



The leaders of CSTO members Belarus (left to right), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Russia, and Tajikistan pose for a photo in Yerevan on November 23.

Pashinyan Attacks Russian-Led Alliance at Summit in Yerevan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has criticized the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) for its refusal to support Armenia when it faced “Azerbaijan’s aggression.”

Speaking at a CSTO summit in Yerevan on November 23, Pashinyan said it was “depressing that Armenia’s membership in the CSTO has failed to contain Azerbaijani aggression.” He said this had been “hugely damaging to the CSTO’s image both in our country and abroad.”

Armenia asked for military help in September after deadly clashes broke out between the two Caucasus neighbors, but the CSTO responded only by sending its secretary-general to the conflict zone and offering to set up a working group to analyze the situation.

Six countries — Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia — comprise the CSTO, which was established in October 2002.

Pashinyan said his country had supported see CSTO, page 4

Armenia ‘Interested’ In Peace Treaty with Azerbaijan

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia hopes to negotiate a peace treaty with Azerbaijan “as soon as possible,” Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan insisted on Monday, November 28, denying Azerbaijani statements to the contrary.

“We presented Azerbaijan with our proposals regarding the normalization of relations or a draft peace treaty and received their reply only yesterday,” Mirzoyan told the Armenpress news agency. “These discussions are continuing.”

“We hope to reach an agreement on this issue as soon as possible, and mediation efforts by our international partners could also play an important role in this process,” he said.

Mirzoyan again declined to disclose the proposals which he presented to his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov in Washington on November 7. Nor did he say whether they were accepted by the Azerbaijani side.

Earlier this year, Baku put forward five key elements of the peace treaty acceptable to it. They include mutual recognition of each other’s territorial integrity.

The Azerbaijani reply reported by Mirzoyan came two days after Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev canceled a meeting with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan which was due to take place in Brussels on December 7. He complained that Pashinyan wants French President Emmanuel Macron to also participate in it along with European Union President Charles Michel.

Aliyev claimed that Pashinyan set that condition in order to drag out the negotiating process and prevent the signing of the peace treaty.

Mirzoyan dismissed the claim. He said that when Aliyev and Pashinyan met in see PROPOSAL, page 7



Judith Saryan, left, and Nune Tumanyan, sculptor, unveiling the sculpture of Zabel Yesayan

ICARE Modernizes Agribusiness at New Campus

By Aram Arkun

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — The International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) has been providing agribusiness and agriculture education since 2005 based in an office and classrooms on Teryan Street in downtown Yerevan belonging to Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU). Now, it is developing in Proshyan village in Kotayk Province a campus which recently was renamed the Zabel Yesayan Agribusiness Center (ZYAC).

ICARE Foundation director Arthur Grigoryan explained that previously students would leave Yerevan for fieldtrips and internships but land was purchased in Proshyan in 2019 for a more hands-on learning experience, and more land was added from 2020 to 2022. The new area initially was called an ecofarm but was renamed ZYAC this October. Victor Zarougian and Judy Saryan, longtime major supporters of ICARE and its various subsidiaries, were major proponents of turning the ecofarm into a campus.

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ICARE students

Armenia Ambassador To Berlin in Dialogue On War and Peace

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

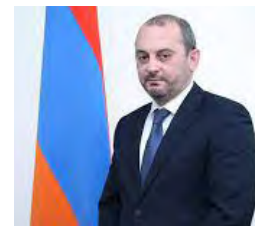
BERLIN — On November 26 the French Senate voted 295-1 in favor of a resolution calling for sanctions on Azerbaijan in response to its attacks against Armenia and aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh. It demanded Baku pull its troops out of Armenia, and reaffirmed a resolution the Senate had passed in 2020 in favor of French government recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The immediate question posed by the French move is: how will the rest of Europe respond? First and foremost, how will Germany respond? That question was at the center of a dialogue in Berlin between Dr. Raffi Kantian, president of the Deutsch-Armenische-Gesellschaft, and Viktor Yengibaryan, the Armenian ambassador in Berlin.

Broadcast live via Zoom, the discussion was part of a series of events organized by the DAG known as the Berliner Reihe. Ashot Smbatyan, Yengibaryan’s predecessor who is now serving in Georgia, had also been a special guest.

The Berlin event, titled, “After the 44-Day War and Azerbaijan’s Aggression: Growing Awareness, Competing Interests,” took place on the same day the French Senate opened its debate. As Kantian noted in his welcoming remarks, both US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken’s explicit identification of Azerbaijan as the aggressor in its mid-September attacks, and the French Senate’s debate demonstrated such growing international awareness.

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Ambassador Viktor Yengibaryan

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Emma Sogoian Celebrates 100th Birthday

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Conference in Los Angeles Focuses on Lost Heritage

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia to Host Global Genocide Forum

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — On December 12-13, Yerevan will host the fourth Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide titled “Prevention of genocide in the era of new technologies.”

The forum is dedicated to the issue of the prevention of genocide in the era of new technologies. It will address the challenges, opportunities and perspectives of utilizing new technologies for the prevention of genocide.

Officer Charged with Treason

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The National Security Service (NSS) of Armenia has alleged another case of high treason involving an Armenian army major.

In a statement on Tuesday, November 29, the law enforcement agency said the officer was recruited by foreign intelligence services in July 2021 and signed a cooperation agreement with them.

Being the chief of a department at a military unit, the man collected military secrets from February until November 2022 and passed classified information to foreign agents via mobile applications in return for \$19,700.

Thus, he committed high treason, causing damage to Armenia’s territorial integrity and security, the NSS said.

The officer has been charged with treason and remanded into pre-trial custody.

Armenia to Participate in UNESCO Heritage Session

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — An Armenian delegation is participating in the 17th session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to be held in Rabat (Morocco) from November 28 to December 3.

The committee is one of the main bodies of the UNESCO Convention “On the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage” established under Article 5 of the Convention. One of the most important functions of the 24-member Committee is to make a final decision on the applications submitted by the member states for registration in the lists established by the convention.

More than 1,000 representatives from 125 countries of the world, including member states of the convention, representatives of non-governmental organizations operating under the auspices of UNESCO, observers, as well as media from different countries, are expected to participate in the session.

One of the important issues on the agenda of the session is the discussion of applications submitted for registration from different countries. Fifty applications have been submitted.

The Republic of Armenia ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention “On the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage” in 2006.

ICARE Modernizes Agribusiness at New Campus

ICARE, from page 1

Saryan was involved with translation projects of the works of Zabel Yesayan through the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA). She said, “I am a big supporter or fan of Yesayan’s writing as well as her political activism and her focus on education. It seemed to me that her reason for coming to Armenia was really to be teaching at Yerevan State University. That fit well with the educational purpose and goals of ICARE. In addition, she was also very much a believer in the rural areas. You can’t ignore them; you can’t just focus on urban areas. Again, that seemed to fit with the goals of ICARE and their emphasis on agricultural education.”

She added that she and her husband think that agriculture is vital for Armenia’s security and so it must be improved for the sake of food security and the stability of rural Armenia. As far as ICARE is concerned, she said, “We really believe in the people and the quality of education that they are giving is first rate. They are training people for jobs that actually exist in Armenia.”

On his part, Grigoryan noted that changing the campus’s name made sense because although Yesayan was not directly connected to agriculture, she had a rebel spirit

and the desire to change things, just as ICARE wants to do through its educational model. Not only was the ecofarm renamed ZYAC, but a statue of Yesayan, commissioned from Nune Tumanyan through a donation of Saryan and Zaruhi, was erected on campus. As the center and campus was just in its initial state, Grigoryan said, “Zabel Yesayan is a sort of flagship to open doors for us and attract people to her statue and to the activities that we are doing here.”

Decades prior to the campus project, and even before ICARE was founded, what became its flagship component, the Agribusi-

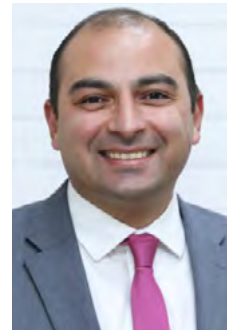
ness Training Center (ATC), began in 2000 to provide undergraduate degree programs as a collaboration between Texas A&M University and ANAU. ICARE was founded five years later by these two universities and the United States Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service and

began offering master’s degree programs in 2010. Today, ICARE’s ATC continues to offer degrees through ANAU, whose focus is degree education. Grigoryan specified that ICARE does not want to create another university or replicate ANAU (where he is a departmental dean).

He said, “The ZYAC would be more or less a vocational educational center rather than providing a standard degree education. I say this because in many of our short-term programs, which we run with Geisenheim University of Germany, like the wine program and the greenhouse

He explained that he learned of this model for the campus while he was working for the American Farm School in Greece for several years, but the ICARE Foundation is trying to modify it and even bring it to a higher level. ICARE already had developed some experience with a business model of operation because as a non-governmental institution it had to financially support various enterprises originally created for educational purposes.

For example, there is the wine laboratory of the EVN Academy, a part of ICARE, which allows students to carry out chemical



Arthur Grigoryan, director of ICARE Foundation



Professor Alexander Yesayan, Zabel Yesayan’s grandson

agronomy program, we see students come to us of very diverse ages, from 18 to 74... This is why we see ourselves as more of a center for lifelong learning and vocational education rather than a degree-granting university which mostly works with students in their 20s.”

A Business Oriented Approach

At present, Grigoryan said that there is only a four-story building built by the previous owner of the site, with some office space, but no real classroom space. The goal is not only to provide theoretical knowledge in the future classroom facilities. He said that in addition to centers where students

analysis of wines. To make it sustainable, it began to provide fee-based services to Armenian wineries. Grigoryan said, “Over the past five years, we expanded and started to provide wine testing services to almost every winery in Armenia, including the big ones, like Karas and Armenia Wine.” Although the latter have their own laboratories, they still would send samples for a second opinion. The wineries of Artsakh and many small wineries in Armenia send their samples. Now the lab makes profits and can sustain itself. Students learn as they help the staff conduct the fee-based services.

“We want to gradually expand this idea of having profit-making business units, which will insure that ICARE as an organization will not rely solely on donations. We are very thankful for all our donors but we really want to showcase that there are business opportunities in Armenia, and we also teach this to our students,” Grigoryan stated. A second opportunity soon appeared. EVN Academy began producing wine in the facilities of another winery and sales went quite well, Grigoryan said, with students helping both with production and marketing. Encouraged by this, a new winery is being established at ZYAC and the wine lab will eventually be moved from the Teryan Street offices to the new center too.

A vineyard is planned at ZYAC. Part of the produce will be used by the winery and the rest sold. The winery will allow experimentation with micro vinification and the creation of wines from new varieties of grapes, which eventually may be commercialized.

Eventually a greenhouse and other facilities will also be established at the ZYAC campus, which at present is about 13 acres in size but will hopefully grow to at least 30 acres. Grigoryan said, “What we want is to have a real mini-campus, like what exists in the United States but smaller, *continued on next page*



Nairian Vocal Ensemble performing during the sculpture unveiling event

can practice growing plants, producing wine and doing other practical activities, they participate and work in profit-making business units contained within the ICARE system. This would also contribute to the sustainability of the model via profits from the businesses.



ARMENIA

More Opposition Members Resign from Armenian Parliament

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Three more lawmakers representing the main opposition Hayastan alliance resigned from the National Assembly on November 29, objecting to the bloc's decision to end a seven-month boycott of sessions of the Armenian parliament.

The 35 members of the 107-seat parliament affiliated with Hayastan and the second parliamentary opposition force, Pativ Unem, began the boycott in April in advance of their daily demonstrations demanding Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation. They failed to force him to step down before deciding in mid-June to scale back the protests sparked by

Pashinyan's apparent readiness to make major concessions to Azerbaijan.

The opposition deputies continued the boycott in the following months despite government threats to strip them of their parliament seats. Most of them returned to the parliament floor on November 15.

Several members of Hayastan's 29-strong parliamentary group continued the boycott. One of them, Aram Vartevanyan, resigned his seat last week. The 33-year-old lawyer, who used to represent Hayastan's top leader, former President Robert Kocharyan, said he is "returning to the legal community."

The three other Hayastan deputies who tendered their resignations are senior members of the Resurgent Armenia

party, which is part of Kocharyan's bloc. They include Vahe Hakobyan, the party chairman.

Under Armenian law, the vacant parliament seats will be given to four other individuals who ran for the National Assembly on the Hayastan ticket.

In a statement announcing the resignations, the Resurgent Armenia leadership said it believes the opposition should have continued the boycott.

Two other Resurgent Armenia deputies chose to return to the parliament and keep their seats. They revealed last week that they quit the party recently.

The Resurgent Armenia statement stopped short of announcing the party's exit from Hayastan. It said it will contin-

ue to cooperate with the bloc on "common ideas and shared goals."

"We will remain in the opposition camp," Hakobyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. He ruled out any deals with the Armenian government.

Hayastan's parliamentary leadership said, meanwhile, that it "respects" the decision and looks forward to continued cooperation with Resurgent Armenia.

Kocharyan set up Hayastan together with Resurgent Armenia and another opposition party, Dashnaksutyun, in the run-up to the June 2021 parliamentary elections. The bloc finished second in the polls won by Pashinyan's Civil Contract party.

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where students will have classroom space and business units, where they can actually work and participate in business activities. Hopefully there may be student residences in the future. There will be a full cycle of services provided to the students."

There will be an agrihub, which is a US-AID-funded project. This will be the first applied center for agribusiness startup, incubation and acceleration in Armenia, he said. It started because of many requests from students and graduates, who noticed the many parallel structures in the IT sector, but wanted similar ones for agriculture. For example, some asked for a plot of land to experiment with growing thyme, which largely has previously been harvested wild in Armenia.

"That is why we decided to establish the first platform in Armenia which will not only include classrooms, mentoring and training, but will also have physical facilities for those groups who can experiment and create prototypes, and try to commercialize those prototypes," said Grigoryan.

There are already businesses resident in the ZYAC agrihub. One of them is run by Shahan Paloulian, a honey producer who is an ICARE program graduate. According to Grigoryan, he invited a new design of a beehive which can produce honey up to 5 to 10 percent more productively. He does not treat the bees with chemicals but uses essential oils.

Another startup, ArmenianKeg, is composed of two graduates who are producing kegs from various varieties of wood in Armenia for any drinks which need to be aged, and then selling them on different platforms like eBay. They needed office space and a showroom but because they just started they could not afford such space in Yerevan. The agrihub was a good solution for them.

There is also a group which wants to produce mushrooms.

Unlike the business units run by ZYAC, like the wine lab, vineyard and winery, these businesses are being allowed to come in, experiment and be accelerated for a certain period, perhaps around a year, before graduating out. In the future, a share of each new business, perhaps 10 percent, will be requested in exchange for this service, so that ICARE through this partnership can invest any profits into generating and incubating new businesses.

In addition to academic activities and business units, ICARE also engages in project implementation. It receives funding from international organizations such as the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), and



The plan for the future ZYAC



The land for ZYAC before development

USAID to carry out projects such as with fisheries or greenhouses, and most recently, an academic program in intensive fruit production financed by the Austrian Development Agency and based on industry demand. These projects can eventually lead to ICARE business applications.

"In general, our approach is that whenever we see that a project has a product or service which we can potentially continue with a potential to work at least at a breakeven point, then we do not stop when the project is over but continue offering it at a fee-based level. In this way we can continue to support the Armenian economy in that specific sector," Grigoryan said.

Roadmap for Expansion

The cost to expand ZYAC over 30 acres and establish a main university building, student residences and various business units is estimated by Grigoryan to be up to 50 million dollars. At present, the ICARE core staff is up to 20 people, while there are around 150 people including short-term experts running the various academic programs and projects.

Local Armenian businesses are still a bit reluctant to invest in education, he states, though there are some exceptions. Instead, he said, "I think the two major sources will certainly be donations, and the profits generated by the business units within this campus such as the winery."

He estimates that it will take some ten years to achieve the expansion. He said, "Every year we are adding a small bit to it. This is a continuous process. The school in

Greece that I mentioned is now 120 years old and it continues development and adding business units."

There are other components envisioned once the ZYAC model is fully operational. There is a lot of room for innovation and research in the sector of food production and food processing, Grigoryan said. Once sustainable funding has been created, then maybe a practical research laboratory can be created in this sector for experimentation.

