia and an average income of five times Armenia. Both Armenia and Estonia declared independence in 1991, yet they have been on very different economic paths.

Estonia is not a country that I have given much thought to over the years. If you have every used the video conferencing program Skype, this was originally created in Estonia before being purchased by Microsoft. Estonia's neighbors are Finland, Sweden, Latvia, and a 200-mile border with Russia. What a fascinating story President Karis shared on how Estonia immediately upon independence invested in their people and infrastructure. Today, Estonia is known for their embrace of the digital revolution. Part of their branding is that they consider themselves the first "Digital Republic," claiming that 99 percent of public services are digitized. President Karis asserts that virtually everything that can be done electronically is performed electronically, except for marriage and divorce.

No question digitizing public services in Armenia will certainly be helpful as well as save time and money. However, this does not explain why Estonia has been so successful. I believe it really comes down to two main factors.

Estonia is geographically located in Europe, and when they looked west for economic motivation, they embraced the EU and the European mentality. Armenia never had such an opportunity, and if you look at Armenia's neighbors, they are far from shining economic examples. You can make that same argument about Israel, except that the political strength of the Israeli diaspora has been a key point of differentiation, which Armenia needs to improve upon as discussed later.

The other factor in favor of Estonia is the opposite level of corruption that Armenia has endured over the decades. While Estonia was heavily investing in their infrastructure and people, Armenia was still following the Soviet model of corruption, oligarchs, and generating wealth for the few. Obtaining verifiable figures is difficult but it is estimated that former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan has a net worth of \$4 billion and former President Serzh Sargsyan has an estimated net worth north of \$300 million. In comparison, the four former presidents of Estonia: Lennart Meri, Arnold Rüütel, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, and Kersti Kaljulaid have a combined estimated net worth of about \$8 million.

One other obvious distinction is that Estonia has the protection of NATO. Armenia, as we have all learned the hard way, has no real military allies. Yet Russia has the 102nd Military Base in Gyumri with an estimated 10,000 soldiers, but that seems to be yielding little value to Armenia as witnessed in recent times.

Agriculture, mining, and tourism still make up most of the Armenian economy and, although the IT industry is the bright star in Armenia, unemployment is still 20 percent. In fact, it is estimated that some 15-20 percent of Armenians go to Russia to find work. We, in the diaspora, have little ability to change the geopolitical climate of Armenia. Apart from Georgia, who has never been an Armenian ally, our neighbors are far more powerful with resources unavailable to Armenia.

Some wonderful recent news is that the Armenian economy is likely the best it has been in years, primarily because of all the Russians who have migrated into Armenia since the war in Ukraine. A significant portion are
see ESTONIA, page 20



Estonia vs. Armenia

ESTONIA, from page 19

IT workers who have real income. We cannot change the past, but Armenia needs to change its future trajectory. If Armenia pins its survival and economic hopes on Russia, the EU, or even the U.S., we will only be disappointed with the outcome. If we are honest with ourselves, what real economic value do we offer to the world today? That must change and change soon if Armenia is to thrive. And the good news is that it is within our power.

Our focus needs to be on what can the diaspora do to help Armenia help itself. We cannot fix all the ailments of Armenia from the diaspora, but we can be an important part of the solution. With all that you hear about the Armenian diaspora, it is still an underutilized and unrealized asset. It's not about sending more donations or money — it's about being the engine to building Armenia economically. It comes down to one key factor — economic development. This is something that the diaspora can do from anywhere and if those who have the where-

withal to help do their small part, together, we can move Armenia from linear growth to logarithmic growth.

For those of you reading who are thinking about improving education, health care, military capabilities and social services — those are all important needs, but our ability to affect them from the diaspora are limited. Improving the Armenian economy will help raise all levels in Armenia. The important question is how to do this in a manner that is highly efficient and effective. From time to time, I have helped a young company or two in Armenia. I'm not alone as I have known many people who have used their skills and talents to help an Armenian enterprise. The question is how to do this better and on a larger scale. How do we bring together the right person from the diaspora who can help an Armenian enterprise and can we institutionalize this as a repeatable and scalable process?

