



EU monitors visit Gegharkunik region, October 18, 2022.

EU Starts New Monitoring Mission

By Nane Sahakian

BRUSSELS (RFE/RL) — The European Union announced on Monday, February 20, the launch of a new and more long-term monitoring mission to Armenia’s volatile border with Azerbaijan which is strongly opposed by Russia.

It said that the 100 or so monitors sent by various EU member states will strive to “contribute to stability in the border areas of Armenia, build confidence and human security in conflict affected areas, and ensure an environment conducive to the normalization efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

“The total — exclusively civilian — staff of the EUMA [EU Mission in Armenia] will be approximately 100, including around 50 unarmed observers,” the EU added in a statement.

It did not specify whether the other members of the two-year mission will carry weapons. Recent news reports said that the EU monitors will include officers of the German police and the French gendarmerie.

The EU already deployed 40 civilian monitors to Armenian border areas in late October on a two-month mission agreed during an Armenian-Azerbaijani summit in Prague. The agreement followed the September border clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces which left more than 300 soldiers dead.

The Armenian government asked for another monitoring mission in late December, saying that it would lower the risk of fresh armed incidents on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. The EU formally granted the request on January 23, drawing criticism from Russia as well as Azerbaijan.

see BORDER, page 4

KEN MARTIN PHOTO

EU’s Michel Meets Armenian, Azeri Leaders

MUNICH (RFE/RL) — European Council President Charles Michel has held separate talks with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the sidelines of an international security forum held in Munich. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s office said he discussed with Michel on Friday, February 17, the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and, in particular, a possible peace treaty between Baku and Yerevan. It cited the European Union’s top official as saying that the EU will continue to facilitate such an agreement.

The two men also discussed the upcoming launch of an EU monitoring mission along Armenia’s border with Azerbaijan. Baku had earlier criticized the EU’s decision to deploy more than 100 monitors there. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held what an Armenian government statement described as an “informal meeting” with Michel in the German city late on Thursday. They spoke about “regional security,” the short statement said without elaborating.

see EU, page 5

United Boston Armenian Community Calls for Ending Artsakh Blockade

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — Approximately two hundred members of the Boston Armenian community assembled in front of the Massachusetts State House in Boston on Thursday, February 16, to call for an end to the Azerbaijani blockade of Artsakh, humanitarian aid to the besieged Armenians and US sanctions on Azerbaijan. Representatives of several organizations of the community spoke before the gathered crowd, plus the large numbers of passersby in cars and on foot. The event was briefly reported on NBC10 Boston.

Massachusetts State Representative David Muradian, Jr. served as the master of ceremonies, while fellow state

see PROTEST, page 11



ARMENIA

Paros Builds New Medical Center in Gegharkunik Village

Page 3



PARIS

Baccarat Rouge 540 Takes the World By Storm

Page 12



YEREVAN

MIFA Creates An Instruments For Change

Page 12



‘Disaster Diplomacy’ Creates Hope for Armenia-Turkey Normalization

By Arshaluis Mgdesyan

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan was welcomed warmly in Ankara by his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu on February 15.

The visit came shortly after Armenia sent humanitarian aid and rescue workers to its historical rival in a powerful gesture of goodwill following the deadly earthquakes that rocked southern Turkey on February 6.

At a joint news conference, Cavusoglu thanked Armenia for “extending a hand of friendship” in Turkey’s time of need while Mirzoyan said that the sides had agreed to open their border to third-country nationals and diplomatic passport holders ahead of the 2023 tourist season.

That border has been closed since 1993 with the exception of the historic brief openings on February 11 and 14 to allow the delivery of quake relief.

After the briefing, Mirzoyan paid a visit to the 27 Armenian rescue workers deployed to the quake-hit city of Adiyaman.

see DIPLOMACY, page 2

Aliyev, Pashinyan Hold US-Mediated Talks

MUNICH (RFE/RL) — The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan met in Munich on Saturday, February 18, for talks organized by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

“We believe that Armenia and Azerbaijan have a genuinely historic opportunity to secure enduring peace after more than 30 years of conflict,” Blinken said at



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meet in Munich, February 18, 2023.

the start of his trilateral meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

“The parties themselves have renewed their focus on the peace process, including through direct conversation as well as with the EU and ourselves,” he said. “The United States is committed to doing anything we can to support these efforts,

see MEDIATION, page 5



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Expected in Armenia on Feb. 22-23

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On February 22-23, Foreign Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn was expected to pay an official visit to Armenia, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Vahan Hunanyan said Tuesday, February 21.

On February 22, the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Luxembourg was scheduled to take place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, which will be followed by a joint press conference.

During the visit, the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg met with high ranking officials of Armenia. Lilit 2-25

Armenia Envoy, US Rep. Discuss Lachin Blockade

WASHINGTON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On February 14, Armenia's Ambassador to the United States Lilit Makunts had a virtual meeting with US Rep. Adam Schiff (D-California) to present the recent developments regarding the Lachin corridor blockade.

Makunts thanked Schiff for his interest in the issue and emphasized the importance of consistent support.

Schiff assured her that the issue will remain under his consideration.

Since December 12, the sole road connecting Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia - the Lachin Corridor - has been blocked by self-described Azerbaijani environmentalists. Karabakh residents have reported food and fuel shortages, while hospital patients don't have access to essential medicines, with only a handful allowed transfer to facilities in Armenia proper.

Armenia to File Complaint With ECHR about Death of Soldier

YEREVAN (news.am) — A complaint is being prepared to the European Court of Human Rights in connection with violation of soldier David Gishyan's right to life, representative of Armenian prisoners of war and their legal successors in the ECHR Siranush Sahakyan said on February 13.

According to her, the results of the expertise are available and it is obvious that Azerbaijan is responsible for Gishyan's death. "A complaint is being prepared for violation of the right to life. Here, first, the state did not provide emergency medical care, on the other hand, the injuries were caused while alive. When these two facts are combined, we believe that Azerbaijan must be held responsible for Gishyan's life," stressed Siranush Sahakyan.

David Gishyan was wounded during Azerbaijan's September aggression last year. He was captured and even allegedly bandaged. However, on September 17, Azerbaijan handed over the bodies of 32 Armenian servicemen to Armenia, including Gishyan's.

35th Anniversary of Karabakh Movement Marked

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — February 20 marked the 35th anniversary of the Karabakh Movement, launched by Armenians of Artsakh for the liberation of the territory from Azerbaijan control.

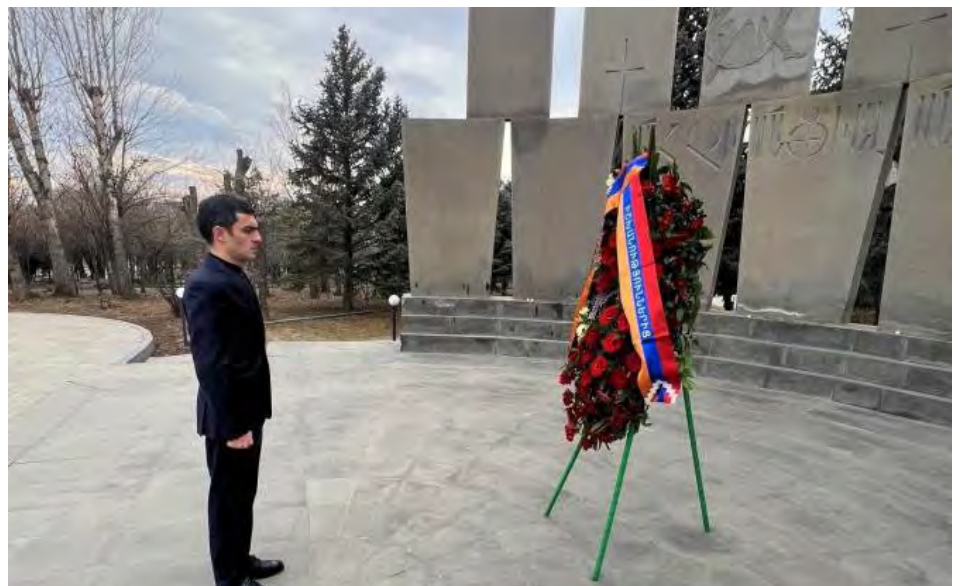
On the occasion, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh Sergey Ghazaryan, who remains in Armenia due to the ongoing blockade, visited Yerablur military pantheon and on behalf of the people and authorities of Artsakh placed a wreath in memory of those who gave their lives for the independence and freedom of the Motherland throughout the National-Liberation Struggle of Artsakh.

In addition, the Foreign Ministry of Artsakh released a statement:

"The Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic) today marks the 35th anniversary of the current stage of the national liberation struggle of Artsakh Armenians - Karabakh movement, a struggle that embodied the collective aspiration of the people to restore historical justice, preserve national identity and dignity, and fully realize their inalienable right to live freely and develop in their homeland. In response to the decades-long discriminatory policies of Azerbaijan, the people of Artsakh gathered all their will and rallied for the idea of the revival of Artsakh and reunification with Armenia.

Thirty five years ago, on February 20, 1988, an extraordinary session of the Council of People's Deputies of the NKAO was held, which decided to petition the Supreme Soviets of the Azerbaijan SSR and the Armenian SSR to transfer the autonomous region from Azerbaijan to Armenia. The issue of the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia was raised in a democratic, parliamentary way, on the basis of the people's will, in strict accordance with the Soviet legislation in force at that time and the generally recognized norms of international law.

The decision of the session, which confirmed the right of the people of Artsakh to decide their own destiny, marked the current stage of the Karabakh Movement and predetermined the prospects for



Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh Sergey Ghazaryan at Yerablur Military Pantheon

the socio-political development of Nagorno-Karabakh. It, in fact, became the forerunner of the Declaration of Independence the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, adopted on 2 September 1991, under the new historical and political realities created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and marked the beginning of the path to the state independence of Artsakh.

This act of a nationwide expression of will by the people of Artsakh was rightly regarded as a reliable guarantee against the policy of discrimination of the ethnic Armenian population pursued by Azerbaijan for decades, which ultimately should have led to its complete destruction. Subsequent events confirmed the legitimacy and rightness of the historical choice of the people of Artsakh. Just a week after the session of the regional Council, the Azerbaijani authorities organized brutal pogroms and murders of Armenians in Sumgait and other cities of Azerbaijan, and with the collapse of the Soviet Union, they unleashed a full-scale war against Artsakh. The criminal policy of official Baku, aimed at the destruction of the people of Artsakh, has not changed even decades later. This is evidenced by the military aggressions of 2016 and 2020, the

ongoing state terrorism against the people of Artsakh, as well as the transport and energy blockade of the Republic that has been going on for the third month already.

Despite the incredible difficulties and trials, the people of Artsakh continue the struggle for their free and independent existence in the historical homeland, thereby realizing the right of peoples to self-determination, enshrined in international law, including the UN Charter. The past 35 years have clearly demonstrated that the most important prerequisite for solving national problems is national unity, the consolidation of the moral and spiritual forces of Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora, which makes it possible to confront the most serious challenges of the time.

Through many years of struggle for national dignity and the right to freely decide their own fate in their historical homeland, as well as the creation of a democratic and viable state, the people of Artsakh proved that they deserve recognition of their independence by the international community.

On this memorable day, we honor the memory of all those who gave their lives for the freedom and independence of Artsakh, and for universal ideals and values."

'Disaster Diplomacy' Creates Hope for Armenia-Turkey Normalization

DIPLOMACY, from page 1

Back in Yerevan on February 16, the top diplomat told a government meeting that those rescuers would return home through the land border on the same day.

He also reported to the cabinet that an agreement had been reached on the restoration of the historic Ani bridge on the Akhuryan (Arpacay) river which forms part of the two countries' border.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan welcomed the announcement as a "symbolic step" and said Armenia already had preliminary designs for the bridge's reconstruction.

Pashinyan also hit out at domestic critics of the decision to send quake relief.

"Millions of people in the neighborhood of our country need support and it is unacceptable for anyone to remain indifferent," he said.

That criticism, which included opposition groups' use of the familiar epithet "Turkophilia" towards the Pashinyan government, is borne out of powerful historical grievances.

Ankara refuses to recognize the World War I-era mass slaughter and deportation of

Armenians by the Ottoman Empire as an act of genocide, and it has sided with fraternal Baku for decades in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey shut the border in 1993, just two years after Armenia gained independence, in solidarity with Azerbaijan amid the First Karabakh War.

But after Azerbaijan - with extensive Turkish help - retook large swathes of land from Armenian forces in the Second Karabakh War of 2020, Armenia and Turkey gingerly embarked on normalizing relations.

They appointed special envoys who met first in January 2022 and have occasionally achieved modest progress such as the restoration of direct cargo flights in January 2023.

Historian Nelli Minasyan believes Mirzoyan's visit gave the normalization process a nudge.

"Turkey already uses the term 'disaster diplomacy' in relation to Armenia and Greece, countries that Ankara has deeply problematic relations with. I think that the agreements reached in Ankara were not formulated spontaneously. Discussions on

these issues have been going on for a long time, and the earthquake and the processes around it served as an occasion to voice them," she told Eurasianet.

But Ruben Safrastyan, a specialist in Turkey at Armenia's National Academy, sees no reason to expect a major breakthrough.

"These statements have signaled that the process will move forward in small steps," he told Armenian Public TV after the foreign minister's visit. But, he warned, the recent catastrophe does not change the fact that Azerbaijan is wary of Armenia-Turkey normalization and possesses levers to stall it.

Cavusoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, hinted, during the briefing with his Armenian counterpart, at Ankara's close coordination with Baku.

"Advances in Armenia's dialogue with Turkey and Azerbaijan will contribute to stability in the region. If our three countries take sincere steps, we will be able to achieve long-term peace in the South Caucasus," Cavusoglu said.

(This article originally appeared on Eurasianet.org on February 16.)

Paros Builds New Medical Center in Gegharkunik Village

AKUNK, Armenia—The Gegharkunik Region village of Akunk has a new medical center thanks to the work of The Paros Foundation through the benefactor Mr. Alex Cherchian (SC-USA). Prior to the completion of this new center, the medical staff worked to address the needs of more than 4,500 people in this community from a room in the nearby village school.

“The fact that Akunk did not have a dedicated medical center space with sanitary conditions to adequately service its population was a huge program,” said Peter Abajian, Executive Director of The

Paros Foundation. “I would like to extend our appreciation to Mr. Alex Cherchian and his family for sponsoring this important project.”

While the work on the medical center was completed in September of 2022 — and the staff began work at the new center — the official ribbon cutting was delayed until mid-February because of the September attack on Armenia by Azerbaijan.

In 2020, the Regional Government of Gegharkunik partially renovated the facility, but never completed the work. The Paros Foundation installed the center’s



Paros Staff, Akunk Medical Center Staff, Tavush Regional Deputy Governor, Akunk Village Representative and Head of the Vardenis Consolidated Community celebrate the opening of the Akunk Medical Center.