Grigoryan said that there are even more ambitious plans for expansion and the creation of new centers in different regions of Armenia and beyond. He declared, "We believe that in rural areas of Armenia there are many groups which want to start certain businesses but they need this platform in terms of office space and equipment so that they can start prototyping and experimenting with their products. In the longer term, we envision replicating this model, or at least the agrihub model, which is the agribusiness startup incubator, around Armenia – and maybe even going global at some point just like TUMO did. Time will tell."

Withstanding Covid and Aggression

"Covid probably affected us more or less in the same way as it affected every other for-profit and non-profit institution in Armenia, because we had a lockdown. We had to switch some of our academic programs to online which presumed that we had to set up all the cameras and audio equipment in our classrooms," Grigoryan said. In other words, the teacher would come to the classroom alone while all of the students would join online. Now this situation is better.

"In terms of war, and this continuous instability – because we don't really feel in Armenia that it has ended, because it just goes on and on – I think we are all com-

mitted to make the Armenian economy stronger. We feel economic development is one of the important bases to support the army, to support our resilience, to support our ability for defense and this will also keep the Armenian people in Armenia. If they can earn a decent income in Armenia, then leaving Armenia, leaving for Europe, Russia or the United States, will be less attractive for them. So we need to create good income opportunities in Armenia," Grigoryan commented.

He observed that Armenia is so small that everyone is practically on the frontiers. For example, once everyone thought that Jermuk was far from the war zone, but in September they realized it is on the frontier. From a personal point of view, he said, "Now I am sitting in my house and we are only 20 km. from the Turkish border. If we moved a bit north, we would be closer to the Azerbaijani border. We are all on the border line."

The IT sector is encouraging more urbanization in competition with the agricultural sector, Grigoryan related, as everyone wants to move to Yerevan and do programming or coding, sitting in cafes. On the other hand, ICARE believes that modern, productive and innovative agriculture can create economic opportunities in rural Armenia and in particular in border area villages.

Grigoryan said that ICARE didn't want to separate itself from the IT sector, as many of ICARE's current students and graduates come from that very field. They earned some wealth there but want to invest money in the agricultural sector. For example, many of the EVN wine program graduates continue their IT companies while investing in wineries or intensive fruit orchards.

Consequently, Grigoryan said that ICARE can potentially be a bridge between the successful IT sector and a successful agricultural sector. This will bring more development to rural Armenia and connect the latter with capital. In Armenia, this wealth is concentrated in Yerevan at present.

ICARE participates in big strategic planning workshops and events. For example, Grigoryan participated in the Global Armenia Summit organized by the Armenian government at the end of this October. He said, "We want to listen and to share our own ideas. We don't want to develop in our little cage. We are part of the bigger organism which is Armenia and its diaspora."

Most importantly, he said, "What we as an organization would like to see more clearly is a big vision and big strategy, not only at the vision level and philosophy, but also step-to-step. How would we see Armenia in 10 or 20 years, and how would others see ICARE's contribution?"



ARMENIA

Vanadzor Police, Residents Clash Over Pashinyan's Motorcade

By Karine Simonian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Police in the northern Armenian city of Vanadzor have clashed with several local residents and seriously injured one of them after accusing them of interfering with a motorcade carrying Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The officers of a Western-funded division of Armenian police stopped a car and confronted its driver as they cleared the way for the motorcade driving through Vanadzor on Friday, November 25.

The driver, Rafik Avetisyan, claimed on November 28 that one of the officers sparked an altercation by berating him disrespectfully.

"I said, 'Brother, I'm as old as your father, aren't you ashamed of talking to me like that?'" Avetisyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "He was like, 'You'll see what happens,' and called up other officers."

Avetisyan said that moments later the policemen tried to arrest him, his 17-year-old son Radik and his brother-in-law, beating them up and spraying them with pepper gas in the process.

Radik was taken to Vanadzor's main hospital after the incident and remained there on Monday. Doctors there said that he suffered four rib fractures.

"Three of them sprayed the boy with gas and started beating him," said the young man's uncle. "The boy suffers from asthma. He could have been poisoned by the gas."

Rafik Avetisyan acknowledged that his car almost got in the motorcade's way. But he insisted that he did not see the approaching government vehicles or block their passage.

Armenia's Office of the Prosecutor-General said on Monday that criminal proceedings have been launched against both the police officers and the

Vanadzor men. It said that the latter could be charged with assault and "hooliganism", whereas the policemen are suspected of torture.

A statement by another law-enforcement body, the Investigative Committee, blamed the Avetisyan and their friends and relatives for the incident. It said that they insulted and hit, including with a metal bar, one of the police officers.

The Vanadzor hospital administration told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that none of the officers received treatment there following the incident.

The Armenian police pledged, meanwhile, to conduct an internal inquiry into the officers' actions.

Armenian opposition lawmakers were the first to publicize the incident. They presented it as the latest manifestation of impunity enjoyed by law-enforcement officers in charge of Pashinyan's personal security. One of the lawmakers recalled in that regard a pregnant woman who died in Yerevan last April after being hit by a police car escorting Pashinyan's motorcade.

The officers involved in the Vanadzor incident are members of the Patrol Service, a police unit set up last year with financial and technical assistance provided by the United States and the European Union.

The new police force was meant to introduce Western standards in road policing, street patrol and crowd control in Armenia. Armenian and Western officials have described its creation as a key element of police reforms announced by Pashinyan's administration.

"Our patrol service officers have skills and knowledge matching international standards, and the equipment that they will be provided ... will help them use those skills to the best effect," an EU statement released in November 2021 quoted a senior Armenian Justice Ministry official as saying.

Yeghishe Charents Memorial Plaque Unveiled in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Panorama) — A memorial plaque honoring prominent Armenian writer Yeghishe Charents was unveiled in Yerevan on Monday, November 28, as part of the events marking his 125th birth anniversary.

The plaque was installed on the wall of the Yeghishe Charents House Museum at 17 Mashtots Avenue, where the poet lived

during the last two years of his life, 1935-1937.

Security officers arrested the poet near the very building on July 26, 1937 and he never entered this house again.

One of Charents' most famous poems, "My Sweet Armenia," was recited at the inauguration of the plaque.



The plaque honoring Charents



Composer Tigran Mansurian was among those attending the ceremony

Pashinyan Attacks Russian-Led Alliance at Summit in Yerevan

CSTO, from page 1

CSTO member Kazakhstan immediately in early January when Kazakh President Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev asked CSTO troops to enter his country following unprecedented antigovernment protests.

"Armenia is ending its chairmanship of the CSTO. Although it is an anniversary year [for the CSTO], for Armenia it was not an anniversary year at all. In the last two years, a CSTO member-state has been attacked by Azerbaijan at least three times, and actually, till now, we have not received any reaction from the CSTO regarding Azerbaijan's aggression, which is a big blow to the CSTO's image," Pashinyan said.

Dozens of square kilometers of Armenia's sovereign territory were seized by Azerbaijan during the military conflict between the two countries in May 2021, in November 2021, and in September this year.

Pashinyan met later on November 23 with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the Yerevan summit to discuss bilateral relations and regional issues.

At the start of the meeting Pashinyan reportedly noted that the CSTO did not manage to reach a consensus on all issues on

the agenda of the summit.

Pashinyan said during the summit that he was not ready to sign draft documents regarding "joint measures on providing assistance to Armenia" that he said did not address Yerevan's concerns regarding the CSTO's political position on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

"Under these conditions, the lack of a clear political assessment of the situation and the failure to make the above decision may not only mean the CSTO's refusal from allied obligations but may also be interpreted by Azerbaijan as a green light from the CSTO for further aggression against Armenia," Pashinyan said at the summit.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the CSTO was a "necessary" organization whose services were "very much in demand" to resolve regional conflicts.

"It is very important that Armenia and Azerbaijan agree on a peace treaty," said Peskov, who accompanied Putin to Yerevan. "This is our main task. And we all have to do our utmost to...make it happen," he told reporters after the summit.

During his meeting with Putin, Pashinyan raised the issue of honoring agreements that Armenia and Azerbaijan have reached

through the Russian president's mediation.

"These are very important issues, which, of course, we need to discuss, just as we need to discuss the agenda, which, we hope, will lead to a lasting peace in our region," Pashinyan said.

Putin, as quoted by the Kremlin, highlighted the allied nature of Russian-Armenian relations that he said have "deep roots."

In his remarks at the summit the Russian leader said that a meeting between the leaders of Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan in Sochi, Russia, on October 31 and their joint statement afterward created "a good basis for future compromises" between Yerevan and Baku.

Putin said that only through consistent implementation of agreements on border delimitation, unblocking of transport links, and solutions to humanitarian problems will it be possible to achieve normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"We hope that this will eventually pave the way for a peace treaty between Yerevan and Baku," Putin said.

Prior to the summit hundreds of activists representing civil society and democratic institution rallied on November 23 in

downtown Yerevan, demanding Armenia leave the CSTO. Among the demonstrators were Ukrainian citizens who protested Russia's ongoing unprovoked invasion of Ukraine launched in late February.

The leaders of the CSTO's member states — Putin, Pashinyan, and Toqaev along with Alyaksandr Lukashenka of Belarus, Sadyr Japarov of Kyrgyzstan, and Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan — met in the Armenian capital as Russia continued shelling Ukrainian towns and cities with missiles targeting energy infrastructure.

It was announced at the summit that Kazakh politician Imanghali Tasmaghambetov will replace Belarusian politician Stanislav Zas at the post of secretary-general of the CSTO.

The 65-year-old Tasmaghambetov, who has been known as one of the most loyal people to Kazakhstan's former President Nursultan Nazarbaev, used to serve as Kazakhstan's prime minister, deputy prime minister, mayor of the Kazakh capital, Astana, and the country's largest city, Almaty.

His last official position was ambassador to Russia, the position he held before he announced his retirement in 2019.

(With reporting by and RFE/RL's Kazakh Service and AFP)



INTERNATIONAL



Toivo Klaar (R), the EU's special representative to the South Caucasus, meets Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, June 3, 2022.

EU Envoy Expects 'Restraint' From Armenia, Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A senior European Union diplomat urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to show “strong political will” to end their long-running conflict on Monday following the effective cancellation of an Armenian-Azerbaijani summit planned in Brussels.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said on Friday that the summit scheduled for December 7 will not take place because Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan wants French President Emmanuel Macron to also take part in it. He said that France can no longer mediate Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations because of Macron's recent pro-Armenian comments and “anti-Azerbaijani” resolutions adopted by French lawmakers. (See related story on page 1.)

France did not publicly respond to Aliyev's accusations. The French Foreign Ministry said only that Paris “remains fully committed to supporting current negotiations” between Baku and Yerevan.

Toivo Klaar, the EU's special representative in the South Caucasus, met with Aliyev in Baku late last week. He said that the Azerbaijani leader remains committed to the “EU-facilitated format” of peace talks.

“Many challenges remain; restraint and strong political will be needed by Azerbaijan and Armenia to reduce tensions to achieve a comprehensive settlement,” tweeted Klaar.

It remained unclear whether Charles Michel, the head of the EU's top decision-making body, still hopes to host next

week talks between Aliyev and Pashinyan with or without Macron's participation.

The four men met in Prague on October 6. The Armenian Foreign Ministry insisted on Friday on the same format of the next Armenian-Azerbaijani summit in Brussels and “the composition of its participants.”

The December 7 meeting was called off amid mounting tensions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the “line of contact” in and around Karabakh. Armenia and Azerbaijan continued to accuse each other at the weekend of violating the ceasefire at various sections of the border.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry also alleged fresh truce violations by Karabakh Armenian forces. The latter dismissed the claims as “disinformation.”

Switzerland Approves \$1 million in Aid for Resilience and Economic Recovery of Border Communities in Armenia

BERN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC last week approved 960,000 Swiss Francs (\$1 million) in aid for Armenia to improve border communities' resilience towards crisis situations. Partnering with the World Food Programme (WFP) for implementation, Switzerland provides immediate humanitarian and long-term economic support to Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor and Syunik with the “Resilience and Economic Recovery of Border Communities in Armenia – REBCA” project.

Armenia's recent progress with its socio-economic reform agenda has been challenged by external factors such as COVID-19, military conflict in 2020, and international external economic shocks particularly from the war in Ukraine.

Furthermore, due to the military escalations in September 2022, six Armenian communities in the areas bordering Azerbaijan in Gegharkunik, Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions (totaling 133 settlements and 133,165 people) are directly affected, including in terms of economic livelihood and food security.

The 12-month REBCA humanitarian project will protect and reestablish the livelihoods of people living in border areas in Armenia and provide economic means to improve resilience towards crisis situations. The project targets 15 conflict-affected border settlements of Vardenis (Gegharkunik), Sisian (Syunik), and Jermuk (Vayots Dzor) enlarged communities by directly responding to the needs of more than 1000 households.

The Swiss-funded REBCA project is jointly designed and implemented by the WFP with the involvement of the World Vision Armenia (WVA), the Child Development Foundation (CDF) and the Strategic Development Agency (SDA), each responsible for specific interventions in the required fields of expertise. The project will be also supported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (MLSA), the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia (MTAI), and local authorities of the selected target regions.

An important feature of the project is the combination of immediate humanitarian

response with efforts towards long-term economic recovery and growth. In collaboration with its subcontractors, WFP will deliver cash assistance, social work support, resource and capacity development of local communities, support in agricultural activities, and promotion of (self-)employment.

REBCA project translates principles and objectives of Switzerland's foreign policy and development cooperation into action. With its Swiss Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus 2022 – 2025, Switzerland supports the transition of Armenia towards a market economy and inclusive economic development. REBCA is another expression of a longstanding tradition of Swiss humanitarian assistance to Armenia in time of need, which started with the Spitak earthquake of 1988.

Additionally, the REBCA intervention feeds into the Team Europe Initiative “Together for Syunik” launched early November 2022 by the EU Delegation and five EU member states, the European Investment Bank and Switzerland as an external partner.

INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijani President, US Envoy Discuss Armenia-Azerbaijan Processes

BAKU (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met with the U.S. co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group on Karabakh, Ambassador Philip Reeker, local media reported, on November 28.

During the meeting, an exchange of views took place on the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as a meeting in Washington at the level of foreign ministers regarding the negotiations on a peace treaty.

The parties “highly appreciated” the fact that Secretary of State Anthony Blinken keeps the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan under close attention.

Armenian Students Win 7 Medals at Belarusian Physics Olympiad

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian school students have earned seven medals, including one silver and six bronze, at the Open Belarusian Physics Olympiad hosted by Minsk last week.

Contestants from nine countries, including Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkey, gathered online for the event, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports reported on November 29.

Areg Barseghyan claimed silver for the Armenian team, while Narek Galstyan, Makich Karapetyan, Gor Hasratyan, Maria Arakelyan, Vyacheslav Petrosyan and Hovsep Karapetyan won bronze medals.

All students, except for Hovsep Karapetyan, are from the Physics and Mathematics Specialized School named after Artashes Shahinyan. Hovsep studies at Polytech High School.

Greek Lawmakers Visit Yerevan

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — On a working visit to Armenia, Members of the Greek Parliament Periklis Mantas, Anastasios Bartzokas and Konstantinos Zachariadis visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial, accompanied by Arman Yeghoyan, chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on European Integration.

Lusine Abrahamyan, the deputy director for museum works of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute welcomed the guests and briefed them on the history of the memorial complex. She also referred to the history of the three khachkars erected in the Tsitsernakaberd area in memory of the Armenians who died in the massacres organized by the Azerbaijani government in the cities of Sumgait, Kirovabad (Gandzak), Baku in the 20th century, and the stories of the five freedom fighters buried in front of Hushapat (Memorial Wall) during the Artsakh struggle, emphasizing the latest events and the Armenian Genocide.



INTERNATIONAL

Controversial Russia-Azerbaijan Gas Deal Raises Questions for EU

Azerbaijan has begun importing gas from Russia under a deal which should enable Baku to meet its own domestic demand but which raises serious questions over its recent agreement to boost exports to Europe.

Russia's state gas producer and exporter Gazprom announced on November 18 that it had begun supplying gas to Azerbaijan's state gas company SOCAR on November 15 and would supply a total of up to a billion cubic meters through March 2023.

Neither Azerbaijan's Energy Ministry nor SOCAR replied to questions from Eurasianet seeking confirmation of the agreement, details of which remain unclear.

