

Pope Francis Condemns Azerbaijani Blockade of Artsakh

VATICAN CITY (Azatutyun) — Pope Francis has expressed serious concern about the continuing Azerbaijani blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh’s land link with Armenia that has led to a serious humanitarian crisis in the Armenian-populated region.

“I renew my appeal regarding the serious humanitarian situation in the Lachin Corridor, in the South Caucasus,”



Francis told the Roman Catholic Church faithful who gathered at the Vatican’s St. Peter’s Square on Sunday, January 29.

“I am close to all those who, in the dead of winter, are forced to cope with these inhumane conditions,” he said in a clear reference to Karabakh’s population struggling with shortages of food, energy and medicine for about two months. “Every effort must be made on the international level to find peaceful solutions for the good of the people.”

Unlike the United States, the European Union and Russia, the pontiff stopped short of explicitly urging Azerbaijan to reopen the corridor blocked by Azerbaijani government-backed protesters on December 12.

The US State Department insisted last week on a “full restoration of free movement” through the sole road connecting Karabakh to Armenia and the outside world.

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State Minister Ruben Vardanyan Renews Call to Support Artsakh

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Until recently, Ruben Vardanyan was primarily known to Armenians as a billionaire philanthropist who, having made his money in Russia, was involved in a variety of ambitious projects in Armenia. This all changed when he accepted the position of state minister, equivalent of prime minister, in the Republic of Artsakh around three months ago. Now he has become the loudest voice of the Karabakh Armenians. Vardanyan gave an interview to the *Mirror-Spectator* on Saturday, January 28 on the Artsakh blockade and his new role.

Not a Stranger

Vardanyan’s ties to Artsakh go back several generations, as his grandmother’s mother’s side came from the Hadrut region of Artsakh and emigrated to Tbilisi, Georgia. Vardanyan related, “I went to Artsakh for the first time in 2002. I loved it



from the first day.” Since then, he spent a lot of time in Artsakh, visiting somewhere between 8 and 15 times a year, and carrying out various philanthropic projects.

When the 2016 four-day war took place, he said he rushed there immediately from Argentina, while he spent more time in 2020 there due to the 44-day war. This connection evidently was passed down to his children. His son volunteered to serve in the army in Artsakh in 2015-16 when

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Armenian Caucus Members Working On Resolution to Punish Azerbaijan For Blockade

WASHINGTON — Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), along with Armenian Caucus leaders David Valadao (R-CA), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Brad Sherman (D-CA), are spearheading a resolution condemning Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and ongoing human rights violations, calling on President Biden to immediately suspend U.S. military and security assistance to Azerbaijan and to fully enforce Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and provide U.S. humanitarian and development assistance to the Armenian victims in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The bipartisan resolution, which began circulating on January 26 for original co-sponsors, states that “Azerbaijani forces [are] in violation of international obligations to resolve disputes with Armenia and Artsakh peacefully,” following their large-scale, unprovoked invasion of Artsakh in 2020.

The resolution states that “President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan has used vitriolic rhetoric to call for the ethnic cleansing of indigenous Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and his regime has consistently violated important international humanitarian legal agreements during the 2020 war and up until the present date, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Charter, and the Geneva Convention.”

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Extremists Attack Armenians and Patriarchate in Jerusalem Quarter

JERUSALEM (Combined Sources) — Late in the evening of January 28, two Israeli extremists tried to obstruct the traffic on the Armenian Patriarchate street, then hit the car of Armenian young people returning home from work, Chancellor at the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Fr. Aghan Gogchian reported.

The Armenians got out of the car and politely spoke and asked why they were being attacked, adding they live in the neighborhood and are returning home from work.

One of the assailants allegedly started shouting, “You don’t have a neighborhood here. This is our country, get out of our country.” (See related editorial on Page 17.)

And when the Armenian young man said: “This is also our country, our home is here, we were born here, we have nowhere else to go,” the other sprayed an irritant into the eyes of the Armenian and the two

of them ran away.

After returning from the hospital, the Armenians filed a complaint with the police. The police questioned the two extremists and arrested them. One of them was released at dawn, but the one who used tear gas is still under arrest.

An hour after this incident, another group of Israeli extremists, passing along the street of the Patriarchate, tried to climb the roof of the Patriarchate and remove the flags of the Patriarchate and the Republic of Armenia.

Armenian young people standing in front of the monastery noticed the attempt, approached and prohibited the actions of the extremists, the latter fled and soon returned in a smaller group, this time with masks on.

The masked extremists tried to provoke a fight again, cursed the Armenians and

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Attacks on the residents of the Armenian Quarter by Israeli settlers

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Officer Charged with Treason

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The National Security Service (NSS) of Armenia has uncovered another case of high treason involving an army officer, it announced on January 31.

In a statement, the law enforcement agency said the officer holding the rank of captain was recruited by foreign intelligence services in early 2021 and passed military secrets to them via mobile apps.

He continued cooperation with the foreign agents after being moved to another military unit and appointed head of a service.

The officer leaked classified information about weapons and ammunition in his unit, including equipment purchased from India, as well as the location of combat posts. In return, he received money twice and a mobile phone from foreign intelligence services, the NSS said.

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

A preliminary probe is underway.

ICRC Helps 19 Karabakh Residents Reunite with Families in Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Nineteen people have been transferred from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia with the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to be reunited with their families.

Since December 12, the sole road connecting Karabakh to Armenia has been blocked by self-described Azerbaijani environmentalists.

Egypt Offers to Mediate Between Armenia, Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi expressed readiness to mediate between Armenia and Azerbaijan during an official visit to Yerevan on Sunday, January 29.

Al-Sisi, who visited Azerbaijan on Saturday, made the offer after talks with his Armenian counterpart, Vahagn Khachaturian.

Khachaturian noted Egypt's "extensive experience in mediation missions" and peaceful co-existence with neighbors which he said is needed by Armenia.

"During our conversation, I noticed that we have a neutral position regarding the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict," al-Sisi told a joint news briefing after the meeting. "In this sense, if you accept our mediation and would like us to mediate or assume such a role, then we are ready."

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan did not request such mediation in his comments made during separate talks with al-Sisi held later in the day. He instead brought up Azerbaijan's ongoing blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh's land link with Armenia and said Egypt is his country's "reliable partner."

Al-Sisi similarly spoke of "mutual trust" between the two nations and "many opportunities" for deepening relations.

Deputy Commander of Military Unit Arrested In Connection with Death of 15 servicemen

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Gor Aghabekyan, the deputy commander of the military unit, was detained for two months in the case of the death of 15 servicemen in the military shelter, the General Prosecutor's Office reports.

On January 25, the prosecutor's office informed that a criminal prosecution was initiated against the military officer for official

platoon of the military unit with fire protection means, as a result, carelessly caused the death of people.

He was arrested last week, and a petition was submitted to the court regarding the arrest.

On January 19, as a result of the fire in the shelter of the military unit located in Azat village of Gegharkunik region, 3 more servicemen were taken to the hospital with respiratory tract burns.

The main hypothesis under investigation is that the fire broke out when the captain of the military unit tried to heat the fire of the stove with gasoline. Meanwhile, hours after the incident, the platoon commander insisted that there was no gasoline in the area. The law enforcement officers also interrogated the platoon commander, details are not disclosed.

The head of the Investigative Committee, Argishti Kyaramyan, announced that "the hypothesis put forward from the beginning is substantiated." On the day of the fire, it was Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan who put forward the hypothesis of lighting the stove with gasoline.

According to Armenpress, a second arrest has also been made.

The General Prosecution said the major, M.S., is facing criminal charges instituted under clause 3 of Article 550 of the Criminal Code (military official negligence which recklessly caused death).

The major was in charge of enforcing fire safety rules in the barracks, namely providing fire extinguishers in all barracks. He failed to fulfill his duties and negligently caused multiple deaths, prosecutors said.



The 15 soldiers who died in a fire in their barracks

negligence, which caused the death of a person through carelessness.

According to the prosecutor's office, Aghabekyan, being responsible for the organization of fire protection in the military unit, did not fulfill his duties, did not provide the engineer sniper

Armenia Slides in Global Corruption Rankings

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Transparency International has downgraded Armenia's position in its annual survey of corruption perceptions around the world, finding "worrying signs" in the country.

Together with Romania, Armenia ranks 63rd out of 180 countries and territories evaluated in the Berlin-based watchdog's 2022 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) presented on Tuesday, January 31. It occupied 58th place in the CPI released a year ago.

Armenia's CPI "score," measured on a 100-point scale, likewise fell from 49 to 46 over the past year. The Armenian government had pledged to have it gradually raised to 55 in its three-year strategy of combating corruption approved in 2019.

"After years of improvement, this CPI brings worrying signs as Armenia drops three points," Transparency International said in its latest report. "While not yet statistically significant, this downturn reflects the breakdown in maintaining checks and balances, ensuring integrity in law enforcement, securing judicial independence and protecting civic space."

Varuzhan Hochtanyan, the head of the watchdog's Armenian branch, said Prime

Minister Nikol Pashinyan's administration has failed to properly implement its anti-corruption strategy. He warned of a further worsening of Armenia's position in the global corruption rankings.

Hochtanyan pointed to "selective" enforcement of Armenian laws and regulations, controversial appointments of senior officials as well as growing questions about integrity in public procurement.

Pashinyan has claimed to have eliminated "systemic corruption" since coming to power in 2018. Law-enforcement authorities have launched dozens of high-profile corruption investigations during his rule. They have mostly targeted former top government officials.

Critics say that Pashinyan uses corruption inquiries to crack down on his political opponents. They also claim that some members of his entourage are busy enriching themselves or their cronies, notably by helping companies linked to them win government contracts.

Alen Simonyan, the Armenian parliament speaker and a leading member of Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, is a case in point. A construction company managed by his brother won last year

at least nine government tenders for the construction of rural roads.

One of those contracts was worth about 3 billion drams (\$7.5 million). A government agency overseeing road construction said the company called Euroasphalt bid just 8,300 drams (\$21) less than its closest competitor. The tiny margin of its victory in the tender raised suspicions that Euroasphalt had illegally received insider information about the other bids.

The Armenian government has also signed many lucrative deals with companies linked to other senior officials, including a deputy chief of Pashinyan's staff.

Pashinyan was asked about the apparent enrichment of the extended families of Simonyan and his other political allies during a recent news conference. He insisted that it does not testify to government corruption.

Armenian law allows the government not to put contracts for the delivery of goods or services out to competitive tender in some cases. The number of such government decisions has reportedly increased in recent years, prompting concerns from opposition figures and civil society activists.



ARMENIA

AGBU's Discover Armenia Is Relunched

By **Cristopher Patvakanian**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — For many young Armenian diasporans, outside of visiting Armenia with family members, very rarely do they have an opportunity to become immersed with the country and engage with local communities there. However, the AGBU's Discover Armenia Program (DAP) provides a unique experience for diasporans aged 15-18 to visit Armenia, volunteer, meet local youth and adults, and also bond with other likeminded diasporans. After a two-year gap due to the pandemic, AGBU relaunched their program in 2022 and had 30 participants from over 8 different countries participating in a variety of humanitarian work activities.

The program was founded and run by Hermine Duzian of AGBU France for the past 20 years, and consistently received much interest from young diasporans. "Young people love community work..[participants] have asked to have more time to do

person in Armenia. "During the Artsakh war in 2020, I had been here [in Los Angeles] protesting and helping with fundraising, but when I saw the opportunity to go in person to help, I wanted to take it". In his view, actually being in Armenia, connecting with the people, and doing something himself was a very rare and rewarding opportunity. For Hayk, the highlight of his experience was volunteering with children who had fled from Artsakh after the war. "It really caught me off guard, I wasn't expecting that they would like us so much," he reflected. "They recognized that we came for them, that we knew about them, they're not forgotten and that we want to help them." Beyond volunteering, he and the other volunteers had the ability to meet with one another, creating cross national connections.

Duzian fondly describes the joy in seeing generations of young adults not only participating, but networking and keeping those ties after their time volunteering. And that is a crucial component of the program, for youth to make connections with one another and local Armenians. Though other initiatives provide similar

opportunities for diasporans to be in Armenia, DAP distinguishes itself on staying away from touristic activities and provides more substance to visiting the country. "It's a different way to see Armenia and it's a bonding experience," Duzian emphasized. In some cases even, the Discover Armenia Program has turned out to be the original meeting place of couples who later on got married.

After participating, volunteers take on several different paths, and oftentimes their younger siblings and friends follow in their footsteps. Many express their desire to return and invest in Armenia again as volunteers, partaking in more programs such as AGBU's Armenians Come Together (ACT) program, the AGBU's Global Leadership Program (GLP), and eventually Birthright Armenia once they become eligible. Participants upon returning home are often

active members of AGBU chapters in their own countries, but carry with them a renewed energy and passion toward Armenia and the global Armenian community. In Hayk's words, "It was an experience I can never forget and the change I was able to make is something I will always remember. I definitely want to go back in the future."

This upcoming summer the AGBU Discover Armenia Program will be celebrating its 20th anniversary, and for young adults interested in learning more and applying the details are on the AGBU's website at <https://agbu.org/discover-armenia>.



Hayk Achemian, left, with another AGBU Discover Armenia Program participant helping

things in the community. In the youth there is happiness, they feel the importance of helping," Duzian remarked. This year's participants had several projects, some which included working in Dilijan's national parks to set up infrastructure, helping families in Artashavan to build homes, and spending time with children and families from Artsakh.

