

Sen. Menendez Presses Secretary Donfried, Ambassador Reeker on Humanitarian Crisis in Artsakh, Waiving Sec. 907

WASHINGTON — Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, this week referred to the humanitarian crisis in Artsakh, where Armenians face daily violent threats by Azerbaijan. Chairman Menendez further questioned the wisdom of the State Department’s ongoing waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act during an SFRC hearing on Wednesday, November 16, 2022, which assessed U.S. Policy in the South Caucasus with Karen Donfried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Ambassador Philip



Senator Robert Menendez

Reeker, Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations from the U.S. Department of State, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly). In his opening remarks, Menendez stated that the “people of this region don’t want to live under the threat of violence and they don’t want autocratic rule imposed on them by the barrel of a gun.” He stressed that the Armenian people “deserve to live in peace and they deserve freedom and security. And that means ensuring that a peace deal does not lead to ethnic cleansing for the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh. It means tackling the needs of the humanitarian crisis there. It means holding accountable those who order and carry out the violence we’ve seen in this region.”

Addressing the root of the conflict in the region, Menendez noted that “dictators with imperial aspirations have victimized those living in the South Caucasus.” He cited the Russian-backed aggression in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as Turkish-supported Azerbaijani aggression in Armenia and Artsakh, where “disregard for human life has been clear,” most recently during the 44-day War on Artsakh in the Fall of 2020, when Azerbaijan’s unprovoked assault uprooted over 100,000 Armenians from their homes in Artsakh, and resulted in the deaths of 6,500 people in total.

Menendez noted that the “Armenians in Artsakh still face an acute humanitarian crisis, including threats of ethnic cleansing, and chronic shortages of water, energy, health care, and food.”

Menendez has continuously pushed for robust humanitarian assistance to help victims in Armenia and Artsakh. He admonished the U.S. humanitarian response see MENENDEZ, page 9



Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi addressing the Armenian Assembly’s 50th Anniversary Tribute

Armenian Assembly Celebrates Landmark 50th Anniversary

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America commemorated its 50th anniversary with a special event honoring the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), with the Assembly’s Ambassador Henry Morgenthau Award for her strong support of and leadership on US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide. The event, representing a cross-section of Armenian American organizations, and filled with an impressive number of young and mid-career professionals, took place on Thursday, November 17, at the Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C., and included a salute to the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, led by Reps. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Jackie Speier (D-CA), David Valadao (R-CA), and Adam Schiff (D-CA). Speaker Pelosi, who received multiple standing ovations throughout her remarks, expressed her gratitude to the Assembly for the “very distinguished honor” of receiving an award created in honor of an outstanding and heroic diplomat who courageously promoted human rights and helped save the Armenian people. Pelosi noted that it was a “privilege” to receive an award see ASSEMBLY 50TH page 11

“WE MADE IT VERY CLEAR THE US STRONGLY CONDEMNS AZERBAIJAN’S ATTACKS AS ILLEGAL, BRUTAL AND ESCALATORY”
—NANCY PELOSI

Pashinyan Discusses Security In South Caucasus With Macron, Other Leaders at Francophonie Summit

DJERBA, Tunisia (Azatutyun) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan discussed issues related to security in the South Caucasus with French President Emmanuel Macron and other leaders this weekend on the sidelines of a Francophonie summit in Tunisia, which took over the rotating presidency in the organization from Armenia. The two-day summit of the International Organization of La Francophonie that began in Djerba, a Tunisian island off the Mediterranean coast, on November 19 has brought together leaders of dozens of countries.

see SUMMIT, page 6



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, right, with French President Emmanuel Macron

French Senate Condemns Azerbaijan for Aggression Against Armenia with Demand for Sanctions

PARIS — On Tuesday, November 15, the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF) organized a demonstration in front of the French Senate to support a resolution condemning Azerbaijan in response to its aggression against Armenian territory. The resolution passed 295-1 the same day. Soon, the same resolution will be presented to the French National Assembly. The resolution also calls on Baku to withdraw its troops from Armenia, and reaffirms the Senate’s 2020 resolution calling on the French government to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh. It also calls for guarantees that the status of the Lachin corridor, which links the region with Armenia, will remain unchanged. “We call on the government to consider, together with European allies, the means of giving the strongest and most adequate response to the new Azerbaijani attacks, including confiscation of the property of Azerbaijani leaders and the possibility of placing a ban on the import of Azerbaijani gas and oil,” the document reads. The French Senate also asks the French government to consider the issue of setting up a humanitarian office in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as “to show Paris’ support to Yerevan by all means,” considering “the strengthening of Armenia’s defense capabilities.” Olivier Becht, France’s Foreign Trade Minister who was representing the country’s foreign minister at the Senate debate, did not raise objections to the adoption of the resolution. But he also did not clarify whether the government would take the way of imposing sanctions. “No country in the world does more to support Armenia,” he said. see SANCTIONS, page 6

MASSACHUSETTS
Mapping the Armenian Highlands



NEW YORK
Michael Sarian Breathes Authenticity Into His Free Jazz



MICHIGAN
Hagopian Companies Support Young Rug Designers





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenian Startup doodooc Is Official Music Visualizer At Qatar 2022

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian music startup doodooc has teamed with the FIFA World Cup 2022, the company said in a statement on November 21.

doodoooc has joined forces with GL events and Octagon to make the ultimate World Cup experience unforgettable.

The startup is the official music visualizer of all Fan Zone stages, and its visualizations will be displayed on every screen of FIFA Fan Zones.

The 22nd FIFA World Cup is taking place in Qatar from November 20 to December 18.

France Refuses to Extradite Fugitive Armenian Ex-Governor

PARIS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — France has refused to extradite to Armenia the controversial former governor of Syunik, Surik Khachatryan, wanted by Yerevan on corruption-related charges, the Armenian service of RFE/RL reports.

It proceeds from the reply that RFE/RL's Armenian Service got from the Armenian Prosecutor-General's Office that Yerevan received a rejection from Paris regarding its bid for Khachatryan's extradition about a month ago.

The French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs sent a reply through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, saying that five months ago judicial bodies in France expressed a negative opinion on Armenia's bid for Khachatryan's extradition and that the decision was based on the European Convention on Extradition, according to which "Khachatryan's extradition may have extremely serious consequences for him."

Azerbaijan Forces Keep Shooting into Karabakh, at Farmers

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — Units of the Azerbaijani army opened fire on the citizens carrying out agricultural works at 2:30 pm on November 22, Artsakh Police inform.

The head of the Sarushen community in Askeran region reported the incident to the Karmir Shuka Department of Martuni Regional Police.

He said irregular shots were fired from the Azerbaijani side while farmers were working in the lands belonging to Sarushen community, which forces the agricultural works to stop.

In addition, on November 21, at around 11:00 am, the enemy opened fire at civilians working in the same area.

No civilians were injured.

The Martuni regional department of the Police has handed over the collected facts to the Russian peacekeeping troops.

Armenia's New Gun Law: Risks and Advantages

By Astghik Karapetyan

YEREVAN (EVN Report) — Armenia has a new law on the acquisition of arms, and the sale and circulation of military products. The Law "On Regulation of Firearms Circulation" was adopted on October 5, 2022, by Armenia's National Assembly and is expected to improve gun control measures and regulate the circulation of weapons and munitions.

The law will come into force six months after the adoption date. Until then, access to firearms is still subject to the current Law on "Firearms" adopted in 1998.

Parts of the law relating to the access of civilian firearms were at the center of heated debates.

The Right to Own a Firearm

"I became interested in guns after the war," says Habet Madoyan, a lecturer at the American University of Armenia. "I haven't served in the army and I have never held a weapon in my life. I shot for the first time at the age of 40. Before I bought a gun, I went to a military officer I knew and he taught me how to disassemble and assemble it."

According to the current law, a person over 18 can acquire a firearm after obtaining a permit from the police. Article 13 of the current law also allows for citizens who are members of a hunting association to purchase hunting firearms and long-barreled rifles as well as air rifles.

A hunting rifle can be purchased by a person who is licensed to hunt, is engaged in a profession related to hunting or is a member of a paramilitary organization.

One can own a long-barreled hunting weapon if they have not broken any laws related to hunting or the production, trade, sale, acquisition, transfer, display, registration, maintenance, use, or traffic or collection of weapons for at least five years.

Any long-barreled firearm (shotgun) must be registered with the police within two weeks of purchase. After submitting documents about the legal purchase of the weapon, the owner can keep and carry a long-barreled rifle and groove-barreled rifle for five years.

Regulations stipulate that a citizen can acquire and carry a long-barreled firearm only if they are a member of a hunting association. According to Madoyan, this is illogical. "I am not a hunter and I'm not interested in hunting. I bought the weapon for practice [recreational] and self-defense purposes," he says. "However, people who are not hunters, but want to own a gun, have to become a member of a hunting association. This is very easy — all you need is 5,000 drams, two pictures and you're given that certificate at a gun store. You have to buy a hunting rifle, wait five years, and then you'll have the right to buy a rifle."

"The logic behind this is that the person will hunt for a while, learn, and then can acquire a more sophisticated weapon," says Ishkhan Gevorgyan, Chair of the Board of Azatazen, an NGO that also offers military training for civilians. He says that people come to Azatazen who already have a weapon, but they don't know the basic rules on how to use it.

Azatazen was established last year with the aim to promote the development of a culture of carrying and using weapons in Armenia, as well as the development of weapons production and legislative improvements in acquiring, carrying and using weapons. It also organizes military and fire training courses and shooting competitions.

Gevorgyan also notes that currently, definitions of smoothbore (smooth barreled) and rifled (groove barreled) firearms have

been blurred compared to how they were in 1998 when the current law was adopted. For example, there are combination guns that have at least one rifled barrel and one smoothbore barrel.

The New Law on the Right to Own a Firearm

The new Law "On Regulation of Firearms Circulation" specifies three types of firearms that can be purchased by Armenian citizens: Long-barreled firearms (grooved or smoothbore firearms); Combination firearms (barreled and smoothbore), including interchangeable, insertable grooved barrels; Long barreled firearms (firearms with a barrel length not exceeding 1500 mm and caliber not exceeding 12.7 mm).

Article 15 of the new gun law defines the right of Armenian citizens to acquire a weapon. After gaining permission from the police, any person 21 years and older can purchase a combination or long-barreled firearm (shotgun). The firearm must be registered with the Police within five working days after its purchase. Being a member of a hunting association and owning a combination firearm for five years is no longer a requirement for purchasing a weapon.

According to the current law, an Armenian citizen can own a maximum of eight firearms — up to three rifles and five shotguns. The new law states: "A citizen is allowed to acquire 10 units of civilian weapons with a permit to keep and carry them."

"There is not a single civilian shooting range in a country that has been at war for 30 years," wrote Ishkahn Gevorgyan in April of this year after the bill was introduced. "We are trying to build the first one with Azatazen at the expense of our lives."

Gevorgyan believes that one of the positive aspects of this new law is that it stipulates what types of shooting ranges can exist, and how and by whom they can be operated. Chapter 9 of the Law is entirely devoted to shooting ranges.

"There are dozens of shooting ranges and training courses all over Europe, while we have all kinds of entertainment besides that," says Gevorgyan. "My wife and I found an area for a shooting range. We hunt there, which we have the right to but it will soon become a shooting range. We have trained over a thousand people with our own money. Azatazen does not seek profit. We survived for a purpose and the men who died were better than us in many cases. This is why we took this initiative."

Supporters of the new law believe that weapons should be more accessible to ordinary citizens for self-defense purposes. According to them, this does not mean people should be armed while walking down the street or protecting themselves from their neighbors. Rather it is a recognition of the fact that Armenia is in a state of war and it is vital for its reservists to be combat-ready and in fighting condition.

For example, Gevorgyan says that they were against loosening the rights to own handguns. "We fought against it because the handgun can be a concealed weapon: it's possible to take it to clubs and other similar places," he explains. "We at Azatazen believe that weapons are necessary for training and protecting ourselves. Armenia is too small a country for us to fight each other with weapons."

"It's not the purchasing of weapons that is being loosened, but the purchasing of rifled firearms that are being loosened," says Habet Madoyan. "And in general, there are more restrictions now — it's become mandatory to pass an exam to own a weapon."

Training to Own a Firearm

The new law stipulates that a citizen who is a first-time purchaser of a civilian weapon is required to undergo a short-

term training course on gun safety rules in weapon's training NGOs authorized by the government and to obtain a certificate. The police determine how the training is to be conducted.

"What we are doing now on our own will soon be mandatory by law. In other words, the right to have a weapon will be given based on knowledge," explains Gevorgyan. "Don't we often hear that people die because weapons were carelessly handled in the army? The same thing can happen with civilian weapons. It is necessary to educate people." He also states that after undergoing training and learning how to use weapons, there will be an exam consisting of theoretical and practical parts. If they pass the exam, the person will receive a certificate.

It is still not clear which organizations will be conducting the training and how those trainings will take place.

Although the current law does not require first-time gun owners to undergo training, it does require owners to be informed about the rules regarding gun use and it requires them to be tested. The law states: "Citizens who purchase firearms and hunting rifles for the first time, upon receiving a permit for engaging in hunting, are obliged to pass a test on their knowledge of the rules of handling weapons at the organizations authorized by the Armenian government in accordance with a plan agreed upon with the Armenian Police."

Thus citizens should also have a basic level of knowledge of gun handling before being tested by the police. However, as our interviewees have stated, in practice, weapons also end up in the hands of those who do not know how to use them.

This is the problem of the law's applicability and oversight. Are there any guarantees that with this new law, a greater number of weapons and with a greater range (for example, up to 1500 meters and more) will not end up in the hands of those who have a certificate to own a weapon, but do not know how to use it properly?

Gor Hovhannisyan, an environmental activist and participant in the 44-Day War, says that he is in favor of the adoption of this new law, because in a country surrounded by enemies, owning weapons should be allowed.

"We have laws that if we follow them we won't be worse off than Singapore and Switzerland," says Hovhannisyan. "But we do not follow them because of corruption and unsound thinking, relying on favoritism and nepotism [this will be a problem]. I have very big doubts about oversight. They also said they would strictly control PCR tests and vaccinations."

Ishkhan Gevorgyan gives another example: "When I was a young man, driver licenses were widely bought. Now everyone takes exams. In our country, every law can be broken, but you can also prevent this. We have to be diligent so that the law is enforced. With our organization, we will do this. The others must be careful so that someone can have a weapon when they have the appropriate knowledge. Otherwise someone will get hurt."

Risks and Dangers

Gor Hovhannisyan brings up an expected risk this new law has for the environment. According to him, with long-range weapons, animals are put in danger. "Someone sitting on a mountain can kill a bezoar goat calmly grazing on the top of another mountain," he explains. "He would not have been able to shoot the goat with a 200-meter range weapon."

One of the main criticisms against the loosening of the law on purchasing and

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ARMENIA

American University of Armenia Announces Kenn Kakosian Family Scholarship Fund

YEREVAN — The American University of Armenia (AUA) announced recently a new scholarship sponsored by renowned husband and wife dentists Drs. Kenn M. Kakosian and Irina V. Kakosyan of New York City. With this generous annual gift of \$100,000 to establish the Kenn Kakosian Family Scholarship Fund, Dr. Kakosian aims to provide academic opportunities to ambitious students from the provinces of Armenia and Artsakh, extending his reach outside the central hub of Yerevan.

“The natural resources and traditions in provinces give unique opportunities for public-private partnerships. When universities are active participants with new knowledge, perspectives and students that will become the future leaders, these clusters can give impact and attraction to prosperity. The students awarded this scholarship will be guided by dedicated mentors to integrate their university studies with possibilities in education, research, collaboration and outreach connected to development in a cluster of choice. We are deeply grateful to our donors for this insightful new scholarship program,” reflected President of AUA, Dr. Karin Markides.

Full tuition scholarships will be awarded to students who have been admitted to one of the three collaborating universities — AUA, Yerevan State University, and Armenian National Agrarian University — with AUA taking the lead in administering the program. With this cross-university cooperation, the scholarship stands out as unique in its national scope. The Fund will provide renewable annual scholarships to cover up to 100% of each selected student’s tuition for four years of study. Recipients will hail from the less served and developed provinces of Shirak, Lori, Tavush, Syunik, Vayots Dzor, and Artsakh.

“Those of us who have visited over the

years can see the enormous gaps in development, opportunity, and even security among different regions. By starting a program modeled after successful international aid programs to educate and empower students to put their new skills to work in needier places, we hope to contribute to a solution,” noted Drs. Kenn and Irene Kakosian, “And we want to thank AUA president Dr. Markides as well as Yerevan State and the Armenian National Agrarian University for coming together on this program with the hope that it grows over the years.”

As part of the scholarship requirement, applicants will describe how their studies and planned work will benefit these selected provinces to develop prosperity and desirable resilience. Recipients, who will be publicly identified as “Kakosian Scholars,” will select and commit themselves to a capacity-building project in a developmental area of choice during the course of their studies. The goal is to encourage Kakosian Scholars to eventually choose to return to attractive jobs in an Armenian province after completing their studies and continue developing these critical regions.