In a statement to Azerbaijani news agency APA, SOCAR said that it had long cooperated with Gazprom and that the two companies "are trying to optimize their infrastructure by organizing the mutual exchange of gas flows."

The deal was signed just ahead of the mid-winter peak demand period, as Azerbaijan will be seeking to maintain supplies to its domestic gas customers while also meeting its export commitments to Georgia and Turkey, as well as its recently expanded trade with Europe.

Exports to Europe through the Southern Gas Corridor had been scheduled to reach 10 billion cubic meters this year, but under a new memorandum of understanding with the European Union signed in July, Baku agreed to increase exports to 12 billion cubic meters.

That increase was intended to help Brussels to offset the loss of supplies of Russian gas, which have been cut by Moscow in retaliation for EU sanctions imposed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

While the deal has been highly touted both in Brussels and Baku, it was never made clear where exactly the extra gas would come from.

Problems with the commitment emerged as early as September, when Azerbaijan Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov announced that Azerbaijan would export only 11.5 billion cubic meters to Europe this year, giving no hint as to why the export target had shrunk.

Even where this more modest extra volume will come from remains unclear.

A source close to the consortium which owns Azerbaijan's giant Shah Deniz gas field, which currently supplies all of the gas Azerbaijan exports, confirmed to Eur-

asianet that no new export contracts have been concluded and the field is currently only contracted to supply the 10 billion cubic meters previously agreed.

Now, the news that Azerbaijan will import gas from Russia this winter suggests that Baku intends to use the Russian gas to supply its domestic market in order to free up gas and enable it to meet its commitment to Brussels.

The sanctions imposed by the European Union against Russia don't apply to Azerbaijan, which remains free to import as much Russian gas as it wants.

But the new deal contravenes the political intention of the July agreement, which was agreed specifically to boost the volumes of Azerbaijan gas flowing to Europe so as to help the EU reduce its dependence on Russian gas.

Longer-term Implications

The fact that part of those imports from Azerbaijan are being facilitated with help from Moscow suggests that Brussels's efforts at diversification may be in vain, and not just in the short term.

Under the deal signed in July, Baku also agreed to double exports through the Southern Gas Corridor to 20 billion cubic meters a year by 2027 – the maximum that the existing pipeline network can carry.

That increase will be expensive and will take time to realize, requiring both the addition of new compressors to the existing pipelines as well as huge investments in Azerbaijan's gas fields to produce the necessary gas.

As yet, no investment decision has been taken to expand the three pipelines which make up the Southern Gas Corridor that transports Azerbaijani gas to Europe, while questions remain over where the additional 10 billion cubic meters per year of gas will come from.

BP confirmed earlier this year that the giant Shah Deniz gas field which it operates is incapable of supplying all the additional 10 billion cubic meters required.

Azerbaijan does have some other small gas fields, but production from those is not expected to be sufficient to meet Baku's undertaking to Brussels, either, raising the prospect that gas would have to be sourced from other countries in the region.

This revived long-standing hopes that Azerbaijan could transit gas from its neighbor across the Caspian, Turkmenistan, which boasts the sixth-largest gas reserves

on the planet.

Relations between Baku and Ashgabat have improved considerably over recent years, culminating in a groundbreaking three-way gas swap agreement with Iran in December 2021, under which Turkmenistan pledged to supply between 1.5 and 2 billion cubic meters of gas a year to north-eastern Iran and a similar amount of gas would be supplied from northwestern Iran to Azerbaijan.

Widely hailed as a rare and remarkable example of regional cooperation, that agreement had been viewed as a possible short-term source of extra gas for Europe.

However, the current status of the deal is unclear. Azerbaijan's unexpected need to import Russian gas raises the suspicion that that agreement may have fallen foul of deteriorating relations between Baku and Tehran.

Other options for delivering Turkmen gas to Europe exist; Turkish officials confirmed in July that Ankara was looking at three options for transiting Turkmen gas delivered from Azerbaijan via the Southern Gas Corridor to Europe.

One of those options is believed to be a US-backed project to pipe gas currently flared from some of Azerbaijan's Caspian oil fields onshore from where it could be exported.

But with no news of any progress on any of the possible options, the possibility is growing that — like its commitment to deliver 12 billion cubic meters of gas to Europe this year — Azerbaijan may also be unable to deliver on its promise to double exports to 20 billion cubic meters by 2027.

(This article originally appeared on Eurasianet.org.)

Strasbourg Raises Armenian Flags in Front of City Hall in Show of Solidarity

STRASBOURG (Public Radio of Armenia) — The flag of Armenia was raised in front of Strasbourg City Hall on November 24 as a sign of solidarity.

Attending the ceremony were the Mayor of Strasbourg Jeanne Barseghian and Armenia's Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, Arman Khachatryan.

On November 7, the City Council of Strasbourg adopted a Motion of support for Armenia in the face of the aggression by Azerbaijan. As a sign of solidarity, it was decided to raise the flag of Armenia in front of the City's administrative center.



The flags of Armenia and France in Strasbourg with Council of Europe Armenia Representative Arman Khachatryan, second from right, and Mayor of Strasbourg Jeanne Barseghian, at right

Exhibition at European Parliament Showcases Destruction of Armenian Heritage of Artsakh



Vahe Gabrielyan speaks as Anna Aghajanyan and Nathalie Loiseau wait, at right.

BRUSSELS (Panorama) — An exhibition on endangered heritage of Artsakh opened at the European parliament at the initiative of MEP Nathalie Loiseau on November 28.

The exhibition showcases the destruction and eradication of Armenian heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Addressing the event were MEP Nathalie Loiseau, Armenia's Ambassador to Belgium/Head of the Mission to the European Union Anna Aghajanyan and Director of the Diplomatic School Vahe Gabrielyan.

The exhibition ended on December 1.



INTERNATIONAL

Israeli Soldiers Accused of Spitting at Armenian Archbishop in Jerusalem Procession

JERUSALEM (*Times of Israel*) — Soldiers from the Israel Defense Forces' Givati Brigade are suspected of spitting toward the Armenian archbishop and other pilgrims during a procession earlier this month in the Old City of Jerusalem, the *Haaretz* daily reported Sunday, November 27.

It is the latest in a series of incidents of controversial behavior by soldiers in the infantry unit over the past month.

According to the report, two soldiers were detained by police on the spot and a total of three were later probed by the IDF.

The military has decided two soldiers will face disciplinary action for "behaving disrespectfully," without detailing the accusation.

Church officials said that on November 7, Archbishop Sevan Gharibian, the Grand Sacristan of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate of Jerusalem, along with other senior officials, was leading a procession including pilgrims from abroad to mark the Feast of the Cross.

The parade set off from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and when it reached the area of the souk it passed by some Givati soldiers, some of whom allegedly spat at the participants and the cross they were carrying.

Chancellor of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem Koryun Baghdasaryan told *Haaretz* that although the church has encountered such behavior in the past from religious Jews in Jerusalem, "this is the first time that soldiers have spat at us, on the cross and priests who were there."

"They stood there and expressed their hatred for the cross and for Christianity," he said.

Israel Police officers who were escorting the procession detained two soldiers, one of whom was released after questioning.

One of the soldiers claimed he was only spitting on the ground and not at the pilgrims, the report said.

Church officials filed a complaint with the police and the day after the incident, they were summoned to give a statement.

The police investigation is still ongoing, according to *Haaretz*.

The IDF said in a statement to *Haaretz* that "two soldiers who were present at the scene behaved disrespectfully towards the priests," without detailing the suspected wrongdoing.

"The soldiers were summoned for an immediate investigation, and last week an investigation was held led by the Givati Brigade commander. In the coming days, the soldiers will be tried in a disci-



Archbishop Sevan Gharibian

plinary court," the military said.

The military also said "a recruit who passed by a procession of priests spat at the floor" and the "incident is not consis-

tent with IDF values."

The IDF said that soldier was detained by the police immediately after the incident, and the case against him was closed the same day.

The IDF has recently taken action against several Givati soldiers who have been involved in violent incidents in the West Bank.

On Friday, two of the unit's soldiers were suspended for beating and taunting left-wing activists in the city of Hebron.

In footage shared by Breaking the Silence, an organization that collects and publicizes mostly anonymous testimony by former Israeli combat soldiers about alleged human rights violations against Palestinians, one soldier can be seen tackling an activist to the ground and punching him in the face.

In a separate video from the scene, a soldier from the same squad was seen confronting an activist and boasting about far-right lawmaker Itamar Ben Gvir, who is set to become Israel's next national security minister — an expanded public security minister role.

A week earlier the IDF suspended a soldier after he cursed a Breaking the Silence activist. Another three troops of the brigade were suspended last month over an assault on a Palestinian man.

Armenia Ambassador to Berlin in Dialogue on War and Peace

DIALOGUE, from page 1

Yengibaryan said the French resolution was "good news," and expressed his gratitude for the support. He would "welcome such a resolution from Germany;" acknowledging the considerable understanding and sympathy expressed in Foreign Ministry and Bundestag (Parliament) circles, he mentioned statements by the SPD (Social Democratic Party) for Azerbaijani troop withdrawal, and a resolution the party passed for a negotiated peace. Although certainly important, as the SPD is a member of the three-party coalition federal government led by SPD Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the resolution was passed not by the Bundestag but by the SPD parliamentary faction. As for the government's position, "the situation is a bit different." Yengibaryan pointed to the October European Union meeting in Prague, and expressed his gratitude for the subsequent foreign ministers' decision to send an observer mission to the Azerbaijan-Armenian border.

Kantian spoke against the "deafening silence" emanating from the German foreign ministry, especially from Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who "found words talk about the suffering women in Iran — and rightly so," but has said nothing about the "massive crimes" committed against Armenian soldiers, including female combatants. Surprising, he noted, for someone who pledged to follow a "feminist foreign policy."

In contrast, the US appears to be actively engaged. Kantian stressed the importance of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit, followed by other American lawmakers, and direct phone contact between Blinken and Armenian president Nikol Pashinyan. Yengibaryan agreed that the US, already involved in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group process, has become very active. He emphasized the fact that Azerbaijan's aggression against Armenia also constitutes a violation of international law which, in the current fragile security situation, constitutes a setback for Europe and the world order.

Such aggression elsewhere in Europe or in the Caucasus cannot be allowed. He identified manifold geopolitical interests in the crisis, not only for America, but also Russia, Iran, Turkey and the EU, and applauded the will on the part of western nations, including Germany, to stop the aggression. Most important for Armenia, he said, is that "the biggest players have an interest in establishing stability in our region."

The dialogue partners also considered the economic dimension, for instance with respect to a controversial deal the EU signed with Azerbaijan for natural gas supplies.

Yengibaryan, who explained the EU's interest in stabilizing the region in terms of a common European identity and shared values, expressed no objection to the gas deal per se, considering the current energy supply crisis, but raised the possibility of attaching conditionalities. Citing a law in Germany and EU regulations on human rights in trade and supply lines, which should go into effect in 2023, he suggested something similar might be applied in the energy sector: one could forbid energy contracts if the revenue were used for anti-humanitarian purposes or for territorial aggression. Beyond this, he proposed enhanced cooperation with Europe, through the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, including Armenia. Though blockaded for decades, "we don't have to be isolated," he said, and "are interested in opening communications," including energy pipelines through Armenia.

Kantian interjected that such projects could succeed only if Azerbaijani aggression were overcome, and asked whether Yengibaryan thought that pressure from the American government could be effective, the Ambassador said that Azerbaijan was "not an easy partner," and not only with regard to his country; Baku has ambitions for a "Greater Azerbaijan" and seeks to exploit the current fragile situation for its own purposes. But international law does exist and is respected, he said. As for negotiations with Azerbaijan, he explained the difference between press reports and

reality, noting that the "not easy" partner would make agreements during talks, but then issue public statements to the contrary shortly thereafter.

To clarify Armenia's position, Yengibaryan defined four pillars: 1) Nagorno Karabakh, contrary to Baku's view, does exist, and the conflict exists; 2) the Republic of Armenia government wants to open communications and borders; 3) the Armenian/Azerbaijani border must be defined and respected, which means Azerbaijani troops occupying 150 square kilometers of Armenian territory must withdraw; and 4) the humanitarian issue must be solved, with regard to Armenian hostages, missing and killed. Though there are opposing views, the two sides must enter direct negotiations, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh.

But are these demands feasible? Regarding the occupied 150 square kilometers, Kantian asked point blank whether, considering that even Blinken's demands for troop withdrawal had been in vain, it might be necessary to "deal with Aliyev differently," to make him understand, he cannot renege on negotiated agreements. He cited the trilateral meeting on August 31 among Pashinyan, Aliyev and European Council president Charles Michel, where decisions were made, only to be ignored three weeks later when Azerbaijan attacked Armenia. Doesn't he have a deaf ear? Kantian asked. Are there alternatives? Yengibaryan said he thought sanctions should be considered, including those that "play a preventive role." In addition, Armenia needs more support. He recalled the immense multifaceted support that Turkey had provided Azerbaijan in the 2020 war. In this respect, he said Turkey had a "special responsibility," and expressed hopes it would play a constructive role.

Kantian believes that Armenia also needs to become stronger militarily. Aliyev had boasted that Armenia "had no army," because he had destroyed it in 2020. If, in Kantian's view, even pressure made by the American Secretary of State did not suffice to force Aliyev to withdraw his troops,

wouldn't it be better to enhance Armenia's capabilities? Perhaps India could supply weaponry. The ambassador assured his host that Armenia is making reforms, also differentiating its arms suppliers, including domestic production. He underlined the importance of defense readiness, remarking that Armenia, in its long history, has never attacked another country. For the immediate future, he said, the government's three priorities are education and research (including in the defense sector), peaceful neighborly relations, and defense capabilities. As for Aliyev's claim that Armenia had no army, Yengibaryan wondered why the Azerbaijani leader would demand that that army must leave Karabakh. In truth, Aliyev must have been referring to the Nagorno Karabakh self-defense forces. He closed with the observation that such rhetoric is deployed also for internal consumption. Some layers of the population are not pro-government.

Armenia 'Interested' In Peace Treaty with Azerbaijan

PROPOSAL, from page 1

Prague on October 6 in the presence of both Michel and Macron they agreed that the French leader will also attend their meeting in Brussels.

The minister suggested that Aliyev may be preparing the ground for another escalation in the conflict zone. The situation there is already "extremely tense," he said.

Tensions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the "line of contact" in and around Nagorno-Karabakh have increased in recent days, with the two sides accusing each other of violating the ceasefire on a daily basis.

Karabakh's Defense Army reported that two of its soldiers were wounded by Azerbaijani forces on Monday.

Community News

Dr. Ümit Kurt To Speak on 'Microhistories of the Armenian Genocide'

FRESNO — Dr. Ümit Kurt will give a presentation on "Microhistories of the Armenian Genocide" on Friday, December 9, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus. The event is organized by the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State.

The Armenian Genocide was a mass violence event committed by a wide-ranging group of perpetrators. The individuals who were involved in this atrocity did so in line with their own decisions, regardless of the circumstances, making individual responsibility a pertinent concept. Alleging that this mass violence was committed only by a group headed by the CUP or Talat Pasha (infamously known as the architect of the genocide) causes us to, primarily, disregard the aggregate dimension of the Genocide itself as well as the individual and collective responsibilities of those who partook of their own free will.

It becomes necessary to construct a new paradigm in this regard by shifting our point of focus from CUP elites to local (and grass-roots perpetrators), as the responsibility for the destruction of Ottoman Armenians is not limited to merely the central government, CUP dignitaries, or Talat Pasha.

Research into the micro-history of the Armenian genocide has made use of various often neglected or overlooked primary sources to shed light on the fate of survivors, as well as the many more who perished. Rather than relying on the secondary literature examining this part of Asia Minor with a macro-level focus, uncovering under-utilized archival documents grants passage to the largely unknown world of the localities. This lecture focuses on the scholarship about genocidal activity at the local level(s) and different regions and the destruction of the Ottoman Armenians from the perspective of microhistories.