A warm greeting awaited Paros Foundation Staff and guests at the ribbon cutting at the Akunk Medical Center.

heating system, completed the plaster and painting, installed flooring throughout and completed the plumbing systems and bathroom. Now the center is fully equipped with a laboratory, restroom, patient exam rooms and administrative offices.

To learn more about The Paros Foundation, or to support a project, visit www.parosfoundation.org.

Prominent Armenian General Arrested, Freed

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A prominent Armenian general who demanded Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s resignation in 2021 was set free on Tuesday, February 21, one day after being arrested on charges strongly denied by him.

Armenia’s Anti-Corruption Court refused to allow the National Security Service (NSS) to hold Grigori Khachaturov in detention pending investigation. He

walked free in the courtroom as a result.

Khachaturov is the former commander of the Armenian army’s Third Corps mostly stationed in northern Tavush province bordering Azerbaijan. He received a military award and was promoted to the rank of major-general after leading a successful military operation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in July 2020, less than three months before the outbreak of the six-week war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Khachaturov was among four dozen

high-ranking military officers who accused Pashinyan’s government of incompetence and misrule and demanded his resignation in February 2021. The unprecedented demand was welcomed by the Armenian opposition but condemned as a coup attempt by Pashinyan.

Khachaturov insisted on the prime minister’s resignation in a separate statement issued in March 2021. He said that “every day and hour” of Pashinyan’s rule “erodes” Armenia’s national security. He was fired a

few months later.

The NSS detained Khachaturov late on Monday on charges of money laundering stemming from a controversial criminal case opened against Seyran Ohanyan, a former defense minister who now leads the parliamentary group of the main opposition Hayastan alliance.

Ohanyan was charged earlier this month with illegally privatizing in the past two buildings in Yerevan and two other, disused properties that belonged to the Armenian Defense Ministry. He rejects the accusations as politically motivated.

New US Ambassador Meets with Foreign Minister

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The new United States Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien presented the copy of credentials to the Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan on February 20.

Mirzoyan congratulated Kvien on assuming office and attached importance to the further deepening of the Armenia-United States partnership in areas of mutual interest. The importance of the Armenia-United States Strategic Dialogue format was emphasized in context of advancing the agenda based on common democratic values, the foreign ministry said in a read-out.

Mirzoyan appreciated the United States support for strengthening institutional capacities and fostering the government’s democratic reforms in Armenia.

Issues related to regional security and stability were also discussed at the meeting.

The latest developments in the Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement process, including the trilateral meeting in Munich were discussed.

Mirzoyan expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by the United States both trilaterally and as a co-chair of the OSCE



Ambassador Kristina Kvien with Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan

Minsk Group for the establishment of lasting peace in the region.

Speaking about the illegal blockade of Nagorno Karabakh by Azerbaijan, Mirzoyan emphasized that Azerbaijan must unconditionally restore the regime of the Lachin corridor as defined under the 9 November trilateral statement.

Law-enforcement authorities say that Khachaturov “de facto” acquired one of those properties at a knockdown price and used it for obtaining a bank loan worth 18 million drams (\$45,000). The retired general’s lawyer, Hakob Yenokyan, described the money laundering charge as “laughable.”

Several opposition figures voiced support for Khachaturov as they gathered outside the Yerevan-based court during a hearing on his pre-trial arrest sought by the NSS. They claimed that Pashinyan is trying to punish the general for his and his close relatives’ anti-government views.

Khachaturov’s father Yuri was the chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff from 2008-2016. He served as secretary general of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization when the current authorities indicted him as well as Ohanian and former President Robert Kocharyan in 2018 over their alleged role in the 2008 post-election unrest in Yerevan. Armenia’s Constitutional Court declared coup charges leveled against them unconstitutional in 2021.

Yuri Khachaturov and his second son actively participated in last year’s anti-government protests staged by the country’s main opposition forces.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Le Havre Delegation Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On February 21, Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan received a delegation headed by Edouard Philippe, the former Prime Minister of France, Mayor of Le Havre and President of Le Havre Seine Metropole, with the participation of parliamentarians, public and political figures, ARMENPRESS was informed from MFA Armenia.

The interlocutors commended the privileged relations between Armenia and France characterized by a high-level political dialogue and an expanding multi-faceted bilateral agenda. They also touched upon the prospects of Armenian-French cooperation.

The agenda also included issues of regional security and stability.

European Parliament Delegation Visit

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Vice President of the National Assembly Ruben Rubinyan met with Members of the European Parliament Sylvie Guillaume and François Alfonsi, on February 21.

Welcoming the guests, Ruben Rubinyan introduced the situation in the region at the request of the MEPs. Rubinyan spoke about the humanitarian challenges that the 120,000 Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh face as a result of Azerbaijan's illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the parliament's press service said in a read-out.

The sides discussed the invasion of the sovereign territory of Armenia by the Azerbaijani armed forces and the problems regarding Armenian prisoners of war.

They also exchanged ideas on the process of normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations.

Tahar Rahim Set to Play Aznavour in Biopic

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) — Tahar Rahim is set to play Charles Aznavour in "Monsieur Aznavour," the eponymous biopic slated for release in 2024, the Armenian Film Society reported.

Monsieur Aznavour will chart Charles Aznavour's rise to stardom in the 1950s and his friendships with many artists, including Edith Piaf, who took him with her on a tour of France and the United States. The film will be directed by singer-turned-filmmakers Mehdi Idir and Grand Corps Malade, and will be produced by Jean-Rachid Kallouche's Kallouche Cinema and Mandarin & Compagnie.

Rahim starred in Fatih Akin's "The Cut." The film, which was written by Mardik Martin, is about the life and experience of a young Armenian in the light of the Armenian Genocide and its repercussions in different parts of the world. He is a two-time César Award-winner and has earned BAFTA and Golden Globe nominations. He can next be seen in Ridley Scott's "Napoleon."

Producer Jean-Rachid Kallouche, is married to Katia Aznavour, the daughter of Charles Aznavour.

EU Starts New Monitoring Mission

BORDER, from page 1

The Russian Foreign Ministry claimed that EU monitors "can only bring geopolitical confrontation to the region" and accused the EU of seeking to "push back Russia's mediation efforts at any cost."

Earlier in January, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov rebuked Armenia for refusing a similar mission offered by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) during a November summit in Yerevan.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan declined the offer on the grounds that other members of the Russian-led military alliance refused to condemn Azerbaijan's offensive military operations along the border.

Pashinyan gave another reason for the rebuff on February 8. He claimed that unlike the EU, the CSTO does not recognize Armenia's current borders.

Armen Baghdasaryan, an Armenian political commentator, said Yerevan should take the Russian criticism very seriously.

"Russia will want to show that the EU mission is not effective and that security mechanisms proposed by the EU do not work," he told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "The shortest way of showing that is [to provoke] new clashes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border which the EU observers cannot influence in any way."

Baghdasaryan suggested at the same time that the EU monitors could prevent another large-scale Azerbaijani attack on Armenia in the coming months. But he was skeptical about their longer-term impact, arguing that the EU has not given Yerevan

a response to increased Russian military presence there.

"Our Western partners started rebuking us that 'you are planning aggressive actions because there is a buildup of Russian and Armenian troops planning to attack Azer-



Russian border guards stationed in Syunik province are inspected by Russian Ambassador Sergei Kopyrkin, May 24, 2022.

any security guarantees.

Pashinyan indicated on February 8 that the European observers will also be monitoring Russian troops stationed in his country. He said Azerbaijan has told Western powers that its "aggressive actions" are

baijan and the poor Azerbaijanis have to seize [Armenian] border heights to counter that threat.' We said, 'OK, come and monitor on the ground and see if that is true,'" Pashinyan added in remarks denounced by his domestic political opponents.

Russia Reaffirms Opposition to EU Monitoring Mission in Armenia

MOSCOW (Azatutyun) — Russia has accused the European Union of trying to squeeze it out of the South Caucasus, reacting to the deployment of some 100 EU monitors to Armenia's border with Azerbaijan. (See related editorial on Page 18.)

The Russian Foreign Ministry on February 21 insisted that the monitoring mission, officially launched on Monday, February 20, will not reduce the risk of fresh fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

"Unfortunately, it is not the first time we have recorded the desire of the European Union and the West as a whole to gain a foothold in our ally Armenia by any means," the ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said in written comments.

"We see in these attempts a purely geopolitical background which is far from the interests of a real normalization of relations in the Transcaucasus. Everything is being done to squeeze Russia out of the region and weaken its historical role as the main guarantor of security," she charged.

Zakharova reiterated the official Russian line that Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Moscow during and after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh will remain "the key factor of stability and security in the region in the foreseeable future."

Moscow already condemned the EU member states in late January just days after they formally approved the monitoring mission requested by Armenia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also rebuked Yerevan for refusing a similar mission offered by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in November.

Armenia, a CSTO member, has repeatedly accused the Russian-led military alliance of failing to defend it against Azerbaijani "military aggression."

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan praised the EU for sending the observers when he met with the head of the monitoring mission, Markus Ritter, and another senior EU official on Monday. Mirzoyan expressed confidence that the mission will make an "important contribution" to re-

gional stability and the security of Armenian border areas.

The EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, similarly tweeted that the monitors "will contribute to human security, build confidence on the ground and support EU efforts in the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan."

The EU deployment underscores grow-

ing friction between Moscow and Yerevan. Russian-Armenian relations have soured recently also because of Azerbaijan's continuing blockade of Karabakh's land link with Armenia.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly accused Russian peacekeepers of doing little to unblock the vital road. Moscow has rejected the accusations.

Blinken Welcomes 'Time out' on Greece-Turkey Tension

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on February 21, urged NATO allies Greece and Turkey to calm rhetoric as both countries head to national elections, in an effort to bolster unity as Russia's invasion of Ukraine nears its anniversary.

Greek and Turkish officials said they are willing to take a time out from longstanding disputes over sea boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean in the aftermath of the earthquakes that have killed about 45,000 people in Turkey and Syria.

Blinken said he hoped the pause would provide an opportunity to return to diplomacy.

"It's profoundly in our interest and I believe in the interest of both Greece and Turkey to find ways to resolve longstanding differences," he told reporters in Athens on Tuesday.

"And to do it through dialogue through diplomacy to do it peacefully and in the meantime to not take any unilateral actions or use any charged rhetoric that would only make things more difficult."

Greece is expected to hold a parliamentary election in April, while Turkey will hold a general election in June.

"Both countries are heading to an election. That certainly creates, sometimes, incentives to engage in rhetoric that can create more problems," Blinken said.

In Athens, he met with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis as well as ministers

of foreign affairs and defense, continuing discussions to deepen bilateral military cooperation that has significantly expanded in recent years. "We're all heartbroken over the humanitarian catastrophe that has struck our neighbors," Mitsotakis told Blinken late Monday. "I think this horrible catastrophe has proven that there is a deep connection between our two peoples. We may have big, significant political differences, but the bonds between our peoples are there."

Celeste Wallander, the US assistant defense secretary for international security affairs, on Monday visited military bases and port facilities in northern Greece where the US has been granted access in recent years. They include a base near Larissa, in central Greece, used by the US for MQ-9 Reaper drones, and the port of Alexandroupolis, near Greece's border with Turkey, which has become an important logistics hub for the US military.

Blinken called for Sweden and Finland to be admitted to NATO, a process held up by Turkey. He also criticized Iran for providing Russia with attack drones and failing to engage in internationally-sponsored nuclear talks. Asked if the US would discourage Israel from taking military action aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, Blinken responded: "Countries will make sovereign decisions for their own security and of course that's no different when it comes to Israel or any country."

Turkey Earthquake

Deadly New Tremor Traps People Under Rubble

ISTANBUL (Combined Sources) — Rescuers are once again searching for people trapped under rubble in Turkey after another earthquake hit the country on Monday, February 20, killing at least six people.

A 6.4 magnitude tremor struck near the city of Antakya near the border with Syria, where massive quakes had devastated both countries on February 6.

The earlier quakes killed 44,000 people in Turkey and Syria with tens of thousands more left homeless.

Buildings weakened by those tremors collapsed in both countries on Monday.

This was followed by a 5.8 aftershock three minutes later and dozens of subsequent aftershocks that were not as severe.

The health minister, Dr. Fahrettin Koca, said 294 people have been injured, 18 of them seriously.

It's thought the death toll has been relatively low this time because the earthquake struck in an area that was largely empty after it was badly hit.

Reports from the city of Antakya spoke of fear and panic in the streets as ambulances and rescue crews tried to reach the worst affected areas where the walls of badly damaged buildings had collapsed.

"I thought the earth was going to split open under my feet," local resident Muna al-Omar told Reuters news agency, crying as she held her seven-year-old son. She had been in a tent in a park in the city centre when the new earthquakes hit.

Ali Mazlum, 18, told AFP news agency he had been looking for the bodies of family members from the previous earthquakes when the latest tremors hit.

"You don't know what to do... we grabbed each other and right in front of us, the walls started to fall," he said.

In a visit to the southern province of Osmaniye, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan promised to hold to account anyone responsible for shoddy construction that led to deaths in the initial earthquake a fortnight ago.

"It is our duty to hold the wrongdoers accountable before the law," he said.

Shortly after the earthquake, officials issued more than 100 arrest warrants in connection with the construction of buildings that collapsed in the quake, a move that some saw as an attempt to divert overall blame for the disaster.

Antakya, the capital of Turkey's Hatay Province, was one of the places hit most

severely by the February 6 earthquake

In the city of Adana, the latest earthquake drove people to a volleyball center that had been converted into a rescue center following the first earthquake.

The authorities have told the BBC they believe as many as 600 people may have arrived overnight - seeking a sturdy, ground-level building in which to take shelter.

When the quake struck, people were reported to have run out into the streets rather than staying put, reflecting the fact that there is still significant fear two weeks after the initial disaster.

In Syria, some 470 injured people are said to have visited hospitals after Monday's quakes, which were also reportedly felt in Egypt and Lebanon.

In a visit to Turkey on Monday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced \$100m (£83m) in humanitarian aid, saying that America would help with earthquake recovery "for as long as it takes".

Armenian Community in Turkey

The Armenian-populated Kessab Armenian Church of Saint Astvatsatsin in Syria was again damaged as a result of the earthquake on February 20. This is reported in the article published by Gandzasar daily.

Surb Astvatsatsin church, already damaged by the February 6 earthquake, has been damaged again, the newspaper reported.

In addition, the only remaining Armenian village in Turkey – Vakifli – suffered extensive damages in the latest earthquakes that hit Turkey Monday.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople said no deaths occurred in the village but buildings suffered heavy damages. The Holy Mother of God Armenian church in the village was also damaged.

Two more Armenians died as a result of the devastating earthquake in Turkey, according to Gandzasar.

"Berc Kartun, the head of Vakifli village of Mount Musa, confirms that two Mount Musa residents were killed. They died in other cities. Villagers spend the night in tents and near canteens. The aftershocks are strong, and nobody wants to stay at home," the post says.

And according to the information provided Thursday by the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of Armenia, the official number of Armenians



Armenian church in Iskenderun was damaged by Turkey earthquake

killed in Turkey is nine, and two Armenians have died in Syria as a result of this tremor.