“This scholarship is a wonderful opportunity to not only financially support our students in receiving a quality education, but also encourage and help them realize their dreams and contribute to the development of their communities and our country,” said Rector of Yerevan State University Dr. Hovhannes Hovhannisyman. “I would like to thank the Kakosian family for this patriotic and important initiative, emphasizing the importance of the cooperation established between the three universities within the framework of this program and ensuring that it will best serve our students and facilitate our further collaboration.”

“The contribution of the Kenn Kakosian Family Scholarship Fund is highly valuable

given the current difficulties facing Armenia and Artsakh. The Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU) is happy to be one of the three collaborating Armenian universities, and I strongly welcome and appreciate this unique opportunity for our students to be part of this exciting development,” commented Dr. Vardan Urutyan, rector of ANAU. “Moreover, we at ANAU are pleased that a priority area like agriculture and rural development has been valued by the Fund. This means that the best students from the targeted regions will have the opportunity to receive a scholarship which will realize their vision related to their respective communities and their own professional career while contributing to the balanced development of these regions and communities.”

A mentor assigned by the Armenian Technology Future Initiative (ATF Initiative) will guide them through the volunteer work, research, internships, and other activities involved in each scholar’s capacity-building project. The ATF Initiative is the ideal partner organization for the Kakosian scholarship, as it aims to implement and scale educational and outreach projects to promote technological development in Armenia and foster dialogue among educational institutions, technology industries, and the government.

“The government welcomes and supports these types of initiatives, which play an important role in the development of our country and its educational system. The Kenn Kakosian Family Scholarship Fund will help bright students who achieve high academic performance and are active in their provinces contribute to the prosperity of their communities and become future leaders,” said Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia Karen Trchounian.

Scholar selection will be a collaborative process, conducted by a panel — headed by AUA and consisting of representatives from the three universities who will award the scholarships to students with the most competitive application and motivation letter and with proven engagement through the years of study. The Kakosian Scholars will be assigned a mentor who will support the development of an engagement schedule in selected areas of development. Kakosian Scholars will meet periodically as a group, as well as with the Benefactor to review their studies and work on an annual basis.

Artsakh State Minister Responds to Aliyev’s ‘Willingness to Start Dialogue’

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — Artsakh’s State Minister Ruben Vardanyan this week welcomed the “desire of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to start a direct dialogue with Artsakh.” He noted that “Artsakh should be subjective in this process.”

“I also welcome the establishment of a new format for direct negotiations through international mediation. France, whose Senate recently adopted a resolution containing a clause on the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh, must be among the international mediators, along with Russia and the United States,” Vardanyan said in a Facebook post, reminding that France is also a co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

Vardanyan suggested “moving to a more constructive tone” and said he would like to get clarifications about the “clear agenda” Aliyev supposes he has.

“I have repeatedly stressed that I renounced Russian citizenship to avoid accusations that I am pursuing someone else’s interests in Artsakh, except for the interests of the people of Artsakh. I believe that I fully comply with the criterion of a negotiator put forward by Mr. Aliyev,” Vardanyan said.

The comments come after Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev said “Azerbaijan is ready to talk about the rights and security of the Armenians of Karabakh with people living there.”

“If they [Armenia] want to talk about the rights and security of Armenians in Karabakh, then this will not work. We are ready to talk about this with the Armenians living in Karabakh. We are ready to talk with people who live in Karabakh and want to live there. We are ready for this. By the way, this process has begun,” the President of Azerbaijan said. He stressed that without interference from the outside and attempts to stop this process, it “could go more dynamically.”

“War always brings war. Sometimes this happens even after a change of several generations. Aggression today is a time bomb laid under the future generations of our peoples. This means that the leaders of the two sides must assume full responsibility and, no matter how difficult it may be, sit down at the negotiating table and stop the bloodshed,” Ruben Vardanyan said in response.

Armenia’s New Gun Law: Risks and Advantages

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carrying firearms is that crime may increase. “Anyone who wants to commit a crime has access to an illegal weapon, and if they leave that weapon at the scene of the crime, they will not be identified,” Gevorgyan explains. “In my case [those who have a legal weapon – auth.], if they find the fired bullet, that means they have found me.”

The fact that the majority of gun crimes are committed with illegal weapons is also evidenced by police data. Between 2017 and 2021, 22 crime cases were committed with legal weapons in Armenia — an average of four cases per year. Meanwhile, 296 cases were committed with illegal weapons — an average of 59 cases per year.”

“If there are many weapons, crimes of carelessness also increase,” says Gevorgyan. “Just like if there are many cars, road accidents also increase.” According to Gevorgyan, it is worth people’s safety and the increase in self-defense skills. “People don’t give up transport because of accidents, right?” Gevorgyan asks.

The National Assembly presented justification for the adoption of the new law, citing data from international experience. Specifically, the cases of the Baltic States, Georgia, and Moldova show that a year after adopting a law on the liberalization of civilian weapons, crime levels dropped by

40-60%. Meanwhile, restrictions have led to a sharp rise in crime in the UK over a five-year period.

Production and the Black Market

Habet Madoyan, an economist by profession, notes that currently, there is a shortage of weapons in gun stores, new batches are quickly sold out, and that people wait for months to get the gun they want.

According to Madoyan, this new legislation will lead to arms importers starting new businesses and likely producing weapons themselves. Having international contacts and connections and understanding the nuances of the business can ultimately lead to importers turning into manufacturers, as has been the case with other major importers since the 1990s.

Hovhannisyman also believes that the new law will lead to the development and expansion of the arms market. “The market will grow and therefore the black market will also grow,” he explains. “When weapons enter the country and a gun culture is created, it’s impossible that the danger will also not increase and that illegal weapons will not start to increase in number. New contacts are created and whoever has those connections can use them for illegal weapons as well.”

He emphasizes that in general, he is in favor of the adoption of the law, but that risks must also be calculated and we should

be prepared for the dangers.

According to the current law, in order to obtain a permit to purchase a weapon, a citizen must submit a medical report to the police about health issues that would prevent the possession of weapons, such as visual impairment, mental illness, alcoholism or drug addiction.

The medical report is issued by a polyclinic based on medical inspections made by a medical committee. If the polyclinic does not provide psychiatric and narcotic medical care and services, then the citizen has to submit a medical document to the polyclinic issued by medical institutions that provide psychiatric and narcotic medical care and services.

These documents are better known as “narco” and “psycho” certificates. Until recently, the fee for these certificates was only 3000 AMD. However, in August, they increased six times to 20,000 drams.

Gevorgyan says that these certificates are valid for only one month, and that every time a weapon is purchased, it is mandatory to have a medical certificate. In addition to these certificate fees, there are other one-time fees. Owning a gun is expensive.

“This should not be allowed,” he says. “They are making guns for the rich again,” Gevorgyan adds, saying that they have appealed to the State Commission for the Protection of Economic Competition.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Japan Donates 39 Ambulances to Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Japanese government has donated 39 ambulances worth \$3.5 million to Armenia, the Ministry of Health reported on November 22.

The ambulances were donated to the country as part of a grant agreement on economic and social development signed between the governments of Armenia and Japan in 2020.

Four of the 39 vehicles are mobile intensive care ambulances. All are equipped with advanced medical devices and accessories.

Azerbaijani Businessman Detained on Suspicion of Spying for Russia

BAKU (news.am) — Billionaire businessman Farhad Ahmedov was detained this week during an operation carried out by the Azerbaijani State Security Service, on charges of spying for Russia.

Media.az reports searches were carried out at his offices in Baku, Goychay and Ismayilli districts.

So far, there have been no official statements on the subject, the newspaper notes.

Ahmedov is the head of AzNar Company, a producer of natural fruit juices. He is 49th in the list of Russian billionaires, according to Forbes 2022, with a fortune of \$1.7 billion. He is also on the list of the richest Russians sanctioned by the European Union and the UK in April 2022.

Iran's Christians Say Officials Are Pressuring Them To Stay out of Protests

TEHRAN (RFE/RL) — Yonathan Betkolia, the head of Assyrian Society of Tehran, said that the intelligence and security authorities of the Islamic Republic have asked the representatives of Christians, bishops and Assyrian priests to prevent the participation of Christian and Assyrian citizens in nationwide protests sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini.

A senior member of the Iranian Christian community says security officials are pressuring religious minorities to remain silent and not participate in anti-government protests.

With the protests in Iran now in their third month, Iranian authorities have blamed the West for the demonstrations.

While Betkolia previously has publicly agreed that foreign provocations are the cause of the protests, it is the first time he has acknowledged some Iranian Christians are supporting anti-government policies.

Betkolia, a member of parliament, has been criticized by Iranian Christians for being close to the authorities.

In an earlier statement, the Council of United Iranian Churches condemned the “systematic suppression of women and human rights violations in Iran” and demanded “freedom, justice and equal rights for all Iranians.”

Russian Senator Says Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict ‘Out of CSTO’s Competence’

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Sparking a further backlash in Armenia, a senior Russian lawmaker has claimed this week that the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan “does not fall within the competence of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).”

In a November 21 interview with the Moscow-based weekly newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty* published ahead of the CSTO summit in Yerevan, which is due on November 23, Konstantin Kosachev, Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Federation, the upper house of Russia’s parliament, said: “Each of the CSTO member countries determines its attitude towards this conflict independently.”

Senator Kosachev said that Russia was “most sincerely” involved in efforts to promote a settlement. “And our efforts are equally wanted by both sides. It can’t be otherwise. The situation can develop only in this way. To take the position of supporting only one side in this conflict would mean to aggravate it. It is necessary to take the position of a peaceful settlement and help ensure that the terms of this settlement are acceptable to all parties,” Kosachev said.

At the same time, the Russian politician argued that Turkey was making a mistake by supporting Baku in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

Leaders of the CSTO, a Russia-led defense alliance of six post-Soviet nations, including Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are to meet in Yerevan for an annual summit to discuss current issues of the organization in which the rotating presidency is passing from Armenia on to Belarus.

In the wake of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border clashes in mid-September, Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan urged the CSTO to come up with a “roadmap for restoring Armenia’s territorial integrity.”

Yerevan accuses Azerbaijan of capturing dozens of square kilometers of Armenian territory in a series of incursions since May 2021. Azerbaijan denies the accusation.

Nearly 300 soldiers were killed on both sides in border clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan on September 13-14, which proved to be the deadliest fighting since the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh that claimed the lives of close to 7,000 people.

During a virtual conference of CSTO leaders on October 28, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko bluntly rejected Armenia’s appeal for military assistance, opposing 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.” Therefore, he said, Pashinyan should negotiate with Aliyev to settle “border disputes” between the two countries peacefully.

Lukashenko’s remarks sparked criticism of the CSTO in Armenia, triggering a war of words between Yerevan and Minsk.

In an interview with Armenia’s Public Television on November 16, Pashinyan blasted the CSTO for refusing to defend its member Armenia against Azerbaijan, a non-member.

He said answers to be received to Armenia’s question regarding the CSTO’s stance on this conflict at the upcoming summit of the organization where Russian President Vladimir Putin will also attend were “extremely important” to Yerevan. “I think that the attitude of Armenian citizens towards the CSTO and the future of our relations with the CSTO will be formed based on this matter,” he said.

Vigen Khachatryan, a member of the ruling Civil Contract faction in the Armenian parliament, described the Russian official’s statement about the competence of the CSTO as “unserious.” “The opinion expressed by him shows that at least he did not read the CSTO charter,” Khachatryan said.

“We expect that the CSTO will give a political assessment, that is, will demand the withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops from the occupied sovereign territories of Armenia, and further steps of the CSTO will be based on this political assessment,” the pro-government lawmaker said.

Tigran Abrahamian, secretary of the opposition Pativ Unem faction in the Armenian parliament, said that he did not expect any “surprises” from the CSTO summit, given “the warm relations between CSTO member countries and Azerbaijan.”

“There will be no targeted assessment,” he said, stressing that the position of the Belarusian president was shared by “many other” CSTO members.

“I believe that at this stage we should try to resolve the situation by working with Russia. That is, to get what we can through its intermediary role, to get what we can in terms of its military assistance or supplies. It is much easier to solve the problem this way than by solving the same problem within the framework of the CSTO, even though the CSTO charter defines such obligations,” Abrahamian said.

To the question whether the issue of quitting the CSTO will be included in the government’s agenda if there is no specific assessment from the bloc, Khachatryan said. “There is no much time left. We will wait for the answer and will think about what to do next.”

Asked by RFE/RL’s Armenian Service whether any steps would follow after the CSTO summit, the pro-government lawmaker said: “I think that some steps will have to follow.”

In his public remarks on Monday Azerbaijani President Aliyev also boasted that “despite the fact that Azerbaijan is not a member of the CSTO it has more friends in it than Armenia.”

He claimed that Armenia “has failed to turn the CSTO members against Azerbaijan.”

Azerbaijan’s Aliyeva Quits UNESCO Post

By Ulkar Natiqqizi

First Vice President and first lady of Azerbaijan, Mehriban Aliyeva, has unexpectedly resigned from her role as “goodwill ambassador” to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, amid a dispute between Baku and the UN organization over Karabakh.

Aliyeva made the announcement on November 15 via a letter in which she implied that she was too busy.

But the resignation comes in the context of what has been a long-running conflict between the Azerbaijani government and UNESCO, as Baku considers the current leadership biased toward Armenia.

The organization has long been the subject of criticism from Azerbaijani state officials, starting from President Ilham Aliyev, who accuse it of failing to investigate the destruction of Azerbaijani cultural heritage following Armenians’ victory in the First Karabakh War of the early 1990s.

Then, following the Azerbaijani victory in 2020, when it retook most of the territory it had lost in the 1990s, UNESCO publicly complained that Azerbaijan was dragging its feet in allowing a UNESCO mission into those territories to assess the situation with cultural heritage. Azerbaijan’s Foreign

Ministry retorted with a complaint that the organization was “politicizing” the issue.

While Azerbaijan has in principle agreed that such a mission should take place, it has yet to happen. At a February video meeting between Aliyev, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, French President Emmanuel Macron, and European Union President Charles Michel, the sides agreed to send UNESCO missions to both countries.

In a July interview, Azerbaijan Minister of Culture Anar Karimov reiterated that the visits were agreed in February. “However, due to the non-constructive position of the Armenian side, the visit of this mission hasn’t yet taken place,” he said.

A commentary on the issue by Caliber.az, a site associated with Azerbaijan’s defense ministry, described Aliyeva’s move as a “diplomatic protest against the double-standard approach that UNESCO has adopted towards Azerbaijan.”

It said that UNESCO only became interested in Karabakh’s heritage following the war and when reports began to surface about Armenian cultural heritage sites being destroyed by Azerbaijan.

The French Senate adopted a resolution recommending sanctions on Azerbaijan. Much of the anti-UNESCO commentary has focused on the fact that its secre-

tary general, Audrey Azoulay, is French. Azoulay’s “French origin should not be overlooked among the reasons UNESCO demonstrated a position against Azerbaijan,” APA wrote.

Azerbaijan may also have other reasons to be unhappy with Azoulay’s tenure.

Her predecessor in the post, Irina Bokova, was linked via her husband to the money-laundering scheme known as the “Azerbaijani laundromat.” Some of the money in the \$2.9 billion slush fund was found to have been used to buy influence in favor of the Azerbaijani government.

During Bokova’s tenure, it was also announced Azerbaijan would donate \$5 million to the organization as a part of the cooperation agreement signed by her in the presence of Mehriban Aliyeva. In 2010, Bokova also presented UNESCO’s “Mozart Gold Medal” to Aliyeva for her “services to strengthening of dialogue among cultures.”

“It seems Azoulay doesn’t like caviar like Irina Bokova, that is why their relationship was cooled,” Azerbaijani activist Bakhtiyar Hajiyev wrote on Facebook following Aliyeva’s announcement.

(Ulkar Natiqqizi is an Azerbaijani journalist. This column originally appeared on the site eurasianet.org.)



INTERNATIONAL

BBC Accused of ‘Whitewashing’ Autocratic Azerbaijan in BP-Sponsored Film

LONDON (Opendemocracy.net) — The BBC has been accused of “whitewashing” the Azerbaijani dictatorship after broadcasting a film made with the support of the country’s controversial ruling family — and sponsored by UK oil and gas giant BP.

Audiences tuning into BBC World News in August were promised that they would discover “how Azerbaijan’s oil wealth enabled the capital Baku to flourish” and “gain the reputation of being the “Paris of the East” in the BP-sponsored “Wonders of Azerbaijan” film.

BP spent £300,000 (\$356,000) on the film, which was made by UK production company SandStone Global with support from a foundation and a media center run by members of Azerbaijan’s ruling Aliyev family. Broadcaster and historian Bettany Hughes, who co-founded SandStone, presented the film.

Emin Huseynov, an Azerbaijani journalist who fled political persecution in Azerbaijan in 2015, accused the BBC of “whitewashing a dictatorship” over the film.

Huseynov, who was the subject of an award-winning 2006 BBC documentary which followed pro-democracy youth activists in Azerbaijan, told openDemocracy that the BBC had undergone “a shameful transformation and given the floor to one of the bloodiest and most corrupt regimes in the world.”

He also accused the BBC of being “passive” in its coverage of the human rights situation in Azerbaijan and questioned the lack of scrutiny over BP’s ties to the Aliyev regime.