One such participant this year was 17-year-old Hayk Achemian, currently a senior at Providence High School in Los Angeles. His decision to apply for the program was motivated by several reasons, but primarily the desire to make more real change in



The 2022 AGBU Discover Armenia Program's cohort on site at Artashavan where they were building homes. The 4th from the top left is Hayk Achemian and 5th from the top left is Hermine Duzian, Director of Summer Youth Programs in Armenia and France.

Another Diaspora Activist Denied Entry to Armenia

By **Robert Zargarian**

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia's government has banned yet another Diaspora-based activist of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun/ARF) from entering the country, in a move strongly condemned by the opposition party.

Njtch Karakavorian, the head of the youth wing of ARF's branch in France, was due to attend an upcoming conference of the pan-Armenian party's young activists that will take place in Syunik province. He said he learned on Sunday, January 29, that he will be denied entry to Armenia.

"They are saying that I'm an undesirable person for Armenia," Karakavorian told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on January 30. He said the authorities in Yerevan gave no concrete reason for the travel ban.

Armenia's National Security Service (NSS), which issues such bans, refused to clarify why it declared Karakavorian persona non grata. It said that only the French-Armenian activist can receive a formal explanation if he requests one in writing.

Karakavorian, who repeatedly visited Armenia last year, is the fourth ARF activist known to have been barred from visiting his ancestral homeland. The three others received such bans last summer. They included Mourad Papazian, one of the leaders of France's influential Armenian community.

The Armenian government said that Papazian was deported upon his arrival at Yerevan's Zvartnots airport in July 2022 because of organizing an angry demonstration against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's June 2021 visit to France. It said the protesters threw "various objects" at Pashinyan's motorcade when it drove through Paris. Papazian denied any involvement in that protest.

The ARF in Armenia was at the forefront of regular rallies launched in Yerevan last spring by the country's main opposition groups trying to topple Pashinyan.

The party has strongly condemned the travel ban imposed on its European activists.

Humanitarian Aid for Artsakh Stuck in Goris, Negotiations with Russian Peacekeepers Continue

STEPANAKERT (NKR Info Center) — In response to media inquiries, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's Information Center on January 27 informed via its Facebook page that 100 tons of food donated by the "Hayastan" All-Armenian Fund for the people of Artsakh to alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by Azerbaijan's closure of the only road connecting Artsakh with the outside world, as well as more than 250 tons of humanitarian aid donated by a number of Armenian and foreign charitable organizations, and New Year's gifts prepared for the children of Artsakh, still remain in Goris and cannot be delivered to Artsakh due to the road closure.

We also inform that negotiations are underway with the command of the Russian peacekeeping forces to organize, in the current crisis situation, the transportation of the humanitarian cargo to the Republic of Artsakh. If the humanitarian aid reaches Artsakh, it will be stored at the Ministry of Social Development and Migration of Artsakh and will be distributed free of charge to socially vulnerable groups according to the ministry's lists.



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he had a choice between different options, while his older daughter conducted some volunteer work there.

Last year, his youngest son visited him in November and then went away to school, planning to return to Artsakh for the holidays. The blockade prevented that, and Vardanyan said that for the first time, he had to pass the holidays alone without his family.

Philanthropy in Artsakh and Armenia

The 54-year-old, born in Yerevan, moved to Moscow for university studies. He cofounded Troika Dialog there in 1991, turning it into one of Russia's first and largest investment banks, until it was sold in 2011 to Sberbank for one billion dollars. He served as co-head of Sberbank CIB until 2015, founded several other companies in the same decade and served on many other corporate boards.

Vardanyan said, "First of all people need to realize that together with my wife, we made a decision in 2008 that we will spend most of our wealth in philanthropy and social impact." He said they told their children from a young age that they will get a certain minimum, less than 10 percent of their total wealth.

Vardanyan cofounded the Moscow Skolkovo School of Management and served on boards of various cultural and educational institutions in Russia and elsewhere. He set up an "ecosystem" of philanthropic, educational and entrepreneurial projects focused largely on Armenia, often with his longtime friend and partner Noubar Afeyan, including the IdeA Foundation (Initiatives for the Development of Armenia), Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, United World Colleges Dilijan College, Revival of Tatev Project, Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST), and the Future Armenian public initiative. The latter included a pilot project begun in 2022 concerning Artsakh.

Vardanyan said that prior to the blockade he had already spent hundreds of millions of dollars on projects in Armenia and Artsakh and that there were plans for many new projects with other donors. He was going to try to use his own money with a multiplier effect to accelerate these projects. Vardanyan said he spent over \$400 million in philanthropy in total, including projects in Armenia and Artsakh, but he said he was prouder of raising one billion dollars for such purposes.

For Artsakh, he said, "I not only planned to spend my own money but also other people's resources. The question of the blockade changed the issue, but of course we are still planning to help Artsakh as much as we can, and we are doing so now. We are helping a lot."

The Job

Vardanyan came to Artsakh last August 31 and met the president, Arayik Harutyunyan. He said, "He was very emotional and immediately invited me to become some type of government official." Vardanyan said that he needed some time to think, as he never thought in his life that he would become a government official. He then traveled around Artsakh to try to understand the situation better and met with many people.

Vardanyan explained that "he offered me the formal state minister position. I am trying at this point to help him manage the situation with other people. I received the formal right to manage the entire government except the military and other security forces."

After his November 4, 2022 appointment to office, 9 out of 11 cabinet ministers were removed. He said, "Generally, it is normal when you come in as prime minister to replace the cabinet. Secondly, by the way, of the 9 people I asked to leave, two will now be reappointed. It is nothing personal...It is a typical managerial decision." He said that while most were very professional, some had a different set of skills and approach than what he needed. Nevertheless, he added, half of them will continue to work in various other roles.

There were some discussions with Artsakh's political elite about possible extraordinary elections, but Vardanyan stated: "I don't think it really makes sense now to talk about any election when you have a blockade and Azerbaijan putting full pressure to take over Artsakh."

Vardanyan has been recently visiting various villages in Artsakh in the provinces, such as in Askeran, Martakert and Martuni. He said, "First, when I became prime minister I said that it is my duty to see very village and every place for myself. Second, ... from January we started trips to the region to just talk with people to see how they react and what do they respond about the blockade."

He observed that the people of Artsakh are quite conservative, so the best way to communicate with them is



to do it directly. This will help the government also see existing problems and take necessary measures.

The Blockade

When asked about the dimensions of the current blockade of Artsakh and the dangers of eventual starvation, he said, "I think we need to be more precise about what is happening now in Artsakh because there is a little bit of confusion. Yes, we have a blockade, but it is not a blockade like nobody can bring in any food. The International Red Cross and the Russian peacekeepers can bring in food to us." However, he said, the amount is minimal, as prior to the blockade Artsakh would get 800-1000 trucks a day of resources imported from Armenia, and now it is receiving, according to an estimate by the Azerbaijanis, 400 trucks per month.

"Don't forget that Artsakh is quite an agricultural country," he said. Despite the blockade, the people in Artsakh will survive the winter because Artsakh has significant wheat and various grain reserves, and things will get better in the spring, he pointed out.

The limitations on medicaments, food, energy, and operation of infrastructure are significant, but the broader nature of the blockade is most important, he said. "People need to understand that it is not about starving and dying from lack of food, but the pressure to give up your basic right to be independent, self-determining your future, and self-determining your right to live in your own homeland with your own rule of law." In other words, this is a politically motivated blockade aimed at destroying Artsakh's ability to continue as a separate self-governing entity.

As part of this pressure, the right of 120,000 people to move freely has been violated, he said, as well as their rights to normal education and many other things. With the entire economy closed down, there can be no production, there is no supply and demand of the markets. People cannot earn their livelihoods.

Among other things, because of the blockade, in December Artsakh was forced to shut down its copper and molybdenum mines, one of the main sources of revenue for the state, after the protests of the Azerbaijani so-called eco-activists. When asked what they were protesting, Vardanyan said simply that "If their demand was truly ecological they would agree to allow international experts to come and check. But they didn't accept this, because their aim is totally different."

International Stakeholders

Aside from the "eco-activists" carrying out the blockade, tens of thousands of Azerbaijani and Turkish troops are amassed on the borders of Artsakh and Armenia. When asked whether the Russian peacekeepers in Artsakh are sufficient to ward off potential threats to the local Armenians, Vardanyan replied, "Russia provides peacekeepers which we all know are limited in number – less than 2,000. And they have a very limited mandate to stop the civil activists, whom they call ecologists. The Russian peacekeepers' role is not fighting against anyone. Their role is to protect the peace and prevent escalations. In the case of aggression, it will be us protecting our homeland."

Vardanyan said that Russia played an important role in bringing peace to Artsakh in November 2020 when the trilateral ceasefire agreement was signed. As far as how greater involvement of the Western powers in the region might affect the current primary Russian role, Vardanyan said, "To be honest with you, I never heard from the 'West' a wish to allocate peacekeepers in Artsakh. But I know how powerful they can be if they impose sanctions on [Azerbaijani President Ilham] Aliyev." In other words, he continued, "They don't have a military presence, but

they have political influence which they can use to prevent any aggression and force Aliyev to stop the blockade immediately."

He declared: "I understand that we have a very complicated situation, with a lot of stakeholders with different interests. But I believe that Russia, France and the United States, being co-chairs of the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group and knowing the essence of the conflict can come together and exert really strong pressure on Azerbaijan jointly, not separately. I believe that this is an issue where the interests of big countries like the United States, France and Russia are common – to save democracy, to save a small nation whose people have been living on their own land for thousands of years."

What Can Be Done Now?

Recently, the authorities of the republics of Armenia and Artsakh have expressed divergent views on how to resolve the current crisis and Artsakh's relations with Azerbaijan. Concerning the role of the Republic of Armenia, Vardanyan declared, "Look, I am not going to say something to you which you do not already know. Usually the Armenian government says that we cannot negotiate on behalf of Artsakh, [meaning] thus Stepanakert needs to talk to Baku directly. We have good working relations [with Armenia] in other areas, like financial, but not about negotiations. We [the Artsakh authorities] have said many times that we are ready to talk with Baku within certain international mechanisms."

However, direct negotiations between the Artsakh government and Azerbaijan do not seem possible, especially with Vardanyan, who has been disparaged by President Ilham Aliyev. Vardanyan said that some contacts were attempted through Russian peacekeepers. "The president [of Artsakh] met a couple of weeks ago the last time with a representative of Azerbaijan. It was not a negotiation. It was more of a meeting without negotiation," he said.

Despite all obstacles, Vardanyan feels that there still is a way forward. He said, "The most important is that the story is not over. I think the UN Security Council discussion, France's position, the United States' position, [and] Russia's position, showed clearly that this is not an internal issue for us... Clearly we have a right to raise our voice, to say we have a right to self-determine our future. We have the right to raise this issue, against ethnic cleansing. We have the right to exclaim worldwide that we cannot stay under Azerbaijan state control."

While some may view repeated statements of international bodies and governments about deblocking the Lachin passageway as moral cover without practical implications, Vardanyan disagreed, stating, "These moral statements work. Azerbaijan will be scared that it will get sanctioned. The Azerbaijani state and elite need to get more pressure to understand that whatever they are doing, they will pay a huge price – and I think it will work. Of course it is not enough, but it is a very important step."

Moreover, he said, "From my point of view the blockade helped us a lot to explain to the world why we cannot be part of the Azerbaijani state, why we have the right for our own self-determination and will live in our own homeland. We need to make use of this format as much as we can and build the status quo."

He continued, "I understand that this is not the end solution. Today we need to gain the time to build a longer term strategy to try to find out. We can live side by side, but not under one system [of government] with Azerbaijan."

Role of Armenian Diaspora

Vardanyan said the role of Armenian communities throughout the world, and in particular in the US and the West, is very important. He said, "We need to keep interest in Artsakh at the right level. We need to continue to pressure all governments that they cannot give up on it because it is too small or irrelevant for them. We need to create pressure about an airlift... We need to also keep the Armenian diaspora's interest."

While sending supplies is useful, money is better, he said, especially as there will be a serious government budget deficit this year.

Vardanyan concluded with a message to readers: "Artsakh is one of the last lands which we Armenians hold where Armenians have lived for thousands of years. If we lose this place, it will constitute serious damage to the entire Armenian nation. Amaras, where Mesrob Mashtots started the first school to educate people in the Armenian alphabet, was in Artsakh... It is not only important for the Artsakh people but for everyone who feels Armenian."



Artsakh War Doc ‘Invisible Republic’ Has Global Release

NEW YORK — In light of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Artsakh — with Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor creating a deepening food, health, and humanitarian crisis for the 120,000 Armenians now trapped in the republic — the producers of “Invisible Republic” have made the film available digitally globally. Inspired by the explosive wartime diary of Lika Zakaryan, the award-winning documentary can now be [watched](#) by virtual cinema.

The release is accompanied by a global awareness and education campaign spearheaded by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and Creative Armenia. Physical screenings for governmental groups, human rights organizations, and educational institutions are now being set in London, Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Zurich, and other cities.

“This isn’t just a film about me,” said Lika Zakaryan, who has been separated from her family for 38 days as a result of the blockade. “It is the story and tragedy of my family, my friends, and my people. And sadly it isn’t over. I look forward to sharing the film with you and meeting with you to discuss the history of Artsakh, what is happening there now, and what we can do to prevent another genocide against the Armenian people.”

