



Ishkhan Saghatelian addresses the rally on Saturday.

Armenian Opposition Stages Rally ‘in Support of’ Karabakh

By Narine Ghalechian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian opposition groups gathered thousands of supporters for a rally in Yerevan on Saturday, November 5, that they said was a demonstration of support for Nagorno-Karabakh’s right to self-determination.

The rally in Yerevan’s France Square came days after thousands of Karabakh Armenians rallied in the central square of Stepanakert on October 31 at the urging of local political groups to support their joint statement

saying that the Armenian government must not unequivocally recognize Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity through a bilateral peace treaty.

Speakers at the Yerevan rally organized by the Resistance Movement, a coalition of political parties and groups, including two opposition parliamentary blocs — Hayastan and Pativ Unem led by former presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan, respectively, — again accused Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of planning major concessions to

Azerbaijan in a planned peace treaty as a result of which, they claimed, Yerevan will formally recognize Baku’s full control of Nagorno-Karabakh.

They charged that Pashinyan and his government have no mandate to make this or other major concessions to Azerbaijan that would jeopardize Karabakh Armenians’ right to self-determination and Armenia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Member of the Hayastan parliamentary faction Ishkhan Saghatelian, who has led street protests by the Resistance Movement, warned Armenian authorities against signing any document that would pave the way for Nagorno-Karabakh’s being formally recognized by Armenia as part of Azerbaijan.

see RALLY, page 3



WASHINGTON (Public Radio of Armenia) — In Washington, on November 7, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan had a meeting with Erika Olson, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, and Philip Reeker, US Co-Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group and Senior Advisor on Caucasian Negotiations.

It was followed by a meeting between the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers.

The meeting of the delegations led by the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan is currently underway.

Above, the Armenian delegation, left, is pictured facing the Azerbaijani delegation.

Moscow Urges Calm Along Armenian-Azerbaijani Border

By Armen Koloyan

MOSCOW (Azatutyun) — Russia has urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to refrain from actions that could further escalate the situation along their border as well as in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone.

Over the weekend Yerevan and Baku accused each other of ceasefire violations along their restive border, with each side rejecting the blame. No casualties were reported by either side.

Armenian authorities in Stepanakert, meanwhile, claimed that Azerbaijani armed forces opened fire at a civilian’s tractor in the east of Nagorno-Karabakh, a region where Russian peacekeepers have been deployed since the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijan war over the region.

see CALM, page 5



AN ADL SUPREME COUNCIL STATEMENT  
*In Defense of Armenia’s Sovereignty*

The 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan had a detrimental impact of historic proportions on Armenia’s destiny. The human and territorial losses were as discouraging as the isolation which was the result of the international community’s indifference and silence.

Regional and global developments after the war created new political factors and new perspectives for Armenian diplomacy.

The new attack by Azerbaijan on September 13, 2022 and its occupation of Armenian territory in the regions of Jermuk, Sotk, Vardenis and other border areas gave all indications of the start of an all-out war, which fortunately did not materialize, thanks to the warnings of the United States, France, and European Union as well as the positive posture of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Armenia is a military ally of Russia, and a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which were supposed to defend Armenia under treaty obligations, and defend Armenia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

see STATEMENT, page 20

*Spain’s Congress of Deputies Expresses Solidarity with Armenia, Votes against Azerbaijan Deal*

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Congress of Deputies of Spain, the lower house of the parliament, on November 4 rejected an international agreement signed with Azerbaijan as a sign of solidarity with Armenia.

In an interview, Spanish member of parliament Jon Inarritu said that the agreement, which was signed in Madrid in December 2021, involved exchange of classified information with Azerbaijan and protection of that information.

But the agreement was not ratified as 174 lawmakers voted against it and 132 voted in favor.

During the debate of the agreement before the voting Jon Inarritu called the signing of such an agreement an “absurdity”, especially now “when aggressor Azerbaijan has carried out an attack on Armenia in September, occupying several square kilometers of the territory of Armenia.”

“The Azerbaijani regime is corrupt, aggressor and intolerant to dissidents”, the lawmaker said, emphasizing the fact of violations of human rights and freedom of speech and the high number of political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

Another lawmaker, Marta Rosique, condemned the Spanish government for staying silent over the aggression carried out by Azerbaijan against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. She also criticized Spain that it has not yet recognized the Genocide committed against Armenians.

ARMENIA  
Israeli Ambassador, Delegation Visit Genocide Museum



DETROIT  
Farm Grill Offers Armenian Hospitality to Metro Detroit



NEW YORK  
Authentic Armenian Folk Music at Carnegie Hall





ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Armenia Reports Progress In Turkey Talks

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — There is progress in the process of normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey, negotiations continue, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan told the parliament on Thursday, November 4.

“It is well known that the process is without preconditions, and at the same time, the Turkish side constantly links it with the settlement of relations with Azerbaijan, which in a way resembles a precondition. Nevertheless, in line with these statements, very concrete discussions are taking place, firstly at the level of the Special Representatives, but also outside this level, with certain professional involvement,” the Foreign Minister said.

He said that the talk is about several concrete steps, including the opening of the border for persons having diplomatic passports and for the citizens of third countries.

“I can say that there is progress, the conversation continues. And I also can say that I expect and hope that there will be positive results in the near future,” Mirzoyan stated.

### French Deputies Visit Soldier's Home

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — On October 28, the deputies of the National Assembly of France Guillaume Kasbarian, Anne-Laurence Petel, Luc Lamirault, Mohamed Laquila and Sarah Tanzilli being in Yerevan on an official visit, visited the Soldier's Home Rehabilitation Center.

The Rector of Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) Armen Muradyan presented the background of the structure and underlined that it is equipped with state-of-the-art equipment necessary for rehabilitation treatment.

The guests took a tour of the center, talked to the soldiers who were wounded in the third Artsakh war and received injuries of various degrees as a consequence of the Azerbaijani last aggression.

The deputies expressed their admiration of the will of the young people of the Soldier's Home.

### Armenia, Azerbaijan Border Commissions Meet

BRUSSELS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The European Union on Thursday, November 3 hosted and opened in Brussels the third meeting of Armenia's and Azerbaijan's border commissions, Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Nabila Massrali said in a statement.

The meeting follows agreements reached at the highest level between President of the European Council Charles Michel, President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during their trilateral Brussels meetings.

“The EU commends the constructive atmosphere in which the meeting was conducted, and the willingness of the parties to continue working on addressing border-related issues, as well as to improve the security situation,” Massrali said.

## AUA Launches Two New Graduate Degree Programs

YEREVAN — The American University of Armenia (AUA) announced recently the launch of its two new graduate degree programs: Master of International Relations and Diplomacy (MIRD) and Master of Public Affairs (MPA) in the College of Humanities and Social Science (CHSS). The two degree programs are set to begin in Fall 2023, pending final authorization by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of the Republic of Armenia.

MIRD is a two-year graduate program designed to prepare students with the necessary knowledge and tools required for careers in public service, local and international non-governmental organizations, and global public affairs agencies. Using an interdisciplinary approach to critically assess and examine the changing dimensions of international relations, governance and diplomacy, the MIRD curriculum is designed to prepare a cadre of professionals trained in relevant conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and innovative problem-solving skills to address the most pressing challenges of regional and global politics.

The MIRD program was created to address the need for young professionals to examine and understand the global challenges facing Armenia and be able to skillfully nurture influential cooperation

through diplomacy. Recent regional developments, including the 2020 Artsakh War and post-war challenges, have made it clear that expertise in regional affairs and international relations, diplomatic leadership and judicious discernment of complex situations are greatly needed for addressing national and international issues. “Thinking is as important as zooming in. More advanced knowledge in the Caucasus, the Middle East, and Russian politics will allow students to look beyond the generally accepted regional narratives and develop new ways of looking into the existing problems,” reflects Dr. Asbed Kotchikian, associate professor in CHSS.

Graduates of the MIRD program are expected to assume positions in the public and private sectors, in international organizations in Armenia and beyond. The program also embraces a rigorous research component aimed at equipping students with the advanced theoretical and practical skills in problem-solving and communication.

MPA is a two-year graduate program designed to prepare students with the analytical, policy, administrative, and leadership skills needed to make an impact on Armenian society and beyond. MPA students are taught how to ask and answer political questions, design optimal policy solutions to public problems, and administer those solutions with skilled leadership and man-

agement akin to public, private, and non-profit organizations. The program provides a substantive focus on development policy, strategy, and leadership — essential components in the construction of prosperity and stability in Armenia.

The MPA program is created and designed to find pioneering solutions to public problems as they apply to the construction and maintenance of the administrative state. The construction of a viable public sector is perhaps the most critical issue to the political, economic, and social development of Armenia. Dr. Uroš Prokić, assistant professor in CHSS, elaborates, “In our increasingly diverse and complex world, the need for conscientious and ethical public servants is all the more necessary. Graduates of the MPA will not only become effective public affairs professionals, but also upstanding global citizens who are able to discern between genuine public needs and public wants.”

MPA students will learn how to grapple with a myriad of ethical dilemmas real-world practitioners face on a daily basis. Graduates of the program will also master professional communication skills and be eager to engage with a diverse audience. Above all, they will be able to embody and demonstrate the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion critical to the foundation of modern public sector agencies in Armenia.

## Israeli Ambassador, Delegation Visit Genocide Museum

YEREVAN (ArmenPress) — Accompanied by the Ambassador of Israel to Armenia Joel Lion and Honorary Consul of Israel to Armenia Ashot Shahmuradyan, Deputy Director General, Head of Euro - Asia Division at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel Simona Halperin and Michal Hershkovitz, Director, Central Asia and Caucasus Department Michal Hershkovitz visited the Armenian Genocide Museum on November 8, according to the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.

Harutyun Marutyan, director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, welcomed the guests and presented a brief history of the creation of the memorial complex.

Regina Galustyan, Researcher at the Comparative Genocide Studies Department introduced the guests from Israel to the documents proving the first genocide of the 20th century, as well as permanent and temporary exhibitions.



Joel Lion and his delegation visit the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.



Regina Galustyan explaining the exhibits to the guests.

# President Khachatryan Attends Climate Change Summit, Meets With Arab Leaders

YEREVAN (Armenpress) —President Vahagn Khachatryan met with the Secretary General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul Gheit within the framework of the 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on ClaimClimate Change (NFCCC-COP 27), on November 8, in Egypt.

Khachatryan noted that Armenian-Arab relations have centuries-old history and are developing through political, economic and cultural multi-layered interaction. The President emphasized that relations with the Arab world are always among the priorities of Armenia’s foreign policy.

Ahmed Abul Gheit noted that in the Arab world, Armenia is considered a partner and friend, with which they are ready to make maximum efforts to create closer interaction platforms.

During the conversation, Khachatryan expressed his concerns regarding a number of anti-Armenian and untrue episodes of the Azerbaijani president’s speech at the recent Arab League summit, in which the Azerbaijani president tried to distort the content of the Karabakh conflict and present it as a religious conflict. The Armenian President stressed that Armenia has many friends in the Muslim world, the Republic of Armenia is a democratic country, where any manifestation of religious or any other

# Armenia in Fresh War of Words With Belarus

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Belarus has sparked a fresh war of words with Armenia after bluntly rejecting its appeals for military assistance addressed to the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Yerevan last week initiated an emergency summit of the military alliance in another attempt to secure such support in the face of what it regards as Azerbaijani military aggression. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan again urged the CSTO to come up with a “roadmap for restoring Armenia’s territorial integrity.”

Speaking at the virtual summit, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko opposed any CSTO intervention in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. He said that Azerbaijan is not an adversary of Belarus and other CSTO member states and its President Ilham Aliyev is “totally our guy.” Pashinyan should therefore negotiate with Aliyev over Armenian-Azerbaijani border disputes, he said.

A CSTO statement issued as a result of the summit did not voice support, let alone promise military aid, for Armenia. According to Pashinyan’s press office, a report presented by CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas to the member states confirmed that Azerbaijani forces invaded Armenian territory in September and called for their withdrawal.

Lukashenko reaffirmed his stance when he met Zas in Minsk

on November 1. He also went further, effectively blaming Armenia for the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia’s leadership hit out at Lukashenko on the following day, accusing him of not honoring his country’s CSTO membership obligations.

“I saw nothing serious in his comments,” parliament speaker Alen Simonian told reporters. “I am worried that his comments were not quite his.”

“We do not consider it appropriate to comment on the Belarusian president’s chaotic statements divorced from the logic of negotiations and contradicting allied and partner relations,” the Armenian Foreign Ministry said for its part.

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry dismissed the Armenian reaction as “unprofessional.”

“It is quite clear that the approaches voiced by the president of Belarus are on the contrary based on reality, understandable and honest in an allied way,” said a ministry spokesperson.

Lukashenko, who has a warm personal relationship with Aliyev, has repeatedly raised eyebrows in Armenia in the past with pro-Azerbaijani statements on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and arms supplies to Baku.

In February this year, he also angered Yerevan by claiming that Armenia will have no choice but to join a Russian-led “union state” of former Soviet republics. Armenian pro-government lawmakers launched scathing attacks on the Belarusian strongman who has been in power since 1994.

discrimination, intolerance is excluded.

Abul Gheit emphasized that he is definitely interested in taking steps to smooth out misunderstandings as much as possible and contribute to ensuring the right of the Armenian side to presenting its own position.

He also met with President of Iraq Abdul Latif Rashid and told him that Iraq is Armenia’s reliable partner in the region and that Armenia attaches great importance to the deepening cooperation with that country.

The Iraqi President said Armenians living

in his country enjoy the support of the Iraqi authorities and they highly value the Armenian-Iraqi close relations.

Khachatryan added that Armenia has wonderful relations with the Islamic, including with most of the Arab countries.

# Armenian Opposition Stages Rally ‘in Support of’ Karabakh

RALLY, from page 1

He suggested that in order to preclude this and other major concessions, Armenia needs to change its “top negotiator” at the talks with Azerbaijan, meaning Prime Minister Pashinyan.

ister Pashinyan.

“With this rally we are saying that Armenia welcomes the efforts of mediators towards establishing lasting peace in the region. Armenia is ready to discuss all

complex issues. Armenia is ready for hard and meaningful negotiations and solutions. But this cannot come at the price of national humiliation and loss of our homeland. No document that would limit Artsakh’s [Nagorno-Karabakh’s] right to self-determination can be signed and ratified. Such a document would be torn by our people and immediately after a regime change it will be declared null and void,” Saghatelyan said.

Armenian authorities do not conceal that a version of the future peace treaty with Azerbaijan that is currently being discussed does not mention the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh, but they dismiss accusations of the opposition that the current government ignores the rights and freedoms of ethnic Armenians living in the region.

Official Yerevan insists that these issues should be discussed directly between representatives of Baku and Stepanakert in a dialogue ensured by an international mechanism to be set up for the purpose.

Saghatelyan claimed, however, that the Pashinyan government “does not express the collective will of the Armenian people.” He said that in order to “achieve victory” the opposition movement needs “an overwhelming number of people in the streets.”

“We are not fighting for someone from among us to become a prime minister, we are fighting for Armenia to have a prime minister. Therefore, we will not step back or give up, we will go till the end,” he said before opposition supporters staged a march through central streets of Yerevan.

Former President Kocharyan also attended the rally, but did not address it from the stage or talk to the media. The former leader believed to be behind the Resistance Movement also participated in the march.

The Armenian Apostolic Church authorized one of its senior clergymen to address the rally. Bishop Bagrat Galstanyan delivered a speech at the Yerevan rally “with

the blessing” of Catholicos Karekin II, the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

A vocal critic of Pashinyan, Galstanyan heads the church diocese in Armenia’s northern Tavush province.

“This is a supra-partisan rally,” he told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service. “Even if it was partisan, it’s a reaction to our Artsakh compatriot’s cry for help. That cry cannot go unanswered.”

“Artsakh’s right to self-determination is not a limited right, it’s about the dignity, honor and survival of all Armenians,” the outspoken bishop said.

The Armenian Church’s Supreme Spiritual Council headed by Karekin II also signaled concerns about the government’s Karabakh policy in a statement issued on Friday, November 4, after a four-day session in Echmiadzin. It said that “the Artsakh people’s right to self-determination is non-negotiable.”

The statement urged the government to “eliminate the dividing lines in our national life, stop discriminatory approaches motivated by political beliefs, overcome the atmosphere of hatred and hostility and initiate a meaningful and healthy dialogue” in the country. This would pave the way for a “national consolidation” needed for confronting grave security challenges facing Karabakh and Armenia, it said.

The opposition movement has staged several campaigns of sustained street protests demanding the resignation of Pashinyan and his government since the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh in which Armenians suffered a defeat.

All of those street protests, including the latest one last spring, fizzled out within weeks.

Representatives of the current government have attributed it to the lack of popular support for the opposition’s demand for Pashinyan’s resignation or policy change.

# Armenian Tycoon Takes Leadership Role in Karabakh

By Artak Khulian

STEPANAKERT (Azatutyun) — Ruben Vardanyan, a prominent Armenian billionaire, warned of a “tough road” ahead for Nagorno-Karabakh as he formally took up the post of the country’s prime minister, on Friday, November 4.

Born and raised in Yerevan, Vardanyan moved to Russia in 1985 and made a big fortune there in the 1990s. Over the last 15 years he has developed major business interests in Armenia as well as increasingly financed charitable projects there.

Vardanyan, 54, received Armenian citizenship in June 2021 and is understood to have mostly lived in his home country since then. On September 1, 2022 he announced that he has decided to renounce his Russian citizenship and move to Karabakh.

Arayik Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, offered to appoint the tycoon as his state minister one month later. Vardanyan accepted the offer later in October. Karabakh officials say that he will have more powers than his predecessors.

“I and the people have very high expectations from you, Mr. Vardanyan,” Harutyunyan said while introducing him to officials in Stepanakert.

“I must honestly tell you that I don’t see any chance of a miracle,” Vardanyan said at the meeting. “A very tough road awaits us. We have no more than 900 days to effect changes, to address security and development issues.”



Vardanyan appeared to refer to the three years remaining before the end of the initial five-year mission of Russian peacekeepers deployed in Karabakh following the 2020 war with Azerbaijan. The Karabakh Armenians say that their continued presence is vital for the territory’s security and survival.

