

Karabakh-Armenia Road Still Blocked By Azerbaijan

STEPANAKERT (Azatutyun) — Nagorno-Karabakh’s leadership continued to strike a defiant note on Monday, December 19, as the only road connecting the region to Armenia remained blocked by Azerbaijan for the eighth consecutive day.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan expressed serious concern, meanwhile, about growing shortages of some basic goods and other humanitarian problems in Karabakh resulting from the blockade.

“People of Nagorno-Karabakh are stuck on roads in the cold, families are finding themselves on different sides of the blockade,” Pashinyan wrote on Twitter. “Citizens with serious health problems are deprived of medicine and health services.”

“We have been in a blockade for 168 hours,” the Karabakh premier, Ruben Vardanyan, said in a daily video address to the population. “Life goes on. We are going ahead with our decision to act in a way that



State Minister Ruben Vardanyan speaks at a meeting in Martakert, December 17, 2022.

would preserve our dignity.” Vardanyan spent the weekend touring two districts of Karabakh and meeting with local residents. “They [the Azerbaijani authorities] didn’t realize that this blockade is uniting us and making us stronger,” he said in the town of Martuni on Sunday. “They are only now realizing that they gave us strength.” Speaking in another Karabakh town, Martakert, Vardanyan again accused Baku of seeking to force the Karabakh Armenia to leave their homeland. see BLOCKADE, page 3

Tekeyan Cultural Association 75th Anniversary At California’s Beshgeturian Center

ALTADENA, Calif. — This year, the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) has been marking the 75th anniversary of its founding worldwide with various events in different parts of North America. The most recent commemoration took place at the TCA Beshgeturian Center in Altadena on Sunday, December 4, with a cultural program held under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Arme-

nian Church of America and under the aegis of the Central Board of the TCA of the United States and Canada. The evening organized by a special TCA 75th anniversary committee was under the presidency of benefactor Nazareth Kevonian, while Dr. Simon K. Simonian was the keynote speaker. Maral Voskian served as the evening’s master of ceremonies. After Voskian asked for a moment of silence in memory of all TCA founders, leaders and members who have passed away, TCA 75th Anniversary Committee Chair Sonia Babayan presented an overview of TCA activities throughout the Armenian diaspora. Voskian then introduced Dr. Simonian, an otolaryngologist by profession, and related among his many accomplishments how he played a leadership role in TCA both in Philadelphia and after moving to Pasadena. He served on the TCA Central Board and played an important role in the founding of the TCA Beshgeturian Center. He has held leadership positions in many other Armenian organizations, including the Armenian General Benevolent Union, and is at present chairman of the Zvartnots Cultural Committee of the Western Diocese. see ANNIVERSARY, page 12



Cutting of the TCA 75th anniversary cake

The Lachin Corridor Must Not Turn into Genocide Alley



Turkey and Azerbaijan, two genocidal countries, are on the job again to complete the crime they attempted a century ago. Azerbaijan with its despotic regime, armed and directed by Turkey, intends through successive provocations and military operations to eliminate the territories of the Republics of Artsakh and Armenia, the last indigenous lands remaining under the control of the Armenian people, in full view of the civilized world. The closure of the Lachin Corridor, under the pretext of environmental protection, is only an excuse to put a stranglehold on the lives of the Armenians of Artsakh, because it was accompanied by disruption of the gas supply to Artsakh. The use of the pretext of environmental protection also is intended to cripple the mining industry in Artsakh. All these acts create a humanitarian disaster for the 120,000 Armenians of Artsakh. The heroic Armenians of Artsakh are forced to fight for survival in the severe winter cold, while defending themselves against the Azerbaijani military threat. This existential struggle needs the support of the civilized world. Armenians are especially grateful to the governments of the United States, France and Holland, and to the European Union, which have warned the dictatorial regime of Baku to immediately open the Lachin Corridor to prevent medical and provisioning dangers, and more importantly, to respect the November 9, 2020 declaration by which Azerbaijan is committed to refraining from provocations. see COMMUNIQUE, page 20

Difficult Road Ahead for Karabakh and Armenia

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

MINNEAPOLIS— The most recent gut-punch to the Armenian psyche happened this past week, with the double-whammy of the blocking of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Armenia and Karabakh (Artsakh) and the cutting off of gas to the latter by Azerbaijan. As of this writing, gas has been restored to Artsakh, but the road remains blocked by hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians who claim they want to make sure that mining operations in Artsakh do not harm the environment. According to social media, however, many have ties to the Azerbaijani government or military. Incidentally, the gas for Karabakh from Armenia but passes through the territory of Azerbaijan. In a recent interview, Dr. Artyom Tonoyan, the editor of the book *Black Garden Aflame: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Soviet and Russian Press*, and a professor at Hamline University, offered some reasons for the increased Azerbaijani aggression against Karabakh. see TONUYAN, page 7



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MIRROR-SPECTATOR WINTER VACATION
The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will not publish the week of December 31 as the paper will close for its annual winter break. The last issue of 2022 will be that of December 24 and the first issue back will be that of January 7, 2023



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

10 Children in Intensive Care in Artsakh Hospital

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — Non-urgent surgeries are still suspended in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) hospitals to save medicine amid the ongoing Azerbaijani blockade, the Artsakh Ministry of Health reported on Monday.

Medical facilities in the country are not facing a shortage of drugs or medical supplies at this point, however their imports from Armenia remain blocked.

“Ten children are in the intensive care unit at the Arevik Medical Center. One is in critical condition. The Artsakh doctors are providing the necessary medical care to them by consulting with their colleagues in Armenia online,” the ministry said.

The Republican Medical Center in Stepanakert has 11 patients, including four critically ill, in its intensive care unit.

Pashinyan Chairs Security Council Meeting

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Monday, December 19 presided over a meeting of the Security Council in Yerevan, Armenia, his office reports.

In addition to the members of the Security Council, the President of the Republic Vahagn Khachaturyan, President of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan, Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister Arayik Harutyunyan, National Assembly Vice President Ruben Rubinyan, Minister of Finance Tigran Khachatryan, Minister of High-Tech Industry Robert Khachatryan, Head of the National Assembly Civil Contract faction Hayk Konjoryan, Deputy Minister of Defense Karen Brutyan participated in the session.

British Spy Chief Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The chief of Britain’s foreign intelligence agency, Richard Moore, met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday, December 16, during a surprise visit to Armenia.

In a short statement on the meeting, the Armenian government’s press office said Pashinyan and Moore discussed “processes taking place in the South Caucasus.”

“Topics related to regional and international security were also addressed,” added the statement.

No other details were reported. Photographs of the meeting released by the office showed that Armen Abazyan, the head of Armenia’s National Security Service, was also in attendance.

Moore, who runs the Secret Intelligence Service also known as MI6, arrived just four days after meeting with Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, in London. According to Grigoryan’s office, they discussed “prospects for bilateral security cooperation.”

US Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns visited Armenia and met with Pashinyan in July. Few details of those talks were made public.

As the Post-Soviet Order Collapses, Azerbaijan Tests New Ways to Pressure Armenia

By Avedis Hadjian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

It was five minutes past midnight and Lilit was praying by the window of her apartment in Jermuk, a resort famous for its mineral water and spas in southern Armenia. Suddenly, enormous, orange balls of fire lit up the sky.

“This is it,” she said aloud to herself. “The war has begun.”

The *blitzkrieg* attack by Azerbaijan in the early minutes of September 13, 2022 left at least 6 civilians and 200 Armenian soldiers dead in two days of fighting, which stopped after the prompt diplomatic intervention by the US State Department and, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin, his government too.

Few spots in the world concentrate so much geopolitical imbalance as Armenia. Squeezed in the South Caucasus, at the intersection of the imperial interests of Russia, Turkey, and Iran, it now faces growing threats by the autocratic regime of Azerbaijan, its neighbor to the east and victor of a brutal war two years ago.

The attack in September may have been an attempt by Azerbaijan to test global tolerance for aggression against sovereign territory of Armenia. If so, it backfired. With Azerbaijani forces that have now set up posts at least five miles inside sovereign Armenian territory, locals are wary.

And on December 12, Azerbaijan blocked the road leading from the Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, the conflict risks escalating again. Armenia’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement accusing Azerbaijan of “pursuing the policy of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

All this may be pointing to a dictatorship that is rushing to make the most of the tectonic shifts happening in global geopolitics. With a wealth based on depleting oil fields and fickle legitimacy, founded on the fading popularity it earned after the 2020 war — that failed to capture Artsakh, even if it badly injured her — these actions by the Azerbaijani regime of Ilham Aliyev are either part of a masterplan unknown to others or they may be erratic decisions that are not yielding the desired results.

After inflicting catastrophic defeat on Armenia over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in a 44-day war in 2020, Azerbaijan occupied more than 50 square miles of sovereign Armenian territory in a *blitzkrieg* attack along a 120-mile front on Sept. 13-14 this year. He has now set its eyes on the southern Armenian province of Syunik.

Aliyev is threatening a new war, saying on November 25 that Armenia would not be able to “stop” his troops from forcibly opening a corridor that would link the mainland to Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijani exclave to Armenia’s southwest.

War in the Making?

On the way to southern Armenia, Ara Zargaryan pulls over by the side of the road and stretches his arms out. “This is Armenia at its narrowest,” he says. At this stretch, the country is some 25-miles wide, flanked by Azerbaijani territory on both sides, with the mainland to the east and the exclave of Nakhichevan to the west.

Zargaryan, a former seminarist and now a volunteer in the Armenian army who fought in the 44-day war and took part in the defense of Jermuk, stayed in Lilit’s apartment, who opened her home to 20 soldiers, offering shelter and food to them for

weeks after the fighting was over.

In Jermuk, Lilit was visiting her neighbor, Maryam. The two women were among the very few residents — perhaps a dozen or two — who decided to stay in the city of 6,000 after the civilians were evacuated during the two days of fighting.

Maryam, a widow and the mother and grandmother of soldiers serving in the Armenian army, has seen war on and off since independence in 1991. Her son, who fought in the 44-day Nagorno Karabakh war, returned unharmed from fighting yet with a memory that has been haunting him from the first day of combat in Jabrayil, now a ghost town captured by the Azerbaijani forces in 2020. “Just as they were emerging

ble to the naked eye on the hills in the distance. The magnifying lenses of the binoculars — an inscription in English on them reads “Made in the USSR” — reveal no soldiers in the outposts yet they expose the Azerbaijani blue, red, and green flag, with a white crescent and star in the middle.

Just behind the young reservists, atop a taller hill, a Russian flag flies over a fenced perimeter. It’s Russia’s air surveillance station.

When asked why the Russian forces had not fulfilled their treaty obligation to defend Armenian borders against the Azerbaijani attack, the soldiers laughed the question off. “Are you serious?” they asked the reporter.



Incense burns next to the tomb of 44-day war hero at Yerablur, the military cemetery in Yerevan (January 2021, photo Avedis Hadjian)

from their hideout, he saw the car in which his four friends had just got into go up in flames,” possibly struck by a drone.

Analyst Benyamin Poghosyan believes a new war is in the making, saying it may happen by the end of 2022 or March-April 2023. “Any timeframe is based on perceptions, misperceptions, and speculation, but Azerbaijan is preparing for war.”

No Margin for Errors

Conditioned by an unforgiving geography, any adverse developments in the defense and foreign relations of this tiny democracy can rapidly escalate into a potentially existential crisis. “Armenia cannot afford any gambles,” said Levon Ter Petrossian, the first president after the republic proclaimed its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Ter Petrossian does not see an easy way out. “There could have been one if war had not broken out in Ukraine.”

The implications of the war in Ukraine worry him. “That war may draw in Russia to such an extent that it may lose the capacity and even the will to mediate and influence in the developments in the South Caucasus.”

With global attention focused on Ukraine, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is just a blip in media coverage. The government of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan insists on a peace treaty with Azerbaijan, yet the bellicose rhetoric coming from Aliyev is a clear indication it is intent on pursuing a maximalist agenda by military means.

Just outside the village of Khnatsakh, in Syunik, two reservists in camouflage outfits are surveying the Azerbaijani positions with binoculars, even though they are visi-

A former high official who has taken part in the negotiations with the Russian Federation that led to the strategic alliance with Armenia in the early years of independence was unsure about the protection it afforded to the country.

“How could Russia guarantee Armenia’s territorial integrity,” asked that former official. “It cannot even guarantee its own.”

Inside Khnatsakh, Vladimir, a cheerful farmer who still works at 82, and his wife, 76, can see an Azerbaijani tower a hill away from their balcony. It appears unmanned and without a flag. Yet it is there, presiding over the homes and fields of this village of some 700 residents.

The son of a World War II veteran who entered Berlin with the Red Army in 1945, Vladimir’s views were shaped during conscription in the Soviet Union of 1950s. While he is prone to taking at face value Putin’s arguments for invading Ukraine, he has given up on Russia as a potential savior of Armenia. “We are living,” he says, when asked how they are doing, using a common formula in Armenia to say that things are going well. But then he adds, with the same merry tone, “We are living, envying the fate of the dead.”

The Aliyev Factor

Yet it is the danger posed by Azerbaijan, rather than major power politics, that looms large over Armenia. The narrative that the declining Russian influence in the South Caucasus is being filled in by Turkey is only partially correct, says Anna Ohanyan, political science professor at Stonehill College, as it underestimates and obscures regional factors.

These include Azerbaijan’s deepening authoritarianism and its associated state



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People attending his meeting in Martakert included employees of a copper and gold mine located in the area. The company operating it is Karabakh's leading corporate taxpayer.

The Azerbaijani government is demanding that Baku be given access to this and another mine. When denied, they blocked the road on December 12.

Karabakh and Armenian officials reject this demand, saying that it runs counter to the terms of a Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

The ceasefire agreement led to the deployment of around 2,000 Russian peacekeeping troops in Karabakh. They are now locked in a standoff with the government-backed Azerbaijani protesters blocking the so-called Lachin corridor controlled by the peacekeepers.

The Russian Defense Ministry said over the weekend

that the commanders of the peacekeeping contingent are continuing to negotiate with both conflicting sides. It gave no details of those talks.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said last Thursday that the sides must "strictly" comply with the truce agreement.

The United States and the European Union have explicitly urged Azerbaijan to unblock the corridor.

"The closure of the Lachin Corridor has potentially severe humanitarian implications and, quite frankly, sets back the peace process," a US State Department spokesman, Vedant Patel, said on Friday.

Patel also said Washington is also "pleased" that natural gas supplies to Karabakh, blocked by Baku on December 13, resumed earlier on Friday.

The supply disruption forced the authorities in Stepanakert to close all Karabakh colleges, schools and kindergartens using gas for heating purposes. Classes

there resumed on Monday.

According to the authorities, about 300 Karabakh schoolchildren remain stranded in Armenia and its Syunik province in particular. They will attend schools in Syunik pending the opening of the road.

Later on Monday, Azerbaijan allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to evacuate a Karabakh Armenian man who needs to undergo urgent heart surgery in Armenia.

The director of Stepanakert's main hospital, Mher Musayelian, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that the 62-year-old man is one of his several patients who were due to be transported to Yerevan for surgeries or check-ups last week. Musayelian said a few hours later that one of those patients died.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said that the ICRC asked Baku to allow the evacuation and that the request was "granted immediately."

weakness driving that fracture.