The BBC told openDemocracy that the “Wonders of Azerbaijan” “is not a current affairs programme.”

“The wider geopolitical story of the region has been reported on extensively by BBC News services,” a spokesperson said.

Chris Garrard, from the arts campaign group Culture Unstained, told openDemocracy that media sponsorship arrangements such as BP’s “legitimize” fossil fuel companies as they continue to invest in new oil and gas infrastructure, rather than trying to meet net-zero goals.

Given the Azerbaijani regime’s track record of human rights abuses, the BBC film’s “positive cultural perspective on Azerbaijan” worked to “BP’s advantage,” Garrard said.

The film also implicitly promoted Azerbaijan’s claims to Shusha, a city in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh that Azerbaijan seized from Armenian forces in the Second Karabakh War in 2020. Azerbaijan now wants to turn the region into a “green energy zone” with BP’s help.

Under its so-called “contract of the century,” BP is the largest foreign corporate investor in resource-rich Azerbaijan.

It has long faced criticism from human rights and climate activists for its ties to the ruling Aliyev regime, which has been accused of “electoral fraud,” the silencing of dissenting voices and benefiting disproportionately from Azerbaijan’s oil and gas wealth.

“BP needs to keep the [Azerbaijani] government onside and this [film] is a low-cost way of doing it,” said campaigner James Marriott, co-author of *Crude Britannia: How Oil Shaped a Nation*.

BP told openDemocracy it aims to work for the “effective and responsible” development of the Caspian Sea’s energy resources for the benefit of Azerbaijan and the company.

It added that it has a net zero ambition and is working to decarbonize operations and develop renewable energy in Azerbaijan.

“We do not support individuals or political groups in any country,” a BP spokesperson told openDemocracy.

A BBC spokesperson said: “Hosting advertising and sponsorship outside of the UK, which is clearly labelled as such and is completely separate to our editorial output, allows us to invest in the BBC’s world-class journalism, which provides independent and impartial news across all topics, including climate change, the energy crisis and geopolitics.”

BBC World News aired the two-part program to its viewers outside the UK over a week in August — the same week that British audiences saw the BBC broadcast extensive coverage of the energy crisis and soaring household fuel bills.

Ads aimed at the “curious, eco-conscious traveler”

were shown alongside the BP-sponsored film, as part of a brand deal between BBC Global News (one of the BBC’s commercial subsidiaries) and Azerbaijan’s official tourist board.

“Wonders of Azerbaijan” is part of a wider editorial series, also presented by Bettany Hughes, which explores areas of natural, artistic and cultural interest around the world.

The BBC licensed the content for the two-part program from Hughes’s production company, SandStone Global. The BBC edited the material, but the copyright remains with SandStone. The production itself was funded by BP, whose sponsorship was made clear on screen when the program aired.

Each of the two episodes was broadcast globally five times in late August, flanked by travel ads for Azerbaijan.



Bettany Hughes in “Wonders of Azerbaijan”

It was not broadcast in the UK.

A representative of SandStone Global told openDemocracy that it was “standard practice” for production companies to get support from “local organizations” for on-location services.

Baku Media Centre provided logistics support to SandStone, while the Heydar Aliyev Foundation helped the UK company secure filming permits and access to unique heritage sites, the representative said.

The Baku Media Centre is run by Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev’s youngest daughter, Arzu Aliyeva. It works closely with the family-run foundation.

SandStone’s representative said: “[The organization’s involvement] does not amount to editorial influence, as all decisions relating to our productions are made by the SandStone Global team.” Arzu Aliyeva was not personally involved in the production process, they added.

The BBC spokesperson said: “Whilst the original programme was not made by the BBC, the BBC alone has full editorial control over everything broadcast on its channel, in line with its robust editorial guidelines.”

BP supported the program as a “contribution to Azerbaijan’s global promotion” in partnership with the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, named after the former president, who led the country both before and after it gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Heydar Aliyev was succeeded in 2003, after ten years of rule, by his son, the current autocratic president Ilham Aliyev.

The foundation is chaired by Ilham’s wife Mehriban Aliyeva, who is also the country’s vice president.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation is tasked with promoting Azerbaijan’s image abroad, including by advancing the government position over Nagorno-Karabakh. But government critics say this work extends to diverting attention from the regime’s relentless crackdown on dissent and its systemic corruption.

“The foundation was set up by the ruling family to whitewash Azerbaijan’s image,” Arzu Geybullayeva, an Azerbaijani journalist living in exile, told openDemocracy. She added: “It can by no means be described as independent of the state.”

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation did not respond to requests for comment.

Speaking at a launch event for the film in Baku in September, presenter Bettany Hughes said: “I understand history not through politics... I don’t get involved in politics at all.

“But I do go to places which have been extraordinary in culture. So it was exceptional for me to get access to plac-

es which when I came last time I couldn’t go to because there was too much conflict there.”

Hughes was speaking about Nagorno-Karabakh, which is internationally recognized as Azerbaijani territory – but had been under ethnic Armenian control since the early 1990s.

That was until 2020, when Azerbaijan started a 44-day war to take control of part of the disputed territory – as Ilham Aliyev himself recently admitted. Thousands were killed in the fighting as Armenian forces attempted to protect it.

Indeed, the BBC series featured a segment where Bettany Hughes travelled to the city of Shusha, in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan seized the city in November 2020 as part of its brutal military offensive. Prior to that, Shusha — known as Shushi to Armenians — had been in the hands of ethnic Armenians since the first Nagorno-Karabakh war three decades earlier.

Azerbaijan has now declared Shusha a “cultural capital,” and major efforts are under way to restore Azerbaijani culture in the city. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation is leading restoration works in Shusha. Some of these works featured in the BBC program, including a sequence shot inside a reconstructed Soviet-era mausoleum to the 18th-century Azerbaijani poet and statesman Vagif. The monument fell to ruin when the city was under Armenian control.

Speaking in Shusha in June 2022, BP’s regional president Gary Jones said Nagorno-Karabakh had the country’s “best solar and geothermal resources” – making it a “perfect opportunity for a fully net zero system”. BP is planning a solar power plant in the city of Jabrayil, which Azerbaijan regained control over during the 2020 war.

“Wonders of Azerbaijan”, which did not address Armenia’s connections to Shusha or Nagorno-Karabakh’s bitterly contested history, was broadcast in the last week of August.

A fortnight later, Azerbaijani forces made further incursions into Armenian territory – the worst escalation in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict since the 2020 war.

BP’s Jones took to the stage at the Baku premiere of the film in late September to praise the “unwavering support of the [Azerbaijani] government” for his company and its co-venturers’ operations in the country.

Jones also spoke of the “joint effort” that went into creating the documentary. He thanked the Heydar Aliyev Foundation for its support and paid personal homage to the president’s daughter, Arzu Aliyeva, and to the Baku Media Centre she heads, “for their outstanding technical support” on the production.

This isn’t the first time BP has collaborated with the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, or that the foundation has cropped up on the BBC.

Last year, BBC StoryWorks, the in-house content studio for the commercial BBC Global News, ran a separate tourism-focused campaign for Azerbaijan to mark the 30th anniversary of the country’s independence from the Soviet Union.

The campaign included a paid-for advertorial that invited readers to “discover more” about Azerbaijan by following a link to an external website run by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. The ‘Azerbaijan’ portal claims (among other things) that Azerbaijan’s current president Ilham Aliyev “has always focused on ensuring a fuller provision of human rights and freedoms in the country”. It also contains information about the so-called “Armenian problem”.

Azerbaijani officials have a long record of using dehumanising language and imagery about Armenians, including opening a “war park” last year containing weapons, armour and vehicles seized from Armenian forces and wax figures of Armenians – as the BBC reported in the UK.

The link was removed after openDemocracy contacted the BBC for comment.

BP, meanwhile, has signed a cooperation agreement with the Heydar Aliyev Foundation to jointly implement some of its social investment projects.



INTERNATIONAL

Pashinyan Discusses Security in South Caucasus With Macron, Other Leaders At Francophonie Summit

SUMMIT, from page 1

Armenia, which became a full member of the organization in 2012, hosted its previous summit in 2018.

According to Pashinyan's press office, during his meeting with Macron the parties "highly appreciated" Armenia's presidency of the organization and discussed "issues related to the organization's priorities and future plans."

The two leaders also reportedly discussed issues related to further development of Armenian-French cooperation.

The official statement said that during the meeting Pashinyan and Macron also "exchanged ideas on the results of the quadri-lateral meeting of the leaders of Armenia, France, Azerbaijan and the president of the European Council held in Prague in October this year."

"The importance of the implementation of steps aimed at strengthening stability and security in the South Caucasus was emphasized. Prime Minister Pashinyan stressed the need to eliminate the consequences of Azerbaijani aggression, and of an immediate withdrawal of Azerbaijani units from the sovereign territory of Armenia," it added.

During EU-hosted talks in the Czech capital on October 6 Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, in particular, confirmed their countries' commitment to the UN Charter and the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991 issued after the demise of the Soviet Union, through which both sides recognize each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Pashinyan also discussed the results of the Prague meeting with President of the European Council Charles Michel whom he met in Djerba earlier on Saturday. The two reportedly emphasized "the importance of the implementation of the agreements reached as part of the Prague



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, right, with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

Statement and the implementation of steps aimed at strengthening peace and stability in the region."

Meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau the same day Pashinyan also reportedly presented "the consequences of the Azerbaijani aggression against the sovereign territory of Armenia and the positions of the Armenian side in the direction of their elimination."

"The sides exchanged thoughts on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the processes taking place in the South Caucasus, as well as various issues of mutual interest," the Armenian prime minister's press office added.

Pashinyan also raised the issue of what he called Azerbaijan's aggression against Armenia in his speech at the summit.

"We have to record that the fundamental principles of the UN Charter have been violated, in particular, the principle of not using force against the territorial integrity of any country, on which the collective security of all of us is based, thus gradually imposing the Law of the Strongest."

"The aggression carried out by Azerbaijan, to which the Republic of Armenia fell victim on September 13-14, is a vivid manifestation of this reality," the Armenian leader said.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan addresses the summit of the International Organization of La Francophonie in Djerba, Tunisia, November 19, 2022.

Pashinyan stressed that "Azerbaijan's totally unjustified and unprovoked aggression led to the occupation of a part of

Armenia's territories, causing death and suffering to the civilian population and causing considerable destruction."

"The established ceasefire, however, has not yet put an end to this country's ambitions for other territories of Armenia."

"Faced with new threats, we expect the international community to make a fair assessment of the situation our country has appeared in today, condemning the occupation of some parts of the Armenian territory and demanding the return of Azerbaijani forces to their initial positions."

"Armenia, for its part, is firmly committed to contributing to the process of achieving a peace treaty with Azerbaijan, as well as ensuring the rights and security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh," the Armenian premier underlined.

French Senate Condemns Azerbaijan for Aggression Against Armenia with Demand for Sanctions

SANCTIONS, from page 1

The debate on the resolution in the French Senate in Paris was accompanied by a protest organized by representatives of the local Azerbaijani community and its passage predictably sparked condemnations in Baku.

By contrast, ethnic Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh swiftly welcomed the resolution in France. Also, a group of Karabakh Armenians organized a rally in front of the French embassy in Yerevan on Tuesday afternoon in support of the French Senate's move.

As presented by Senator Bruno Retailleau, the resolution reads as follows:

"Considering the condemnations of the international community and the emergency meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations Organization at the request of France, which presides over it,

Strongly condemns the new military aggressions of Azerbaijan perpetrated at the beginning of August 2022 in the Lachin corridor connecting Armenia with the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert, and repeated on 13 and 14 September 2022 against the southern and

southeastern regions of the territory of the Republic of Armenia, in violation of its sovereignty, international agreements and the United Nations Charter;

Calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Azerbaijani forces and their allies from the sovereign territory of Armenia and the Lachin corridor to their original positions, the security and unchanged status of which must be ensured in accordance with the terms of the ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020;

Calls for the future respect by the Azerbaijani authorities and all their partners in the region, in particular Turkey, of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Armenia in accordance with their international obligations and commitments,

Calls for the immediate and unconditional release and repatriation of all Armenian prisoners of war;

Condemns the violations by Azerbaijan of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 4 January 1969 and calls for the respect by the Azeri authorities of international agreements and

conventions aimed at ensuring the security of the Armenian population and their right to live in peace and freedom, the right of return of displaced populations as well as the preservation of the Armenian cultural and religious heritage;

Calls upon the Government to work with determination to have the United Nations Security Council refer the matter of Azerbaijan's aggression on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia to the International Criminal Court, including the investigation of mass and war crimes;

Calls upon the Government to draw all diplomatic and economic consequences of these new aggressions, and to consider, together with its European partners, the strongest appropriate responses — including the seizure of the assets of the Azerbaijani leadership and an embargo on gas and oil imports from Azerbaijan — to sanction the military aggression carried out by the Azerbaijani forces on the territory of the Republic of Armenia, in violation of its sovereignty;

Invites the Government to consider the establishment of a humanitarian office in

Nagorno-Karabakh;

Invites the Government to demonstrate by all means France's support for Armenia, in particular by considering the strengthening of Armenia's defense capabilities in order to ensure its territorial integrity;

Invites the Government to take without delay any initiative allowing to guarantee the security of the Armenian populations and of Armenia, within its internationally recognized borders, and to ask for the deployment of an interposition force placed under the aegis of the international community;

Reaffirms the need to recognize the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and to use this recognition as an instrument of negotiations for the establishment of a lasting peace;

Calls upon the Government to do its utmost to ensure that Azerbaijan urgently and peacefully engages in a negotiation process through diplomatic channels, with a view to establishing a lasting peace in the South Caucasus."

(A short version of this story appeared in last week's print edition.)



Community News

Prize-winner Ronald Grigor Suny Lectures In Britain

LONDON — After a 55-year career as teacher at Oberlin College, the University of Chicago, and the University of Michigan, Ronald Grigor Suny decided to retire from that last position in June 2022. But his scholarly activities and lecturing continue. His latest book, *Stalin: Passage to Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2020), won the Isaac and Tamara Deutscher Memorial Prize for the book “which exemplifies the best and most innovative new writing in or about the Marxist tradition.” As a scholar Suny has been open and frank about his indebtedness to the historical insights and methods of analysis of Karl Marx, even through the long years of the Cold War when such a commitment was potentially harmful to an academic career. Indeed, the eminent biographer and Marxist historian, Isaac Deutscher, who wrote one of the first academic biographies of Joseph Stalin and a well-regarded three-volume biography of Leon Trotsky, was blackballed from ever receiving a job in a British university. Prominent liberal thinkers like Isaiah Berlin, a fellow of All-Saints College, Oxford, carried on a secret campaign in letters to powerful figures to keep Deutscher out of the academy.

Suny has fared better. He was the first holder of the Alex Manoogian Chair of Modern Armenian History and founder of the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan and went on to teach political science and history at the University of Chicago. In 2004 he returned to Michigan, where he worked as an organizer of the Workshop for Armenian and Turkish Scholarship (WATS), which successfully brought together Armenian, Turkish, Kurdish, and other scholars to discuss the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916. He published several important books on Armenian history: *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Indiana University Press, 1983) and “*They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*”: *A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton University Press, 2015); as well as co-editing with Fatma Müge Göçek and Norman Naimark, *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2011). Most of his other dozen books have been about Russia and the Soviet Union, most notably *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford University Press, 1993); *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford University Press, 1998, 2011); *Russia's Empires* (Oxford University Press, 2017), co-written with Valerie A. Kivelson; *Red Flag Unfurled: Historians, the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Experience* (Verso Books, 2017); and *Red Flag Wounded: Stalinism and* see SUNY, page 12



MIT's Armenian Society during one of their fall lunch, MITAS website.

Armenian Students at Local Universities Promote Homeland

By **Melanie Tuysuzian**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BOSTON — The Boston area is famed for being home to some of the most famous institutions of higher education in the world like Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Northeastern University and Boston University. Each of those universities has its own Armenian student organization. One of their main purposes is to unite Armenian students and to promote Armenian culture on their campuses.

“What is your favorite memory of being Armenian?” Emin Abrahamian asked, as the 10-member group gathered for their weekly meeting at Northeastern. Abrahamian is a third-year student in the bio-engineering major and the current president of Northeastern's Armenian Student Association (ASA).

Knar Krafian, a science major, spoke about the memory of her most recent trip to Armenia and her discovery of Khor Virap. Jack Zakian, a fourth-year engineering student, recalled the wedding of his uncle, which was “pretty Armenian” in his words.

Every other Monday, Northeastern's ASA members meet to discuss and learn more about each other. One of their main objectives is to open up the group to Armenians and non-Armenians: “Sometimes, some members bring their non-Armenian friends, so that's the best way to make them discover Armenia. We even have a Portuguese student who used to come to our meetings from time to time,” Abrahamian explained.

Lena Bardakjian is a Boston University student majoring in public relations and sociology. She is also the president of the Boston University's ASA who encourages members to advertise their club to all students. “Although most of our mem-



Northeastern's Armenian Student Association during one of their meetings, on November 7th, Northeastern campus.

bers are of Armenian descent, we welcome everyone and encourage them to bring non-Armenian friends who are interested in learning more about our organization and culture,” Bardakjian said.