In an interview with the Russian daily *Kommersant* published earlier this week, Vardanyan said that Armenia’s government has no mandate to negotiate on behalf of Karabakh and single-handedly decide its future.

Karabakh leaders are increasingly worried that Yerevan is ready to recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh through an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty. In a joint statement issued on October 30, Karabakh’s main political factions rejected “any document calling into question Artsakh’s right to self-determination.”

## INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL

Russia Confirms  
Azerbaijan's Ceasefire  
Violation in Karabakh

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijani troops used firearms to shoot a Nagorno-Karabakh resident who was carrying out earthworks using agricultural equipment near the village of Khramort on November 5, the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement the next day.

As a result, the tractor was damaged, though the civilian was not injured.

"The command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, together with the Azerbaijani side, is conducting an investigation," the Russian Defense Ministry said.

At 30 observation posts, Russian peacekeepers are monitoring the situation.

ECHR Finds Against  
Armenia in Officer's  
Suicide

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on Tuesday, November 8, delivered a judgement in the case of Vardanyan and Khalafyan v. Armenia, finding against the government of Armenia.

The case concerned the death of the applicants' son and brother, Lieutenant Artak Nazaryan, who committed suicide during his military service in 2010, as well as the subsequent investigation.

Relying on Articles 2 (right to life), 10 (freedom of expression) and 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights, the applicants, Hasmik Hovhannisyan and Tsovinar Nazaryan, filed a complaint about his death and alleged that the investigation into the matter was ineffective.

In its judgement, the European Court held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 2 — substantive aspect (right to life) of the European Convention on Human Rights and a violation of Article 2 — procedural aspect (right to life: obligation to conduct an effective investigation).

The court found in particular that, due to the absence of any system of psychological assistance in the military forces, no such support had been available to Nazaryan despite the apparent risk that he might commit suicide. Furthermore, the authorities had failed to take appropriate and effective measures to prevent that known risk from materializing.

Therefore, the state had failed to comply with its obligation to take appropriate measures to safeguard his life during his military service. The ECHR also considered that the investigation conducted in the case had not been sufficiently thorough and had failed to protect the applicants' interests and to enable them to properly exercise their rights.

The European Court obliged Armenia to pay the applicants jointly €20,000 in respect of nonpecuniary damage and €3,500 in respect of costs and expenses.

Aliyev Threatens Armenia, Its  
Foreign Allies at Shushi Speech

SHUSHI (News.am) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev visited the occupied Armenian city of Shushi on November 8 and made a number of statements. Threats against Armenia dominated his speech.

To begin with, Aliyev said that next year Azerbaijan's military budget will reach a record high. "Azerbaijan's state budget for next year will reach a record level, including funds allocated for military expenditures. One may ask why, the war is over, two years have passed. The answer is very simple. Revanchist forces are raising their heads in Armenia. There are forces and circles in Armenia which do not want to accept the results of the war," Aliyev explained.

Aliyev further stated that "Armenia does not fully comply with the Statement of November 10, 2020, has not fully withdrawn its armed forces from Karabakh," although not only the statement does not suggest this, but Armenian troops have never been in Artsakh. "Armenia has not given us the Zangezur corridor and periodically carries out military provocations against us. Of course, we have to be ready, and we are," Aliyev complained.

Aliyev added that Azerbaijan "wants peace, does not want war."

"We want peace, but a just peace. The conditions we put forward are fair, based on international law, and a peace treaty must be signed on the basis of those conditions. If Armenia shows its will, it (peace

treaty) will be signed, if not, it will not be signed. Life will show what will happen next," the Azerbaijani president said.

Aliyev repeated his favorite phrase that "our patience is not unlimited, and if Armenia does not fulfill its commitments, Azerbaijan will take the necessary steps." "We are fulfilling all the commitments we made in the November 10, 2020 statement. We have been fulfilling them for two years, but is Armenia fulfilling them? No! Right after the second Karabakh war, he (Pashinyan) was just so scared that he implemented these provisions and returned the occupied territories of the Agdam, Kelbajar and Lachin regions to us without a single shot fired," Aliyev said.

Speaking about the demand for the Zangezur corridor, Aliyev threatened: "For two years, we do not touch the cars coming from Armenia to Karabakh and in the opposite direction along the Lachin road. We are committed to our obligation of free movement. Armenia has also committed itself to providing road links between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic. Two years have passed, there is no feasibility study, there is no movement, no railroad or road. And how long do we have to wait?"

"The current Azerbaijani Army is stronger than it was two years ago, and everyone and Armenia should know it!" continued Aliyev: "Armenia should be well aware of what this means. Today from these strate-

gic heights we can see the cities of Garakilsya, Gafan, Gorus and Istisu (Azerbaijani versions of the names of Armenian cities). We are on the shore of Lake Bala Goycha. The Big Goycha Lake is also in front of our eyes. All these are realities. We created these realities after the Patriotic War. Why? First of all as a response to Armenia's military provocations, on the other hand, to insure ourselves against military provocations in the future. The fact is that most of the Armenian army posts are visible from the heights I mentioned, and if there is a concentration of forces there, we will see it and take immediate action.

Aliyev appealed to some Muslim countries supporting Armenia: "We have established close relations with Muslim countries and we managed to explain them that Armenia is conducting an aggressive policy not only against us but also against the whole Muslim world. Mosque destroyers cannot be friends with Muslim countries. Leaders of Muslim countries cannot accept those who destroy mosques, can they? Can they embrace and kiss them? This is hypocrisy and betrayal, there is no other word for it."

In conclusion, Aliyev moved on to direct insults to the heads of foreign countries.

"It is true that some foreign patrons of Armenia want to accuse us of something. I answered them. If they say anything else, I'll answer them anyway. It won't stop me," Aliyev promised.

## Opposition Claims Turkey Flooded by Gangster 'Black Money'

By Andrew Wilks

ISTANBUL (AI-Monitor) — The arrest of one of Europe's most wanted criminals in Istanbul has fueled opposition claims that Turkey is being flooded with "black money" from abroad amid a growing need for foreign cash.

Zeljko Bojanic, an alleged senior figure in the Montenegrin mafia involved in cocaine smuggling, was seized in Istanbul's upmarket Sariyer neighborhood on Friday, November 4, the city's Anti-Organized Crime Branch said in a statement Monday, November 7.

Excavations were carried out at Bojanic's luxury villa in search of the body of a rival Serbian drug smuggler who disappeared two years ago. Police said nothing was found.

The arrest of Bojanic, who was on Europol's most wanted list and is said to have arrived in Turkey with a fake North Macedonian passport, came days after opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu accused the government of turning a blind eye to an influx of illicit funds.

"I said black money brings its owner. All the mafia scum in the world came to our cities with their money," Kilicdaroglu, who heads the Republican People's Party (CHP), tweeted Sunday. "Now a body search is carried out in the gardens. What you see is just a grain of sand in the sea."

Last week Kilicdaroglu posted a video accusing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's administration of failing to stop drug lords from moving their fortunes to Turkey.

"They allowed all kinds of black money to enter the country," he said. "They said 'Bring it, no matter where you bring it from, I will not ask for its source,' and they

used this dirty money, billions of dollars — in other words, drug money — to finance Turkey's current account deficit."

The CHP leader went on to dub Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu as "Breaking Bad Suleyman," a reference to the TV show following the escapades of a chemistry teacher who becomes a major methamphetamine producer.

"Breaking Bad Suleyman has allowed the children of the country to be poisoned," he said, warning of a "methamphetamine epidemic." Soyulu refuted the claims as slander and Kilicdaroglu later became the first person to be charged under a controversial new "disinformation" law. He faces up to three years in prison if found guilty of "publicly disseminating misleading information."

The Financial Action Task Force, a global watchdog monitoring efforts to combat the movement of dirty money, added Turkey to its "grey list" last year over deficiencies in its system for countering money laundering and terror financing.

Task force president Marcus Pleyer told a news conference that Turkey needed to address "serious issues of supervision" in its banking, real estate, gold and gemstone sectors.

The move delivered a further blow to Turkey's troubled economy, threatening to erode legitimate foreign investment. According to New York University's *The Economics Review*, the listing could have wiped more than \$76 billion off Turkey's capital inflows and foreign direct investment.

Bojanic is said to be a leading figure in the powerful Kavac clan of Montenegro's mafia. He has been implicated in the killing of Risto Mijanovic, a member of the rival

Skaljari clan who went missing two years ago.

The gangs, based in neighboring towns in Montenegro's Kotor region, have been engaged in an eight-year feud that has led to at least 50 deaths. Skaljari boss Jovan Vukotic was shot dead in Istanbul's Sisli district in September.

The Kavac and Skaljari clans developed following a split in the Kotor crime group that had been led by Dragan Dudic. Bojanic is said to have acted as Dudic's right-hand man until his murder in 2010.

Criminals from the Kotor region feature prominently in the cocaine trade between South America and Europe. They have offshoots across the Balkans, especially in Serbia, as well as import transit countries such as Spain and Italy. They are also present in other European territories as well as Brazil, Ecuador and Uruguay.

Bojanic was reportedly on the run since Slovenian authorities issued an arrest warrant over his alleged involvement in a drug trafficking operation in Slovenia, Brazil and Austria in 2014 and 2015.

In recent years Turkey has emerged as a key route for cocaine trafficking as law enforcement crackdowns and tightened port security in Europe have forced smugglers to seek alternate routes.

"We will see more such incidents and conflicts within the framework drawn by Kilicdaroglu as long as black money is not traced and is not abolished," crime journalist Cengiz Erdinc told Halk TV. "The gangs are doing as they like in Istanbul."

Questioning how Bojanic was able to live in Istanbul, Erdinc added, "He came with assets and obviously bought a villa for several million dollars. But no one asked 'Where did you get these few million dollars?'"

# Multifaceted Debate on Genocide Denial in Germany

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

BERLIN — Denial has been identified as the last stage of every genocide. Why, despite the testimony provided by ample documentation, are these crimes against humanity so stubbornly disputed? What are the reasons for such a defensive posture? What forms does denial assume? And how can this defensive posture be overcome?

These are the questions posed by the organizers and treated by a group of experts at the historic Lepsiushaus in Potsdam, near Berlin, during an interdisciplinary conference on November 5, entitled, “Genocide and Denial.” Co-sponsored by the human rights organization, Working Group on Recognition - Against Genocide, for Understanding among Peoples (AGA), and the Activists against Racism, Nationalism and Discrimination (AKEBI), the day-long gathering represented the continuation of discussions begun in January 2022 on the theme of genocide and denial. As AGA chairwoman Dr. Tessa Hofmann explained, this conference aimed at developing the concept more deeply, with contributions by

experts on the juridical and psychological aspects of genocide denial.

Following greetings by Dr. Roy Knocke, director of the Lepsiushaus, Hofmann, sociologist and genocide researcher, delivered the keynote address on “Freedom of Opinion or Protection of Genocide Denial: Experience from Human Rights Activities.” Genocide denial, which appears in various forms, deserves merits legal punishment; yet the matter is problematic, in that penalization creates conflictual tension with the fundamental right, recognized in the German Constitution and other basic law, the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Hofmann traced attempts in France to expand the 1990 Gayssot Law, which penalized denial of crimes against humanity, especially the Holocaust, to include the Armenian genocide. In 2006 and 2011-2012, initiatives in this direction failed, largely due to political pressure from Turkish threats.

In 2008 the AGA presented an initiative to the German Bundestag (Parliament), inspired by the French motions, calling for extension of penalization of Holocaust denial (1994) to include genocide against the Armenians and other

Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire. That petition was rejected in 2012 on grounds that the German legal position already conformed to a European Union Commission Framework Decision passed in 2007, on combatting racism and xenophobia. The EU decision foresaw penal provisions regarding racist or xenophobic hatred, open approval, denial or gross trivialization of genocide, as well as crimes against humanity and war crimes. Hofmann said, the EU disagreed, insisting that the German legal position did not conform to EU norms, and initiated an infringement proceeding at the end of 2021. Now, on October 20, just weeks prior to the Potsdam conference, German legislators complied, by inserting a new clause into Paragraph 130 of the German criminal code. As Hofmann explained, it now renders punishable by law the “public approval, denial and gross trivialization of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, if the act is committed in a way that is likely to incite hatred or violence and to disturb public peace.”

Citing controversial responses in the political arena and press, Hofmann remarked, “The dispute about freedom of opinion has not thereby been settled,

however.” Nonetheless, she expressed her happiness as a human rights proponent with the expansion of the provision, which she hopes will contribute to alleviate the pain of denial.

And juridical parameters defining criminal prosecution are not the only aspects of genocide denial discussed in Potsdam. In addition to further presentations, by Dr. Gurgen Petrossian (Erlangen) on “Genocide Denial from the Perspective of International Law,” and Nihat Kentel (Berlin) on “Overcoming Denial in the International and National Context,” the psychological, subjective dimensions were the subject of careful analysis. Dr. Melanie Altanian, research assistant at the School of Philosophy, University College (Dublin), dealt with “Denial, Misrepresentation and Epistemic Oppression,” and Dr. Angela Moré, professor of social psychology at Leibniz University (Hannover) and co-founder of Group Analysis Institute GIGOS, presented a lecture on “Denial of Crimes against Humanity – Motives, Mechanisms and Consequences.” The conceptual debate that unfolded among these participants will be the subject of the second part of this report next week.

# NATO Chief Urges Turkey to Stop Stalling Sweden, Finland Accession

By Nazlan Ertan

ISTANBUL (AI-Monitor) — NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg urged Turkey to ratify the accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO as soon as possible, saying those two countries had lived up to their obligations to address Turkey’s security concerns.

But Mevlut Çavusoglu, Turkey’s foreign minister, said that while progress was made, it was still impossible to say that Turkey’s conditions had been fully met. Çavusoglu, however, added that Turkey had a more positive outlook toward the new Swedish government and was looking forward to the visit of Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson “in a few days.”

Stoltenberg last week was on a two-day visit to Turkey, the only country that has made no move to ratify the alliance’s Nordic expansion after Hungary said it would seek to seal the accession accord by mid-December. Stoltenberg will meet President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on Friday for further talks.

“The pace and the finalization of the ratification” for the Nordic enlargement would

depend on the steps taken by Sweden and Finland, a brief statement from the presidency said after the Erdogan-Stoltenberg meeting late Friday.

In a joint press conference with Çavusoglu on November 3, Stoltenberg said that in NATO’s Madrid summit in June, all allies made “a historic decision” to invite Finland and Sweden to join the alliance. Turkey, which had been shuffling its feet, lifted its blockade at the eleventh hour with a trilateral memorandum that addressed its security concerns.

The trilateral memorandum commits the two Nordic countries to extend their full support to Turkey on threats against its national security, including the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). It states that the two countries would not support YPG/PYD (Syrian Kurdish groups which Turkey considers offshoots of the PKK in Syria) or FETO, the organization headed by US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, which Ankara says carried out the unsuccessful putsch in 2016. The two countries also promise “to work with Turkey” on extraditions of people on Turkey’s wanted list and lift military embargoes on Ankara.

“Finland and Sweden have delivered on their agreement with Turkey. ... It is time to welcome them as full members of NATO,” Stoltenberg said, and finalizing the accession is “even more important in these dangerous times to prevent any misunderstanding or miscalculation in Moscow.”

Aware that Ankara is more concerned with Sweden than Finland, Stoltenberg cited the “major, concrete” actions Sweden had taken, such as strengthening legislation that prohibited membership in terrorist organizations, including the PKK, launching new tools for financial controls, and sharing intelligence. He also hinted that the new legislation might enable some extraditions.

Besides the visit of Kristersson on Nov. 8, Çavusoglu also said that the next meeting of the trilateral mechanism will be in Stockholm later in November. “Some progress has been made, but we cannot say that all elements in the memorandum had been fulfilled,” he said, in a thinly veiled reference to Turkey’s extradition requests from Sweden.

Following the formation of the new government, Çavusoglu called his new counterpart Tobias Billstrom to congratulate him. Çavusoglu had criticized Sweden’s Foreign Minister Ann Linde and what he called her “so-called feminist policy” at a critical NATO meeting, attacking Linde’s embrace of the Syrian Kurdish leadership, which has strong female representation.

than Sweden, which has a sizable and vocal Kurdish minority. However, Helsinki has repeatedly said that it would not detach its accession application from its neighbor.

“We do not have huge problems with Finland, but both countries and the secretary-general has asked to take the two applications together,” Çavusoglu said at the press conference with Stoltenberg.

Since August, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly criticized Sweden for failing to deliver its promises, particularly on the extradition of about 30 people requested. Sweden made one extradition in August, but the case concerned fraud and not terrorism. In late September, Swedish authorities lifted a ban on military exports to Turkey, meeting another of Ankara’s demands.

Ankara-Stockholm ties soured further in October when the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Sweden’s envoy over “disgraceful” comments about the Turkish president on Swedish state TV. The rebuke coincided with a Swedish delegation visit to Turkey today to discuss the implementation of the memorandum, particularly the extradition demands. Bekir Bozdag, Turkey’s defense minister, said his ministry renewed some extradition requests.

Kristersson, whose center-right government took office in mid-October, has been trying to break the impasse and persuade Turkey to proceed with the ratification. Paying a visit to NATO headquarters three days after taking office, Kristersson assured that his country would honor the agreement with Turkey and cooperate on fighting terrorism.

The newly elected premier told journalists that new legislation gives Sweden “more tools to prove in practice that we are delivering what we were promising.” Kristersson also sent a two-page letter to Erdogan, showing the 14 steps Sweden had taken to fulfill its obligation. The letter, dated Oct. 6, said Sweden’s security and counter-terrorism police “has intensified its work against the PKK” and “carried out new analyses of PKK’s role in threats to Sweden’s national security and in organized crime (and) this is likely to lead to concrete results.”

# Moscow Urges Calm Along Azerbaijani Border

CALM, from page 1

Karabakh Armenian officials said the tractor that was used in the implementation of agricultural work was damaged as a result of the shooting. Azerbaijan’s Defense Ministry denied the Armenian claim about the ceasefire violation. But the fact of the ceasefire violation was later confirmed by the Russian Defense Ministry in its news bulletin.

Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, on Monday, November 7, reminded that both sides committed to resolving issues through political and diplomatic means when their leaders held a trilateral summit with the Russian leader in Sochi on October 31.