There are damaged Armenian holy places, too, as a result of the earthquake in Turkey. Ara Kocunyan, the Chief Editor of Jamanak Armenian daily of Istanbul, told Armenian News-NEWS.am about this.

"The churches in Sebastia [(Sivas)] and Diyarbakir were not damaged. The Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in Caesarea [(Kayseri)] is also safe. The church of the Armenian Vakifli village of Musa Dagh was also spared. The Church of Holy Forty Children in Iskenderun region was seriously damaged, the Latin church of the same village completely collapsed, the Greek church also suffered serious damages," said Kocunyan.

He added that all the Armenians of these regions have suffered serious damages, which have not been assessed yet.

Donations

Earlier, Armenian News-NEWS.am reported that two Armenians — a woman and her son — were killed and two Armenians were injured in Aleppo, Syria, as a result of the earthquake.

The Armenians of Turkey have donated 5.5 million lira (around \$290,000) in aid to earthquake relief efforts, according to the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, Archbishop Sahak Mashalian, <http://Ermenihaber>.

am reports.

Mashalian offered remarks after Sunday mass served on the eve of Great Lent at the Armenian Saint Vardanants Church in Feriköy, Sisli.

The Patriarch stressed the need for humanism in trying times. Speaking about sending humanitarian aid to the disaster area, he emphasized that the Patriarchate collected and sent aid on the second day of the disaster.

The Union of Armenian Foundations handed over 2.5 million lira in aid to Turkey's disaster and emergency department, while foundations and individuals representing the country's Armenian community collected and donated 3 million lira.

(BBC News, Armenpress, PanArmenian.net and News.am contributed to this report.)

EU's Michel Meets Armenian, Azeri Leaders

EU, from page 1

Michel, who heads the EU's top decision-making body, hosted last year a series of meetings between Aliyev and Pashinyan in Brussels. The three leaders as well as French President Emmanuel Macron were due to meet again in early December.

Aliyev canceled that meeting, objecting to Macron's participation in it. He said France can no longer be an honest broker in Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks because of pro-Armenian statements made by Macron and French lawmakers.

Aliyev was reported to tell Michel on Friday that Azerbaijan supports "the Brussels peace process."

The Russian Foreign Ministry reiterated on Friday that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is still ready to meet with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts. A ministry spokeswoman said both conflicting sides are interested in continued Russian mediation of their peace talks.

Aliyev, Pashinyan Hold US-Mediated Talks

MEDIATION, from page 1

whether it's directly with our friends, whether it's in a trilateral format such as this or with other international partners."

Neither Blinken nor the conflicting sides announced any concrete agreements after the talks held on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

An Armenian government statement said that the three men discussed ongoing negotiations on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty as well as transport links between the two South Caucasus states and a demarcation of their border.

"Prime Minister Pashinyan reaffirmed the Armenian side's determination to achieve the signing of a treaty that will truly guarantee long-term peace and stability

in the region," added the statement.

He said Pashinyan also "stressed the fact" of Azerbaijan's two-month blockade of the sole road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. It did not say whether he made further progress in Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks conditional on the lifting of the blockade.

Aliyev told Azerbaijani television that the summit was "constructive." He spoke of "progress" in Armenia's position on the peace treaty sought by Baku.

Aliyev again defended Azerbaijani government-backed protesters blocking the Lachin corridor to Karabakh on ostensibly environmental grounds. He reportedly said that Azerbaijan should be able to set

up a permanent checkpoint in the corridor.

The Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war placed Karabakh's land link with Armenia under the control of Russian peacekeepers. It also committed Baku to guarantee safe passage through it. Yerevan has repeatedly condemned the blockade as a gross violation of these provisions.

Pashinyan's previous meeting with Aliyev was hosted by Russia's President Vladimir Putin in the Russian city of Sochi in late October. The Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders were due to meet again in Brussels in early December. Aliyev canceled that meeting, objecting to French President Emmanuel Macron's participation in it.



Community News

Milwaukee’s St. John the Baptist Church Celebrates Vartanants

By David Lührssen

MILWAUKEE, Wis. — Despite a winter storm that dropped six inches of snow on Milwaukee, St. John the Baptist Armenian Church celebrated Vartanants and Ghevontians as planned on February 16. The event brought Midwest clergy from the Diocese and the Prelacy together in a joint observation of a pivotal event from Armenian history.

Ghevontians and Vartanants are observed each year on the Tuesday and Thursday, respectively, before Great Lent as a remembrance of the Battle of Avarayr (AD 451). In that year, Armenians fought for religious freedom against the Persian Empire, whose ruler sought to impose Zoroastrianism as the state religion. Militarily, the rebellious Armenians were led by a nobleman, Vartan Mamigonian, and spiritually by Ghevont, a priest who had studied under the discoverer of the Armenian alphabet and the translator of the Bible into Armenian, St. Mesrob and St. Sahag.

Vartan and Ghevont were martyred at Avarayr and canonized as saints by the Armenian church. The Armenians



A group photo of participating clergy, deacons and organist

lost the battle at Avarayr but won the war, remaining Orthodox Christians through their stubborn resistance to tyranny.

At St. John’s Ghevontians and Vartanants observation, Rev. Nareg Keutelian, the parish’s former visiting pastor, celebrated the divine liturgy. St. John’s current priest, Rev. Guregh Hambardzumyan sang in a choir worthy of a great cathedral alongside Very Rev. Boghos Tinkjian (All Saints, Glenview, IL), Rev. Fr. Andreas Garabedian (St. Gregory the Illuminator, Chicago), Rev. Avedis Kalayjian (St. Mesrob, Racine, WI) and Rev. Sahag Kashian (recently retired from Holy Resurrection, South Milwaukee, WI). Jan Avakian-Kopatich accompanied them on organ. Deacon Levon Saryan (St. Hagop, Racine, WI) read the Old Testament and Epistles and Deacon Thomas Ohanian, (All Saints, Glenview, IL) lead the altar servers (sub-deacons Michael and Arek Kashian and David Lührssen) in singing.

In his sermon, Tinkjian reflected on Avarayr and reminded listeners that the threat to Armenian identity, culture and faith posed by the ancient Persian king remains with us today but in many and often less obvious forms, not only from external enemies but from within the global culture.



Gacia Tachejian (Photos courtesy Laidrey)

Gacia Tachejian Opens Laidrey in Tarzana

Ethically Sourced, Meticulously Roasted, Freshly Brewed

TARZANA, Calif. — An attractive new coffee shop and in-house roastery opened on January 7, 2022 in Tarzana, with free drip coffee to all who stop by. Laidrey, that has been serving customers since last fall out of a modified coffee cart while the space is fully built out, is the brainchild of co-owner and roaster Gacia Tachejian, and is located at 18600 Ventura Boulevard. It’s the first coffee shop for Gacia, a behavioral research scientist by trade who transitioned into working a coffee cart in the San Fernando Valley last summer during the ongoing pandemic. She’s now roasting beans sourced directly by her, and selling a full menu of brewed coffees, specialty drinks, espressos, and food items like specialty toasts from a 2,200-square-foot cafe and roasters.

Gacia grew up in Reseda in a large Armenian family. She says that’s where she learned to appreciate traditional Armenian and Turkish-style coffee. While working as a behavioral researcher, she couldn’t find the kind of coffee she loved so she began roasting her own. That led to a coffee cart that was so successful that in December 2021, she opened Laidrey, a brick-and-mortar cafe in Tarzana.



“I wanted to create an inviting, warm atmosphere with lots of space to walk around and not feel cramped,” Gacia told Daily Coffee News. “We left a lot of open space at the order and pickup counters so that customers can spread out and feel safe. We want to establish our own coffee brand recognized as the highest quality coffee that is ethically sourced, meticulously brewed, and freshly roasted.”

Gacia adds, “At Laidrey, we bring you the highest quality specialty coffee from around the world. Quality guides every aspect of our process. It begins with partnering with passionate coffee farmers who sustainably harvest their crops and hand pick each coffee cherry. We feature seasonal coffees from various regions to bring you the best possible coffee during its most fruitful season.”

“Laidrey began long ago in my home garage, where I was roasting coffee for myself, friends, and family. I had initially discovered my love for specialty coffee in New York while attending grad school. I moved back to my hometown of Tarzana from New York in 2013 and got a job at UCLA working as a project manager for clinical trials in behavioral health. On my way to work every day, I struggled

continued on next page

Armenian Church Shines Spotlight On Artsakh at DC Religious Freedom Summit

WASHINGTON — Earlier in February, the Eastern and Western Dioceses of the Armenian Church of America participated in the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit 2023, a Washington, DC, gathering of civil society, religious leaders, scholars, journalists, relevant government officials, and other stakeholders in promoting religious freedom across the world.

During and after the summit, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director Archbishop Vicken Aykazian (of the Eastern Diocese) and Artsakh Heritage Committee Chair Simon Maghakyan (of the Western Diocese), who also serves on the board of Save Armenian Monuments, joined by other community leaders, led a series of discussions on denial of religious freedom and other human rights violations in post-war Artsakh, particularly in light of Azerbaijan’s ongoing blockade of Artsakh’s corridor with Armenia.

“The Western Diocese was pleased to partner with the IRF Summit this year to spotlight vital issues concerning religious freedom and other human rights across the world, particularly in Artsakh,” said Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese. “We are pleased that there is now a greater understanding among external international religious freedom stakeholders of the existential threats faced by Armenians, and express hope that our community’s allies will be even more attentive and proactive in their efforts.”

Defending Armenian Rights

On February 1, Maghakyan spoke in his academic capacity at the IRF Summit’s Documenting IRF panel on the use of remote technologies in exposing destruction of houses of worship and sacred sites.

On February 3, Archbishop Aykazian and Maghakyan moderated a high-level private discussion among internal and external stakeholder organizations, initiated by the Western Diocese and hosted on Capitol Hill by Belmont Abbey College, on supporting religious freedoms and other human rights in Artsakh.

“The IRF Summit and the February 3 stakeholder discussion demonstrated, yet again, that coalition building is important for defending Armenian rights,” said Archbishop Aykazian. “We are grateful to the many partners that discussed with us the present and future of religious freedom protections concerning all threatened communities, including the Armenian community, and for expressing solidarity with Artsakh amid the ongoing blockade. We look forward to tangible actions on this front.”

The delegation at the IRF Summit 2023 worked closely with Sonya see SUMMIT, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

to find good quality coffee. So, I started roasting coffee myself on a small 1-pound Behmor Roaster in my garage. I had no idea how much I would enjoy roasting. It became a slight obsession and my husband was intrigued. We started handing coffee out to friends and family. I was pleasantly surprised at all the positive feedback and excitement for what I was doing. I'd also give some coffee to my boss and mentor at UCLA who I had worked with for over eight years. She encouraged me to follow my passion and always provided me with great insight and advice. I spent time with her and her husband (who is an expert in the beverage industry) and they would advise me on how to expand on my passion. Fast-forward four years later, and the three of us partnered together to start Laidrey. I feel proud and blessed to be able to bring my passion to my neighborhood.”

“We serve delicious pastries inside as well as a carefully curated breakfast and lunch menu. Our roastery is the first of its kind in the west San Fernando Valley. We are excited to provide a fully immersive coffee experience that will include hold-

ing public cuppings for our customers and showcasing our coffee roaster in our shop.”

Laidrey began as a pop-up coffee cart in Tarzana after owner Gacia Tachejian developed a love for coffee in grad school in New York

“We decided to open our roastery during the middle of a worldwide pandemic so there have been some unique challenges. We knew it was going to be a tough road but we were committed to bringing our passion for coffee to our local community and decided to start building with the new ‘normal’ in mind. We found a perfect location that has the ability to serve customers both inside and outside, through a take-out window and a newspaper stand allowing us to bring our coffee to our customers in a safe way. We added mobile ordering with curbside pick-up to make the experience as smooth as possible. To reach beyond our local community we’ve incorporated a subscription option allowing us to directly ship our freshly roasted coffee anywhere in the world every month to our customers,” she adds.

“At the core of our new coffee roastery, we work to continuously offer the best cof-



Monkey Toast at Laidrey's: Almond or peanut butter, sliced bananas, honey drizzle, cinnamon sprinkle – served on brioche toast (Photos courtesy Laidrey)



Inside of Laidrey

fee beans in the world that not only taste amazing but are sustainably grown and ethically sourced. Once we find the coffee we love, we have to be quick in reserving. For our opening, we were very lucky to be able to source Puno coffee from a small region in Peru which is some of the best coffee in the world. We use our Peru coffee in our cold brew because we believe it highlights all the delicious vanilla and brown sugar flavors.”

“In terms of the roastery, we believe we are bringing something new and unique to our community where specialty coffee shops are rare and roasteries do not exist. We plan to give customers a fully immersive and transparent coffee experience where they can watch coffee being roasted, packaged, and brewed. Our mission: Ethically Sourced, Meticulously Roasted, Freshly Brewed. Not only do we pay careful attention to our coffee beans, we also locally source ingredients for our menu items. Every ingredient, even our Vanilla syrup (half Madagascar half Tahitian) is carefully curated in order for our customers to have the highest quality ingredient in every cup. We bring a set of unique drinks such as our Beach Brew and Maple Oat latte. Both have been a summer favorite on our cart.”

“Our day jobs are very different: Marisa is a molecular biologist, Paul is a successful entrepreneur in the food and beverage industry, and I am a social worker turned coffee roaster. Yet we all share a love for coffee and our local community. Coffee has always been a part of our daily work life and at home as parents with young kids. Coffee is our sanctuary. A sip of delicious coffee in the midst of a chaotic morning with little ones running around or a long commute can be all we need sometimes. We know what it’s like to anticipate that yummy coffee and get disappointed when it does not taste as good as you were expecting.”

“This is where my interest in coffee started,” she says, “which led to me roasting at home and eventually becoming my true passion. As I started to think about a possible coffee roastery, Paul began helping me on the operations side and together we saw a foundation of a great business venture – this is how Laidrey was born. Throughout our coffee journey our families have been a huge source of inspiration and when it came time to naming our business, we knew exactly what name to choose. Our children’s names are Leo, Aiden, and Audrey and together their names make Laidrey.”

“Success is being able to do what you love for a living and doing it in a way that can help make a difference in the world. As a coffee roaster, my passion lies in what I do but in every step of our business, we have made conscious decisions to make a positive impact. It starts with sourcing coffee from farms that use sustainable methods in harvesting and processing coffee plants

and beans. We work to pay a premium for our coffee beans so that equitable pay and equal opportunity is given to coffee farmers who happen to be 70 percent women. We source from farms that give back to their communities, through supporting local education, health care, or community projects. We hope to grow big enough to use our proceeds to give back to our coffee community around the world.”

Coffees, sandwiches and fresh pastries are a main attraction

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The famous Avocado Toast at Laidrey (Photos courtesy Laidrey)



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COMMUNITY NEWS

California Assemblymember Chris Holden Introduces Anti-Blockade Resolution

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — This week, Assemblymember Chris Holden introduced AJR 1: Relative to the Republic of Artsakh., to condemn the Azerbaijan’s blockade of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) and calling for the Biden Administration to take tangible action to hold Azerbaijani government accountable for its flagrant violations of international human rights.