"It is the legitimacy challenges for the Aliyev regime and the associated institutional weakness of the Azerbaijani state that is pulling external powers into the region, and in a way that can be most destabilizing," Ohanyan said. "Pulling in Turkey in the 44-day war, expansionist rhetoric directed at Iran, deepening Russia's influence over its opaque energy deals with Azerbaijan, these are some of the factors that feed into the great, middle, and regional power rivalries in the South Caucasus."

Climate change is also a factor that has been overlooked, yet it may have critical importance, especially for a country like Azerbaijan, an autocracy in a hurry, with rapidly-depleting oil fields.

While it is true that the reports of fossil fuels' death have been greatly exaggerated, there can be little doubt of their demise in the coming decades. According to the International Energy Agency, Azerbaijan's oil and natural gas production brings in around 90 percent of Azerbaijan export revenues and finance 60 percent of the government budget.

This affects Russian calculus too, weakening its imperial leverage over a free-wheeling, increasingly militaristic regime

asian connectivity."

Yet with the continuing war in Ukraine, Russia's weakening will accelerate, she predicts. "Russia will emerge from this war with much weaker leverage over the continent."

The implications for Armenia and other countries may be dire.

"Climate change can result in major political shifts globally, which can threaten smaller nations, considering the deeply interconnected world we live in today," says Madlen Avetyan, professor of anthropology at LA Valley College.

Yet both she and Ohanyan also see opportunities in the geopolitical transformations taking place.

"These political shifts can also present niche opportunities for some small nations to fill power vacuums that appear in their region," Avetyan said. According to Ohanyan, "This is a post-imperial moment for Russia, and an opportunity for Armenia to diversify and institutionalize its relations with other powers, near and far."

On the other hand, Karen Harutyunyan, an analyst and reporter at CivilNet, a media organization based in Yerevan, says that Armenia can dismiss Russia at its own peril. He has faulted Pashinyan's government for an inconsistent policy towards Russia, which has been perceived sometimes as openly hostile to Moscow.

"In the end, Russia is a country that, for all its flaws, is very important for Armenia," he said. "Even if it has no constructive role, you should always be mindful that it may have a destructive role."

In the circumstances, the prospects of a peace treaty that would put an end to conflict in the region are dim at best. CivilNet's analyst Eric Hacopian says that as long as the military balance is not addressed,

peace cannot be assured.

"Unfortunately, so much of the political legitimacy of the regime in Baku comes from aggression," he said. "The other thing about a piece of paper is that no matter what they say, the heart of the argument is Artsakh, and there's an 800-pound gorilla in the room and it's Russia — they can blow up any agreement: we have no idea what

they will do or what condition that country will be in six months from now or two years from now or three days from now."

But signing anything doesn't mean anything, he said. "The moment you say you sign and say we accept each other's borders, and the next day something happens in Artsakh and any Armenian government says something, [Azerbaijan] will say 'you are violating the agreement, you are interfering in our internal rights, we are going to fight revanchism.'"

Defense expert Nerses Kopalyan, political science professor at the University of Nevada, advocates the "military porcupine" doctrine, the one underpinning Taiwan's deterrence architecture. In the face of such an imbalance of military power, Armenia should become extremely costly to defeat.

"The time has come for Armenia to reconfigure its security architecture as it exists now, as opposed to these grand understandings that Russia will come to our rescue and the continuous reliance on Russia," Kopalyan said.

Soviet Maps

Existential fear is what has mobilized Armenians from all walks of life. A young priest, Geghard Hovhannisian, who was the spiritual pastor of Amaras, a 4th century monastery in Nagorno-Karabakh right by the front lines when the 2020 war broke out, donned military fatigues over his priestly collared shirt and took up arms along with a defense unit made up of reservists and volunteers. He fought for weeks until he was injured. "The last thing I remember was the tank firing against us," he said. He woke up in a hospital in Yerevan, where he recovered.

He asked his church superior for permission to go to war. Archbishop Pargév Martirosyan, who at the time was the primate of the Armenian Church in Artsakh (the Armenian name of Nagorno-Karabakh) was silent for a minute. "*Astootsov*," he then said, simply. "With God."

For, the other 800-pound gorilla in the room is, of course, the Armenian Genocide. Armenians' existential fears about their neighbors are rooted in history. To this date, Turkey not only does not recognize the Genocide. Its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, even praised the memory of one of the architects of the Genocide, Enver Pasha, in a "Victory Parade" in Baku on December 10, 2020, to mark Azerbaijan's victory in the Karabakh war, with substantial Turkish support.

Yet a source who is directly familiar with the meeting of Pashinyan and Erdogan in

Prague on October 6 said the Turkish leader told the Armenian prime minister to sort out their problems with Azerbaijan, following which he would eagerly open the border with Armenia. Turkey has closed it since 1993 in solidarity with its ally Azerbaijan.

A policy of open borders would not be an altruistic endeavor by Erdogan. Paradoxically, he sees it as a way to stimulate the depressed economies of the Turkish provinces on the border with Armenia.

At the same time, Turkey is building up the pressure on Armenia with its close cooperation with Azerbaijan's army. In a conflict that involves many dimensions — autocracies and dictatorships versus democracies; energy supplies — there is a confluence of interests between Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Russia into opening an outlet to the West by way of Azerbaijan through Armenia, now that the war in Ukraine has blocked Russian access to Europe.

A further complication for Armenia is the common interests many external players — including the United States and Israel — share against Iran. A European diplomat in Yerevan, who spoke on condition of anonymity, expressed his frustration over what he believed was American lack of support for Armenia. "They could have provided early warning to Armenia," he said, speaking of the September 13 aggression. "I'm sure US satellites are permanently monitoring Azerbaijani troop movements."

In no small part, the conflict has its roots in Soviet map-drawing. The inextricably intertwined republics, with ethnically diverse or segregated enclaves and exclaves, were conceived to prevent a breakup.

"The policy of the Soviet Union was to create conditions in various republics, through which the central authorities could create problems and control their behavior," says cartography expert Rouben Galichian. "To such end during 1927-1940 small and large plots of Armenian land were given to Azerbaijan, often through illegal means and by orders from the central government, for which hardly any document is available — suffice it to say that Azerbaijani enclaves are sitting on Armenian highways, while the Armenian enclave is in a remote corner of Azerbaijan."

In the end, as the Armenian-Azerbaijani war and other conflicts in the former Soviet Union have shown, secession was not impossible. It simply became much more bloody.

(Avedis Hadjian is a writer and journalist based in Venice. He is the author of *Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey* (Bloomsbury, 2018).)



War veteran Ara Zargaryan at the narrowest stretch of Armenia, only 25 miles wide. In this part of Syunik, Armenia is flanked by territory under the control of Azerbaijan, including the exclave of Nakhichevan, an Armenian region ethnically cleansed of Armenians by the Azerbaijanis and given to the Azerbaijani Soviet Republic by the Kremlin in the early years of Sovietization (November 2022, photo Avedis Hadjian).

like Aliyev's.

"The profitability of Russia's oil fields has been declining, and the Western sanctions on Russia [after Crimea's annexation] made it hard to bring in new capital to explore new oil fields," Ohanyan said. "This technology is also needed to make the Arctic open for navigation, which would have enhanced Russia's leverage over the Eur-



ARMENIA

Birthright Volunteer Trailblazes Occupational Therapy in Armenia's Villages

By Jack Baghumian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Armenians in the diaspora often come to Armenia and bring an international mindset and experience to the country. In the case of Armineh Babikian, not only did she reform a branch of healthcare, but she also evolved the world of Occupational Therapy in rural Armenia.

Babikian's work as an occupational therapist (OT) essentially means that she guides people to learn, or relearn, how to do daily activities that occupy their time; such as "getting out of bed, brushing their teeth, getting dressed" as well as more involved tasks like "going to work, going to the store, and using a computer." Essentially, an occupational therapist helps people with "physical, cognitive and psychosocial challenges", be it from birth or from injury, with the ultimate goal being to have independence and quality of life. Her work helps people achieve the ability they have lost, or have never had, to participate in society.

Babikian first volunteered as an OT in Armenia in 2017 through the Birthright Armenia, an NGO that finds opportunities for diaspora Armenians between ages 21 and 32 in Armenia. During that time, she was able to work with organizations such as Children of Armenia Fund and My Way Educational and Rehabilitation Center. She noted, "inclusive education was just starting to be mandated and implemented. There was a growing demand for resources on inclusive education."

Babikian explains how she was the first ever OT to visit several villages of Armenia. "I would go to eight different villages and work with children with developmental disabilities, many of whom had never received any support before," she said.

Her work was especially impactful when you consider how several parents of children with disabilities had simply believed that their child would not be able to lead the life of a healthy, fully functioning individual. She changed that with her volunteer



Armineh Babikian with fellows of the Interdisciplinary Rehabilitation Fellowship

work proving to parents that their child can indeed "learn and have friends and be included in different ways."

Many of the children who she worked with had simply not received the individualized support they needed to thrive.

Older teaching methods were still being used in the newly inclusive schools in the villages, creating yet another barrier to fostering an inclusive environment. Babikian brought her expertise to the forefront of Armenian education by introducing different learning styles as well as classroom modifications to guide teachers in inclusive teaching to better understand how to educate children with varying needs. The progress she made was showcased when upon her return she saw that the children she worked with were social and smiling, and their peers had welcomed them. Still, Babikian would explain later, that "there was a huge demand for more help."

As a result of her volunteer experience, she published a book titled *Occupational*



Armineh Babikian working in the villages of the Aragatsotn region.

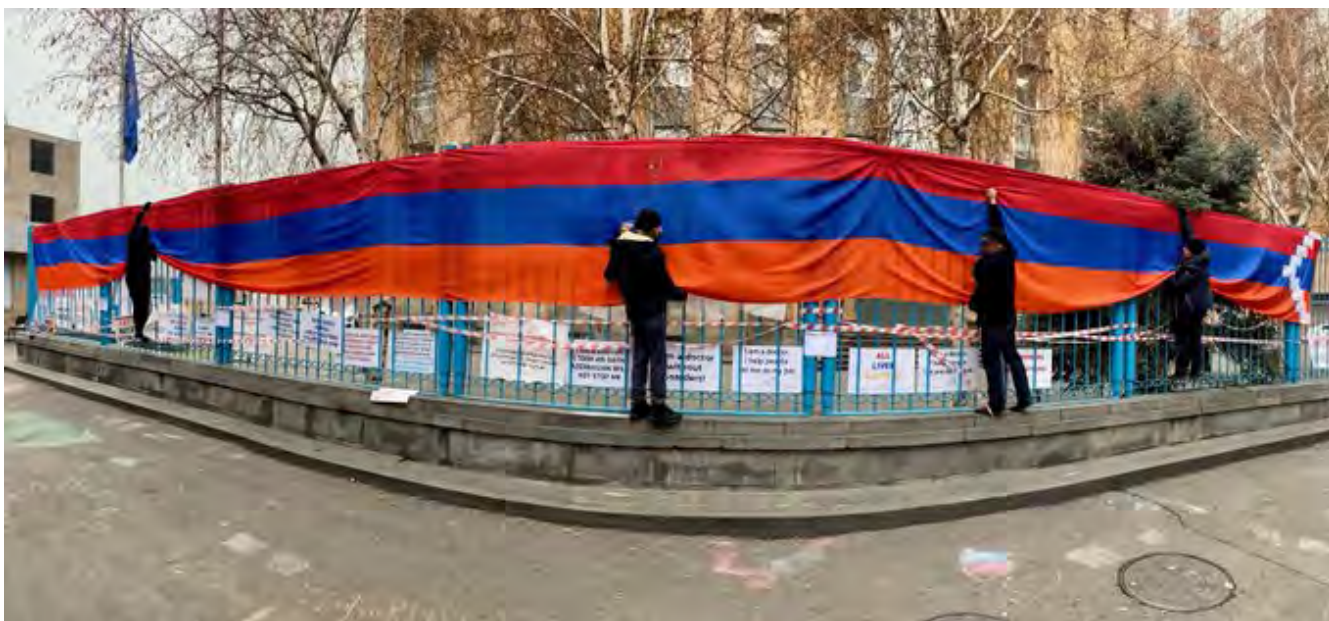
Therapy Guidebook to Inclusion [in Armenian]. The purpose of the book was to "give simple explanations about developmental disabilities like autism and down's syndrome." The book was also meant to

show "ways to develop different skills using simple household items...to help with challenges like coordination or memory."

Ultimately, Babikian wanted to leave behind a means to continue the work that was being done. With support from a Birthright Armenia Alumni Grant, Children of Armenia Fund, and World Vision Armenia, 1000 copies of her book have been donated to various schools, developmental centers, and rehabilitation clinics throughout Armenia and Artsakh. Thanks to her support and involvement, thousands of children are receiving education, socializing with peers, and being included in their community. The work she has done has fought the stigma of disability one village at a time and has highlighted that every child has the right to an education. Her work has proven that disability is just a different way of being and doing.

As a result of her efforts, thousands of teachers and caregivers have resources to support children with developmental disabilities, rehabilitation providers are receiving high quality continuing education, and people with disabilities in rural Armenia are living in more inclusive communities.

Today Babikian is pursuing her PhD at the University of Toronto, studying rehabilitation science and global health, and doing her research in Armenia. She makes regular trips to Armenia to push forward the progress that has been made in her field. While she sees "a lot of effort on a national scale" there is still "quite a journey ahead of us."



UN Building in Yerevan Covered by Artsakh Flag

YEREVAN — On December 19, former Artsakh State Minister Artsakh Beglaryan posted on Twitter a picture of a flag of Artsakh he and supporters put on the fence surrounding the building of the United Nations office there. Beglaryan and a group have protested outside the office the past week.

"Today we put the 22-meters flag of the Republic of #Artsakh on the hedge of the @UNArmenia. One day the Artsakh flag will be on the UN headquarter as full member of the UN, but before that UN urgent support is needed to overcome humanitarian & security issues," he wrote.



INTERNATIONAL

UN Chief Urges Reopening of Karabakh-Armenia Corridor

NEW YORK (Azatutyun) — UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has added his voice to the international community's calls for the opening of the Lachin corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

A section of the vital road has been blocked by a large group of Azerbaijanis since Monday morning. They are demanding that Karabakh's leadership allow Azerbaijani officials to inspect mining operations in the Armenian-populated territory.

"The Secretary-General is following with concern the ongoing developments around the Lachin corridor," a spokesman for Guterres, Stephane Dujarric, said late on Wednesday, December 14.

"The Secretary-General urges the sides to de-escalate tensions and to ensure freedom and security of movement along the corridor, in line with the previously reached agreements," Dujarric added in written comments.

The statement followed Guterres' meeting in New York with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Mirzoyan briefed him on the situation around the Lachin corridor and stressed the "need for



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan meet at UN headquarters in New York, December 14, 2022.

the international community's targeted reaction" to its closure.

Unlike the United States and the European Union, the UN chief was careful not to openly criticize Baku for the road block-

ade.

The blockade sparked a series of protests outside the UN office in Yerevan. The protesters include Artak Beglaryan, a senior Karabakh official.