“This first-hand account of the realities experienced during and after the 44 days of Azeri aggression in 2020 is a critical documentation of the true human experience. Today, Artsakh is threatened by a territorial blockade putting the lives of its citizens at risk. We urge Armenians everywhere to share Lika’s account and leverage this impressive documentary to raise awareness of what is happening today. We cannot remain silent observers when our fellow Armenians need our voices,” urged AGBU Central Board member Ani Manoukian.

“We initially made this film to educate the non-Armenian world about Artsakh and to raise awareness about the 44-day Artsakh War of 2020,” said the film’s producer Dr. Eric Esrailian, who is also an AGBU Central Board Member and a Founding Member of Creative Armenia. “But the darkest chapter of war may be yet to come. We have decided to move up distribution plans and share Lika’s story with the world, in hopes that it will move hearts and minds to stand with the people of Artsakh at this moment of crisis.”

The entirety of the proceeds of the film’s release will be donated to Artsakh-related humanitarian and relief charities, including [AGBU’s Global Relief Fund](#).

For “Invisible Republic” and Creative Armenia inquiries: anush@creativearmenia.org



Stills from “Invisible Republic”



INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan Evacuates
Iran Embassy Staff after
Attack

TEHRAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Azerbaijani Embassy staff and their family members have been evacuated from Iran after a deadly terrorist attack on the embassy on January 27, *The Statesman* reports.

The Embassy staff and their family members have been evacuated from Iran and left for Baku, according to a tweet by Nasimi Aghayev, the ambassador of Azerbaijan to Germany.

A security staff was killed while two others were injured when a man allegedly opened fire at Azerbaijan's embassy in Iran, Turan News Agency reported.

Asst. US Secretary of State
Donfried Reiterates Calls
For Opening Lachin

YEREVAN (news.am) — The situation around the Lachin corridor is an obstacle to the advancement of the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Karen Donfried, the US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs said in an interview with the Armenian service of Voice of America on January 28.

Donfried stressed that opening the Lachin corridor was a priority in the recent telephone conversations between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken with the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Blinken had earlier called for the immediate reopening of the corridor and emphasized the importance of unimpeded commercial and private traffic through it. The US is very concerned about the situation of the local Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh, Donfried added.

EU Removes All
Restrictions on Flights from
Armenia

BRUSSELS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Common Aviation Area Agreement (CAAA) between the European Union and Armenia entered into administrative application sometime in January, EU NEIGHBOURS east revealed on January 31.

The agreement was signed on November 15, 2021 and aims at removing market restrictions and creating a common aviation area between Armenia and the EU.

In particular, the agreement means that all EU airlines will be able to operate direct flights from anywhere in the EU to any airport in Armenia, and vice versa for Armenian airlines. Also, all limitations and restrictions on flights between Armenia and the EU will be removed and the provisions on open and fair competition will guarantee a level playing field.

With the agreement, Armenia will further align its legislation with EU aviation rules and standards in areas such as aviation safety, air traffic management, security, the environment, economic regulation, competition, consumer protection and social aspects.

Armenia Calls Azerbaijan Blockade an
Act of 'Ethnic Cleansing'

By Molly Quell

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (Court-house News) — Amidst rising tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the United Nations' highest court opened two days of hearings Monday, January 30, between the two Caucasus neighbors.

Both countries have asked the International Court of Justice for a second time to intervene and issue provisional measures, accusing one another of violating a decades-old treaty forbidding racial discrimination.

"Azerbaijan seems intent on strangling the ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, no matter what the cost," Armenia's agent Yeghishe Kirakosyan told The Hague-based court.

The case stems from a bloody 2020 war over Nagorno-Karabakh, a 1,700-square-mile area that technically falls within the borders of Azerbaijan but is overwhelmingly ethnically Armenian. The region has been a source of friction since the fall of the Soviet Union.

The pair have appealed to the ICJ, sometimes referred to as the World Court, under the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, or CERD, which requires signatories to take steps

to end racial discrimination and promote of understanding between differing nationalities, races and ethnic groups.

Lawrence Martin, another member of Armenia's legal team, told the court that Azerbaijan blockaded the Lachin corridor, the only road between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, starving the 150,000 inhabitants of food and medicine. He also said that Azerbaijan's government based in Baku has cut off gas during the winter months.

"Such blatant acts of ethnic cleansing have no place in modern Europe," Martin said.

It is the second time the pair have asked the court to impose provisional measures — essentially an injunction — while the underlying case proceeds on the merits. During hearings in October 2021, Armenia argued Azerbaijan was intentionally exacerbating existing tensions. Among other complaints, Armenia's government in Yerevan cited the creation of a victory memorial from the 2020 conflict that included the helmets of dead Armenian soldiers. Azerbaijan contended the Armenian military had seeded the ground with landmines, leaving the area dangerous and impassable.

In December 2021, the court ordered Azerbaijan to ensure the safety of sol-

diers captured in the conflict, prevent incitement of racial hatred and protect Armenian cultural heritage sites, while telling Armenia to avoid doing anything to exacerbate the conflict.

Azerbaijan contends that Nagorno-Karabakh has been illegally occupied by Armenia for 30 years and accuses the inhabitants of destroying the area's natural resources. Describing the region as the "formerly occupied territories," Elnur Mammadaov, Azerbaijan's deputy minister for foreign affairs, said the damage was so bad the region was "unrecognizable." According to Mammadaov, Armenia has been using the Lachin corridor to move illegally mined mineral resources and blockades of the road were organized by environmental protesters who are opposed to the deforestation.

Last week, the Council of Europe, the oversight body of the European Court of Human Rights, ordered Azerbaijan to open the Lachin corridor after the Strasbourg-based court ruled the route was needed to bring vital supplies and services to Nagorno-Karabakh. The countries have a different case pending before the rights court, which protects the civil and political rights of Europeans, stemming from the same conflict.

Extremists Attack Armenians in Jerusalem Quarter

ATTACKS, from page 1

fled in the direction of the police. The Armenian youths chased them, and when the latter noticed that, they started shouting "Terrorist attack, terrorist attack!"

The police, thinking that the shouts of the Israeli aggressors were true, blocked the way of the Armenian men, held the weapons on them, beat some of them, and after arresting Gevorg Kahkejian, they took him to the police station, on the charges of attacked a police officer, which is not true.

George Kahkejian was kept in police custody for one night, the next day, January 29, after noon, with the direct intervention of Patriarch Nourhan Manougian and the decision of the court, George Kahkejian was released and given 20 days of house arrest. And since Kahkejian has physical injuries, the police, through the mediation of the monastery's lawyer, allowed him to undergo a medical examination.

On the same day, Israeli settlers attacked an Armenian restaurant near the New Gate in the Christian Quarter of the occupied city of Jerusalem, local sources told Wafa News Agency.

The settlers attacked a group of diners, mostly Armenians, who were enjoying their meals at the Taboon Wine Bar in the Armenian Quarter. According to the restaurant owner, Mihran Grigorian, the three dozen attackers shouted "Death to Christians!" and "Death to Arabs!"

A video of the incident posted on Facebook showed them turning tables and chairs and throwing them at restaurant staff.

"This is not the first time that extremists have behaved like this," News.am quoted Grigorian as saying. "Non-Jewish residents are attacked systematically."

The Patriarchate said on January 11 that vandals left anti-Armenian and anti-Christian graffiti on the walls of a local Armenian church.

On Friday afternoon, Latin Patriarch

Pierbattista Pizzaballa visited the restaurant owners and adjacent shopkeepers, whose businesses were the target of attacks, in a show of solidarity by the church.

Last January, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem said Israeli radical fringe groups were seeking to drive the Christian community out of the city.

"Our presence in Jerusalem is under threat," Theophilos III, the patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, wrote in an op-ed in *The Sunday Times* (U.K.) at the time.

"Our churches are threatened by Israeli radical fringe groups. At the hands of these Zionist extremists the Christian community in Jerusalem is suffering greatly. Our brothers and sisters are the victims of hate crimes. Our churches are regularly desecrated and vandalized. Our clergy are subject to frequent intimidation," he continued.

Last June, the Office of the European Union Representative in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip warned that the heritage and traditions of the Christian community and the established religious equilibrium in the Old City of Jerusalem were at risk after Israel's Supreme Court legitimized the takeover of Greek Orthodox properties by a Jewish settler group.

Yerevan Alarmed

Armenia expressed on January 30 serious concern at the latest reports of attacks on the Armenian community in Jerusalem blamed on Jewish extremists.

"We are deeply concerned by recent acts of violence and vandalism targeting Christian religious institutions in Jerusalem, including the Armenian Patriarchate, and Armenian residents of the Old City," tweeted the Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Vahan Hunanyan.

Hunanyan did not say how Israeli authorities should respond to such incidents.

One week before that, more than 30

graves at the Protestant Cemetery on Mount Zion were desecrated. An Anglican archbishop blamed Jewish extremists for the vandalism.

"This is the latest in a string of attacks against Christians and their property in and around the Old City," the British Consulate in Jerusalem said on January 4. "The perpetrators of religiously motivated attacks should be held accountable."

The Armenian Apostolic Church has for years accused radical Israelis of regularly cursing and spitting at its clergymen in the streets of Jerusalem's Old City. Two Israeli soldiers were briefly detained by police in November 2022 for doing so during a religious procession led by an Armenian archbishop.

(Stories from Middle East Monitor, Public Radio of Armenia, Christian Post and Azatutyun were used to compile this report.)

Pope Francis Condemns
Blockade of Artsakh

POPE, from page 1

Despite these calls, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev continues to defend the protesters demanding that Baku be given access to "illegal" copper mines in Karabakh.

The Karabakh premier, Ruben Vardanyan, called at the weekend for stronger international pressure on the Azerbaijani government. In an interview with French television, Vardanyan suggested that the US, Russia and France work together to have the blockade lifted. He said that the three world powers, which have long co-headed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, still have similar positions on the Karabakh conflict.

Community News

Portantino Urges White House to Halt Military Assistance to Azerbaijan and Deliver Humanitarian Aid to Artsakh

SACRAMENTO — Stae Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D – Burbank) led efforts this week to submit a letter to the White House urging President Biden to take action against Azerbaijan by immediately ending military assistance and requesting that emergency humanitarian aid be delivered to the people of Artsakh who have been devastated by Azerbaijan’s blockade since December 12, 2022.

“The 25th Senate District his home to a vibrant Armenian American community deeply troubled by events threatening the well-being of family and friends in Artsakh. I am pleased to work with the ANCA Western Region to lead efforts calling on the White House to take immediate action on the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Artsakh,” stated Senator Portantino. “It is critical that we move beyond words and take meaningful action to put an end to the inhumane blockade and demand the re-opening of the Lachin Corridor. I strongly condemn Azerbaijan’s violent campaign against the Armenian people of Artsakh, who were recently subjected to war and now have been left without food, medical supplies and the right to free movement.”

In a letter to President Biden, Sen-



State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino and his colleagues highlighted that “since the unprovoked military attack by Azerbaijan in 2020 against the indigenous Armenian people of Artsakh, no direct U.S. humanitarian assistance has been provided to the Armenian population.” The letter calls on President Biden, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, NSC Chair Jake Sullivan, and USAID Administrator Samantha Power, to take concrete against Azerbaijan and bring immediate humanitarian relief to the people of Artsakh.

“We are grateful for Senator Portantino taking the lead to send a letter on behalf of California State legislators to President Biden. We must continue to make our voices heard to urge the White House to take immediate tangible steps to address the humanitarian crisis, end Azerbaijan’s inhumane blockade of Artsakh, and hold the Aliyev regime accountable,” said Nora Hovsepian, Esq., Chair of the Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region. “The support of our elected representatives at every level of government is invaluable toward achieving this goal.”



AAHPO Fourth Annual 5K Raises Funds for Artsakh Healthcare

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

LEONIA, N.J. —Overpeck County Park is a world away from Artsakh, but that distance became inconsequential recently when upwards of 100 people participated in the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) Fourth Annual 5K Run/Walk event.

This year’s activity, held to raise desperately needed funds to support healthcare and medical services for the Armenian population of Artsakh and Armenia, was even more significant in light of the humanitarian crisis caused by Azerbaijan’s unlawful blockade of the Lachin Corridor. Armenian citizens in Artsakh are deprived of food, heating fuel and medical attention caused by the closure of the sole route that connects Artsakh to Armenia and the outside world. For this reason, AAHPO continues to focus its efforts toward alleviating the lack of critical resources and medical care facing indigenous Armenians in Artsakh. Examples of this are the training of doctors in the rural areas of Artsakh in innovative approaches, methods, and technologies in medicine, as well as underwriting the cost of curating and sending medical equipment and medicine to the region.

“The continued growth of our 5K Run/Walk Event is a testament to the dedication and compassion of Armenian-Americans in NY, NJ and CT,” said AAHPO President Larry Najarian. “The situation in Artsakh has been very difficult for quite some time now, but the most recent repercussions caused by the Azeri blockade has made our mission of providing assistance to our brethren in the region all the more critical.”



see AAHPO, page 11

Mutafian Delivers History Lesson On Armenian Connection to Jerusalem

By Harry A. Kezelian III
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Research and Studies (NAASR) hosted an online webinar lecture on the history of the Armenian connection with Jerusalem on January 13 with Prof. Claude Mutafian of Paris, the noted French mathematician turned history scholar.