The resolution urges the administration to ensure emergency humanitarian assistance is made available to the Armenians of Artsakh. Azerbaijan has cut off power to Artsakh during the blockade that began on December 12, 2022. Over 120,000 people, including women, children, elderly, disabled among others are left fifty-three days without heat in the freezing winter.



“California is home to a large diaspora of Armenian Americans, many whose family and friends are being impacted by the continued blockade,” said Assemblymember Chris Holden. “I may not be Armenian but my heart aches alongside the Armenian diaspora community as their homeland continues to be under attack by Azerbaijani forces.”

Earlier in January of this year, Holden joined his colleagues in the California Armenian Legislative Caucus in a letter to the Biden administration, urging for the Administration to make every effort to open the Lachin Corridor, the only route linking Artsakh and Armenia.

“Assemblymember Holden has been a longtime friend of the Armenian community. He once again has shown his unwavering support during these trying times, when Armenians in Artsakh are facing extermination by the Azerbaijani government. The Armenian American community is thankful for Mr. Holden presenting a joint resolution calling on the Azeri government to end its illegal blockade and to hold Azerbaijani government accountable for its relentless aggression,” said Aida Dimejian, Armenian National Committee of America National Board Member.

The resolution would respectfully call on the President and State Department for the enforcement of Section 907 restrictions on military assistance to Azerbaijan, the imposition of sanctions on Azerbaijani officials complicit in the enforcement of the blockade and commissioning of war crimes, and urges the Administration to ensure emergency humanitarian assistance is made available to the Armenians of Artsakh.

Armenian Church Shines Spotlight on Artsakh at DC Religious Freedom Summit

SUMMIT, from page 6

Nersessian, a member of the Artsakh Heritage Committee representing the Armenian Bar Association, which has undertaken legal documentation of cultural destruction and religious freedom violations in Artsakh in a series of reports. The delegation also included scholar Tamar Purut.

Representatives of many other Armenian organizations and allies were also present at the Summit. One such organization, the Philos Project, sponsored the Summit’s closing session, entitled Save Armenia, during which the organization’s president

Robert Nicholson spoke on the USA’s WWI-era efforts to save Armenians and asked IRF Summit participants to do the same today for Artsakh as it endures Azerbaijan’s blockade.

The Artsakh Heritage Committee was founded at the initiative of Archbishop Derderian, in the aftermath of the 2020 war on Artsakh and its ongoing repercussions. The committee consists of scholars, experts, clergymen, and other key stakeholders dedicated to the cause of safeguarding Armenian cultural heritage under Azerbaijan’s newfound control.



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Rep. James McGovern (D-Ma) and the Armenian Assembly of America’s Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, with another attendee of the event.

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COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Akçam to Lecture on ‘The First Decision of The Armenian Genocide and the Role of the Kurds in Ottoman Documents’

FRESNO — Historian Dr. Taner Akçam will speak on “The First Decision of the Armenian Genocide and the Role of the Kurds in Ottoman Documents” on Friday, March 3, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus. A reception will take place immediately before the lecture at 6 p.m., in the University Business Center Gallery. The event is part of the Armenian Studies Program Spring 2023 Lecture Series.

Based on some newly available Ottoman documents, Akçam will revisit the question of the final decision to exterminate the Armenian population. He will show that the first decision to exterminate Armenians, contrary to the common belief in the field, was not taken in February-March 1915 but much



Prof. Taner Akçam

earlier, in the beginning weeks of the First World War in December 1914. He will also show that the letters belonging to Bahaattin Şakir revealing the decision of total extermination of the Armenians published by Aram Andonian are authentic.

The role of the Kurds during the Genocide is another important topic that Dr. Akçam will discuss. He will introduce some new Ottoman documents and argue that some Kurdish tribes acted not on the order of the central government and attacked the Armenian villages singlehandedly outside the central government’s control.

Akçam is the inaugural director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program at the UCLA Promise Institute. Before coming to UCLA, Akçam held the Kaloosdian and Mugar Endowed Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University. Akçam is widely recognized as one of the first Turk-

ish scholars to write extensively on the Ottoman-Turkish Genocide of the Armenians in the early 20th century. He published extensively on Armenian Genocide and Turkish Nationalism. His most known books are *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide*

and the Question of Turkish Responsibility (Metropolitan Books, 2006) and “Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire (Princeton University Press, 2012), received several awards. Akçam’s latest book is “Killing Orders: Talat Pasha’s Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide (Palgrave, 2018).

He is the founder of Krikor Guerguerian Online Archive: <https://wordpress.clarku.edu/guerguerianarchive/>.

The reception and lecture are free and open to the public. Parking is available in Fresno State Lot P6, near the University Business Center, Fresno State. A parking pass is not required for the Friday evening presentation.

The presentation will also be live-streamed on YouTube at: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesyoutube>.

OBITUARY

Ida Krikorian

Member of St. Gregory’s Ladies Guild, Dedicated to Family

METHUEN, Mass. — Ida Krikorian, age 101, of Cambridge, and a former long-time resident of Methuen, passed away on Thursday, February 9, 2023.

Born and raised in Methuen, the daughter of Oscar and Shooshan (Hovanasian) Arakelian, and stepfather John Minassian, Ida graduated from Searles High School in Methuen in 1939.

She retired from Raytheon as a supervisor.

Ida was predeceased by her sister, Rose Arakelian.

She is survived by her daughter, Dr. Susan Krikorian, and husband Dr. Jack Jaffe. She is also survived by a godson, Dr. Mark Muradian, his wife Carol, niece Hope (Krikorian) Fabiani and her husband Stephen, plus several cousins and relatives.

Ida was an active member of the Ladies Guild of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church and enjoyed volunteering at their bazaars and picnics. She enjoyed foreign travel, as well as cooking and playing Gin Rummy. She was especially fond of hosting friends and relatives in her warm and inviting home.

The family extends their deepest gratitude to the nurses and staff at Neville Center, Cambridge, for the exceptional care



given to Ida.

The funeral service was held on Monday, February 13 at Cataudella Funeral Home, Methuen. Burial was in Bellevue Cemetery in Lawrence.

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

Notice to Our Subscribers Regarding Print Version

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

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

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

We apologize and ask for your continued understanding.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian EyeCare Project's 30th Year Culminates with Special Anniversary Gala

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — After two years of virtual gatherings, the Armenian EyeCare Project (AECPP) was thrilled to be able to celebrate its momentous 30th anniversary year with its supporters in person again through the organization's 30th Anniversary Gala last fall.

On November 19, 2022, hundreds of friends and supporters of the organization gathered at the beautiful Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach, California to celebrate three decades of life-changing work and sight-saving service in Armenia. The evening began with a bustling cocktail reception where friends of the AECPP were excited to get together again in support of a cause close to everyone's hearts: eliminating preventable blindness in Armenia and making quality eye care accessible to every child and adult in the country.

Through the captivating banter between the unlikely duo of a cinematic storyteller and dedicated eye surgeon, Master of Ceremonies Art Simon and Tom Lee took the crowd on a three-decade-long journey of the AECPP and its momentous accomplishments in Armenia.

It began with the story of how it all started. In 1992, a call from Armenia's Ministry of Health had asked Armenian-American physicians in the US to help fight the growing wave of blindness in Armenia due to war and a tragic earthquake that had hit the country. Dr. Roger Ohanesian, who would later found the Armenian EyeCare Project, responded quickly, motivated by a promise he had made to his grandfather as a 12-year-old boy to help protect his ancestral homeland when he had the opportunity.

The story continued with what the AECPP

has accomplished in Armenia since its inception 30 years ago. This includes medical education and training programs for local physicians and medical staff in Armenia. It also includes the development of several eye care initiatives in the country, like the AECPP's Mobile Eye Hospital, which travels across Armenia to provide eye care at no cost to the country's most vulnerable residents; its Center

of Excellence for the Prevention of Childhood Blindness, which combats eye disease found in babies and children; and its Regional Eye Centers, which provide care to residents who live in the many regions throughout Armenia.

And always with more work to be done, guests at the AECPP Gala were able to get a glimpse of what's to come in terms of developments the AECPP is currently working on including expanding access to regional care with more diagnostic facilities across Armenia and more.

Honoring Alcon and Dr. Dwayne Baharozian

None of AECPP's accomplishments, of course, would be possible without help from groups and individuals who have



AECPP Founder Dr. Roger Ohanesian presents Alcon's Corporate Honoree Award to Jeannette Bankes, President & GM of Global Surgical Franchise at Alcon.

gone above and beyond to provide support for the AECPP's services in Armenia. The AECPP was proud to honor Alcon as its Corporate Honoree of the evening as well as

by Alcon. Ohanesian said that this particular contribution has had a tremendous impact on the care available in Armenia, as the cutting-edge equipment has been designated to eye care facilities spanning across the many regions of Armenia. "Now no person with an eye disorder is more than 20 miles from a location where they can be diagnosed and 40 miles from where they can be treated," Ohanesian said.

The AECPP Founder also mentioned that the organization would be nowhere without the companies and individuals who are so dedicated to helping AECPP fulfill its mission in Armenia. "Much of AECPP's credit should be passed on to companies like Alcon and people like Dr. Baharozian," Ohanesian said. "Thanks to their dedication, we are able to provide much-needed assistance to so many deserving Armenians."



The Champagne Girl is all out of champagne but everyone is still having a great time!

ophthalmologist Dr. Dwayne Baharozian as its Individual Honoree.

Alcon, a medical company and global leader specializing in eye care, has donated millions of dollars' worth of state-of-the-art medical equipment to the AECPP since the organization's start in 1992. In fact, Ohanesian's first trip to Armenia included a shipment of equipment donated from Alcon. This equipment has proven to be incredibly valuable over the years, allowing local physicians in Armenia to have the most modern tools needed to perform vital, sight-saving surgeries and procedures on their patients. Jeannette Bankes, president & GM of Global Surgical Franchise at Alcon, accepted the award on Alcon's behalf and noted that the company will continue to support such a worthy cause as the AECPP.

Baharozian, a board-certified ophthalmologist from Boston, was the AECPP's Individual Honoree. Baharozian has been a volunteer physician with the AECPP for several years and most notably has helped facilitate many valuable in-kind donations for the organization. The most recent of these was an in-kind donation of nine pieces of state-of-the-art eye equipment made



Masters of Ceremonies Art Simon and Dr. Tom Lee welcome guests.

As the crowd migrated to the Grand Ballroom, the evening continued with dinner, live music by the Hosharian Brothers Band and the opportunity to support the AECPP's priceless work in Armenia by participating in the organization's thrilling Live Auction and memorable Fund-a-Need.

A 30-Year Story

One highlight of the night was the 30-year story shared with guests throughout the evening through a documentary produced by Art Simon, a talented videographer who has been working with the AECPP for nearly 20 years. Simon co-hosted the Gala alongside ophthalmologist Dr. Tom Lee, who works as director of the Vision Center at Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) and has been a volunteer physician with the AECPP for more than 10 years.



AECPP Volunteer Physician Dr. Dwayne Baharozian (second from right) was the Individual Honoree at the AECPP's 30th Anniversary Gala. Here he is with his family.



Guests bid enthusiastically during the evening's Live Auction.

AECPP's gala culminated with guests celebrating on the dance floor. Most importantly, the event was able to raise much-needed funds for the organization so it can continue its sight-saving work in Armenia. Highlights from the AECPP's 30th Anniversary Gala can be found at www.eyecareproject.com/gala

COMMUNITY NEWS

Boston Armenians Call for Ending Artsakh Blockade

PROTEST, from page 1

representatives Kate Lipper-Garabedian, Steve Owens and Simon Cataldo as well as State Senator Will Brownsberger attended to show their support of the event. State Rep. F. Jay Barrows sent legislative aide Alex Movsesian to represent him.

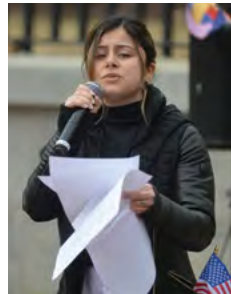
Four Armenian clergymen of the Boston area, Fr. Arakel Aljalian of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown, Fr. Vart Gyozyan of Hye Pointe Church in Haverhill, Fr. Khachatur Kesablian of Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church in Chelmsford, and Fr. Vasken Kouzouian of Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge, began the event with prayers in Armenian and English.

Herman Purutyan, board member and state chair of the Armenian Assembly of America, was the first speaker. Recalling Martin Luther King's statement that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," Purutyan pointed to the blatant injustice of the 67-day blockade of the 120,000 people of the Republic of Artsakh by Azerbaijan. He said that this was a 21st century ethnic cleansing taking place in front of our eyes.



A direct challenge to the United States, this blockade violates Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act of the US Congress. Consequently, Purutyan called for its implementation, requiring the end of US aid to the despotic regime of Azerbaijan. He asked that everyone make their voices heard by their representatives in the federal government, and ask them to push back against the bully President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and end the blockade.

Meghri Dervartanian of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation of Boston observed that the



highlanders of the Republic of Artsakh were determined to live on their soil in peace and dignity, with self-rule. She deplored the fact that some 30,000 children in Artsakh

were deprived of education thanks to the Azerbaijani government's blockade and cutting off of energy supplies, making schools unusable during the harsh wintertime.

Dervartanian said that the protests of so-called eco-activists which were closing

down the Lachin corridor connecting Artsakh to Armenia were not genuine, as no protests occur in Azerbaijan unless authorized by the authoritarian government. The blockade, she said, should be understood within the larger context of a genocidal pattern of acts by the Azerbaijani regime against Armenians and the Republic of Armenia, separating Artsakh from the latter.

The statements of governments like the US, France and many European governments condemning the blockade have not been followed by actions. She urged Congress to back House Resolution No. 180 to stop all US assistance to Azerbaijan and issue sanctions until it lifts the blockade. She

called on the US State Department and its ambassadors in Yerevan and Baku to travel to Artsakh, Samantha Power, administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, to organize an international airlift of supplies there, and all citizens to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Armenians of Artsakh, not leaving them alone.

Aram Arkun, managing editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and executive director of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, declared that everyone had gathered at the State House to deliver the same message in a united fashion. "The world is a cruel place, full of natural tragedies like earthquakes and manmade ones like wars, which claim untold numbers of victims," he said. When one learns of such tragedies, he continued, most people are moved. Yet, he said, "When we have the ability to help but do not, we bear a certain degree of complicity in the outcome. ... and the people of Artsakh have called out to us and to the world, asking for help under the difficult condi-



Armenian priests with heads bowed in prayer (photo Ken Martin)

tions of the blockade."

The entire population of Artsakh, whose ancestors had lived on its lands for some two thousand years, has been rendered defenseless, he noted, and is being slowly suffocated in pursuit of a political aim. Azerbaijan wants to take over this land without



its Armenian inhabitants, and if the latter does not flee due to the pressure, Azerbaijan might even resort to genocidal violence.