Kurt is assistant professor in the School of Humanities, Creative Industry, and Social Sciences (History) and an affiliate of the Centre for the Study of Violence at the University of Newcastle, Australia. A former Polonsky Fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, he is the author *The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province* (Harvard University Press, 2021; received PROSE Award Finalist in the category of World History by Association of American Publishers), *Antep 1915: Genocide and Perpetrators* (Ilesitim, 2018) and the coauthor of *The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide* (Berghahn, 2015). He is the co-editor of the volumes of *Armenians and Kurds in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2020) and *The Committee of Union and Progress: Founders, Ideology, and Structure* (Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2021).

Dr. Kurt's book will be on sale.



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church (Western) being interviewed during a recess at the conference

'Nagorno-Karabakh: Today and Tomorrow' Conference in Los Angeles Focuses on Lost Heritage

LOS ANGELES — The Artsakh Heritage Committee of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of North America held an international conference on human and cultural security prospects for Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh in Los Angeles on November 11-13, 2022 that featured top experts from across the world to discuss cultural preservation, geopolitics, diplomacy, and legal matters concerning Armenian existence.

"We thank the esteemed experts that travelled from across the USA, Armenia, Austria, Bolivia, Georgia, and the United Kingdom for the 'Nagorno-Karabakh: Today and Tomorrow' conference to discuss the present and future of Artsakh's religious heritage and living culture," remarked Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Diocesan Primate. "We are also grateful to the many individuals and institutions, particularly conference host Woodbury University and Armenian Studies centers from various universities, for making this gathering possible," the archbishop.

"The aftermath of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war has left Armenian communities, including in the Diaspora, feeling confused, helpless, and hopeless," remarked conference chair Simon Maghakyan. "This is why we brought together expert practitioners and stakeholders in a Chatham House-like intimate environment to understand what can be done to ensure sustainable human and cultural security for Artsakh," continued Maghakyan, who is a Denver-based investigative researcher and cultural heritage defender.

The Conference Report that summarized conference discussions and findings was recorded for public dissemination.

It can be viewed on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mm4p3rTMR2E>

A communiqué, summarizing recommendations and next steps, was adopted by conference participants. The text of the communication is presented below.

The Artsakh Heritage Committee was founded at the initiative of His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, in the aftermath of the 2020 war on Artsakh and its ongoing repercussions. The Committee consists of prominent scholars, experts, clergymen, and other key stakeholders dedicated to the cause of safeguarding Armenian cultural heritage under Azerbaijan's newfound control.

The conference on the subject "Nagorno-Karabakh: Today and Tomorrow," convened in Los Angeles, United States of America 11-13 November 2022, gathered top experts from across the world to discuss cultural preservation, geopolitics, diplomacy, and legal matters concerning Armenian existence in Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh.

The current conference is the fourth in the series of international conferences in Holy Echmiadzin (Armenia), Austria, and the Russian Federation, on the timely topic of the preservation of the cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh, and this communiqué reflects the principal formulations of the preceding conferences.

Meeting in Los Angeles, by the blessings of His Holiness, Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians and under the auspices of His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, we, conference participants from around the world, are deeply moved and inspired by the faith and resilience of the Armenian people in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Furthermore, we are also profoundly concerned with the consequences of the horrors of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war launched by Azerbaijan and the ongoing aggression against the sovereign territories of the Republic of Armenia.

The discussions highlighted the critical importance of the protection of the living Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh: as physical sites and, critically, as a way of life for the people of Artsakh.

There are serious concerns regarding the preservation of the monuments that came under Azerbaijani control as the result of the recent war, taking into consideration the consistent practice of Azerbaijan of destroying Armenian cultural heritage in its

see CONFERENCE, page 9

NAASR Holds 68th Annual Assembly, Welcomes New Board Members

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) welcomes four new members to its 27-person Board of Directors, after elections held during its 68th Annual Assembly of Members on Saturday, November 5. The new Board members are Dr. Nick Akgulian; Brian Ansbikian; Mihran Aroian and Gerald Papazian.

At a meeting of its Board of Directors following the Annual Assembly, officers were elected for 2022-23 are Chairperson, Judith Saryan of Cambridge, MA; First Vice-Chairperson, Roxanne Etmekjian of West Newton, MA; Second Vice-Chairperson, Mark A. Momjian of Philadelphia, PA; Secretary, Arlene Saryan Alexander of Washington, D.C.; Treasurer, Bruce W. Roat of Los Angeles; Advisors, Ara Araz of Franklin Lakes, NJ, and Nancy R. Kolligian of Watertown, MA.

Incumbents re-elected for three-year terms were Edward Avedisian of Lexington, MA; Jirair Balayan of Auburn, MA; Dr. Susan Barba of Cambridge, MA; Nancy Kricorian of New York; Arlene Saryan Alexander; and Shushan M. Teager of Belmont, MA.

The three outgoing board members are: Marta T. Batmasian of Boca Raton, FL; Dr. Bedross Der Matossian of Lincoln, NE; Dr. Jesse Matossian of Woodland Hills, CA; and Stepan Piligian of Westford, MA.

NAASR's chairperson for the past seven years has been Yervant Chekijian, who has led NAASR's growth including the completion of its splendid building. Chekijian's commitment to NAASR as a long-time member for more than 50 years and as a Board member for more than 20 years has set an example of dedication and generosity that will remain an integral part of NAASR.

New Board Members

The new NAASR Board members are experienced professionals in their respective fields.

Dr. Nick Akgulian, of Racine, Wisc., attended the University of Wisconsin for both undergraduate (BS) and medical school (MD). He completed residency in family practice, working as a family practitioner in the Racine area for much of the time between 1995 and 2021. From 2001 to 2002, he lived and worked in Armenia for a World Bank/USAID project involving health care reform. From 2003 to 2005, he lived and worked in Belize, as medical director of Hillside Clinic, Toledo District. In January 2021, he resumed the medical directorship at Hillside until July 2022, at which time he traveled to live and work in Artsakh for two months on a health care reform project in the Martuni region, sponsored by the Tufenkian Foundation and the Armenian American Medical Association (AAMA) Boston. Involvement with the Armenian community has taken many forms including as a

see NAASR, page 10



COMMUNITY NEWS

‘Nagorno-Karabakh: Today and Tomorrow’ Conference In Los Angeles Focuses on Lost Heritage

CONFERENCE, from page 8
territories in the past. For example, after formerly Armenian-populated Nakhichevan came under the control of Azerbaijan, its Armenian cultural heritage was entirely annihilated between 1997 to 2006: 89 churches, as well as around 6,000 khachkars (cross-stones) and over 22,000 tombstones across Nakhichevan were destroyed.

The acts of vandalism committed by the Government of Azerbaijan are an extension of an ongoing policy towards Armenians that began several decades ago.

This consistent policy has two clearly defined directions: on the one hand, the complete elimination of Armenian heritage, and on the other hand, the misappropriation of Armenian heritage for the same purpose, where by effacing the inscriptions in Armenian from the walls of the medieval churches and gravestones they are then reclassified and represented to be Caucasian Albanian. The claims of Azerbaijan regarding the origin of the Armenian churches of Artsakh are a distortion and falsification of historical facts. The purpose of this policy of politicized historiography and historical revisionism is to eliminate every trace of Armenians from the region.

This international gathering underlined the urgency for the Government of Azerbaijan to allow immediate and unimpeded international access to the areas of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh which have come under Azerbaijan’s control for the purpose of independent assessment and monitoring missions.

The Government of Azerbaijan must halt and cease the activities of the “working group” on eliminating Armenian traces from historical monuments, and allow independent international cultural heritage professional and monitoring groups of the UNESCO and other relevant organizations to monitor the current state of the monuments of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Relevant stakeholders, particularly OSCE



The speakers at the conference

Minsk group co-chairs, should ensure the fundamental rights to access places of worship and cemeteries.


The organizers pledged to continue the work together in the implementation of a more detailed action plan to be issued shortly after the conference, to address the concerns raised during these conferences in Holy Echmiadzin (Armenia), Austria, the Russian Federation, and the current conference in the United States of America.

Finally, the international community must exert the necessary pressure to ensure Azerbaijan’s compliance with assumed international obligations with regard to preservation of fundamental human rights and liberties, including preservation of cultural heritage.



Dr. Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpugh, one of the speakers

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Daughters of Vartan Returns to Merrimack Valley with New Chapter

Haverhill, Mass. — On October 22nd, 2022, a celebration ceremony occurred in Haverhill, Massachusetts, as The Daughters of Vartan Grand Council instituted a new chapter, Tzouig #33, with 17 new members. The institution and initiation of those 17 Sisters and the installation of the Tzouig Chapter were presided over by Grand Chairwoman Gloria Korkoian. The ceremonies also involved the Grand Council with the assistance of Past Grand Chairwoman Yvonne Korkoian, New England Grand District Representative Yn. Patricia Buttero, Past Chairwoman Debbie Megrachian, Aik Chapter #10, Providence, and Secretary Catherine Minassian, Arpie Chapter #9, Boston. Attendees included the Sisters of Arpie Chapter #9, Aik Chapter #10, Santoukht Chapter #5, and the Brothers of Arakadz Lodge #35 and Ararat Lodge #1.

The new Chapter's Chairwoman is Susan Hazarvartian, who became a member of the Daughters of Vartan during the Grand Convocation in July 2022. She is the wife of Commander Kim Eric Hazarvartian of the Knights of Vartan Arakadz Lodge #35. Her great-great-uncle, Bishop Papken Guleserian, helped found the Knights of Vartan in 1916.

Hazarvartian expressed: "Finally, we have a chapter in this growing Armenian community, where we can build a sisterhood, carry on what our past generations started, and stand by our Armenian men to continue our cultural mission."

The new Chapter, located in North Andover, MA, will be involved in the Daughters of Vartan programs and projects on a local, national and international level. In addition, they will identify programs to support a wide range of Armenian projects, events, and charitable causes in their area. But most of all, it is about people, a sisterhood.

The Grand Council traveled from Detroit, Michigan, joining other leadership members from New England to participate in and witness the Institution-Initiation-Installation of Tzouig Chapter #33. The Institution team was: Grand Chairwoman Gloria Korkoian, Past Grand Chairwoman Yvonne Korkoian, Grand Chaplin Nancy Kalajian Berschbach, Grand Secretary Laura Negosian Lucassian, NE Grand District Representative Yn. Patricia Buttero, Grand Mistress of Ceremony Leslie Balian Bush and Grand Sentinel Joyce Karageozian Obenhoff.

The Executive Board of Tzouig Chapter consists of the following: Chairwoman Su-



Tzouig Chapter group photo

san M. Hazarvartian Vice Chairwoman Reinya Rita Kitabjian, Secretary Naro Khandjian, Treasurer Beverly Chorbajian, Chaplin Araxie Kitabjian/Brenda Tavitian

Mistress of Ceremony Barbara Sarkisian Arthur Sentinel Robin Hazarvartian Advisors Past Chairwoman Beverly Koltookian and Past Chairwoman Araxie Vann.

The event itself was very emotional. It was the first institution in the New England District in 49 years and 11 years since the last Daughters of Vartan's Chapter, Anoush, was formed in Orange County, CA.

Grand Chairwoman Gloria Korkoian also presented Certificates of Appreciation to three Daughters of Vartan members who had served fifty years or more. The certificate recipients were Past Chairwoman Sylvia Tavitian, Past Chairwoman Brenda Koltookian, and Past Chairwoman Elizabeth Kochakian, all charter members of Tzouig Chapter #25.

The name Tzouig comes from Lady Tzouig, the sister-in-law of Commander Vartan Mamigonian and mother of Vahan Mamigonian.

The chapter is accepting new members. Any women interested in joining may contact Chairwoman Susan at Hazarvartian@teppLLc.com.



Tzouig Chapter, from left to right, Daughters of Vartan Grand Chairwoman Gloria Korkoian, Susan Hazarvartian, the new Chairwoman or Dirouhie of Tzouig Otyag No. 33, and New England Grand District Representative Yertzgin Patricia Buttero.

NAASR Holds 68th Annual Assembly, Welcomes New Board Members

NAASR, from page 8

NAASR member; being a founding member of the MidEast Beat Armenian folk band; St. Nerses summer study graduate; Armenian Assembly summer intern; St. Mesrob Armenian Church (Racine) Parish Council member; cofounder of the Racine Armenian Coalition organization; Armenian studies in Venice; a number of trips into Anatolia beginning in 1984, most recently 2019; living in Armenia the spring of 1992 and providing relief to earthquake survivors and war refugees; numerous trips to Armenia with Fuller Housing to participate in home construction.

Brian Ansbikian, of Stoneham, Mass., has been an active member of the Armenian community since adolescence. As a boy, he attended Sunday School at St. James Armenian Church and went on to study Armenian language for several years at the church's Mesrob Mashdotz Institute. He was an active ACYOA and AGBU Young Professionals member for many years. He completed his undergrad-

uate studies in finance and Middle Eastern studies at Boston University. His experience with the curriculum sparked a lifelong interest in supporting the advancement of research and study of Armenian topics. Ansbikian currently works in mergers and acquisitions within the technology industry and has prior professional experience in investment banking, corporate strategy, and business development. Brian is passionate about Armenian culture and history. Deeply interested in Armenian music, he has studied the oud and various genres of Armenian and Middle Eastern music since age 16. He maintains a large collection of antique ouds and has performed extensively across New England, including at the opening of NAASR's Vartan Gregorian building.

Mihran Aroian, of Austin, Texas, is a longtime member of NAASR. Most recently Mihran has been on the faculty at the McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin and a visiting professor at the Manoogian Simone College of Business & Economics at the American

University of Armenia in Yerevan. He was instrumental in Texas passing House Resolution 191 and becoming the 46th state to recognize the Armenian Genocide, having the Texas Commission on Holocaust and Genocide include the Armenian Genocide in their educational programs, and having the Texas Education Agency include the Armenian Genocide in Texas public school social studies curriculum. He has an eclectic background as a scientist, venture capitalist, entrepreneur, and instructor. Previously, he was the co-founder of TMI Capital, Amicus Networks, and Science Partners. Having worked for Austin Ventures, Aroian has a background in working with entrepreneurial firms in the US and Armenia and is currently consulting with a cardiovascular biotech company in Boston.

Gerald (Jerry) Papazian, of Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., is currently the managing director of Fountainhead Associates, Inc., a management consulting firm he founded, which specializes in helping entrepreneurs start and grow new businesses. He graduat-

ed Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Southern California (USC) with a degree in Economics and received his JD/MBA degree from UCLA, where he was a member of the law review. Jerry is a NAASR Leadership Circle member since 2013 and is active in his local community. Jerry became Chairman of the Armenian Film Foundation after the death of Dr. J. Michael Hagopian, and along with Carla Garapedian, successfully led the effort to include digitized and indexed copies of Hagopian's 400 filmed interviews of witnesses and survivors of the Armenian Genocide into the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, founded by filmmaker Steven Spielberg. He was a member of the USC Board of Trustees and served as president of the USC Alumni Association. He is currently President of the US Capitol Page Alumni Association and serves on the board of the Pomegranate Foundation and the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games. He is a Henry Crown Fellow at the Aspen Institute.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Emma Sogioian Celebrates 100th Birthday

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich. — Emma Tabibyan Sogioian celebrated her 100th birthday on November 20 in her home in Bloomfield Hills, together with relatives and friends.

Sogioian and her late husband, Kalousd Karl Sogioian, well known philanthropists, supported a number of projects for the Mother See of Echmiadzin. Notable among these was her decision to donate 18 Armenian manuscripts to Echmiadzin in 2007.

The Sogioians were responsible for the complete construction of a beautiful church in Vayk, Armenia. They tried to equally support all of the Armenian churches in Metro Detroit. They donated organs for both St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church and St. John Armenian Church. They also have supported the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society, Cultural Society of Armenians of Istanbul (CSAI), and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). The couple hosted many high-ranking dignitaries visiting from Armenian and Russia (including Mrs. Gorbachev).

Emma Sogioian was a past president of the Detroit Armenian Women's Club from 1979-1981, and has been very active until this year. She has also been a regular supporter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Sponsor a Teacher program and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

Both Emma and Karl were honored with the titles of Prince and Princess of Cilicia by the Holy See of Cilicia in Antelias in 1996. In 2012, Emma Sogioian, a longtime member of St. John Armenian Church of



From left, Diana Alexanian, Emma (Bagdassarian) Bagdassarova, who organized the party, Zabel Belian, Aslin Parunak, Ani Parunak, Nevart Torian, with Emma Sogioian seated in front

Southfield, received Echmiadzin's St. Gregory Medal and Pontifical Encyclical during a banquet at the church.