“The statement adopted as a result of the

tripartite meeting in Sochi emphasizes that the parties, Armenia and Azerbaijan, prefer exclusively peaceful, and political and diplomatic means of settlement. Therefore, we continue to call on both sides to avoid dangerous actions and steps that could cause tensions,” Peskov said, as quoted by Russian news agencies.

The latest reported tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan came on the eve of another meeting between the two countries’ foreign ministers, Ararat Mirzoyan and Jeyhun Bayramov, to be hosted by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington on November 7.

Yerevan and Baku are expected to continue working on a peace deal before a possible new Armenian-Azerbaijani summit in Brussels later this month.

# Community News

## Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian's Announces Budget Wins for Cultural and Civic Organizations

NORTH HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — This past week, with organizations gathered at AGBU Manoo-gian-Demirdjian School, Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian announced \$1.75 million dollars in funding he secured during the 2022 State Budget Process.

"In the ten years that I have been in office we have never seen the level of investment in the Armenian community that we see today. I am proud to announce an additional \$1.75 Million in investments in organizations serving the community. In the past decade I am proud to have worked to secure over \$30 million in funding for the community and hope that these investments will pay dividends for years to come."

Nazarian's latest budget wins include:

\$200,000 to the Armenian Bar Association for pro bono tenant relief clinics

\$200,000 to Homenetmen Hrashq for services for youth athletes with disabilities

\$350,000 to Ararat Home of Los Angeles for facility costs and operations of the Eskijian Museum

\$250,000 to Camp Arev for capital improvements and new facility construction

\$750,000 to AGBU Manoo-gian-Dermirdjian School for capital improvements and classroom reconstruction.

The announcement of these budget wins comes at the end of a blockbuster legislative year for the retiring Assemblymember with 12 out of 13 of his bills signed into law, including AB 1801 which establishes April 24th as, Genocide Remembrance Day, an official state holiday.

Elected in 2012, Assemblymember Nazarian represents the San Fernando Valley and portions of Hollywood.



Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian



Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan, Yn. Karine and their children at the celebration

## Banquet Celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pastor Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan Of Bayside, NY

By Dr. Lynn Cetin

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — On Saturday evening, October 22, the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs in Bayside, New York, held an elegant banquet in celebration of Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as its pastor.

The sold-out event of 200 was a joyful gathering of clergy, parishioners, and friends in celebration of Fr. Abraham's "first decade of ministry" at Holy Martyrs and other recent milestone events in his life. In 2020, Fr. Abraham successfully defended his dissertation and received his Doctor of Ministry Degree from the prestigious Fordham University. He completed his degree while working full time at Holy Martyrs. In 2020, Fr. Abraham also celebrated his Ten-Year Ordination Anniversary, for which he received a pectoral cross from Bishop Daniel Findikyan. Both achievements were not celebrated prior due to the covid pandemic. The evening of October 22 was a wonderful party to celebrate Fr. Abraham, the Malkhasyan family, and the entire Holy Martyrs community.

The celebratory banquet, catered entirely in-house by the Anniversary Committee, was co-chaired by Dr. Lynn Cetin and Tamar Kayserian. It was an evening



Seated, Yn. Karine Malkhasyan and Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan; standing from left, Gregory Saraydarian, Garo Sedorian, Bertha Sekdorian, Dr. Lynn Cetin

of delicious and abundant food, many smiles, wonderful memories, and an outpouring of love for the Malkhasyan Family. The church auditorium was decorated in blue, silver and white, and transformed into a beautiful banquet hall complete with banquet chairs and china, a surprise to all! Diocesan Vicar Very Rev. Fr. Simeon Odabashian, Garo Sekdorian, former Parish Council chair who "found" Fr. Abraham in Florida more than years ago, and Gregory Saraydarian, current Parish Council chair, spoke words of congratulations at the start of the night. Dr. Lynn Cetin, Anniversary Committee co-chair, served as the master of ceremonies and

see ANNIVERSARY, page 7

## US Supreme Court Spurns Turkey's Bid to Avoid Suits Over 2017 Washington Protest

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — The US Supreme Court on October 31 declined to hear Turkey's bid to dismiss two lawsuits filed by demonstrators seeking monetary damages after accusing Turkish security forces of injuring them in a 2017 protest in Washington during a visit by President Tayyip Erdogan.

The justices turned away an appeal by Turkey of lower court rulings allowing the litigation to proceed, rejecting the NATO ally's argument that it has immunity from such legal action in the United States under a federal law called the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act.

At issue in the litigation is a melee involving members of Erdogan's security detail that occurred as protesters demonstrated outside the Turkish ambassador's residence in Washington on May 6, 2017. Erdogan was in the US capital to meet then-President Donald Trump. The incident strained relations between Turkey and the U.S.

Two lawsuits were filed in 2018 - one case brought by 15 plaintiffs and the other by five - seeking to hold Turkey's government responsible and asking for monetary damages for injuries that included concussions, seizures and lost teeth. The plaintiffs sought tens of millions of dollars, according to court papers.

The Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act limits the jurisdiction of American courts over lawsuits against foreign governments.

Andreas Akaras, a lawyer for some of the demonstrators, said in a statement that he and his colleagues "look forward to holding Turkey accountable in a court of law for its terrorizing attack against our clients."

A lawyer representing Turkey declined to comment.

The police chief in the US capital described the incident as a "brutal attack" on peaceful protesters.

Criminal assault charges were brought in Washington against several Turkish security agents and others involved. Two of the defendants — not members of Erdogan's security team — pleaded guilty. Prosecutors dropped charges against 11 agents in 2018.

President Joe Biden's administration had urged the Supreme Court not to hear Turkey's appeal to avoid the lawsuits, saying that when foreign security personnel deploy force in ways that are not related to protecting officials from bodily harm they are acting outside their legal protections.

Lower courts ruled against Turkey. The US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in 2021 ruled that while members of the Turkish security detail had a right to protect Erdogan, their actions in this incident did not meet that exception.

Turkey had argued that a failure by the Supreme Court to reverse that ruling threatened to disrupt US foreign relations and "invites reciprocal erosion of immunity for US security agents protecting American presidents, diplomats and missions abroad."



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pastor Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan of Bayside, NY

ANNIVERSARY, from page 6  
intertwined facts, words of gratitude, anecdotes, and humor throughout the evening.

“Der Hayr, as we spend the next few hours in celebration, we want you to realize that you have become part of the fabric of this amazing and challenging parish,” said Cetin. “You are now the second longest serving pastor of Holy Martyrs (after Fr. Vartan Megherian of blessed memory). Your humility, patience and messages of love have made your ministry endure and thrive in a parish that is hard to please. We are so multifaceted here, but you have managed to rise above and embrace us all. Tonight, we honor you with our love and gratitude. Please sit back and enjoy the celebration that is so well-deserved!”

The evening of celebration highlighted the parish’s achievements over the last decade under Fr. Abraham’s leadership with a wonderful photo and video montage which included congratulatory messages from all the parish’s schools and auxiliaries.

The video, produced by Alexander Vartanian, was a “Scrapbook of Memories” with photos from many successful events over the past decade: the addition of a parish elevator, dedication of a new plaza, renovation of the Youth Room and church halls, reinstating the very popular Vacation Bible School, starting a new youth choir and dance group, successfully renaming the street in the back of the church as “Armenia Way,” the blessing of a centennial *khatchkar* brought from Armenia, establishing a green space next to the church after finally knocking down a house, and most recently dedicating a new playground for our children....just to name a few exciting moments in the history of Holy Martyrs. A surprise video of congratulations from Fr. Abraham’s family in Armenia was also a touching moment in an evening full of much love and appreciation for Fr. Abraham, Yn. Karine, Evelina (11), Armen (10), and Mariam (almost 4).

During the banquet, clergy, parishioners, and friends had the opportunity to mingle. For many, this was the first large event they had attended since the Covid lockdown. After dinner, the attendees were serenaded by violinist and parishioner, Diana Vasilyan, with a variety of Armenian pieces, including the encore crowd pleaser, *Artsakh*, (one of Fr. Abraham and Yn. Karine’s favorites). The Malkhasyan Trio (Fr. Abraham’s very talented children) brought the excited crowd to their feet in applause with a beautiful rendition of *Yerevan/Erebuni*. Cetin presented the children with sunflowers.

The parish gifted Fr. Abraham a new set of vestments made in Armenia, in honor of his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The vestments —



Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan, Yn. Karine and their children in front of the anniversary cake at the celebration

green, cream and gold, with appliques of the Apostles — were blessed and worn during *Badarak* the next day. The parish also honored Yn. Karine and the entire Malkhasyan Family with a special gift.

“We cannot forget that celebrating *Der Hayr* means celebrating the entire Malkhasyan family,” said Cetin. “Without Yn. Karine’s support and love, *Der Hayr* would not be complete. It takes a special woman to be behind the scenes guiding a pastor, during good days and challenging ones. We are grateful to you and your children for sharing *Der Hayr* with our community.”

Yn. Karine was presented a limited-edition Michael Aram foliated cross. The foliated cross has a personal meaning to Michael Aram. He states, “leaf shapes traditionally found at the tips of the cross is a representation that enforces the cross as a symbol brimming with life, potential and hope.” “This is the message of our parish,” said Dr. Lynn Cetin. “We wish you all continuous good health, the inspiration to continue your ministry together and much hope and love as you spread the Word of God, together as a family with our parish. May you remember this day each time you look at this beautiful cross.”

A draft “Booklet of Blessings” was also presented to Fr. Abraham during the banquet, listing all donors and congratulatory messages received in his honor thus far. Due to the overwhelming response to the Booklet, donations and messages will be accepted until the end of November. The Booklet will soon be finalized with the addition of the photos from the celebratory weekend. Over \$21,000 has been raised in Fr. Abraham’s honor to date!

Cetin reflected on a discussion with Fr. Abraham when he was asked about his first few weeks at Holy Martyrs:

“This was known to be a tough parish,” said Fr. Abraham, adding, “but I am always up for a challenge, so I knew that this was the place for me to be. I took that challenge upon myself with patience, love, self-control, humility and of course hope! Holy Martyrs is a very progressive parish. There are people in this parish who are from very different backgrounds, but I look at that as a gift. We can learn from everybody. We can build upon the strength of each other, and I knew from the very beginning that Holy Martyrs had so much potential as long as we accepted each other, and we worked together. It has been the foundation of my ministry to bring love into the center of everything

that I do — to set aside jealousy and pride and to remember that we are all here to worship the Lord and bring healing to those who have been wounded.”

The evening concluded with a celebratory cake-cutting and words of gratitude from Fr. Abraham, who was visibly moved. “Tonight inspires me to do more,” he said.

“*Der Hayr*, you have loved us, comforted us, healed us, and made us better, and we thank you,” said Cetin.

No one wanted the night to end, as many lingered in the hall as the servers began cleaning up. The Anniversary Committee had anticipated this and welcomed everyone to an “After Party” in Kalustyan Hall, set up like a café. This was the perfect setting to relax after the banquet, congratulate Fr. Abraham and Yn. Karine personally and to dance to Armenian and American music. Many stayed until after 1pm! The following day, after *Badarak*, the faithful enjoyed a lavish celebratory fellowship hosted by the Anniversary Committee, all of the church’s schools (Day School, Saturday Armenian Language School, Sunday School) and auxiliaries. Children from the Sunday School presented Fr. Abraham with a photo signed by all the students and the Lousaper Choir sang their hearts out in celebration!

## Armenian Assembly Releases Updated Financial Aid Directory

WASHINGTON — The updated Tenth Edition of the Armenian Assembly of America’s financial aid directory for undergraduate and graduate students of Armenian descent has been released. The comprehensive resource is designed to provide students with information regarding available financial assistance to pursue their higher education.

This updated Tenth Edition lists organizations throughout the United States, along with some groups in Canada and abroad, that grant scholarships.

First produced in 1982, the Assembly’s Financial Aid Directory continues to serve as a resource for students to obtain scholarships and other forms of financial assistance. The Armenian Assembly remains committed to promoting education and encouraging Armenian youth to pursue higher learning. The Assembly’s flagship, an-

nual Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Summer Internship Program in Washington, D.C., and its Yerevan Internship Program in Armenia, also offer scholarships to college students interested in these programs. Both Summer internship programs provide college students of Armenian descent an opportunity to experience the two nations’ capitals, and take part in a full schedule of educational, cultural, volunteering, networking, and social activities throughout the eight-week duration.

Students who are accepted into the Washington, D.C. program, currently in its 45th year, are assisted with internship placements in a number of fields, including congressional offices, think tanks, media organizations, and governmental agencies. Participants also have the opportunity to meet Members of Congress, noted academicians, and other leaders through the Assembly’s

Capitol Ideas and Lecture Series programs. Students admitted into the Yerevan Internship Program, presently in its 23rd year, have interned with Armenian governmental offices, NGOs, think tanks, museums, media outlets, medical centers, law firms among other offices.

Over the course of eight weeks, participants experience life in their ancestral homeland, tour historical sites around Armenia, meet with Armenian officials, and even volunteer over one weekend to help build a home in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity. Further information about both of the Assembly’s Summer internship programs can be found here.

For additional details or assistance with the application process, contact Assembly Programs Director Joseph Piatt at [jpiatt@aaainc.org](mailto:jpiatt@aaainc.org).



## OBITUARY

# Rev. Nersess Jebejian

## Dedicated Priest

PROVIDENCE, RI — Fr. Nersess Jebejian, longtime, stalwart clergyman of the Diocese, son of one of the Armenian Church's pre-eminent priestly families, and father to the Very Rev. Aren Jebejian, passed away in the early hours of October 27. He was 87.

Born in Aleppo, Syria, on December 17, 1934, he came to the United States to continue his education, which he did at Episcopal Theological Seminary, where he received bachelor's and graduate degrees.

He was ordained to the holy priesthood by Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan—the late Diocesan Primate and Patriarch of Jerusalem, and uncle to Der Nersess — in October 1969, at the Holy Cross Church of New York. From the 1960s through early 2000s, he served at parishes across the breadth of the Eastern Diocese, including those in Cleveland, OH; Southfield, MI; Springfield, MA; Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Houston and Carrollton, TX; Pinellas Park, FL; and mission parishes in Florida, Texas, Missouri, and Louisiana.

Jebejian and his wife, Yn. Aurora, had two children, Rena and Aren — the latter of whom followed the calling of his family into the holy priesthood, and now serves as pastor of St. John Church in Southfield, MI. Der Nersess is survived by his beloved wife and children, son-in-law Stephen Megrđichian, grandchildren Mari and Garen, and the extended Jebejian and Nersoyan family.

The Divine Liturgy and final anointing for Der Nersess *Avak Kahana* Jebejian took place at Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church in Providence, presided over by Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director, on Thursday, November 3.

Nersess Jebejian was born in Aleppo, Syria, on December 17, 1934, the first of three sons (including Hagop and Aren) to Sarkis and Mariam Jebejian. While growing up, Nersess attended the *Grtaseeradz Aintabsi* Elementary School and subsequently graduated from Aleppo College. At a tender age, Nersess along with his younger brother Hagop developed a love for serving the church by frequently wearing robes and serving on the Holy Altar of St. Asdvadzadin Church, which served former natives of Aintab.

Nersess emigrated to the United States seeking a higher education. He arrived in New York in 1956 and stayed with his uncle and aunt, Dr. Hagop and Marie Nersoyan, in Forest Hills, NY. While in New York, he attended Adelphi University and graduated with a degree in Social Work. He subsequently went to Episcopal Divinity School of Harvard University and graduated with a Masters in Divinity.

In 1966, Dn. Nersess attended and graduated from the world-renowned Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Geneva, Switzerland. Throughout his lifetime, both before and after his eventual priestly ordination, Fr. Nersess had a genuine passion for ecumenism. From his time in Cleveland to Springfield, all the way until his days in Texas, Fr. Nersess was deeply involved in the ecumenical movement and was well respected by many non-Armenian Clergy. He served in various capacities in the National Council of Churches (NCCUSA) as well as participating in numerous World Council of Churches gatherings over many decades.

In 1961, Nersess was ordained a deacon of the Armenian Church at St. James Church of Watertown, MA. He was assigned by then-Primate Archbishop Sion Manoogian to the St. Gregory of Narek Church of Cleveland, OH, as its Deacon-in-Charge, where he served from 1961 to 1964. While there, he oversaw the building of the new church, which was consecrated on April 12, 1964. He was subsequently assigned as the Youth Director of St. John Church of Southfield, MI. While there, he was in charge of the Church School which had over 900 attendees, from 1965 to 1969.

There, too, he met Aurora Melikian, who would become his wife. The couple married and began a family, first with the birth of their son Aren, and then their daughter Rena.

Deacon Nersess entered the holy priesthood on October 2-3, 1969, at Holy Cross Church of Armenia in Washington Heights, NY. He was ordained by the hand of his grand-uncle, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, former Primate of the Eastern Diocese and Patriarch of Jerusalem. His ordination godfather was the late Edward Mardigian. The new Fr. Nersess celebrated his *antranig badarak* (or first Divine Liturgy) at New York's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral that same year.

In 1969, at the behest of then-Diocesan Primate Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Fr. Nersess and Yeretzgin Aurora were assigned to Armenian Church of Springfield, MA, at the time named for St. John the Divine. During his tenure in Springfield, Fr. Nersess brought together a diverse community from different walks of life, and planted the seeds of a new endeavor: to build a new church in Wilbraham that was consecrated St. Mark Armenian Church.

Simultaneously, during the early 1970s he served as Youth Director for the Diocese and would travel weekly to the Diocesan headquarters to invigorate the youth program. He led Diocesan youth on four ACYOA Armenian Studies Program trips to the Armenian homeland during this time.

At home with Yn. Aurora and the children, Der Nersess loved to relax with his family while tending their backyard garden of 60 tomato plants, 40 pepper plants, zucchini, beans, cucumbers, eggplant, asparagus rhubarb, not to mention the huge blueberry bushes. They also enjoyed summers with the Jebejian and Nersoyan relatives in Matituck, Long Island.

While making preparations for a new sanctuary in Springfield by identifying new land for a new church, Fr. Nersess was invited to be the Dean of the Alex and Marie Manoogian Seminary at the Armenian Patriarchate of Sts. James in Jerusalem. While there, he brought discipline and a new sense of educational attainment to a generation of seminarians — many of whom today are clergymen within the Eastern Diocese and throughout the world.