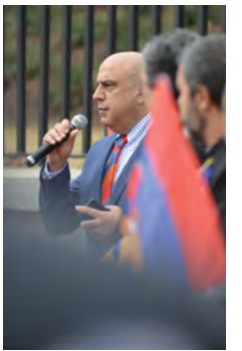
Americans must call on their federal representatives to break the blockade and sanction Azerbaijan, he exclaimed, making it understand that it will pay a price for inhumane actions.



Garo Sakaian, representing the Armenian General Benevolent Union's New England District and chairman of the AGBU Young Professionals of Boston, defined

From 1994 to the present, available satellite imagery indicates that the Artsakh Armenians did not cause an environmental crisis since the forest cover remained the same, and possibly even grew a bit. Now, the blockade itself is forcing Armenians to cut down trees to heat their homes and stay warm, Papelian said. She asked that those listening continue to raise their voices so that the Artsakh Armenians know they are not alone.

Dr. Shant Parseghian of the Pan Armenian Council of New England explained that the council was formed in October 2022 to unify the Boston area Armenian community as a reaction to the Azerbaijani war on Armenia and Artsakh, and this demonstration was its first major project. The Boston community has many resources and significantly is the second largest community in the US. He asked that people call their federal representatives, post on social media and raise awareness about the plight of the 120,000 Armenians of Artsakh, especially in non-Armenian circles.



At this point, Muradian acknowledged the presence of Robert Trestan, Anti-Defamation League New England Regional Director, FayeRuth Fisher, senior director of Public Affairs of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, and Jim Kaufman, the former president of the American Jewish Committee Boston. In his closing words, Muradian called for action, declaring that we need to make sure that the federal delegation knows how much this means to us. They are the ones, he emphasized, that can put pressure through Congress on the president to get something done.

Rev. Laura Everett, executive director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, of which the Armenian Church is a part, concluded the event with a brief talk and followed by a prayer. She suggested for those who are not Armenian to imagine that the population of Cambridge was under siege and Memorial Drive was blocked. "We would not stand for such a thing in Massachusetts so we cannot stand for such a thing across the nation [nor] across the world," she declaimed. "Help your friends understand the depths of this even if they do not have the same view and the same love of Armenia that you do. Because we want to stand with you. This is what solidarity looks like....We show up for one another even when it is not about us."

(All photos by Ken Martin)



ethnically cleansing and indicated that what was happening in Artsakh fell into this category. He quoted Nelson Mandela, who said, "To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity" and asked those present to become an important voice by engaging with their governmental representatives. The United States must be a leader in protecting humanity, Sakaian declared. When we say never again, we must mean it, he concluded, as human lives are at stake.

Jeanmarie Papelian, the executive director of the Armenia Tree Project, spoke about the work of her organization in Artsakh and

Armenia and proclaimed it ironic that the Azerbaijani blockade was allegedly motivated out of concern for the environment. During the 44 day war in 2020, Azerbaijani forces used white phosphorus,

deadly to all living things, to burn almost 5,000 acres of forest in Artsakh. Papelian said that a country which uses white phosphorus in this fashion does not care about the environment. It is trying to weaponize the environment through false claims while it causes true environmental and humanitarian crises.



Arts & Culture

Musicians on Mission to Fund Digitization Of Armenia’s National Music Library

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — Victoria Avetisyan and Nuné Hakobyan are on a mission for the preservation and proliferation of the legacy of Armenian classical music and they are doing it through music: a concert on March 18 in Bedford.

The two women are members of an informal group known as “Yerkir Nairi” (Land of Nairi), after the poetic name for Armenia popularized through the poetry of Vahan Teryan and derived from Urartian times.

The group was founded after the 44-Day War in 2020 by Boston-area classical musicians from the Armenian community, most of whom were born and educated in Armenia. The group wanted to do something to help Armenia using their prolific talents, and by 2021 began to present concerts in the area.

The collective, which plans to form an official nonprofit in the near future, has taken on the support of the Komitas State Conservatory in Yerevan as their cause. Their focus in particular is the library, whose holdings have not yet been digitized. They describe it as a mission of national importance for the Armenian people.

According to Avetisyan and Hakobyan, classical musicians of Armenian background are often asked to perform pieces, whether orchestral/instrumental or vocal, by Armenian composers alongside those of the great Western classical composers. If, however, the scores are not been entered into a computer, musicians far away will not be able to play them.

Avetisyan is a mezzo-soprano who



Victoria Avetisyan

was born in Yerevan and received her master’s in vocal performance from Komitas State Conservatory. She began performing in the National Opera Theatre of Armenia and was then invited to join Boston University’s see DIGITIZATION, page 14



Francis Kurkdjian (François Roelants photo)

Francis Kurkdjian *Baccarat Rouge 540 Takes the World By Storm*

“A great fragrance does not smell good; it smells beautiful!”
—F. Kurkdjian

By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Francis Kurkdjian is considered by many to be the world’s greatest designer and creator of new perfumes and scents. Born in Paris in 1969, he is perhaps best known for creating the men’s fragrance Le Male for Jean Paul Gaultier in 1995, which became one of the world’s best-selling perfumes. He has since created more than 40 fragrances for major companies worldwide, including Elie Saab Le Parfum for Elie Saab; My Burberry for Burberry; L’Extase for Nina Ricci; Narciso Rodriguez for Her for Narciso Rodriguez, and Green Tea for Elizabeth Arden. He also re-created Marie Antoinette’s favorite perfume for the Palace of Versailles, going back in time to the early 17th century and the sources of perfumery. And in 2006, Kurkdjian redeveloped and updated Papier d’Arménie — little booklets of scented paper, which you burn like incense — for the “Year of Armenia in France.”

In 2009, Kurkdjian then co-founded the fragrance house Maison Francis Kurkdjian with Lebanese-French businessman Marc Chaya. It became part of the LVHM fashion juggernaut in 2017. Today its scents and affiliated products are sold worldwide. His unisex Baccarat Rouge 540, with notes of jasmine, saffron and cedar, was released in 2016 and has since become one of the biggest hit in perfumery.

In 2021, Kurkdjian was named the creative director for Dior perfumes. Like Karl Lagerfeld who managed to design Chanel as well as his own line, Francis Kurkdjian has the energy and work ethic needed to successfully take on both jobs simultaneously.

In recognition of his contributions to the world of perfumery, he received the Prix François Coty for lifetime achievement in 2001 at 33. And in 2008 the French Government bestowed on him the “Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres,” title, one of the country’s greatest honors.

What I find most remarkable about Kurkdjian is the absolute passion that he has for perfumery: he works assiduously not just developing new scents but also carefully studying the history of his profession and trying to push the perfumery industry forward in innovative ways. He has worked in tandem with renowned artists to place scents side-by-side and at the same level as other arts such as painting or music, for example. He has also set up the unique “Fonds de Dotation Francis Kurkdjian,” (www.fondsFranciskurkdjian.org) a non-profit organization that funds innovation both within and outside of perfumery. His vision: ensure that his profession remains

continued on next page

MIFA Creates An Instrument For Change

By Sona Mirzoyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — “Do whatever you can, without waiting for the perfect time.” This is the motto of the Musical Instruments for Armenia (MIFA), a grassroots charity initiative that aims to tackle the scarcity and lack of access to musical instruments for children in remote regions of Armenia and Artsakh.

What began as an ordinary discussion on Clubhouse social audio network now has turned into an ambitious idea that has fueled a group of Armenian enthusiasts from different parts of the world to roll up their sleeves and bring positive changes.

Music producer and DJ Hayk Harutyunyan and violinist Mariam Vardanyan explained the goals of MIFA, its impact, and future endeavors.

The core MIFA team, composed of Hayk Harutyunyan, Mariam Vardanyan, Roseanna Kegeyan and Natalya Ghurbanyan, got to know each other via the Clubhouse social audio network in December 2020, soon after the end of the 44-Day War. In one of the most popular Clubhouse audio rooms, titled “Armenia,” compatriots were discussing the means and methods to do something beneficial for Armenia. “While in Germany, I was thinking about how I could help my country and came up with the idea of eliminating the scarcity of musical instruments in Armenia and Artsakh so that children could learn pure Armenian music rather than *rabiz* (popular music) melodies,” Vardanyan said.

The idea was supported by Harutyunyan, Vardanyan, Kegeyan, Ghurbanyan and other participants in the Clubhouse, who joined in the effort to launch the very first fundraiser for MIFA through the Clubhouse to kickstart the initiative. Later, MIFA organized charity concerts and events both in Armenia and the United States to spread the word about the impact it is making in children’s lives throughout Armenia and Artsakh. This generated a lot of support from renowned Armenian musicians, including Vahagn Hayrapetyan, Garik Papoyan, and Soné Silver, as well as from a well-regarded Armenian radio host and showman Gor Grigoryan (Glumov). “There are schools where children wait for their turn to play an instrument of their choice. We started to visit villages and collect necessary data and register what children’s needs were, which instruments were more in demand, etc.,” recalled Harutyunyan.

The majority of the instruments provided by MIFA are Armenian folk instruments. Girls mostly play the *qanun*, and 20 have been purchased.

Harutyunyan said that the reason for the emphasis on folk instruments is that many children in villages can imagine a future where they play those instruments.

Vardanyan refers to the myriad of videos available on social media, see MIFA, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

innovative and relevant in the future and thus moves the culture forward in ways unforeseen.

He recently agreed to a brief interview.

Baccarat Rouge 540 was such a viral hit. How did you feel about the fragrance's success and how did it happen?

Success has one rule: coherence, “justesse” as we say in French. While composing a new fragrance, you may feel that it is truly creative, but success is impossible to predict. Baccarat Rouge 540 was a creative collaboration with the house of Baccarat crystal to celebrate its 250th anniversary. I had carte blanche to capture the spirit of the crystal house in one scent. The making of the iconic red Baccarat crystal guided me throughout my creative journey. I wanted to translate the feeling of brightness and the density of crystal, to create a contemporary fragrance by its name and its scent, almost avant-garde, that would reflect the essence of Baccarat and push the brand in the future. The scent was not about the past 250 years, so much as a celebration of the upcoming 250!

What does the number 540 signify?

Crystal is obtained through the interplay of three components: minerals, fire and craftsmanship. Powerful and distinguished, the name Baccarat Rouge 540 evokes the metamorphosis of a clear crystal mingled with 24-carat gold powder, brought to fusion at 540 degrees Celsius, which produces a glowing scarlet appearance. The bottle of Baccarat Rouge 540 extrait de parfum actually echoes this scarlet shade

Can you please briefly explain its composition and what makes it so special?

The composition is straightforward while its olfactory family is rather avant-garde. I wanted this scent to convey the codes of our era. Sweetness was the first must have. However I stopped using all the raw materials together which were used beforehand — so I started from a blank page at this point.

The scent is my interpretation of three inherent components of crystal: the mineral breath, the breath of fire and the breath of craftsmanship. As if human hands were conversing with the magic of nature. Like a true alchemy of senses, its graphic, highly condensed olfactory signature delivers floral, amber, and woody notes. Airy jasmine facets and intensely radiant saffron carry the mineral notes of ambergris and the woody, lightly spiced tones of red cedar.

The scent is very contemporary yet there is a timeless feeling to it. Its trail is unique, persistent and recognizable from among any other fragrance. It is abstract. It's not about flowers or amber only. The ingredients disappear to leave only their trail, with an impressive volume.

More generally, what makes for a good perfume? How do you come up with fragrances? What are your favorite fragrances that you created and a favorite that isn't signed Francis Kurkdjian?

A great fragrance doesn't smell good; it smells beautiful. That is one step further from a good scent, with artistry and feelings. And a great fragrance arises from a great story. A good technique is needed to achieve your idea, but the idea itself is not enough. A fragrance must have a distinctive olfactive signature and be diffusive at the same time. I often compare the art of perfumery to ice-skating. In skating you receive one mark for technique, and another for artistry. You need both to be excellent, just like in perfumery. On the other hand, a good fragrance is memorable, has a strong signature and lasts long. This may seem easy but it's actually the most difficult thing to achieve.

I always approach my creations with the same process. When I create a new scent, I first focus on a general feeling. I try to envision the final image for the fragrance, and I always start with the name. The name sums up what I want to say with my perfume, the story I want to tell, my inspiration. It's like the title of a book, it helps guide me on my creative path. Words are extremely important to me. After this, I start writing the formula. My creative process is never driven by raw materials. They are pieces of the puzzle, but I focus on the overall scent.

There are two phases to creating a perfume: the first is a period of reflection and creating the name and guidelines for the scent. After that during the second phase, I begin

the composition and spend time in the lab to create the formula.

To be honest I don't have any favorite scents, whether from my house or from other brands. As a perfumer, when it comes to my personal taste, the fragrances I have in mind for the future are always the most intriguing and appealing to me. The most exciting part of life, in fact, is what lies ahead in the future.

How is the process when you create fragrances for Christian Dior compared to when you are doing so for your own house?

The creative process remains the same for both houses.



Maison Kurkdjian's Baccarat Rouge 540 (Photo courtesy of Maison Kurkdjian)

Only the subjects of inspiration differ.

In the past decade (maybe even earlier with Calvin Klein's CK One), the lines of men's and women's scents have sometimes blurred. What do you think about gendered perfume?

You mention CK One, from the early 1990s, but non-gendered fragrances date from the 17th century! Eau de Cologne is the first unisex/non-gendered olfactory form! Traditionally, some notes have been used only for feminine or masculine fragrances because of some cultural preconceptions. Rose is one example; it's been linked to women's fragrances. However, roses have been used in masculine fragrance as well, “hidden” by stronger, spicier, or woodier notes. For me and for my work this is totally irrelevant. Notes have no gender; ingredients are merely a tool to obtain certain results. What matters in the end is the formula, not any single ingredient. A tailor can turn silk into a men's tie or an evening gown; the perfumer does the same with the ingredients she uses. The Gentle Fluidity duo is a demonstration of that — two unisex eau de parfums with dramatically different olfactory signatures, created with the exact same 49 ingredients. And with L'Homme À la Rose Maison Francis Kurkdjian was the first fragrance house to give men the power to proudly wear a rose scent: it can be perceived in the scent's trail and is unmistakably masculine.

You have been referred to as one of the greatest living noses. How do you become a “nose?” Do you train or are you born with it?

Above all, I am not a nose (laughs) ... A nose does not create, it is just a transmitter of emotions. I'm a master perfumer and artistic director. During my childhood I never thought about becoming a perfumer. After a short-lived career as a classical ballet dancer, I pursued couture, but unfortunately that didn't work out either. At age 14 I read an article about several perfumers in a magazine, and I found out that the couturier was not the one who was creating his perfumes. There were people behind it, who practiced a very special art. Perfume is intimately linked to the couture world; it's so close to the skin, even closer than a piece of clothing. After reading that story, I made up my mind to become a perfumer and when I was old enough, I attended ISIPCA, the perfumery school in Versailles, France. I had found my true calling. After school,

you have to train and work, a lot! It usually takes about 5 to 10 years before you are able to create a solid fragrance alone. However I did not follow this timeline, as I created my first internationally renowned scent 6 months after I left school. No matter what, you first have to learn the basics.