Russian Peacekeepers in Karabakh under Harsh Spotlight

By Joshua Kucera

As the blockade of Karabakh drags on, the performance of the Russian peacekeepers charged with providing security on the road in and out of the territory is coming under closer scrutiny than ever before. And the reviews, from all sides, have been scathing.

Under the harsh spotlight of the constant coverage by pro-government Azerbaijani media, the peacekeepers have appeared uncertain of how to manage the belligerent protesters that have managed to shut down the road for four days and counting. On some occasions the Russians are easily pushed around by the protesters and reporters, on others they lose their patience and lash out.

The performance has only deepened skepticism of the peacekeeping mission on both sides.

For Armenians, the episode has confirmed the Russians' impotence in the face of Azerbaijani pressure. Baku has been steadily ratcheting up pressure on Yerevan to sign a comprehensive peace agreement that would restore Azerbaijan's control over Karabakh.

For Azerbaijanis, the crisis has only confirmed that the peacekeepers harbor pro-Armenian sympathies.

The peacekeeping presence dates from November 2020, when the Russia-brokered agreement that ended the Second Karabakh War stipulated the deployment of 2,000 Russian soldiers to monitor the ceasefire. The peacekeepers were also to "control" and "protect" the Lachin Corridor, the only road in and out of the Armenian-populated territory.

Beyond that, though, there was no detailed mandate for their presence and little agreement on what the peacekeepers were supposed to do.

"So far, no party to the conflict has pushed back on the broad range of activities taken on by Russian peacekeepers," the International Crisis Group wrote in a November 2021 report. "However, experience from other conflict zones suggests this could quickly become an issue in the event of an escalation in tensions: in that scenario any disparity between the two sides' visions of Russia's role will come sharply into view."

Since December 12, a group of Azerbaijani government-sponsored activists have closed off the Lachin Corridor, holding a non-stop protest demanding that Azerbaijani officials get free access to mines that they claim Armenians have been illegally exploiting. The standoff has virtually marooned the Armenians of Karabakh, who have begun to ration food and fuel.

As international condemnation of the blockade has grown, Azerbaijan has sought to shift the blame on to the Russians.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry has argued that it is not their side, but the Russian peacekeepers who have blocked the road. Azerbaijanis at the protests say they are willing to let Armenians through, but that the Russians and the de facto Karabakh leadership are preventing it.

Armenians, meanwhile, have accused the peacekeepers of neglecting the spirit of their mission, which is to ensure the security of the Armenian population in Karabakh.

"Azerbaijan is more and more testing the red lines, checking for the Russian peacekeepers' weaknesses and is trying to see how far this kind of pressure can go," analyst Alexander Iskandaryan told CivilNet. "The only limit on Azerbaijan is the Russian reaction, which Azerbaijan is constantly testing, and it sees that there has not been any kind of reaction that could stop this. So that's why this is happening."

The peacekeepers "have been on duty there for over two years already and in a way should know their tasks," said Olesya Vartanyan, an analyst at the International Crisis Group and one of the authors of the 2021 report.

"They are doing now what they have been doing since they got deployed to the region," Vartanyan told Eurasianet. "The issue now is that they are in the center of a crisis with people from different sides eager to criticize them: Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh might expect the peacekeepers to remove people who are blocking the road; protestors might attach different hopes to the mission."

There are complaints not just about the peacekeepers' passivity on the ground but the relative silence from political leaders in Moscow. While several foreign governments called on Azerbaijan to lift the blockade, four days into the crisis Russia had yet to follow suit.

"At the moment the US, European Union, France have already issued statements, and according to our information Russia is also preparing a similar statement, which the Armenian people have been waiting for for a long time," speaker of parliament Alen Simonyan said on December 14. "We hope that this time our partners will not disappoint us."

On December 15 Moscow did finally address the issue. While it stopped short of blaming Azerbaijan for the blockade, it did hit back at criticism of the peacekeeping mission.

"It is unacceptable to create problems for the lives of the civilian population," Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, said in a statement, adding: "Accusations against the peacekeepers are unacceptable and counterproductive, the Russian peacekeeping mission is effectively carrying out its duties acting as the guarantor of stability in the region."

Indeed, it may be that the crisis has only strengthened the case for the peacekeepers.

"The key here is that without the peacekeepers it could be even worse. They are still in a way helping to sustain this shaky stability on the ground," Vartanyan said. "The mission finds itself in a difficult situation, because, with the current crisis in Ukraine, it is not easy for those in the West to support the Russian presence in Nagorno-Karabakh."

Challenging the peacekeepers may turn out to backfire for Baku.

"If Baku engages in good faith with local Armenians, this would reduce the risk of potential spoilers of a peace agreement," Zaur Shiriyev, another analyst at the International Crisis Group, said.

(This article originally appeared on Eurasianet.org on December 15.)

INTERNATIONAL

Turkey, Azer. and Georgia Defense Ministers Meet

BAKU (news.am) — Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov will pay a visit to Turkey on December 21, Azerbaijani media outlets reported.

The purpose of the visit is to participate in the 9th trilateral meeting of the Defense Ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia, to be held on December 21 in Kayseri, Turkey).

Iran Hopes for Quick Resolution of Blockade

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani expressed hope that the blockade of the Lachin Corridor will be resolved through dialogue and peaceful way between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always emphasized that the full implementation of the terms of the trilateral statement on ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan can put an end to the disputes between the two countries," ISNA news agency quoted Kanaani as saying.

He said that establishing peace and stability in the region requires not allowing any unnecessary tensions, and expressed hope that the unblocking of the Lachin Corridor will be solved through dialogue and peaceful talks between the sides.

Borrell: EU Begins New Phase of Engagement In South Caucasus

BRUSSELS (News.am) — The European Union (EU) is launching a new phase of engagement in the South Caucasus with a transition team that will prepare the ground for a possible long-term EU mission in Armenia with the ultimate goal of promoting sustainable peace in the region, EU chief diplomat Josep Borrell noted.

The EU monitoring group in Armenia (EUMCAP), launched in October, completed its mandate this week, it was noted.

Based on an agreement between the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, the European Council and France, the EUMCAP was deployed along the Armenian side of the international border with Azerbaijan on October 20 to monitor, analyze and report on the situation on the ground.

The deployment of 40 monitoring experts helped build confidence in an unstable situation. The new phase of EU engagement in the South Caucasus was launched with a transition team that will prepare the ground for a possible long-term EU mission in Armenia.

Against this background, the Council — in consultation with the Armenian authorities — has decided that the existing EU Monitoring Mission to Georgia will send a temporary assistance team to Armenia to raise EU awareness of the security situation and to contribute to the planning and preparation of a possible civilian mission in the country. The transition planning assistance team will support European Council President Charles Michel in the EU-facilitated normalization process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the statement reads.



Community News

Schiff Asks Biden to Force Azerbaijan to End Blockade

WASHINGTON — This week Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), Vice-Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Armenian Issues, spearheaded a letter signed by 29 Members of Congress, requesting President Biden to break Azerbaijan’s blockade of Artsakh, cut off U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan, and send U.S. humanitarian aid to Artsakh.

The letter condemns Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the lifeline connecting Artsakh to Armenia, and, by extension, to the outside world. The blockade was imposed by the Aliyev regime on December 12, 2022 and has affected 120,000 Armenians — including 30,000 children — who are without access to food, medical supplies, transport, and other essential goods, ultimately “depriving them of their right to free movement.”

The letter emphasizes that “Azerbaijan is once again weaponizing basic human necessities to further degrade already strained living conditions for the Armenians living in Artsakh,” and if the situation continues, “a humanitarian crisis with potentially tragic consequences is imminent.”

In addition, Azerbaijan’s actions are a “direct violation of the trilateral ceasefire agreement of November 9, 2020, which outlines an obligation to guarantee the secure movement of citizens, vehicles, and cargo in both directions through this route known as the Lachin Corridor.”

The people of Artsakh have not yet recovered from the Fall 2020 44-day war, launched by Azerbaijan with the full and open support of Turkey, and appeals for robust U.S. humanitarian assistance have fallen short.

“The federal government has failed to provide adequate aid, which makes decisive action by the Administration now all the more important,” the letter stated, underscoring Azerbaijan’s continued “belligerence, which has followed a well-documented pattern of abuse against the Armenian population of Artsakh, motivated by the bombastic rhetoric of the Aliyev regime.”

The letter concluded: “We urge the United States to use all tools at its disposal to ensure the safety of the people of Artsakh, now and in the future, including cessation of financial support to Azerbaijan and imposition of sanctions. We cannot allow Azerbaijan’s policy of aggression and intimidation to continue.”

“We commend Congressman Schiff for spearheading this timely letter,” said Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. “Azerbaijan’s aggression against the Armenian people, which has precipitated a humanitarian crisis, cannot continue to go unchecked. We urge the Administration to take decisive action to safeguard the Armenian people, and hold Azerbaijan accountable for its continued and egregious human rights abuses.”

Signatories to the letter alongside Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) include see SCHIFF, page 8



Gevorg, one of the children helped by the doctors

Thanksgiving Medical Mission for the Armenian International Medical Fund

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian International Medical Fund(AIM Fund) completed its 24th medical mission during the week of Thanksgiving; this was its second mission trip in 2022. Fifteen children and adults were treated; of these, six children received cochlear implants (CI) and the remaining were complicated ear surgeries. In addition, one soldier with a shattered skull from a blast was operated on, and his hearing was restored.

All complicated ear surgeries and cochlear implant surgeries are performed by Dr. Akira Ishiyama, professor and otology surgeon at UCLA Health, who volunteers his time and expertise as the principal surgeon of the CI program in Armenia. Armenia is the only country in the region to offer the latest generation of implants and processors, thanks to the work of the AIM Fund and Dr. Ishiyama’s exceptional skills and outcomes. At this mission, William Guinhawa, RN from UCLA Health accompanied Dr. Ishiyama. This was Guinhawa’s first trip to Armenia and travel expenses were supported by the AIM Fund.

In addition, Dr. Salpy Akaragian, founder and president of AIM Fund, provides her professional expertise and leadership to the mission of the AIM Fund by spending much of the year in Armenia, taking care of logistics and meeting with parents and government entities. Earlier this year, Mr. Arayik Harutyunyan, Chief of Staff of the Office of the Prime Minister, honored Drs. Akira Ishiyama and Salpy Akaragian with Certificates of Appreciation, recognizing the critical work of the AIM Fund.

AIM Fund is ending the year with a total of 25 cochlear implant surgeries and 14 ear surgeries, achieving a new milestone.

In a season of gratitude, AIM Fund extends its sincere appreciation to the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Services, Erebuni Medical Center, Arabkir Medical Center, and parents for their strong collaborations and help in completing another successful medical mission. Similarly, AIM Fund is grateful to all who participate in this innovative healthcare program in Armenia, especially its generous donors.

To date, AIM Fund has implanted over 175 children and young adults in Armenia and continues strengthening its CI program. AIM Fund is a non-profit organization; all officers and members are volunteers.



The AIM Fund team in Armenia

Armenia Caucus Co-Chairs Issue Statement On Escalation of Azerbaijani Abuses in Artsakh

WASHINGTON — Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chairs Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (NJ-06), Gus M. Bilirakis (FL-12), Jackie Speier (CA-14), David G. Valadao (CA-21), and Adam B. Schiff (CA-28) issued the following statement after troubling reports of Azerbaijanis blocking the sole road connecting the people of Artsakh to Armenia and posing huge risks to



Frank Pallone, Jr. (NJ-06)

vulnerable populations: “We condemn the aggressive actions taken by Azerbaijan in Nagorno Karabakh. It is disturbing that the only time the people of Azerbaijan are allowed to freely protest is when it threatens the lives of Armenians. Their blockade of the Lachin Corridor appears coordinated and intended to shut off the only remaining supply route for much of Artsakh’s food, medical supplies and transport, and other essential goods, not to mention further restrict the people of Artsakh’s freedom of movement. Additional reports allege that Azerbaijan has also shut off one of the major sources of natural gas for civilians in the territory, potentially leaving tens of thousands without heating as temperatures plummet, much like it did earlier this year in March. “The shutting down, or even the threat of shutting down, of these vital lifelines by Azerbaijan is once again weaponizing critical infrastructure and manufacturing a humanitarian crisis for Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh. This follows a well-documented pattern of abuses against the Armenian people that is motivated by the bombastic rhetoric of the Aliyev regime to dehumanize them. We urge the United States and our European partners to use every diplomatic tool at their disposal to halt this clearly fabricated crisis created by Azerbaijan, bring Aliyev back to the negotiating table through the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group and other multilateral peace processes, and ensure that the people of Artsakh are included in these discussions.”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Difficult Road Ahead for Karabakh and Armenia

TONOYAN, from page 1

“There are several reasons. Number one, because they can — and they can do it any time they want. There is a fancy term in political science, escalation dominance. Azerbaijan has the ability to escalate matters anytime it wants. This could have happened a month ago or a month from today but for some reason they chose this juncture,” Tonoyan said. “Number two is because of the conventional wisdom, which is somewhat iffy, Russia is distracted because it has bigger fish to fry or it is the biggest fish that is being fried. One way to look at it is that Russia has given a tacit agreement to [the blockade] because Russia for one reason or another is not happy with the Armenian authorities. It looks to them that Armenian authorities and Pashinyan’s government are stonewalling the opening of the borders — communications as they call it — the Zangezur [corridor]. The other way of looking at it is Turkey is pushing for it. Turkey has entered election season and it has thrown its complete lot in with Azerbaijan. A victory for Azerbaijan is a victory for the Erdogan government.”

Tonoyan concluded, “The truth is a mix of all these factors.”

Wishful Thinking

When asked what could have been done in the past 31 years to have taken Armenia and Artsakh to a different point, he did suggest that of course, hindsight is 20/20 but that things could and should have been done. Tonoyan offered that there were many clues that the situation could change and the leaders should have prepared for it.

“Having the benefit of hindsight, we could always have conducted policy that would have deterred Azerbaijan. Armenia had the chance to upgrade its military capabilities and its civil society, to have a better government that had the foresight that could have predicted what would happen,” he said. “The world is not static and Armenia’s neighborhood is not static. It is not the European heartland. There are always clashing geopolitical interests. There is always something brewing.”

Instead, he said, Armenian authorities indulged in “wishful thinking,” assuming the victory in Karabakh in 1994 had closed that chapter for good.

He added, “The wishful thinking was that Russia is on our side, that it’s in Russia’s best interest to not allow a war to break out because at the end of the day, if Armenia loses, ... Armenia will look elsewhere for its security arrangements.”

The authorities, he continued, counted on Russia without really bothering to study its motivations or actions closely and thus leaving themselves open to their big ally’s shifting strategies.

“That wishful thinking continued apace. Just the very fact that Armenia’s main geopolitical and economic ally is Russia [yet] you do not have a full-time Russian studies department or Kremlinologists that analyze Russian press,” is a problem, he said.

In fact, Tonoyan said, that very obliviousness to Russian thinking was why he decided to study the reaction of the Russian press to the Karabakh war, which resulted in *Black Garden Aflame: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Soviet and Russian Press*.

“It was always ‘Russia is our friend. We are allies. We are on the same page on any number of security issues.’ But it’s not the case. It’s never the case,” Tonoyan noted.

“The Russian thinking on these issues is not very dissimilar to any great power’s thinking. It has its interests and its interests are always on shifting sand,” Tonoyan said.