For several years, the Northeastern's ASA has organized events to help Armenia. Last year, they hosted a fundraising dinner for Artsakh on campus, raising \$600 in a single day. “A now-graduated member of the club whose family owned an Armenian restaurant donated meat to us. We grilled from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. so people would come and go as they got out of classes. We made it affordable; it was \$3 for a sandwich and the majority of people who came weren't Armenian,” Abrahamian

see CLUBS, page 8

Schiff Introduces Bill to Name Post Office for Former Navy Secretary Paul Ignatius

WASHINGTON — Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) introduced a bill on November 17, H.R. 9251, that would name a United States Postal Office in Glendale, in honor of the dedicated service of former Navy Secretary Paul Ignatius, who will be 102 years old in November, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

Ignatius, born and raised in Glendale, was an American government official who served as Secretary of the Navy between 1967 and 1969, and was the Assistant Secretary of Defense during President Lyndon Johnson's Administration.

The son of Armenian parents who migrated to the United States from the Kharpert region, Ignatius earned his B.A. degree from the University of Southern California, and his MBA degree from Harvard Business School.



Paul Ignatius

He began his military career in the Navy during World War II, and following his graduation from Harvard Business School, began to work with the Department of Defense.

A longtime advocate of the Armenian community in California, particularly Glendale, where his family was one of the earliest Armenians who settled there in 1911, Ignatius serves as a member of the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies National Honorary Council and as a supporter of the Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of America, to be built in Glendale.

“The Armenian Assembly welcomes H.R. 9251 that will honor Paul Ignatius by naming a post office after him in his hometown of Glendale, CA,” said Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. “This is a testament to Paul's lifetime of service not only in the American context, but also an Armenian one,” Ardouny added.

Established in 1972, the Armenian Assembly of America is the largest Washington-based nationwide organization promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues. The Assembly is a non-partisan, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization.



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Armenian Students at Local Universities Promote Homeland

CLUBS, from page 7

explained. Posters and flyers about the situation in Armenia/Artsakh were also on display, to make this event both educational and fun.

In addition, the ASA at Harvard Law School has focused on organizing public events regarding issues that affect the Armenian community. Arman Smigielski, a third-year law student, is the co-president of the club, along with his classmate, Gayane Matevosyan. They noticed that a large number of non-Armenian students were interested in attending their events on campus. Last September, they welcomed Yeghishe Kirakosyan to lecture upon his work as the representative of the Republic of Armenia before the International Court of Justice and European Court of Human Rights.

"About 60 people attended the lecture and the majority of them weren't Armenian. We also had a recent public meeting with the judges Milena Mailyan and Gassia Apkarian, founding members of the Center for Truth and Justice. They brought to light audiovisual eyewitness testimonial evidence of human rights abuses against Armenians during the Artsakh War," Matevosyan said. Both of the judges were from California and took a flight to Boston especially to come and speak with Harvard Law School ASA. "Harvard's student population often ends up with a lot of power just by virtue of attending this institution, so we're hoping to make an impact that way. We take advantage of that platform to reach a broader audience that we won't be able to

for the defense of democracy. Hundreds of students and professors across the country at different universities have signed it in support of Armenia," she explained. (Link of the letter's post : https://www.instagram.com/p/Civd_aavZnh/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

These initiatives allowed non-Armenian students to understand the situation better: "My Harvard Law residential assistant came to speak with me and checked in after hearing about what was happening in Armenia. I was shocked," Mikaelian recalled.

MIT's programs in Armenia for non-Armenians students

At MIT, the concept of promoting Armenia is more of a student immersion into the country itself. This institution has established educational programs and internships in Armenia, called "MITSI Armenia," to teach MIT's students about Armenia and contribute to its technological development. In the educational program, students have the opportunity to teach in Armenia for three weeks. During this time, they share their knowledge of nuclear science, robotics, and computer engineering at the American University of Armenia or the after-school center of creative technologies, the TUMO Center. Internships are also planned for the summer in different Armenian technological firms. In total, nearly 40 students intend to enroll in these programs. For the next educational program this coming January, 18 of the 20 students who are participating are not Armenian.

Areg Danagoulian is the co-director of this program. He has been a science and en-

in Armenia, as a director and adviser: "Students are interested in Armenia because they are not familiar with its culture. Once, one of the students called me because she wanted to go skiing in the mountains and she needed some advice. I set her up with

Last month, he took time to exchange and motivate students to go to Armenia.

Having these Armenian Students Organizations is an opportunity to commit students around the world to the Armenian cause since institutions like Harvard and



Yeghishe Kirakosyan's lecture at Harvard's Law School on September 28th, 2022.

a friend who lived near Tsaghkadzor ski resort, and she convinced him to go skiing with her. She really was resourceful and curious about the country," he recalled.

Last year, only four people went to Armenia through MITSI because the financial cost was too high. Since then, MITSI Armenia has been supported with individual donations. Noubar Afeyan, Moderna's co-founder and chairman, is one of these sponsors. He was himself a MIT student and earned his PhD in biochemical engineering there in 1987. He was also a senior lecturer at MIT's Sloan School of Management for 16 years. Now, Afeyan is a member of the MIT Board of Trustees.

MIT have worldwide recognition. They are not only inspiring the Armenian youth but the youth, in general, to make an impact and promote Armenian culture.

To learn more, visit :

Harvard ASA (<https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/alsa/>)

MIT Armenian society (MIT Armenian Society)

Northeastern ASA mostly present on Instagram (Armenian Students Association (ASA) at NU (@asanortheastern) • Photos and videos Instagram)

Boston University ASA (BU ASA (@bostonu_asa) • Photos and videos Instagram)



Harvard's Law School Armenian student association with the judges Milena Mailyan and Gassia Apkarian on November 11th, 2022.

reach without all of this," she added.

Danielle Mikaelian is a first-year law student at Harvard. She recently started posting graphics and content relating to the war in Artsakh the Harvard's ASA Instagram account. These posts included an open letter, released on September 20th to denounce Azerbaijan's assault. "In conjunction with students from other Armenian Students organizations across the country, we wrote that letter. It spoke about the horrific acts being committed by Azerbaijan against Armenians and called

gineering professor at MIT for eight years and a member of the Armenian Society of MIT. He takes advantage of their meetings to exchange ideas with the Armenian students regarding their next trip to Armenia and the best way to promote the program. "To motivate students to go to Armenia, we like to bring out the idea that the country is small, with a real urgency to develop science and education. Therefore their work will be meaningful, they will accomplish a concrete change there," Danagoulian explained. The professor will also be present

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Sen. Menendez Presses Secretary Donfried, Ambassador Reeker on Humanitarian Crisis in Artsakh, Waiving Sec. 907

MENENDEZ, from page 1

as being “insufficient,” and expressed outrage over its continued, annual provision of security assistance to Azerbaijan. “How on Earth can the United States justify sending any kind of support, security or otherwise, to a regime in Baku? It’s inexcusable. I personally think it’s morally repugnant. And it makes a mockery of the FREEDOM Support Act.”

Menendez continued: “Section 907 of this Act is meant to ban security assistance to Azerbaijan until Azerbaijan is ‘taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.’ And yet the Department of State has waived Section 907 over and over again. It requested \$600,000 for Fiscal Year 22 to provide Azerbaijan with international military education and training – a program meant to ‘provide a professional military education to countries selected by the Secretary of State.’”

Expanding on the question of U.S. secu-

city assistance, Menendez referenced the Government Accounting Office’s (GAO) report, publicly released earlier this year, which demonstrates that the Department of State and Department of Defense failed to comply with reporting requirements for reviewing U.S. assistance to the government of Azerbaijan relative to Section 907’s statutory requirements. Concluding his opening remarks, Chairman Menendez said he “welcomes senior level U.S. engagement in this region” and has “high hopes for a lasting peace.”

During the hearing, in response to Donfried and Reeker’s respective testimonies, Menendez stated that their testimonies are “unresponsive to the concerns” that he raised in his opening statement or in the past. He pressed Reeker about video footage that caught Azerbaijani forces “killing unarmed Armenian soldiers in cold blood.” Ambassador Reeker replied that he has “seen a number of videos” and that his “email box is filled with them.”

Chairman Menendez asked if he has made efforts to verify the videos and if he has come across reports of Azerbaijani soldiers sexually assaulting and mutilating an Armenian female soldier. In response, Ambassador Reeker said that he has “seen many reports of atrocities,” however, he stated he was “not familiar” with reports relating to Azerbaijan’s reported use of illegal weapons, including white phosphorus, cluster bombs. Chairman Menendez emphasized that the State Department “seems to be looking the other way because of whatever interests we have with Azerbaijan.”

“My frustration with the State Department is that they always say ‘well both sides should refrain.’ But when there is an aggressor, we should call out the aggressor...it’s Azerbaijan. Yet we look the other way and we waive Section 907.” Addressing Assistant Secretary Donfried specifically, Chairman Menendez asked how the State Department continues to provide a waiver to Section 907, not only due to the

fact that the GAO study reaffirmed that the State Department did not meet its reporting requirements, but also because of the atrocities that the Aliyev regime wantonly commits.

In response, Donfried said that the State Department is “working very hard to achieve a goal I think we share, which is a sustainable peace in the South Caucasus... what we are hearing from both [Armenia and Azerbaijan] is they believe there is an historic opportunity for a sustainable peace in the region.” Regarding waiving Section 907, Assistant Secretary Donfried said the State Department “welcomes the GAO’s review of the Section 907 waiver process” and that steps were taken to implement the GAO’s recommendations.

Menendez pressed that in the face of all of the facts, one cannot justify a waiver to Section 907. “Is it humanly possible to say that Azerbaijan has not benefited itself from the assistance we have given it in a way that gives it a clear edge against Armenia as it relates to its military prowess? There’s no way to say that. You can’t sit here with a straight face and say that.”

Turning to specific actions the Biden Administration has taken to directly help at-risk Armenians living in Artsakh, Menendez emphasized that the humanitarian needs of the people in this conflict are being “wholly underserved.” Ambassador Reeker acknowledged the “terrible humanitarian toll” from the 2020 war and that the “State Department continues to work with relevant agencies to evaluate needs in the region and identify how best humanitarian assistance can be provided.” He noted that access to Artsakh is “extremely limited” and “not currently possible for U.S. government personnel to access the area and conduct needs assessments or monitor programs.” The U.S., however, has provided funding for humanitarian demining operations, including the allotment of \$2 million.

Menendez remarked that this is “wholly unresponsive in terms of health care, food security, water. I can’t believe we don’t have an answer.” Further in the hearing, Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) emphasized “Turkey’s historic role backing Azerbaijan” in relation to the country’s role in the South Caucasus region. He stated that the U.S. relationship with Azerbaijan is due to its “increasing role as a supplier of energy to neighbors and into Europe” and that the U.S. has gotten the “balance wrong when it comes to promoting human rights and democracy in countries that have large oil reservoirs.”

Also during the hearing, Senators Ed Markey (D-MA) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) rightly questioned the judgement of the U.S. Departments of State and Defense in advocating for continued U.S. security assistance to the Aliyev regime in Azerbaijan.

In his closing statement, Chairman Menendez said the hearing was “disappointing,” while pointing out to Assistant Secretary Donfried that while the State Department is urging Azerbaijan to observe human rights, the U.S. continues to give the country “direct assistance that can hurt Armenia.” He emphasized that “one side is the aggressor” and the [U.S.] “has done nothing to verify the videos and the evidence of cluster munitions, of white phosphorus, which are illegal.”

Addressing Donfried and Reeker, Senator Menendez said it is “totally unacceptable” that they can’t respond with specificity what kind of humanitarian assistance the U.S. is providing to the victims.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

NAASR to Host Webinar on ‘Mapping the Armenian Highland’

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will present a webinar with Matthew Karanian on Thursday, December 8, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern) / 4:30 p.m. (Pacific), titled “Mapping the Armenian Highland.” This program is made possible through the support of the Dadourian Foundation.

The webinar will be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and on NAASR’s YouTube Channel. To register go to <https://bit.ly/NAASR-Karanian>.

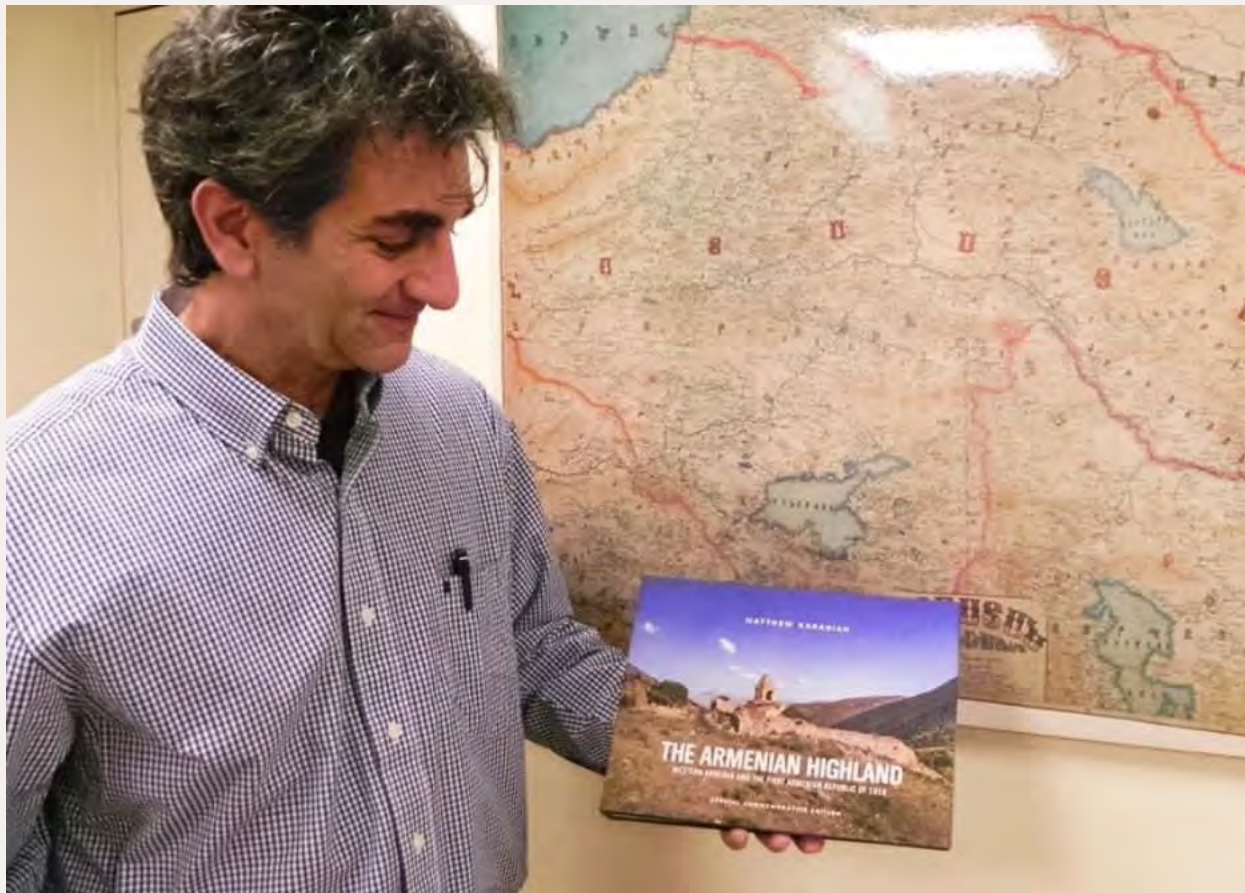
Author and lawyer Matthew Karanian discusses how a series of maps that his great-uncle Mardiros Kheranian produced one century ago encouraged Matthew’s own research of ancient Armenia, and guided him along the way. Matthew has published several books about Armenia. His publication *The Armenian Highland* relied on an ancient map that his great uncle Mardiros Kheranian created in 1922, and one of his Uncle Mardik’s maps was the cultural artifact that set Matthew on his path to discovery in Western Armenia.

Matthew’s journey of discovery began in Cilicia and concluded more than 20 years later with the exploration of all of ancient Armenia. And along the way, he picked up where his Uncle Mardik had left off, by mapping the Armenian Highland in words and photographs, to preserve their memory for future generations.

Kheranian’s maps are works of art as well as historical records. They have been displayed, or are currently on display, at the National Museum in Yerevan, at Holy Echmiadzin, at the Armenian Prelacy in Detroit and at the Armenian National Committee of America offices in Washington, D.C.

Karanian has reproduced two of the maps in his books. He’ll show these maps, and talk about what they mean to him, and to the Armenian nation, during his presentation.

For more information contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



A selection of photographs, curated from *The Armenian Highland*, has been published in a newly released 2023 wall calendar.

The calendar features 18 color photographs from Ani, Van, Kars, Kharpert, Erzerum, Bitlis, Sasoon and Tigranakert, as well as maps of ancient Armenia and of the Armenian Highland, which includes the lands known today as Western Armenia.

The photographs are by Matthew Karanian, the author of several popular books about Armenia, including *The Armenian Highland* and *Historic Armenia After 100 Years*.

“These photographs show us the magnificence of or historic homeland in Western Armenia,” said Karanian.