Mutafian taught mathematics in French universities as well as around the world for more than 40 years; but always with a passion for history, he has conducted a significant amount of research and writing in this field



Professor Claude Mutafian, mathematician and historian as well, obtaining a PhD from the Sorbonne in 2002 with a thesis on the “Armenian Diplomacy in the Levant During the Crusades.” The period of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and its relation with the Crusaders is his area of specialty, and the role of Armenians in Jerusalem forms a major part of the history of that era.

The lecture, titled “Jerusalem and the Armenians: Until the Ottoman Conquest (1516),” was co-sponsored by NAASR (Belmont, MA), the Ararat-Eskijian Museum (Los Angeles) and the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute. Marc Mamigonian of NAASR and Maggie Goschin of the Ararat-Eskijian Museum introduced Mutafian, who spoke via Zoom from France.

Early Armenian Connections to Jerusalem

Mutafian stated that the Armenian people seem to have been “obsessed” with the holy city of Jerusalem since the nation’s conversion to Christianity in the 4th century. As an example of this, he explained that almost every important figure in the history of Armenia, until the late Middle Ages, seems to have had a desire to make the trip to Jerusalem. St. Gregory the Illuminator, after converting Armenia to Christianity; Mesrob Mash-tots, after inventing the Armenian alphabet; and Movses Khorenatsi, after writing one the first complete histories of Armenia all travelled to Jerusalem, Mutafian stated.

see HISTORY, page 10



OBITUARY

Shaghig (Tuysuzian) Palanjian

Co-Founder of Sayat Nova Dance Company

WALTHAM, Mass. — Shaghig (Tuysuzian) Palanjian) of Waltham, passed away peacefully, surrounded by family on January 28, 2023.

Beloved wife to Jack Palanjian. Devoted mother of Sevag Palanjian and his wife Alina, and Talar Palanjian. Cherished grandmother of Liana Rose Palanjian. Loving daughter of Setta (Kananjian) Tuysuzian and the late Nishan Tuysuzian. Adored sister of Vahe Tuysuzian, Tsolig Chamlian and the late Dzovig Hajian. She is also survived by many loving nieces and nephews.

In her short time on earth, Shaghig's impact was immeasurable. She was a pillar of strength, grace and determination not only for her family, but also for her community and career.

To her family, she was the matriarch. Both compass and North Star, she guided everyone with love and compassion. In her career, she moved mountains, broke glass ceilings and led by example. Always upholding integrity, regardless of its difficulty. Through her role as co-founder and assistant director of Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston, she was able to pass on her passion for Armenian culture and dance to the hearts of countless individuals.

She was described by many as an inspirational leader, a compassionate teacher, and a true lover of life. Her immense impact



lives on in the hearts of those she touched every step of the way. She will be remembered with great love and inspire us all to live a life of passion, joy and resilience.

Funeral services were at Saint Stephen's Armenian Church, 38 Elton Avenue, Watertown on February 1. Interment followed at Newton Cemetery, Newton, MA.

Gregory 'Teddy' Tevekelian

Descendent of Genocide Survivors

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Gregory "Teddy" Tevekelian passed away peacefully yet unexpectedly at home in on January 22, 2023. He had recently lived with his daughter and her family during an extended period of declining health, including dementia.

Teddy was born in Cambridge, Mass. in October 1944 to Haig and Lucy Tevekelian (Tutunjian). Along with older brother Kevork, Teddy was raised in a loving envi-



ronment in Belmont, Mass., surrounded by many Armenian friends and relatives. Frequent family gatherings were the foundation for Teddy's gregarious nature. He was immensely proud of his heritage and was happiest when enjoying Armenian music, dance, food, and camaraderie.

After graduating from Belmont High School, Teddy briefly served in the United States Coast Guard. For many years, he worked for his family's dry-cleaning business in Belmont, later operating his own businesses as well. Over the years, Teddy served in many different professional capacities. He worked in the construction and

livery businesses, was a private yacht captain, ran his own towing business, and in his later years, joined Watertown Ford in the parts department.

Wherever he went, Teddy was always willing to lend a helping hand to others. He will be remembered by family and friends for his positive outlook, carefree and adventurous spirit, and being full of life.

Teddy very much enjoyed the companionship of his beloved Yorkshire Terriers over the years, whether joining him on RV journeys to Maine or boating around New England and on the Charles River.

Teddy is survived by his daughter, Dawn (Tevekelian) Keller of Charlotte, NC and her husband, Charlie; his grandsons, Benji and Charlie Jr.; brother Kevork Tevekelian, Sr. and fiancé Sandra Boroyan; and nieces and nephews Jennifer (Boudreau) Tevekelian, Josh Tevekelian and wife Diana, Janeen (Tevekelian) Bazarian, and Alana (Tevekelian) Counts and her husband Roger Counts. He is also survived by his loving great nieces and nephews Andrew, Derek, and Kyle Tevekelian, Avo and Armen Bazarian, Devin and Izabella Counts, and Aline Tevekelian.

Teddy was preceded in death by parents Haig Kevork Tevekelian, an Armenian Genocide survivor from Malatya, Armenia (present day Turkey), and Lucy (Tutunjian) Tevekelian of Granite City, IL; former wife Patricia (Najarian) Dixon of Virginia Beach, VA; nephew Kevork Tevekelian, Jr. of Shrewsbury, MA; and great-nephew Greyson Counts of Morehead City, NC.

A Celebration of Life and prayer service will be held on Friday February 17, 4-7 p.m. at Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home at 558 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. Rev. Antranig Baljian of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church will preside over prayer at 6 p.m. A private burial will be held at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

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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.

ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR



COMMUNITY NEWS

NAASR Offers Negotiation and Leadership Course

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) Negotiation and Leadership Course is now accepting applications. During this two-day program on February 24 and 26, participants will have the opportunity to learn new negotiation and leadership skills, engage with experts in conflict resolution, and expand their network.

The program will explore both theory and practice, and equip participants with new tools to better resolve conflicts in their professional and personal lives. The objective is to empower participants to communicate effectively and resolve disputes across a variety of contexts. Professionals from all fields are encouraged to apply. The program will be held at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building at 395 Concord, Ave.

The course was initiated by Judith

Saryan and Narine Karapetyan as a result of their travel to Armenia and Artsakh in 2019. “We realized there was a great demand and need for negotiation and leadership skills development after various discussions with local individuals, organizations, and institutions,” said Saryan. They agreed that such an initiative is important and timely, more than ever in Armenia and in the Diaspora. The first Negotiation and Leadership Course was held at the TUMO Center in Yerevan in August, 2021.

Karapetyan is an international negotiation and mediation senior advisor and trainer, who has over a decade of experience offering intensive conflict resolution training courses. “We want to offer participants a unique opportunity to hone their negotiation and leadership skills in an interactive environment of simulations, coaching, demonstrations,



Narine Karapetyan

group exercises and peer exchange,” explained Karapetyan.

Space is limited. Please send in applications at soon as possible.



Judith Saryan

For more information on the program and application process, contact the Training Team at negotiationandleadership@gmail.com.

Dr. Michael Rubin to Take Part in Webinar on Lachin Blockade

BOSTON — The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) of Boston will host a webinar with Dr. Michael Rubin, from the American Enterprise Institute, on February 9, at 7 p.m. Rubin’s presentation is titled “Remedying US Policy in the Caucasus after the Lachin Blockade.”

Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor and its efforts to starve Artsakh’s population into submission should be a wake-up call for Washington, DC. Azerbaijan’s actions suggest President Ilham Aliyev’s disrespect for U.S. diplomacy and the ineffectiveness of State Department strategy. As military and humanitarian crises accelerate in the South Caucasus, what

might the White House, State Department, and Congress do to ensure U.S. interests and Armenian human rights are paramount in American foreign policy toward the region? A former Pentagon official, Dr. Rubin has lived in post-revolution Iran, Yemen, and both pre- and post-war Iraq. He also spent time with the Taliban before 9/11.

For more than a decade, he taught classes at sea about the Horn of Africa and Middle East conflicts, culture, and terrorism, to deployed US Navy and Marine units. Dr. Rubin is the author, coauthor, and coeditor of several books exploring diplomacy, Iranian history, Arab culture, Kurdish studies, and Shi’ite politics, including *Seven Pillars: What Really Causes Instability in the Middle East?* (AEI Press, 2019); *Kurdistan Rising* (AEI Press, 2016); *Dancing with the Devil: The Perils of Engaging Rogue Re-*

gimes (Encounter Books, 2014); and *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos* (Palgrave, 2005).

Most recently, he published a piece titled “As Genocide Looms Against Armenians, Credibility Requires Action, Not Empty Rhetoric,” outlining the anemic response of the US Government to the looming genocide in Artsakh. Rubin holds a PhD and an MA in history from Yale University, where he also obtained a BS in biology.

The audience will be able to engage the speaker in a question-and-answer session following the presentation. For all questions and additional information, contact the ANC of Boston at sardarabad@arfeastusa.com.

Visit <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYuduiqzwtGNO7udFCN-AReYyWX-BuwGxDW> to register for a zoom link.



Dr. Michael Rubin

Rep. Schiff Condemns Anti-Armenian Flyers In Beverly Hills

LOS ANGELES — Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) has condemned the racist anti-Armenian flyers found in Beverly Hills over the weekend.

“It was shocking to see posters advocating genocide against Armenians,” he [tweeted](#) on January 30.

“We must all condemn this bigotry in the strongest terms. Armenia and Artsakh face the real threat of war from Azerbaijan. The community needs support — not hate,” Rep. Schiff stressed.

The flyers were found taped to street poles near La Cienega and Wilshire boulevards and surrounding areas.

One of the racist messages read, “Israel + Azerbaijan + Turkey + Pakistan = 4 BROTHERS ERASING Armenia OFF the World MAP,” “Azerbaijan + Turkey + Pakistan + Israel = 4 brothers WILL WIPE Armenia OFF the MAP Inshallah !!!”

The discovery comes after the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors voted to call on President Joe Biden and Schiff to support efforts to end the Azerbaijani blockade of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

Armenian Americans held marches over the weekend to show their support for Armenians affected by the blockade.

Armenian Caucus Working on Resolution to Punish Azerbaijan For Blockade

CAUCUS, from page 1

Evidence of Azerbaijan’s violations of international humanitarian law during the 2020 war — including rocket strikes on civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, the decapitation of civilians, the use of white phosphorus munitions, and the torture and killings of Armenian prisoners of war — are well-documented by reputable non-governmental organizations such as Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The resolution emphasizes that the November 2020 ceasefire statement that ended the 2020 war signed by Azerbaijan “clearly states in Article 6 that, ‘The Lachin Corridor (5 km wide), which will provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia while not passing through the territory of Shusha, shall remain under the control of the Russian Federation peace-making forces...The Republic of Azerbaijan shall guarantee the security of persons, vehicles and cargo moving along the Lachin Corridor in both directions.’”

Despite the Article, on December 12, 2022, “Azerbaijan created a man-made humanitarian crisis by implementing an ex-

tended blockade of the Lachin Corridor under the guise of a civilian protest” which has resulted in “dangerous, escalatory steps.”

The closure of the Lachin Corridor — which serves as a vital lifeline connecting the Republic of Artsakh to the Republic of Armenia — and its blockade prevents food, critical medical supplies, and other essentials from reaching 120,000 people, and has “severely worsened the quality of life for the people living in Artsakh, including 30,000 children, 20,000 elderly individuals, and 9,000 people with disabilities, including the sabotage of civilian infrastructures such as a critical natural gas pipeline, power transmission lines, and fixed-line internet.”

The U.S. Department of State has time and again warned that the “closure of the Lachin Corridor has severe humanitarian implications and sets back the peace process,” and publicly called “on the government of Azerbaijan to restore free movement through the corridor.”

In addition to condemning the blockade of the Lachin Corridor, calling for the immediate suspension of U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan, and providing humanitarian aid, the resolution also encourages the U.S. and international community to petition the

International Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights, or other appropriate international tribunals, “to take appropriate steps to investigate any and all war crimes committed by the Azerbaijani forces,” while also calling on the U.S. to deploy international observers to the Lachin Corridor and Artsakh “to explore opportunities for more effective and sustainable guarantees of security and peaceful development,” as well as “support U.S. sanctions under existing statutory authority against Azerbaijani officials responsible for the blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh and other well-documented human rights violations committed against Armenians in the region.”

“The Assembly applauds the tireless efforts of the Armenian Caucus leadership to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its continuous human rights violations against the Armenian people of Artsakh, particularly as Azerbaijan’s blockade, which has spurred yet another humanitarian crisis, is in its seventh week,” said Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. “We urge the U.S. and the international community to stop Azerbaijan’s attempts at ethnically cleansing the Armenian people and destabilizing the South Caucasus region for its own gain.”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Mutafian Delivers History Lesson on Armenian Connection to Jerusalem

HISTORY, from page 7

He also pointed out that the Old City of Jerusalem is divided into four quarters: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Armenian; the fact that Armenians have their own quarter rather than being a part of the Christian Quarter is more proof of the importance of Armenians in the history of that city. He also discussed the opening of the new Mardigian Armenian Museum near the Zion Gate. He was a consultant on this project, and it gave him the occasion for the publication of his new book, *Jerusalem et Les Armeniens: Jusqu'a La Conquete Ottomane, 1516* (Jerusalem and the Armenians: Until the Ottoman Conquest, 1516), which was the basis for the lecture.