“If Russia’s security, economic or geopolitical interests call for other arrangements other policy priorities, you have to be ready for it.” Thus, he noted, such a mindset dominated for the past 30 years and “when push came to shove, we were caught with our pants down.”

Tonoyan is active on social media and has been critical of the tweets of Toivo Klaar, the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, which he deems toothless and mealy mouthed.

Asked why Armenia can’t get traction with many world bodies, he said, power or its lack thereof.

“Ultimately it comes down to power, to me, and to economic power, as well. It’s a small economy and a small country. In the great scheme of things, it’s insignificant for them. It has very little to offer.”

In addition, because of its general Russian and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) orientation, the Western bodies are not sure they can meddle.

“It has not made a complete geopolitical turnabout toward Europe or the United States. Its complimentary policy that was adopted under Serge Sargsyan was at best mealy-mouthed. It was the due that vice was paying virtue,” he said.

Therefore, he said, the country’s stance globally is different from its neighbor, Georgia, which under former President Mikheil Saakashvili, who led the country from 2004 to 2013, made the pivot.

“The other thing is that for Georgia, for instance, when Saakashvili came to power, he completely switched its foreign policy priorities, foreign policy engagements and security arrangements,” Tonoyan said. He kicked out the Russian soldiers, thus making his political orientation clear.

Tonoyan stressed that at this point, certainly, he would not advocate for Armenia or Artsakh to kick out the Russian troops, because the results could be deadly.

They are the only factor holding off Turkey, he said. “At this point, yes Russia has abrogated its duties and commitments and agreements with Armenia, but at the end of the day, they are still there and Turkey has not attacked. And Turkey can attack and Turkey will attack, given the chance and the time.”

Turkey’s global ambitions are willingness to invade the soils of other countries have already been demonstrated in Syria and Iraq, he stressed.

Asked why Turkey has not been taken to task for its acts of aggression in those two countries, as well as its regular threats against Armenia, Greece and Cyprus, among others, Tonoyan explained that the country serves a purpose.

“It may sound cynical, but sometimes good actors need bad actors to act badly for the good actors to win ultimately,” he said about Turkey. “It may not be following the American lead on any number of issues but there is still some benefit to be drawn from Turkey’s actions.”

Of course, he stressed, we need to re-

member that Turkey is a NATO member. “To get rid of Turkey as a NATO member, you need unanimous agreement on it and nobody is going to kick out Turkey out of NATO.”

On a more hopeful note, he said, Recep Tayyip Erdogan would not be the leader of Turkey forever and it is possible, as far as NATO members are concerned, a less aggressive leader might take over.

Facing Ethnic Cleansing

For now, however, Armenia and Artsakh have much to worry about. The end game they are facing, he said, is “total ethnic cleansing. There are no two ways about it.”

Tonoyan was loath to answer what the government of Artsakh should do now, whether to advocate for its population to

agency in their affairs. They have said what they want. The question is not about what Nagorno Karabakh’s people want. We know what they want. It’s the ability of the Armenians in the Armenian Republic and the diaspora to understand that the die has been cast and there is no turning back,” he explained. What everyone needs to do is “our utmost to stave off the existential threat. My fear is that we are not doing our utmost. We wasted so much capital, so much good will, so much of everything, that at this point, all we can hope for is the status quo to at least exist, that Lachin is still open, that the gas is restored, that people can go back and forth, that people are not starving and dying en masse. The only way I see it is for Armenia to upgrade radically its capabilities, but also upgrade its political thinking.”

Tonoyan was very forceful about the political thinking by the authorities on Armenia. “It has been so sorely lacking. It’s one-dimensional, predicable, readable and very, very injudicious.”

Asked what he would advise Armenia’s leaders right now, he said, “To seek non-traditional allies.”

Tonoyan noted the government has started doing it recently, by reaching out to India, and China. They need to “expand the pool of interested parties towards the region.”

He continued, Armenia needs to “make its case to foreign policy actors and governments that matter that this is unacceptable, that Armenia matters and it needs its succor and support.”

The situation is precarious not just for Artsakh but for Armenia, if a route is carved through Syunik — what the Turks and Azerbaijanis call the Zangezur Corridor — linking Azerbaijan with its exclave of Nakhichevan. “If Azerbaijan manages to get parts of Syunik, Armenia’s statehood becomes questionable. It’s as good as a failed state. It’s as simple as that. It [Turkey] can’t control swathes of territory. ... What would happen is basically would definitely encourage further outmigration and a massive humanitarian crisis.”

In addition, Tonoyan said that move will “completely destroy Iran’s ambitions toward South Caucasus” and cut off its trade routes.

He lamented, “I didn’t think in my lifetime I would be sitting where I am and thinking these thoughts.”

Tonoyan is a visiting professor of global studies at Hamline University. He was previously at the University of Minnesota Holocaust and Genocide studies. He will teach a course on the history of human rights.

Black Garden Aflame is available on Amazon.



Dr. Artyom Tonoyan

stay or to move en masse to Armenia.

“Talk about being between a rock and a hard place, finding yourself constantly being badgered and hammered and the Europeans and the Americans are mealy mouthed about it and the condemnations are at best half-hearted,” Tonoyan said. “There is no strong disincentive for Azerbaijan to not engage in this kind of behavior and Azerbaijan takes advantage of it and ultimately the European and the Americans just may be OK with the Armenians being exiled from their ancestral homeland in Artsakh.”

As for what Armenians of Karabakh want, he noted, “The people in Nagorno Karabakh have voted with the blood of their sons and daughters, as have Armenians, in staking a claim, re-acquiring

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

Notice to Our Subscribers Regarding Print Version

Dear subscribers, it has come to our attention that for the past year, and specifically the past month, the delivery of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* has been erratic.

Please note that our paper goes to our printer at the same time every week and is mailed out the same time every week. Nothing has changed.

The delivery problems all lie with the postal service, which is understaffed, and though we have contacted them repeatedly, we have not been able to resolve the problem.



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Archbishop Vatche Hovsepien Dies at 92

LOS ANGELES — The Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church reported on Sunday, December 18 the passing of former Primate Archbishop Vatche Hovsepien. He was 92 years old.

Archbishop Hovsepien (baptismal name Hovsep) was born on June 11, 1930, in Beirut, Lebanon. He received his primary education at the Armenian Mesrobian School in Lebanon. Upon his graduation, he entered the Theological Seminary of Antelias.

On June 24, 1951, he was ordained as a celibate priest by Bishop Terenig Poladian, and given the priestly name of Vatche. Upon his ordination, he was appointed to serve as the Dean Assistant and Instructor at the Seminary.

In 1953, he went to study at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

In 1956, he was assigned as the spiritual pastor of the Holy Cross Armenian Church of Union City, NJ. Here he continued his studies at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary at Rutgers and received a Bachelor's of Divinity degree.

In 1967, he was appointed as the Vicar General of the Diocese of Canada. There he organized new parishes and

facilitated the implementation of a new constitution for the Canadian Diocese, bringing it into compliance with Canadian requirements.

In October 1967, he was consecrated as a bishop by Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I.

In March 1971, he was elected as the Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. During his tenure in the Western Diocese, he established thirteen new parishes and ordained eight priests. In addition, he elevated and inducted into the ecclesiastical ranks of Acolyte, sub-Deacon and Deacon, hundreds of youth within the Diocese.

In 1976, upon the commemoration of his 25th anniversary of ordination, he was elevated to the rank of archbishop by the pontifical encyclical of Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I.

In April 1985, in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks, His Eminence was invited to address both House of the State Legislature of the United States.

In 1986, he served as a member of the Supreme Spiritual Council of the Arme-



nian Church.

In 1988, after the disastrous earthquake in Armenia, Archbishop Hovsepien established an Orphan's Fund in the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. In addition, under his auspices, the Western Diocese re-built the St. Gregory the Illuminator High School in Stepanavan, Armenia. During his tenure, St. Gregory Alfred and Marguerite Hovsepien Armenian School was founded in Pasadena, California, which serves the Armenian youth within the Los Angeles area.

In 1994, the Diocesan headquar-

ters were demolished because of the Northridge Earthquake and temporarily moved to the St. Gregory Armenian Church in Pasadena.

In May 1997, through the Primate's initiative, a new territory for the Diocesan headquarters was purchased and a new spacious Western Diocesan headquarters were built in Burbank, California.

Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin I appointed Archbishop Vatche to serve as the Chairman of the Constitution Committee of the Armenian Church. He was charged with drafting a constitution which was completed in 2002 and submitted for review and approval.

Upon the demise of Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I, Archbishop Vatche was asked by the Locum Tenens, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, to organize the National Ecclesiastical Assembly in Echmiadzin for the election of the new Catholicos; which he carefully planned and organized.

In 2003, after 32 years of devout service, Archbishop Vatche retired as Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America.

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Edmond Megerian - \$50

Foreign Relations Chairman Sen. Menendez Condemns Erdogan's Threat to Attack Athens with Ballistic Missiles

WASHINGTON – Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) on December 19 delivered remarks on the Senate Floor following Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's threatened missile strike on Athens. Menendez called on the US and the international community to take concrete steps to hold Erdogan to account for his growing ties to Vladimir Putin, and for his pursuit of repressive and anti-democratic norms and continued violations of international law.

"As violent as Erdogan's tenure has been at home, his foreign policy has been absolutely awful But one thing is clear — the United States must take the Turkish President's actions seriously We need to hold Erdogan accountable for his behavior when he violates international laws, or challenges democratic norms, or allows his forces to commit human rights abuses. And that's why I'm calling for free and fair elections in Turkey," Menendez said. "But if standing up to human rights abuses makes me an enemy of Erdogan — if calling out Turkey for arming Azerbaijan and enabling the massacre of innocent Armenian civilians makes me an enemy of Erdogan — if demanding Turkey recognize Greek and Cypriot sovereignty makes me an enemy of Erdogan — then it is a badge I will wear with honor."

"That is why, as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I will not approve any F-16s for Turkey until he halts his campaign of aggression across the entire region," he continued. "To my colleagues here in the Senate — do not be afraid to stand up for American values in the face of Erdogan's aggression. To the

international community — do not hesitate to hold Turkey accountable for violating international law. To the citizens living in the shadow of Erdogan's Typhoon missiles—do not forget the United States stands shoulder-to-shoulder with you. And to those people in Turkey who still hope for a free, democratic future—do not give up. One day soon, with your bravery, peace and prosperity will return to your homeland."

He said, "This is a NATO member — directly threatening to target Athens, a city of three million civilians. According to the United Nations — an intentional attack on civilians is a war crime."

Schiff Asks Biden to Force Azerbaijan to End Blockade

SCHIFF, from page 6

Armenian Caucus leadership Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Jackie Speier (D-CA) and David Valadao (R-CA), as well as Members of Congress Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Joaquin Castro (D-TX), Judy Chu (D-CA), David N. Cicilline (D-RI), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), James R. Langevin (D-RI), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Susie Lee (D-NV), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY), James P. McGovern (D-MA), Grace Meng (D-NY), Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA), Scott H. Peters (D-CA), John P. Sarbanes (D-MD), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Susan Wild (D-PA).

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| Avedis and Houry Boyamian, Winchester, MA \$1,000 | James Tashjian, Westboro, MA \$100 |
| Sarkis A. Satian, McLean, VA \$500 | Raffi Dorian, Fresno, CA \$100 |
| Berdj and Margaret Kiladjian, Winchester, MA \$500 | Agnes Killabian, Highland Beach, FL \$100 |
| Annie Simonian Totah, Potomac, MD \$500 | Claire Mangasarian, Madison, WI \$100 |
| Nancy R. Kolligian, Watertown, MA \$500 | Casey and Bella Kazanjian, Rockville, MD \$100 |
| Jeffrey D. Bilezikian, Watertown, MA \$500 | Hermine Adamian, Wellesley, MA \$100 |
| Elizabeth Aprahamian, Northville, MI \$500 | Arshag and Takouhi Tarpinian, Old Tappan, NJ \$100 |
| Daniel and Ludmila Sahakian, State College, PA \$500 | Osep and Dr. Nadya Sarafian, Northville, MI \$100 |
| Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Watertown, MA \$500 | Guiragos Minassian, MD, Tarzana, CA \$100 |
| Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros, Lynnfield, MA, \$500 | Dr. Jacques Gulekjian, Fort Lee, NJ \$100 |
| Arlene Avakian, Boca Raton, FL \$300 | Sonia Zorian, Lynn, MA \$100 |
| Heratch O. Doumanian, Chicago, IL \$300 | Charles Gazarian, Brookline, MA \$100 |
| Victoria S. Hovanessian, Fort Lee, NJ \$300 | Berjouhi Adourian, Woburn, MA \$100 |
| Ernest M. Barsamian, M.D. and Sonig Kradjian, Boca Raton, FL \$300 | Edward Shooshanian, Boynton Beach, FL \$100 |
| Nubar Aram and Aida Sethian, Monrovia, CA \$300 | John and Joanne Pehlivanian, Bay Head, NJ \$100 |
| Dr. Myron and Mrs. Ruth Allukian Jr., Boston, MA \$300 | Frederick and Catherine Kasparian, Glenville, NY \$100 |
| George W. Haroutunian, Stoneham, MA \$300 | Hmayak Baltayan, Los Angeles, CA \$100 |
| Karekin Arzoomanian, New York, NY \$250 | Hagop and Maria Vartivarian, Mahwah, NJ \$100 |
| Anonymous \$200 | Dr. Charles and Manoushag Garabedian, Shrewsbury, MA \$100 |
| Ruth and Wil Swisher, Newington, CT \$200 | Kevork and Silva Keushkerian, Pasadena, CA \$100 |
| Asadour Hadjian, Alexandria, VA \$200 | Richard McOmber, Rumson, NJ \$100 |
| Carol A. Babikyan, Belmont, MA \$200 | Dr. John and Dr. Sophie Bilezikian, Scarsdale, NY \$100 |
| Vatche Semerdjian, Glendale, CA \$200 | Albert Der Tatevasian, Fort Worth, TX \$80 |
| Harry and Janice Mazadoorian, Kensington, CT \$200 | Charles Durgerian, Ft. Lauderdale, FL \$80 |
| Barbara and Donald Tellalian, Newton Ctr., MA \$200 | Naomi Zeytoonian, Racine, WI \$50 |
| Leon and Marion Semonian, Newton, MA \$200 | Richard and Ann Tarvezian, Watertown, MA \$50 |
| Jirair and Ani Hovsepien, Belmont, MA \$180 | Hayg and Brigitte Boyadjian, Lexington, MA \$30 |
| Noyemi and Hagop Isnar, Haworth, NJ \$150 | Andrew and Rose Torigian, Moorestown NJ \$25 |
| Gary and Mariann Zamanigian, Bloomfield Hills, MI \$150 | Barbara Soghigian, Middleton, MA \$25 |



Merry Christmas
Casey and Bella Kazanjian
Rockville, MD

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone
Edmond Y. Azadian
W. Bloomfield, MI

Best wishes at Christmas and throughout the New Year
Harry and Janice Mazadoorian
Kensington, CT

Merry Christmas!
Ruth and Wil Swisher
Newington, CT

In appreciation of the quality reports in general, and in particular the editorials we read throughout the year 2022, we wish you all a joyous holiday season and a New Year filled with happiness.
Maro and Sirop Bedrosian
Houston, TX

Merry Christmas to the Mirror-Spectator and all its readers
Dr. Jacques Gulekjian
Fort Lee, NJ

Wishing all a Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year.
Dr. Myron Allukian Jr.
Boston, MA

Wishing you the Merriest Christmas and a happy New Year filled with great joy and peace.
Vatche and Sossy Semerdjian
Glendale, CA

Greetings from the Gazarians
Charlie, Ric and May
Brookline, MA

Best of Luck
Heratch Doumanian
Chicago, IL



*an
Happy N*

Happy Holidays and God Bless All the Armenians around the World
Hmayak Baltayan
Los Angeles, CA

May the Christmas Season bring peace, happiness and joy to all
Dr. and Mrs. Gary and Mariann Zamanigian
Bloomfield Hills, MI

God bless and give strength to keep up the good hard work of FREE journalism
Nubar Aram and Aida Sethian
Monrovia, CA

We wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a happy, secure, peaceful and united Armenia in the New Year.
Mr. Osep and Dr. Nadya Sarafian
Northville, MI

Holiday Greetings to all our family and friends, far and near! We hope and pray that the New Year will be a very peaceful one, filled with health, love, happiness, compromise and coexistence for all mankind.
Annie Simonian Totah and Family
Potomac, MD

We congratulate the Mirror-Spectator for its 90 years of continuous community service with international news of interest the Armenian communities within the Diaspora and Armenia.
Jirair and Ani Hovsepian
Belmont, MA

*Christmas wishes to all Armenians.
May the New Year bring Peace.*
Ara Cherchian
Hartland, WI

Keep up the superlative reporting
Robert Mirak
Winchester, MA



and New Year



With prayers for a joy-filled Christmas and a Happy 2023!