The world of scent is like foreign languages: you must start by learning the alphabet — meaning the raw materials — one by one, describing them, classifying them with your own words and feelings. Then you create words (small fragrance accords) and then sentences. But it is like any other art form. Everybody knows how to write, paint,

draw, and sing, but not everybody is an artist who creates new things... Not everybody knows how to express novelty and create new forms.

You've spent a lot of time living and working in New York City but Paris remains your true love. How do both two cities inspire you creatively?

I liked the years I spent in New York City when I was a young perfumer. But Paris is my hometown, to live and to work. That's why Maison Francis Kurkdjian is a tribute to Paris, its magic and spirit of freedom. This city is the heart of my inspiration and each of my perfumes is part of a fragrance wardrobe that I build year after year. My travels take me away, but they also serve to bring me back to Paris and its heterogeneous population, to the light and the shade of its monuments, the grey of its rooftops and the bursts of magic as its golden spires punctuate its incredible skyline. Above all I love the cultural life in Paris: the museums, the classical and modern theater, the architecture which varies from very classic to modern. For example, I have a view of the new iconic tower by architect Renzo Piano. Paris inspires the universe of my fragrance house: like the grey zinc and gold caps on our bottles. The inspiration for the flacon comes from an antique bottle, to which I added the house monogram, like an artist's proud signature on their work.

My latest fragrance, 724, is actually a tribute to New York, Paris and all the big cities I have lived in. I pictured 724 accompanying you through the city or urban environment. It's not the scent of the streets, or the subway, or something figurative about the city, it's about you and how you feel and what type of smell you'd like to wear when you are surrounded by urban vibes. Something comfortable and fresh — the edge of cleanness, if you will.

You seem to have accomplished so much already within the fragrance world. What are your remaining goals and where do you see yourself creatively or otherwise in 10-15 years?

Bringing the world of scent to a new level of consciousness, finding new ways to wear or experiment fragrances is really something I am increasingly looking at in the future. I believe it is part of my mission in the world of fragrances to open new paths and to question my era about the importance, meaning and place of fragrances. I believe it is also the modernity of it: breaking down boundaries, rather than simply rules.

Please tell us about your link to Armenian culture and to your Armenian roots.

My parents were born and raised in France. They went to French schools and so did I. That doesn't mean that we don't stay in touch with our Armenian origins, but they are far away from us in a certain way. I'm not sure if they have inspired or influenced my career. I am sure deep inside there must be an influence, but I can't express it.



Maison Kurkdjian's new eau de parfum



ARTS & CULTURE

Musicians on Mission to Fund Digitization of Armenia's National Music Library

DIGITIZATION, from page 12

Opera Institute, where she received her artist's diploma. She has performed all over the United States and Canada in major operatic roles, and resides in the Boston area, where she continues her operatic career and gives voice lessons.

Hakobyan is a classically trained pianist, studied at the Sayat-Nova Music School and the Tchaikovsky Music School, holding a master's degree in piano and an artist diploma in collaborative piano from Komitas State Conservatory. She and her family moved to the US in 1996, where she has worked as an accompanist at the Boston Conservatory and other notable schools and orchestras in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, as well as teaching piano.

Both women stated that when they are asked to perform works of Armenian composers, the scores are very difficult to come by, aside from the most famous works of Komitas, Khachaturian, and so on. The wealth of Armenian Classical music is buried in archives and libraries, especially the library of the Komitas Conservatory (also known as the Armenian National Music Library.)

The Conservatory has many historical manuscripts, books, and scores (sheet music) which need to be organized and systematized, so that people all around the world can have access to them. "The library is in great need of digitization," the women concluded.

Much of the repertoire of the great European classical composers is available online these days, through various databases, some of which are on a payment basis.

The group's dream is to see such a resource available for the works of Armenian composers to be made accessible to professional musicians not only of Armenian descent but throughout the world.

About a year ago, the women came up with the idea of the digitization project, and then they presented their proposal at the Armenians Forward Together forum, which took place at the Hotel Ibis in Yerevan this past August.

The women noted that their expertise is in classical music by Armenian composers, rather than liturgical, folk, or various forms of Armenian party music. The classical style of music composed by professionals in the Armenian tradition and spirit is intended to be presented in a concert setting. The names of Komitas, Khachaturian, Babadjanian and others are well known to the Armenian community as the exponents of Armenian classical oeuvre, with Komitas being regarded by many as the forefather and source of the entire movement, who based it on his research into the purest forms of the songs of Armenian villagers.

Classical music was heavily promoted and subsidized by the Soviet government

during the time that Armenia was part of the USSR, resulting in many master composers and a multitude of classically-trained musicians. Today, much of that legacy is falling to the wayside, according to the group.

Some of the works of these composers have never been published. For example, the Komitas Conservatory is in the possession of handwritten manuscript scores by Edgar Hovhannisyan (1930-1998), which have never seen the light of day.

Tsovinar Movsisyan, the Prorector of the Conservatory, is the one who discovered Hovhannisyan's manuscripts, and is lead-

ing the process of digitization. Last summer, she was approached by IT specialists from the National Academy of Sciences who had the idea to start the process. The Conservatory has only one old computer and one printer. They now have one person hired as the technician to oversee the digitization process, as well as a web domain, but they need funds for better equipment. That's where Yerkir Nairi comes in. Their goal is to raise funds to support the Conservatory in this work, firstly through buying two new computers and a professional scanner.

Yerkir Nairi's fundraising concert will take place on March 18, at 6 p.m., at The First Parish in Bedford, 75 Great Road.

The concert will feature thirteen musicians from the Boston and greater New England area, most of whom are from Armenia and many of whom are graduates of the Komitas Conservatory. The musicians include: Victoria Avetisyan, mezzo-soprano; Yeghishe Manucharyan, tenor; Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian, piano; Sargis Karapetyan, violin; Nuné Hakobyan, piano; Levon Hovsepian, piano; Haig Hovsepian, violin; Ani Hovsepian, piano; Lilit Muradyan, viola; Armenuhi Hovakimian, violin; Arpine Azatyan, violin; Knarik Nerkararyan, soprano and Armen Ghazaryan, violin.

Various solo, quartet, and other group performances will be included in the concert. All of the pieces performed will be by Armenian composers, Avetisyan and Hakobyan stressed, though the selection of repertoire will be "diverse."

Part of their goal is to make the public more aware of the wealth of compositions created by Armenians in the Classical field.

Hakobyan stated that the group's current primary focus is to promote the concert and that one of the benefits is that it will "bring together the musicians of this area." Little by little, Armenian musicians are starting to work together, she said, and all the musicians who are playing on March 18 are donating their time, so that all proceeds will go to the Music Library.

According to Hakobyan, "the idea came from Victoria, she is always approaching and saying, 'why don't we start this?' And we emailed many musicians from Armenia, some of them are alumni of the conservatory. And most of them very happily agreed to donate their talents."

Avetisyan stated that "we have a great music — Armenian music in all genres — and for me that is the inspiration to do this."

Tamara Babaian, who is not a musician herself but is a great supporter of Yerkir Nairi and is helping the group to organize the March concert, stated that "Both Nune and Victoria are performing in the Boston area and throughout the US and internationally, and not only they but many of the musicians who will be performing are very well known in the community here, and they really enrich our cultural life here in Boston and we are really grateful for these opportunities to hear our music. It accompanies us in the saddest days of our lives, and also the happiest days of our lives." She also noted that the project to digitize the Conservatory's library is very important from the perspective of cultural preservation and protection of these precious documents for future generations.

Hakobyan reiterated that "this [concert] is not folk or spiritual music. We are playing professional classical music, that is written by composers to be presented on the concert stage." She continued that her future vision for the Yerkir Nairi group is to represent Armenian music, by sponsor lectures and discussions, teaching, educating, and holding concerts. She also envisions the group branching out into other areas of Armenian culture, such as architecture, art, painting, history, and so on. In keeping with the group's vision, the concert poster has an image representing the patriarch of Armenian music in modern times, Komitas Vardapet.

Tickets can be purchased online here: <https://www.ticketsource.us/whats-on/ma/the-first-parish-in-bedford/celebrating-and-preserving-armenian-cultural-treasures/e-kegvvgp>

PwJTs

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MARCH 18, 2023

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ARTS & CULTURE

MIFA Creates an Instrument for Change

MIFA, from page 12 where Turks and Azerbaijanis present Armenian folk instruments as theirs. However, there are no exceptions or special rules: MIFA is ready to assist in any case, be it national or classical instrument. The cornerstone is to play music by adhering to high quality standards, she added.

There is a popular dilemma concerning the best way to operate a charity organization: simply paying the bills or diving deeper into the core of the problems and going the extra mile to solve them. MIFA has chosen the latter option. “In our opinion, donating instruments is the best possible way. Moreover, we reach out to local stores and instrument makers when it comes to procuring instruments, and thus we contribute to the growth of local businesses and support the traditional musical instrument makers, whose talent and craftsmanship are passed onto the next generations of musicians,” said Harutyunyan.

“The overall process is not as easy as it may seem. It includes meticulous bureaucratic work, reports and data collection. However, all those efforts pay off when instruments are delivered, and you see the gleam in the eyes of kids receiving long-awaited instruments,” noted Vardanyan. This warm welcome and gratitude are healing energies for the team to further expand their mission.

The goal of MIFA is to cover the needs of music schools both in Armenian regions and in Artsakh. The team has already vis-



group of volunteers and supporters, who have dedicated their time and resources to support the cause.

“We have managed to completely cover two regions: Gegharkunik and Lori. We also visited certain schools in Shirak and Ararat regions. To continue our mission, we need financial resources, so there is a need to raise funds again, as the instruments are quite expensive,” added Vardanyan.

MIFA members have other ambitious plans, such as holding seminars, events, and concerts, and organizing visits of children to the capital. As MIFA team members

are all volunteering their time to this cause, the key challenge has been for them to find the time out of their busy full-time careers to dedicate all of their resources to accomplish the aforementioned activities. However, Mariam and Hayk are sure that this is just a matter of time, and one day MIFA will be capable of expanding the scope of its activities.

“I have always dreamed of creating a music academy in Shushi, Jrdruz, and here we are now: it’s no longer ours. And this notorious example comes to prove that time waits for nobody,” said Vardanyan.

“You certainly do not have to be a genius, own a fortune or be famous, in order to make a difference in this world. Anyone, from various paths of life, can have a pos-

itive and meaningful impact in the lives of others,” added Harutyunyan.

At MIFA, there is a belief that one should not wait for war or any other disaster to start acting. “In our case, the idea was born after the 44-Day War in Artsakh, but humanity should always act and live collectively, as we are all in one chain,” said Harutyunyan. At first, everything seems very scary, but you only need to take the first step and trust the process.

To contact the MIFA team, write to musicalinstrumentsforarmenia@gmail.com, follow them on Instagram @musicalinstrumentsforarmenia and check on their progress on www.musicalinstrumentsforarmenia.com.

MIFA also has videos online.



ited 36 schools, including the “Chakhruk” ethno music group of the Kharberd specialized orphanage, and donated more than 100 musical instruments. Approximately \$17,000 has been raised for the effort, and a number of instruments were donated through in-kind donations by various supporters in Armenia and abroad. The team was also fortunate to have an amazing



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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Jenn Segal's Spinach & Cheese Strata (Photos from Once Upon a Chef)

Once Upon a Chef: Jenn Segal's Spinach & Cheese Strata

Layered with spinach, cheese, and bread, and soaked in a savory custard, this make-ahead strata is ideal for entertaining.

Jenn Segal, professional trained chef, mom, and author of the bestselling cookbook *Once Upon a Chef*, is known for her updated spins on everyday classics. Meticulously tested and crafted with an eye toward both flavor and practicality, Jenn's recipes focus on exactly what you feel like making in today's busy and often hectic times.



Jenn Segal - Classically Trained Chef, Cookbook Author and Busy Mom (Photos courtesy of Once Upon a Chef)

Jenn is the founder of Once Upon a Chef, the popular cooking blog showcasing easy, family-friendly recipes from a chef's point of view. Her recipes have been featured on numerous websites, magazines, and television programs, including The Huffington Post, WJLA's Good Morning Washington, FOX5DC, SeriousEats.com, and Parade.com.

Before creating her blog, she attended the Maryland-based L'Academie de Cuisine, considered one of the top cooking schools in America. She cooked at the acclaimed L'Auberge Chez Francois, and was director of marketing for a prominent restaurant group, both in the Washington D.C. metro area. One marriage and two children later she created Once Upon a Chef featuring her tested and perfected recipes with approachable ingredients and step-by-step photos.

"I left the restaurant business in 2003 when my first child was

born. Now, I'm cooking for my family and sharing my collection of recipes. The recipes on my site reflect my life; as a mom, I need easy meals the whole family will enjoy but the chef in me needs to eat too," she says. With the authority of a professional chef and the practicality of a busy working mom, Jenn teaches readers how to improve their cooking skills one family-friendly recipe at a time. She lives in Potomac, Maryland, with her family. At Once Upon a Chef readers will discover: step-by-step photos; ingredient recommendations that take the guesswork out of grocery shopping; and menus for special events and holidays, entertaining and everyday family meals.

"A strata is a layered casserole made with bread, eggs, cheese, and sometimes vegetables or meat (strata means layers). Think of it as a savory bread pudding. This spinach version is richly flavored with Gruyère, Parmesan, and Dijon mustard. It's the perfect vegetarian brunch dish to feed a large crowd. You do all of the

preparation the night before, let the strata rest in the refrigerator overnight, then pop it in the oven in the morning. As it bakes, it puffs up like a soufflé, making it a real showstopper. The strata does fall a bit as it cools, but it's still impressive. Serve with crispy bacon, a strawberry and orange fruit salad, and mimosas," suggests Jenn.

"The recipe is pretty flexible so you can play around with different sautéed vegetables depending on what you have on hand. Some cooked sausage or pancetta would also be good — just be sure to reduce the salt in the recipe to a scant teaspoon or the dish will be way too salty."

Servings: 8-10

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 75 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour 45 minutes, plus at least one hour to sit in the refrigerator

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound bag chopped frozen spinach, thawed completely
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped (about 2 cups)
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 12 ounces (3/4 pound) Italian sandwich bread, cut into 1-inch cubes (about 11 slices or 8 cups)
- 6 ounces (1-1/2 cups) coarsely grated Gruyère
- 2 ounces (2/3 cup) finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 9 large eggs
- 2-3/4 cups half-and-half
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1-3/4 teaspoons salt
- 3/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg

PREPARATION:

First, squeeze handfuls of spinach to remove as much liquid as possible.

Melt the butter in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and drained spinach and cook 2 minutes more. Set aside.