Fr. Nersess returned to the United States in 1981. Archbishop Torkom assigned him to develop the blossoming Armenian Church community in Fr. Lauderdale, FL, which eventually became St. David Armenian Church of Boca Raton.

In 1982, St. Kevork Armenian Church of Houston, TX, was in need of steady leadership. While in Houston, numerous projects were undertaken and the community came together under "one dome." While serving as fulltime pastor in Houston, Fr. Nersess was also assigned by the Primate as the Mission Parish Coordinator for the communities emerging in the Diocese's Southern Region and elsewhere. The communities Fr. Nersess worked with included: Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio, TX; Baton Rouge, LA; Nashville, TN; Jacksonville, Orlando, and Naples, FL; Charlotte, NC; Kansas City, MO; Atlanta, GA; Minneapolis, MN; Ann Arbor and Lansing, MI. During his tenure as Mission Parish Coordinator, the Dallas community began to grow and was consecrated as St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Fr. Nersess became its first pastor, serving from 1994 to 2000.

During the early days of his service to St. Sarkis Church in Dallas, Fr. Nersess had suffered a brain aneurysm in October of 1994. He recovered fully, and continued his missionary work to the parish and the Diocese.

It was also in this period that Armenia suffered the massive earthquake of 1988. As rescue efforts began to be organized, it soon became evident that the cause of relief to the homeland would not be short lived. In 1991, Fr. Nersess was assigned by then-Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian to travel to Armenia and become the first director of the Diocesan Fund for Armenia's Recovery (precursor to the Fund for Armenian Relief). In Yerevan, he lived at the Hrazdan Hotel from 1991 to 1993 among officials who



were setting up their country's new government following Armenia's independence in September 1991. For his efforts during this critical time, Der Nersess was honored with an Encyclical from His Holiness Vasken I, of blessed memory, the late Catholicos of All Armenians. The honor was conferred in 1994, to mark the 25th anniversary of Fr. Nersess' priestly ordination.

In 1993, Fr. Nersess and Yn. Aurora witnessed the marriage of their daughter Rena to Stephen Megrđichian of Providence Rhode Island, at Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church. Just a few years later, they welcomed twin grandchildren, Mari and Garen. Throughout the years, Mari and Garen became the main focus for *Der Hayr* and Yeretzgin, as Stephen, Rena, and the children enjoyed traveling to visit with the Jebejians in Pompano Beach, FL.

A new chapter of ministry began in 2000, when Der Nersess became the new pastor of the Armenian Church of Pinellas Park, FL. Once again Fr. Nersess and Yn. Aurora were called to guide a mission parish as it blossomed into a full-fledged church, eventually consecrated in 2007 as St. Hagop Church.

In April of 2004, Der Hayr and Yeretzgin witnessed their son's ordination to the holy priesthood at St. Vartan Cathedral. Fr. Nersess, proudly, was Fr. Aren's spiritual sponsor, and subsequently traveled to the Mother See of Holy Ecmiadzin to stand at his son's side as he celebrated his first Divine Liturgy at the main altar of the Mother Cathedral, following Fr. Aren's 40 days of seclusion in Armenia.

For over a half century, Fr. Nersess was a figure who spoke with dignity and authority during meetings at annual Diocesan Assemblies and ACYOA Assemblies. In addition, Fr. Nersess was intimately involved with the Diocese's Choir Association, which he chaired during the mid-1980s.

Following *Der Hayr's* retirement, the Jebejians enjoyed their time in Pompano Beach, FL, with frequent visits from their children, the Very Rev. Aren Jebejian and Rena (Jebejian) Megrđichian. The Jebejians were known for their hospitality and preparation of gourmet meals, with Der Nersess' passion for Armenian cuisine being inspired by his mother, Diramayr Mariam Jebejian. Der Hayr was also known as a connoisseur of wines, especially French wines.

The family requests that in-lieu-of-flowers donations be made to Mer Doon Young Women's Shelter, in Echmiadzin, Armenia (make checks payable to St. John Armenian Church (Memo: Mer Doon), 22001 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield, MI 48075); or to the "Rev. Fr. Nersess and Diramayr Jebejian Endowment Fund" of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary (486 Bedford Rd., Armonk, NY 10504).

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## OBITUARY

# Art Laboe (Art Egnoian)

## *Ruled LA Airways*

By Esmerald Bermudez

LOS ANGELES (*Los Angeles Times*) — When Art Laboe was a child, his mother couldn't pull him away from the radio.

"I listened to soap operas. I listened to news. I listened to all the announcements," he told the *Times* in 2009. "I was enthralled with this box that talked."

The disc jockey, who got his first radio job at 17, went on to fill Southern California's airwaves for more than 70 years. He was one of the first to play rock 'n' roll on the West Coast and was a pioneer in creating a compilation album, calling it "Oldies but Goodies."

His inviting, baritone voice became a beacon for generations of fans, particularly Latinos.

Behind a microphone until late in life, died on October 7, while battling pneumonia, Joanna Morones, a spokesperson for Laboe's production company, said. He was 97.

Through the decades, his nighttime love song and dedication show endured unchanged in a sea of constant radio format shifts.

Listeners would call in from Oxnard, Boyle Heights, Riverside; from as far as Phoenix, Albuquerque and Nevada. They were lovers, loners, kids and grandmothers — some who had tuned in since grade school.

Laboe helped them celebrate anniversaries, mourn the loss of loved ones and profess their love. He played intermediary in arguments and blew kisses on birthdays.

His radio program consistently ranked near the top evening time slots and was syndicated in more than a dozen cities, drawing about a million listeners per week. His show was broadcast in Los Angeles for more than 20 years on Hot 92.3 (KRRL-FM).

"He was the voice of the real L.A.," said Lou Adler, the famed record producer, manager and hardcore Laboe fan. "He reached out and touched people growing up in this melting pot. He cut right through it and understood us."

Laboe was born Art Egnoian in Salt Lake City on Aug. 7, 1925, in the same decade commercial radio broadcasting began. He was a loner growing up, he said in a *Times* profile, a small Armenian kid who "wasn't a big, good-looking hunk."

His parents divorced when he was 13 and he moved to South Los Angeles to live with his sister. He started his own amateur radio station in 1938 out of his bedroom. Over the airwaves he was anonymous, and listeners, he was pleased to find, were drawn to his voice.

He attended Stanford University and, after a stint in the Navy during World War II, scored his first job at a station in San Francisco. A general manager encouraged him to adopt the last name Laboe because it sounded catchier.



By the time he returned to Los Angeles in the 1950s, rock 'n' roll was beginning to make its furious ascent. Laboe, a plain-spoken man with sharp business instincts, dove in and promoted the music.

He broadcast his show live from Scrivner's Drive-In at Sunset and Cahuenga boulevards, and teenagers showed up in droves to watch, creating traffic jams around the classic hamburger joint.

As the crowd grew, he would lean in to the microphone and say, "Hey mothers, gather up your daughters. Here comes Art Laboe and his devil music."

His audience grew so large at the drive-in that Laboe began to host dance shows. The city of Los Angeles did not allow public dances for those under 18 at the time so he headed to the El Monte Legion Stadium.

There, up to 3,000 fans would gather every other week to dance away to rising stars such as Sam Cooke, Ritchie Valens and Jackie Wilson. Laboe used to greet fans at the door and help them out with 50-cent pieces if they were short on money.

"It was like a tidal wave, and kids went nuts for it," Laboe told *LA Weekly* in 2005.

Concertgoers formed a rainbow of colors: white fans from the Westside, Black listeners from South L.A. and Latino fans from the Eastside.

Until the end, many of those Latino listeners — their children and grandchildren — remained devoted fans.

"He is more Chicano than some Chicanos," comedian Paul Rodriguez said in 2009. "And everyone from the toughest vato to the wimpiest guy would say the same."

During his Scrivner's days, Laboe noticed that listeners often gravitated to oldies, songs that were 4 or 5 years old. He began calling them "Oldies But Goodies," a phrase he later trademarked as other broadcasters began to borrow it.

In 1959, he took the concept and commercialized it, creating one of the first compilation albums of oldies music. His first volume (there were 15 total) stayed on the Billboard Top 100 chart for more than three years.

Those collections, along with his radio show, promoted countless music groups

that may have otherwise been forgotten: the Shirelles, the Platters, Eddie Holman, Brenton Wood.

"You don't replace people like Art Laboe," said author-historian Harvey Kubernik. "His reach was monumental. He was a disc jockey, program director, concert promoter, label owner, columnist."

Laboe rarely took a day off. He used to love working holidays because that's when the best — and often the most sentimental — dedications came in.

For years he ran his show inside his dimly lit Hollywood studio, home of his record label, Original Sound. His star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame was just a few blocks away on the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue.

In his studio, he used to ease into his leather chair just before 7 p.m. to watch phone lines flash with callers. Laboe chatted with each fan and read their dedications on the air:

"Her name is Ana Ivette Vasquez and I want to let her know that I'm really sorry for doing her wrong, for all the tears she dropped and pain I put her through. I want to dedicate this song from deep down in my heart."

He estimated that about half of his callers were Latino. Some had loved ones locked up in prisons in places like Chino, Delano and Calipatria. Others had nicknames like Mr. Porky, Lil' Crazy, Buggy and Payasa.

Laboe never judged them.

"Here's somebody," he said to the *Times*, "who might feel that what they have going on is of little importance in life and now they come on the radio and their voice goes out to the whole world."

Latino fans loved him the way Lakers fans loved the colorful play-by-play calling of Chick Hearn. They filled his annual concerts by the thousands and made him part of the emerging Chicano identity. He was the only non-Latino ever selected as grand marshal of the East L.A. Christmas Parade. And he had such a connection to El Monte that the city proclaimed March 10 Art Laboe Day and erected a fountain in his

honor at the site of the long ago demolished Legion Stadium

In the early 1970s, even future Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said he used to cruise through Boyle Heights in his canary-yellow 1964 Chevy, bumping Laboe's music.

"His show was the first place a young Chicano kid had to air his feelings, the first place you could say something and be heard," said Ruben Molina, author of two books on Chicano music and American culture.



Art Laboe with Little Richard (Los Angeles Times photo)

Off the radio, Laboe lived a mostly quiet life. He lived alone in a house in the Hollywood Hills and enjoyed eating at the Chateau Marmont, where everybody seemed to know him. He moved to Palm Springs in 2015 when his broadcast moved to KDAY-FM (93.5).

His family, he used to say, were his listeners.

Approaching 90, he remained healthy and active, doing push-ups and pull-ups. And he still came on the radio every Sunday evening with "The Art Laboe Connection Show," which he began broadcasting from his home when the COVID-19 pandemic began. He had been set to broadcast one of his signature DJ concerts last Saturday at Glen Helen Amphitheater in San Bernardino.

Retirement seemed out of the question.

"Radio," he told *The Times*, "is my life."

## Dr. Avedis Khachadurian

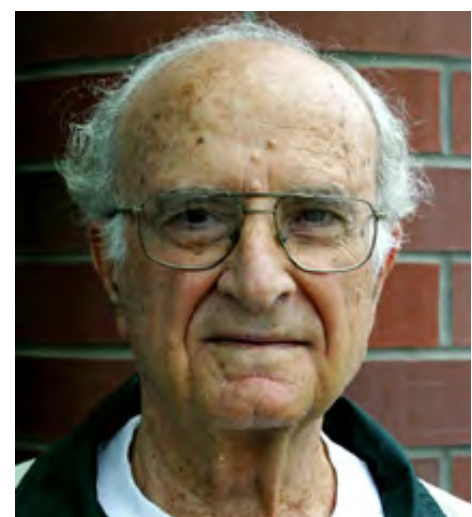
### Groundbreaking Researcher at Rutgers Medical School

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — Prof. Avedis Khachadurian, MD, a pioneer in cholesterol research and husband and father, died on September 22, 2022.

Dr. Khachadurian was born in 1926.

He graduated from the American University of Beirut, where he became a professor of biochemistry. He showed that children with signs of hypercholesterolemia had inherited two aberrant genes leading to overproduction of cholesterol and premature death from coronary artery disease. These seminal observations defined the disorder known as homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia and eventually led to extraordinary advances in cholesterol therapeutics. In 1972, he was appointed the founding director of the division of endocrinology at Rutgers Medical School. He continued his research, cared for patients and trained over 30 endocrinologists. In 2012, he was honored with the Distinguished Achievement Award by the National Lipid Association.

In 1973, Rutgers Medical School was transitioning from a two to a three-year medical school when Dr. Khachadurian became one of the first members of the Department of Medicine. He continued his NIH supported research and lecturing students about cholesterol as he expanded faculty in endocrinology. His colleagues recognized him as the sharpest mind in the room. He mentored many students and trained over 30 endocrinologists.



"He was a mentor and role model for generations of Armenian physicians, who could always count on him for his wise counsel," noted Levon Nazarian, MD, close family friend of Dr. Khachadurian.

The Rutgers Department of Medicine recognizes an outstanding graduating resident annually with The Khachadurian Award. In 2012, he was honored with the Distinguished Achievement Award by the National Lipid Association.

Khachadurian is survived by his wife Laura, who was an enormous asset to his career and achievements, and by his daughters Cynthia of Princeton, and Linda of Boston. A memorial service is planned in the spring

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Hasmik Movsesyan's Farm Grill Offers Armenian Hospitality to Metro Detroit

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — In a nondescript strip mall, hidden from view alongside a huge parking lot that serves three other strips of stores in the inner-ring Detroit suburb of Southfield, an equally nondescript storefront awaits the customer in search of great Mediterranean food. The large sign proclaiming this to be the Farm Grill, with its style and design, along with pictures of kebab, announce to the passerby that the trusted Lebanese-American cuisine popular throughout all parts of Metro Detroit can be found here. Neighborhood residents, clerks at the nearby outlet stores, and especially gym-goers at the Planet Fitness across the parking lot wander over in search of something healthy to eat — a plate of hummus, or perhaps chicken shawarma, skipping the fried-chicken-and-fish place that's right next door. But Farm Grill is not a typical Lebanese or "Mediterranean" restaurant.

The interior of the Farm Grill is dark and simplistic. But as soon as one enters, the smiling face of proprietor Hasmik Movsesyan, with her friendly welcome, lights up the room. As customers discover the healthy and delicious home-made cooking, and family-like Armenian hospitality, they forget the exterior and even the interior of this true diamond in the rough. The Farm Grill transforms into home, especially for the many Armenian customers. Movsesyan's fellow natives of Armenia often call it *horants doon* (father's house or family home, in Armenian). Others simply call it "Hasmik's place."

This small restaurant has become a highlight of the Detroit Armenian community and a gathering place for Armenians from all walks of life, from the American-born generations to Movsesyan's fellow arrivals from Armenia, to those who immigrated from the Middle East and Turkey some 50 years ago. This is the story of how an immigrant family's successful business brought the Armenian community together and provided a taste of homeland hospitality not only to the Diaspora but to all residents of Metro Detroit.

## Detroit's Ethnic Restaurant Scene

Two decades ago, there was little to speak of in terms of Armenian cuisine in the area, particularly restaurants.

Early immigrants dating back to the 1920s had attempted to open restaurants, but aside from the old-world "surjarans" (coffeeshouses) which died out with the generation of early immigrant men that patronized them, an Armenian was more likely to have better luck running a general "American" restaurant than one specifically featuring ethnic cooking. In the early days of Detroit, Greektown on Monroe Street downtown reigned supreme for Mediterranean cuisine as well as entertainment; in later years, as the Arab-American population of Dearborn boomed, Lebanese restaurants proliferated throughout the suburbs under the trade term "Mediterranean." These two ethnicities with their popular cuisines cornered the market on the homeland region's food, with the Greek community expanding into more American-style diners, known colloquially in Detroit as "coney islands" (a story for another time.) Armenians for the most part didn't enjoy the difficult restaurant business.

There was always call for Armenian catering services, like Gary Reizian's long-running "Uptown Catering," which also produced labor-intensive but in demand items like cheese beoreg and lahmajoun en masse. Some of the Armenian caterers throughout the years tried to open full-service restaurants at times, but none lasted. Most Detroit Armenians abided by the mantra of "why go out to eat 'our' food when we can make it better at home?" The annual church picnics and bazaars were one's best bet for getting a taste of Armenia.

At the time that the Farm Grill opened, the only Armenian restaurant in the area was Allegro, a supper club and event space that catered to post-Soviet immigrants and which was owned by a Russian-speaking Armenian family from Baku. Piles of *khorovadz* washed down with vodka awaited the patrons who ranged from Armenian grandmothers to Ukrainian teens, as the audience was entertained by the floor show featuring Bakutsi Armenian performers that sang in Russian. Local chapters of the AYF or ACYOA would occasionally rent the space

for dances; Armenian grandparents held their anniversary parties there. The Movsesyan family themselves along with their relatives and friends were frequent patrons.

With Allegro now closed, Farm Grill has become the only full-service Armenian restaurant. But the tale of Farm Grill is the story of one woman's dogged determination to forge her own path as an independent business owner while serving others, thanks to a lot of hard work, determination, and the value of education.



## Armenian Tradition of Work Ethic and Education

When Movsesyan arrived in the US with her family in 2000, she had no plans to go into the restaurant business. She had trained as a nurse in Armenia and her ultimate goal was to become licensed in the same profession here. Coming from a family where education was a major priority, Movsesyan said that her father worked as a welder and her mother as an accountant in a large supermarket.

In fact, while Movsesyan started working hard, cleaning hotel rooms upon her arrival in the US, and then moved on to a local Mediterranean restaurant, the Pita Café, where she worked as a dishwasher, waitress and finally cashier, she simultaneously went back to school herself and earned a bachelor's degree in social science. Why? "I just have to be educated," says Movsesyan, a value she has passed on to her children, Artak and Anahit. Artak has a business degree and helps his mother in the restaurant as well as in her developing real estate business, while Anahit is a physician assistant. Movsesyan stated, "when I came to this country, the first thing I told Anahit and Artak, I don't care what you're going to be, you have to be educated, no matter what. Thank God my children were smart enough, I helped them to find the path, I don't put them in there. I didn't insist Anahit to become a PA, I helped her to choose that."