Sarkis and Ruth Bedevian

Wyckoff, NJ

Wishing a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home

Watertown, MA

*To our family and friends near and far, Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year*

Michele Kolligian and Bob Khederian

Boston, MA

*Armenians should look to the Mirror as spectators to decide if
they are worthy of being Armenians. If not, read the Spectator
more regularly and you will get there! Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year!*

Ernest M. Barsamian, MD and Sonig Kradjian

Boca Raton, FL

You are doing a great job on the publication!

Mr. and Mrs. Leon Semonian

Newton, MA

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all friends
and family*

Maria and Hagop Vartivarian

Mahwah, NJ

Peace on Earth! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Jeff Barasatian

West Chester, PA

*Thank you for continuing to send me the Mirror. I share it with
the parishioners at St. Mesrob in Racine.*

Naomi Zeytoonian

Racine, WI

Peace on Earth

Aprahamian Family

Northville, MI

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all my relatives and
friends in the US and Canada*

Sonia Iskandarian

Watertown, MA

Happy Holidays to my relatives and friends

George W. Haroutunian

Stoneham, MA

*Prayers to God that He provide strength and guidance to the
Mirror-Spectator Staff*

Dr. and Mrs. Charles Garabedian

Shrewsbury, MA

*Let the New Year bring peace to Armenia and Artsakh
and prosperity to our people there.*

Kevork and Silva Keushkerian

Pasadena, CA

Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year to all

Agnes Killabian

Highland Beach, FL

Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year!

Gregory A. Kolligian, JD

North Reading, MA

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year; Hope next year will
be a better year.*

Avedis and Houry Boyamian

Winchester, MA

*Wishing you all the Love, Peace and Happiness that the true
meaning of Christmas brings.*

Nishan and Margrit Atinizian

Winchester, MA

*God bless you for keeping us in touch with our homeland and
our miraculous people. I hope we survive all challenges*

Barbara Sohigian

Middleton, MA

*May the spirit, joy and blessings of Christmas be with all of us
throughout the years. Peace, goodwill, good health
and God's blessings to all!*

Richard and Ann Tarvezian

Watertown, MA

Merry Christmas to everybody who loves Armenia

Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros

Lynnfield, MA



COMMUNITY NEWS

Tekeyan Cultural Association 75th Anniversary at Beshgeturian Center

ANNIVERSARY, from page 1

Dr. Simonian in his speech stressed the importance of the preservation of Armenian identity in the diaspora and how TCA played a key role in this over the decades, especially in serving as a “bridge” between Armenia and various Armenian communities scattered throughout the world. The name Tekeyan symbolizes the world of ideas, love, faith, and conviction, he said.

TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian provided the biography and accomplishments of Kevonian, who not only is a successful businessman who overcame various obstacles early in life, but is well known as a philanthropist supportive of the Armenian community. He has helped many different types of organizations, including TCA. Kuredjian revealed that the very chairs people were sitting on in the hall were gifts from him.

After this, a previously delayed special gift in recognition of his many services to the Armenian people was bestowed upon Dr. Armen Baibourtian, former Deputy Foreign Minister and until recently Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles. Dr. Baibourtian also has served Armenia at the ambassadorial level in far-flung places like India.

TCA Central Board President Edmond Y. Azadian then took the podium and stated that he and TCA in general are extremely grateful for Dr. Simon Simonian's contributions to TCA over the years. Azadian expressed appreciation that High Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Zareh Sinanyan agreed to come to participate in the event only three hours after disembarking from a flight from Paris. He noted in connection with Sinanyan's office that the diaspora is one part of the collectivity of Armenians, and if it cannot continue unreserved relations with the homeland, then its efforts to perpetuate Armenian culture and identity are in vain. Consequently, irrespective of the individual holding office, it is necessary for Armenians to stand behind the work of institutions like the High Commission.

Azadian also recognized the energetic, inspiring and constructive activities of



Nazareth Kevonian, left, receives a gift from Edmond Azadian, with at far left Tamar Kevonian, and far right Sonia Babayan



to Los Angeles. TCA, wherever it may be, serves as the shield or army defending Armenian culture, Azadian proclaimed.

He spoke about the decades of working not only to disseminate Armenian culture but to allow Armenians in the West to remain in touch with various cultural and social developments in Soviet Armenia during the difficult era of the Cold War. Some of the most eminent writers, musicians and artists of Soviet Armenia were brought to the diaspora as part of Tekeyan programs.

After this speech, the main speakers and guests of honor participated in the cutting of a special Tekeyan 75th anniversary cake. Honorary president Kevonian was given a special gift as souvenir of the evening.

High Commissioner Sinanyan then was invited to speak. He praised the work of TCA in the preservation and dissemination of Armenian cultural and its contributions to the progress of the homeland. Sinanyan



Dr. Simon Simonian



Sonia Babayan

briefly spoke of the perilous situation Armenia was facing and called for all Armenians to rally around the homeland.

Archbishop Derderian at the conclusion of the formal program said that 75 years is a significant span of time for an organization to have pursued its mission and maintained a membership. In his remarks, he quoted from the works of the “prince of poets” Vahan Tekeyan and called for everyone to love the Armenian culture and church and truly become “bridges” to the homeland.

continued on next page



Edmond Azadian



Dr. Armen Baibourtian, center, with Archbishop Hovnan Derderian and Edmond Azadian

COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

Archbishop Derderian was accompanied at the event by Archpriest Fr. Manoug Markarian.

The aforementioned talks were interspersed with musical interludes. Arthur Hagopian, who goes by the name “Mr. X” when he performs, sang a number of internationally known songs including Armenian ones, while the Tekeyan Youth Band, formed only relatively recently, performed various types of jazz fusion and Armenian works, including an adaptation of Arno Babajanian’s *Elegy*. The band, introduced by Kuredjian, includes Edgar Ekshian on piano, Hayg Kaymakamian on guitar, Sean Armoudikian on guitar, Mark Tavukjian on saxophone and Michael Andinian on drums. Marie Kayayan is their musical adviser.

Counselor Nazeli Hambardzumyan of the Consulate General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles was among the special guests in the audience, along with leaders of various Armenian organizations and political parties. TCA of the US and Canada Central Board members Hilda Hartunian and Mihran Minassian, as well as TCA Execu-



Zareh Sinanyan



Maral Voskian

tive Director Aram Arkun, had come from the East Coast to attend the event.

After the formal program was concluded, a buffet dinner was provided to guests, who had the opportunity to speak further with the artists and dignitaries involved in the evening’s program. Violinist Merouzhn Margaryan provided further musical entertainment both before and after the formal program. The Beshgeturian hall itself was specially adorned with festive decorations for the occasion. A video of the entire event can be seen at <https://fb.watch/hwPmDha0a6/>.

The program booklet for the evening included letters of encouragement and congratulations from Archbishop Derderian, Armenian Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Vahram Dumanyan, High Commissioner Sinanyan, President of the Writers Union of Armenia Edward Militonnyan, and Edmond Azadian. At the end of the booklet are the names of the members of the Tekeyan 75th Anniversary Committee of the West Coast who helped organize the event, including chair Sonia Babayan, Hratch Ajemian, Jirair Frounjan, Ani Kartalian, Parsegh Kartalian, Lilit Keheyen, Mariette Asdghig Khanjian, Lora Kuyumjian, Ani Nahabedian, Khatchig Nahabedian, Siran Oknayan, and TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian.



The Tekeyan Youth Band



Tekeyan Cultural Association

21st Anniversary

Sponsor a Teacher
in Armenia and Five Artsakh Villages



SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2001, THE TCA SPONSOR A TEACHER PROGRAM HAS RAISED \$793,560 AND REACHED OUT TO 7,163 TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH.

☐ Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher's name and address.

☐ \$200 ☐ \$400 ☐ \$600 ☐ other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Make check payable to:
Tekeyan Cultural Association—Memo: Sponsor a Teacher

Mail your check to:
TCA Sponsor a Teacher
5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056

Your donation is Tax Deductable

Arts & Culture

Ben Newman Finds Dream Job at Baltimore Chamber Orchestra

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BALTIMORE — Ben Newman is a man with a passion for music. As executive director of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, he is responsible for every element of the day-to-day operations of the company; in his words, “the marketing, the finances, contracting artists, paying the orchestra, paying for and attending board meetings, sending out fundraising letters, selling tickets, and so on.”

It sounds like a job for a business major with a passion for music; or even a music major who was always good with business. Newman is neither; he’s a classically trained violinist and singer who has a passion for the classical music experience as a whole. He’s translated that passion into a career in Arts Administration, spanning from opera companies to his current position with the BCO.

It all started with a unique childhood experience that blended the Armenian, Jewish and American cultures in Southeast Michigan.

Detroit Roots

“I grew up in a musical family,” said Newman. “We were all singers, and my sister and brother played piano. And at a young age I was introduced to classical music and really enjoyed the sound of the violin, and I asked my mom if I could play the violin at age 6.”

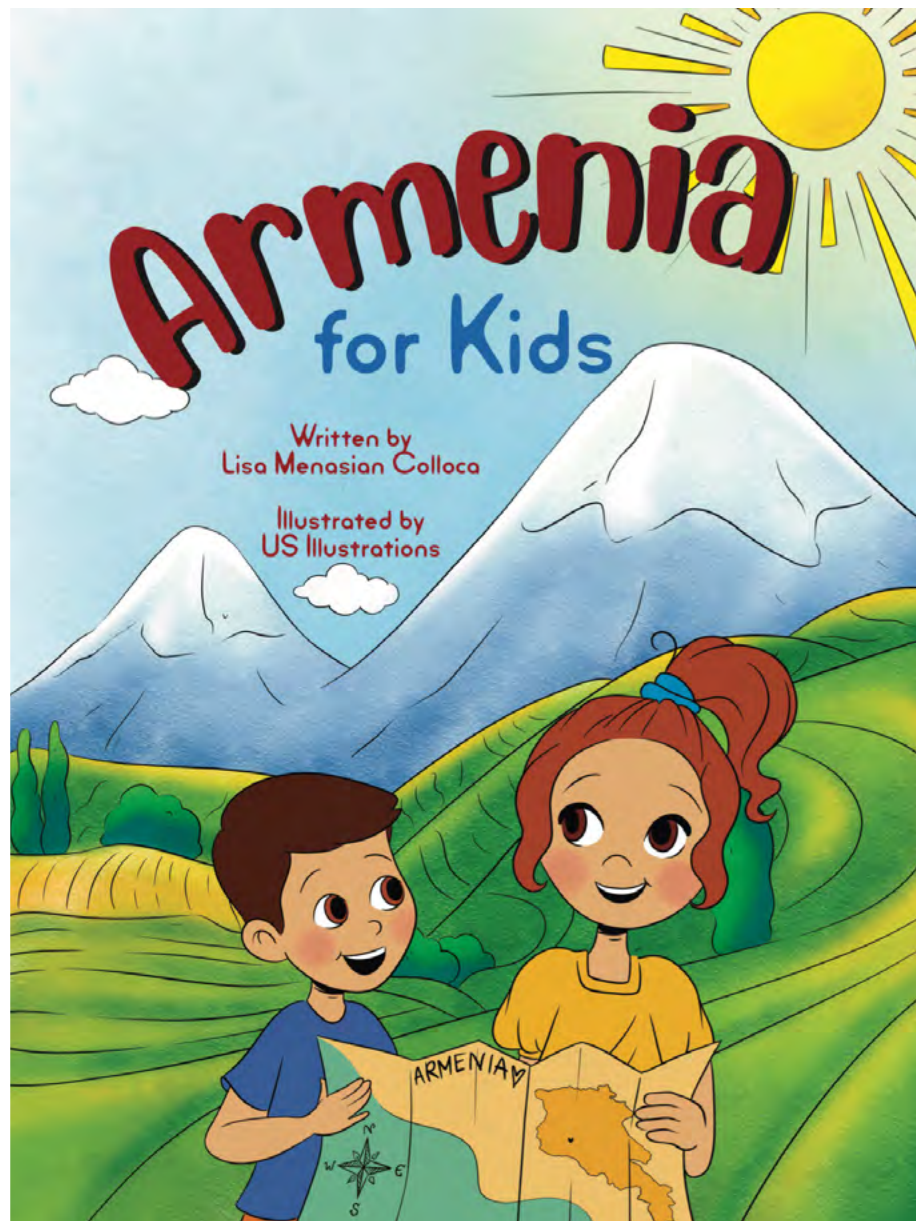
Newman came from an unlikely background. His father, Gene Newman, was a scion of one of Detroit’s storied Jewish families, and was a convert to Christianity as an adult. His mother, Robin (Soutanian) Newman, was the granddaughter of Armenian Genocide survivors whose Armenian father and non-Armenian mother were both deaf.

The couple raised 10 children in a Protestant denomination and were ardent proponents of homeschooling. A few of their younger children, including Ben, eventually attended the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School in Southfield, for high school, from where Newman graduated.

Education, reading and high culture such as classical music were strongly encouraged in their home and Newman’s mother eventually got him a violin for Christmas when he was 8. “I started lessons and played all through high school. I was concert master for a small orchestra in Livonia called the Livonia Youth Philharmonic. So I pursued music as my undergrad degree in violin performance, and I added a French major and minor in German and voice.”