The wall-sized calendar measures 12 x 18 inches and covers the 13-month period from December 2022 through December 2023, with one large color photograph of ancient Armenia for each month. Several additional photographs of ancient Armenia are also included.

Stone Garden Press publishes the calendar and donates all proceeds from its online sales to the Historic Armenia Project, which funds ongoing research about Western Armenia and Artsakh, and produces publications about these ancient Armenian regions. No profit is taken.

San Diego SparkleS Foundation Gift to AMAA Orphan & Child Care Fund

PARAMUS, N.J. — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) earlier in November announced receipt of \$25,000 provided by San Diego SparkleS Foundation. The donation will be directed to orphan children living on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“Children in war-torn areas still have dreams for their futures,” said Magna Poulos, AMAA Director of Operations and Donor Relations. “With the arrival of winter in the Caucasus, we will steward these funds to provide for warm shelter, clothing, blankets and most of all, hope.”

AMAA provides food and clothing dis-

tribution, medical and dental services, education centers and social workers to address childhood trauma. All donations go to direct services to children.

“Some of these children have lost not just their homes, but their families,” said Kathy Kassarian, president of San Diego Sparkles Foundation. “San Diego’s Children’s Benefit fashion show donation will help to make a difference in their lives.”

Children from across San Diego County participated at the San Diego Children’s Benefit Fashion Show & Luncheon on September 17, 2022, at Hyatt Regency La Jolla. Two hundred guests— from Hillcrest



Models in the children’s fashion show



Young models walk the runway at the San Diego Sparkles Foundation’s Children’s Benefit Fashion Show

to North County— contributed to the fundraiser supporting children at-risk abroad and in San Diego. Five charities were identified as recipients.

In 2023, the San Diego SparkleS Children’s Benefit Fashion Show will be held on September 30. The event supports charities dedicated to protecting children in San Diego and children displaced by war. Currently, Donations are accepted and can be mailed to Sparkles Foundation. P.O. Box 676067 • Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067 or online at https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=2CTWT2GMUB-N3U&source=qr



Emcee Zanni Kalaydjian, Missy Digius and Michelle MacDonald



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Celebrates Landmark 50th Anniversary

ASSEMBLY 50TH, from page 1
named after Ambassador Morgenthau, “who sounded the alarm on the Armenian Genocide unequivocally and without hesitation.” She thanked the Assembly Board for its “excellent leadership” and emphasized that the Assembly has been an “invaluable force for half a century in creating bonds between America and Armenia.”

“It’s been a joy to work with you in our treasured Armenian-American community, and in my hometown of San Francisco,” she said. “All of you are active advocates, and I thank those of you who I saw firsthand strongly lobbying and advocating.” She stressed that visiting the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan was a “life-changing experience, where we learned the horrific truths of the 1.5 million Armenians murdered, and where we spoke the names of the communities that were erased. At that eternal flame, we felt the pain and open wounds.” Reflecting further on her trip, she said it was a “thrill” to lead the delegation, alongside Representatives Anna Eshoo, Frank Pallone and Jackie Speier.

“We made it very clear the US strongly condemns Azerbaijan’s attacks as illegal, brutal and escalatory, threatening prospects for a long-awaited and deeply needed peace agreement,” said Speaker Pelosi. “In the weeks since, both parties and the Biden Administration have redoubled diplomatic efforts to pave a way towards peace.”

Pelosi continued that the world must formally recognize the Armenian Genocide, and the passing of H.Res.296 in 2019, authored by Rep. Adam Schiff, was a culmination of a decades-long fight. Thanks to the support and leadership of President Biden, the historic step of formal recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the US, which was rooted in “bipartisan cooperation in Congress,” came to fruition. “We pledge to fight efforts to erase history that denies the truth,” she said. “America is committed to upholding liberty and security in Armenia and around the world...in this difficult moment we draw inspiration from



Speaker Pelosi addressing the standing-room-only audience (Photo credit: Calypso Digital Photography)

in the Armenian Caucus, Pallone said she “really knows when to make a difference.” “Speaker Pelosi knew when the time was right to get the votes for Armenian Genocide recognition, and that’s one of the main reasons why we were able to accomplish getting H.Res.296 passed,” he said. On the most recent occasion of the latest aggression by Azerbaijan, he said that Speaker Pelosi “understood the dangers Armenia and Artsakh faced, and she was determined that she’d take us to Armenia at that crucial time to make the point that the US was with Armenia and it was going to speak out against the aggression taking place.”

In his introduction of Speaker Pelosi, Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny emphasized her 35-year record as

during a critical time and condemned Azerbaijan’s ‘illegal and deadly attacks on Armenia,’ she helped diffuse the escalation by Azerbaijan and helped save lives.” He concluded: “The Speaker has been with

a remarkable lady and role model, and we are sure your unbelievable career is going to be enshrined in the Halls of the US Congress, and in American government and history textbooks, where students are going



Speaker Pelosi and Assembly President Carolyn Mugar (Photo credit: Calypso Digital Photography)



Speaker Pelosi is honored with the Assembly’s Henry Morgenthau Award by Assembly Board members (l-r) Annie Totah, Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, Assembly President Carolyn Mugar, and Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian. (Photo credit: Calypso Digital Photography)

the Armenian people who keep the flame burning now and for centuries to come.”

In his remarks, Pallone thanked the Assembly and fellow organizations across the diaspora who work on behalf of Armenia and Artsakh. “We in Congress would not be able to do the things that we do without you, because you are our backbone that support all of our initiatives, and get people to join the Armenian Caucus,” said Pallone. “While it may be frustrating at times, stick with it because what you do is so important.”

Turning to Speaker Pelosi’s efforts with-

a champion of human rights and democracy, and on Armenian issues. He cited the many times Pelosi participated in Armenian Genocide commemorations on Capitol Hill. He also elaborated on her strong support of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and her efforts to stop the provision from being repealed.

“The Speaker stood with us on the House floor, and when forces tried to repeal that provision of law, we prevailed on the floor 231-182,” said Ardouny. “And this September, when the Speaker, the highest-ranking US official to visit Armenia, traveled

us every step of the way and was on the House floor leading by example, speaking in strong support of the Armenian Genocide resolution” that passed the House by a vote of 405-11.

Assembly President Carolyn Mugar expressed her “gratitude and love” to Speaker Pelosi. “There’s no substitute for being present, and you showed the world you were present when you demonstrated that the US is an ally of the Armenians,” said Mugar. “From the bottom of our hearts, you will be enshrined in our hearts and in our history books.” In her welcoming remarks, Assembly Board of Trustees member Annie Simonian Totah stated that 2022 has been a very important year for the Assembly as it celebrates its 50th anniversary. She acknowledged distinguished guests, Ambassadors, Embassy representatives, military attachés, elected public officials, and current and former statesmen, including Ambassador John Evans, a former recipient of the Ambassador Morgenthau Award, the Ambassador of Ukraine to the US Oksana Markarova, and the Ambassador of Armenia to the US Lilit Makunts.

Addressing Pelosi, she said: “Madam Speaker, you have been and continue to be

to learn all about you.”

Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian recognized the importance of and saluted the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues. Barsamian thanked Speaker Pelosi for “highlighting the human rights violations that are happening” in the South Caucasus region, and appreciated the support of the United States, the largest democracy, towards the Republic of Armenia, an emerging democracy.

Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian in his closing remarks noted the presence of major Armenian American organizations in attendance. “This is the same concept that led to the Assembly being formed 50 years ago,” said Krikorian. “Our commitment to bipartisanship has paid off over the years, both in the Armenian and American contexts, and Speaker Pelosi, when we say thank you, we mean it from the depths of our hearts.”

The closing prayer was led by Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), who stated that Pelosi is “part and parcel of Armenian history,” and that “generations to come” will speak about her.

Armenian American Museum Hosts Inaugural Young Professionals' Soirée

GLENDALÉ —The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California recently hosted its inaugural Young Professionals Soirée at NOOR in Pasadena. Hundreds of attendees from across the country joined the event to support the landmark center and share an exciting

events, programs, and activities throughout the next year. The Soirée served as the official kick-off event for the committee.

Communications Director Arsine Torosyan officially welcomed guests to the event on behalf of the Board of Trustees and Board of Governors of the museum.

spiration to launch the Young Professionals Committee with fellow young volunteers.

“To support the Armenian American Museum means to ensure that we have a place to tell our stories, showcase our history, and share experiences that will shape and brighten our future,” stated Young Professionals Committee Chair Aleen Ohanian. “It is up to all of us to work together to appreciate America’s ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Armenian American experience and create opportunities to bridge our diverse communities.”

Major sponsors of the Soirée included Bauformat Pasadena, Chris Ghazari-

an Law, Harutune Hamassian APC CPA, Nuvo Spine & Sports Institute (Dickran Altounian D.O.), Oceanview Capital Partners, and OPUS Builders.

Proceeds from the event benefited the Armenian American Museum, a landmark institution currently under construction in the museum campus at Glendale Central Park. The museum will offer a wide range of public programming through the Permanent Exhibition, Temporary Exhibitions, Auditorium, Learning Center, Demonstration Kitchen, Archives Center, and more.

For more information, visit <https://www.ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org>.



The Armenian American Museum Young Professionals Committee

evening of entertainment, networking, and community building.

The Young Professionals Soirée was organized by the newly launched Young Professionals Committee. The committee promotes the mission of the museum, connects young professionals throughout the community, and empowers the next generation of leaders. The committee plans to host a series of social and educational

“The Armenian American Museum invites young professionals to join us on this exciting journey and help support, shape, and bring to fruition a world class institution and landmark center that will serve and enrich our global community for generations to come,” stated Communications Director Arsine Torosyan.

Young Professionals Committee Chair
Aleen Ohanian delivered remarks on the in-

Prize-winner Ronald Grigor Suny Lectures in Britain

SUNY, from page 7

the Fate of the Soviet Experiment Verso Books, 2020).

Suny traveled to London from his home in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to receive the Deutscher Prize and give the lecture that goes with that honor. At a conference organized by the journal *Historical Materialism*, he spoke on the topic “Was Stalin a Marxist? And If He Was, What Does That Mean for Marxism?” Attended by more than 250 listeners, the lecture was enthusiastically received and was followed by

of liberalism and neo-liberal capitalism.

Suny also gave a lecture for London's Armenian Institute on "The Persistence of the Past: How Violence and Genocide in Ottoman Turkey Affect Our World Today." The audience was small, not more than 15 people, because of a strike closing down the subways in the city. But the audience responded with questions about the current situation in Turkey as well as queries about the Genocide itself. Suny also traveled to Cardiff, Wales, where he repeated the Deutscher Prize lecture at the University of



Ronald Grigor Suny

an hour of questions. The audience was largely made up of young Marxists, whose interests in the intricacies and potential of Marxist thought challenged the speaker to explain his position on the work of Trotsky, his critique of Soviet political practices that eroded the democratic possibilities expressed in the revolution of 1917, and his understanding of what Marxist socialism potentially offers the present global crisis

Cardiff to an attentive audience of undergraduates and faculty. He was gratified to note that the often-harsh response to Marxism that he has experienced in his home country was largely absent in his tour of Britain. Apparently, Isaac Deutscher would have been more successful as a professor of history and politics in the current post-Soviet period than he had been in the years of the Cold War.

SAS Elects Maranci, Goshgarian to Executive Council

The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) held its annual Executive Council meeting via Zoom on October 29, to elect a new president and vice president and announce the results of the Executive Council elections.

Christina Maranci, who currently serves as the Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, is the newly elected SAS President. In addition, the newly appointed vice president is Rachel Goshgarian, an associate professor of History and Assistant Department Head at Lafayette College as well as the current Reviews and Reconsiderations editor of JSAS. Incoming Executive Council advisors include Armen T. Masroobian (Southern Connecticut University), Asya Darbinyan (Clark University), and Helen Makdounian (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign).

Maranci was delighted to share a few remarks regarding her position and hopes for the future. “I’m honored to take the reins from my friend and colleague. Bedross Der Matossian, who has guided the Society of Armenian Studies through an extraordinary and challenging four years. I cannot duplicate the leadership Bedross has demonstrated—the initiatives, the lectures, panels, and conferences, and the publications (includ-

ing the extraordinary JSAS), the new connections he has forged — but I will work hard to follow in his footsteps. Let me also say how fortunate I am to be working with a brilliant executive committee and an energetic, accomplished, and engaged membership. I look forward to working with all of you in the upcoming years, and to continue to fulfill SAS's mission of supporting Armenian studies in all its facets, and promoting the exchange of scholarly ideas among scholars, students, and the community at large," Maranci stated.

Goshgarian also commented on her position, “I am very excited to work with Christina and the entire executive committee. We have big shoes to fill, and I am honored to build upon the foundations of former SAS leadership and attempt to live up to the remarkable standards set by Professor Der Matossian.”

The Society for Armenian Studies is an international body, composed of scholars and students, whose aims are to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, including history, language, literature and social, political and economic questions; to facilitate the exchange of scholarly information pertaining to Armenian studies around the world; and to sponsor panels and conferences on Armenian studies.

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Arts & Culture

A Genocide That Still Haunts: Arda Collins’s *Star Lake*

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

“My grandmother/and great-aunt . . . didn’t go to church/because they had survived the genocide,” writes Arda Collins in “Easter,” a poem in *Star Lake* (The Song Cave, 2022), Collins’s second collection of poems. “I wondered/ if God was around,” muses the little girl seated in the back seat of the car, driving from church on Armenian Easter with her mother and aunt, to “My grandmother/and great-aunt waiting for us at home/with lamb and pilaf.”

It is not too often that one comes across a book that so explicitly evokes the 1915 Genocide, a specifically Armenian tragedy, while it also takes us into a space that transcends it.

Arda Collins writes intimately about her family, survivors of the Armenian Genocide, but she also summons the August wind, the pink and orange sky, the pine tree and the willow tree, images that speak to us all, to reach beyond her personal history:

I remember
my fear yesterday,
swimming across the pond. In the middle
I saw deep water
all around, and nothing
near. I was nowhere.

The speaker in the poems is haunted by her traumatic past. “I never thought I would write so much about my family,” confides Collins. “Late Summer, Late Winter, and Genocide” recalls the 1915 deportations and killings:

Your great-grandmother carried her children
across the desert, your grandmother,
her sister, their brother
who died,
. Chert fossils
from an old ocean scatter in the desert covered over with dirt.
The river is distended
with the bodies of dead Armenians.
Elsewhere, Collins writes of “at least seven Armenian children,/my cousins, who, like me, sprang from the women/driven from their homes/ while their husbands and fathers were seized and murdered.” Her, “The desert is nothing./Corpses/decompose into shadows,” is a direct evocation of the Death March into the desert. Death and ashes are ever-present in the poems. “The sun is death” she writes in “Elegy from Space,” echoing,

August,
no one can do anything about it.
The sunlight is made of sorrow.
There’s a shadow
under the arbor
at the Blessing of the Grapes
church picnic someplace.

While she tries to forget, the persona cannot let go of the memories. She remembers going “with my mother to a church in a nearby town to hear a choir sing Maurice Durufle’s *Requiem*.” She recalls her dying mother’s

see COLLINS, page 17



Michael Sarian Breathes Authenticity Into His Free Jazz

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

NEW YORK — Michael Sarian is a man with a background as diverse as the music he plays, jazz, and the city he calls home now.

Born in Toronto to a Canadian mother and a Romanian-born Armenian father and raised in Buenos Aires, he attended college in Pennsylvania, and currently lives in New York City where he got his graduate music education; he is a native speaker of both English and Spanish.

His musical language touches on all these influences, especially the Latin jazz influence of his earlier career, but in the past several years he has not only delved further into his Armenian identity, but expanded his horizons into Free Jazz, allowing him to express himself with a more authentic voice all his own.

Diverse Roots

Sarian’s father was born in Romania and his grandmother in Istanbul, but her family roots were in Van. As his family fled the Ceausescu regime, most settled in Argentina, but Sarian’s father went to Canada to get a college education and married a Canadian woman. A year after Sarian’s birth, the family joined his father’s relatives in Buenos Aires.

Sarian stated that his family was not too involved in the large Armenian community in Argentina, but like many Armenian children, he was given piano lessons at a young age. In middle school and high school he began to play the trumpet in the school band. Looking for music to listen to that included his chosen instrument, he discovered the jazz of Miles Davis and so many other trumpet masters.

Following his interest in music, he returned to North America, and attended Muhlenberg College, in Allentown, Penn., graduating with a BA in music theory and composition. He then returned to Argentina where he worked as a music teacher in a K-12 school. He didn’t find much of a jazz scene in Buenos Aires, he said, and so, in 2012, he returned to New York to pursue a master’s degree in jazz performance at New York University.

Said Sarin, “The thing about New York, is that there’s a jazz scene, I didn’t find it in Buenos Aires. It’s all here in New York. You see what others are doing and know that it’s a possibility.”

Armenian Connection

In 2012, the Armenian General Benevolent Union’s (AGBU) New York central office created a performing arts department, and for one of their first concerts they reached out to Sarian to play. It was to be a concert of “Armenian Jazz” featuring local musicians along with legendary percussionist-bandleader-composer Arto Tunçboyacıyan.