"In my family the education is the first," continued Movsesyan. "Here's what I say to whoever comes to the United States: I don't care what you're going to do. I don't care what business... sometimes they say 'if you are going to open a business you don't need to be educated.' Oh, you *do* have to. You have to be intelligent. You have to be able to write. Yes, you have to! It's an education. You have to be able to communicate with people."

Movsesyan's Social Science degree interestingly helped her run a service industry business catering to the diverse Metro Detroit population and better interact with her many customers from all sorts of backgrounds. "Social science is one of those degrees where you can learn about everything," she stated. "And actually, social science is also very helpful to learn about different nations and their traditions. So many things. When I was taking the class, they're teaching you how to communicate with the nations [or religious groups] who believe that touching is not allowed. So much to learn. And why not?"

## Embracing the Restaurant Industry

As a hardworking waitress and then cashier at the Pita Café, her work ethic was noticed by one of the cooks, who had the ambition to open his own restaurant. According

to Movsesyan, "Armenian ladies — we do everything!" The cook and his business partner asked Movsesyan to join them as an employee at their new restaurant, but she refused to jump ship unless they offered her a share of the business. They claimed that they couldn't do so, because it was a family business. Meanwhile, Movsesyan didn't think it was worth it otherwise, since her goal was to return to nursing. Finally the men called her back and offered her 20 percent of the new business. The original Farm Grill restaurant in Novi, Mich., was born in 2007.

The restaurant followed a menu typical of most Mediterranean eateries in the Metro Detroit area, that is to say, Lebanese-American cuisine. "It had nothing to do with Armenian food," Movsesyan said, though also noting that many of the menu items are also part of Armenian cuisine as well. The familiar offerings like shawarma, shish kebab, rice pilaf, grape leaves, hommos, tabbouleh, and so on, were drawn directly from the Lebanese recipes of the two men that started the restaurant, without any real Armenian influence.

"Any items on our menu, it was prepared mostly by me," said Movsesyan. "No man likes to roll the grape leaves," she laughed, continuing that she was "doing everything" such as grape leaves, fried kibbe, stuffed cabbage, salads, tabbouleh, mujadra, etc.

According to Movsesyan, after seven years in business, the partners decided to open a Southfield location. Being in what was once the heart of the local Armenian community and with the massive religious, cultural, and educational complex of St. John's Armenian Church and the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School nearby, as well as being nearby her home, Movsesyan became manager of the Southfield location. But six months later, she says, she paid off her partners and took over the Southfield restaurant as her own, though the name, signage, and much of the menu remained the same.

It was Movsesyan's independent spirit and her introduction to some of the delicacies of Western Armenian cuisine that began the process of turning a run of the mill Detroit style Lebanese eatery into an Armenian community gathering place.

"I took everything under my control because I wanted to do something extra," says Movsesyan "I wanted to put something extra, I wanted to put some Armenian food. When he [the Lebanese partner] saw me doing the *manti*, he said, 'I'm not gonna do this in Novi!'"

Yes, Movsesyan's Farm Grill restaurant is the only restaurant in the Michigan that serves *manti*. But as she tells it, *manti*, though it's been popularized in Armenia over the last 20 years, was practically unknown there when she left in 2000. The story of the *manti* is the story of how Farm Grill became what it is today.

## Manti Inception

In 2015, "Two sisters came to eat in our restaurant," Movsesyan says. They were Diaspora-born Armenians of Western Armenian descent. One sister asked Movsesyan if she could make *manti*, a popular dish throughout the Diaspora, and no less in Detroit, where it is associated with immigrants that originated in Istanbul, Kayseri, and Evereg. Not knowing precisely what it was, Movsesyan asked for clarification. The woman said that it was like a dumpling. According to Movsesyan, there is a type of dumpling popular in the former Soviet Union that is also called *manti* and is native to Uzbekistan. "It's steamed and it's very big," similar to Georgian *khingali*, says Movsesyan, who then inquired of the woman how many of these large dumplings she would eat at once.

Daughter, Anahit Movsesyan, a graduate of the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School was standing by. She nudged her mother. "Mom, you don't know what you're talking about," she said. "What do you mean I don't know what I'm talking about?" "This is not the same manti!" Anahit insisted. But she then agreed to help her mother fulfill the woman's request.

Having attended the AGBU Manoogian school with classmates of all Armenian backgrounds, many of Anahit's closest friends were decedents of various Western Armenian diasporas. In fact, mothers from the school regularly congregate to make *manti* which is bagged, frozen, and sold to raise money for the school. Anahit had helped out with this effort many times, "but I never saw those



## COMMUNITY NEWS

### Community Gathering Place

As the word of Movsesyan's *manti* spread throughout the Metro Detroit Armenian community, Armenian-Americans, many of them second- and third-generation, showed up craving the traditional delicacy. The restaurant's proximity to St. John's Armenian Church, and in particular on the route many take from the church to their homes in the more northerly suburbs, has made it a popular destination for Sunday afternoon lunch. It has also become an easy choice for local Armenians who want the typical Mediterranean fare of *shawarma* sandwiches and *hommos* but also want to be able to buy a couple *lahmajouns*. Movsesyan was in the business of providing the Western Armenian fare that locals wanted but did not have the time to prepare themselves.

Not only that, but naturally, fellow natives of Hayastan come to the restaurant because they know Movsesyan personally, trust her, and enjoy her hospitality and the warm atmosphere she has created. They call the restaurant *horants doon*, meaning "father's house," i.e., the family home where one can relax and enjoy home-cooked meals.

"Like I said, the business its home, it's friends, it's everything," says Movsesyan. "My customers, when they come here, they don't want to go anywhere, and they're like, 'this is like *horants doon*.' My friend just called and she said, 'I was in Armenia for about a week and when I came back, I said to my husband, Hasmik's back, can I go see Hasmik?' And her husband says, one second I turned around and I heard her tires screeching because she took off to go to Hasmik's place. She says, 'I feel so comfortable here.'"

The confluence of Armenians from all over the map has resulted in new acquaintances and given the restaurant the feel of a community gathering place. When going to the Farm Grill you are never sure who you will run into that you might know.

For Movsesyan the restaurant is also like home. "It's not only my people, my cousins. This is like my home, too, you know I go home at 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock. Noone's going to come to my house at 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock unless you have something to do."

"You come to my place you eat, I appreciate, you get happy, your stomach's full; happy, healthy, fresh food," Movsesyan continued. "My cousins, my customers, they come here. And if anyone needs help, and doing any paperwork or something, they come here. Everything. Plus, I'm a real estate agent. And I do that also here. I started doing that about a year ago."

Movsesyan loves helping people. She also does immigration paperwork for her Armenian friends, and is a registered notary, as well as doing

translations of documents from Armenian into English. She does it for free, she says: "not a penny out of those. In the meantime, I run my food business to support myself." She also has hired several women over the years who are recent arrivals from Armenia and would have a tough time finding jobs elsewhere. "This is another help for them, because some of them don't speak English," says Movsesyan. Rather than having to clean hotel rooms as Movsesyan once did, they can work for a fellow Armenian native, trusted woman boss while being able to practice their English with the customers.

Movsesyan's customers aren't just Armenians of course. They come from all walks of life. Being one of the cheapest takeout places for trusted quality Mediterranean food in her neighborhood, it is favored by local area residents. The Planet Fitness gym also supplies much of the clientele, who are interested in healthy food.

"Because of the menu, it's Mediterranean, it's favored by lots of people, doesn't matter the culture, because as soon as they try it, they like it and they always come back," says Movsesyan. "Not only Armenians like the *manti* and

*lahmajoun* and *sou beoreg*, I have Americans that try it too, and they call [*manti*] "dumpling soup." Please don't call my hardworking dish 'soup'! Soup, you can make it in a half hour! It's dumpling dinner, not soup!"

All ingredients at the restaurant are fresh. "We know the Mediterranean cuisine is one of the healthiest cuisine. Because their ingredients are garlic, lemon, vinegar. Very good for diet," says Movsesyan. She makes her own *madzoon* (Armenian homemade yogurt) and creates her own chicken broth, fresh, from the chicken meat that she uses for kebab and shawarma. She also grinds her own beef for the *dolma*.

The *manti* is served in chicken broth with *madzoon*, garlic, and *sumakh* on top. Movsesyan's unique broth is known for her addition of small cut up vegetables in addition to being fresh. "I don't like plain," says Movsesyan. "They call my *manti*, 'comfort food.' One Lebanese guy came and I gave him the *lahmajoun*, *sou beoreg*, *manti*." The customer, and many others, refer to the *manti* as "comfort food." The term especially caught on among Americans who can't remember or pronounce the name. They refer to Hasmik as "Jasmine", the English translation of her name and ask her to bring their favorite treat from her kitchen (*manti*), known only to them as "comfort food."

### Solidarity Through Tough Times

Movsesyan mentioned that, "To have my own business was not my goal, but during the time I worked for people, that's how I found out: why do I work for other people?"

She loves being able to share her hospitality with the Armenian community as well as the broader community of Metro Detroit. "The best advantage of this restaurant, I just became so close, all my communities, all my Armenian friends, from church, from customers...their happiness is my happiness, God forbid their pain is my pain. Like they become family, we have become one big family, including our beautiful St John's Church and Armenian School."

Movsesyan also credited the Armenian community with helping to keep her business afloat during the tough years of Covid-19. "Businesses are [hit] very hard, especially after Covid," Movsesyan said. "[The years] 2020-2021 were just terrible years for us. We barely survived. Thanks to my Armenian community, I knew some of them were here just to give me business, and I appreciate that. I know many of my customers were here and they would just order something, just to give me business, and I really appreciate that."

In turn, Movsesyan feels an obligation to continue to provide the community with their beloved cuisine and gathering place. "Why am I keeping this, mostly because of my Armenian community. There are some moments when you are feeling tired. This is already 15 years, I might do something else. And guess what I think after the next second — what am I going to do with my customers? I can't close my doors. I can't do that. So maybe I'll just keep that and do something else on the side. Because I like changing. I don't want to just stick with one thing."

In that vein, Movsesyan is looking to expand into a space that can accommodate large parties, replicating to some extent the role that the now-closed Allegro restaurant once played in the community. "Currently I'm looking to go bigger," says Movsesyan. "So many are asking me if they can come with 30-40 people, and I don't have the space, I'm looking for a bigger space. That way we can have parties there."

Movsesyan feels that she has succeeded. "What's the success of the mother, when they see their kids doing well. This business has helped not only myself but so many other people. When I came to the United States I had zero, I was like a little infant, newborn. No language, no speech, no driving. Like a baby. I can't do that, and that's why I put myself through school with my children. [Movsesyan graduated in 2014 before opening the Southfield Farm Grill.] I started with the housekeeping. From one work you enter into a different work, with no car, no driving. You are cleaning. It was hard, it was stressful, but thank God, everyone's happy, I'm happy, I have my grandson, I go crazy every night when I see him."

Ultimately, though, she attributes her success to her work ethic and desire to constantly learn. "I took a test to be licensed in the food industry, and I passed, and I'm thinking, what should I do next? Anahit goes: 'MOM, stop! Enough learning!' I'm not going to stop learning. I'm going to learn, I'm going to study until my last breath! All the time I said to my children, Artak and Anahit: 'You guys have to choose something, a major, education, that all your life you have to keep learning. Not to go do one thing and that's it.' I said to Anahit, 'If you are going to be in medicine, guess what, there's always something new to learn.' Now they're helping me!"



Proprietor Hasmik Movsesyan shows off her special family recipe Armenian Walnut Cake

delicacy. "I hope [all these people that heard about it are] not going to come back and ask for *manti*," Movsesyan thought to herself. But sure enough "One guy walks in and says 'I hear you are serving *manti*.' I said, 'Well, I have one order left, I'm going to serve it for you.' And he ate and he's like 'Oh, please can you make it again, can you start making this'," Movsesyan recalled.

From *manti*, Movsesyan branched out to other classic Western Armenian dishes. The second was *sou beoreg*, the recipe for which daughter Anahit again scouted out, this time on YouTube. *Sou beoreg*, which is like an Armenian lasagna minus the meat and tomato sauce (it includes layers of dough and flat pasta along with cheese), is a highly popular delicacy in Detroit, again thanks to the large amount of Armenians descended from Evereg and elsewhere in Central Anatolia.

From there, the Movsesyans started including recipes from their native Yerevan, Armenia. "After Anahit started everything, well *lahmajoun*, it's easy to make. It was easy for me. And after that I purchased a pizza oven [to make the *lahmajoun*], and why not make the *lavash* too! Movsesyan also offers Marlenka cakes as well as her own walnut cake which is a family recipe from Armenia, as well as *gata* prepared in the Eastern Armenian style found all throughout Hayastan today. When local Armenian caterer Gary Reizian retired, Armenian customers of the restaurant requested *cheoreg* and cheese *beoreg* from Movsesyan, and she began making these items as well. But it is the *manti* that remains the draw for many and of course is so time consuming.

"Some days I might have 70 percent of [my work] is just *manti* and *sou beoreg*, that happens on Sundays after church," she says.



Bowl of steaming hot Manti at the Farm Grill restaurant in Southfield, MI (2 photo options)

# Arts & Culture

## Artists from Quinn Exhibit Hold Talk at Armenian Museum Of America

By Melanie Tuysuzian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — Since June 16, the Armenian Museum of America has hosted the dual exhibition “On the Edge, Los Angeles Art 1970s-1990s from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection” and “Discovering Takouhi: Portraits of Joan Agajanian Quinn.”

On Saturday, October 29, three of the artists whose works are on display, along with Joan Agajanian Quinn herself, Jack Quinn’s widow, and their daughter, Amanda, came together for a public conversation. Mostly known for its impressive ancient Armenian artifacts, the museum rarely hosts modern art exhibitions. The museum staff said it felt like a new start after COVID-19 and the lockdowns.

LA-based artists Laddie John Dill, Gregory Wiley Edwards, and Joe Fay were ready to start when there was a power outage in the neighborhood. Therefore, the moderator, Bolton Colburn, curator of collections and exhibitions at the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art in Logan, Utah, spoke loudly to introduce the panelists. According to him, it was a one-of-a-kind art show as it allowed California art to be highlighted. The rest of the conversation took place in the dark, without microphones. However, many didn’t seem bothered and were captivated by the attending artists.

Joan and Jack Quinn’s collection of modern art hasn’t been exhibited very often because it used to be private. Through the years, this power couple in the LA modern art scene collected numerous works of art and promoted several Southern Californian artists. Across Los Angeles, they were well known and loved by significant artists like Andy Warhol, Astrid Preston, Steven Douglas, and their collection, through their local connections, extended across the pond to David Hockney, one of the most celebrated modern British painters. The Quinns had an influence on the evolution of California’s modern art. During the panel conversation on Saturday, Joan and her late husband were thanked by artists and the audience.

Despite the California 1970s vibe, Joan has always kept close to her Armenian roots and has been a trustee of the Armenian Museum for years. That is why she and Jason Sohigian, executive director of the Armenian Museum, agreed on displaying her collection there: “The Bakersfield Museum, in California, already curated her collection, in 2021. But with Joan, we wanted to bring these works of art to the East Coast, and we were sponsored by the JHM foundation, which was interested in the show and who helped us underwrite the cost of the exhibit and bring it here. It’s our largest exhibition in 50 years and it features more than 75 artists,” Sohigian explained.

see PANEL, page 13



The musicians honored Lucine Amara, center.

## AGBU Performing Artists Brings Authentic Armenian Folk Music to Carnegie Hall

NEW YORK — More than 250 music aficionados gathered at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall to celebrate the next generation of Armenian talent at the 11th AGBU Performing Artists in Concert. Organized by the AGBU New York Special Events Committee (NYSEC), it was their first concert programmed with exclusively Armenian music, using traditional instruments performed by AGBU scholarship recipients hailing from internationally renowned institutions like The Juilliard School, The Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Moscow, and The Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

The concert honored the iconic Lucine Amara, an American soprano of Armenian heritage who made her Metropolitan Opera debut as the “Voice from Heaven” in Verdi’s Don Carlos and continued to grace stages with iconic performances in Carmen, Madama Butterfly, Don Giovanni, Aida, and more.

The performance also paid tribute to the late Artemis Nazarian, a lifelong advocate of the arts and AGBU’s performing arts endeavors. Though her philanthropy extended far and wide, her dedication to young talent helped fund higher education and performance opportunities for musicians across the globe. An accomplished piano player herself, Nazarian’s generosity impacted the lives of countless AGBU artists and continues to do so with her Memorial Scholarship for performing arts.

The program was authored by artistic director and performer Diana Gabrielyan and Hayk Arsenyan, director of AGBU Arts. The program put historic elements of Armenian folk music center stage, using lesser-known instruments like the viola da gamba and kamancha to stay true to authentic compositions, including pieces from Edvard Baghdasaryan, Alexander Spendaryan and Alexander Arutiunian. “It’s really exciting to be a part of a project where there is new music written for early instruments, and I’m happy to be a part of this — also in an Armenian context,” said London-based viola da gamba player Lucine Musaelian.

The performance premiered pieces like Gushakuhin from legendary Armenian composer Alexander Spendaryan and returned to classics like Komitas’ Karun a and Aram Khachaturian’s Sabre Dance. The audience was also introduced to Spendaryan’s Romance, a delicate melody not heard before.

The artists were equally thrilled and proud to work on this project with fellow Armenian musicians from around the globe. “It’s my first time performing at Carnegie Hall and this is a great opportunity for me to play the piano, sing, accompany myself, and work with wonderful Armenian musicians,” said Sydney-based musician Christopher Nazarian. “AGBU is also special to me because it’s like a home away from home.”

see MUSIC, page 13



The musicians performed at Carnegie Hall.

## Separated by an Ocean, Reunited By a Photograph

By Harry N. Mazadoorian

HARTFORD, Conn. — My parents were both survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, having undergone unimaginable hardships and deprivations. As were so many of the victims, they had been uprooted and displaced time and again, with very few family keepsakes, photographs or possessions to remind them of the precious times before the brutalities began.

One of the few physical reminders which survived the turmoil and upheaval is a portrait photo of my mother’s family taken sometime in 1914 in the province of Kharpert, where both my parents’ families lived. (My mother was from the Kharpert village of Yegheki and my father from the village of Ichme.)