Studying French and German made it easier to sing opera, for which Newman has always had a passion. “I love how music and culture are such staples in how people connect to where they’re from and who they are. That totally ties to my passion

see NEWMAN, page 15



New Children’s Book Helps Kids Learn About Armenia



“WHAT STARTED AS A PANDEMIC PROJECT AND GIFT TO MY OWN CHILDREN, SOON TURNED INTO A MORE SERIOUS VENTURE”

—LISA MENASIAN COLLOCA

A new book, *Armenia for Kids*, by Armenian-American author Lisa Menasian Colloca has just been published.

According to Colloca, “what started as a pandemic project and gift to my own children, soon turned into a more serious venture after connecting with a talented Yerevan-based illustrator at US Illustrations.”

She added, “When I was a child, I can remember looking for a book about Armenia in libraries and bookstores, but didn’t find one that satisfied me. Now, as a history teacher and parent, I hope to share a book with the Armenian community that will resonate with children and adults. So far, that seems to be the case! I sold three dozen copies at my soft-launch at a recent fall festival at my parish, the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, Haverhill, MA. More requests came in the days that followed.”

In the book, two young travelers visit the country, see Mt. Ararat, visit the giant Alphabet Park, explore Yerevan and visit many historic sites.

Armenia for Kids is available from <https://www.armeniaforkids.com/> with free shipping, or from Barnes and Noble or a local bookstore.

Los Angeles Magazine Sells to L.A. Attorneys Mark Geragos and Ben Meiselas

By Seth Abramovitch & Ashley Cullins

LOS ANGELES (*The Hollywood Reporter*) — A trio of Southern California magazines — *Los Angeles* magazine, *Pasadena* magazine and *Orange Coast* magazine — have sold to Engine Vision Media, the company founded by celebrity attorneys Mark Geragos and Ben Meiselas.

Los Angeles magazine will immediately relocate from Wilshire Boulevard to the historic Engine Company No. 28 building in downtown L.A. All existing *Los Angeles* staff will remain with the publication during the transition.

Engine Vision “plans to invest in more content, significantly enhance the magazines’ digital presence, [and] expand the slate of live events hosted by the magazines in their respective communities,” the company said in a press release announcing the sale.

“As someone who was born in downtown Los Angeles and raised in the Pasadena area, it’s a dream to help steward the legacy of these three incredible magazines and provide the resources needed to take them to the next level with a positive vision that celebrates the communities that these magazines serve,” Geragos says in the statement.

Adds Meiselas, “From culture, to entertainment, to food, and business, I am looking forward to setting forth a vision for these magazines to become a trusted source of information and unifying forces in the community.”

The last *Los Angeles* magazine sale was in 2017 when Emmis Communications sold off multiple titles to Hour Media, a Detroit-based company that owns Hour Detroit, Sacramento magazine, Atlanta magazine, Orange Coast and others.

At the time, the new owners ousted editor Mary Melton and then, in early 2019, hired Maer Roshan as the top editor. Roshan will remain in the position under Engine Vision.

Los Angeles’ gross circulation as of 2020 was 120,000 monthly.

While not exclusively an entertainment litigator, Geragos made a name for himself in Hollywood representing clients such as Michael Jackson, Chris Brown, Winona Ryder, Nicole Richie and Sean Combs. He’s also recently made headlines in connection with cases involving Kesha and Michael Avenatti.

Meanwhile, Meiselas leads the civil and transactional practices at Geragos & Geragos and represents former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick across all of his legal and business endeavors, including his first-look overall deal with Disney, and is a co-founder of Kaepernick Publishing.

This acquisition continues the trend of expanding their business endeavors well beyond the law. In early 2021, Geragos Global bought Scott’s Family Resort, a 1,000-acre property in the Catskills that was featured in season two of “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel.”

Meanwhile, Meiselas formed SuperPAC MeidasTouch with his two

see GERAGOS, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

Ben Newman Finds Dream Job at Baltimore Chamber Orchestra

NEWMAN, from page 14
and identity as an Armenian. I remember my mom told me when the Michigan Opera Theatre was going to produce ‘Anoush’” opera in 2001. Newman recalls that as a kid he went around telling everyone that there was an Armenian opera. He also had a chance to perform operatic pieces in undergrad at Hillsdale College in rural southern Michigan. “I sang some sections from ‘La Boheme’ and also ‘Don Giovanni’; they were community performances, basically.”

Although he doesn’t perform or direct an Armenian repertoire on a regular basis, growing up as part of the Metro Detroit Armenian community had a big impact on direction toward a musical career.

“I got introduced at an early age to Isabel Bayrakdarian and became a huge fan of hers, I got her CDs for Christmas and listened to them all the time, and listened to them in college. And the Armenian sound and identity played a huge role in my appreciation of music,” he noted.

The large number of Armenians who have succeeded in the classical music world in the United States and in particular those who came out of the Detroit area, gave Newman the encouragement to believe he could do the same. He cites the nationally-known violinist sisters Ani and Ida Kavafian (who were born in Istanbul and brought to Detroit as children, where they started their careers), and Charles Avsharian, the Ann Arbor native who started the highly popular violin and stringed instrument supplier Shar Music (<https://www.sharmusic.com/>).

He added, “There were all kinds of connections to singing and stringed instruments, which I fell in love with, and has been a constant source of inspiration to me in my career”

He did have a chance to play part of Khachaturian’s violin concerto in his senior recital. He said that while he unfortunately has not had to the chance to perform singing in Armenian, he has arranged his own version of the Edgar Hovhannisyan’s popular *Yerevan-Erebuni*, which he plays “all the time” on violin for himself as his own personal source of inspiration.

Discovering a New Side To The Classical Music World

How did a young man who studied music performance end up running an entire orchestra company at a young age? Newman discovered a niche area of the field which most don’t think much about: Arts Administration.

After graduating from Hillsdale, “I did what many struggling artists did and started waiting tables at a restaurant. I was at Texas de Brazil. [A steakhouse in downtown Detroit]. I got promoted to manager within six months and was transferred to San Antonio, and lived there for seven or eight months.” Newman could have been successful career-wise, but decided he didn’t want to stay in San Antonio and that he wanted music again in his life. Going into



Ben Newman

performance and succeeding as a working member of a symphony seemed daunting and there were not many opportunities in the area.

He said, “As I was thinking about what it would look like to leave Texas, I started thinking, ‘aren’t there people who run symphony orchestras?’”

Indeed there are, and Newman discovered the field of Arts Administration. Newman admits that it sounds “niche” to many people, “but it is perhaps the thing that I am most excited about in the world.”

“I basically started with looking up anything and everything I could about the field and learning that there are masters programs, but I didn’t have the resources to go back to school. So I thought, maybe I can just work my way up the ladder. But being in San Antonio there weren’t a lot of opportunities. So I left, packed up, and took 5,000 bucks in my pocket and went to New York City to try and make it.”

When in New York, Newman got an internship in a company called Opera America, which is the national service organization for opera companies in the United States. The company produces an annual conference to help the opera sector. “I was in the right place at the right time when a full time position opened up, and that facilitated what would become the last 10 years of my career, when I was able to build a massive network to understand the opera field at large,” he said. In 2016, Newman left New York and moved to Denver working for Opera Colorado. He has also worked for Opera Philadelphia, Opera Omaha, the Detroit Opera, and then “I got into artist management, representing about 25-30 singers and stage directors.”

The late David DiChiera, founder and artistic director of the Michigan Opera Theatre / Detroit Opera House, was a huge influence on Newman. “David DiChiera was a huge mentor to me in many ways, he came from California but was on faculty at Oakland University [in the Detroit suburbs] and in 1971 he founded Michigan Opera Theatre in downtown Detroit.”

At the time, race riots had recently racked the city leading to a massive exodus of residents. DiChiera was told that an opera company would not work in the inner city and that he should have started it in one of the wealthier suburbs. But according to Newman, “it is integral that the city has an opera company that is in the heart of the city. I really loved his passion not only for the art form but for the city. That was very inspiring as a young person, to see a person so committed.”

DiChiera pulled off remarkable programming for Detroit, like bringing the Three Tenors to Comerica Park, home of the Detroit Tigers baseball team, in 2000. Newman grew up going to opera performances in downtown Detroit and admired DiChiera as a pivotal figure, but did not get a chance to meet or work with him until he

was in New York working for Opera America. DiChiera became a mentor for Newman; he passed away in 2018.

A Passion For Making Classical Music Happen

“I think one of the things that happened for me was I thought that if I’m going to work on the business side, I need to know all the ins and outs. Because I saw incredible artistic directors who were programming great seasons and booking great artists. But there’s a whole business infrastructure, and if I’m serious about doing this, I have to get to know as many sides of the industry as I can; get to know how to do fundraising, artistic planning, marketing, all the things that make a business run every day. So when I work with different people I know what they’re talking about.”

What drives Newman in this niche field is wanting to make classical music experiences available for audiences. “For me it was really framed by having really powerful experiences as an audience member, hearing absolutely fantastic singers. When we would have *badarak* services with Deacon Rubik [the choir director of St. John’s Armenian Church in Southfield, MI], when he would sing, the liturgy is so beautiful. And I think that appreciation growing up in a strong cultural and religious musical framework demonstrated how powerful music is. I want to share this and make this possible for as many people as I can. Leading up to today, I think about how many people turn to TV or movies but throughout history whenever there’s been a period of war or uncertainty, they turn to the arts and to media to try to find comfort. Very often it is that art that allows us and gives us the capacity to heal. Music is involved in all these things, and they help us to be able to process what’s happening.”

Embarking On a New Role in Baltimore

Over the summer, Newman moved to Baltimore where he was working as a freelance producer and artist manager. His passion for making classical musical artistry possible plays a huge role in this phase of his career. “I’ve gotten to know a lot of singers and different artists working in the field,” he said. “People are so passionate about creative minds coming together, I was hearing a number of artists say they have ideas, and I wanted to help them make that happen. I’m helping a friend work on a program, she’s an operatically trained

soprano, but found her passion in jazz and R&B, and international music, and she’s created this amazing program that focuses on the music of the African Diaspora, looking at three singers from Africa, Cape Verde, and the US, showcasing the diversity and experience of these black female icons of different places.”

As for Baltimore, he chose the city because of its proximity to the centers of classical music activity on the East Coast, even before he got his newest gig. “I love Baltimore, it reminds me a lot of Detroit,” he said.

He’s still able to do his independent producing, because it’s “project-based,” he said. But after a few months in the city, he applied for and got a permanent job as executive director of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra.

A “chamber orchestra” features a smaller number of musicians than a standard modern symphony orchestra. There are about 25-40 musicians, specializing in music that was written for that size of orchestra, mostly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, larger orchestras usually play arrangements of the compositions of the classical era, but the chamber orchestra is more historically accurate. It’s not to be confused with “chamber music,” such as what is played by a string quartet. There are about 15 chamber orchestras throughout the country, Newman said.

For him, the new job meant coming full circle. “It brings me back to my roots as a violinist. And it’s been really refreshing. It’s also really great to be a part of another side of the classical music world.”

As for his independent productions, Newman describes himself as an “independent producer of passion projects. I really love working with artists and performers. I don’t want to be on stage. I view it as a privilege to work with world class artists, and I support it from behind the scenes.”

For younger people interested in the field, Newman has this advice: “Get an internship, study, there are more resources available for ongoing education today than ever before. What a lot of people don’t know is that the work of arts administration is similar to that of the artists. It’s a hard grind. The work ethic to be able to stick it out, it’s not for everyone; but it’s also extremely rewarding.”

To see the upcoming programs, visit <https://thebco.org/>.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

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 Phoenicia 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.

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 28 — Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church presents “David Ayriyan - Memorial concert ” Wednesday, 7:30 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/>



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Grilled eggplant dip with yogurt garnished with roasted seasoned almonds, red pepper, parsley, drizzled with olive oil (Photo by Yakir Levy)

Faye Levy: Flavorful Middle Eastern Dips for All Seasons

(Recipes reprinted from *The Orange County Register*)

By Faye Levy and Yakir Levy

From velvety dips and spreads to vibrant salads to rosewater-spiked treats, Middle Eastern cuisine is as colorful as it is delicious. You may have noticed hummus rising in popularity over the past few years, with a huge array of flavors available at most grocery stores and markets. But you might not have tried the colorful variety of other Middle Eastern dips out there. Never fear: We’ve gathered an array for you to try soon. Grab fresh pita, pita chips, flat bread or favorite crackers and get ready to taste some wonderful favorites.

“Middle Eastern cuisines are known for a variety of meat dishes but cooks make many colorful and healthy vegetable dips as well, to serve as appetizers or side dishes. Armenian, Turkish, Lebanese, Syrian or Palestinian meals sometimes begin with an array of such dips. At home, we make those savory, easy to prepare dips and spreads mostly from pantry foods combined with one or two fresh ingredients,” says Faye Levy, culinary columnist and award-winning author.

Faye is the lead cooking columnist for the *Jerusalem Post* and the author of 23 critically acclaimed cookbooks, including *Feast from the Mideast* and *1,000 Jewish Recipes*. She has won prestigious prizes for her cookbooks, including a James Beard Award. A syndicated cooking columnist, she has contributed many articles to the country’s top newspapers, as well as to *Gourmet*, *Bon Appetit* and other magazines.

Three-Way Grilled Eggplant Dip

The easiest way to cook eggplants is to grill them whole. You can make them into Middle Eastern eggplant dip with tahini, Persian-style eggplant with yogurt, or reddish-orange eggplant dip with roasted red peppers. Globe eggplants are traditional but we like to use Chinese eggplants too. For garnish, use mint sprigs, olives, toasted almonds or pomegranate arils, or the customary chopped parsley and ground red pepper. Serve these dips with fresh pita bread or other Middle Eastern flatbreads.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 globe eggplants (total about 2 pounds), whole
- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- 4 to 5 tablespoons tahini, stirred in jar until blended before measuring, to taste
- 3 to 4 tablespoons strained fresh lemon juice, to taste
- 1 to 2 tablespoons water
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Extra virgin olive oil (for drizzling)
- About 2 or 3 teaspoons minced Italian parsley (garnish)
- Aleppo pepper (coarsely ground, semi-hot Middle Eastern red pepper), coarsely ground hot or sweet paprika or cayenne pepper (garnish)

PREPARATION:

Preheat broiler or prepare grill with medium-hot coals.

Prick each eggplant 5 or 6 times with a fork. Set eggplants on a broiler pan, lined with foil if you like, or on grill. Broil or grill, turning eggplants a few times, until they are very tender, about 20 minutes. They should look collapsed and their skins should be charred; check for tenderness by pressing on neck end or piercing it with a fork - it should go in easily.

Remove eggplants from oven or grill. Let stand until cool enough to handle. Cut off eggplant caps. Halve eggplants lengthwise. Scoop and scrape out eggplant pulp from inside skin. Put pulp in a colander; leave for 5 minutes to drain off any liquid. Chop pulp fine with a knife or by pulsing in a food processor. Transfer eggplant to a bowl. Add garlic and mix well.

Spoon tahini into a medium-size bowl. Gradually stir in 3 tablespoons lemon juice and 1 tablespoon water. Add to eggplant and mix well. Season generously with salt, add pepper to taste and more lemon juice for a sharper taste or water for a milder taste or thinner dip. If you like, stir in more tahini; taste again for seasoning. Refrigerate for 1 or 2 hours to blend flavors. To serve, spread eggplant mixture in a thick layer on a plate, making edges slightly thicker than center. Drizzle center with olive oil. Garnish with parsley and Aleppo pepper.