Jerusalem's Armenian quarter is dominated by the Monastery of Sts. James (James the Great and James the Lesser, two of the 12 disciples of Christ). The monastery has the largest and most important collection of Armenian treasures (art, books, etc.) outside of Armenia. For example, only seven manuscripts illuminated by Toros Roslin, considered the greatest illuminated manuscript artist in Armenian history, remain; four are in Jerusalem.

The oldest examples of the Armenian alphabet are also located in the Holy Land; a large, intricate floor mosaic with a text dedicating the artwork in the memory of all Armenians, dates to the 6th century. An even older inscription with Armenian lettering dating to the 5th century was recently found in Nazareth. The first printed Armenian alphabet, made in 1486, is even connected to Jerusalem. It was made by a German traveler interested in languages who visited Jerusalem and learned the Armenian alphabet while he was there.

The 6th-century mosaic, with its images of birds, was originally discovered in a chapel near the Damascus Gate, on the north side of the Old City, at the margin of the Christian and Muslim Quarters. However, the atmosphere where the mosaic was located was extremely humid and damp; as a result, the mosaic was deteriorating, as Mutafian noticed on successive visits to Jerusalem. He stated that there was some controversy around the suggestion that the mosaic should be moved to a safer location; if this was done, there would be no proof of the Armenian presence in that chapel, which was shown to be the Armenian Chapel of St. Polyeuctos (a 3rd-century Roman martyr in the city of Malatia, historic Armenia). Ultimately, the mosaic was moved to the central courtyard of the new Mardigian Museum. Mutafian's opinion is that it is better this way, because the mosaic will be preserved, and more people will see it. However, he hopes that a replica can be installed in the Chapel of St. Polyeuctos.

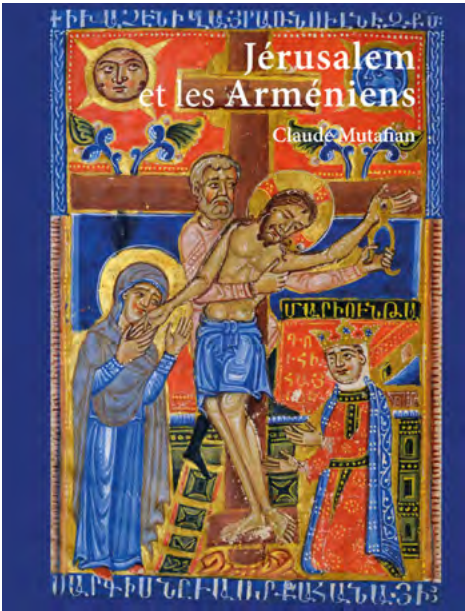
Dawn of the Cilician Period

Mutafian then turned to his area of expertise, Cilicia. During the 11th century, when the Turks were invading Asia Minor, Armenians moved west into the Byzantine Empire settling in different regions including Cilicia and Cappadocia. According to Mutafian, the reason Armenians went to Cilicia was that there were already Armenian settlers there.

Two noble families, the Roupenians and the Hetoumians, settled in Cilicia and attempted to recreate a new "Kingdom of Armenia." The Roupenians ended up winning the power struggle just in time for the Crusaders to show up in the region looking to "liberate" Jerusalem from the Turks. It just so happens that the region of Cilicia is directly on the land route from Europe via Constantinople to Jerusalem. The Crusaders, known in the East generically as "Franks," naturally passed through the re-

gion, and formed close alliances with the Armenian aristocracy.

Not only in Cilicia itself but also in other regions of Asia Minor, the Armenians had become so prevalent after the 11th century that the Crusaders thought of it as their



Front cover image of Mutafian's new book, "Jerusalem and the Armenians." The crucifixion is depicted with Queen Marioun looking on; the text above her reads "Մարիուն Թագուհի Հայոց է" (This is Marioun, Queen of the Armenians)

original homeland. According to Mutafian, when one of the leaders of the First Crusade entered Caesarea (i.e. Gesaria, modern Kayseri, Turkey), a city that was the traditional capital of the Greek-speaking region of Cappadocia, it was so full of Armenians that in his memoirs he wrote "now we entered Armenia."

The Crusaders fought the forces of the Seljuk Turks, conquering the city of Jerusalem and other regions of the Levant. They set up four states, namely the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch, the County of Tripoli, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Both the County of Edessa and the Principality of Antioch border on the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, so the Franks had a lot of contact with the Armenians. In fact, the majority population in the County of Edessa was Armenian. (The County of Edessa was centered around the city of Edessa, today's Urfa, Turkey.)

Due to this extensive contact, Crusader nobility often married Armenian princesses. Because Armenians were Christians local to the region, yet not affiliated with the Byzantine Empire and its Greek Orthodox Church which was a major rival to the Roman Catholic Crusaders, Armenian women made ideal queens for the Crusader states. In fact, the first two Latin Kings of Jerusalem married daughters of Armenian lords; thus the first two Queens of Jerusalem in the Crusader period were Armenian: the wife of King Baldwin I was Arda, daughter of Toros, Lord of Marash; and the wife of King Baldwin II was Morphia, daughter of Gabriel, Lord of Malatia.

On the death of King Baldwin II, his widow Morphia was left with four daughters and no sons. The eldest daughter, Melisende, inherited the throne as Queen of Jerusalem. According to Mutafian, Melisende impressed the Crusaders as a capable female ruler, stating that "all the Frankish writers of that time are fascinated by her." Mutafian also mentioned that when Toros II, lord of Cilician Armenia, visited the city, the King of Jerusalem went out to meet him with great honor, showing the importance of the Armenians as a regional power at the time.

Mutafian underscored the importance of

the Armenians in that time period by mentioning the visit of Toros II, lord of Cilician Armenia to Jerusalem. The King of Jerusalem, Amalric I (son of Queen Melisende) went out to meet him with great honor, showing the importance of the Armenians as a major regional power.

The Armenians Officially Recreate their Kingdom

Mutafian continued with his discussion by mentioning that in 1187, the Kurdish warrior Saladin, leader of the Muslim forces, retook Jerusalem from the Crusaders. He also captured the last King of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan, in the Battle of Hattin. This provoked the Third Crusade, led by King Richard the Lionheart of England and Frederick Barbarossa, the German ruler of what was known as the Holy Roman Empire, based in Central Europe.

Richard the Lionheart went to the Holy Land by sea, and on his way conquered the island of Cyprus, giving it to the former King of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan. Lusignan kept his title "King of Jerusalem," and ruled as "King of Cyprus and Jerusalem," though the latter was in name only. Richard then landed in the Levant where he fought Saladin and reconquered some territory, though not Jerusalem itself. Nevertheless, the coastal territory thus reconquered (including most of the coastline of present-day Lebanon and Israel) was titled "Kingdom of Jerusalem" and the Lusignan family became its rulers while still holding sway over Cyprus. Later, the same family would be connected with the Kingdom of Armenia.

Frederick Barbarossa, in the same Crusade, went by land, travelling through Cilicia. The Lord of Armenian Cilicia, Prince Levon II, sent an embassy to Frederick offering help in crossing the difficult Taurus Mountains (which separate Asia Minor from Syria). In exchange, Levon asked for

the coronation of himself as King, which would be Frederick's right as an Emperor. Frederick complied with this request.

In this way, in 1198, Prince Levon II was crowned King Levon I, recreating the Kingdom of Armenia — outside of Armenia — as Mutafian pointed out. At his coronation Levon received crowns from the German ("Holy Roman") Emperor, the Byzantine ("Roman") Emperor, and the Pope of Rome. Levon was not titled "Armenian King of Cilicia" or "King of Cilician Armenia," nomenclature used by later historians. Rather, the coins which he minted, as Mutafian stressed, are inscribed in Armenian script with the words "Levon Takavor Amenayn Hayots" (Levon, King of All Armenians). Mutafian then showed an image of the coin minted by Levon's contemporary, Amalric of Cyprus, with the inscription "Amalric, by the grace of God, King of Jerusalem and Cyprus." According to Mutafian, these became the two main Christian powers in the region for the next hundred years, until the end of the Crusader period. As for the struggle over control of Cilicia between Levon's family, the Roupenians, and their rivals the Hetoumians, the feud finally ended with the marriage of Levon's daughter and heir Queen Zabel to Prince Hetoum, who then became King Hetoum. "After that, there were no more problems," stated Mutafian, who referred to this as "the matrimonial policy."

King Hetoum Travels to Mongolia on Foot

By the middle of the 13th century, "everything changes," Mutafian stated. In Cairo, a group of Turkish slaves had taken power and imposed themselves as Sultans of Egypt. They were known as Mamluks, and their empire soon conquered all of Syria. During the same time period, the Mongols, who had originated from Central Asia, and

continued on next page

25 YEARS OF THEATER

Celebration Gala

MAY 13, 2023

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COMMUNITY NEWS

AAHPO Fourth Annual 5K Raises Funds for Artsakh Healthcare

AAHPO, from page 7

The 5K course, equal to 3.1 miles, offers scenic views of the Manhattan skyline and picturesque, waterfowl-populated ponds and marshes. But the beauty of the course did not distract the event's participants, consisting of both seasoned and novice runners, from the gravity of the situation. Groups of walkers and runners from many different backgrounds and vocations converged as one team to help those in need.



Among the participants was champion racewalker Sherry Brosnahan, who holds one world masters record and eight US masters records in racewalking at distances from 20 to 50 kilometers.

Her presence underscored the recognition, regardless of one's ethnic background, of the inhumanity of the Azeri blockade. "I am here to have fun with the group and to exercise for my health," she said, "but most importantly, to raise funds that will help those faced with a very dire situation."

Representatives from organizations

which have partnered with AAHPO in previous events also showed their solidarity by participating, including Aram Setian, former president of the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA). "It is incumbent upon us as diasporans to do what we can to help our brothers and sisters in Artsakh and Armenia," he said.

One of the additional benefits the event provided runners was the opportunity to boost their competitive racing statistics, as

race results were officially recorded and certified by USA Track & Field, the United States national governing body for track and field, cross country running, road running and racewalking. In addition, all registrants received a commemorative T-shirt and a pair of wireless earphones donated by Phillips Corporation.

AAHPO is greatly apprecia-

tive of the sponsors whose generosity made this year's event possible: Armand P. Asarian, MD; Alma Janet Olivos-Asarian, MD; William G. Basralian Funeral Service; Bedminster Eye and Laser Center; Englewood (NJ) Pediatrics; Dr. Tro's Medical Weight Loss & Direct Primary Care; Harco Incentives; Paul Miller Auto Group; Peapack Private Wealth Management; Northern Jersey Obstetrics & Gynecology; Toufayan Bakeries and USA Track & Field.

To donate to the cause, visit <https://aahpo.org/>.



Armenian Connection to Jerusalem

from previous page

had conquered a vast Empire under Genghis Khan, began to conquer the areas of the Middle East under the successors of Genghis. They conquered most of the territories of the region, up to Asia Minor. At first the Mongols were strongly anti-Muslim. Therefore, in the regional power struggle between the Mongols and the Mamluks, King Hetoum decided to ally himself with the Mongols. Mutaftian showed the audience an image from an historic illuminated manuscript of the Nativity of Christ including the visit of the Three Kings. A note written beside the image states that "the Tatars just arrived," referring to the Mongols, and depicting them as protectors of the Armenians.

Hetoum made the remarkable journey all the way to the Mongol capital, Karakorum, in present-day Mongolia, in order to seal the alliance. This political move allowed the Kingdom of Armenia to survive in Cilicia for another century. Mutaftian commented that Cilician Armenia had a few political geniuses, such as Hetoum I and his father-in-law Levon I, and unfortunately Armenia cannot say the same today. Hetoum also patronized the Christian sites in the Holy Land; the wooden doors to the Basilica of Bethlehem were gifted by him, which had inscriptions in Armenian and Arabic stating them to be the gift of King Hetoum.

Unfortunately, the alliance with the Mongols was not too stable because Arme-

nia was far from the Mongol homeland. In the end, the Mamluks won out and in 1375 put an end to the Kingdom of Armenia, incorporating Cilicia into the lands of the Mamluk Sultanate. Despite that, Armenians continued to be important players in the region. With Armenians neutralized as a political force, they were no longer dangerous to the Mamluk Empire as were the Latin (Western European) and Greek powers; therefore the Mamluks decided to protect the Armenians as a Christian minority. There is an inscription left by the Mamluks at the door to the St. James Armenian Monastery compound in Jerusalem, stating "Everyone who would do harm to the Armenians will be punished."

Under the rule of the Mamluks, the region became stabilized and was again safe for pilgrims. The number of Western travelers making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem grew, and many pilgrims wrote memoirs of their journey. According to Mutaftian "everyone had a chapter in their manuscript dedicated to the Armenians," showing that they continued to have a noticeable presence in the area. One European called the Armenians "our principal allies," as well as noting that the Armenian community included the most beautiful women in Jerusalem! But Mutaftian showed that there was also animosity towards Armenians by other Christian nations, displaying a chapter from a book entitled "About the Armenians and Their Errors." Since the 5th century, when the Armenians refused to recognize the Council of Chalcedon, they have been considered heretics by the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches. Especially between Armenians and Greeks in that era, said Mutaftian, there was a terrible hatred.

As for the royal dynasty of Armenia, by the time of the fall of Cilicia, it had been inherited by a branch of the Lusignan family (of French Crusader origin), who also reigned as Kings of Cyprus. The last king of Armenia, Levon V, was a Lusignan; he was crowned in 1374 and the Mamluks destroyed his kingdom the following year. Levon V was imprisoned in Cairo, along with Queen Marioun, the wife of the last king that had ruled before Levon V. Mutaftian showed his audience an image of an illuminated Gospel miniature by renowned artist of the time Sarkis Bidzag, which depicted the queen, and has a text which reads "This is Marioun, Queen of the Armenians."