Butter a 3-quart (or 9x13-inch) baking dish. Spread one third of the bread cubes in the dish and top evenly with one third of spinach mixture. (Try to break it up as much as possible so there are no huge clumps of spinach.) Sprinkle with one third of each cheese. Repeat layering twice, ending with cheeses.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs. Add the half-and-half, Dijon mustard, salt, pepper and nutmeg and whisk until well combined. Pour the custard mixture evenly over the strata. Cover the strata with plastic wrap and chill for at least 1 hour or overnight.

Preheat oven to 325°F. Bake the strata, uncovered, until puffed, set and golden brown all over top, 70-75 minutes. Let stand 10-15 minutes before serving. (The cook time is based on the strata going immediately from the refrigerator to the oven. If it sits out at room temperature before baking, the cook time will be 10-15 minutes less.)

Note from Jenn: "My starting point for this recipe was this popular strata originally published in *Gourmet* magazine. I increased the spinach; amped up the flavor by adding garlic and increasing the salt; swapped the milk for half-and-half; and reduced the baking temperature from 350°F to 325°F for a creamier texture."

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.onceuponachef.com/recipes/spinach-cheese-strata.html>

A *Washington Post* Bestseller: *Once Upon a Chef*, the Cookbook: 100 Tested, Perfected, and Family-Approved Recipes (Easy Healthy Cookbook, Family Cookbook, American Cookbook) Hardcover – April 24, 2018 by Jennifer Segal (Author), Alexandra Grablewski (Photographer).

Today, Jenn Segal cooks dinner for her family every night, and in her book, she shares 100 recipes that will up your kitchen game while surprising you with their ease. With the authority of a professional chef and the practicality of a busy working mom, Jenn teaches you to improve your cooking one recipe at a time, with valuable tips on topics such as how to season correctly with salt, how to balance flavors, and how to make the most of leftovers.

To purchase, go to: <https://www.onceuponachef.com/cookbooks>

There is hidden gluten in many foods; if you're following a gluten-free diet or cooking for someone with gluten allergies, always read the labels of your ingredients to verify that they are gluten-free. For Jenn's gluten-free adaptable recipes, go to: <https://www.onceuponachef.com/recipes/gluten-free>

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ARTS & CULTURE

Victoria
Harwood
Butler-Sloss

Writing Fiction Based on
Ancestors’ Stories

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / LOS ANGELES — Victoria Harwood Butler-Sloss is an Anglo-Armenian writer and actress. She was born in Devon, England in 1961 to an English father and Armenian mother. When she was 2, her family moved to Nicosia, Cyprus; then moved to London when she was 18. Here Victoria trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Harwood started her career as a dancer, then in television and stage, working in theaters in London and Europe. After getting married she moved to Hollywood with her husband, producer William Butler-Sloss (1967-2018) and two sons, Arum and Roibhilin, where she continues to work in voice overs. Victoria acted in more than 20 TV series and films. In 2014, her diary about the 1974 war in Cyprus was exhibited and turned into a documentary called *Cyprus Summer 1974*. Harwood’s first book, published in 2018, is the first part of a trilogy beginning in the Ottoman Empire in 1895 and following four generations of women until the present day. Residing in Los Angeles, Victoria Harwood Butler-Sloss divides her time between the US and Cyprus.

Dear Victoria, we briefly met in London in 2005 during the Armenian Film Week. I was glad to meet a British actress with Armenian origin, who is interested in her mother’s culture. Do you speak any Armenian?

Yes, I do! Armenian was my first language along with English as I was living in Cyprus with my mother’s extended family when I was a baby. And then, something happened. I have actually written a story about it which will appear in a later book in the series. We moved to England when I was two and my mother continued to speak to us in Armenian at home until my brother started primary school. One day she was called in to school for a meeting and told that the teachers thought he was confused as he would skip between the two languages. They told her to stick to English at home. I remember the day she told me we would have to only speak English as my brother was confused. I asked what she meant and she explained. As a 4-year-old it was clear to me: “He knows what he’s saying, so maybe it’s the teachers that are confused not him?” Anyway, she dropped speaking to us in her mother tongue and consequently my Armenian is basic. I then went to classes in London with my father when I was in my 20s and we both learnt how to read and write as well.

Where are your mother Takouhi Avakian’s roots from?

My great-great-grandmother Mertha Djindjil was an Assyrian from Mosul. She married Thooma Khouri in Ourfa and had six children — my great-grandmother Khatoun was one. She married Iskender Agha Boghos and had four children, my grandmother Alice being the eldest. In 1922 the family were exiled to Aleppo, and my grandmother Alice met my grandfather Haygaz Avakian and married him. He came from Kharpert. My mother Takouhi and her sister Verginia were both born in Aleppo and the family moved to Cyprus in around 1938, where my mother later met



my father... and then I was born! All of the people above are in the trilogy, so hopefully you will get to read all of their stories!

What do you have from your mother’s Armenian heritage?

From the age of about 8 I was brought up in my extended family — great-grandmother, grandparents, aunt, uncle, cousin. We lived together in two houses on one plot of land with cats, birds, dogs. A strong sense of family has been my backbone and to this day I feel privileged to have been brought up in such a loving, if sometimes chaotic home. I eat dinner with my sons every night. Is that Armenian? To me it is. When people have lost so many family members due to circumstances beyond their control, family becomes everything.

In your theatric career there were some Armenian connections. In 1996 you acted in “The Sentence,” a play on Armenian subject by Tamara Hinchco and Christina Balit; later your directing debut was “Black Angel” about Arshile Gorky, starring Nouritza Matossian. Please tell us about this and other Armenian-related theater works if they are such.

I was involved in a performance of poetry reading of Armenian poems at the Hellenic Centre in London and afterwards was approached by Nouritza Matossian, who wrote *Black Angel*. She was about to go on a book tour to promote her book and asked if I would help her prepare. After reading the book I floated the idea of creating a one-woman show and telling the story from different female perspectives: the mother, the sister, the wife and the lover. Nouritza was completely on board and so we created the piece which was accompanied by slides and music. Although not a trained actress, Nouritza is a natural born storyteller and the show was a great success. She travelled the world with it to great acclaim and we remain good friends to this day.

Your novel, *The Seamstress of Ourfa*, was published five years ago. I assume it was inspired by your family.

I call the story “fictoir,” meaning a blend of fiction and memoir! The stories are all based on true events that were passed down through family stories. I fictionalized conversations and characters so as to tell the story in actual time, but essentially the book is about my family, beginning with my great-grandmother Khatoun’s story. She is the Seamstress of Ourfa.

What was the reception to your novel?

I have had wonderful feedback on the book. I have not had any negative responses which may be partly due to the way the story is told, very matter of fact, without animosity. My great-grandmother never bore any hatred, even though she lost ev-

erything when exiled. As far as translations, not yet. I am open to it and would welcome a translation into Armenian!

Please tell also about the award-winning short film, “A Flock of Birds,” based on the excerpt of your novel.

When I finished writing and sent *Seamstress of Ourfa* out to publishers I wanted to do something to distract me while waiting for a response. I decided to film my favorite chapter of the book, “A Flock of Birds.” To begin with I was just going to film something very interpretive and wanted to hire a cameraman and crew. It soon became clear that I didn’t have enough money to hire anyone! So, since I had access to a camera, I decided to film it myself. I literally googled how to use the camera (A Cannon D5) and switched it on. I was amazed at how beautiful everything looked through the lens. My family were visiting and along with some friends, I had them all play roles in the film. My mother, aunt, cousin and neighbors all play roles. The film won several awards and really opened up another avenue to me for storytelling. The chapter is told from the perspective of a dead woman, taking us through her last day on earth and the secret she held close all her life. It’s based on a story about my great-great-aunt Ferida.

You were the recipient of Creative Writing Grant of International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA) in 2022. What have you done during last year?

The last year has been about reawakening. My husband passed away two months before I published *Seamstress of Ourfa*. For a year I was busy promoting the book and then the pandemic happened and my two sons ended up back at home (my eldest was in college). My aunt also passed and I spent time looking after my mother who has Alzheimer’s. I found it hard to read a book and even harder to write — my creative energy was sapped. And then, last year I found the space to get back to editing the second book in the trilogy - tentatively called *Love in Aleppo*. I applied for a grant and was awarded the creative writing grant by the IALA and with that fire lit under me I am now in full swing and getting my final draft ready.

In 2019 you wrote you are going to travel to Armenia.

With the pandemic I didn’t go anywhere until last year when I finally visited family in London and Cyprus after three years. I’m ready to come anytime, now!

You are always welcome to your motherland!

Thank you! I would love to come!

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

MARCH 17 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Beshgeturian Center Social Committee present “Family Night,” with music by renowned violinist Merouzhn Margaryan. 7.30 p.m., TCA Beshgeturian Center, 1901 N. Allen Ave., Altadena. For reservations call 626-296-1806.

MASSACHUSETTS

FEBRUARY 25 — The 128th Anniversary of the Lowell Aharonian Gomideh of the ARF. The Armenian Church at High Pointe, 1280 Boston Rd, Haverhill. Dinner-program. Narrated slide presentation by Joe Dagdigian: “Unseen Armenia: A brief glimpse of People, Places, and Projects.” Keynote Speaker: Reverend Father Vart Gyozyan - “Current Life and Conditions in Armenia.” Donation: Adults- \$35 and Students: \$20. Reservations Required. For Tickets: Call or email Armen at 978-265-9479, armenjeknavorian@gmail.com or Ara 617-803-2612, ara.a.jeknavorian@gmail.com. Tables of 8 to 10 may be reserved in advance.

MARCH 6 — St. James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting, Father-Son Night. Monday, featuring Guest Speaker, Tony Massarotti, Author and former Sports writer for the Boston Globe and Boston Herald. Speaking about his book, This is Our City, How Boston Became the most Dominant Sports City in the World. Books will be available for sale and signing. Social Hour [mezza] 6.15 p.m., Dinner 7 p.m. Losh Kebab and Kheyra dinner. 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. New members welcome.

APRIL 16 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Sunday beginning at 7:30 a.m. Supported by the Park’s Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund. Rain date: April 23. For details, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

NEW JERSEY

MARCH 18 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York presents “Payts,” a new show from comedy great Vahe Berberian. Tickets \$75. Talia (917) 238-3970 or RSVPTaliab@gmail.com. Numbered seating and mezza and cash bar. Cocktails at 6.30 p.m., program to start at 7.30. St. Leon Church, Abajian Hall, 12-61 Saddle River Road, Fair Lawn.

MAY 13 — Save the Date! The Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group will mark its 25th anniversary with a gala. Details to follow.

RHODE ISLAND

MARCH 11 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church and Composers Union of Armenia Presents Armenian Music Concert in memory of composer Levon Chaushyan, Featuring Anahit Chaushyan, piano (UK), Knarik Nerkararyan, soprano, Levon Hovsepian, piano. Saturday, 7 p.m. Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence. Donation \$20. Refreshments after performance.



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EDITORIAL

New Threat to Armenia's Sovereignty, in Addition to Azerbaijan



By Edmond Y. Azadian

Until recently, Armenia faced a threat to its sovereignty from Azerbaijan. After the 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, President Ilham Aliyev demanded the opening of the "Zangezur Corridor," which effectively would bisect Armenia's territory, thereby compromising its sovereignty.

This was Aliyev's condition for signing a peace treaty after the disastrous 44-Day War.

As if that were not enough, Mr. Aliyev invented another plan to completely take over Armenia's territory, proclaiming it "Western Azerbaijan." Indeed, Mr. Aliyev, trying to rewrite history, concocted a theory that the current territory of Armenia had been part of "historic Azerbaijan," and that was enough reason for Baku to take over Armenia. It is trying actively to add to its landmass, also eying Iran's Azerbaijan province.

Since this threat was issued by none other than the head of a state, it constituted a declaration of war, which the international community chose to ignore, in the hopes of scoring some of Azerbaijan's hydrocarbons.

While Armenia was struggling to deal with this peril, all of a sudden, it found itself facing another threat to its sovereignty, this time around from a so-called strategic ally, Russia.

Russian foreign policy is failing to provide any help to its strategic ally and partner in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Instead, it has resorted to its ultimate weapon in its arsenal: the fear factor.

Similarly, the opposition in Armenia, having run out of any positive statements about Russia, has been using the fear factor to convince the populace and the government that Russia can use its awesome military power to punish Armenia, if the latter dares to veer away from its orbit.

That fear factor was brazenly manifested recently in a number of cases where Armenia's interests collided with those of Russia.

Since the 44-Day War, one thing has led to another to help worsen relations between Armenia and Russia.

When Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan refused to sign the concluding statement after a CSTO session in Yerevan in 2022, because it did not condemn Azerbaijan's actions, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, reacted angrily, justifying Azerbaijan's war against Armenia. Tensions further escalated when Armenia refused to host the CSTO war games in January. This time around, Moscow used a stick-and-carrot policy.

Prime Minister Pashinyan had used a statement Aliyev had made to explain this non-participation. Aliyev had accused Armenia of colluding with Russia to wage a war against Azerbaijan. Pashinyan's excuse had a cynical tenor but was a valid one. He stated that membership in CSTO not only does not help defend Armenia, but that it also makes Armenia a target for aggression, ergo Aliyev's accusation.

At first, the CSTO Chief of Staff Col. Gen. Anatoly Sidorov announced that the CSTO will protect its member states, if necessary. In reality, it has failed to protect them when it was really necessary. Sidorov's statement was followed by a visit by Igor Khovaev, the Russian co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. Khovaev conveyed the Kremlin's warning to Yerevan that "Moscow is seriously angry with Pashinyan's statement that the Russian Federation's military presence in Armenia

not only does not guarantee but to the contrary, creates threats to Armenia's security."

Russia saw that as Armenia crossing a red line.

But what broke the camel's back was Armenia's decision to welcome, encourage and station European Union monitors on its borders.

Ever since the last war, Azerbaijan has encroached steadily into Armenian territory and occupied strategic points. Last September, that intrusion almost proved to be the beginning of a new all-out war against Armenia, as more than 200 Armenian soldiers were killed, with almost as many dead from the Azerbaijani side. Only a stern warning from Washington stopped Aliyev part-way into his campaign.

To discourage such incursions, the EU decided to station 40 civilian monitors on Armenia's border with Azerbaijan. That certainly could not stop a new aggression, but it helped to discourage Aliyev from engaging in another adventure. Based on that experience, Armenia invited the EU monitors to be stationed over longer-term periods and in larger numbers. That is how a decision was made to station 100 monitors, along with 7 gendarmes from France and 15 retired policemen from Germany.

Mr. Lavrov said that the CSTO was now ready to send monitors but that Armenia had opted for the EU presence on its territory. That, of course, did not sit well with Moscow.

The European Parliament, along with sending monitors, urged Azerbaijan to "immediately reopen" the Lachin corridor. Its resolution also condemned the "inaction" of Russian peacekeeping forces in Karabakh and called for their "replacement with OSCE international peacekeepers."