This particular portrait was taken by a professional photographer in Mezre. It was intended to be sent to my mother’s father Haroutiun (nicknamed Dado) Aharonian and his younger brother Karekin, who had traveled to the United States to earn money and improve their economic condition before returning to Kharpert. A third brother Aharon had also been with them, but had returned home prior to the Genocide. The photo shows my grandmother Loo-sig standing behind her two daughters Sarah and younger sister Yegsa, my mother. Also in the photo is my mother’s *horyeghpayr* (paternal uncle) Aharon, who had returned from America, and his wife Hazervart.

A close examination of the photo tells the viewer a great deal about the subjects and the times. My grandmother Loosig has a courageous but stoic and mournful look about her revealing her concern about the increasingly difficult times being experienced by her family and the absence of her husband Dado, still in the United States. Aharon’s attire speaks to his return from America. The western influence also is implied by the fact that none of the women in the photograph have their heads or faces covered. Aharon’s left arm is in a sling following an injury he sustained leaping from roof top to roof top evading a Turkish home inspection. His expression appears to be one of quiet defiance and pride. Seated, among four standing women, he conveys an air of authority as the acting patriarch of the family, while his two brothers still toil in the factories of New Britain Conn., thousands of miles away. My mother’s older sister Sarah has a benign expression on her face, whereas my mother’s face discloses an unhappiness and anger, which our family stories tell us is from a punishment meted out to her by her uncle just prior to the photograph being taken.

But in addition to the original portrait photo, there was another version of this wonderful picture. The second, photo, however, contained the additional images of my grandfather Dado and his brother, Karekin,

see PHOTOGRAPH, page 14



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Artists from Quinn Exhibit Hold Talk at Armenian Museum of America

PANEL, from page 12

The third floor of the Armenian Museum needed renovations in order to host the exhibit and therefore the museum staff moved their offices to the fourth floor, next to the museum's research library. The show was set up quickly since they were helped by Rachel Wainwright, Bakersfield Museum's curator: "She came from California to see the gallery before the installation and was really excited about the space we had, so she said yes immediately," Sohigian said. When the show closed in California, most of the artwork was sent to Watertown. Then, Wainwright returned to Boston with her husband, Harry, to hang the rest of the art.

## A New Audience

In the past five months, the number of visitors had increased steadily, and their membership is higher than it has been in the past 16 years. "We do promotion on social media a lot, and the exhibition was reviewed by the press, not only the local one but also the *Boston Globe*, WBUR, and Jared Bowen, one of the most famous art reporters in Boston. That's why on Saturday, while we were hoping to have at least 100 people, around 150 actually came, and we had to add chairs," Sohigian noted.

"These are beautiful paintings, and as an Armenian, I'm proud to see how a woman of Armenian descent like Joan was such an important figure in the Los Angeles modern art society," Lana Gurabian, a Watertown citizen, expressed.

In the back of the gallery, an entire room was dedicated to the exhibit "Discovering Takouhi," Quinn's Armenian name. It was filled with 30 of Quinn's portraits, drawn by 28 Armenian painters. Quinn's likenesses were hung all throughout the gallery, representing her in different shapes and textures. She was also featured in the main exhibition "On the Edge," where, among others, Joe Fay's colorful portrait of Quinn was on display.

Blake B. was gazing intently at Joan's abstract and colorful face, painted by Aram Saroyan: "I'm here today because my fam-



Laddie John Dill, Gregory Wiley Edwards, and Joe Fay during the conversation, Saturday, October 29, at the Armenian Museum of America.

ily is friends with Joan and I'm glad I came because I don't think we've ever had such an eclectic series in Boston before," he said. As a non-Armenian, it was his first visit to the Armenian Museum. For Richard Freeman, it was only his second time here. This painter came to meet Dill, Edwards, and Fay and was one of the first visitors to sit and wait for them to talk: "I've been living in Watertown for many years, but I've rarely visited. When I learned about the event, I thought it would be a good opportunity to return," Freeman said.

## Post-Covid Era

Hosting this exhibit gave the museum the chance to start over after COVID-19. Because of lockdowns, they did many virtual programs, but the opening of the exhibition in June and the conversation with the artists this past Saturday were the first in-person events after COVID-19. According to Sohigian, most of the non-Armenian visitors were interested in the Armenian part and art. Last Saturday, before going up to the third floor, some even took the time to look around at the Armenian artifacts. "It has been a great success so far, and now we're also hoping for more younger people or professionals to come. I would like to host a networking session and bring Armenian student clubs from universities," Sohigian said. The museum was also con-



"Discovering Takouhi: Portraits of Joan Agajanian Quinn" gallery, Saturday, October 29th, in the Armenian Museum of America, Watertown.

## Armenian Folk Music At Carnegie Hall

MUSIC, from page 12

AGBU Performing Arts Scholarships offer grants for full-time study in the arts to gifted students at the undergraduate or graduate level. "I'm very grateful for AGBU, and I'm super honored to have my scholarship," said trumpet player Sean Alexander, who performed with the Arutiunian trio. "They helped support my orchestral performance degree at Manhattan School of Music. I would not be where I am today in my trumpet career without it," Alexander stated emphatically.

AGBU NYSEC is a female-led group of 11 dedicated volunteers that was formed in 2004 with a commitment to organizing cultural and educational events that showcase rising stars. "I am extremely appreciative of AGBU for giving NYSEC the opportunity to showcase talented Armenian musicians," said NYSEC Chair Nila Festekjian. "Not only do we raise money for scholarships, but help the musicians make lifelong friendships, support each other throughout their careers and make valuable connections through AGBU."

The concert raised \$55,000 for AGBU performing arts initiatives in support of music education and the arts as well as to cultivate emerging musical talents worldwide.

tacted by many schools from the area for field trips, as part of classes on WWI and the Armenian Genocide. The first visits after the lockdown will return next week, with approximately 100 students planning to visit this month.

"They'll come to see the Armenian section, but we're also proud to show them our modern art section," Sohigian noted.

This past Saturday was also an achievement for the LA-based artists speaking. They spent their afternoon discussing California art. One of the most widely mentioned topics was Quinn's support for them. She was delighted to be there, rediscovering the gallery with the new visitors: "The most exciting thing is having the Watertown community come," Joan admitted.

The power came back at the end of the afternoon: "When they finished talking, the light went on, and that was kind of interesting, at least people will remember it," Sohigian said. They were able to continue the event with a reception and visitors stayed until 6 p.m. Thanks to its success, the exhibit will be extended past the new year, as Michele Kolligian, president of the museum's Board of Trustees, announced during the event. Saturday's discussion was recorded, and the museum is hoping to post the video on its website soon. Moreover, they're discussing welcoming Armenian artists whose works are displayed for another public conversation.

To learn more about the museum and exhibitions, visit <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/>



From left, Amanda Quinn Olivar, Joan Agajanian Quinn, Gregory Wiley Edwards, Joe Fay, Bolton Colburn, and Susan Anderson, Saturday, October 29th, at the Armenian Museum of America, Watertown. (Kenneth Martin photo)



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# CALENDAR

## OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

## CALIFORNIA

**NOVEMBER 19** — Holy Resurrection Church of New Britain, CT, will hold its annual "Holiday Fair" on Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., on the church grounds (1910 Stanley St., New Britain). Armenian delicacies, games for children, raffle, crafts, Armenian wine sampling. Place orders for the holidays. Sponsored by parish Women's Guild; free admission. E-mail [garyhov@aol.com](mailto:garyhov@aol.com) for information.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**NOVEMBER 12** — Annual Fall Bazaar at the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road, (Rte. 125) Haverhill, 12 to 6 p.m. Delicious Armenian Food, Lamb Shish, Chicken, Losh Kebab, Kheyma, Vegetarian Menu, Lulu Kebab (limited), Hot Dog and Chips. Pastry and Cuisine Table featuring Spinach Pies, Vospov Kheyma, Lamejun, Ghapama, Tourshi, Paklava, Choereg, Khadaif. Gifts Baskets and Cash Prize Raffles, winner need not be present to win. For more information visit: [www.hypointearmenianchurch.org](http://www.hypointearmenianchurch.org) or call (978) 372-9227.

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

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

**NOVEMBER 19** — Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, Chelmsford, Food Festival. 12 Noon – 7 p.m. Eat-in or Take-out. All lunches and dinners along with Country Store items are to be pre-ordered by Wednesday, November 9. The Food Festival menu includes shish-chicken-losh kebab dinners, a vegetarian platter, a variety of desert items, and a country store featuring eetch, cheese beureg, spinach pita, vosbov kofta, tourshi, choreg, and green beans. Food order and Festival Sponsor forms are available on the

church website, [www.stsvartanantz.com](http://www.stsvartanantz.com).

**DECEMBER 8** – Join the Trustees of the Armenian Museum of America for a Christmas Reception in the museum galleries. All Museum Members are cordially invited for socializing, networking, and to enjoy the exhibitions including "On the Edge: Los Angeles Art 1970s-1990s from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection." 5:30 p.m. – Save the date!

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

**DECEMBER 11** – Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. **CANDLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY.** Sunday at 4:45pm. "Boston's Newest Holiday Tradition" Hot Chocolate & Festive Cookies. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org) **DECEMBER 18** — St. James Annual Name Day Banquet - Celebrating the 91st Anniversary of the Parish and Honoring Annie Chekijian, Berj Chekijian, Meri Demirjian, Alex Kalaydjian, Annie Kalaydjian (posthumously), Rita Meneshian and Mayda Yetimian for their decades of service to the parish Armenian Language Schools. 10 am Divine Liturgy. Banquet to follow. \$50 per person. \$20 for children 12 and under. Advance Reservations Required. View full details and reserve online at [www.tiny.cc/stjamesnameday](http://www.tiny.cc/stjamesnameday). 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown 617.923.8860 [info@sthagop.com](mailto:info@sthagop.com).

## RHODE ISLAND

**DECEMBER 9-28** — Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church presents: December 9 Christmas concert at Church sanctuary featuring Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, Junior Choir, soloist Friday at 7 p.m., free. 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/>

• December 28 at 7:30 pm - "David Ayriyan - Memorial concert"

## Separated by an Ocean, Reunited By a Photograph

PHOTOGRAPH, from page 12

apparently superimposed between Loosig and Hazevert: an early example of photoshopping. In addition to the two men being inserted into the photo, the quality of the photo has been enhanced, giving it greater clarity and definition. The images of the two men, who were still in America at the time the first photo was taken, appears to be from a photography studio photo the men took and apparently sent to the family in Yegheki. While I do not have the forensic wherewithal to determine exactly when or where the images were superimposed, the more central question is why the family went through the effort to create it. The purpose of the second photo, whatever its provenance, is unequivocally clear: a desire to remember –and to actually see– all members of the family together even though that was not physically possible. It was an anticipation of a future reunion which they hoped would take place.

The significance of these "double" photos became even more fascinating to me recently when I read, in the *Wall Street Journal*, of an exhibit which opened at the National Gallery of Art in Washington this past summer entitled "The Double." The exhibit features what was described as "pairs, reversed images and alter egos" of artwork by numerous well known modern artists. It seems an eerie coincidence that the *Wall Street Journal* article entitled "The Power of Seeing Double" is accompanied by large images of two paintings by the Armenian artist Arshile Gorky entitled "The Artist and His Mother." The author of the article, Peter Saenger, discusses the significant differences between the two Gorky paintings, done about six

years apart, and states that "the haunting power of doubles could also be used to address family trauma."

The "double" photograph, as the one in my family, has likely been experienced in other families. Viewed together, the photos speak to that ageless and powerful Armenian characteristic of cherishing and celebrating family life and togetherness, even when it is necessary to alter an actual photograph with the dream and hope of a reimagined one.

Tragically, the hoped for reunion of the entire Aharonian family never took place as fantasized in the second photo. While Karekin eventually returned to Kharpert to be with his family, expecting to be followed by his brother Dado, he perished in the Genocide as did Loosig, Aharon and his wife. My mother Yegsa and her sister Sarah miraculously survived the Genocide and ultimately traveled to the United States to be reunited with their father Dado, who had never been able to return to Kharpert to join his family because of the intervening outbreak of the Genocide. Thus, Dado was the only one of my grandparents, maternal and paternal, who was not lost in the Genocide.

However, despite the horrors which befell them and their tragic separation in real life, the family had indeed been reunited for one brief moment – and permanently in that magical second photo – at least in their dreams and hopes.

(Attorney Harry Mazadoorian lives in Kensington Connecticut. This article is based, in large measure, on family history and photographs preserved by his late brother Charles Mazadoorian.)



Family portrait with father and uncles superimposed



ARTS & CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



## Ghapama – Stuffed, Baked Pumpkin, Kef-Style with a Song

Ghapama is a great meatless option for the vegetarians in the family. This recipe and photos are courtesy of Robyn Kalajian at her essential Armenian food blog, [thearmeniankitchen.com](https://thearmeniankitchen.com)

“Ghapama (Armenian: դափասփա) is an Armenian stuffed pumpkin dish, often prepared during the holiday season. It is prepared by removing the flesh of the pumpkin (known as դդում in Armenian, pronounced ddum in Eastern Armenian and ttum in Western Armenian), and stuffing it with boiled rice and a variety of dried fruits such as chopped almonds, apples, corn, apricot, prunes and raisins. It is common to pour on honey and mix in ground cinnamon or sugar. The pumpkin is baked until it becomes soft, and then brought to the table where it is cut up and served.”

“In Armenian, the word ‘ghapama’ literally means cooked in a covered pot. Recipe-wise, ghapama is a stuffed, baked pumpkin traditionally served between the New Year and Armenian Christmas which many Armenians celebrate on January 6,” says Robyn Kalajian, culinary arts teacher and blogger of Armenian cuisine, culture and more. “I was reminded by a friend that there is a traditional song written about this dish re-popularized by Armenian pop singer Harout Pamboukjian titled, ‘Hey, Jan, Ghapama,’” she adds.

“This dish is so Armenian that Armenians have songs written about it. With its vibrant, artistic flair, the dish makes a striking presentation at a dinner or buffet table. The song is often performed in the middle of the celebration or closer to its end, when the guests are already full and want fun. In the song, the singer talks about how there is a wonderful pumpkin in the fields, how they chose it in order to make a ghapama. How they brought it home, filled it with many delicious things. How guests were waiting for it to be ready. And if the hostess prepares everything just right, the ghapama will turn out to be beautiful and appetizing. So appetizing that the hungry relatives will fill their mouths with the aromatic pumpkin. This is exactly what Harout sings about...”

Watch Harout Pamboukjian’s celebrated 1983 version at: <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/ghapama-stuffed-baked-pumpkin-recipe/>

“A more formal rendition of this song was performed by the KOHAR Symphony Orchestra and Choir of Gyumri, Armenia,” says Robyn. Watch the orchestra’s Live in Concert from June 2002 at BIEL, Downtown Beirut, Lebanon at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sza0jBxz-4Q>

“Sometimes this recipe is made with a winter squash like the acorn squash variety rather than pumpkin. A medium sized pumpkin (about 3 lbs. in weight) is cut open at the top, then the fibrous strands and seeds are scooped out. Generally, a stuffing made with partially cooked rice, dried fruit, raisins, chopped nuts, cinnamon, sugar or honey is placed in the cavity. The filled pumpkin is baked until very tender and served table-side,” says Robyn.

“According to the legend and folklore, on earth, where people have different faiths, different nationalities, goodness, and kindness must prevail. Ghapama exists to bring peace in the world. Ghapama is a dessert and has different ways of cooking. In earlier times, cooks filled the pumpkin with groats (hulled kernels of various cereal grains, such as oat, wheat, rye, and barley), meat, and fresh fruit. The most famous version, however, is the pumpkin stuffed with rice, dried fruits, nuts and honey,” she adds.

Course: Course: Main Course, Side Dish, or Dessert  
Prep Time: 20 minutes  
Cook Time: 2 hours 15 minutes  
Servings: 4

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pumpkin, about 3 lbs.\*\*
- 1 1/2 cups rice
- 4 tablespoons butter melted
- 1/4 cup each of dried plums, dates, apricots and cherries, chopped
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 3/4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 tablespoons honey, to taste
- 1/2 cup nuts, chopped (walnuts, almonds, pecans, cashews, hazelnuts or a mix of nuts will all work)
- 1/4 cup hot water
- Dash of salt, to taste

### PREPARATION:

Wash and dry the exterior of pumpkin. Cut off the top in a circle shape as it will be used as a lid.

Remove the seeds and fibrous pulp inside. Discard fibers, but rinse and save the seeds for roasting later on, if desired. Rinse the inside of the pumpkin; pat dry.

In a saucepan, bring 3 cups of water to a boil. Add rice, stir, cover the pot and reduce heat to low. Cook rice for about 15 minutes. Rice should not be completely cooked. Drain any excess liquid.

In a bowl, mix together the partially cooked rice, dried fruit, melted butter, cinnamon, honey (or sugar), nuts, and salt, if using.

Loosely stuff filling into pumpkin; pour the 1/4 cup hot water over the top of the filling (the water should cover the rice fully).

Place the pumpkin on a lightly greased baking sheet for support. Put the top of the pumpkin back on and bake at 325F for about 1 1/2 to 2 hours or until very soft. Insert a toothpick into the pumpkin to determine tenderness.

Next, remove the pumpkin from the oven and let it rest for 10 to 15 minutes. Carefully remove the pumpkin to a large, round serving platter, and use a sharp knife to cut the pumpkin into serving-sized wedges.

To serve, each guests receives a wedge of baked pumpkin along with a scoop of rice pilaf. This dish would be an attractive menu addition for any Thanksgiving or holiday table, accompanied with hot spiced tea or Armenian coffee. The size of the pumpkin varies depending on the number of servings needed. For a dessert ghapama, simply add more fruit and honey to the rice to sweeten it up. If you don’t have honey, plain sugar can easily substitute.