Her husband, who passed away in 2006, always said that he could have not accomplished what he had without the help and support of his wife and close business associate for over 45 years. She became president and major stockholder of K. P. Sogioian Manufacturing, Inc., based in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Emma Sogioian's birthday party at home included as guests her niece, Ani Parunak and great-niece Aslin Parunak, both visiting from Montreal, Canada. Also attending were Emma (Bagdassarian) Bagdassarova, Nevart Torian, and Diana Alexanian, all local friends. She also had two other parties with family.

Sogioian remains as forward thinking, kind and alert as always, and still keeps a very special place in her heart for the Armenian Church and the homeland.

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Armenian Assembly Offers Summer Internships in Yerevan, Washington

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America is now accepting applications for the 2023 Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program in Washington, D.C. and the Assembly Summer Internship Program in Yerevan, Armenia.

These internship programs provide college students of Armenian descent an opportunity to work in the two nations' capitals while taking part in a full schedule of educational, cultural, and social activities.

Applications for the D.C. and Yerevan programs will be accepted until Friday, December 10, 2022, and Friday, January 14, 2023, respectively.

Students who are accepted into the Washington, D.C. program are assisted with internship placements in various offices, including congressional, think tank, media, and governmental agencies. Participants will have the opportunity to meet with U.S. Representatives, Senators, and other government officials as well as noted academics, business leaders and entrepreneurs through the Capitol Ideas and Lecture Series programs. Interns will also benefit from a wide variety of networking opportunities and social activities that are planned throughout their eight-week stay.

Students admitted into the Yerevan internship program are placed in Armenian governmental offices, inter-governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, medical centers, media outlets, and more. Over the course of eight weeks, participants will have the opportunity to experience life in their ancestral homeland, tour historical sites around Armenia, help build a home in a provincial region of Armenia with Fuller Center for Housing, and meet with officials representing Armenia and Artsakh.

"Being a Terjenian-Thomas Intern in Washington was an invaluable experience for which I could not be more grateful," said Lily Kalandjian, a 2022 participant who interned for Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL). "I had the opportunity to connect with other Armenian students across the country and Armenian professionals including Capitol Hill staffers, World Bank traders, and McDonald's executives," she continued.

"Directly meeting with United States Representatives and Senators to advocate for Armenian issues and support for Artsakh was an amazing way to give back to my community and further the Armenian cause. I able to get in touch with my Armenian heritage on a deeper level and create lifelong friends. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity provided by the Armenian Assembly as it has afforded me an experience of a lifetime," concluded Kalandjian.

"The Assembly really takes everything into account and sets up professional internships, meetings with leaders, and visiting touristic sites," said 2019 participant Michelle Ohanian, a student at UCLA who interned with the Permanent Representation of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (Artsakh) in Armenia. "I would definitely recommend the program as a whole because it's a unique opportunity and it's crucial that we become connected with our homeland."

Students can access the application and learn more information about the program here.

For additional details or assistance with the application process, contact Intern Program Director Joseph Piatt at jpiatt@aaa-inc.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Armenia Fund Telethon Raises More than \$64.8 Million for Artsakh and Armenia

LOS ANGELES — Armenia Fund held its 25th annual International Thanksgiving Day Telethon around the central theme of “25 Years of Global Armenian Unity.” Reporting to the thousands of supporters and the larger community, this year’s telethon was focused on showcasing the vital projects completed in Artsakh and Armenia since the 44-day war. These projects, totaling \$64.8 million, were made possible by unprecedented financial contributions from Armenian communities in the US.

The six-hour event, hosted by Araksya Karapetyan, Ellina Abovian and Paul Chadertjian, featured testimonials, statements of support by civic and religious leaders, and cultural performances by Armenian artists, raising over \$10.7 million globally, of which \$5,000,250 came from the United States. Other Armenian communities including France, Canada, Brazil and the UK participated through various events leading up to the 2022 telethon.

“We often speak of the Armenian community, but we are more than that.

Armenians are a global, deeply connected family,” said Armenia Fund Board Chair Maria Mehranian. “This year, we focused on all the ways the Armenia Fund of the USA has helped the homeland - children and families, communities, the entire nation - through post-war rebuilding, humanitarian relief, and infrastructure development.”

During 2021-2022, Armenia Fund completed \$48 million in housing construction and school renovation projects, over \$10 million in roads, water and energy projects, \$5 million in medical and psychological assistance to service members and their families, and over \$1 million in social and cultural programs.

“The incredible giving we experienced during and after the devastating 44-day war shows how committed and united global Armenian communities are to supporting the homeland in the face of enormous challenges. We will continue to build on the immense progress we’ve made over the last three decades since the Armenia Fund’s inception,” said Mehranian.

OBITUARY

Jirair Tanielian

Award-Winning Educator, Writer and Editor

WALTHAM, Mass. — Jirair Tanielian of Waltham, passed away on November 22.

He was the husband of Zevart (Mardirosian), father of Maral Der Torossian and her husband Vatche, and Arpy Tanielian and her husband Sevag Zaroukian; grandfather of Shant and Shahe Der Torossian and Raffi and Danny Yehiayan; brother of Pakrad Tanielian, his wife Silva and daughters (London). In addition, he was the brother of the late Yeprem Tanielian, his wife Lusine and Children, nephew of Kohar Khatchadourian and children (Lebanon), nephew of the late Arjon Djeredjian and children. He is also survived by many loving nieces and nephews.

Funeral service at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont on Tuesday, November 29 at 11:00 a.m. Relatives and friends are kindly invited to attend. Visiting hours will be held at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church on Tuesday morning from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m., immediately prior to the funeral service. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church. Burial at Saint Patrick Cemetery, 999 Belmont Street, Watertown. Memorial luncheon will be served at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church immediately following burial services.

He was born on April 21, 1941, in Beirut, to Garabed Tanielian and Sirarpi Topalian.

He attended the Mekhitarist School in Beirut, followed by AGBU’s Hovagimian-Manoogian Secondary School. He received his higher education at Haigazian University of Beirut, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in history and pedagogy, where he met the love of his life, Zevart. They got married shortly after and went on to have two daughters, Maral and Arpy, and four grandsons. Along with his bachelor’s degree, he obtained the Normal Diploma. In 1998, he was awarded the Honorary Doctorate Degree from Yerevan University of Economics and Law.

In 2017, he received an Honorary Doctorate in Armenology from the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia.

Tanielian started his career at Haigazian University, where he served for 23 years, first as the head of the Armenian Library and then as the general University librarian. This period for him became a unique era of academic excellence in philology.

In 1987, he was appointed director of AGBU’s Hovagimian-Manoogian Secondary School, and in 1993, he also became the director of Tarouhi Hagopian Secondary School. He was a lecturer in the Department



of Armenian Studies at Haigazian University and at AGBU’s Hussusian Center. He was also director of and lecturer in Armenian Studies at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia.

A very active public and cultural figure, Jirair was the Secretary of the AGBU Lebanon Education Committee (1985-1987), Secretary of the Central Board of the Armenian Youth Association (AYA-Antranik) (1987-1997), Chairman of the board of Khacher Kaloustian Pedagogical Center within the Catholicosate of Cilicia (2010-2020). He also was a member of four different commissions within the Catholicosate of Cilicia. Tanielian participated in several Armenia-Diaspora Writers’ Conferences, including the Armenia-Diaspora Conference dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Armenia’s independence. He was an organizing member of the three educational congresses organized by the Catholicosate of Cilicia. He held numerous public lectures in Lebanon, Syria, United States, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, Yerevan, Canada, and England.

He was a member of the Union of Armenian & International Journalists, a member of the Writers’ Union of Armenia, and a member of the Board of Lebanese-Armenian Writers.

On August 4, 2020, he was seriously injured during the catastrophic explosion at the port of Beirut. Soon after he left for the United States of America for treatments.

His publications include: *Armenian Press Collection* (1974, republished in 1981), *The Ramgavar Azatagan Press* (1982),

Retreat Without Song as Evidence (1983), *The New Armenian Periodical Press. 1967-1981* (1984), *Lebanese-Armenian Printing during the War Years. 1975-1984* (1986), *Philological Quests* (1997), *Lebanese-Armenian School. Numbers and Reflections. 2001-2002* (2002), *Literary Quests* (2007), *In the Spins of Philology* (Yerevan, 2011), *Philology Versus Listing Volume 1* (2020), *Volume 2* (2021).

In addition, he edited more than 30 volumes. He was the editor of the reprints of Western Armenia and Cilicia Memoirs (14 volumes) published on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

He was a member of the editorial boards of *Harach*, *Haigazian Armenological Review*, *Hask Armenological Yearbook*, *Hussusian Armenological Yearbook*, *Khosnag*, *Shirak*, and *Navasart*. He was the editor-in-chief of *Shirak* literary magazine published by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, (1990-1997), one of the founding editors of *Yeridasart Hay* (1969-1975), and the founder and editor-in-chief of *Gamar Art & Liter-*

ary Magazine (2005-2020).

He received numerous awards in his lifetime. In 1999, he was awarded the Haykashen Uzunian Literary Prize of the Tekeyan Cultural Association in Yerevan and named the winner of the Haykazun and Anahit Vartivarian Competition of the Beirut based *Zartonk* daily. In 2005, he received the Mesrob Mashdots medal and consecration received from Aram I the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia. In 2009, he received the Order of the Writers’ Union of Armenia during a ceremony in Yerevan and in 2010 Certificate of Education from the Lebanese Ministry of Education. In 2011, on the occasion of his 70th anniversary celebration in Yerevan, he received the Republic of Armenia’s Ministry of Education and Science Gold Medal, the Republic of Armenia’s Ministry of Diaspora’s William Saroyan medal, the first gold medal of the newly established Faithful Professional of the Union of Journalists of Armenia, and the Ararat Gold Medal. In 2014 he received the Movses Khorenatsi Medal of the Order of the Republic of Armenia.

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Arts & Culture

Without Heirs, Larry Gagosian Finally Plans for Succession

By Robin Pogrebin

NEW YORK (*New York Times*) — It is hard to imagine an art world without Larry Gagosian in it. The mega dealer, who started in the 1970s by selling posters on the street, represents some of the most important artists of our time (Cy Twombly, Helen Frankenthaler, Richard Prince), but has also come to symbolize — and set the tone — for a sexy gallery scene of museum-quality shows, glamorous exhibition openings and high prices.

While privately held, his company's revenue is widely estimated at about \$1 billion. As one collector put it, there are two people in the art world who require only a first name: Larry and Andy (as in Warhol).

But people in the art world have long wondered how Gagosian's empire will survive without Gagosian himself. Every one of his 19 galleries in seven countries bears the stamp of his shrewd taste in art, his spare, elegant aesthetic. Gagosian is a strong — somewhat opaque and occasionally prickly — personality with clear opinions. A bachelor with no children, he turns 78 in 2023, raising the question of a succession plan.

Now Gagosian finally seems to be forming one. In the last year, he assembled a board of directors to help him think through the future of his business. In addition to seven of his key associates and Gagosian himself, the board features 12 outside members from various industries, all of them collectors. These include Evan Spiegel, the chief executive of Snap; the artist Jenny Saville; the financier J. Tomilson Hill, who is the chairman of the Guggenheim Museum; Glenn Fuhrman, a financier who founded the Flag Art Foundation; and Delphine Arnault, the executive vice president of Louis Vuitton who also serves on the executive committee of its parent company LVMH, run by her father Bernard Arnault, one of the world's top collectors.

"I don't know who will take over for me," Gagosian said in an interview. "It's tricky to have a legacy business, particularly when there's no family. But we have an extremely successful business and we would like to see it live beyond me. This seemed like a step in that direction. I'm not contemplating stepping down or slowing down. It creates a model for the gallery to move forward and it also enriches it right now."

Recently, talk has intensified around what a Gagosian Gallery enterprise will look like post-Gagosian. His peers in the field — David Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth, Pace, Acquavella, Nahmad — are family businesses, with a younger generation who could potentially succeed the founders.

Reports have also recently appeared in art publications, saying that Gagosian was for sale or considering see GAGOSIAN, page 16



Installation view in "A Knot in the Throat: Foraging for a Vanishing Present" in the Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, 2021.

Silvina Der-Meguerditchian *The Re-creator of Lost Worlds*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN / BERLIN — Silvina Der-Meguerditchian is a multidisciplinary artist. She was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, lives and works in Berlin. Her artwork uses different mediums such as installation, video, sound, mix-media and performance. The burden of national identity, the role of minorities in society and the potential of a space "in between" are important topics in her artistic research. Der-Meguerditchian is also interested in the impact of migration in the urban texture and its consequences. Reconstruction of the past and the building of archives are a red thread in her work. Her projects were awarded by different international institutions, to name a few, the European Cultural Foundation, Kunstfonds Stiftung, the Sharjah Art Foundation and the Goethe Institut. In 2022 she was awarded with the Falkenrot Preis, the working fellowships for visual arts by the Senate Department for Culture of Berlin and the "in view" grant by the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Silvina has been working as art director of the Houshamadyan project (www.houshamadyan.org) a project to reconstruct ottoman Armenian town and village life since its inception in 2011.

From 2014 she cooperates with "Women mobilizing memory", a group of artists, writers, museologists, social activists, and scholars of memory and memorialization, who focus on the political stakes and consequences of witnessing and testimony as responses to socially imposed vulnerability and historical trauma.

She participated in "Armenity", the Pavilion awarded with the Golden Lion at the 56. Venice Biennial for the best national participation. Her artistic work has been shown in many exhibitions around the world, including, among others, Germany, Italy, Greece, Argentina, USA and Turkey.

"Out of lost stories, things and objects Silvina arranges living archives, creates textures of memory which are material for new affiliations, open up spaces of action for a more hopeful future and a different kind of coexistence" (Barbara Höffer).

In 2021 *Silvina Der-Meguerditchian: Fruitful Threads* bilingual (German-English) catalogue was published by Verlag für Moderne Kunst, Vienna.

Dear Silvina, I first saw your work in 2015 at the 56th Venice. We all were so happy that our Pavilion received the Golden Lion award for the best national participation.

Yes, of course, all the participating artists were very happy about this recognition. Adelina Cuberyan von Fürstenberg did a great job curating and we as artists gave our best. I had been interested in the Venice Biennale as a platform for a long time. That's why it was very significant for me to be invited to the official pavilion. Actually, I initiated the first diaspora pavilion in 2007, it was not in any program, a "subversive" pavilion. Back then it was an initiative to open a dialogue with the Republic of Armenia, and to talk about our affiliations and our self-perception as a trans-nation.

Do you think that the Armenian Diaspora Pavilion's Golden Lion award was politicized as it coincided with the centennial of Armenian Genocide?

If you are addressing the politicization in the ROA, and the questions about why and if diaspora Armenians should represent Armenia, to tell you the truth, I am quite see SILVINA, page 14



Iranian Troupe Stages Play in Yerevan

(The following is an interview with Arad Entezar, one of the members of the performance group MokhTalafat, which will stage a play in Yerevan later this month.)

Q: Please introduce yourself.

A: My name is Arad Entezar and I'm an actor as well as one of the main members of the MokhTalafat Art Group. We are an Iranian international multi-art-production company hoping to raise the standards of Iran's theater scene.

Q: Why did you want to stage a play in Armenia?

A: A couple of months ago we performed in Armenia's main international performing arts festival called *High Fest* with our play called "MokhTalaftim" (meaning "we've lost our minds") and there I got to meet my now dear friend, the play's producer, Lilit Movsisyan. We talked and decided to arrange an Iranian-Armenian performance here in Yerevan.

Q: Can you tell us about the play?

A: Well, this play is the third part of the MokhTalaftim trilogy and it is called "The Big Head." It's about a patient in a psychiatric hospital who thinks his head has become very big. It is because he hasn't thought and analyzed anything he has been told from a young age, so in reality it's all inside his head and imagination. The first part of this trilogy was "MokhTalaftim," which by the time it came on the stage of Shahrzad Theater of Tehran became the best-selling and most viewed performance of Iran in 2020. Also, the second part, "Oodo" [someone who runs], was performed in Iran's Fajr International Theater Festival.

Q: Who is the director and what can you tell us about the cast?