Moscow and Baku proffered the contention that Iran will object to the presence of European monitors close to its borders and Iran is rightfully suspicious of any Western presence close to its borders. In this world

of espionage and counterespionage, anything can happen. For example, as Israeli agents use Azerbaijan to surveil Iran's territory, similar actions may take place with the European peacekeepers. Despite Iran's principled position on this issue, Tehran did not object to the monitors. That was perhaps a function of the recent Baku-Tehran standoff.

The first objection came from Azerbaijan, as if Baku could control Armenia's right to host any group that it wished on its sovereign territory. But Moscow's reaction was even more stern. Vyacheslav Volodin, chairman of the State Duma, invited his Azerbaijani counterpart, Sahiba Gafarova, on February 13, to Moscow, to sign an interparliamentary agreement between the two bodies.

Mr. Volodin, who is a close friend and associate of President Vladimir Putin, used the occasion to blast Armenia. He warned that the European bodies should not be involved in resolving Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Sending a message to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), he claimed that they can fan the flames of regional tensions. Armenia and Azerbaijan should stick to their agreements brokered by Russia during and after the 2020 war, he said.

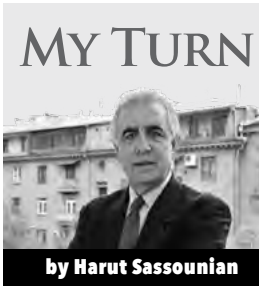
"And those who make statements in the direction of European institutions, may simply lose the country," he added.

This was a direct existential threat to Armenia. Maria Zakharova, spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry, has been wincing during her sporadic press statements over the European presence in Armenia and warning that the West has been trying to push Russia out of the Caucasus.

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



Earthquake Damage and Corruption Are Intertwined in Erdogan’s Turkey

With each passing day, the number of victims of the earthquake in Turkey is increasing. Our heart goes out to the nearly 50,000 dead and close to 200,000 injured as of now. The ancient city of Antioch (Antakya), with a population of 250,000, has been mostly reduced to rubble.

As I wrote last week, Armenians should distinguish between the Turkish government that committed the Genocide and the Turkish people who played no role in this mass crime. Not one of today’s Turks was alive in 1915.

In recent days, hundreds of articles have been written by journalists from around the world pointing out that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s corrupt practices increased the toll of the disaster manifold. Erdogan who came to power in 2003 as a devout Muslim has turned into a corrupt dictator. As it is said, “power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Many Turks blame Erdogan personally for the large number of deaths and the collapse or damage of over 100,000 buildings which were poorly-constructed by the President’s cronies. At least one million people have been left homeless in Turkey.

Let’s start with the earthquake tax that the Turkish government established after the earthquake in 1999 which had caused the deaths of 17,000 people in Turkey. In 2021, by a presidential decree, the tax was increased from 7.5 percent to 10 percent on all private communication. The billions of dollars raised through this tax were used to fund construction, transport and agricultural projects, instead of the intended purposes of reinforcing buildings and disaster prevention.

Reuters reported the anguished plea from a mother whose two sons were trapped alive for two days under the rubble in Antakya, begging for a crane to rescue her children. “Many in Turkey say more people could have survived the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the south of the country and neighboring Syria if the emergency response had been faster and better organized.” In the absence of an organized rescue effort, people were forced to dig through the rubble with their bare hands to save their family members.

Turkish soldiers either did not show up to help in the rescue or were too slow to arrive, awaiting orders from Erdogan’s civilian officials. Interestingly, Erdogan had “risen to prominence more than two decades ago partly due to his cri-

tique of the response to a major 1999 earthquake,” Reuters reported. Instead, “he hollowed out state institutions, placed loyalists in key positions, wiped out most civil society organizations, and enriched his cronies to create a small circle of loyalists around him,” according to Foreignpolicy.com. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, leader of the main opposition party, said that even more damaging than the magnitude of last week’s quake was the “lack of coordination, lack of planning and incompetence.”

Making the disaster worse, “in 2019, President Erdogan of Turkey praised legislation that his political party had pushed through allowing property owners to have construction violations forgiven without bringing their buildings up to code,” according to The New York Times. Up to 75,000 buildings were given such amnesties in the earthquake zone alone. Ironically, just a few days before the earthquake, the government was about to issue another amnesty for construction violators. Now the Turkish government is arresting building contractors with ties to collapsed buildings. But the true culprits are the government officials who approved these shoddy buildings. Many of the owners of these buildings have close ties to President Erdogan or his ruling political party.

Rather than taking urgent measures to rescue the trapped citizens, Erdogan lashed back at his critics. One such critic, “a French journalist with long experience in Turkey, Guillaume Perrier, was detained at the Istanbul airport and deported back to France, with a five-year ban on his reentry into the country,” the Middle East Institute reported. Furthermore, the government temporarily closed down the social media in the midst of the earthquake to block criticism of the Turkish government’s incompetence.

The Jerusalem Post published an article on Feb. 20, titled: “After the earthquake, Turkey’s Erdogan hunts for scapegoats.” The article stated that: “Erdogan’s house of cards has collapsed with the earthquake. There is already a rush to find scapegoats and as well as the arrests of looters.... Faced with the coming elections, what Erdogan will find equally hard to explain is a video circulating on social media, where he boasted he had approved a construction amnesty for buildings in the earthquake epicenter of Kahramanmarash, in 2019. This meant they were absolved from adhering to building and earthquake regulations. In the 10 earthquake provinces, almost 295,000 buildings were included.”

One of the unexpected side effects of the disastrous earthquake is that Turkey will be preoccupied for several years with the reconstruction of over hundred thousand collapsed buildings. Turkey’s attention will be sidetracked from attacking Syria, Iraq, Cyprus, Greece, Armenia and Libya. These countries will breathe a sigh of relief for a while!

New Threat to Armenia’s Sovereignty

from previous page

Moscow has been shepherding Armenia into the trilateral format in order to corner Armenia and impose the bilateral will, as Russian and Azerbaijani interests coincide. But all those trilateral meetings have proven to be nothing but spinning one’s wheels.

Every time negotiations shift to Brussels, envious Russia sets up a meeting in the same format in Moscow. As a result of the recent developments, Moscow once again has invited the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan for another round of empty talks.

Moscow seems to have made a U-turn on the issue of the “Zangezur Corridor,” in order to align with Azerbaijan’s position. As one can deduct from Mr. Volodin’s statement, Armenia’s sovereignty is the last thing that Moscow is worried about.

Russia nurtures predatory ambitions in the Caucasus and believes that Armenia has been undermining its hegemony in the region by courting Europe. Along that line, French President Emmanuel Macron’s statement at the Munich Security Conference has worried Moscow even more. The French president began his speech with the following statement: “How can we believe that the challenges of the Caucasus can be overcome by the neo-colonial Russia that I described a moment ago? I am saying this in the presence of my friend, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, with whom we will continue to stand and act.”

There is an element of truth in Russian objections. The West certainly is not involved in the Caucasus out of altruism and there is an intent there to weaken Russia’s position in the region. Russia has done everything to force Armenia to seek its security in the West. The fear factor in the Russian threat is not mere empty talk. Russia can act and harm Armenia. Therefore it behooves Armenia to calibrate its moves in seeking security, up to the degree of tension that it can endure with Moscow. This is a delicate balancing act.

One must remember that when Georgia cast its lot with the West, Russia attacked it in 2008 and amputated some territory, while the West’s reaction did not extend beyond verbal warnings.

With the Ukraine war, Russia has become the wounded bear. Armenia needs its security to maintain its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Therefore, in its balancing act, it also needs the most flexible and thoughtful diplomacy.

What Next for Karabakh after the Munich Security Conference

By Benjamin Poghosyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On February 18, after the three-month break, Armenia and Azerbaijan resumed negotiations at the Munich Security Conference. The meeting was initiated by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who took part along with Karen Donfried, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Louis Bono, the recently appointed new US Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations. This was the first meeting between Armenian and Azerbaijani officials after the November 7, 2022, discussions between Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in Washington, which again were organized by Blinken.

After the November 7 meeting, Azerbaijan canceled the summit in Brussels, rejecting the Armenian offer to include French President Emmanuel Macron in the Brussels format and imposed a blockade on the self-proclaimed Nagorno Karabakh Republic, while the Armenian foreign minister did not take part in the scheduled meeting with his Russian and Azerbaijani counterparts in Moscow, citing the ongoing Lachin corridor blockade. After momentum in the negotiation process, which resulted in the endorsement of the Prague statement on October 6, 2022, the negotiation process entered an impasse. Meanwhile, despite the absence of direct talks, Armenia and Azerbaijan continued work on the draft of the peace agenda. Azerbaijan sent Armenia its suggestions for a peace agreement in early February. Armenia sent its version of the complete peace agreement in mid-February to Azerbaijan and three co-chair countries of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

The negotiating parties did not disclose the initial text of the agreement as well as Armenian and Azerbaijani suggestions. The secretary of the security council of Armenia only mentioned that Armenia, in its last set of suggestions, offered to include the issue of Nagorno Karabakh in the peace agreement and again reiterated that an international mechanism should be established for facilitating Azerbaijan – Nagorno Karabakh negotiations over the rights of Armenians. Azerbaijan’s foreign ministry immediately issued a statement, claiming that attempts to include a clause about Nagorno Karabakh in the agreement were utterly groundless and would be regarded as territorial claims against Azerbaijan. The foreign ministry emphasized that Azerbaijan would never agree on any international mechanism. The discussions between Azerbaijan and Karabakh Armenians were an internal issue of Azerbaijan, and Baku would never tolerate any external involvement.

Despite these contradictory statements, the US Secretary of State argued at the beginning of the trilateral meeting that Armenia and Azerbaijan had a genuinely historic opportunity to secure an enduring peace after more than 30 years of conflict.

However, the statements of President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan after the trilateral meeting and during the panel discussion on South Caucasus security, which took place after the Pashinyan–Aliyev–Blinken meeting, proved that Azerbaijan continued to push forward the same ideas without even minor changes. Aliyev claimed that there could be no mention of Nagorno Karabakh in the peace treaty and reiterated that an Azerbaijani checkpoint should be established on Lachin road.

During the panel discussion, the Azerbaijani President pushed forward the usual Azerbaijani claims that there was no Nagorno Karabakh anymore, only the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. He also stressed that Armenians are citizens of Azerbaijan, and there would be no special status or mechanism for protecting their rights and even went so far as to reject the fact of the blockade of the Lachin corridor. President Aliyev also reiterated his position that Azerbaijan forced Armenia to sign a capitulation on November 10, 2020 and that the Armenian people accepted the terms of that capitulation by voting for see SECURITY, page 20

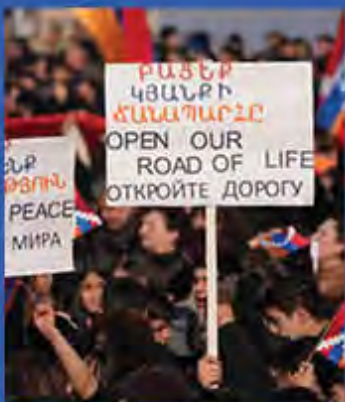
COMMENTARY



Tekeyan Cultural Association Launches

ARTSAKH CRISIS
AID CAMPAIGN

The Armenians of Artsakh have been suffering direly due to the Azerbaijani blockade since December 12 and have asked for our aid, but we hesitate.



How Much
Longer Must
the People
of Artsakh
Suffer?

Due to the blockade, sending supplies is physically impossible, but there still is a way to help. The Tekeyan Cultural Association of USA and Canada has reached an agreement with the Artsakh government to send money directly into the bank accounts of families with children to allow them to purchase much needed life-sustaining supplies.

TCA immediately sent an initial \$10,300. Another \$10,090 was raised from donations and sent at the start of February. So far, 212 families have been helped through TCA, and its fundraising campaign continues.

LIVES, AND THE VERY FUTURE OF
ARTSAKH AND ARMENIA ARE AT STAKE

Please donate as much as you can online at <https://givebutter.com/YCrT8P> or mail checks made out to the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Memo: Artsakh Aid, to Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472.

For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

What Next for Karabakh

SECURITY, from page 19
Nikol Pashinyan during the June 2021 early parliamentary elections in Armenia. Meanwhile, he again demanded to remove from Nagorno Karabakh State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, arguing that Azerbaijan was ready to speak to the representatives of its Armenian minority, but only if Vardanyan left the region.

Given the statements of the Azerbaijani president, it is clear that Azerbaijan continues the same strategy that it pursued immediately after the end of the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war. According to this vision, Armenia was destroyed during the war, capitulated, and should confirm that capitulation by signing a legally binding document, which Azerbaijan called a “peace treaty.” Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh should accept Azerbaijani citizenship without special status and international guarantees or leave the territory. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan rejects the fact that its troops occupied up to 200 square km. of Armenian territory, which means that Azerbaijani troops will not leave the strategic heights which they invaded in the Vayots Dzor and Syunik regions of Armenia, creating a significant threat to the connection between Yerevan and southern regions of Armenia.

In the current situation, any breakthrough in peace negotiations is possible only if Armenia agrees to accept Azerbaijani demands, which will inevitably sooner or later lead to the exodus of the absolute majority of Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh while creating additional security risks for Armenia itself. In the current environment, instead of convincing Armenia to accept Azerbaijani maximalist demands, the international community should focus on preventing the outbreak of large-scale hostilities. In this context, the emphasis should be done on confidence-building measures, including the creation of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, similar to the mechanism created after the 2008 Russia – Georgia war. Meanwhile, Arme-

nia should consider its options if Azerbaijan demands the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Nagorno Karabakh after November 2025, simultaneously rejecting the deployment of an international peacekeeping mission.

(Benyamin Poghosyan is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, and Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Policy Research Institute [APRI] of Armenia.)

California Doctors Offer
\$1 Million Scholarship to
Armenian Students

BURBANK — Dr. Neshan and Dr. James Tabibian have established a \$1 million Tabibian Family Scholarship Endowment Fund for students enrolled in IT courses that will be administered in partnership with the Knights of Vartan.

Effective spring 2023, and every year thereafter, the names of the applicants will be provided by the Science and Technology faculties at Yerevan State and the National Polytechnic Universities of Armenia. The scholarships will be based on academic excellence, financial need, as well as a commitment to stay in Armenia at least five years after graduation. The final selections will be made by the Knights of Vartan committee after reviewing the applications.

The goal of the Endowment Fund is to create future generations of individuals, who are highly trained and skilled in IT, who will enhance Armenian technological capabilities for a prosperous and stable Armenia.

The scholarship application deadline is March 24. Applications can be made through the universities.



Institute for the Study
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THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Grace and Paul Shahinian
Armenian Christian Art and Culture Lecture Series

ARMENIA
AND THE WORLD
in art and culture

CHRISTINA MARANCI, PH.D.
MASHTOTS PROFESSOR OF ARMENIAN STUDIES
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Date: March 23, 2023

Time: 5 p.m.

Location: Heritage Hall

Reception to follow in Heritage Hall

The Catholic University of America
Father O’Connell Hall
620 Michigan Ave., N.E.
Washington, DC 20064

To request accommodations for individuals with disabilities, please call 202-319-5683.