For this recipe, go to: <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/ghapama-stuffed-baked-pumpkin-recipe/>

Ghapama with Lucy Joulfayan-Yeghyayan

<<https://mirrorspectator.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Ghapama-3-e1543515236210.jpg>>

Lucy Joulfayan-Yeghyayan’s well-known ghapama recipe was featured on November 29, 2018 at:

<https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/11/29/the-original-ghapama-recipe/>

She writes:

“Ghapama is one of our oldest traditional, national dishes and a pride of the Armenian cuisine. Historically, it has been celebrated as a centerpiece during the Armenian New Year’s Eve, weddings and other feast related occasions; our folk culture has included it in the popular art forms, we have songs and dance about the ghapama, and it is present in drawings and literature. For centuries, every part of our ethnic cuisine in the ancestral homeland and beyond (meaning, in the several Diaspora communities, historically, several diaspora communities were formed, throughout the centuries: post Armenian Genocide, and even before it, since the forced relocation of the Armenian population by the invading Tatars and Turks in the Caucasus, earlier by Shah Abbas, before it Cilicia, before it Ani, and a long list before that...) has maintained ghapama as one of its delicacies. The widespread fame of this dish traveled with the Diaspora communities to their new villages, towns and cities, many of whom believed that the ghapama is the trademark of their own village or town because they had discovered new spices and vegetable types in their new hometowns which they added to the original ingredients of the dish, thus creating the several versions/recipes that we enjoy today. Traditionally, regardless of the recipe/filling, whether in the homeland or the Diaspora, our ancestors baked ghapama in the Armenian ‘tonir’ or oven.”

“Ghapama is offered as a main dish when prepared with meat and or other vegetarian recipes, also as a part of the desert table delicacies. The contents/ingredients may vary, and so may the spices, but what matters is for the tradition to live on especially that (as we mentioned above), this dish was served during the feasts including weddings. For example, in Marash, in Western Armenia, it was traditional to serve the groom and his family a ghapama dish baked with meat and grains.”

\* <https://www.iarmenia.org/ghapama/#>

\*\*Use any pumpkin or any winter squash with a center cavity large enough to hold 3 or 4 cups of cooked rice (1 1/2 to 2 cups of uncooked rice). Other references:

<https://thestuffedgrapeleaf.com/ghapama/>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/food/recipes/ghapama>

<https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/stuffed-pumpkin-ghapama/>

<https://www.diningindiaspora.com/food/2017/10/23/ghapama>

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# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

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## COMMENTARY

# EDITORIAL

## A Time for Positive Policies and Actions



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

The Armenian Diaspora is a force born out of tragedy. It has followed its own path, and perhaps incidentally, it has become a political force to be reckoned with. Diasporan Armenians sometimes fail to recognize the clout they wield to impact policies concerning Armenia. But the enemies of the latter, the Turkish and Azerbaijani governments, realize its potential and they arm themselves to thwart anticipated negative consequences for themselves.

In a recent statement, Ibrahim Kalin, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's spokesperson as well as foreign policy advisor, commented on the need for Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign a peace treaty — a peace treaty which is full of potential dangers for Armenia. While making this comment, he stated that the government of Armenia has sent some positive signals. But, he added, diasporan Armenians should also fall in line and understand the benefits of such a treaty for the entire region. "We know for a fact that Armenians have large communities in the US and France," he said.

This was an inadvertent admission recognizing the power that those communities can exercise. The Turkish authorities have always complained about the political activities of the diasporan Armenians fighting for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. That has proven to be an impediment for Turkey's foreign policy in its drive to join the European Union, and will continue as such as long as Turkey aims for membership on the United Nations Security Council.

Currently, Armenia and Turkey have been conducting negotiations to lift the blockade against the former and to establish diplomatic relations, supposedly without preconditions. However, during the course of those negotiations Ankara has begun to insert a precondition — progress with the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace deal. In addition, there are unspoken preconditions, particularly Turkey's expectations that Armenia drop its demand for Genocide recognition.

The administration of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has understood that expectation and is already signaling to Ankara that the Genocide issue has been outsourced to the diasporan Armenians. That position will not save Pashinyan government's neck, since Turkey wants to silence the diaspora.

Turkey and Azerbaijan have allocated a substantial amount of resources to quietly combat diasporan Armenian activism.

All of this indicates that the diaspora has a role to play. It should realize the value of that power and put it into good use.

There have always existed opportunities for diasporan Armenians to act. Ironically, the diaspora has acted, sometimes, against its own interests. For example, some segments of the community, who have political affiliates in Armenia, have exported local conflicts and polarization to the diaspora, protesting against Armenian officials' foreign visits to the extent of stoning the prime minister's motorcade in foreign capitals, while giving a free pass to Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, whose overseas visits have remained unchallenged.

Yet during this period, the tides have been turning in Armenia's favor so that it would behoove us to be alert to new opportunities.

During the 44-Day War in 2020, the international community's inordinate passivity and silence were not only because of President Donald Trump's nonchalant foreign policy but also because Azerbaijan had lobbied intensely, pushing its foreign policy position that it was not acting in a bellicose manner but rather fighting to recover its historic territory "usurped" by Armenia.

The combined resources of the diaspora and Armenia could never match that of Azerbaijan. In 2018, 13 members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) were expelled from the organization for accepting gifts and bribes from Azerbaijan. The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project found that between 2012 and 2014, Azerbaijan had laundered \$2.9 billion to pay off European Union (EU) politicians. Of course, we all know that Aliyev investing \$3 billion in Hungary convinced Hungary's Prime Minister Victor Orban

to release Azerbaijani officer Ramil Safarov who had murdered Lt. Gurgen Margaryan of Armenia with an ax in 2004, during NATO training program in Hungary.

All these represent only the tip of the iceberg of Azerbaijan's illicit activities, to buy acceptance in political circles.

There is some good news. The recent aggressions against Armenia and territorial occupations are no longer viewed in the same tolerant manner and Azerbaijan is gradually being branded as the pariah that it is, in place of the false tolerant, European democratic image it is trying to project.

Therefore, it is time for Armenian activists to strike back, particularly with the political forces which we can galvanize in the diaspora. The opportunities are there waiting to be used.

The first scenario is developing in Spain, where the lower house of the parliament voted down an agreement with Azerbaijan this week. Indeed, an agreement had been signed in 2021 between Spain and Azerbaijan to exchange confidential information. But the lower house voted against that agreement with a vote of 174 to 132, in protest of Azerbaijan's aggression against Armenia. Jon Iñárritu, a member of parliament, dismissed that agreement as an "absurdity," when aggressor Azerbaijan has carried out an attack on Armenia in September, occupying several square kilometers of territory of Armenia. Marta Rosique, another member of the parliament, blamed the Spanish government for its silence in the face of Azerbaijan's atrocities in Armenia and Karabakh, questioning, in addition, why Spain has not yet recognized the Armenian Genocide.

The French Senate has expressed a more assertive posture. Indeed, a draft motion was filed in the French Senate, calling to impose sanctions against Azerbaijan, asking Baku to immediately withdraw from Armenia, and also calling for the enforcement of the November 9, 2020 ceasefire agreement to establish a "lasting peace" between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The United Kingdom has been the most recalcitrant party when it comes to the issue of the Genocide, except for periodic speeches of Baroness Carolyn Cox in the House of Lords, which are mostly about Karabakh, only tangentially referring to the Genocide. But recently, a Genocide Determination Bill was sponsored by Lord David Alton. A Second Reading was given in the House of Lords and it was referred to a committee for further consideration. Lord Ara Darzi, the only member of the House of Lords of Armenian extraction, delivered a moving speech in support of the bill.

These and other actions which are taking place in European and global political circles, deserve our attention and support. Rather than harassing Armenian government officials during their visits, diasporan Armenians have to rally around these developments. The Armenian presence has been sparse in Spain. Only recently have some 30,000 Armenians, mostly from Armenia, settled there. If the leaders in the community there can politicize the masses, they can officially express their gratitude to the Spanish government and hold rallies in support of those legislators who have been spearheading the vote in Armenia's favor.

The French-Armenian community is more active politically. Its members will certainly make their voices heard at the higher echelons of the government.

The challenge remains to organize a diaspora-wide movement and head towards all Spanish and French embassies with rallies to express our appreciation.

In the meantime, we have to be watchful for other opportunities, educate our various communities and motivate them politically.

Armenians are used to supporting Armenia financially to soothe their consciences. But most of the time, political activism can bear much better results. In the current state of globalization, motivating the masses is relatively easy, but only if we can generate a political leadership whose members can guide movements and send messages to the halls of power around the world.

Despite its limited activism, the diaspora has demonstrated that it has caught the attention of Turkish and Azerbaijani authorities. That justifies further action and greater coordinated efforts to promote historic and current Armenian issues.





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## When Will the World Put a Stop To Turkey's Criminal Behavior?

For many years, dozens of reports have been written about the Turkish government's large-scale kidnapping of Turkish citizens from around the world for criticizing Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's regime.

Exiled investigative Turkish journalist Abdullah Bozkurt has exposed these illegal Turkish activities, providing copies of confidential documents he has received from sources inside the Turkish government. Not surprisingly, Turkey has issued a warrant for his arrest. He publishes the Nordic Monitor in Sweden.

Bozkurt wrote an article on Nov. 3, 2022, in Nordic Monitor, titled: "Spying by Turkish diplomats continued in 2022 with new targets in Norway, Netherlands, Greece."

Bozkurt published a secret Turkish document issued by the Security General Directorate on June 7, 2022. He revealed that Turkish diplomats stationed at embassies and consulates overseas continue "the unlawful practice of intelligence gathering on critics and opponents in Europe."

Bozkurt reported that "Two Turkish diplomats, then-Press Attaché Hacı Mehmet Gani and Hakan Kamil Yerge, then-second secretary at the Turkish Embassy in Bern, plotted to drug and kidnap a Swiss-Turkish businessman in 2016. In June 2018, the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland issued arrest warrants for the two Turkish diplomats."

In addition to attempting to seize and return home its opponents, the Turkish government jails their relatives at home and confiscates their assets.

In a second article published in Nordic Monitor on Nov. 4, 2022, titled: "Turkish intelligence continues to spy on journalists in Sweden," Bozkurt reported that Levent Kenez, editor of Nordic Monitor in Sweden, "was spied on by Turkey's intelligence agency, which leaked his private information to the Turkish media. [Sabah], a newspaper run by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's family, published photos of Kenez last Tuesday in front of his apartment in Stockholm, where he lives with his family, and disclosed his address and details of his daily routine," endangering their lives. It is clear that after silencing his domestic critics, Erdogan is now trying to silence his critics abroad.

A third article titled, "Turkish diplomats exploited US Homeland Security website to track a dissident in the US," was published by Bozkurt in Nordic Monitor on Nov. 2, 2022.

Bozkurt revealed a secret Turkish document which showed that the Turkish intelligence agency used the website of US Customs and Border Protection to track a Turkish doctor in the United States who is critical of the Turkish government. It is a crime to access the personal information of individuals on the U.S. government's website.

Bozkurt reported that in the years 2016-17 alone, Turkish embassies and

consulates profiled 4,386 critics of Turkey who were residing abroad. In 2021, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu stated that Turkish diplomats assigned to embassies and consulates have officially been instructed by the government to conduct clandestine spying operations on foreign soil. In addition, pro-Erdogan Turkish networks and organizations overseas have acted as the long arm of the Turkish regime.

In 2019, the U.S. government convicted Kamil Ekim Alptekin, a Turkish government operative, for running surveillance on opponents of Erdogan in the United States. Alptekin remains a fugitive and is currently hiding in Turkey, while his associate Bijan Rafiekian was tried and convicted of acting covertly in 2019 as an agent of the Turkish government in the United States, without disclosing that relationship to the U.S. government, according to Bozkurt.

Matthew Amlot published in Al Arabiya an article on July 12, 2020, titled: "Turkey signed secret agreements with countries to abduct dissidents from abroad." According to a joint letter written by four UN rapporteurs, "Turkey signed secret agreements with multiple countries [Azerbaijan, Albania, Cambodia, and Gabon] in order to conduct extraterritorial abductions of suspected state dissidents ... Turkey also targeted [its] nationals in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Lebanon and Pakistan, according to the letter."

The UN letter stated that "The Government of Turkey, in coordination with other States, is reported to have forcibly transferred over 100 Turkish nationals to Turkey, of which 40 individuals have been subjected to enforced disappearance, mostly abducted off the streets or from their homes all over the world, and in multiple instances along with their children."

Alice Taylor wrote in "Exit News" that "in November 2018, the Turkish Foreign Minister informed Parliament that 452 extradition requests had been sent to a total of 83 countries."

Yasir Gokce wrote an article published on Nov. 25, 2018 in Harvard University's Kennedy School Review, titled: "Turkey's Kidnappings Abroad Defy International Law." These illegal abductions should be brought in front of the U.N. Security Council and the International Court of Justice, Gokce suggested.

In 2020, Johan Heymans in collaboration with International Observatory of Human Rights published a 128-page report, based partly on a report by the Ankara Bar Association, documenting the specific cases of deportation or abductions of Turkish citizens from 17 countries: Moldova, Azerbaijan, Gabon, Sudan, Kosovo, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Bulgaria, Bahrain, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Ukraine, Lebanon, Malaysia, Switzerland, and Mongolia.

Finally, OpenDemocracy.net published an article by Serdar San on June 16, 2021, titled: "Turkish spies are abducting Erdogan's political opponents abroad."

Serdar San correctly observed that "emboldened by a lack of repercussions from NATO and the EU, President Erdogan's regime is kidnapping dissidents" to silence political dissent. This is the fault of Western governments for turning a blind eye to the illegal behavior of successive Turkish governments, encouraging them to continue violating domestic and international laws for decades.

## Iran Seeks to Increase Its Influence in the South Caucasus amidst Geopolitical Turbulence

By Benjamin Poghosyan

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

As the South Caucasus becomes increasingly involved in the great power competition, and the US-Russia confrontation impacts regional geopolitics, Iran looks for additional ways to secure its national interests. Iran's top foreign policy priority remains the Middle East, where Tehran seeks to consolidate its power and influence in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. However, Iran views the South Caucasus as a significant region where Tehran should continue its presence and prevent anti-Iranian developments.

Iran is concerned with growing Azerbaijan-Israel political, economic, and military cooperation. Israel was one of the biggest weapons suppliers to Azerbaijan before, during, and after the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war. According to several sources and reports, Israel's security services actively use Azerbaijan territory for their anti-Iranian activities. Azerbaijan established control over the 130 km. long Nagorno Karabakh-Iran border due to the 2020 war and opened two airports there — Fizuli and Zangelan — located very close to the Azerbaijan-Iran border. Given the absence of population in these territories, the construction of two airports has no other logical explanation than the dual – civilian and military — usage of these airports. The recent visit of the Israeli defense minister to Azerbaijan proved that bilateral military ties, including shipments of modern weapons, continue to develop. Armenia is probably not the only target for Israeli arms.

Iran is also concerned by the ongoing discussions about establishing the so-called "Zangezur corridor" to connect Azerbaijan with Turkey via the Syunik province of Armenia. Iranian experts and some officials have already dubbed this a "Turan corridor," referring to the Pan-Turkish dreams of establishing a common economic, cultural, and political area spinning from Istanbul to the Kazakhstan-China border. The establishment of the organization of Turkic states in November 2021 raised alarm bells in Tehran as a first tangible step towards creating a "Turanic empire." The existence of an up to 25 million Azeri-speaking population in Northern Iran, located along the Iran-Azerbaijan border, is another concern for Iran. Tehran believes that Israel and the US seek to trigger separatist movements in that areas and use this as additional leverage to sow instability in Iran.

Not surprisingly, in recent months, high-level Iranian officials made several statements arguing that the change of borders and geopolitical situation in the South Caucasus was a red line for Tehran. Iran is looking for ways to increase its presence in Syunik, and opening a consulate was a step in that direction. The Iranian foreign minister visited Armenia for the opening ceremony and reiterated the Iranian position that any change in borders was unacceptable. Meanwhile, Iran is also concerned by the possible decrease of Russian influence in the South Caucasus due to the shift of Russian focus towards Ukraine. Iran strongly believes that less Russia in the region means more US, regardless of whether the US will be present here through Israel or Turkey. Given the growing Russia-Iran military cooperation amidst the ongoing war in Ukraine and Iran's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Russia may view Iran as a good option to balance the US involvement in the region via increased Turkish and Israeli presence.

Simultaneously, Iran seeks not to alienate Azerbaijan completely. Tehran needs some influence in Baku, and a complete rupture of relations will deprive Iran of any tools to influence Azerbaijani politics. Azerbaijan may

play a significant role in launching the International North-South Transport Corridor, which should connect India with Russia via Iran. The Western route of the corridor passes via Azerbaijan, while the eastern route connects Iran with Russia via Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

Iran views the development of its relations with Armenia as an essential tool in its efforts to balance Turkey in the region. In this context, Tehran was concerned about the growing US role in Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations and the US push to sign the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement by the end of 2022. If the Armenia-Azerbaijan and Armenia-Turkey normalization process results in the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Nagorno Karabakh and Russian military base and border troops from Armenia, it will have multiple geopolitical risks for Iran. In this context, Iran seeks to send clear messages to Armenia that Tehran is concerned by the appearance of foreign forces in the region, hinting that any U-turn in Armenian foreign policy from Russia to the US will automatically make Armenia a hostile nation for Iran. Meanwhile, Iran seeks to foster economic relations with Armenia. During Armenia's prime minister's November 1, 2022 visit to Tehran, Armenia and Iran signed an agreement to extend the terms of the "gas for electricity" deal, which envisages the import of Iranian gas to Armenia and the export of electricity to Armenia. According to Iranian officials, Armenia and Iran agreed to a significant increase in the volume of Iranian gas exported to Armenia. The Iranian president spoke about the mutual will to reach the annual 3 billion USD threshold in Armenia-Iran trade.

As the geopolitics of the South Caucasus becomes more and more complicated, regional players, including Iran, seek to protect their interests and balance against current and future threats.

(Benjamin Poghosyan is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan.)



# After the Dust Has Settled

## Reflections at the End of the Global Armenian Summit

By Arto Manoukian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The controversial Global Armenian Summit was held in Yerevan’s Meridian Convention Center from October 28 to 31. Due to past gatherings of the Armenian diaspora that were nearly all failures, this latest summit was subject to skepticism, followed by the refusal to participate from the two Armenian Catholicosates based in Echmiadzin and Antelias. Such a negative approach was promoted by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and its affiliates.

As per Zareh Sinanyan, High Commissioner for Diasporan Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, the protocol for invitation to this summit was different from those hosted in the past. Personal invitations were issued, thus avoiding invitations to diasporan organizations.