Queen Marioun, when taken prisoner, was treated kindly by the Mamluk Sultan. He asked her if she desired anything, and she responded "I wish to end my life in Jerusalem." Mutaftian noted the symbolism of the close connection between Jerusalem and the Armenian people by pointing out that the last Queen of Armenia decided to finish her life in Jerusalem. For this reason, Mutaftian chose her image for the cover of his new book.

As for Levon V, he was freed by the Sultan and came to Paris, where he died without an heir. He is buried in the same chapel that contains the cenotaphs of all the Kings of France. The title "King of Armenia" was then inherited by his closest relative, James I, King of Cyprus. James was also "King of Jerusalem," in name only of course. As the Kingdom of Cyprus fell, the great-grandson of James was married to a Venetian noblewoman who tried to hand the crown of "Jerusalem, Cyprus, and Armenia" to the Doge of Venice. But instead, her husband's sister took the title and married a prince from the

House of Savoy, which later came to rule Italy after its unification in 1861. Apparently, the title was still used by the Kings of Italy until all extraneous titles were abandoned by King Victor Emmanuel III at the beginning of the 20th century.

A Labor of Love

Mutaftian noted that Jerusalem has been a center of Armenian culture and especially manuscript production. The oldest Armenian manuscript copied in Jerusalem was from 1215 and is kept by the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Brotherhood in Venice. There are also many manuscript treasures which did not originate in Jerusalem but are kept there; one of the outstanding examples is the Gospel of Queen Keran, created in 1272 at the order of the Queen. The manuscript includes one of the most famous images created by artist Toros Roslin, a depiction of King Levon II and Queen Keran (Guerane) with their five oldest children. Mutaftian pointed out to the audience that the royal couple had 16 children in all.

Mutaftian noted that although the book is not yet available in English, is a 500 page book which includes 1000 pictures. He suggested that those who don't read French would be able to greatly appreciate the images contained in the book, which is available for delivery in the US via Amazon and other online sources. Mutaftian suggested that those who are interested purchase the book direct from the publisher, Les Belles Lettres, here: <https://www.lesbelleslettres.com/livre/9782251452968/jerusalem-et-les-armeniens>

Mutaftian is also planning to come to the US to speak in more detail about his book in person later this year.



Arts & Culture

TCA Holiday ‘Big Bad Armo Show’ Delights Audiences

By Taleen Babayan

NEW YORK — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York hosted the Big Bad Armo Show’s “A Holly Jolly” Christmas Presentation at the Symphony Space Leonard Nimoy Thalia Theater on Saturday, December 10, 2022 and Sunday, December 11, 2022.

Written and created by Lory Tatouljian, the show featured James Adomian, Mary Basmadjian, Helen Kalognomos, Ludwig Manukian, Alex Mashikian, Felix Pire, Lory Tatouljian, and Johnno Wilson, with music by Greg Hosharian. A range of skits throughout the two-hour comedy program highlighted the current political landscape, scenes from Armenian-American daily life, and a special interactive appearance by “Sossi Hayrabedian,” a humorous character created by Tatouljian who is on a quest to become Mayor of Pasadena, California.

“Our audience members had a wonderful time at the ‘Big Bad Armo Show’ performances here on the East Coast,” said Hilda Hartounian, chair of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York. “Following a successful 75th anniversary gala celebration, our chapter wanted to continue our programming and have an enjoyable night of comedy before



The cast of the Big Bad Armo Show’s “A Holly Jolly” Christmas Presentation (Photo credit: Joyce Naltchayan Boghosian)

the end of the year. We appreciate the ‘Big Bad Armo Show’ cast coming from the West Coast to entertain us for a fun weekend.”

“The ‘Holly Jolly Big Bad Armo Show’ is without a doubt such an adventurous and creative production that could not have come to fruition if it was not for partnering up with the Tekeyan Cultural Association, an organization that understands the value of both laughter and art, and the importance of keeping our culture relevant and alive in our generation,” said Tatouljian, who highlighted the more than 30 characters played during the performance. “Coming to perform in New York this time around was a little extra meaningful, as these past couple of years have been devastating, to say the least. It was comforting to relax and share laughter at all the ups and downs. As an Angelino, it was extra magical to walk out of the theater, after a sold-out night and walk through falling snow with a group of very funny and talented Armenian-American actors.”

The Tekeyan Cultural Association was established in 1947 in Beirut, Lebanon.



A scene from “Beast on the Moon” (Scott Rylander photo)

For Kalinoski, the Play’s the Thing

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

OSHKOSH, Wis. — Richard Kalinoski is not Armenian, yet three of his works — including the most famous — deal with tragic chapters of Armenian history.

“I’m proud of each one of them,” he said in a recent interview.

One, the multi-award-winning “Beast on the Moon,” written and performed hundreds of times since 1995, has been translated into more than a dozen languages. It deals with the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, when many young women became picture brides and married men they had not set eyes on in the US or Europe.

A subsequent play, “My Genius of Humanity,” regards the *nergakht*, or repatriation of the 1930s and 1940s, when Soviet Armenia presented itself as heaven on earth for Diasporan Armenians. Thousands of Armenians from all over the world flocked to Soviet Armenia, only to be regarded with suspicion, have their money confiscated or even exiled to Siberia to work in gulags.

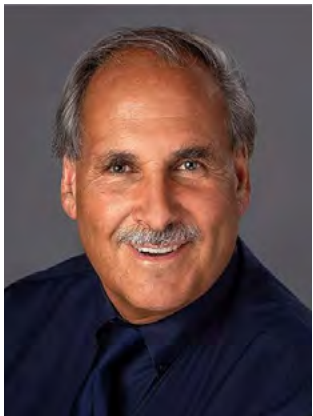
The play just finished an acclaimed production in Oshkosh.

Just Write

Kalinoski is a prolific writer, with several plays to his credit — about 23, adding that between “8-10 are viable.”

In a recent interview from his office at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, where he had been a director and resident playwright since 1998 (he just retired), he spoke about his writing process, as well as his connection with Armenian history and passion for writing about it.

Kalinoski said that he started to write plays in his teens and never stopped.



He studied at the UW-Whitewater. “I was an English major but had the opportunity to study part of the summer at Oxford University. ... There were two areas we were studying: 17th century poetry and the play King Lear. I took part in an outdoor reading of ‘King Lear’ and I told myself if Shakespeare could write plays, so could I,” he said with a chuckle.

Returning as a junior, he wrote a play called “Lifetime,” about a generational battle between a father and son. “I submitted that play and another that I wrote as well, I submitted to Carnegie Mellon University and they accepted me into their graduate program in playwrighting.”

“The last 30 years have been rewarding” in terms of creativity, he said.

Between 1973 and 1979, Kalinoski was married to an Armenian-American woman. “She wasn’t particularly interested in Armenian history, which is slightly ironic, but I was,” he noted.

One play he wrote about Armenians in America in a small community, “inspired by her grandparents, both of whom had survived the genocide,” helped him get into graduate school at Carnegie Mellon College “They [her grandparents] weren’t desperately old, but they were older,” he said. “My former wife’s grandfather established himself in a business in Racine, Wis. but he never learned to speak English. But his wife did and I spent a lot of time with her.”

continued on next page

ARPA International Film Festival Celebrates Silver Anniversary

HOLLYWOOD – 12-20-22 Arpa International Film Festival, a branch of the non-profit Arpa Foundation for Film, Music and Art (AFFMA), takes great pride in working toward recognizing the diverse tapestry of international talent and presenting it to an appreciative audience in the heart of Hollywood. The festival creates a dynamic forum for International Cinema with a special focus on the works of filmmakers who explore the issues of multi culturalism, war, exile, diaspora, dual identity, environmentalism and many others. Through film screenings, panel discussions, networking events, and closing night awards ceremonies, we strive to bridge cultural divides by fostering dialogue among different



Presenter Actress Angela Sarafyan

ethnicities, cultures, and lifestyles. Whether it be through feature films, documentaries, shorts or music videos, the possibilities are endless in discovering how many gifted filmmakers are playing there in the field of Independent Cinema.

Through the years, many industry greats have taken part in Arpa International Film Festival’s galas as honorees, presenters, emcees, special award recipients and attendees. Celebrities such as Howard Kazanjian, Hank Moonjean, Mark Martin, Cheech Marin, Vivica A. Fox, Francis Fisher, Mike Connors, Atom Egoyan, Marla Maples, Esai Morales, Leo Chaloukian, Sid Haig, Shorheh Aghdashloo, Edward James Olmos, Serj Tankian, Joe Berlinger, Terry George, Eric Esrailian, Mike Medavoy, Ed Asner, Ara Keshishian, Carl Weathers, Alexander Dinaleris, Barbara Carrera, Ronnie Carroll, Christine Kludjian, Edward James Olmos, Tippi Hedren, Bob Papazian, Jim Hirsh, Alanis Morissette, Kev Orkian Sonia Eddy, Eric Roberts, and many more.

This year, the AIFF streamed 80 films from 27 countries, hosted by the digital streaming platform Eventive and in Theaters. The Silver Anniversary of Arpa was celebrated at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, on November 20, honoring celebrities such as Michael Madsen, Terry George, Tom see ARPA, page 14



ARTS & CULTURE

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He continued, “They had children. The children eventually became adults and the adult children helped him out. He knew a few words but I have an image of him walking around the yard and grumbling in Armenian.”

“I’ve always looked at the Armenian struggle from a little more distance than a lot of Armenians because they have a different kind of emotional investment in it,” he said, such as “what happened to their parents or grandparents. If my plays are successful with audiences, it’s because I make the assumption that American audiences know nothing about Armenians. I think that’s mostly true. I have a whole lot of students who don’t know that Armenians are actually Armenians.”

“Beast on the Moon,” of course, is his most famous play. It has been translated into at least thirteen languages and has had long runs at theatres in Athens, Moscow (the Moscow Art Theatre), Buenos Aires, London and New York. In March 2010, “Beast” was installed as part of the permanent repertory of the Tallinn City Theatre, Estonia. In France, its success has been even more stellar; there have been several productions of the play in France including winning several Moliere awards in 2001, more than any other play.

Kalinoski said, he had researched the issue a long time. “I came upon the notion of an Armenian orphan girl, which is of course based on reality, in Istanbul, sometime after the cover of World War I or after, there were orphanages/holding places for orphan girls who were Armenian. Over time, I learned that some of these orphan girls were understood to be potential picture brides, who might in effect be imported to be a bride in the US,” he said. “My energy was all about the courage of this young woman.”

He noted that he ended up creating that character, Seta, by reading about accounts of real-life picture brides.

“While there was no individual person I was able to identify and know about,” he said, Seta is created out of “generalized historical accounts.”

The age difference (15 year old Seta and 23-year-old Aram) is a little unnerving. “In the play Seta is befuddled by the whole business, by how she got there. Aram, her would-be husband, is an industrious young man and he manages to find a way to bring her to the US and has expectations of her which initially are at least uncomfortable for her. I think the play does a fairly good job in showing that.”

He continued, “The play shows it takes years for this couple to come together.”

Kalinoski said he is expecting to receive confirmation that the play will have a new production in Paris in French.

‘My Genius of Humanity’

“My ‘Genius of Humanity,’” he said, is his most recent play on the Armenian experience and one which is undergoing further honing with different performances. It is about the Davidian family as they repatriate to Armenia from Michigan and get the shock of a lifetime. The matriarch, Nina, had lost her father to the Genocide and wanted to reclaim her heritage and homeland. Little could she and her family have imagined that they would be saying goodbye to any comfort and would need to fight for survival every day.

“In some ways I think ‘My Genius of Humanity’ is as good as ‘Beast on the Moon,’” Kalinoski said.

He said that the play came to be through a result of in-depth interviews with survivors of the experience.

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh recently put together the play, starring a former student and current Chicago ac-

tress, Andrea Uppling.

The play was staged in a hybrid format, in December, at the university’s Theater Department, with Kalinoski directing.

Since the production Kalinoski has been further honing the play, something he said is typical for a new play, when the words on the page come to life.

“It’s pretty fundamental to have it acted. In fact, 98 percent of the time, that’s really the starting place, usually starting with the reading,” Kalinoski said.



A scene from “Beast on the Moon” (Scott Rylander photo)

The first reading of the “Genius” happened in Fresno but then Covid hit and everything shut down. “The Theater is still trying to recover,” he said.

“Long story short, some 20 plus years when I started, I had a very talented student. I recruited her,” he said, a Chicago-based actress.

“She is remarkable. For me, it was transforming. The length and breadth of the



Andrea Uppling

main character, Nina Davidian, was shown because of her powerful performance,” he said. “I always want to give actors credit.”

In written answers, Uppling said, “As a 2001 graduate of the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh, I met Richard Kalinoski as a student in the Theatre Department. I was cast in the first play that he directed there. It was “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” and I played the role of Candy. It was a very exciting time for our Theatre Department to have such a distinguished

and celebrated playwright as our professor. It was only through reading Richard’s play, “Beast on the Moon,” that I became aware of the atrocities of the Armenian Genocide. It became a lesson for me as to the impact the arts have in bringing awareness to histories that should never be forgotten and the power that art can have in expanding our breadth of understanding. It was only, again, now 21 years later, through reading and participating so intimately in ‘My Genius of Humanity’ that I learned about, as

Kalinoski is also going to do a fundraiser to see if he can stage “Genius” again, this time as a full production.