Sarian began to delve into his Armenian identity and explore Armenian music. After speaking with Hayk Arsenyan, a classical pianist who was the director of the AGBU’s performing arts department, he began interning a few hours a week, and now serves as Performing Arts Coordinator. The department consists of Arsenyan and Sarian, who work together to organize projects like concerts and mini film festivals, as well as the flagship Musical Armenia program.

see JAZZ, page 14

‘Songs of Solomon’ Receives Splendid Response at St. Leon Community Center

By Ruth Bedevian

FAIR LAWN, N.J. — “Empires Fail, Glory Fades, His Music Could Not be Silenced” describes the essence of “Songs of Solomon” which was filmed in Artsakh and Armenia with Armenian actors at the beginning of 2020, before COVID and the 40-Day War.

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan invited three Hollywood luminaries to present film clips and engage in a question-and-answer exchange on October 22. A generous number of trailers were shown which prompted informative discussions and comments. It was explained that the film has not yet been widely released and has been shown to select groups throughout the country which is a common practice in the industry.

Arman Nshanian, the director and a seasoned actor, expressed, “My intent is to draw global attention to Komitas and celebrate his music and contributions and not to replicate a biography of his life.”

Nick Vallelonga, a producer of the film, who is best known for winning two Academy Awards and two Golden Globes for best original Screenplay and Best Picture for the 2018 “Green Book,” joined Nshanian, and Asko Akopyan, also a producer.

The film opens with a scene where Komitas is a child during the time of the Hamidian Massacres (1894-1896). One individual questioned, “In the scene where Komitas is a child, why is he speaking in Armenian? He spoke Turkish and did not learn Armenian until he went to the seminary in Echmiadzin.” Akopyan elaborated that the entire film is in Armenian (with English subtitles) and it was necessary to keep the integrity and authentic quality of the actors’ language; therefore Turkish was not an option. He further explained, “‘Songs of Solomon’ is not a documentary and therefore, directors and screenwriters commonly employ artistic license, being careful to sustain the spirit of the story.”

One visitor reflected on the evening’s film clips and discussions, saying, “I hope ‘Songs of Solomon’ will be viewed by millions of people and will come to know and appreciate our beautiful homeland and history, and most of all feel the resilience of the Armenian people.”

New Jersey State Senator Joseph Lagana was present to render opening remarks and presented a Proclamation to Peter Bonjuklian, Commander of Knights of Vartan, Bakradouny Lodge. He introduced the legislation, SCR.71, in the New Jersey State Senate to officially recognize the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), condemn Turkey and Azerbaijan for their aggression against the peaceful populations of Artsakh and Armenia, and to reaffirm the state’s commitment to recognizing the Armenian Genocide. The resolution passed in June 2021 to an over whelming majority.

ARTS & CULTURE

Michael Sarian Breathes Authenticity Into His Free Jazz

JAZZ, from page 13

Meanwhile, getting to learn about Armenian music and culture significantly affected Sarian's search for his artistic voice. In the Armenian experience, "Everything comes together, like a melting pot — like New York," Sarian says. "It forces you to be honest to what you're creating."

By 2013, Sarian was attempting to find new ways to express himself through jazz music. He decided to look for new sources of inspiration rather than the traditional jazz and pop standards that most musicians in the scene use. "That was when I first started researching Armenian music. I made an arrangement of Komitas, *Der Voghormya*," he says. "It's been really a never-ending well of knowledge of beautiful sounds and culture."

Sarian soon became a proponent of Armenian music and culture to the outside world. "As I discovered more and learned more, and became more connected to who I am in a very, very, big way, it's my mission to include Armenian sounds and Armenian music in everything I do as a musician and as a leader." He speaks of arrangements or jazz interpretations of traditional Armenian pieces like *Dele Yaman* or Komitas' *Chinar Es*.

"It's very important for me as a musician who plays to non-Armenian audiences. I'm not here to give a history lesson, or geopolitics. But I say, 'this is a piece by Sayat-Nova, an 18th century Armenian troubadour, and so on,'" said Sarian.

But much of the classics of Armenian folk music have been interpreted and reinterpreted countless times over the 20th, and now 21st century. "It took me a long time to figure out, because there are so many albums of musicians doing pieces by Komitas. It took me a while to figure out what I could bring to the table."

Sarian states that for similar reasons, he doesn't really enjoy playing or recording traditional jazz standards — the old songs from the '30s and '40s like *All of Me*, *Body and Soul*, and so on, that show up in every pro jazz musician's repertoire as the basis of constant improvisation. Why listen to Sarian play the standards that have already been given definitive recordings by the great musicians of the past, whether in the jazz or Armenian realms?

Yet, Sarian retains a love for melody that is perhaps deep in his Armenian roots. The combination of showcasing classic melodies and the freedom to go far off the beaten path in his improvisations are a hallmark of Sarian's work, especially his latest album, "Living at the End of the World."

Free Jazz

Sarian's early releases, with a septet, were much more Latin-influenced and closer to a big band sound. They were "arranged, through-composed, very different," he says. "I slowly started to think about doing this quartet [that he now works with]."

Aside from Sarian on trumpet and flugelhorn, the group includes Santiago Leibson on piano and keyboard instruments, Marty Kenney on bass, and Nathan Ellman-Bell on drums. Recording engineer Luis Bacque was an integral part of the music-making process.

The first album with the new group was "New Aurora" released in 2020. "It led me to start writing in a different way. I got into 'free jazz.' It's all about listening and creating in the moment. But on the flipside I also like melodies, so I've been writing in a way that's like, I have a melody or a traditional song structure, and then re-improvise. What I do is, here's the melody, providing the song with an aesthetic, then a free jazz section."

Starting a song with a basic melody and eventually entering into an improvisational



section is a basic concept in jazz (and for that matter, in many Middle Eastern styles of music, including Armenian "kef music.") What sets Sarian's work apart is the free jazz element. While traditional jazz (generally) operates by allowing the performers to improvise on top of the chord changes of the song which were already established during the melodic portion, the free jazz which Sarian was drawn to encourages an even more "anything goes" approach. There is no need to stick to a fixed rotation of chord changes over and over until the end of the song. Instead, Sarian allows the opening melody to establish an "aesthetic" or general mood and flavor of the piece, and then "each improvised section in one way or another is going to follow or respect the opening melodic section."

Sarian was inspired in his free jazz ethos by a few influential trumpet players, including Enrico Rava, Tomasz Stanko and Kenny Wheeler. He also cites the Armenian-American drummer Paul Motian as one of the "leaders of the free jazz movement," whose music is "just really, really inspiring." Unfortunately, Sarian never got to meet Motian, who passed away just before his arrival in New York.

The freedom to explore almost anything in a musical way that "free jazz" offers gave Sarian the encourage to try new things. Some of the "weird noises" that the listener will hear on Sarian's new album are things that he figured out how to do while tooting on his newly-acquired trumpet as a child. "It took me till my 30s to think that I can do that [in a serious piece of music]," Sarian says.

Living at the End of the World

Sarian's latest album, "Living at the End of the World," was inspired by Covid. The confinements and chaotic, never-ending situation caused anxiety, but Sarian wanted to spin the story in a hopeful manner. The title track of the album starts with a bluesy shuffle riff reminiscent of swing jazz, to depict the carefree times before Covid began. Then the improvisational section of the song delves into a chaotic world where the Moog synthesizer creates an alien soundscape, before the song returns to the original jazz riff. "It's not that the world is coming to an end, but that we are temporarily inhabiting this space," noted Sarian.

The Armenian segment of the album is found on the very first song, a reinterpretation of Sayat-Nova's classic *Yis Kou Ghimetn Chim Gidi*. (I didn't know your true value). Sarian first heard the melody in a recording by oudist Raffi Wartanian and decided to see "how I could incorporate this piece of music into my repertoire." Of the composition he says "the melody is so beautiful and speaks for itself. For the harmony I messed around a bit and changed some chords. [I wanted to have] it be a part

of what we are presenting musically as a whole." After a free jazz section in the middle of the song, the melody brings the listener back out again, which is the standard format on most of Sarian's recordings.

Armenian melodies are "simple and beautiful and have a lot of meaning on their own," says Sarian. "It gives us a lot of freedom to mess around it without ruining them." He also mentions his unique trumpet tonality on the track, which was likewise inspired by Armenian folk music, stating "there's certain things I can try to emulate that are similar to the duduk, like all the vibrato and airiness."

One of the standout tracks on the album is *Cinta Marina*, which was inspired by the Argentine singer-songwriter Belen Pasqualini. Coming to Sarian with some lyrics, she asked if he would write music to accompany. Somewhat unconventionally, Sarian

decided to present the lyrics in more of a spoken-word format with music behind it, though occasionally the vocalist goes into a melodic passage. The song was performed on the album by Chilean singer Camila Meza, who also plays guitar on the track.

Music Business

Sarian mentioned that the music business is interesting these days, it's "a bit of a saturated market," he said, because "everyone can release music whenever they want, but we are all kind of competing for the same audience." Bandcamp has replaced the traditional record store, while streaming services like Spotify have largely replaced radio. For this reason, the new album is only available on the Bandcamp app for the first few months of the release. It is also available for preorder on vinyl. After a few months, it will be available on streaming services as well.

Sarian has been touring and is headed to Rochester, Buffalo, and Toronto in the near future. He often hires local rhythm sections (piano, bass, and drums) rather than bring his band with him. This means that the music turns out completely different every time — which is kind of the goal of jazz anyway. "It's also forced me to have a really open mind as to what my music can sound like and can be," he said.

As to his future plans? "Hustling, keep writing music, record again — I'd love to do a live album with the group." He has an album coming out in February as well as a current solo project, "After the Rain," with trumpet and effects. "I'm trying to be honest to who I am as a musician," Sarian said. What he's trying to show with his music in broader terms is that "avant-garde can be accessible. The album is half free jazz, camouflaged with melodies and harmonies."

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1901 N. Allen Ave., Altadena, CA 91001

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ARTS & CULTURE

Hagopian Companies Support Young Rug Designers

DETROIT — The Hagopian Family of Companies continues to support and be a part of the communities where they do business.

This year, the Hagopian World of Rugs and the College for Creative Studies (CCS) is celebrating the 34th Annual Student Rug Design Competition. This project was started to mentor students in the fields of design. The competition gives students the chance to compete for scholarship moneys provided by Hagopian and add to their portfolios of accomplishments. In addition, the winning design is made into a rug and displayed at the annual CCS Student Exhibition. The competition is open to all CCS undergrad and grad students. This project enjoys the title of “longest running collaboration” with the College for Creative Studies.

The 2022-23 Competition kick-off meeting, held at the Birmingham Hagopian retail store in October, was attended by the Hagopian contingent Edmond Hagopian, COO and Suzanne Hagopian, Exec. V.P., and CCS participants Professor Jeremy Noonan, Section/Head, Dept. of Fibers and Textiles; Professor Don Kilpatrick, Department Chair Illustration; and Matt Chung from the CCS Office for Partnerships, to determine a design theme. Each year the group searches for ideas that are thought provoking and will require some research and creativity in translating an idea into a functional work of art. This year’s theme will be for students to design a rug that is a contemporary interpretation of Dada, Surrealism or a mash-up of both.

The Hagopian Family of Companies are long-time supporters of the cultural arts in metro Detroit. In addition to this project, they host the Detroit Chamber Winds “Night Notes” series in their Birmingham showroom bringing fine music to local venues at an affordable cost; and, Hagopian World of Rugs / Hagopian Cleaning Services is a Major Benefactor to the Detroit Institute of Arts.



Winners and participants from 2021-22 Competition with Edmond Hagopian, Annamalis Sharp (2nd Place), Camille Guellec (1st with the rug reflecting her design based on an “Urban Cottage’ theme behind group), Lela Hood (3rd), Suzanne Hagopian, Don Tuski, CCS

A Story of Unlikely Friends Translated for Armenian Children

LOS ANGELES — William Steig (1907-2003) is considered one of the finest authors and illustrators in juvenile literature. Until now, the works of Steig, the recipient of the National Book Award, the *New York Times* Book Review Best Illustrated Book of the Year and Outstanding Book of the Year, had not been translated into Armenian.

Translator Karenn Chutjian Presti fell in love with *Amos & Boris*, the story of a mouse and a whale whose paths cross and who form a profound adventure-laden friendship, when reading it to her own children.

She said, “Steig takes on difficult subject matter and is never patronizing toward his young readers. It is impossible to resist his endearing illustrations and lovable characters, yet his language is rich and dense and a wonderful challenge to translate.”

Dr. Presti received the translation and publication rights from Steig’s family and undertook the project for free and without any monetary grants. “I want Armenian children and their parents to be able to revel in the language and these lovely illustrations,” she said.

Presti was contractually limited to publishing only 150 copies, 10 percent of which sold on the first day. “I’m thrilled if they sell on the



open market, but my hope is that Armenian schools will stock copies in their libraries so that many children will enjoy them.” Dr. Presti will donate copies to the local public libraries. In California, the books are stocked at Sardarabad and Abril Books.

Tigran Hamasyan – A Piano Virtuoso Who Defies the Rules

WILLIAMSBURG, Brooklyn — At 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 9, music enthusiasts entered the unobtrusive but historically classic Opera House on Berry Street. The beautiful chandeliers, original architecture from 1911 and a large stage with details that exude the grandeur of the 1800s create an aura perfect for immersing oneself in the music of the star of the night, Tigran Hamasyan. The space is filling up quickly and everyone is eager for the man of the night to get on stage and put us in a musical trance.

Hamasyan is an Armenian jazz pianist and composer. His work crosses boundaries between jazz and Armenian folkloric music from his native Armenia. He’s one of the most remarkable and distinctive jazz-meets-rock-meets-classical pianists of his generation, which explains why there wasn’t a single empty seat left by the time it hit 8 p.m. And true to his reputation, he had the audience in the palm of his hands.



Hamasyan was born in 1987 in Gyumri, Armenia. His current day success and esteemed reputation stems from the age of three, when he started playing piano. He was enrolled in music at age six and discovered classic jazz at age 10. Tigran studied for 10 years at the Tchaikovsky Specialized Music Academy in Armenia, accompanied by classical jazz studies. By age 18, Hamasyan recorded his first album, “World Passion.” His music has evolved over the years but his improvisational and valiant approach, striving for his compositions to feel classic and eternal, has been a constant.

Hamasyan arrives on stage and everyone is cheering with excitement. Accompanying him is Matt Brewer on the bass and Jeremy Dutton on drums. The trio are here to perform Hamasyan’s

10th studio album, “StandArt,” as part of his seven-city North American tour. Incredible energy and rhythmic flow exude from each musician, pouring all their energy into each set. The contrast between the piano and the bass and drums gives the music a perfect harmony of tension. To think it couldn’t get any better, the show ended with a special guest playing the saxophone. The quartet brought an electric joy and masterful jazz improvisation to the stage, an experience the crowd is sure to remember.

Produced by Hamasyan, “StandArt” includes songs from the 1920s through the 1950s by Charlie Parker, Richard Rodgers, Jerome Kern, Elmo Hope, and others, plus a piece Hamasyan improvised with Brewer, Brown, and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire with guest appearances by saxophonists Joshua Redman and Mark Turner. “StandArt” is Hamasyan’s first release of American music, having previously only released original compositions and traditional Armenian music.

—SK

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Harissa-Spiced Lamb with Glazed Eggplant and Pistachio Raita by Chef Daniel Bouloud

FRESNO — American Pistachio Growers (APG) is a non-profit trade association representing over 800 grower members in California, Arizona, and New Mexico. These states represent 100 percent of the domestic commercial pistachio production. Headquartered in Fresno, APG is governed by a democratically elected board of directors who are growers, and is funded entirely by growers and independent processors with the shared goal of increasing global awareness of nutritious, American-grown pistachios.

Chef Daniel Boulud

Originally from Lyon, France, Chef Daniel Boulud is widely celebrated as one of America’s leading culinary authorities. Since arriving in New York City in 1982, he has continually evolved his cuisine and expanded his reach to properties across the United States, as well as Toronto, Montreal, Dubai, Singapore, and The Bahamas. His culinary empire has brought him many accolades, yet his inspiration remains grounded in the rhythm of the seasons. From his flagship, DANIEL, to his properties across the globe, Chef Boulud’s signature remains the contemporary appeal he brings to soulful dishes rooted in the French tradition.

Watch the video and cook along with Chef Boulud as he creates this recipe, Harissa-Spiced Lamb with Glazed Eggplant and Pistachios Raita. For dessert, he makes Pistachio Crusted Pain Perdue Blackberry Chantilly. See: <https://americanpistachios.org/cookalong>

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 lamb chops
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Harissa spice mix
- 1 tablespoon chopped mint
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1/2 cup grapeseed oil, as needed
- 1 cup pistachios, crushed

PISTACHIO ROMESCO:

- 1 red bell pepper
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 red onion, sliced
- 2 Roma tomatoes, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 4 Piquillo peppers (canned)
- 1/4 cup sourdough croutons
- 1/2 cup pistachios, crushed
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Smoked Spanish paprika
- Salt and pepper

GLAZED EGGPLANT:

- 2 Japanese eggplants
- 3 tablespoons sherry vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- Olive oil, as needed
- Salt and pepper

PISTACHIO RAITA:

- 1 cup thick Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup cucumber, peeled, seeded, and grated
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled, germ removed and finely grated 1/2 lemon, zested

- 2 tablespoons mint, chopped
- 2 tablespoons pistachios, crushed
- Salt and pepper, as needed

PREPARATION:

Combine the Harissa spice mix and herbs with the grapeseed oil and blend using a hand blender until it forms a paste. Pour over the lamb and refrigerate for 1-2 hours or overnight.