A: Arman Shirali Nejad, the well-known Iranian-Armenian director who just won the New World Award of the Tirana International Film Festival of Albania for his short movie, "The Messenger," is the director behind this Iranian-Armenian performance. The assistant director is Elza Mamunts and Hasti Jabbari, the young and talented Iranian entrepreneur, is the costume designer of the play. The producer is Lilit Movsisyan and the Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinematography (YSITC). In the cast of actors there are two Iranians, Arad Entezar and Shokoofeh Ahmadi, and four Armenians, Armen Jrbashyan, Mariam Zaqaryan, Karen Harutyunyan and Mariam Meliqyan.

Q: Tell us about "MokhTalafat."

A: MokhTalafat Art Group is an international multi-art production company based in Tehran, Iran. The name MokhTalafat is consisted of two words: "Mokh [Mind]" and "Talaftat [Wasted]," meaning "Wasted-Minds"

Its main members are three people. Arman Shirali Nejad is the CEO of see PLAY, page 15

ARTS & CULTURE

Silvina Der-Meguerditchian: The Re-creator of Lost Worlds

SILVINA, from page 13

discouraged and frustrated regarding the relationship of the Republic of Armenia and the Diaspora in the field of culture. As far as the visual arts are concerned, I think the ministry of culture in Armenia does a lousy job. In the diaspora it is not much better, in fact we have no institution worth its name that promotes and strengthens the visual arts. The relationship between the ROA and the Diaspora is already very dysfunctional in general, something that is clearly manifested in the field of culture.

There are many issues where we address the difficulties with different tools. Moreover, there is no such thing as “the diaspora,” but different diasporas which are not a model of unity either, depending on the institutions prevailing in the different countries. It seems to me a totally ridiculous thing to fight for hegemony of what is Armenian culture or Armenian language and who represents it, instead of playing in a team in which there are many “specialists” and with an incredible wealth of experiences that could achieve a lot of things. Our diversity is our forte, it is a historical diversity of experiences, instead of silencing it, we should celebrate it.

Regarding the politicization in the international art world, despite some malicious comments, I think that the Golden Lion was well deserved, and it was the opinion of most people I met. The pavilion was meaningful, at the right time, in the right place and spoke with the right voice. Instead of “shouting” (figuratively speaking), like many works in Venice that try to attract attention with huge amount of materiality and expensive mega installations, our works dialogued with the space and integrated with the monastery to generate a chorus of whispering voices, which had to be given attention, not out of megalomania, but out of sensibility, aesthetics, politics, and poetry. Adelina was the perfect director for this “chorus.”

You give new life to old artefacts. In your installation of “Armenity,” called “Treasures,” you presented 350 folk health remedies from your great-grandmother’s notebook. Don’t you intend to give new life also to those remedies translating and publishing them?

There was the plan to publish the folk remedies as a book in Turkey in 2016/2017, but the political situation deteriorated so much that the idea was left up in the air. In addition, the sponsors of the project, between them Osman Kavala, ended up in prison. (On November 10, Osman Kavala, who is sentenced to life imprisonment in Turkey, was awarded with “Prize for the Dialogue of Cultures” by the Stuttgart Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations. It was handed to Der Meguerditchian, who in her speech called for the award to help “close the gap between real and moral politics.”)

In 2021 while I was installing Treasures at the Kunsthalle Exnergasse, I met Heinrich Evanzin, a pharmacist and physician researching medieval Armenian medicine in Vienna (Austria) and we agreed that he would try some of the recipes.

This year a cooperation with Dr. Talin Suciyan of the Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, came up. There will be a translation and a scientific publication on the subject in the next few years.

It was logical that you, who recreates lost worlds and involved in artistic archeology, became a part of Berlin-based Houshamadyan project, reconstructing Ottoman Armenian town and village life in visual forms. In this project your talent of filmmaker has been revealed -

I highly enjoyed your shorts on Hajin and Dikranagert (Diyarbakir) Armenians. I am sure you will make us happy with new outstanding projects with Houshamadyan.

I really enjoy working with archival materials. I love working with dialects and with traditional dances. Armenian dialects that are still spoken in different corners of the world and the movements of the dances belong to the intangible cultural heritage and are one of the biggest challenges for me. To archive them in such a way that they are permeable, that they can be disseminated and perceived by a large public is a difficult task. I love challenges. Since last year we have been cooperating with a team of traditional dance specialists in the United States. Bringing into dialogue those tutorials with archival footage from the diaspora meetings/picnics is a very rewarding task. You see how they behave, the clothes, the joy. It makes me happy.

You are one of the rare diasporan artists, who initiated and participated in projects with Turkey, like “Mobilizing Memory: Women Witnessing” in 2014, “Grandchildren, new Geographies of Belonging” in 2015. Before I also believed that through arts and culture we can build a dialogue between Armenia and Turkey, but after Osman Kavala’s imprisonment and especially the 44-day war I hardly believe in it at least in near future.

I have to say that I am also very disappointed, I was convinced that we were on the right track. I am an optimistic person, however, I also think that in the near future the slope is going to remain very steep.

I think there is a difference between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Unlike Azerbaijan, Turkey has a civil society, which is very fragile, but it exists. Feminists in Turkey are very strong and courageous. Many of the people interested in a dialogue are scared off or had to leave the country. Others are very brave and are still there, but they are a tiny minority. I believe that the work we did for more than 10 years is not lost. If the geopolitical situation allows it, I believe it will be possible to pick up where we left off and build a better future.

For that today, September 2022, it would be important that Turkey and Azerbaijan leave the path of hatred and destruction. The more wounds they create, the more work it will cost us all to go back. The genocidal intention must stop. Their speech and acts need a 180° change. It is a rhetoric and behavior of the last century. You don’t need to analyze too much; their acts speak tones...

The worlds today’s challenges must be faced by humanity together, using the strengths and different capabilities of all cultures. Domination, oppression, and expansion are backwards categories from an obsolete mindset. This strategy might appear as relevant today, but in the long term it’s not.

Silvina, you are so Armenian in your works! But I agree completely with Joanna Pfaff Czarnecka, who observed: “I was particularly fascinated by the fact that Silvina has the gift of dressing what is personal to her, her very own, in a language that is universal and therefore very communicable. For me and for many other recipients of her work, her struggle with the path of her own family in the light of the terrible history of Armenia is striking.” How you manage to be both national and universal?

I try to be faithful to all that is me, that way I can feed my cosmopolitan spirit. The fluidity and flexibility in transcending

different geographical spaces and cultures without losing myself are the characteristics of my Armenian identity that I like the most. This practice is evidently reflected in my artwork. I’m happy that you can identify with aspects of my work.

Is there room for expressing your Argentinean side in your works?

I was born and raised in Argentina. The constituent years of my adolescence and childhood were spent in Buenos Aires. I’m sure there are strong parts of me that are rooted in this experience. To have known the endless plains in Patagonia, the vastness of a country. Being critical of the government, having experienced hyperinflation over and over again, having lived in a military dictatorship, trying to get ahead on my own with agility and flexibility, being daring and daring ventures with no safety net to save me if I fail, having lived close to extreme poverty, etc. All these are some of the parts of my Argentine identity that have helped me to survive and that are also manifested in my artistic practice.

You work in the international scene with your typical Der-Meguerditchian surname, which should sound difficult to non-Armenians. Being married to a German, how so you kept your hard-pronouncing surname instead of taking a German family name?

Because my name is part of my identity, where one of the belongings it marked me the most comes. I wanted to honor that belonging using my name, despite the difficulties.

How much do you know about the contemporary art scene of Armenia and how would you evaluate it?

I can’t evaluate the scene, but I can simply tell you my experience. At one time

around 2003/2005 I tried to generate a genuine and curious link with artists from the Republic of Armenia. I had the expectation that this link would help me to get to know myself better, but it did not work. I tried to generate some virtual projects putting a lot of effort on my part (at that time there was no Facebook, skype or zoom) but there was no interest. The artists I met told me that they didn’t think we had anything in common, calling me naive for thinking that because we were Armenian, we would have something to say to each other. I found the circuit very closed, distrustful, prejudiced and even arrogant. Artists of my generation showed no interest over the years.

The last few times I went to Armenia it seemed to me that the younger generations are more open and that there is potential. But the last time I went to Armenia was in 2017, and I am not aware of the latest developments.

When we met last August in Venice I was delighted to learn your son’s name is Avedis and that he attended an Armenian course. Always dealing with issues of migration, minorities, identity, belonging, family, how do you see the future of Armenians in such a melting pot as Europe?

If we manage to get out of this current conflict with Azerbaijan, which aims to reduce and annihilate us, I believe that our capabilities and skills, the role of translator, mediator, intelligence with no other raw material than our ability to adapt and start from scratch again and again, is very attractive for Europe’s idea of the society of the future.

If we begin to capitalize on our strengths, and act as a team, the Republic and the Armenian Diaspora, we can do it. We must come out of this battle with determination.



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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Joumana Accad's Balila

BEIRUT — Joumana Accad, creator of the celebrated food blog TasteofBeirut.com, is a native Lebanese, a trained pastry chef and a professional caterer. In her debut cookbook, *Taste of Beirut*, she shares her heritage through exquisite food and anecdotes, teaching anyone from newbies to foodies how to master traditional Lebanese cuisine. With over 150 recipes inspired by her beloved Teta (grandmother) in their family's kitchen, Accad captures the celebrated flavors of the Middle East and makes them completely accessible to home cooks and chefs around the world. Each recipe features step-by-step instructions, Accad's warm teaching style, and breathtaking color photographs that will make mouths water.

Accad left the Middle East in 1975 and began an international journey. She moved to Paris in the mid-1970s where she finished her formal education, returned briefly to Beirut before moving to the United States in 1979. Widowed at a young age, she moved to Dallas, Texas in 1987, remarried and raised two children. She couldn't resist the call of cooking and entered the Pastry Arts program at El Centro College in Dallas. Upon graduation, she became a pastry chef at a German restaurant, worked as a caterer, and sold her decorated cookies and cakes. Whole Foods Markets even asked her to teach classes on Lebanese cuisine at several of their local markets.

"Lebanon is a beautiful Mediterranean country with few natural resources. I cooked in Beirut with established master cooks, learning tips and techniques to successfully prepare traditional dishes such as balila. As a child, learning to cook from my grandmother, I grew to appreciate and take full advantage of what nature provided us," she explains. "I have modernized many traditional Lebanese recipes like this one that take advantage of seasonal ingredients." She is active on social media channels, especially on Facebook and she has created several videos on YouTube, of which her Baklava in Ten Minutes has attracted over 944,000 views.

"Balila is the epitome of the poor man's dish in Lebanon; it's served for breakfast in every neighborhood joint for the throngs of workers who eat it before heading to their job on the construction site or at the office. It's delicious," she says.

"All you need are chickpeas and some good olive oil, garlic and lemon to season it. And ground cumin. The secret to this recipe is using good quality chickpeas; a famous balila seller in Beirut once told me he gets his chickpeas from Mexico. Apparently, the local chickpeas are too scrawny for his (high) standards, and the Mexican ones are big and plump. The chickpeas need to be cooked to death until they get super soft and dressed at the last minute with the magic Lebanese combo of olive oil, lemon and freshly mashed garlic. The balila gets sprinkled with cumin right before eating for the final touch."

"Balila should be served with fresh radishes, fresh mint, chili peppers, spring onions, sliced tomatoes, and olives, and some warm pita bread to scoop up the soup. Simply cut off a piece of bread, scoop up as much balila as possible, top with a mint leaf, and inhale it with some radish or olive or onion or all of these," she adds.

INGREDIENTS:

2 cans cooked chickpeas OR one cup dried chickpeas (soaked in water overnight, add a pinch of baking soda, then drained and cooked in plenty of water for 2 hours or until extra soft)
Olive oil, preferably extra-virgin, as needed (at least 1/3 cup), to taste
4 large cloves garlic, mashed with a pinch of salt until pasty
Ground cumin, as garnish
Juice of 2 large lemons
Serves 4.

PREPARATION:

If using canned, drain chickpeas and place in a saucepan with fresh tap water and cook for 30 minutes or longer, simmering slowly; mash a few chickpeas to obtain a soupy texture.

Add the garlic, olive oil and lemon juice (you can mix the dressing beforehand). Taste and adjust seasonings.

Balila is always eaten with fresh Lebanese flatbread, also known as pita bread. Rip off a piece to use as a scoop with your hands. Serve with cumin as a garnish or on the side, with fresh radishes, mint, chili peppers, spring onions, sliced tomatoes, and olives. (Cumin can be replaced with ground cinnamon [or both can be added], or even some ground Aleppo or chili pepper.)

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/balila>

For information and more recipes: <https://www.tasteofbeirut.com>

Subscribe to Joumana's food blog and receive notifications of new posts by email: <https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/about/>

For Joumana's Baklava in Ten Minutes, watch her video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7I7-9Amsqk>

Taste of Beirut Cookbook was published in September 2014, with Health Communications, Inc. Order today at:

<https://www.simonandschuster.co.uk/books/Taste-of-Beirut/Joumana-Accad/9780757317705>

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<https://www.star chefs.com/cook/press/chef-joumana-accad-publishes-her-first-cookbook-taste-beirut>

Joumana has worked in the United States and in Lebanon, and has a large inventory of styled, copyrighted food images available if needed. She is interested in styling food for corporate clients and in brand sponsorships. Contact her by e-mail at joumana_accad@yahoo.com or on social media.

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Iranian Troupe Stages Play in Yerevan

PLAY, from page 13

the group who established it in 2020, Arad Entezar, born on September 27, 2000 in Karaj, Iran, is the youngest member of the group and the brains behind organizing and managing the company's activities. He joined the group in March 2021 and has been acting in it since then. Among his notable plays we can name "Oodo" at the Fajr International Theater Festival and "MokhTalaftim" at the Highfest Theater Festival. And finally, Sobhan Babaiee, is the only original member of the original cast of MokhTalaftim 2020 still in the group. The group's sole purpose is to raise the standards of Iran's theater scene and it has proven this with each new production.

Q: What difficulties do you face during creating a performance?

A: Since we are an independent art group and

not supported by big companies or governments we usually have to struggle with financial problems for the play, yet we have always found a way to make things go on.

Q: When is this performance going on the stage and what are your plans for the future?

A: The play will be performed on December 6, 2022 in the Hamazgayin State Theater of Yerevan, Armenia, and we are planning to take this play to Iran and perform it also in Iran's International Theater Festival of Fajr in the international part.

Q: How have things been going so far?

A: To be honest, we are amazed by the amount of effort put into this from all of the cast and all the people supporting this project and at the end I hope we be able to perform a great play for the people of both countries.



Practice for "the Big Head" performance by MokhTalaftat Art Group

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

DECEMBER 4 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) is celebrating its 75th anniversary at the TCA Beshgeturian Center in Altadena, Calif. on Sunday, Dec. 4 under the aegis of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, with the participation of the Central Board of TCA of the United States and Canada, and the presidency of Nazaret Kevonian. Keynote speaker is Dr. Simon Simonian. There is an Armenian-language cultural program and a buffet. 5 p.m. at the Beshgeturian Center, 1901 N. Allen Avenue. To reserve tickets email tca75thanniversary@gmail.com or call 626-251-1111.

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

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

DECEMBER 11 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church presents a Christmas Holiday Concert by Erevan Choral Society in memory of Fr. Oshagan Minassian on

what would have been his 90th birthday, at the Sanctuary of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St, Cambridge, MA. Sunday, 7 p.m. Conductor will be conductor/composer Konstantin Petrossian and will feature soloists Rosy Anoush Svazlian, soprano, and Giovanni Formisano, tenor. The free concert is open to the public.

DECEMBER 11 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. CANDLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY. Sunday at 4:45pm. “Boston’s Newest Holiday Tradition” Hot Chocolate & Festive Cookies. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

NEW YORK

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

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

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

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

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

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 9-28 — Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church presents: December 9 Christmas concert at Church sanctuary featuring Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, Junior Choir, soloist Friday at 7 p.m., free. Armenian Cultural Hour: Whether or not you have a Facebook account, you can find the LIVESTREAM of the event through the parish’s Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/armenianchurchprovidence/videos/>

- December 28 at 7:30 pm - “David Ayriyan - Memorial concert”

Without Heirs, Larry Gagosian Finally Plans for Succession

GAGOSIAN, from page 13

an investment from LVMH or the Arnault family’s holding company.