There are a number of venture capital firms and incubators in Armenia. Granatus Ventures and Hive Ventures have been active investors in Armenia for years. Impact Hub, FAST Foundation, and EPIC have been active incubators in Armenia. Many resources are available — if you know where to look. Armenia needs to develop a value chain from research to market to bring the most advanced solutions to the world. Despite the increase of multination-

al firms, the linkages between research and industry are not prevalent. The few linkages that have worked are based on personal connections rather than an institutional approach. What is missing is a centralization where all resources that an Armenian entrepreneur or business needs can be accessed.

By bringing together our collective resources, we can increase the efficiency by which an Armenian businessman can gain access to industry experts in the diaspora, or access to new markets. Whatever we can do to increase the interaction between Armenians who have expertise and knowledge about a particular industry or market segment can provide introductions and assistance to those firms in Armenia that are looking for those resources. At some point, Armenia will need a technology transfer office in the EU and US, with intellectual property expertise to help facilitate the commercialization of Armenian technology. Having Armenian professional associations in the diaspora is a good starting place. Imagine if we could harness the power of 10 percent of the Armenian diaspora in helping Armenian businesses? The results would be phenomenal. The time is now!

Mihran Aroian teaches in the McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin and is a regular guest lecturer in the MBA program at the American University of Armenia, Yerevan.

California Governor Newsom Signs Bill Making April 24 Statewide Holiday

NEWSOM, from page 1

the impact of these atrocities and groups that have found refuge in California, including, but not limited to, the Holocaust, Holodomor, and the Genocides of the Armenian, Assyrian, Greek, Cambodian, and Rwandan communities. Genocide Remembrance Day would be observed annually on April 24, also known as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, during the week the state of California traditionally recognizes Genocide Awareness Week."

The text further states that on April 24 or on an alternate date "public schools and educational institutions throughout this state may include exercises, funded through existing resources, remembering and honoring the many contributions that survivors of genocide have made to this country. The State Board of Education may adopt a model curriculum guide to be available for use by public schools for exercises related to Genocide Remembrance Day."

"I am signing Assembly Bill 1801, which establishes Genocide Remembrance Day as a state holiday to be observed on April 24, and permits public schools and community colleges to close in observance of this holiday. This bill also permits state employees to utilize eight hours of vacation, annual leave, or compensating time off in lieu of receiving eight hours of personal holiday credit to observe Genocide Remembrance Day," said Newsom in a signing statement.

"Genocide commemoration is more than a history lesson. It is a powerful tool to engage people across generations in the sanctity of human rights, the enormity of crimes, and how to prevent future atrocities. Establishing a state holiday that commemorates genocides — both past and present — provides space for groups to heal and sends a powerful signal about our California values. Importantly, California continues to lead by example, with a strong record of providing refuge to countless groups suffering through the atrocity of genocide," Newsom added.

"I am immensely proud of the richness of diversity and backgrounds represented in our state and understand the importance of wanting to see one's own experience reflected in state holidays. While I am signing this bill and two other bills that also mark two significant days, before increasing the number of state holidays beyond the more than a dozen already recognized, I encourage the Legislature to identify criteria to help evaluate and inform future establishment of additional state holidays," concluded Newsom.

Said Nazarian: "I cannot thank the Governor enough for his support of this bill. As a member of a community impacted by genocide, it's hard to describe how much this means to those of us who have endured the often intentional denial of our pain and history for so long. Today, the largest state in the union and the 5th largest economy in the world has taken a stand to annually recognize the impacts of genocide. To all those who have been lost to genocide, we remember you. To all those who live with the impacts of genocide, we stand with you."

AB 1801 made it through the legislature unanimously and enjoyed the support of the Armenian Assembly of America, Jewish World Watch and the Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region and many others who worked and testified on behalf of the bill.

The bill was then submitted to California Governor Gavin Newsom for his signature on August 31, 2022.



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