Slice the eggplant into 1-inch slices.

Crush the pistachios using a pot until they are finely chopped. Reserve.

Over an open flame, blacken the skin of the red bell pepper. Transfer the pepper to a bowl and cover it with plastic, steam at room temperature for 10 minutes. Peel the black skin from the red pepper and trim away the seeds.

Thinly slice the red onion, Piquillo peppers, 2 cloves of garlic and combine in a bowl. Roughly dice the tomatoes and combine in the same bowl. Reserve.

Peel, seed and grate the cucumber. Toss it with 1 teaspoon of salt and rest at room temperature for 10 minutes to extract the liquid. Squeeze dry the grated cucumber and transfer to a small bowl.

Mix the Pistachio Raita, then combine all ingredients in the bowl with the grated cucumber, season with salt, lemon zest and pepper to taste. Mix in the crushed pistachios and chopped mint.

PREPARATION:

For the Pistachio Romesco: Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large sauté pan over high heat. Add the onion, tomatoes, garlic, and Piquillo peppers. Sauté until the onions are tender and the liquid has evaporated; about 4 minutes. Transfer peppers and cooked vegetables to a blender with the croutons, pistachios, and vinegar. Blend until smooth and while running, pour in the remaining olive oil until emulsified. Season, to taste, with paprika, salt and pepper.

For the Glazed Eggplant: Heat a thin layer of olive oil in a large sauté pan over high heat. Add eggplant in a single layer (you may need to do this in batches) and sear until golden brown on both sides. Reduce heat to medium and deglaze using the sherry vinegar and honey. Bring to a simmer until reduced to a glaze.

For the Lamb Chops: When ready to serve, preheat a grill to medium-high heat. Season the marinated lamb with salt and pepper and then grill the lamb until it is cooked to your desired temperature (about 5 minutes for medium rare). Remove from the grill and let rest for a few minutes. Brush some Romesco Sauce on each side of each chop and dip them in the reserved crushed pistachios to coat them.

Assembly:

Spoon some Romesco sauce onto each plate and drag a spoon across it to make a well. Place 4 slices of glazed eggplant over the sauce and sprinkle some toasted pistachios on top. Divide the lamb chops between the plates and serve the Pistachio Raita on the side.

Cooking with the Pros

Join chef-instructors from the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in this on-line exploration of pistachios’ potential. Assisted by acclaimed French pastry chef Jean-Yves Charon, the chefs will demonstrate how to prepare cakes, confections, macarons, gelato, and even an unusual guacamole with pistachios. The accompanying text, videos, and chef-tested recipes will give you the resources to dive more deeply on your own. To boost the craveability of your pastries and confections, reach for pistachios. Among nuts, they’re the style leader, the one that makes any creation more fashion forward. Pistachio is the flavor of the moment—in gelato, in biscotti, and in the biggest pastry trend from Paris: the macaron. Around the country, patrons at wine bars and craft-brew taprooms are enjoying pistachios roasted with contemporary seasonings like smoked salt and pimentón. Today America leads the world in pistachio production—both in quantity and quality. With California-grown pistachios so prevalent, you can give imported nuts a pass. With convenient formats like shelled kernels, you can easily experiment with making pistachio paste and pistachio flour. For Cooking with the Pros, go to: <https://americanpistachios.org/food-professionals>

American Pistachio Growers are nuts about snacking -- follow us for tips, tricks, and ideas for healthier ways to make the Love Nut your everyday, go-to snack. Research suggests that pistachios have numerous benefits and may help to maintain good health, support an active lifestyle and reduce the risk of nutrition-related diseases. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recognizes that tree nuts, including pistachios, can be part of a heart healthy diet: scientific evidence suggests but does not prove that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts, such as pistachios, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may lower the risk of heart disease. For nutritional information, go to: <https://americanpistachios.org/nutrition-and-health>

Photo and recipes courtesy of American Pistachio Growers

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<https://vimeo.com/americanpistachios>
<https://www.pinterest.com/pistachiopower/>



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

DECEMBER 1 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) offers an evening of literature and music dedicated to the 125th anniversary of the birth of the famous Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents on Thursday, December 1 at the TCA Beshgeturian Center at 1901 N. Allen Avenue, Altadena, Calif. at 7:30 p.m. This Armenian-language event, part of the TCA 75th anniversary celebrations this year, is sponsored by the TCA Los Angeles Chapter. Admission is free and there will be refreshments.

DECEMBER 4 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) is celebrating its 75th anniversary at the TCA Beshgeturian Center in Altadena, Calif. on Sunday, Dec. 4 under the aegis of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, with the participation of the Central Board of TCA of the United States and Canada, and the presidency of Nazaret Kevonian. Keynote speaker is Dr. Simon Simonian. There is an Armenian-language cultural program and a buffet. 5 p.m. at the Beshgeturian Center, 1901 N. Allen Avenue. To reserve tickets email tca75thanniversary@gmail.com or muralala@gmail.com.

JANUARY 28 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter presents “An Evening of Comedy III featuring Harout Soghomonian” on Saturday, at 8 p.m. at Phoenixia Restaurant in Glendale. Special guest appearance by Antic and guest appearance by Tsoghig Samuelian. Admission \$100. For reservations call or text 818.730.1100. No tickets will be sold at the door.

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 5 — Saint James Men’s Club dinner meeting, Guest Speaker Police Chief of Belmont James MacIsaac, the topic will cover the changes in policing over the past few years, with a focus on the George Floyd murder, police reform and the challenges filling vacancies. He is a graduate of the prestigious FBI National Academy and has completed the Senior Executives in State & Local Government course at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. 6:15pm mezze / 7pm Losh Kebab and Kheyma dinner. \$20 per dinner, new members welcome. Saint James 465 Mt. Auburn Street Watertown.

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. CAN-DLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY. Sunday at 4:45pm. “Boston’s Newest Holiday Tradition” Hot Chocolate & Festive Cookies. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

NEW YORK

DECEMBER 10, 11 — A Holly Jolly Big Bad Armo Show coproduced by Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater New York, written and created by Lory Taouloulian, Dec. 10 8 p.m. and Dec. 11 2:30 p.m. at Symphony Space Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 West Broadway at 95th Street, NYC, \$75 at symphonyspace.org, call (212) 864-5400.

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

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

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

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

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”

A Genocide That Still Haunts: Arda Collins’s *Star Lake*

COLLINS, from page 13

face in “total repose” on the hospital bed. “My mother’s face, I love it,” is haunting. A tone of sadness pervades the poems. “Where is my mother?” echoes throughout the collection:

For my whole childhood
I feared
sunny days in January
The orange light
told me
this is my mother’s death
I tried to forget.

Even as an adult, the persona fails to see the logic in her life and remains a stranger in a world “familiar but not known.” What’s inside her makes her grieve. However, the world she lives in is far from being a morbid world. She goes through her daily life, driving around, watching TV shows, with love present in its various manifestations. “F.P., I am in love with you beyond anything I can imagine . . . though I cannot imagine who you are,” she tells “you” in the prose poem, “Wild Love.” The poem ends with, “One day, there was a man, another man, and another man. They are my sons. Their father came out of the ocean and I said to him, ‘I love them with wild love.’”

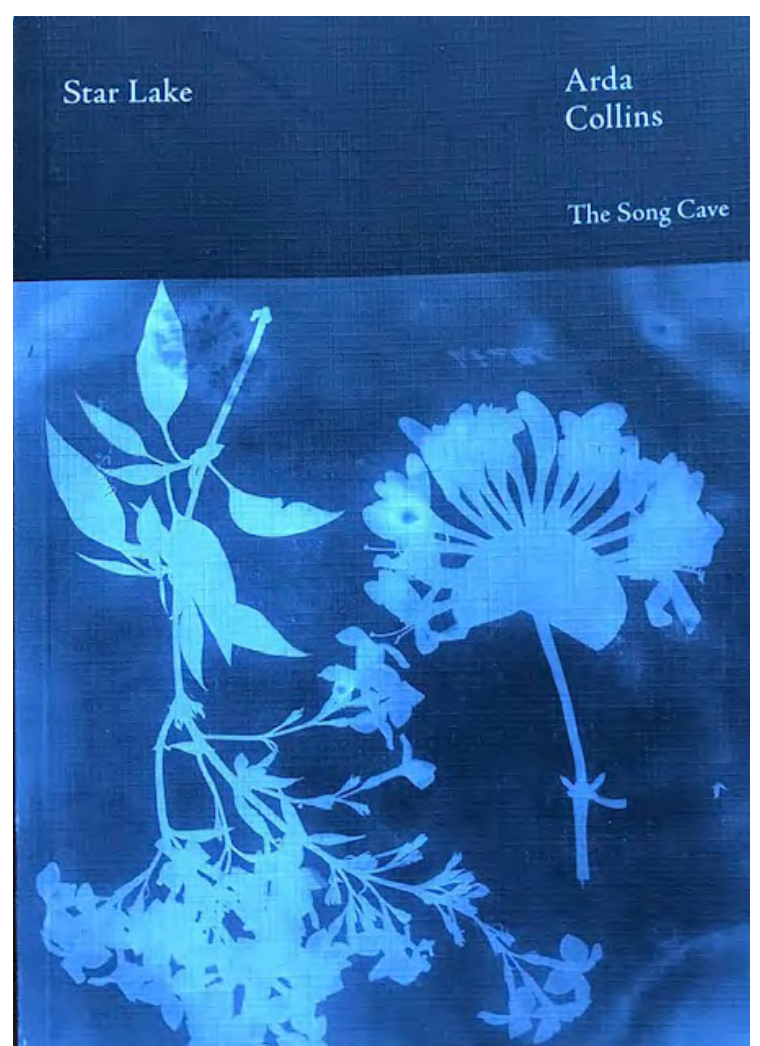
The slim volume concludes with “Easter,” a classic symbol of resurrection and rebirth, but there is nothing typical about the poem. No easy answers are offered, no suggestions or hints even as to how the trauma of loss can be dealt with. The question implicit throughout, “Does one ever come to terms with the loss?” remains a question. Gone is the mother whose

expression, as she was driving, showed the little girl sitting in the back, “that she was both asking a question and knew she was the answer to it.”

Collins’s Armenian mother’s tragic past is an inextricable part of the poet’s consciousness, and she writes about it boldly. Yet, *Star Lake* is not about the genocide. The poems in this second collection are the poet’s attempt to communicate an inner reality to make some sense of “the incomprehensibility of it all.” As the speaker exists primarily in her consciousness, reaching into her inner pain may well be the path to enlightening “my black mind.”

In 2008, Collins won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award for *It Is Daylight*, her first collection of poems. The collection was the pick of 2020 Nobel Prize in Literature Laureate Louise Glück, as the judge of the prestigious competition. Glück wrote the forward to the collection, which was published by the Yale University Press in 2009. What is interesting for us here is that, with *Star Lake*, the celebrated poet unwittingly puts her mother’s Armenian heritage out there for the world to reckon with, a recognition many Armenians believe is key to the advancement of our cause. “We need the world to understand our pain and know our demands,” asserts celebrated writer Leon Surmelian in response to the accusations directed against him for giving up the Armenian language (in which he had created some of his most beautiful poems) to write in English. Surmelian firmly believes that the artist prepares the ground for the statesman who has the capability to set things right.

With her second collection of poems, Arda Collins makes her creativity part of the beauty of being Armenian.





COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

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EDITORIAL

Will Recent Pro-Armenian Measures in West Add up to Anything?



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

There have been pro-Armenian measures in the West recently. Is this a political breakthrough, a false start or something else? We will find out in due course as we analyze trends and developments in the South Caucasus.

It was extremely frustrating for the Armenian side to see the international community's indifference during the 44-Day War in 2020, which isolated Armenia. We must also remember the cavalier attitude of the Trump Administration toward Armenia, which resulted in territorial losses and many deaths. Almost 5,000 young men between the ages of 18 and 22 perished, which was felt doubly in a country struggling to retain a stable demographic profile.

Gradually, after the war, as the international community began to communicate with Armenia, the message to Nikol Pashinyan's administration was that Yerevan has to lower the bars regarding its expectations so that the international community could lend a helping hand for the beleaguered country to recover. Lowering the bar meant for Yerevan to reconcile with the fact that for all practical intents and purposes, Karabakh was lost. It was not enough to contend with the loss of Karabakh, when Azerbaijan began invading the sovereign territory of Armenia itself. As of this date, Azerbaijan's forces are occupying 125 square kilometers of Armenia's soil.

It seems that Azerbaijani aggression has hit a turning point which has enabled the international community to react. A series of powerful statements emanated from Europe and the United States in the past couple of weeks.

Time will show whether those are genuine and what impact they may have on Azerbaijan's intentionally cruel and belligerent course.

The illusive peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan is being dragged from Brussels to Sochi and from Washington to Prague, with no end in sight.

Before delving into the details of that peace treaty, it behooves us to view that crisis within a broader storm, which may render the Armenia and Azerbaijan standoff irrelevant. President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, buoyed by his success over Yerevan, is extending his territorial claims far beyond Armenia, right to Iran, as his speech in Samarkand revealed last week. Aliyev's ambitions are being fueled by the new developments in the region. Angry accusations have been flying across the borders, between Baku and Tehran and Ankara. Thus far, the gunpowder in the region remains dry. However, the new (and former) Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu's return onto the scene may trigger dramatic changes in the political landscape of the region. It is left to be seen if President Joe Biden turns out stronger than President Obama in containing the hawkish posture of the Israeli leader.

Short of strong-arming by Washington, the coalition of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Israel may act against Iran, particularly when Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is itching for some foreign adventures and victory to boost his sagging domestic popularity before 2023's presidential and parliamentary elections.

Barring such an eruption, the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty may continue to dominate the stage in the South Caucasus. Thus, the intervention of the major powers may affect the course of those negotiations.

Until recently, both pro-government and opposition quarters had been criticizing the Pashinyan administration for its lack of initiative in foreign policy. But no more. Armenia's government has been engaged in many diplomatic missions, for better or for worse. It has been diversifying its foreign policy and even taking timid steps to break away from Russian political bondage. And it seems those efforts are paying off, as certain

favorable trends are moving Armenia's way.

One of the first deals post-war was made with India, to rebuild Armenia's defense forces. Other developments are on the political level, which need careful nurturing to yield dividends.

On the legislative front, Spain's parliament fired the first salvo when members refused to ratify an agreement with Azerbaijan regarding exchanging information and intelligence, citing as a cause Baku's aggression against Armenia. Then came the resolution in the French Senate, ratified on November 16, with a vote of 265-1, which coincided with the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee's hearings on November 15, led by Chairman Robert Menendez. There was very little doubt left about their interconnectedness.

The French Senate resolution included all the issues which Armenia had been seeking for the international community to redress and condemn Azerbaijan for. It called on the French executive branch to take action on all those issues: the unconditional retreat of Azerbaijan's forces from occupied Armenian territory, respecting Armenia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, repatriation of the prisoners of war, an end to Azerbaijan's destruction of Armenian monuments, application of sanctions against Azerbaijan and calling on its European partners to do the same, opening a humanitarian office in Karabakh, contributing to the defense capabilities of Armenia, and reaffirming the need to recognize the Republic of Nagorno

Karabakh and carrying out negotiations on that basis. Last but not least, the measure asked for international peacekeeping forces to be stationed in Karabakh, which would certainly hit a nerve with the Kremlin.

Azerbaijan reacted furiously to the French Senate resolution, and its parliament issued an angry press release blaming French senators with "bias and ignorance."

On November 16, the chargé d'affaires at the French Embassy, Julien Le Lan, was summoned to

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry and handed a letter of protest with regard to the resolution.

It is interesting that when the French legislature formulates a passionate statement on a political scene, the executive branch receives that act with a cool head and does not react immediately. Thus, Olivier Becht, France's trade minister, who was representing the country's foreign minister at the Senate debate, did not raise any objections, and neither did he indicate whether the government would take any actions. His only comment was, "No country in the world does more to support Armenia."

We have to wait and see what that statement will translate into.

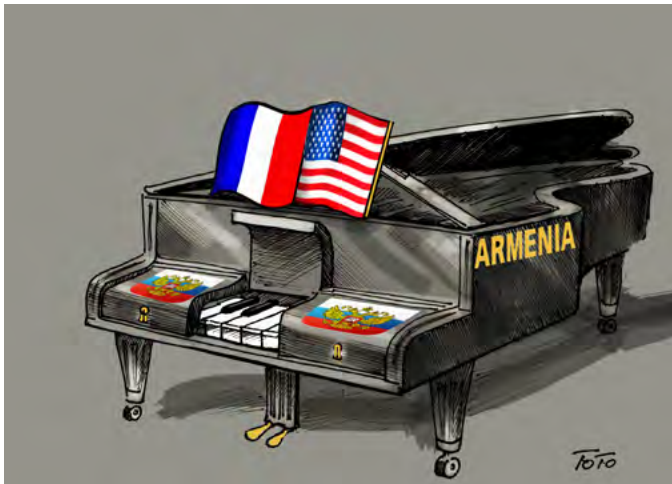
Senator Menendez, in his turn, raised certain pertinent issues at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's hearing, questioning Karen Donfried, the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, and Phillip Reeker, the senior advisor for Caucasus negotiations from the State Department, who is the representative of the US on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, if and when the group comes together again.