Gagosian firmly denied these reports. “There is no conversation going on and I have no plans to sell the company,” he said. “I own 100 percent of it, I have no investors and my business is not for sale. I like to control what I’ve got.” At the same time, he said no company would responsibly exclude such a possibility down the line. “If somebody swooped in and wanted to make a major investment,” he said, “I think anybody would listen to that.”

As to how the new board will affect his concrete plans of succession, Gagosian said it will inform how he approaches the future. Precisely what form that future takes remains uncertain. Gagosian has several high-ranking deputies who help him run things already. None of his executives have emerged as a clear successor, although the veteran art dealer Andrew Fabricant, 67, whom Gagosian hired in 2018, now plays a leading role. (Gagosian called him “a great strategic thinker.”)

Gagosian said he has assembled the board as a kind of brain trust, with no specific mandate or end game, except to consider questions such as “What can you say about our business and more broadly the art market?” and “How do we move forward as a business? What are the challenges, what are the opportunities?”

During the early locked-down months of the coronavirus pandemic, Gagosian said he did some serious thinking about the longtime future of his business and how to let go a little more — although he added that he continues to work as hard as he’s ever worked.

Getting comfortable with delegating and working more collectively has been an acquired skill. “I resisted because maybe I’m a little more of a lone wolf — I’m a very entrepreneurial guy, I’m independent in my thinking,” Gagosian said. “But over the last few years it has given me more time to work on things I’m particularly interested in. I’m quite pleased to see how well the gallery functions. It’s

taken a lot of stuff off my desk and given me time to work more conceptually and to spend more time with artists. It freed me up. I can’t imagine going back to the way it was before.”

Saville said she was happy to serve as the “artist’s voice” on the board.

“It’s very much about finding opportunities for artists, brainstorming about where art is moving,” she said. “I don’t know if other galleries have outlived their figure. The idea is to create something which gives the gallery a lot of longevity, with the beginning of a shape so it can live beyond Larry.”

The trustees, who are compensated, are expected to serve three-year terms, at which point they will rotate off unless Gagosian asks them to stay on. The board — which will meet twice annually — had its first meeting last May and the second one last week.

“It was a way to reach out to people in other areas, people who were insiders and people who were coming from a different perspective, and just kind of broaden the brain pool at the gallery,” Gagosian said. “It seemed like a great group of people that I’m comfortable with, that I already have friendships and relationships with. At the last meeting, we had to call it after about three and a half hours — people were still wanting to contribute more. From my perspective, it’s been very enriching.”

At the most recent board meeting, the members discussed what artists really want in a gallery, “what is an artist looking for?” Hill said. “What is a Stanley Whitney looking for or a Rick Lowe or a Jordan Wolfson — why would they go to Gagosian versus other galleries?”

The additional outside board members — all of them collectors — include the screenwriter and director Sofia Coppola and Dasha Zhukova Niarchos, an entrepreneur

and investor.

“There is no question in my mind that when Larry is no longer, Gagosian Gallery will continue,” Hill said.

At the same time, the knowledgeable, hands-on “Larry” who Hill described working with over the last many years remains difficult to replicate.

“In the ’80s, I would go to his gallery because I’d always



Larry Gagosian

learn something,” Hill said. “And in the ’90s, I saw things I couldn’t believe I was seeing. My first exposure to Rubens oil sketches was a show Larry did of Rubens oil sketches.

“I bought my first Francis Bacon from him,” Hill continued, adding that he also bought his first Picasso, a painting of Picasso’s lover Marie-Thérèse, from Gagosian.

“I’d seen it in the retrospective of portraiture at the Museum of Modern Art,” he added. “It turned out it was owned by the actor Steve Martin. Steve, who had a great relationship with Larry, said ‘Larry, if you can find a buyer for this over the next week, I’ll sell it.’ That’s Larry.”



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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Armenia Should Prepare for Collateral Damage from Iran-Azerbaijan Standoff



By **Edmond Y. Azadian**

The cross-border rhetoric flying back and forth between Iran and Azerbaijan thus far has created a false sense of hope for Armenia.

If until now this war of words was considered political drama in the South Caucasus, the further escalation of tensions between the two major parties makes it pale in comparison in terms of scale.

In the aftermath of the 44-Day War in 2020, political developments exposed regional rivalries which use Armenia and Azerbaijan to expand zones of influence or to fight to replace an antagonist. That, of course, gives leverage to the Azerbaijani dictator to play both sides against each other and take advantage from each side.

President Ilham Aliyev travels to any capital for summit meetings. He even agrees to respect the territorial integrity of Armenia and negotiate in good faith to sign a peace treaty, only to bomb Armenia's borders the next day and to raise the issue of the "Zangezur Corridor" to return the situation back to square one.

The next summit between Armenian Premier Nikol Pashinyan and Aliyev had been planned to take place on December 7 in Brussels, with the participation of European Union President Charles Michel and French President Emmanuel Macron.

However, Mr. Aliyev this week announced his refusal to participate, citing as the reason the presence of Mr. Macron, whom he considers to be pro-Armenian and thus not an independent broker. In addition, behind this resentment lies the recent overwhelmingly one-sided vote in the French Senate, which calls on Azerbaijan to stop its aggression against Armenia and redress all the consequences of that aggression.

Macron's participation in that planned meeting was not necessarily a Pashinyan prerequisite but it was based on an agreement reached in Prague to continue the negotiations in the same format.

Aliyev's refusal was also meant to keep Moscow in the fray, because every time

the negotiations move to a Western capital, Moscow is left out and considers the move as an international strategy to usurp its sphere of influence. Mr. Aliyev also plays up to Moscow's desires because he has found more sympathetic ears in Russia rather than in the West. That was proven once again when the leadership of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) met in Yerevan on November 23 for its annual meeting and to pass a resolution on Armenia's grievances against Azerbaijan. In particular, it was to find ways to help the former in its conflict and to take a position on the September 13, 2021 Azerbaijani attack on Armenia.

Before the meeting, Aliyev had warned that he had more friends among CSTO members than Armenia, an actual member of that group. And his boasting turned out to be true, because the participants could not muster enough courage to point the finger at Azerbaijan as the aggressor.

The scrapping of the December 7 meeting was a boon for Moscow, which jumped on the opportunity to move the next session of the negotiations under its auspices. The spokesperson of Russia's Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, has announced that the Foreign Ministry's special envoy, Igor Kovalyev, has visited Yerevan and Baku to lay the foundations for the next meeting and conduct fact-finding in preparation for a peace treaty and settlement of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

All these developments seem like the normal course of diplomacy, barring the fact that a more powerful storm is gathering strength in the region and Ilham Aliyev intends to play the role of spoiler.

In the past, only minor officials or newscasters in Azerbaijan have made references to the Azerbaijani province of Iran but never has a head of state addressed the issue.

President Aliyev had given an early hint during the recent convocation of the Organization of Turkic States in Samarkand, where he also offered to share a piece of the "Zangezur Corridor" with each Turkic nation as part of the Turanic empire.

But this time around, he was more explicit, laying out a demand on Iran's sovereign territory. Ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran have never given up their identity and have always stated that they have brethren living in a sovereign state called Azerbaijan. Iran's historical aspiration has been to absorb that minority. But it turns out Mr. Aliyev has a bigger appetite and he believes the small fish can swallow the big one — Azerbaijan has a population of 8 million and according to an estimate, there are anywhere between 20 to 25 million ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran, though not all are in the province.

President Aliyev could never have dared to make such a claim if he were not backed by a larger configuration of forces which have an ax to grind with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Last week, during the conference titled "Along the Middle Corridor" in Baku, Aliyev launched an unprecedented attack against Iran, stating that his government would do its "best to

preserve our secular lifestyle ... as well as Azerbaijanis living in Iran," whom he considered "part of our people."

Then he continued his diatribe: "We worked with three presidents of Iran, [Mohammad] Khatami, [Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad and [Hassan] Rouhani. For all these years, there was no similar situation. Never has Iran had two [military] exercises near our borders, within a few months. There has never been such hateful and threatening statements against Azerbaijan."

"Hateful" statements refer to President Raisi's warnings against border changes in the region. Aliyev, putting on a brave face, stated: "We are not

afraid of Iran." Of course, earlier he had boasted that Azerbaijan's army is "also Turkey's army," indicating that Turkey will back Azerbaijan unconditionally as it did during the 44-Day War against Armenia. That nation's army is one of the largest in the world, ranked 13th globally.

Incidentally, while Armenia is struggling to adopt a military doctrine and build up its defense forces, Turkey has helped Azerbaijan to restructure its armed forces along NATO standards.

Aliyev's new and daring belligerence will be understood when it is placed in proper context. Thus, recently Mahmudali Chehregani, the leader of the "South Azerbaijan National Awakening Movement, thus far banned in Azerbaijan and living in Washington, suddenly appeared on Azerbaijan's state TV on November 4 and promised to end the "Persian fascist mullah regime." He has also criticized relations between Iran and Armenia, calling the latter "an enemy of Azerbaijan."

When an exile political operative living in Washington comes out of mothballs and joins his former enemies, it means there is a collusion of forces for a common cause.

Another development is the return to power in Israel of Benjamin Netanyahu, a hawk fixated on Iran or rather its destruction. With the Biden administration new initiatives, negotiations on Iran's ratification of the nuclear treaty had started and the participants were believed to be on the verge of a breakthrough but it was delayed by a visit of Israeli parliamentary delegation to Washington. Pundits in the West believe that Iran's intransigence also helped to derail it and boost Netanyahu's chances to return see STANDOFF, page 18





COMMENTARY

ANALYSIS

What Is Behind Pope Francis' Appointment of New Prefect for Eastern Churches?

By **Andrea Gagliarducci**

For the role of prefect of the Dicastery for the Oriental Churches, Pope Francis has chosen Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, who since 2020 was nuncio to the United Kingdom.

The Italian prelate's diplomatic career came about somewhat "by accident."

As a specialist in Eastern liturgy and a fluent Russian and Armenian speaker, Gugerotti arrived in Rome to serve in the Congregation of Oriental Churches, where he had served as undersecretary before starting his career as "ambassador of the pope."

His recent appointment came as a bit of a surprise, given Vatican rumors were convinced that Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, 79 years old and head of the dicastery since 2007, would remain the prefect until he was 80.

As a possible substitute, there was talk of Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, a longtime diplomat and former Vatican "foreign minister," who is now prefect of the Apostolic Signatura — the Vatican's highest judicial authority.

Gugerotti's profile was among those considered possible prefects but considered unlikely. A little for his well-underway diplomatic career: in London since 2020, he had been sent — he explained in an interview with Vatican News — to continue the dialogue between Catholics and Anglicans. Partly because his fluent knowledge of the Russian language and culture made him, in the eyes of many, too close to Russia and, therefore, ineligible in times like these.

This reading, however, risks being superficial. Gugerotti is an expert on Ukraine, having been nuncio to Kyiv from 2015 to 2020. But he is also an expert on Russia and how Russian politics moves. So when as nuncio he spoke about the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine, long before the large-scale Russian aggression on Ukrainian territory, he did so in terms that very much reflected the diplomatic line of Pope Francis.

In the end, there are three reasons why Archbishop Gugerotti was chosen as prefect of the dicastery:

His experience and knowledge not only of the Eastern Churches but also of post-Soviet politicians.

His diplomatic doctrine.

The role that the Dicastery for the Oriental Churches can play.

Gugerotti, 67, arrived in Rome to serve in the Congregation of the Oriental Churches after attending Eastern theology and liturgy for three years at the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in Verona.

He remained in the dicastery until 2001, becoming undersecretary in 1997.

Then, Pope John Paul II appointed him nuncio to Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, a position he held from 2001 to 2011. He was in Tbilisi when, in 2008, there was the Russo-Georgian War, and therefore he learned about the Russian way of operating.

In 2011, Benedict XVI appointed him nuncio to Belarus. There, he was able to visit political prisoners, negotiating directly with President Aleksandr Lukashenko. This confidence in the Belarusian president came in handy at the end of 2020 when Pope Francis sent him to Belarus to speak with Lukashenko and negotiate the return of Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz of Minsk, who had gone abroad for a series of celebrations and was then prevented by authorities from returning to his homeland.

He had been unable to return home because — it was said — his passport had expired. Gugerotti succeeded in the mission, and Kondrusiewicz returned in time to celebrate Christmas, then left his place when he turned 75 on Jan. 3, 2021.

From 2015 to 2020, Gugerotti was nuncio to Ukraine. Unfortunately, he inherited a situation of conflict that arose following the Russian annexation of Crimea. Nevertheless, he was able to reach the conflict zones, even celebrating one Easter in the Donbas. In addition, he was among the coordinators of the "Pope for Ukraine" initiative. But, above all, he has consistently called for a Russian-Ukrainian reconciliation that goes beyond politics and political needs.

His ability to see competing perspectives is also due

to his excellent knowledge of the Russian language and made him a candidate to hold the position of prefect of the Dicastery for the Oriental Churches.

Analysis: What is behind the changes at Caritas Internationalis?

Gugerotti's positions on the war in Ukraine

To understand Archbishop Gugerotti's diplomatic doctrine, one must reread his statements during the conflict in the Donbas region.

In December 2019, the Paris summit brought together Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, with French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron and then German Prime Minister Angela Merkel in the French capital.

Commenting on the results of that meeting, Gugerotti stressed that "Ukraine, in the conflict territories in the Donbas," needs to live "a true experience of reconciliation; otherwise, there is no way out. So the situation is buffered, but an open-air cemetery is preserved."

Even then, the nuncio said that the conflict represented "a situation of eternal precariousness. The bombing continues." Gugerotti noted how this affected children and how it was difficult to find medicines and food, and to ensure heating.

In short, the nuncio decried the pathological precariousness of the situation.

Gugerotti also asked Europe to be less distracted, even just "for the moral commitment" it had, given that Ukraine had chosen European values: "A choice that costs a lot in terms of human lives and a very high economic price."

Europe was involved, the nuncio said, because it had an ongoing conflict that put its borders at risk. But above all because — "and this must be said," he added — some Western mercenaries were also fighting in the Donbas: Italians, Germans, French, and Americans.

The Italian prelate also said "the tragedy of this conflict is general forgetfulness."

In April 2018, Archbishop Gugerotti issued an appeal to Europe.

"If Europe thinks of solving its problems by looking only at its internal issues, it will not only fail to solve them but will be crushed by external pressure," he said.

"There is a conflict at the gates of Europe, but Europe is too busy with national problems and the difficulty of being together to notice," Gugerotti said. "If international solidarity is not rediscovered as a means to reestablish a minimum of common law, to guarantee a minimum of justice and equity, not only will we not save ourselves, but we will let other people perish and then repent in the future for not having seen."

Calls for reconciliation can be challenging to digest for people experiencing an invasion.

At the same time, Gugerotti had also expressed some concern over the joint declaration between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill, signed in Havana on Feb. 12, 2016. While the pope defined it as "pastoral," critics read the statement as biased toward Russian positions.

The role of the Dicastery of the Oriental Churches

By choosing Gugerotti, Pope Francis presumably wanted to inform the work of the Dicastery for the Oriental Churches with a view to initiatives concerning the war in Ukraine.

The appointment came as a surprise, with an addition to the bulletin, and was announced personally by the pope during the interdicasterial meeting underway the morning of Nov. 21.

Although Gugerotti was naturally a candidate for the post, the appointment has the flavor of being one of the pope's sudden choices, taking others by surprise.

But this kind of choice presupposes that the pope already had a plan.

First, Pope Francis wanted a diplomat to lead the dicastery, so it stayed active at the diplomatic level. In this, Gugerotti is a disciple of Cardinal Achille Silvestrini, another Italian and diplomat, who served as prefect of the Congregation of the Eastern Churches — and succeeded Cardinal Sandri.

From this perspective, the pope wanted to signal to Russia he was appointing a known nuncio who was not

considered hostile. It should be remembered that the dicastery for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is the Dicastery for the Oriental Churches.

Finally, the pope needed a diplomat who supported his line of neutrality but who at the same time showed sympathy and understanding for Ukraine.

It remains to be seen how all this will take shape and impact the diplomatic role of the Holy See in the ongoing conflict.