Boycott or not, by the time the summit concluded, it had more than 600 participants from over 50 countries and around 150 speakers from 15 different countries. During its four days, participants attended 11 public presentations and 15 roundtable sessions. All were led by capable moderators. Their interventions were reasonable and directed the panels of expert speakers to cover the designated topics.

The moderator of the first roundtable, Lara Setrakian, a diasporan Armenian expat and the acting president of Apri Armenia, coined a new word, *Spurkastantsi*, for a diasporan Armenian expat living in Armenia, in her open-

ing remarks.

The 15 roundtable sessions were categorized by the following topics: diaspora and advocacy; diasporan support for strengthening the security of the Republic of Armenia; diasporan soft power and the global brand; Armenia as a lifeline supporting diaspora communities in distress; Armenia as a lifestyle choice; funding and institutionalizing repatriation; the diaspora in public health and social welfare; the diaspora in science and technology; the diaspora in the development of tourism; the diaspora in education and culture; the diaspora in energy, the environment and climate; the diaspora and sustainable agriculture; supporting diasporan youth and their connection to the homeland; diasporan schools and the teaching of Armenian language and culture; Armenian studies, education and resource models.

These panel discussions were staffed by experts in their respective fields. Most were diasporan Armenians who had made Armenia their home. Scholars, scientists, businessmen, educators, specialists in various fields, and politicians from Armenia and the diaspora all had gathered in order to discuss the future of Armenia-diaspora relations.

Boycott or not, the summit has now ended. Will it be evaluated as a success or a continuation of past failed trials? Let’s examine the situation impartially. Avoiding, boycotting or approaching the event negatively serves no one. The country is at a critical point so that any efforts to involve the diaspora should be encouraged. We shouldn’t be afraid of making mistakes again and again. Sitting idle and waiting for miracles is not the path to take.

The summit was very well organized and deserves commendation. Among the positive aspects are the choice of venue and well adapted facilities; the good management



Author Arto Manoukian with Canadian-Armenian expat panelist Patrick Elliott

and coordination; and the presence of top ministerial invitees, well versed and esteemed moderators and expert panelists. The catering services were superb, the closing ceremony fantastic and the cultural performance great.

One flaw that this participant has observed is the absence of a forum where new ideas for Armenia-diaspora ties could be brought up and analyzed. Such ideas could



Lara Setrakian speaking at the Global Armenian Summit



A scene from the summit, with Zareh Sinanyan in center

spur new forms of collaboration.

In conclusion, we have seen many positive developments from the government. I have concluded that the government is trying to incorporate diasporans in its decision-making and in its process of legislating Armenia-diaspora cooperation. Many expatriates have been hired and work now in many ministries to make changes from the inside.

Having seen such positive moves, I left the summit with the impression that the Republic of Armenia is seriously taking positive action to strengthen Armenia-diaspora relations. Soon there will be many new laws which will turn the slogan “global Armenian nation” into a reality. Hopefully this positive impression will soon be justified through concrete positive results.



COMMENTARY

EU’s Gas Deal with Azerbaijan Is Strategically Short-sighted and Hypocritical

By Alexander E. Gale

During a press conference in July, the European Commission’s president, Ursula von der Leyen spoke of the need for the EU to “diversify away from Russia and turn towards more reliable, trustworthy partners.” She cited “Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine” as a reason to move away from Russian gas. She was joined by Azerbaijani president, Ilham Aliyev, to announce an agreement for Azerbaijan to double its delivery of gas to the EU. The irony that Aliyev’s authoritarian regime has been implicated in war crimes and corruption was apparently lost on von der Leyen.

The past year has posed several dilemmas to European energy security. The EU is highly dependent on gas from Russia. Last year, 39.7 percent of the EU’s imported gas came from Russia. However, Putin’s invasion of Ukraine has threatened the reliability of this source of energy.

EU members are concerned that Moscow will cut off gas supplies in retaliation for widespread sanctions levied against the Russian economy and Western military support for Ukraine. Indeed, this summer, Russia cut gas from 170 cubic meters a day to 20, supplied via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline. Over the past year, Moscow has cut its total export of gas to Europe by approximately 88 percent.

In late September, Explosions disrupted the operation of the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipeline and further heightened fears that the flow of natural gas from Russia would not reach Europe. The EU has not blamed Russia directly but suspects sabotage.

Gas is central to the EU’s energy security. Households in EU member states use gas as their primary source of energy at about 32.1 percent. Gas also makes up 21.5 percent of the EU’s primary energy consumption. Most gas is imported. Only 20 percent of the EU’s demand for gas is met by domestic production, which itself has halved over the past 10 years.

The Azerbaijan Gas Deal

Securing alternative energy suppliers to Moscow is a strategic imperative for Brussels. Azerbaijan, with its vast reserves of natural gas in the Caspian Sea, is — on paper — an ideal partner.

The EU-Azerbaijan gas deal is set to increase the delivery of natural gas to Europe from 8 billion cubic meters per annum to 20 billion. By 2023, exports are expected to reach 12 billion cubic meters. The bloc is also planning to invest €60 million of EU funds in Azerbaijan until 2024 with the prospect for further investment via the Economic and Investment Plan, which could facilitate €2 billion in investment.

However, the EU’s decision to make a deal with Azerbaijan is profoundly hypocritical. In March this year, the European Parliament voted in favor of a resolution condemning Azerbaijan’s government of deliberately “erasing and denying” Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh. According to the resolution: “erasure of the Armenian cultural heritage is part of a wider pattern of a systematic, state-level policy of Armenophobia, historical revisionism and hatred towards Armenians promoted by the Azerbaijani authorities, including dehumanization, the glorification of violence and territorial claims against the Republic of Armenia.”

The EU’s decision to make an energy deal with the very government it had accused merely months earlier of human rights violations is a damning indicator that its proposed morals are only skin deep. This double standard is especially troubling at a time when the bloc is projecting

see GAS, page 20

International Association of Genocide Scholars Executive Board Statement on Azerbaijani Aggression Against Armenia

The International Association of Genocide Scholars Executive Board strongly condemns Azerbaijan’s invasion of the Republic of Armenia and the ongoing aggression against the Armenian people in the Republic and in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) and expresses concern about the risk of genocide against the Armenian population of that entity.

On 13 September 2022, Azerbaijan launched an attack on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. Using heavy artillery as well as multiple rocket launchers and attack drones, the Azerbaijani forces shelled the cities and towns of Vardenis, Goris, Ishkanasar, Kapan, Sotk, Artanish, and Jermuk and the surrounding villages in the Republic of Armenia. This attack resulted in over 210 confirmed deaths of Armenian soldiers and numerous civilian deaths and injuries. While a tenuous ceasefire still holds, Azerbaijan’s violence continues, including allegations of executions of Armenian prisoners of war. Over 7,000 civilians have been displaced, and civilian homes and local infrastructure destroyed in an attempt to ethnically cleanse Armenians from a large portion of the Republic of Armenia.

Significant genocide risk factors exist in the Nagorno-Karabakh situation concerning the Armenian population. Noting in particular that this violence occurs in the context of a prior genocide against ethnic Armenians in 1915 - 1923 by the Ottoman Empire (which became Turkey), and the continued relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan. In 1920, Turkey sought to disarm the Armenians and arm the Azerbaijanis, resulting in conflict, Armenian exodus, and atrocities against Armenians in an Azerbaijani offensive. Turkey continues to support Azerbaijan in the Nagorno- Karabakh conflict (including through the provision of drones and mercenaries). Turkish President Erdoğan has referred to the Armenians as ‘occupiers’, despite centuries of history of Urartians and their descendents, the Armenians, in the region.

The current violence is part of a lengthy, related process of violence by the Azerbaijani regime against the indigenous Armenians population of the South Caucasus. There have been several armed conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno- Karabakh territory, in the 1980s-1990s, with the most recent beginning in September 2020 and continuing into 2022, despite supposed ceasefires. The current conflict has included the use of indiscriminate weapons, and civilian deaths and displacement.

Azerbaijani authorities have been openly delivering hate speech against Armenians. Acts of incitement or hate propaganda have targeted Armenians. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has specifically noted that the following acts are risk factors for genocide:

‘Systematic and widespread use and acceptance of speech or propaganda promoting hatred and/or inciting violence against minority groups, particularly in the media’; and

‘Grave statements by political leaders/prominent people that express support for affirmation of superiority of a race or an ethnic group, dehumanize and demonize minorities, or condone or justify violence against a minority.’

Azerbaijan’s state policy includes anti-Armenian discourse and propaganda, including through government speeches and the media. For example, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev has made statements such as: “Armenia as a country is of no value. It is actually a colony, an outpost run from abroad, a territory artificially created on ancient Azerbaijani lands.” Aliyev does not recognize the internationally recognized territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia: “We have perhaps a hundred times more grounds not to recognize the territorial integrity of Armenia than they have not to recognize our territorial integrity. Because everyone already knows this, and so does the world community, that in November 1920 our historical lands of Zangazur [Syunik], as well as Goycha [Sevan], were severed from us and annexed to Armenia. The city of Yerevan was ceded to Armenia on 29 May 1918. So, there are many factors for us, as they say, not to recognize the territorial integrity of Armenia.” Alyev also uses dehumanizing language, such as: “We chased them out of our lands like dogs. I said that we would chase them, that we would chase them like dogs, and we chased them, we chased them like dogs.” Such statements indicate a systematic campaign to end the presence of Armenians in their historic and present-day homeland. These and other statements demonstrate the existence of a risk of genocide, and may amount to incitement to genocide and possibly other international crimes.

There is also a history of cultural destruction in the conflict, leading to a significant fear from Armenians that after the peace deal, which saw the return of Armenian-held land to Azerbaijan, Armenian sites will be neglected, desecrated or destroyed. Some Armenian monuments and churches are hundreds of years old, such as the Saint Nishan church, Dadivank monastery complex and khatchkars in cemeteries, dating as far back as the 9th Century and earlier. It is common for Azerbaijan to present ‘alternative’ histories for Armenian churches, claiming they are ‘Caucasian Albanian’ and were ‘Armenianised’ only in the 19th Century. Such claims have all been debunked outside of Azerbaijan. Rewriting of history and cultural destruction are key hallmarks of genocide. The goal of génocidaires is to destroy, in whole or in part, the targeted group, and one way the perpetrators carry out this destruction is through cultural destruction: eliminating the very essence of the group’s identity, and any trace that they existed in that location.

The Executive Board notes that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has recognised the seriousness of the hate speech and cultural destruction by Azerbaijan towards Armenians and Armenian culture. In its Provisional Measures order of 7 December 2021, the ICJ considered Armenia’s claims of violations of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) plausible, and expressed concern that such violations ‘may have serious damaging effects’ on the protected group. In the interim before deciding on the merits of the case, the ICJ has ordered Azerbaijan, inter alia, to:

‘take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin; and take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and discretion affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artefacts.’

Attacks on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia also likely amount to a violation of the United Nations Charter, and breach the Helsinki Final Act and the ceasefire agreement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia on 9 November 2020, ending the 44-Day Second Karabakh War (27 September 2020 – 10 November 2020).

In order to remove the risk of genocide, the International Association of Genocide Scholars Executive Board calls upon:

- The international community and academic and cultural organizations to condemn violence and hate speech by Azerbaijan against Armenia and take all necessary measures to compel Azerbaijan to cease hostilities and hate speech against the Republic of Armenia and the indigenous Armenians of Artsakh.
- Azerbaijan to comply with the International Court of Justice Provisional Measures order of 7 December 2021.
- Azerbaijan to remove its soldiers from the territory of the Armenian Republic and to respect the right of self-determination of the Armenians of Artsakh as guaranteed under the United Nations Charter (Chapter I, Article 2).
- The international community to hold the authoritarian regime of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev accountable for the crime of aggression (crimes against peace), war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated against Armenia and Armenians since September 2020.



# EU's Gas Deal with Azerbaijan Is Strategically Short-sighted and Hypocritical

GAS, from page 19

itself as a paragon of liberalism and democracy in juxtaposition to Russian aggression and authoritarianism. The EU has rightly decried Putin's invasion of Ukraine and condemned humanitarian abuses but these sentiments fall flat when Brussels will only act on its convictions when they are politically expedient.

Russia has routinely accused the West of hypocrisy to deflect attention from its own nefarious conduct. Every failure by the EU to act according to the moral and ethical principles it has set for itself acts as ammunition Putin can use to win the information war.

Since signing the gas deal, the EU's response to humanitarian abuses by Azerbaijan has been tepid, despite the continued alarm of NGOs. Last month, Human Rights Watch verified the authenticity of a video showing the extrajudicial killing of seven Armenian prisoners of war by Azerbaijani soldiers. The torture, rape, mutilation, and murder of a woman in the Armenian armed forces by Azerbaijani troops also surfaced after a video was posted online. The EU has stressed the need for a probe into alleged war crimes. However, an EU spokesperson also admitted that the bloc has no investigative power in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan was being encouraged to self-investigate.

Peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia remains elusive which means Brussels should be careful to avoid inadvertently funding war crimes. However, when asked if the EU would implement measures to ensure EU money is not spent on the conflict or human rights violations, an EU official commented that no such mechanisms exist.

## Short-sighted Strategy

In international relations ethical sentiments rarely triumph over the cold necessities of realpolitik. However, the Azerbaijan gas deal is also a bad long-term strategic move.

Authoritarian regimes have a tendency to wield energy exports as a tool for foreign policy leverage. For example, in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, several Arab states instigated an oil embargo to dissuade international support for Israel, causing the 1973 oil crisis. Today Putin is leveraging Russia's position as an energy supplier to discourage foreign support for Ukraine. In the future, Aliyev may decide to leverage Azerbaijan's energy supply to similar ends. In fact, Azerbaijan is alleged to have deliberately cut off gas supplies to areas of Nagorno-Karabakh in March this year. In choosing to import gas from Azerbaijan, the EU has opted to kick its energy dependency-problem down the road, instead of seeking a comprehensive long-term solution.

In its dealings with the EU, Aliyev's regime has already demonstrated itself to be a thoroughly unscrupulous partner. In 2018, 13 members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) were expelled from the organisation for accepting bribes and gifts from Azerbaijan. The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project found that between 2012 and 2014, Azerbaijan had laundered \$2.9 billion to pay off EU politicians. Bribes were

used to assuage concerns regarding Azerbaijan's human rights record. For example, a senior EU official in the PACE was paid a bribe of €500,000 to disrupt a 2013 report on political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

There is also the issue of whether turning to Azeri gas would satisfy the basic requirement of being an actual alternative to importing from Russia. In February this year, Lukoil increased its share in Azerbaijan's Shah-Deniz gas project to the tune of approximately \$1.45 billion, upping its stake from 10 percent to 19.99 percent. Lukoil is Russia's second largest company, behind energy giant, Gazprom. Lukoil's share in Azerbaijan's primary source of natural gas is now second only to BP. The EU would therefore be unable to completely bypass Russian involvement in gas imports from Azerbaijan.

## Alternatives to Azeri Gas

The gas deal is only part of a broader jigsaw puzzle that will need to be assembled for the EU to wean itself off Russian energy. Although the jump to 20 billion cubic meters of gas per year is significant, this delivery from Azerbaijan would not be anywhere near enough to entirely replace Russia. Russian gas exports to individual EU members far exceed the projected amount that Azerbaijan will export to the bloc in its entirety. Last year, Russia exported 56.2 billion cubic meters to Germany and 29.2 billion to Italy, alone.

Since Azerbaijani gas can only act as a partial replacement for Russian energy alongside other substitutes, this raises the question: can Azeri gas itself not be substituted for a better option?

The EU is making an effort to increase cooperation with gas exporters like Norway, the US, Japan, South Korea, Turkey, Qatar, Algeria, and Egypt. Some of these suppliers are sensible long-term alternatives to both Russia and Azerbaijan, whereas some pose similar concerns.

The EU should also consider alternatives to gas, altogether. Renewable energies like wind, solar, and hydropower, together with nuclear power present the best-long term solutions. They have the added benefit of being better for the environment. The main drawback is implementation time. In the short to medium-term, the EU would likely have to continue seeking alternative gas suppliers and potentially increase coal usage, which has fallen out of favour due to environmental concerns.

A perfect energy solution does not exist. The EU will have to make compromises, be they security-based, moral, environmental, or economic. Nevertheless, if the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results; then the EU-Azerbaijan gas deal is insane. The EU energy crisis is a lesson on the perils of energy dependency on authoritarian regimes. Brussels should not fail to heed that lesson.

(This commentary originally ran in ModernDiplomacy.eu on November 5.)



## In Defense of Armenia's Sovereignty

STATEMENT, from page 1

Given Russia's involvement in the war in Ukraine, the Armenian authorities would have understood the dire situation of Russia, if CSTO members did not rush to congratulate Azerbaijan, which is in theory an adversary of the CSTO, and in the case of CSTO member Belarus, had not provided military supplies to Azerbaijan.

The more sympathetic stance of the broader international community towards Armenia helped the latter to seek a more independent course of action. Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan's direct questioning of his Russian colleague Sergey Lavrov in Astana as well as Nikol Pashinyan's request for accountability from President Putin on October 31 at the Sochi summit regarding the full implementation of the November 9 declaration (return of Armenian POWs, the evacuation of the occupied zones of Armenia and the prevention of new attacks) are new indications that Armenia is pursuing an independent foreign policy.

Armenia is allied to Russia by means of several treaties and historic relations, and it would be imprudent and harmful to break these military and economic ties under the current difficult conditions. However, the inability of the CSTO allies to deliver on their treaty obligations and, even further, the animosity of some of the treaty members towards Armenia, are sufficient cause for Armenia to decide to break away from CSTO membership.

Armenia's membership in that organization has not been justified even though Armenia has fully complied with its obligations, particularly when it was called to provide a military contingent when disturbances arose in CSTO member state Kazakhstan.

Armenia's membership in CSTO is not only unjustified because of the delinquency of other members, but also because that membership creates political and legal impediments for Armenia to seek allies and military assistance elsewhere on the international market to defend itself.

Armenia's ultimate goal in this dangerous situation is to achieve self-defense and Armenia's major ally Russia should be understanding towards Armenia's search for a new political course.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party  
Supreme Council  
Boston, November 3, 2022

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