Menendez first qualified the Karabakh issue as a humanitarian crisis and then added, "My frustration with the State Department is that they always say, 'well, both sides should refrain.' But when there is an aggressor, we should call out the aggressor. ... It is Azerbaijan."

He also criticized waiving Article 907 of the Freedom Support Act routinely, when Azerbaijan fails to play by the rules imposed on it by the US.

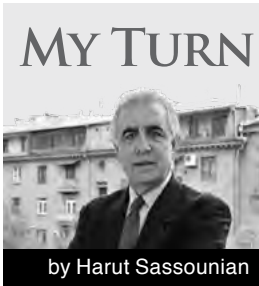
Most of the time, the representatives of the executive branch kept quiet, in rare cases answering in equivocal statements, which frustrated the senator, who in his concluding remarks stated that "It is totally unacceptable that they can't respond with specificity what kind of humanitarian assistance the US is providing to the victims."

continued on next page





COMMENTARY



MY TURN
Armenians Need to Assess French Senate’s Positive Resolution Cool-Headedly

by Harut Sassounian

Throughout their long history, Armenians have always expected that some foreign power would rescue them from their enemies. Over the centuries, they hoped for assistance from the Romans, Byzantines, Russians, French, Americans, and now Iranians. But, no one has ever come to save them. One would think that after such a long string of disappointments, Armenians would finally learn the lesson that no one will rescue them. They need to save themselves.

Given such unrealistic expectations, Armenians keep going from one potential rescuer to another, attempting to find anyone that would assist them. No one helped save the Armenians when Ottoman Turkey was committing genocide against them; no one saved them when the survivors returned to Cilicia only to be attacked and killed by Ataturk’s armies; no one helped them in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s when Azeris were massacring Armenians in Artsakh; and no one helped Armenians when Azeris with the support of Jihadist terrorists, Israel and Turkey conquered most of Artsakh, killing and maiming thousands of Armenian soldiers and civilians.

After all of these disappointing experiences, Armenians were hoping that Russia would step in and save Artsakh. When that didn’t happen, Armenians loudly complained that Russia had betrayed them. Armenians kept demanding that the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) protect Armenia from repeated Azeri encroachments on its borders.

Armenians don’t seem to understand that each nation’s priority is to defend its own national interest, not that of Armenia. No one is obliged to help Armenia, even when a treaty of mutual defense is signed, which is viewed as a mere “a piece of paper.” Rather than abandoning their unrealistic expectations, Armenians have now turned to France and the United States hoping they would come to their rescue!

It is encouraging that in recent months Armenia signed contracts with India to purchase a large number of missiles and artillery. Finally, the Armenian Government is realizing that it needs to defend the country rather than rely on the mercy of others.

Last week, Armenians around the world were elated that the French Senate adopted a pro-Armenian resolution. However, Armenians should neither exaggerate nor minimize the significance of this resolution. The French Armenian community has carried out commendable lobbying activities for many years to create such a sympathetic atmosphere about Armenians and Armenia. That is the main reason why this resolution was adopted by the French Senate with the near unanimous vote of 295 in favor and one against.

The comprehensive French resolution strongly condemned Azerbaijan’s invasion of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia and demanded:

- The immediate withdrawal of Azeri forces from Armenia;
- The release of all Armenian prisoners of war held by Baku since the 2020 war;
- The preservation of Armenian cultural and religious monuments;
- That the French government with the United Nations Security Council refer Azerbaijan’s aggression to the International Criminal Court;
- That France sanctions Azerbaijan, seize the assets of its leaders, and place an embargo on the importation of Azeri oil and gas;
- The establishment of a French humanitarian office in Artsakh;
- The strengthening of the defense capability of Armenia;
- The deployment of an interposition force under the aegis of the international community;
- The recognition of the Nagorno Karabagh (Artsakh) Republic;
- That France ensures Azerbaijan engages in peaceful negotiation with Armenia to establish a lasting peace.

Azerbaijan reacted harshly and condemned the French Senate for adopting this resolution. By taking counter-measures, Azerbaijan risks disrupting its diplomatic and economic relations with France. However, for this non-binding resolution to have any effect, it must be adopted by the French National Assembly and backed by the President and Government of France.

Armenians need to have a cool-headed assessment of the French Senate resolution. They should not expect France to save Artsakh or Armenia. They need to continue developing Armenia’s military so they can defend the country’s borders, while welcoming the assistance of any country, without having any unrealistic expectations. Remember that the French Senate and Parliament adopted resolutions after the 2020 war, urging the French government to recognize the Artsakh Republic, which did not materialize. This is not surprising as Armenia itself does not recognize the independence of Artsakh. To avoid further disappointments, Armenians need to view the French Senate resolution as an important moral and diplomatic support, but not a military one.

Another message of support for Armenia and Artsakh came this week when 120 prominent celebrities and intellectuals issued a joint statement in the French Le Figaro Magazine, including Claudia Cardinale, Gerard Chaliand, Costa-Gavras, Alain Delon, Bernard-Henri Levy, Yves Terson, etc. They wrote: “More than a century after the perpetration of the genocide of Armenians by the Ottoman leaders in 1915, the same people are once again victims of two authoritarian regimes which, in Baku as in Ankara, provoke inter-ethnic hatred to endow their unchallenged power with a bloody new trophy....”

It is now up to the Armenian Government and Armenians around the world to see to it that the French Senate resolution and the statement of the 120 celebrities are used to provide additional support for Armenians in Armenia and Artsakh.

from previous page

Another little-noticed event took place in Djerba, Tunisia, where Pashinyan handed the presidency of the International Organization of Francophonie from Armenia to Tunisia. He was also able to insert Armenia’s position into the final communique of the assembly, against all odds.

The most recent international forum to be held on Armenia’s turf is the annual conference of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), whose members are arriving in Yerevan on November 23. Armenia has been frustrated by that organization’s response its problems. The fundamental principle of the CSTO is to defend the territorial integrity of its members, whereas the group has been qualifying the loss of 125 square kilometers of Armenian territory to Azerbaijan as a “border dispute.” After much debate, finally, “helping Armenia” was placed on the organization’s agenda in Yerevan.

Although Azerbaijan is not a member of the CSTO, Aliyev has already fired a pre-emptive salvo, stating that Azerbaijan has more friends in the CSTO than Armenia. His statement was justified on November 9, as Belarus and Kyrgyzstan congratulated him on his victory in the second anniversary of the “patriotic war” of 2020. The paper tiger of Belarus — Putin’s alter ego — Alexander Lukashenko, repeatedly has insulted Armenia and Pashinyan in the CSTO forum and publicly stated that “it is not CSTO’s business to deal with Armenia’s grievances.” On other occasions, he has stated that “Aliyev is our friend,” while who “needs Armenia.”

Understandably, Lukashenko and Putin will face a resentful public in Armenia, which will call on Pashinyan to quit the CSTO structure.

Because of these intense diplomatic activities, there is an air of optimism in Armenia. But more experienced pundits have been cautioning the public to take a more realistic approach for a number of reasons.

- In the case of the French Senate resolution and the US Foreign Relations Committee hearings, all the statements are at best non-binding recommendations to the executive branch, which most of the time practice realpolitik, running counter even to the basic principles of that respective state, rendering as a mockery all proselytizing on human rights and democracy.
- Despite all these international condemnations, Aliyev continues to bomb Armenia’s borders, because it is encouraged and allowed by Russia. A desperate Putin is bogged down in a Ukraine war it cannot win easy, and now cannot face off against Aliyev and thus he makes his compromises at Armenia’s expense.
- There is also an unspoken factor: the issue of Israel, the protégé of the West, which uses Azerbaijan’s territory as a military spring board for a possible action against Iran. Azerbaijan is Israel’s friend and an enemy of Iran. Armenia happens to be Iran’s friend, a pariah nation for the West.

Once we figure out this political jigsaw puzzle, we can find out why all the political noises in the West end up in an echo chamber.

Armenians Must Awake From Delusional Comfort And Build a Mini-Israel

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian C.M.
Special to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator/Abaka

IT IS HIGH TIME for Armenians across the globe to engage in serious analysis of the present geopolitical status of Armenia and Artsakh in order to try to make a realistic projection of the short- and long-term future.

A bird’s eye view of the last few years’ startling developments must begin with the fateful 44-day war that led to a disastrous conclusion, followed by an overwhelming political whirlwind that appears to have taken hold of our country. The unprecedented intensity of challenges encountered during the following months have created an environment where gradually the general population, and even the elite, appear to have become politically desensitized and ready to accept any future, short of the sad alternative of physically leaving the homeland in search of greener pastures in distant lands.

A dispassionate Armenian observer would necessarily admit that based on the information currently accessible to the general public, it is impossible to rationally identify any path that is currently being followed that would lead to a promising, let alone optimal, future for Armenia. On the contrary, Armenia and Artsakh face a realistic threat to their very existence.

If this is the case, then we must admit that the current situation is potentially catastrophic. Yet we must realize that it is not impossible nor too late for preventive steps to be taken, and, therefore, such steps must be taken as soon as possible.

Armenians, both within and outside Armenia, better wake up! No conscientious Armenian has the right to remain in a bliss of indifference when our multimillennial nation is at such a fateful critical juncture.

Before continuing, it is imperative to demonstrate that this article is sounding a legitimate alarm rather than initiating an unjustified panic.

Admittedly, most casual visitors today to Armenia return overly impressed and even overwhelmed by the apparently vibrant life they witness in Yerevan. Nightlife is glittering and restaurants are overbooked. Modern new buildings rise everywhere, while the economy is said to have grown at an unprecedented rate. Several international technology and trade conventions are being held in Yerevan, and finally, the recent

see DELUSION, page 20



Armenians Must Awake from Delusional Comfort and Build a Mini-Israel

DELUSION, from page 19

Global Armenia meeting brought together some 600 Armenian individuals from all over the world, all ostensibly full of ideas and good intentions to serve Armenia.

On the political scene, feverish and often illogical activity at the highest levels is taking place, with Armenia's representatives meeting with important international leaders of both Western countries and Eastern neighbors in such incompatible political nerve centers as Moscow, Brussels, Sochi, Paris and Washington, one after the other in a relatively short period of time.

While Armenia seems to be at the center of such intense international political attention, aggressive Azerbaijani incursions are unceasing at the borders of Armenia and Artsakh. In fact, the tone of Azerbaijani rhetoric, with consistent support by Turkey, is at its highest level of belligerence, nothing short of where it stood just before the 44-day war. For some unexplained reason, Azerbaijanis are not intimidated by even the most direct high-level messages of condemnation from the US, France or the European Union. As for the normally expected deterrent of "our ally Russian peace-keeping forces," it is effectively inexistant. The latter have conveniently and consistently adopted the treacherous technique of openly "looking the other way."

Given this overview, Armenian authorities should certainly continue to pursue all the diplomatic avenues at their disposal, no matter how effective or ineffective the outcomes. However, when it comes down to the question of whether Armenia can be protected against a sudden and brutal Azerbaijani invasion, certainly neither our authorities nor any Armenian individual should be under the illusion that when Aliyev's forces cross Armenia's or Artsakh's borders, equipped with the most advanced

lethal arms they continuously buy with the support of their generous military budget, either Russian guns or Western or NATO forces will stop them before they reach the heart of Yerevan, which Aliyev has shamelessly and repeatedly claimed to belong to Azerbaijan.

Is this darkest yet realistic perspective not enough yet for Armenia to wake up and immediately engage in the overdue intense national effort of building its own independent defense system with the highest quality equipment and greatest numbers possible? This must take unconditional precedence over any other activities.

This implies Armenia and Armenians, wherever they live, must confront a formidable and highly taxing challenge for an unpredictably great number of years. The good news, however, is that there is at least one example as a precedent of a nation which has met an almost identical challenge in the past, and brilliantly succeeded in overcoming it, right after it achieved its independence. And it certainly has not been easy for it either!

You must have guessed it. Israel was in a much more precarious position in 1948 at the wake of its independence. And yet, we all know where it is now. I would certainly not suggest that we repeat their feat. On the other hand, we have all the reasons to expect and demand that Armenia tries to emulate and become at the very least a mini-Israel, provided of course, that Armenians truly and seriously commit to pursue their own nation-saving effort with a resolve similar to that of what has been the case of young Israel and the international Jewish community in and after 1948. This resolve still remains almost the same, some 75 years later.

Fellow Armenians around the world, we better realize that no nation on this planet

ever receives a pass for a free meal.

The current leader of Armenia himself, PM Nikol Pashinyan, just like Ben Gurion in 1948, has no choice but to put this issue at the top of his agenda. Ben Gurion is said to have gathered in 1948 a team of some dozen or more Jewish leaders in a secluded location in Israel's mostly desert countryside, and bluntly informed them that he will not let them go before they come up with a plan to build a secure nation called Israel. Pashinyan must do the same – and he is in a much better position today than Ben Gurion in 1948.

The Global Armenia meeting was a great show. However, it is certainly not where such an effort can originate.

The brain power and knowhow certainly exists in Armenia proper and in the diaspora. The task to scan the database and discreetly put together a national strategy agency must be headed by no other than Pashinyan himself, with the help of a small core of key personalities, irrespective of their political orientation, in order to underline the vital national importance of this task. This must be planned even better than his trips to Moscow, Paris and Washington. We would like to believe that Pashinyan is able to undertake this task, in which case the great majority of the Armenian nation will certainly back him, irrespective of today's often tasteless and disgraceful public manifestations. If, on the other hand, he shies away from this admittedly difficult yet nation-saving challenge, he cannot blame those who will rightfully hold him responsible for our nation's bleak and seriously fatal future perspectives.

If, on the other hand, such a nonpartisan nation-saving leadership emerges in the very near future, all major Armenian organizations, including the Church, all political, cultural, charitable or other or-

ganizations of all tendencies will be under tremendous moral pressure to put aside any reluctance towards this cause lest they lose all public support.

This true mini-Israel model for what I like to qualify as a "proud and secure Armenia" will lack neither brain power nor expertise in all the needed fields, nor any funds that are needed to build a respectable national firewall against any foolish Azerbaijani or Turkish attempt at aggression. Ben Gurion was also the one who launched the extremely successful Israel Bonds that provide Israel to this day with funds contributed not only by Jews but anyone else, including possibly some of the readers of this article.

I will repeat what I have expressed on several past occasions: Pashinyan and others in his government must not hesitate to launch Armenia Bonds. Unfortunately, Karen Zakaryan, executive director of Armenia's Financial Market Members Association (FINARM), revealed in a recent recent [lin. am](#) TV interview that this hesitation is in fact happening right now. If launched in the kind of positive environment prescribed above, Armenia reconstruction bonds, as I had suggested in an unanswered open letter to Pashinyan back in October 2020, will become a continuous source of funds for the implementation of the aforementioned vital effort. That effort must follow a reliable plan directed by the current prime minister and headed by a nonpartisan National Strategy Agency of the highest professionalism. It will work to build a prosperous "proud and secure Armenia."

It is only then that no neighboring adversaries will dare to disturb Armenia.

Only then Armenia will be able to build its industry, economy and quality of life, in an atmosphere of security, and legitimately become a beacon for all Armenians around the world.

**A Hotly Lolly
BIG BAD
ARMO
SHOW**

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WRITTEN AND CREATED BY LORY TATOULIAN
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75th ANNIVERSARY
TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION

AMOTE
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VISIBLE IN THE WORLD

Canada to Open New Consulate in Armenia

OTTAWA (Public Radio of Armenia) — This year, Canada and Armenia celebrate the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations.

As long-time partners, Canada and Armenia are both committed to further strengthening ties. With an array of successful partnerships in the fields of trade, culture, advocacy, and, of course, La Francophonie, the countries have even more to look forward to in the upcoming decades.

The Embassy of Canada is opening a Consulate in Yerevan on November 24 that will offer essential consular services to Canadians living, studying, working and travelling in Armenia.

Ambassador Alison LeClaire will personally attend this Consulate announcement ceremony on November 24 and give a warm welcome to Vardges Avagyan in his role as Honorary Consul of Canada to Armenia.

Canada is also preparing for the eventual opening of a full embassy. As announced by the Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada will open a full embassy with a resident ambassador in Armenia allowing

for stronger bilateral ties.

Two cultural events marking the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Canada and Armenia will take place at AGBU Armenia HQ, Yerevan:



Ambassador Alison LeClaire

Solo Exhibition of Canadian-Armenian artist Kevork-George Kassabian "Armenian Cultural Heritage" with participation of Ambassador Alison LeClaire and a concert by Canadian composer David Braid "Stories from Armenia, Central Asia and the Caucasus" with support of the Embassy of Canada