Pope Francis, as we know, has always asked for mediation. And Archbishop Gugerotti, a possible key interlocutor with the Russians, will take over the task. After all, Gugerotti has already met with both Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Then there is a further clue. On March 5, Gugerotti attended a pro-Ukraine demonstration in London's Trafalgar Square. The nuncio said: "We are all Ukrainians." His words may also represent the sentiments of Pope Francis, who authorized his nuncio's presence at the event.

So, Gugerotti has already played the role of the pope's voice. He will be called to do it again.

(Andrea Gagliarducci is an Italian journalist for Catholic News Agency and Vatican analyst for ACI Stampa.

He is a contributor to the National Catholic Register.

This piece originally appeared in Catholic New Agency's website on November 22.)

Armenia Should Prepare For Collateral Damage

STANDOFF, from page 17

to power. Once he settles in the seat of power, Netanyahu will push for a direct strike on Iran's nuclear facilities and the administration in Washington will reluctantly support the plan. US State Department Spokesman Ned Price has already indicated that the US will be supporting Azerbaijan in case of a war between Iran and the latter.

This columnist has always maintained that the Iran-Israel controversy is not an isolated case; it is part and parcel of a broader plan, the Arab Spring, which had promised to promote democracy and human rights in Middle Eastern countries ruled by dictators.

Iraq, Libya and Syria were on the butcher block to be destroyed. Libya had the most egalitarian regime in the Middle East, ruled by an eccentric dictator. Iraq was strong and prosperous while Syria was the breadbasket of the Middle East. All these countries now lie in ruins, still waiting for democracy. The planners of the Arab Spring had already figured the current state of affairs when they intentionally misnamed it.

Iran was also part of that plan but its time had not arrived yet.

All the movements start with an internal explosion to create a "need" for foreign intervention. Now, demonstrations have started in Iran, and the Iranian Kurds are being offered armaments to smuggle into the country. Therefore, it seems the stage is set for another chapter of the Arab Spring saga. The ministers of defense of Turkey and Israel had met in Baku in September, joined also by the Saudi Arabian foreign minister. After Baku, they met again in Ankara, most probably to prepare the stage for another "incident."

It is not uncommon to start a war in one part of the globe when the world is engulfed already in another major conflagration.

Was it a coincidence that the Hungarian uprising against Soviet rule took place almost simultaneously with the Suez Crisis? Indeed the Hungarian uprising took place October 23-November 11, 1956 and the tripartite Suez War October 29 to November 7, 1956.

It does not take too much of an imagination to correlate the two cases to each other, when you find out that the same planners have been active behind the scenes.

The noose is being tightened around Iran and if this goes too far, Armenia's case will be marginalized in the ensuing melee.



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

BBC Whitewashes Azerbaijan's Crimes By Airing Film Backed by BP & Aliyevs

The openDemocracy.net website published a critical article about BBC's airing of a two-part propaganda film funded by the UK oil and gas giant British Petroleum (BP) about Azerbaijan. Written by James Dowsett, the article was titled, "BBC accused of 'whitewashing' autocratic Azerbaijan in BP-sponsored film." BP has invested \$84 billion in Azerbaijan since 1995 and is the largest foreign corporate investor in Azerbaijan's oil operations.

The film was titled; 'Wonders of Azerbaijan,' leaving no doubt about its propagandistic purpose. It was produced with the backing of the ruling Aliyev family.

Azerbaijan is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. BBC is wrong to promote such a kleptocracy. BP "has long faced criticism from human rights and climate activists for its ties to the ruling Aliyev regime, which has been accused of 'electoral fraud,' the silencing of dissenting voices and benefiting disproportionately from Azerbaijan's oil and gas wealth," openDemocracy reported.

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

"Emin Huseynov, an Azerbaijani journalist who fled political persecution in Azerbaijan in 2015, accused the BBC of 'whitewashing a dictatorship' over the film," wrote openDemocracy. Huseynov said BBC was giving "the floor to one of the bloodiest and most corrupt regimes in the world."

Before its airing in August, BBC promoted the film by promising the viewers that they would discover "how Azerbaijan's oil wealth enabled the capital Baku to flourish" and "gain the reputation of being the 'Paris of the East.'"

In the film, Bettany Hughes travelled to Azeri-occupied Shushi, but did not say a single word about the city's Armenian heritage. "The film also implicitly promoted Azerbaijan's claims to Shusha [Shushi]," openDemocracy wrote. Azerbaijan has allocated millions of dollars to turn Shusha into its 'cultural capital.'

A BBC spokesman tried to justify its objectionable transaction by telling openDemocracy that the revenue from airing the Azeri propaganda film "allows us to invest in the BBC's world-class journalism, which provides independent and impartial news across all topics." BBC's ridiculous excuse is akin to a prostitute claiming that she donates to the church the money she makes from prostitution!

To generate additional income, BBC ran during the airing of the film travel ads paid by Azerbaijan's official tourist board. The "Baku Media Center provided logistics support to SandStone, while the Heydar Aliyev Foundation helped the UK company secure filming permits and access to unique heritage

sites," a SandStone representative told openDemocracy. The Baku Media Center is run by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's youngest daughter, Arzu Aliyeva. The Center works closely with the family-run Heydar Aliyev Foundation.

BP admitted that the propaganda film was its "contribution to Azerbaijan's global promotion" in partnership with the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. The Foundation is chaired by Ilham Aliyev's wife Mehriban Aliyeva, who is also the country's vice president.

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

Arzu Geybullayeva, an Azerbaijani journalist living in exile, told openDemocracy: "The [Heydar Aliyev] Foundation was set up by the ruling family to whitewash Azerbaijan's image. It can by no means be described as independent of the state."

"The Heydar Aliyev Foundation is leading restoration works in Shusha [Shushi]. Some of these works [are] featured in the BBC program," reported openDemocracy. Meanwhile, BP is planning a solar power plant in the city of Jabrayil, which Azerbaijan occupied in the 2020 war.

BP's regional president Gary Jones "took to the stage at the Baku premiere of the film in late September to praise the 'unwavering support of the [Azerbaijani] government' for his company and its co-venturers' operations in the country. Jones also spoke of the 'joint effort' that went into creating the documentary. He thanked the Heydar Aliyev Foundation for its support and paid personal homage to the president's daughter, Arzu Aliyeva, and to the Baku Media Center she heads, 'for their outstanding technical support' on the production," openDemocracy wrote.

Furthermore, "This isn't the first time BP has collaborated with the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, or that the Foundation has cropped up on the BBC. Last year, BBC StoryWorks... ran a separate tourism-focused campaign for Azerbaijan to mark the 30th anniversary of the country's independence from the Soviet Union. The campaign included a paid-for advertorial that invited readers to 'discover more' about Azerbaijan by following a link to an external website run by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. The 'Azerbaijan' portal claims (among other things) that Azerbaijan's current president Ilham Aliyev 'has always focused on ensuring a fuller provision of human rights and freedoms in the country.' It also contains information about the so-called 'Armenian problem.'" However, the weblink was deleted after openDemocracy contacted BBC. The link had included scenes from a 'war park' in Baku where figures of Armenian soldiers with distorted faces were featured.

BP has signed a cooperation agreement with the Heydar Aliyev Foundation to jointly implement some of its social investment projects. "Previous joint projects have included sponsored films, such as 'The Last Session', a 2018 documentary commemorating the birth of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic—the short-lived independent state that was ended by Soviet invasion in 1920. BP spent \$320,000 on the project, which was organized by the Baku Media Center. Arzu Aliyeva was credited as the film's executive producer," openDemocracy reported.

Could Syrian Kurdish Issue Facilitate Erdogan-Assad Rapprochement?

By Fehim Tastekin

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appears bent on launching a new ground operation in northern Syria following airstrikes that targeted Kurdish forces but caused losses in the Syrian army as well, while still extending an olive branch to Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad. Damascus, for its part, has kept its reactions remarkably low-key, refraining even from saying how many Syrian soldiers were killed, while it urges the withdrawal of existing Turkish troops as a key condition for normalization with Ankara. Only one calculus could explain this situation in which both sides contradict themselves: destroying all prospects of the Kurds gaining a constitutional status down the road after their establishment of de facto autonomy in the north.

According to Russia's special Syria envoy Alexander Lavrentiev, contacts between the Turkish and Syrian intelligence chiefs have continued on a "fairly regular basis" — a statement that justifies questions about likely bargaining going on behind the scenes. Could Assad be acquiescing to Turkey's strikes on Kurdish-held areas, even if grudgingly?

Erdogan's plan, as he has frequently repeated, is to create a safe zone with a depth of 30 kilometers (19 miles) along the entire length of Turkey's southern borders with Syria and Iraq. Speaking after the launch of Operation Claw-Sword, which has hit targets in both countries since Nov. 20, Erdogan said the security belt would be established "step by step, starting from festering points such as Tel Rifaat, Manbij and Ayn al-Arab" — all Kurdish-held towns in northern Syria.

Such an attitude could come off as undermining Ankara's proposal for a new chapter with Damascus, but given Erdogan's modus operandi, it is in no way inexplicable.

It has to do with Erdogan's pre-election strategies as well as Turkey's relations with Russia. Since his Aug. 5 meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Erdogan's reactions on any Syria-related issue, including security and refugees, have been in line with his reconciliation offer to Assad. On Nov. 21, he voiced hope that "things could get back on track with Syria, just as they did with Egypt," asserting that "there is no place for hard feelings in politics."

Peace with Damascus is among the opposition's pledges ahead of the elections, due in June at the latest, so Erdogan does not want to lose this trump card to his opponents. He has said a new page could be turned with Syria after the polls, but recent developments signal he might meet with Assad earlier. Yet Assad appears to get on Erdogan's nerves by not backing down from his conditions for dialogue: the withdrawal of Turkish forces from Syria and an end of Turkey's support to armed rebels. Thus, Erdogan might be reckoning that a fresh military operation could help him impose his own fence-mending terms on Assad.

The first noteworthy Syrian reaction came eight days after the strikes began in a parliamentary statement accusing Turkey of "brutal massacres" and support for "terrorist groups" in Syria. Yet not even this statement mentioned the killing of Syrian soldiers in the strikes.

Damascus' attitude could be attributed to several reasons. First, it might be hoping for the ripening of conditions where the United States can no longer protect the Kurds against Turkey. Damascus could hardly regain control of Kurdish-held areas to the east of the Euphrates as long as US forces are present there. Thus, pressure from NATO member Turkey that would push the Kurds toward Damascus could suit the Assad government's book as well.

Remarkably, head of the Syrian parliament's Foreign Affairs Commission Pierre Boutros Marjane described

Turkey's airstrikes as "a message to separatist Kurdish militia" in remarks to a Turkish news site, adding that "Syrian civilians and soldiers" were among the victims. He said Turkey's concerns over the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) were understandable but stressed that not all Syrian Kurds "can be accused of treason, barring the separatist group armed by the United States." He was referring to the People's Protection Units — the backbone of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) — and its political arm, the Democratic Union Party, which have led the autonomy drive in the north. Ankara equates those groups with the PKK, which it designates as a terrorist group over its four-decade armed campaign in southeast Turkey.

According to Marjane, diplomatic dialogue between Ankara and Damascus could be restored on the basis of the 1998 Adana Accord on bilateral security cooperation and if Turkey "demonstrates readiness to withdraw from Syrian territory."

Another reason for Damascus' muted response is that it would have failed to follow up with action had it reacted with strong language. Also, it could rely less on Russian and Iranian protection now that the war in Ukraine has raised the value of Moscow's ties with Ankara and Tehran is grappling with domestic unrest.

Syrian journalist Sarkis Kassargian told Al-Monitor, "Syria cannot hold out [against Turkey] without Russian or Iranian support. That's the reason for its mild language. If it were to accuse Turkey, people would have asked 'Why are you not responding?' or questioned the [prospect of] normalization."

In 2020, for instance, Turkish forces faced Russian bombardment as they attempted to stop the Syrian army's

see RAPPROACHMENT, page 20



Could Syrian Kurdish Issue Facilitate Rapprochement?

RAPPROCHMENT, from page 19
 advance along the crucial M5 motorway.
 According to Kassargian, “The equilibrium has now changed” in Syria. “Russia is no longer restraining Turkey. Also, it is calling for reconciliation. Damascus has put forward conditions in line with its game plan. Turkey is reluctant to budge and says ‘Either you agree to normalization or I will pound you.’”
 In the Astana process, Russia has heeded Turkish requests to express opposition to “separatist agendas” in the final communiqués of the meetings. In talks after the latest escalation, the commander of the Russian forces in Syria reportedly pressed the SDF to consider withdrawing from border areas in favor of “the deployment of the Syrian army

along the border strip at a depth of 30 kilometers” to fend off a Turkish ground operation. Such messages to the Kurds show that the Turkish threat is of instrumental value to Russia.
 Kassargian dismissed the possibility of a tacit agreement to push the Kurds away from the United States. For him, a Turkish ground operation in areas to the east of the Euphrates is unlikely. “As for the west of the Euphrates ... what the Russians say is what matters. They either give [Turkey] the green light or refuse to do so,” he said. The Turkish threat could be instrumental in pushing the Kurds closer to Damascus only if it concerns areas where the US greenlight is required, he opined, adding, “As long as the US support to the Kurds continues, a

partial operation would not push them toward Damascus.”
 Though popular anger with the SDF has grown over its ongoing partnership with the United States and control of oil-rich areas, Damascus is unwilling to fight the Kurds for Turkey’s sake. Also, it is clearly reluctant to give Erdogan an election gift. Syrian officials often feel the need to note that the Kurds have not taken up arms against the state and have fought terrorists, even receiving arms assistance from Damascus. In other words, they believe that Syrian anger with the Kurds should not play into Erdogan’s hands.
 (This analysis originally appeared on the website Al-Monitor.)

Congressmen Call To Restrict F-16 Sales to Turkey

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of more than 20 U.S. Representatives are calling on Congress to retain — in the final version of the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) — a U.S. House provision, #1271, establishing reasonable limitations on the Biden Administration’s ability to act on its stated intention to transfer F-16 aircraft and modernization kits to Turkey.

“Armenian Americans join with our Congressional friends and Hellenic, Hindu, Kurdish, Jewish, Christian and other partners in underscoring the urgency of common-sense prohibitions on the sale or transfer of F-16s to Turkey — a country that regularly and openly deploys U.S. weapons against American allies,” said Armenian National Committee of America Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “We share our special thanks with Congressman (Chris) Pappas for his principled, powerful leadership in building broad-based consensus around reasonable limitations upon such reckless sales.”

“The purpose of Section 1271 is clear and narrowly tailored. At a time when we must be promoting NATO alliance unity, we should ensure that American weapons are not being used for belligerent actions within the alliance,” argue cosigners of the Pappas letter to the leadership of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees.

Among those joining Pappas in co-signing his letter are Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), David Cicilline (D-RI), Jim Costa (D-CA) Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Susie Lee (D-NV), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Chris Smith (R-NJ), Dina Titus (D-NV), and Lori Trahan (D-MA).

Baltimore Chamber Orchestra Announces New Executive Director

BALTIMORE — The Baltimore Chamber Orchestra (BCO) announced on November 14 the appointment of Ben Newman as the organization’s next executive director.

“I am thrilled to be joining the BCO,” Newman shared. “BCO’s place in Baltimore’s storied musical history is a testament to the city and the community’s passion for music and the performing arts.”

Newman brings a range of experience in concert and opera production, artist management and consulting to the BCO, which is currently under the baton of Music Director Markand Thakar.

Raised in a musical family with strong ties to the Armenian, Deaf and Jewish communities of metro Detroit, Newman has collaborated with many notable artists including Teddy Abrams, Refik Anadol, Matthew Aucoin, Mark Campbell, George Condo.

[Newman is a former Armenian General Benevolent Union Alex and Marie Manoogian School (Southfield, MI) student, whose mother Robin Soultanian Newman is active in the Detroit area Armenian community.]



To Our Readers

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US, and this year it celebrates 90 years of serving the community. Readers can learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

The *Mirror-Spectator* has covered the violence and political uncertainty affecting Armenia and Artsakh, supported efforts at humanitarian fundraising, and secured new young correspondents in Armenia, Artsakh and the US as well as two prominent political columnists from Armenia. We continue to provide periodic video reports online. Send us your email if you wish to regularly receive links to articles and videos.

We continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year’s wishes, and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. In case you wish to give gift subscriptions of the *Mirror-Spectator* for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in the newspaper as well as one below.

Sincerely,


Alin K. Gregorian
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