VARIATIONS

Grilled Eggplant Dip with Yogurt

Omit tahini, lemon juice and water. Mix 1 1/2 cups whole milk yogurt into eggplant-garlic mixture. Add 1/2 teaspoon dried mint or more to taste, and, if desired, 1 to 1 1/2 teaspoons roasted peeled hot peppers such as jalapenos or pinches of cayenne pepper to taste. Taste for salt; add more yogurt if desired.

Grilled Eggplant and Red Pepper Dip

Broil and peel 1 1/2 to 2 pounds red bell peppers, following steps 1 and 2 in recipe for Spicy Walnut and Red Pepper Pâté. Purée broiled peppers in a food processor. Add chopped broiled eggplant, minced garlic and tahini sauce to processor and blend until smooth. Taste for salt, and add 1/2 teaspoon Aleppo pepper, or cayenne pepper to taste. Serve drizzled with olive oil and, if you like, garnished with roasted red pepper strips.

Chickpea and Tahini Dip (Hummus)

When time allows, we cook dried chickpeas for hummus; their cooking liquid enhances the flavor. In addition to the usual garnishes - a drizzle of olive oil, and pinches of chopped parsley and ground red pepper, you can add chopped chives, mint sprigs, edible flowers, cooked chickpeas or toasted pine nuts.

Yield: 8 servings

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 pound dried chickpeas (garbanzo beans) (about 1 1/4 cups) or two 15-ounce cans
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup tahini, stirred in jar until blended before measuring
- 1/3 cup strained fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)
- 1/2 cup chickpea cooking liquid or water
- Salt to taste
- 1 to 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (for drizzling)
- Aleppo pepper, paprika or cayenne pepper (garnish)
- Chopped Italian parsley (garnish)

PREPARATION:

Pick over chickpeas, discarding any pebbles and broken or discolored peas. Rinse well. If you like, soak chickpeas 8 hours or overnight in water to cover generously; this cuts their cooking time slightly and helps improve the texture if peas are old. Drain soaked chickpeas and rinse.

Put chickpeas in a large saucepan and add 5 cups water. Bring to a simmer. Cover and cook over low heat for 1 1/2 hours or until very tender. Drain well, reserving cooking liquid. Cool slightly. If you like, rub chickpeas gently to remove their skins.

Chop chickpeas in food processor. Add garlic, tahini, lemon juice, cumin and 1/4 cup chickpea cooking liquid or liquid from the can. Puree until blended and chickpeas are finely ground. Transfer to a bowl. Gradually stir in more chickpea cooking liquid or water until puree is a smooth spread. Season with salt to taste. Refrigerate, covered, until ready to serve. To serve, spoon hummus onto a serving plate. Spread it so edges are thicker than center. Drizzle olive oil into center. Garnish with pinches of Aleppo pepper and chopped parsley.

Faye Levy and Yakir Levy are culinary columnists of the *Jerusalem Post*, a position Faye has held since 1990. The Levys have lived on three continents, and Faye has written 23 cookbooks in English, French, and Hebrew, including five on Jewish cooking. Faye Levy’s *International Vegetable Cookbook* won a James Beard Award, and *Classic Cooking Techniques*, *Chocolate Sensations*, and *Fresh from France-Vegetable Creations* won awards from the International Association of Culinary Professionals.

Faye began her career in Israel as the assistant of celebrated cookbook author Ruth Sirkis. Next Faye enrolled in a six-week course at Ecole de Cuisine La Varenne in Paris. The Levys lived in Paris for almost six years, during which Faye obtained professional chefs’ training and worked as La Varenne’s cookery editor. The Levys enjoy expanding and sharing their culinary and cultural knowledge at every opportunity, whether around town or traveling across the globe.

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Armenians in Karabakh Hostage to and Victims of International Intrigues



By Edmond Y. Azadian

some political points through standing up to provide aid during this miserable situation. And thus, the lifeline between Armenia and Karabakh remains blocked, creating a humanitarian disaster.

Azerbaijan seems to have developed a playbook which guides its actions and its hybrid war against Armenia. Baku, when it attacked Armenia's sovereign territory in September 13, had not anticipated the world reaction that followed that brief war. This time around, it is moving in a more calculated way to strangle the people in Karabakh, with the ultimate goal of depopulating that enclave and simultaneously extracting a price from Armenia, in terms of having unhampered access to the "Zangezur Corridor."

Words of condemnation have come from major centers of power, which have not thus far deterred President Ilham Aliyev in his determination to continue his policy of ethnic cleansing. They all call for the implementation of the November 9, 2020 tripartite declaration, signed by Moscow, Yerevan and Baku.

There is also some disingenuous intent in all those calls, which render them ineffective; thus, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has expressed concern about the ongoing blockade of the corridor, following his meeting with Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. But the statement was issued through his spokesperson, Stephane Dujarric. Similarly, the US State Department has pitched in, this time around, not through the Secretary of State Antony Blinken, by the Principal Deputy Spokesperson for the State Department Vedant Patel. In diplomatic parlance, all details are very significant. The messenger provides the weight of the message. Thus, President Aliyev can figure out the feel of the message on the priority agenda of the messenger and shape his reactions accordingly.

Once in a while we hear messages from Turkey, which orchestrates Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Right during this stand-off between the so-called Azerbaijani environmentalists and the Russian peacekeeping forces, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu intervened and announced that the blockade will not end until the mines are shut down in Karabakh.

Azerbaijan certainly did not do its best regarding optics while staging this charade of self-styled ecowarriors blocking the Lachin Corridor. The demonstrators, demanding to check the workings of a mine in Artsakh, were meant to symbolize all that is pure and good. Thus, they released doves. However, they chose to release 44 doves, a tribute to the war that broke the back of Artsakh, and the spokeswoman for the group, dressed in a fur coat, something no true environmentalist would do, caused the poor dove in her hands to die while she was shaking it and speaking. The sight of that poor little creature falling to the ground encapsulated the tragedy of the actions.

The mining industry is the major component of Karabakh's economy. Any interruption in mining will paralyze Karabakh's weak economy.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has also spoken in support of Aliyev's demand in creating a false parity between Lachin and carving out a swathe of land in Armenia, in Zangezur. The latter is part and parcel of a global Turanic plan, which was discussed recently in Turkmenistan, where Aliyev assured his

Turkic colleagues that it is already a done deal.

As the plan which the Turkic nations are trying to achieve runs counter to Iran's interest, that is why Tehran has made Armenia's territorial integrity a priority and a red line for its foreign policy. It is a different story as to whether Iran will go to war if Turkey and Azerbaijan force their way through Syunik to create the "Zangezur Corridor." The Syunik province, where Iran opened a consulate this year, is a vital region for Armenia's mining industry, but it has also turned into a piece of strategic territory of global significance in the rivalry between Iran and the Turkic world. Russia is a stakeholder with Iran in that territory too.

Last week, the chief of the MI-6, the British intelligence agency, Richard Moore, visited Armenia. Scant information was released on his talks with Armenian authorities. Comments were made that the visit was related to Armenia's plans to develop its own foreign intelligence agency. But placing that visit in a broader context, we can find that it is more likely related to the Western and Israeli plans concerning Iran. Indeed, last spring, the chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Burns, visited Armenia followed by his Russian counterpart, Sergey Naryshkin. The picture will be completed when we mention that in between those visits, Israel's and Turkey's defense ministers were in Baku, meeting with the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia.

Domestic unrest in Iran correlates with the secret plans plotted against that country in the hallways of power among the global players. Armenia will not remain safe should the regime in Tehran collapse.

Armenians were heartened recently with the news that India would be selling \$250 million in modern weapons to Yerevan to build its shattered armed forces' arsenal. Those hopes were further elevated when a story in the Jamestown Foundation's Eurasia Daily Monitor appeared. According

to that article, "Iran might supply Armenia with indigenous-built combat drones and loitering munitions, enabling Armenian forces to pose a crude deterrent against rival states, primarily Azerbaijan."

The author of the article, Fuad Shahbaz, rather than seeing a military balance which may lead to an equitable peace treaty, believes that the acquisition of those weapons will further delay the prospect of peace. That view is certainly based on the belief that now that Armenia is down militarily, it will be more advantageous for Baku to force down a treaty on its own terms.

While major political and strategic conflicts are developing in the general area, some local cloak-and-dagger games are also in play. Thus, Azerbaijan shut off the flow of natural gas to Karabakh for several days, to freeze Armenians. Suddenly, news came that the flow of gas had been restored. The Artsakh Minister of State of Ruben Vardanyan announced that there had not been any discussions or compromises with the Azerbaijanis to restore the flow of gas. The restoration of gas certainly was not out of charity by Baku authorities. Later on, a different narrative emerged, with the mention of the Sarsang water reservoir. That reservoir has a double use; it provides electricity to Karabakh and irrigation water to lowlands in Azerbaijan. The Karabakh authorities had threatened to deny the flow of irrigation water to Azerbaijan next season and instead use the entire capacity to generate electricity this winter. That did the trick.

The Lachin corridor remains blocked, creating a food and medical emergency for the people trapped in the enclave. The Azerbaijani authorities are counting on the patience of the people in Karabakh and Armenia, pushing them to the brink of starvation, so that they may resort to some desperate acts which would then justify a new war by Azerbaijan.

Vardanyan stated that "we will learn to live under those conditions."

The name of the game is patience and calculated moves.



COMMENTARY

Community Statement on Azerbaijan’s Blockade of Lachin Corridor

Over the past three days and counting, the government of Azerbaijan has ratcheted up its campaign to intimidate and target the Armenians of Artsakh in its ongoing effort to depopulate the centuries-old Armenian enclave and resolve its “Armenian Question.”

Cynically orchestrating a blockade of the Berdzor (Lachin) Corridor by fake government-paid environmental “activists,” Azerbaijan has effectively isolated 120,000 Artsakh men, women and children from the rest of the world and facilitated conditions in Azerbaijan to inflame ethnic tension and hatred against Armenians.

Azerbaijan has chosen this reckless strategy because it has chosen to deny a path to freedom, safety and security for Artsakh’s Armenians. Nor have the world’s governments sufficiently challenged Azerbaijan to stop its past and ongoing human rights crimes against Artsakh’s Armenians.

As long as Azerbaijan can target the Armenians of Artsakh as it is today – by cutting natural gas access in the dead of winter and eliminating safe passage of people, food, and medicine through the Berdzor Corridor between Armenia and Artsakh – the Armenians of Artsakh can expect a repeat of Azerbaijan’s genocidal pogroms that occurred against Armenians in Sumgait and Kirovabad in 1988 and

Baku in 1990.

All who have a role to play in stopping Azerbaijan’s crimes will be held accountable for the fate of the Armenians of Artsakh who continue to fight for self-determination, safety, and security in the face of threatened genocide by the Aliyev regime.

We thank those US officials who are already working to stop Azerbaijan’s dangerous actions and calling on the U.S. government to protect the freedom-loving Armenians of Artsakh who find themselves at the mercy of an Azerbaijan regime that claims them as citizens even as it moves to eradicate their presence from their indigenous lands.

We call on those who have not yet spoken out to condemn Azerbaijan’s brutal actions and join their colleagues to work toward a just resolution to the long plight of Artsakh’s Armenians.

Finally, we call on our Armenian-American community and allies to contact their elected officials to help resolve this evolving and worsening crisis, follow all action alerts, and be prepared to take additional action to protect our brothers and sisters in Artsakh.

December 15, 2022

Signed:

Armenian Assembly of America
Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, Eastern District USA
Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)
Armenian National Committee of America, Eastern USA
Armenian Network of America – Greater New York
Armenian Relief Society of Eastern USA, Inc.
Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Eastern USA
Armenian Student Associations United
Armenian Youth Federation–Youth Organization of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Eastern USA
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Eastern)
Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society, Eastern USA
Homenetmen Eastern USA
Knights of Vartan
National Association for Armenian Studies and Research
Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada

Various Countries, Officials Offer Statements on Lachin Blockade

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Several countries issued statements as a result of the Azerbaijani blockade of the only road connecting Karabakh and Armenia.

•“France condemns the obstruction of traffic through the corridor connecting Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh which has serious humanitarian consequences for the local population. France urges to restore the supplies to Nagorno Karabakh without preconditions, respecting the rights of people living there,” the French Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The ministry added that the provisions of the November 9, 2020 trilateral statement must be observed, according to which “the Republic of Azerbaijan has been obliged to guarantee the safe movement of people, vehicles and cargo in both directions along the Lachin Corridor.”

•On December 14, the European Union and the United States issued separate statements calling on Baku to end the blockade and ensure the freedom of movement on that crucial stretch, which is the only road that connects Artsakh to Armenia.

The European Union has been following with serious concern the various developments around the Lachin corridor since the beginning of December, Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Peter Stano said in a statement.

“The EU calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to ensure freedom and security of movement along the corridor, in line with the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020. Restrictions to such freedom of movement cause significant distress to the local population and create humanitarian concerns,” Stano said.

“Other concerns can and should be addressed through dialogue and consultations with the parties involved,” the Spokesperson added.

The EU reiterates its call for restraint and stands ready to contribute to the above-mentioned efforts.

•State Department Spokesperson Ned Price tweeted, “Closure of the Lachin Corridor has severe humanitarian implications and sets back the peace process. We call on the government of Azerbaijan to restore free movement through the corridor. The way forward is through negotiations.”

•United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Thursday called for the ensuring of security of movement along the Lachin Corridor, a press statement said. “The Secretary-General urges the sides to de-escalate tensions and to ensure freedom and security of movement along the corridor, in line with the previously reached agreements,” said the UN statement, which reiterated Guterres support to ongoing mediation efforts in the region.

•The Lachin Corridor must be re-opened immediately, USAID Administrator Samantha Power said in a Twitter post.

She said “the closure has the potential to cause a significant humanitarian crisis.”

“This corridor is an essential route for the flow of much needed food and medical supplies that must be allowed to flow freely,” Power tweeted.

Where Does the Ship ‘Armenia’ Float?

By Suren Sargsyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The situation in the South Caucasus region in general and Armenia in particular is quite complicated. The region has simply become a powder keg and there are a number of good reasons for that. The war in the Ukraine takes away all of Russia’s resources and Moscow is simply not able to serve its national interests in the South Caucasus, including Artsakh, where Moscow is unable to fulfill the obligations of its peacekeeping mission. Of course Turkey and Azerbaijan take advantage of such a situation. Realizing that Russia does not want to open a second front line against it in the South Caucasus, Russia is forced by this tandem to make concessions to Turkish and Azerbaijani demands. Moscow definitely makes concessions at the expense of Armenia and Artsakh and not at the expense of its national interests.

At the same time, Iran is in a rather difficult state of affairs. Internal processes are developing very rapidly and the demonstrations are spread around the country. Iran is also unable to serve its external interests in full, including in the South Caucasus, especially in the context of the new realities formed as a result of the war in 2020 and Azerbaijani aggression against

Armenia. Turkey wants to quickly take advantage of the momentum by preventing the possible strengthening of Iran’s positions in the South Caucasus as a result of the decrease in Russian influence. The situation is further complicated when the US announces that Iran is extremely close to developing a nuclear weapon and that the US and its allies must act as quickly as possible to prevent it from happening.