Kalinoski’s third Armenian-themed play is “A Crooked Man,” based on Soghomon Tehlirian’s assassination of Talaat Pasha in Berlin.

“Instead of just documenting it, I decided to write a fictionalized play on that. It’s about an elderly, Armenian man who is very stubborn, does not have dementia but he is also not taking very good care of him-

self at his home and his daughter is trying to get him to agree to find some level of comfort in his life. He resist it. Ultimately his grandson befriends him,” he said.

In the play, the older man has a habit of going up on the roof, one which is not particularly safe. “The character is very idiosyncratic and vexing for the audiences but I think it’s a viable play.”

As for “Genius,” she said, “You ask me, ‘What have you taken away from your work in the play?’ I can only humbly respond from an actor’s point of view. The circumstances given to Nina, the Mother, Wife, Daughter that she is, can only be likened to the Greek Tragedies or heightened circumstances of a Shakespearean play. The pain, loss, love, mourning, searching, betrayal, devastation, and, finally, reclamation and redefining of home for Nina, and this family, goes beyond comprehension and yet it is all based in facts. As an artist, I feel that we unite our world through storytelling. Storytelling calls upon our divine thread: empathy. No one can deny the heartbreak of this story nor its fighting spirit. For me, those who watch or perform in it, all become Armenians in a collective cry and the triumph of spirit that lives on.”

Uppling is a 2001 UW Oshkosh graduate having received a BFA in Theatre and Communications. She is currently in Chicago, performing with local theater companies including with the Invictus Theater and Storefront Theater, where she starred in their recent production of “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf.”

The recent production of the “Genius” at Oshkosh got standing ovations every night.

“A play comes about for me if there is something that I can’t identify in a character where that character’s moral center is tested. I am always looking for characters whose dilemmas are considerable, who inspire me to pursue even further what their dilemmas are,” he said.

self at his home and his daughter is trying to get him to agree to find some level of comfort in his life. He resist it. Ultimately his grandson befriends him,” he said.

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In addition, he has two newer plays that have similar themes, this time American football.

“They couldn’t be more different,” he said.

‘Front Room’

There is a production pending of “Front Room” in Kosovo in February, about a mother-daughter. Mother is a hoarder and is unable to see the consequences of her hoarding. She and her daughter, a theater professor, “have this terrible love-hate relationship and the play explores that relationship.”

Along the way, in the play, the daughter finds a love interest and her mother tries to sabotage the relationship.

Again, the play came from Kalinoski’s life. “That play was very directly influenced by my wife’s mother. We were dating for 20 years and finally married in August 2022.”

He added, “There is seemingly no answer and I am fascinated by it. I have had to deal with the consequences of it.”

Kalinoski has taught theater or drama “most of my entire adult life,” he said. He was born and raised in Racine, Wis., and as a teenager was “obsessed” with playing basketball “but I was also writing poetry. Usually the two things don’t necessarily mesh.”

To find out more about Kalinoski and his works, visit www.richardkalinoski.com.

ARTS & CULTURE

ARPA International Film Festival Celebrates Silver Anniversary

ARPA, from page 12

Arnold, Eric Esrailian, DiaPooch Hall, Lord Gavin McLeod, Heather McComb, Scott Campbell, Angela Sarafian, Adrian Dev and others.

The evening also paid tribute to the five-year anniversary of the film "The Promise". The Emcees for the evening were none other than Fox 11 Good Day LA anchor Araksya Karapetyan and Fox 11 Entertainment anchor Amanda Salas. The Jury for the 25th Annual Film Festival were from the film industry: Anthony Grieco, David Uslan, JJ Caruth, Serj Tankian, Marc Butan, Yvette Amirian, Sherif Alabede and Roger Kupelian.

The following list is the 2022 Arpa International Film Festival's award Recipients:

Best Feature Narrative

"It's Spring"...Alexander Khachatryan (Armenia)

Best Director

"It's Spring..." directed by Roman

Musheghyan (Armenia)

Best Screenplay

"The Justice of Bunny King" screenplay by Sophie Henderson (New Zealand)

Best Feature-Length Documentary

"The Captain's Heart" directed by Simon Bang (Denmark)

Best Short Documentary

"Spokespeople" directed by Ryan Meke-nian (United States)

Best Short Film

"Lion's Cage" directed by Linus von Stumberg (Switzerland)

Best Animated Film

"The Record" directed by Jonathan Laskar (Switzerland)

Best Music Video

"Valerine" directed by Andrea VONJAKO Giacomini (United States)

Audience Award

"Car 24" directed by Matias Desiderio (United States)

Arpa is the recipient of \$500,000 donation from the Vezbi Super App.



Director Terry George and Producer Dr. Eric Esrailian



Arpa IFF Committee with three of the directors of the winning films. In the Center Producer, Lead Actor Alexander Khachatryan of Best Feature Film "It's Spring" and Audience Award winner "Car 24" Director, writer, Actor Matias Desiderio



State Sen. Anthony Portantino, Assembly member Adrin Nazarian and Actor, Singer Hovhannes Babakhanyan

Dr. Jerry Burger Discusses His Novel, *The Shadows of 1915*

FRESNO — Author Dr. Jerry Burger will speak about his book *The Shadows of 1915* on Friday, February 17, at 7 pm., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus. The event is part of the Armenian Studies

Program Spring 2023 Lecture Series and is co-sponsored by the Armenian Museum of Fresno.



Dr. Jerry Burger

Burger will be introduced by Fresno-native Dr. Robert Vartabedian, Emeritus President of Western Missouri State University (St. Joseph), who will also moderate a discussion on the book.

How long is the shadow of genocide? How does it affect the offspring of the survivors? And how do survivors and their families retain a belief in justice when atrocities go unpunished? These are some of the questions addressed in Jerry Burger's novel, *The Shadows of 1915*.

The story takes place in Central California in 1953, where Armenian immigrants and their families live one generation removed from the 1915 murder of more

than a million Armenians at the hands of the Turkish government. An encounter between the sons of a genocide survivor and some Turkish college students forces each of the main characters to make difficult decisions that pit loyalty to family and community against personal and legal standards of right and wrong. It is a story about a displaced group of people and the consequences of real historic events that have rarely been examined in fiction. It is also a story about culture, family, recovery from tragedy, and the nature of justice.

Burger is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Santa Clara University, where he was a member of the faculty from 1984 to 2018. He is an internationally recognized expert on the psychological processes that contribute to inhumane acts like atrocities and genocide. His research in this area was the subject of a *New York Times* editorial and was featured in a 60-minute broadcast of ABC News' "Primetime" and in the Discovery Channel documentary, "How Evil Are You?". His many presentations on the topic include an invited address before the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France.

Shadows of 1915 will be available for purchase at the event.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Texas Church Wins US Building of the Year 2022

By John Hill

NEW YORK (world-architects.com) — Saint Sarkis Armenian Church, located in the north Dallas suburb of Carrollton, has received the most votes in our poll for US Building of the Year 2022. Designed by David Hotson Architect, the church reaches far back in time and thousands of miles across the globe to link itself with Armenian traditions and people.

Saint Sarkis Armenian Church was consecrated on April 23, 2022, and held its first Sunday service one day later, on April 24, the traditional day for commemorating the 1.5 million victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. The small church — small especially in comparison to the megachurches littering the Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex — is far from Armenia, about 7,000 miles, but some members of the church’s growing congregation are descended from the Armenians who fled their home country after World War I.

The importance of history and tradition in the Armenian Orthodox Church extends to the design of Saint Sarkis Armenian Church, which derives its form from the 7th-century Saint Hripsime Church near the Armenian capital of Yerevan and memorializes the genocide in an image of the Armenian “tree of life” composed of ex-

(PHOTO: DROR BALDINGER)



Left: Saint Sarkis Armenian Church (Photo: Dror Baldinger); Right: Saint Hripsime Church, 618 AD (Photo courtesy of David Hotson Architect) 5. The daytime illumination of the church is enabled entirely by means of indirect light coves that reflect the strong Texas sunlight into the interior.

Furthermore, a Grasshopper script guaranteed each icon was unique and their distribution resulted in a legible overall image.

The abstraction of Saint Hripsime Church — itself an austere, monolithic mass built entirely of stone — involved matching three main materials on the exterior: precast concrete walls, glass fiber reinforced concrete light coves, and standing seam zinc roofing. Inside, references to the stone dome and vaults of the 7th-century



Texas plain. The western facade of Saint Sarkis memorializes each of the 1.5 mil-

lion victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide, an event that forced the ancestors of many members of the congregation from their ancient homeland. It is my hope that the visibility the church receives from this honor will help raise awareness in America of the history of the world’s most ancient Christian nation, and of the persecution of Armenian Christians that is still happening today in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

The US Building of the Year poll on American-Architects was open during the month of January and asked visitors to the website to pick their favorite building from the 40 Buildings of the Week featured in 20221. Saint Sarkis Armenian Church won by a considerable margin, tallying approximately 64% of the roughly 8,500 votes cast. The three runners-up, all with double-digit percentages of votes, are listed below, with links to the respective Buildings of the Week.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

FEBRUARY 6 — St. James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting, Father-Son Night. Monday, featuring a live presentation from Boston Iaido Dojo, established in 2003. Iaido, the way of the sword, is the art of drawing and using the traditional Japanese sword. Iaido is the second oldest martial art from Japan. Get ready for an exciting night. 6:15 p.m. Social, 7 p.m. Losh Kebab and Kheyima dinner. Dinner \$20.00. 465 Mt. Auburn Street Watertown. For more information look at St. James web site .New members welcome.

FEBRUARY 8 — Celebrating Contributions: Leadership Sharing Experiences, Wednesday at 5 p.m., virtually. Highlighting Storica Wines: Wines from Armenia paired with signature dishes from anoush’ella. Zack Armen, co-founder/president, Storica Wines: Wines from Armenia and Nina Festekjian, restaurateur, chef-owner, anoush’ella, InChu, Hum’oveh, Nu Burger & Kutz. Host: Cindy Fitzgibbon, WCVB TV5. To register and for details, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

FEBRUARY 10 — Feast of St. Vartan Cultural Program of Music & Poetry under the patronage of H.E. the Most Reverend Mikael Mouradian, Bishop of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg in the USA and Canada, with keynote speaker Aram Arkun, Executive Director Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada, Managing Editor Armenian Mirror-Spectator, Friday, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont MA. Reception follows, open to the public.

FEBRUARY 18 – Sts. Vartanantz Poon Paregentan (“Great Carnival”) Dinner-Dance. A terrific family evening of great food, music and dancing. Featuring the fabulous Ani Ensemble – Joe Kouyoumjian, Oud; Dave Anisbigian, guitar and vocals; Art Chingris, Dumbeg; and Ara Jeknavorian, clarinet. Also featuring the latest dance tunes from Armenia and America Pop music. 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. 5:30 p.m. Adults: \$30. Students: \$15. Children under 6: free. Paid reservation must be made by February 14 either on the church website, www.stsvartanantz.com or by contacting Corie Horan, coriehoran@gmail.com.

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 Gyoalyan - “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.

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

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



US Building of the Year 2022: Saint Sarkis Armenian Church, Carrollton (TX) by David Hotson Architect. (Image: World-Architects, photographs by Dror Baldinger)

actly 1.5 million circular icons — each one unique, like the lives that were taken over a century ago.

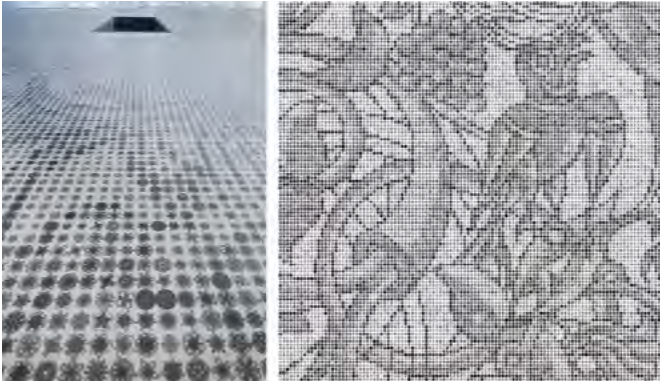
As we described the church when it was featured as US Building of the Week on April 25, just two days after its consecra-

tion, the design “melds ancient forms and contemporary technologies to express the church’s Armenian roots and memorialize the victims of the genocide.” The image on the west facade, seen above, was printed by the Italian company Fiandre in high resolution on UV-resistant porcelain panels.

church are rendered as double-curved plaster vaults made with glass-fiber-reinforced gypsum: historically inspired shapes and modern surfaces created with contemporary means.

On hearing the news that Saint Sarkis Armenian Church was voted US Building of the Year 2022, architect David Hotson sent us these words:

“It is an honor to have the Saint Sarkis Armenian Church receive this acknowledgement, an honor that I share with the full project team and with all of those who voted for the project, most especially those throughout the Armenian Diaspora for whom this building has a special significance. The Saint Sarkis Church reaches back fourteen centuries to connect with the architecture of the world’s most ancient Christian nation, even as it brings a contemporary spatial sensibility and progressive construction technology to a suite of buildings overlooking the vast



Detailed views of the icons on the west facade. (Photos: Dror Baldinger)

tion, the design “melds ancient forms and contemporary technologies to express the church’s Armenian roots and memorialize the victims of the genocide.” The image on the west facade, seen above, was printed by the Italian company Fiandre in high resolution on UV-resistant porcelain panels.