But the most dramatic thing is that the Armenian authorities have totally failed in their foreign policy. Not only has Armenia not achieved any tangible foreign policy achievement since the revolution in 2018, the Armenian authorities have failed the negotiations process, then the war, and now the negotiations are failed again and Artsakh is in blockade. The Armenian government failed to work properly and professionally with the international community, allied and friendly countries, which in turn led to the passive state of the international community and lack of action. Thus, we find ourselves in such a condition because of our failures, no matter how much we try to blame others. Amid dangerous storms and wild hurricanes in world politics, the one who leads the Armenian nation, the captain of our ship, and the one who is responsible for our security is a wrecker.

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



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Turkish National Jailed for Sending US Defense Data to Turkey

I wrote an article in June 2021 about a Turkish man who was accused by the Justice Department of illegally sending US Defense technical data to Turkey. Arif Ugur, 53, was sentenced last week to 33 months in jail, followed by two years of supervised release. He lived in Cambridge, Mass., intermittently since 2002 and became a Permanent Resident of the United States in 2005.

Ugur was arrested in 2021 and accused of: 1) Conspiring to export defense technical data from the United States to Turkey without an export license; 2) Exporting technical data from the United States to Turkey without an export license; and 3) Committing wire fraud by devising a scheme of fraudulently obtaining contracts from the Department of Defense (DOD).

In 2005, Ugur founded the Anatolia Group of Limited Partnership in Massachusetts which was described as a manufacturer and supplier of specialty machinery and parts to DOD. He was the sole owner of the company.

The United States government formally charged Ugur with scheming to acquire dozens of contracts to manufacture and supply the Department of Defense with various parts and hardware items used by the American military. The contracts required that the parts be manufactured in the United States. Ugur had falsely claimed that his company would manufacture these parts at his facilities in the United States, but it turned out that Anatolia was a front company with no manufacturing facilities in the United States. Instead, he had the parts manufactured in Turkey, violating U.S. laws. Furthermore, some of the parts manufactured overseas were substandard and could not be used for their intended military purposes.

Ugur had illegally provided the manufacturer in Turkey with technical specifications and drawings of the parts, which he obtained from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). Several of the drawings and specifications required an export license which Ugur had not obtained, even though he had agreed in writing to comply with the strict legal requirements of not disclosing, sharing or providing foreign entities access to defense technical data. On August 13, 2015, after obtaining the technical specifications and drawings of the parts, Ugur notified three individuals in Turkey on how to access the DLA “Collaboration Folders” through the internet, including its library of “military critical technical data.”

Ugur told the U.S. government in 2016 that the parts were manufactured by Anatolia at 90 Woodmont Road in Milford, Connecticut, but in fact they were

manufactured in Turkey. When the government asked to inspect the parts at his factory in the United States, Ugur delivered them to the Department of Defense (DOD) directly, thus avoiding inspection at his facility. Furthermore, the DOD found that the parts delivered by Ugur failed to meet contractual specifications. Therefore, DOD declined to pay him and attempted unsuccessfully to return the parts to him.

Ugur committed a similar violation in 2016, when he emailed U.S. technical data to an individual who was an employee of AYPIK in Turkey. Once again, the produced parts failed to meet the contractual specifications.

Following his arrest, Ugur was indicted on July 21, 2021 in Boston for illegally exporting defense technical data to foreign nationals in Turkey and fraudulently manufacturing various United States military parts, in violation of the Arms Export Control Act.

On August 10, 2022, Ugur pleaded guilty to two counts of wire fraud, two counts of violating the Arms Export Control Act and one count of conspiring to violate the Arms Export Control Act.

Ugur “willfully defrauded the Department of Defense and gave access to controlled defense information to individuals in a foreign country [Turkey] for personal gain,” said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division. “This type of brazen disregard for our export control laws threatens our military readiness and technological advantage and will not be tolerated by this department.”

On a lighter note, several newspapers and websites in Turkey reported the jailing of the Turkish national in the United States. But surprisingly, they published my photo, instead of Ugur’s, with their articles.

Upon further investigation, I discovered that after I wrote an article about Arif Ugur a year ago, the Noyan Tapan news agency in Armenia reprinted my article, adding my photo from its archives clearly showing Noyan Tapan’s name in English and Armenian. The photo was taken several years ago when I gave a press conference at the Noyan Tapan office during one of my visits to Armenia.

Most probably, when the US Justice Department issued a press release announcing the conviction of Ugur by a federal court in the United States, the Turkish media wanted to publish his photo with the news article. Not knowing what Ugur looked like and finding on the internet my photo with my article about Ugur published by Noyan Tapan, the Turkish media assumed by mistake that it was Ugur’s photo. This is how my picture got printed in several Turkish newspapers.

I will not bother to contact the Turkish media to inform them that they had published my photo instead of Ugur’s and ask them to correct their mistake. I do not wish to waste my time as I don’t believe the Turkish media will even respond to my email.

The Blockade Of Artsakh: What Next?

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On December 12, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade on Artsakh, closing the only highway connecting Stepanakert with Yerevan. The pretexts behind this action – ecological issues and illegal exploitation of mines – are insignificant. Azerbaijan will always find a pretext to close the road and cut the gas supplies. Azerbaijan has clear goals and takes steps to realize them.

These goals can be divided into two categories – tactical and strategic. At the tactical level, Azerbaijan seeks to bring Artsakh into its legal space and solidify its vision that there is no Nagorno Karabakh anymore. There is a Karabakh economic zone within Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijani laws and state institutions should function in that area. The demand to allow Azerbaijani state bodies to conduct inspections in Artsakh’s mines is part of that strategy. Azerbaijani state institutions cannot operate in the territories of other states; thus, if they monitor or do other activities in Artsakh, it fosters Azerbaijan’s claims that this is Azerbaijani territory. The mines are only the beginning. Azerbaijan may then demand to monitor the work of the police, and the activities of courts, municipalities, and other institutions.

However, all this noise is about tactics. On a strategic level, Azerbaijan has one goal – to have as few Armenians in Artsakh as possible. Zero Armenians is the best-case scenario, but Baku understands that it is challenging to implement best-case scenarios in geopolitics. Thus, the second-most preferable scenario for Azerbaijan is to push out as many Armenians from Artsakh as

possible and as soon as possible.

After the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war, Azerbaijan claimed no Nagorno Karabakh exists. However, Baku understands very well that no one terminated the activities of the OSCE Minsk group. No one canceled its latest suggestions on the conflict settlement based on the idea of the legally binding expression of will within the boundaries of the former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region to fix the final status of Nagorno Karabakh. Currently, the Minsk Group is not functioning due to the US – Russia, and EU – Russia confrontation, but Baku knows that the only constant thing in geopolitics is a constant shift. Thus, no one may guarantee that five or ten years from now, the international community will not revitalize the Minsk Group and the “Madrid principles.”

To secure a favorable outcome for Azerbaijan – if ever this happens – Azerbaijan needs to change the demographics of Nagorno Karabakh within its 1988 borders. There are two ways to do that: to push Armenians out and bring Azerbaijanis in. According to Azerbaijani sources, Baku plans to bring up to 45,000 Azerbaijanis to the territories of the former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region currently under its control by the end of 2030. Thus, if Baku is successful in decreasing the number of Armenians in Artsakh below 45,000 within the next eight years, Azerbaijan will have no worries about any referendums which may take place in Nagorno Karabakh.

In this scenario, the continued presence of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno Karabakh will not threaten Azerbaijan, while Azerbaijan may bargain with Russia on the conditions of the peacekeepers’ continued presence and get some concessions. In theory, the existence of a small number of Armenians in Artsakh may benefit Azerbaijan from a mid-term perspective, as Baku will use them as proof of its claims that Azerbaijan is a tolerant and democratic society where the rights of ethnic minorities are protected.

Thus, the blockade of Artsakh, the cutting off of gas supplies, and other actions clearly aimed to force Armenians to leave Artsakh. In early December, Azerbaijan blocked the Goris–Stepanakert highway for several

hours. At the time of this writing (December 18), the blockade has continued for a week. After the highway’s opening (regardless of under what conditions the road may be opened), the message to Armenians living in Artsakh is clear. Be wise to use “the window of opportunity” to leave Artsakh before the third closure of the highway because next time, we may close it not for a week but for a month.

What should Armenia undertake and what should it not do in the current circumstances to prevent the gradual exodus of Armenians from Artsakh?

First of all, Armenian state officials, including ministers, MPs, and others, should stop arguing that the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan on Artsakh is a Russian problem, and it is up to Russia to solve that. These statements send the wrong messages to Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Russia, the European Union, and the US that the Armenian state and society have accepted the loss of Artsakh and are ready to continue to live under the new circumstances. The criticism against Russian peacekeepers is not helpful either. It simply pours the water into Azerbaijan’s mill, as Baku will be only happy to discredit Russians further.

Armenia should do everything to avoid any clashes between Azerbaijanis who blocked the road and Armenians living in Artsakh. Azerbaijan will use any clashes to justify the deployment of Azerbaijani troops along the Goris–Stepanakert highway. Simultaneously, Armenia should continue to use all international fora, legal and political, to depict the dire picture of the Armenian civilian population of Artsakh living under the Azerbaijani blockade and demand to put pressure on Baku. In the longer run, Armenia and Artsakh should take steps to prepare the Armenian population of Artsakh to be ready to live under blockade for more extended periods. Azerbaijan will push forward its strategic goal – to kick out as many Armenians from Artsakh as possible. The blockade is one of a set of tools for Azerbaijan, alongside shootings and attacks against the civilian population.

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

Being the Light We Hope to See

By Isabelle Adourian

It was dark but I never needed light to see. Instead, I needed light to be. Without it I am nothing. Without it he is nothing, and without it she is nothing. We are nothing. You have deemed us extinct, and the world has no recollection of us. You tried to blind us in the dark, but you forgot that we don't need light to see. You tried to rob us of our hope, but you failed because we are the hope. You tried to drown our light in our forgotten history, but you forgot that we don't need light to see; we need light to be. We need to be the light.

I come from a land in the East, secluded yet included, our small culture is leashed like a great mythological beast. Armenia, you named it, Hayastan, we christened it. Thousands of years of culture reside in our disputed borders, and mourners have cried untamed tears over our dark history. Millions of lives were taken with ease. Now a century later nobody remembers our massacre, and the Armenian Genocide of 1915 remains ignored.

It's dreary today, but the sun still penetrates the thick haze that hides the sky from the shame below. Snowflakes drift from the heavens like soft memories wistfully flying away, never to be seen again. Snowflakes are a strange thing; they are praised for their individuality only to lose it upon touching the ground. They will never be proudly unique again but simply one of many, living only to be stepped on and molded.

The ice below me is breaking, but hasn't buckled under the weight of responsibility just yet. This ice has held me up my whole life. It has held me up and away from the murky depths of chilling history, a history I knew not of until I saw who I was for the very first time. Yes, this ice below me has secrets, but I've been told I shouldn't concern myself with them. So I never have.

I only know one person who has ever fallen through this ice — my father. Snowflakes clung to his face, tormented and blinded him, froze his tears, and pulled him under. He returned wet and desperate, grasping hungrily for air that wasn't there. He had seen his history and it changed the way he saw himself. It changed the way he saw the world. He

swore to never let me fall through. It changes you in unfathomable ways. So I've been told.

Looking down, I can occasionally catch rare glimpses of what the ice is harboring. I've seen flashes and shadows, all hidden behind the smooth sheet of frozen water. I know it is hiding death. I know it's hiding millions of lives lived and lost long ago, millions of lives taken painstakingly, all erased through massacre. Genocide. I know it's hiding my father's history; my family's history.

I've had a whirlwind of a childhood. My father was raised here, in New York, in a Lebanese-Armenian family. My mother came from a dangerously different land. She says it was an oppressive society. Everyone was indoctrinated to be the same and think the same. So she left. That place has now changed for the better. My mother grew up in Soviet Armenia. Things seem to be improving. Our family hopes it will stay that way.

My life has been shared between America and Armenia; I belong somewhere in between. In Armenia, I've lived in a small five room apartment with all my cousins and played among the stray cats. Then I hopped on a plane and returned to my family's two-story house in Concord. This is how I evolved to grow two different personalities — my Armenian self, and my American self.

This ice, once as strong as a father's love for his daughter, is buckling, buckling under the pressure. We thought it was over, but the earthquake is still happening. We thought it caused enough destruction, but the seismic waves still hit the shore, causing damage visible only to us. Dark water seeps through the deep fractures in the ice, like tears we never thought we could let loose. Snowflakes unknowingly plummet towards their inevitable fate. One of many. Living only to be stepped on and molded. Dark water seeps through the deep fractures in the ice, like the blood that still oozes out of our veins. Am I unknowingly plummeting towards my inevitable fate?

The silence which once embraced me is penetrated by the splintering screech of shattering ice, high pitched and frantic, the solid surface beneath my feet is solid no more for history is chasing me, drowning me, blinding

The Lachin Corridor Must Not Turn into Genocide Alley

COMMUNIQUE, from page 1

The friendly countries that have expressed concern about this humanitarian disaster must finally understand that the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, is not a dictator who listens to warnings, but will only stop his bloody acts in response to the threat of force and practical sanctions.



The example of national unity should come from Armenia's National Assembly. However, unfortunately, the opposition and the government could not come together to sign a joint statement about this alarming disaster, while, in contrast, the French Senate showed more unity in its position towards Artsakh.

Armenians and especially diaspora Armenians must be convinced that the calls addressed to the world are not enough to curb the disaster and they should initiate assertive political activities to inform and mobilize the governments of those countries that have sway on the stability of the region and the world.

In addition, every Armenian community should be organized in every civilized country to warn about the impending danger through the press and demonstrations.

Moreover, it is necessary to block the entries of the embassies of Azerbaijan in all possible countries by unarmed means and civilized discipline.

It is appropriate for the Armenian authorities in particular to ask the Russian Federation to stand by the commitment it accepted through the November 9 declaration to keep the Lachin Corridor open and safe.

The masses of the diaspora in all its countries should raise the same voice of protest, reminding the Moscow authorities that the contravention of its obligations gives Armenia the right to abandon its alliance obligations.

Genocides in the current century begin with such provocations, if the civilized world, abandoning its double standards, does not resort to practical measures.

Armenians have experienced the bitter carnage of genocide and the time has come to call out loudly to the world, "An End to Genocide."

Supreme Council
Armenian Democratic Liberal Party
Boston, December 15, 2022

me. I need a lifeline, I need something to hold me up, I need to breathe, but I can't and I never could, history is terrorizing me, mocking me, I need to see the light but it is nowhere to be found. I need the light. I need to be the light.

Hope. Hope is the lighthouse that my grandmother looked to through the icy ocean waves. Hope is the lighthouse my great-grandmother looked to. Hope was the future my great-grandfather, my great-uncles, a generation of my family looked to when they had no other options. They were

raped and killed and dismembered and drowned and starved and slaughtered but they never gave in because they had hope, they had hope for a future they knew they would never see, hope that someone would survive and tell their story. I was their hope that decades later someone would survive and tell their story.

(Isabelle Adourian is a student at Concord-Carlisle High School in Massachusetts. This essay was written for school and nominated for a national competition.)

75th ANNIVERSARY

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