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Chef George Vutetakis's Beloved Carrot Cake

Chef George Vutetakis's Beloved Carrot Cake

BLOOMINGTON HILLS, Mich. — Chef and author George Vutetakis learned “the language of food” as a young boy in his Greek grandmother’s kitchen. It was there that he was first exposed to the value of cultural traditions in cooking. His discoveries later continued with his travels to India, where he learned traditional food preparation methods. Whether he’s discussing vegetarian cultures and traditions (he studied in India as a teenager), the benefits of green papaya (it’s a good source for papain, a natural digestive enzyme), or countertops (the more, the better), for Vutetakis the bottom line is quality.

Vutetakis is an award-winning vegan chef/restaurateur who has been an integral part of the plant-based food revolution since the early 1980s. His business acumen and entrepreneurial approach have brought success to many projects. In addition to his consulting company site, <http://vegtraditions.com/>, he shares his vast food knowledge and delicious vegan recipes on his popular blog and his cookbook, *Vegetarian Traditions: Favorite Recipes From My Years at the Legendary Inn Season Cafe*.

He is a leader in plant-based food manufacturing and regenerative soil-to-shelf applications. He has broad experience with scaled consumer packaged goods (CPG) ecosystems and vertically integrated agriculture-to-consumer product design, as well as multi-process food design for thermal, cold-chain and food service applications.

Using time-honored techniques as his guide, he weaves the Mediterranean and Indian flavors of his youth into many of his extraordinary plant-based dishes. His reputation as a leader in the creation of delicious, healthy, and innovative vegetarian cuisine using fresh, unadulterated ingredients flourished as chef and owner at the award-winning Inn Season Cafe in Royal Oak, Michigan. After nearly two decades, he sold the restaurant and began writing and teaching.

At the time, Vutetakis delved into the restoration and renovation of historic homes, taught Food is Medicine programs with cardiologist Dr. Michael Dango-vian, and launched his website/blog featuring stories and incredible vegan recipes. In 2011, Jack Aronson of Garden Fresh Gourmet, the largest fresh salsa company in the world, hired him as director of research and development. This led to plant-based product development and design across the packaged-food industry.

As an industry consultant under CJB and Associates, and co-founder of Chef-to-Shelf, and Vegano Foods, he has worked as a cross-platform consultant spe-



cializing in clean label, organic, and plant-based products. For information, go to: <http://vegtraditions.com/chef-george>

“We must remember that one hundred years ago, all food was organic,” he says while discussing his preference for shopping at local farmers’ markets. “Quality ingredients are always the secret to great food.” Information about Vutekakis and his wife Sara’s projects and the latest release of *Vegetarian Traditions: Favorite Recipes From My Years at the Legendary Inn Season Café* is available at: <http://thevegguy.com/>

Beloved Carrot Cake

“Although my cookbook contains 150 of my favorite recipes during my tenure at Inn Season Cafe, this much-loved Carrot Cake is not one of them. This was the most popular dessert for many decades, and is the most requested recipe on my blog. It is a decadent, moist cake with a healthy density that works well as a sheet cake, round-layered cake, or even a wedding cake.” He adds, “Vegan frostings have evolved as better and better vegan ingredients are available. This frosting recipe uses vegan cream cheese. My preferences are Miyoko’s Cream Cheese, for a tangy cream cheese frosting, or Violife Original Cream Cheese for a mellower version.”

DRY INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/3 cups organic all-purpose flour
- 1 cup organic whole wheat pastry flour
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon cardamom
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice
- 1/4 teaspoon cloves
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

WET INGREDIENTS:

- 6 tablespoons flax seed meal
- 3/4 cup warm water
- 1 1/2 cups coconut sugar
- 1 cup vegan butter
- 1 cup plant-based milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups organic carrots, peeled and shredded
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 cup toasted walnuts, chopped

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 350° F. Line two nine-inch spring form or cake pans with parchment paper. Or lightly oil the sides of a parchment-lined half-sheet baking pan.

Put all dry ingredients into a large bowl and whisk together. Set aside.

In another bowl, whisk together flaxseed meal and water. Beat in coconut sugar and plant butter. Add plant milk, vanilla, and carrots, and mix until combined. Add dry mix and to wet mix, stir vigorously for one minute to develop the gluten in the flour (do not overbeat). Fold in raisins and walnuts. Pour equal amounts into each baking pan.

Bake for 25 minutes, or until a toothpick comes clean out of the center of the cake. Remove from oven. Separate cake from pan by running a knife around the outside edge then turn over onto cake rack. Remove parchment and cool completely.

Cream Cheese Frosting

- 8 oz. vegan cream cheese
- 1/4 cup plant butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups organic powdered sugar, sifted
- 1 cup toasted walnuts, chopped

In a medium bowl, beat together the cream cheese and plant butter. Add vanilla and powdered sugar, and whip until smooth. Apply frosting to the top of the first cake layer. Place the second layer onto the first, and then frost. Garnish with chopped walnuts. Serve cold or room temperature.

For this recipe, go to:

<https://onlyplantbasedfoods.com/recipes/vegan-sour-cream-carrot-cake>

For Chef’s Vegan Recipe Index, go to:

<https://thevegetarianguy.com/recipe-index/>

ORDER TODAY: *Vegetarian Traditions: Favorite Recipes From My Years at the Legendary Inn Season Cafe* Paperback, June 2, 2022, \$39.95: at: https://www.amazon.com/Vegetarian-Traditions-Favorite-Recipes-Legendary/dp/0983110727/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1656927671&sr=1-3

Kindle version: *Vegetarian Traditions: Favorite Recipes From My Years at the Legendary Inn Season Cafe*, 100% Vegan, March 2, 2022, \$9.99 at:

https://www.amazon.com/Vegetarian-Traditions-Favorite-Recipes-Legendary-2022-100-ebook/dp/B09TV21L22/ref=sr_1_3?crid=2UONSVSEI-142W&keywords=vegetarian+traditions&qid=1656927671&s=books&sprefix=vegetarian+traditions%2Cstripbooks%2C140&sr=1-3

COMMENTARY

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SINCE 1932



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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Atamian, Artsvi Bakhchinyan,
Florence Avakian, Christine Vartanian
Datian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Philippe
Raffi Kalfayan, Ken Martin, Gerald
Papasian, Benjamin Poghosyan, Suren
Sargsyan, Harut Sassounian, Hagop
Vartivarian

REGIONAL CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Ani Duzdabanyan-
Manoukian, Kevork Keushkerian,
Michelle Mkhlian
YEREVAN: Raffi Elliott
BERLIN: Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
PARIS: Jean Eckian
SAN FRANCISCO: Kim Bardakian
CAIRO: Maydaa Nadar

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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EDITORIAL

The Cracks in Israel's Toxic Relations with Armenia



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

When cornered in this recent incident, the Armenians, who trace their history in the Holy City to the sixth century AD, reminded their attackers, who asked a group in the Armenian Quarter to leave the country, that this was their neighborhood. The attackers shouted back, "You don't have a neighborhood here. This is our country. Get out." (See story on Page 1.)

This is not a new phenomenon, as these attacks have been taking place for many years. This new surge is the reflection of the new extremist Israeli government, some of whose members come from the same xenophobic quarters as the assailants. While Palestinian youth are sentenced to long prison terms for having thrown stones, the police stations only present a revolving door for such settler attackers.

Since the Genocide and the accompanying deportations, the Jerusalem Armenian community had been holding steady at 15,000-strong, sometimes numbering even higher. The fact that the community has shrunk today to fewer than 1,500 indicates that indeed, they "don't have a neighborhood here."

Armenians and Jews have been bound together by fate as two victims of mass genocides in the 20th century. And this bond is strong, despite the divergence of their politics over the years. The fact that the Israeli government has refused to recognize the Armenian Genocide angers the majority of Jews inside Israel and around the world, as it does Armenians.

During the recent 44-Day War, Israel was a partner in crime with Azerbaijan, not only by providing deadly drones to the Baku government, but also sometimes operating those drones, which killed thousands of Armenians. In one instance, the manufacturer of the Israeli drones Aeronautics Ltd., was caught red-handed in 2017 demonstrating the power of their suicide drones by sending them into Armenia to attack army positions as part of its sales pitch, and only received a slap on the wrist.

Despite this alignment with Azerbaijan, after the incident, Armenia recognized Israel's clout and political influence in the region. Thus, it took a calculated risk and returned its ambassador to Israel, despite the concerns of the Armenian communities in the Arab world and that of Iran, one of Armenia's only friendly neighbors.

It turns out that the Armenians have become collateral damage for Israel, both domestically and internationally, as the religious extremists have created an identity crisis for Israel. They insist on the need to define who is a Jew, and therefore who is entitled to become a citizen of Israel. On the other hand, Armenia has fallen on the wrong side of politics as Iran's friend, a country with whom new (and former) Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu is itching to engage in a major confrontation.

Netanyahu has returned to power by cobbling together a coalition of ultra-Orthodox and xenophobic parties. This kind of collusion is an explosive one and has the potential to create both domestic problems and tensions in working with the Biden administration.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is visiting Israel and the region at this tense time, is pledging, like all US diplomats, Washington's ironclad commitment to Israel's "security,"

which is a license for Mr. Netanyahu to enter into any conflict, pulling in the US behind it.

In an interview with the *Times of Israel*, Thomas Nides, the US ambassador to Israel, said, "The United States hopes Mr. Netanyahu can help to avoid actions that will make cooperating with the Biden administration more difficult."

The ambassador, continuing his comments, added: "It is unclear how much control Mr. Netanyahu has over this coalition, which functions with a razor-margin majority in parliament, or whether he will have to accommodate its most conservative members to remain in power."

The prime minister's answer to that is: "They came to me; I did not go to them."

As if the activities and religion-driven ideologies of the extremist groups were not enough, Mr. Netanyahu is on a campaign to reform the judiciary, weakening the power of the country's Supreme Court, which is quite independent, through giving authority to the parliament to overrule that body's decisions. This will erode the foundations of democracy, claim liberal Israelis. The first beneficiary of that change will be Netanyahu himself, who has been indicted on three cases of bribery and fraud, which could potentially go before the Supreme Court.



This move has alarmed the Israelis who have resorted to protest marches with more than 100,000 participants. The action has reverberated all the way to New York, where crowds gathered in Washington Square, chanting, "Democracy now and for all" and "Fascism is not OK."

It is apparent that this xenophobic wave is not directed particularly towards Armenians but all citizens of Israel. That is why Amir Tibon has written in *Ha'aretz*, a column whose title says it all: "Netanyahu promised order. Instead, he brought chaos."

As a sign of instability, tensions with Palestinians are rising, with Mr. Netanyahu warning even tougher measures, while Palestinians, particularly the 2 million in the Gaza Strip, live in a virtual prison camp. There are 4,450 Palestinian prisoners in Israel, including 160 children, 32 women and 530 "administrative detainees," meaning incarcerated without charges. Most are serving long sentences just for having thrown stones at police. Making their lives more miserable does not guarantee peaceful lives for the Israelis.

Since the new election has caused serious domestic fragmentation in Israel, the new prime minister seems like he is intending a major escalation in the region to rally the nation around him.

Mr. Netanyahu had very tense relations with the Obama administration over the nuclear deal with Iran. President Obama's intent was to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions through negotiations, while Mr. Netanyahu preferred a preemptive strike. The see CRACKS, page 18



COMMENTARY

A Question of Terminology And More: Corridors and Transit Routes

By Jirair Libaridian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On January 19, 2023, the author gave an interview to the Azerbaijani language service of the RFE/RL, the focus of which was the argument presented in the article below, not yet published at the time. The understanding was that the 18-20-minute interview would be released without any editing that would change the sense of the interview. That service used a two-minute segment from that interview as part of its news program and ignored the more substantive segment of the Nakhichevan corridor. After the posting of this article on the Mirror-Spectator website, the RFE/RL Azerbaijani service posted the full transcript of the interview on its website (<https://www.azadliq.org/a/jirayr-libaridyan/32237504.html>).

One of the thorny issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan, if not the thorniest, is a demand by Azerbaijan for what it refers to as a “corridor” that would connect its southwestern provinces to its Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan, an exclave separated by Armenian territory. That corridor would run through the southern Meghri district of Armenia.

The specifications regarding the corridor have changed; and it appears that Baku may be demanding full or quasi-full control over the portion of land that would constitute that passageway, at the expense of Armenia’s sovereignty.

Paragraph 9 of the tripartite November 9, 2020, Cease-fire Statement that ended the 44-day war, signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, stipulates the following: “The Republic of Armenia shall guarantee the security of transport connections between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in order to arrange unobstructed movement of persons, vehicles and cargo in both directions. The Border Guard Service of the Russian Federal Security Service shall be responsible for overseeing the transport connections.”

The wording of the “unobstructed movement” clause makes clear two basic characteristics regarding these transport connections:

- 1.The guarantor of the security for the connections is the Republic of Armenia; and that is so because the lands that will offer the connections are in Armenia, under Armenian sovereignty. Yet Russia will have some kind of oversight responsibility for these connections; and,
- 2.There will be some kind of a regime on these connections that will facilitate the transport.
- 3.The clause refers to more than one connection, although the disagreements are often presented as applying

to one such connection or corridor.

The first observation in this respect is that the use of the term “corridor” for such transport connections is not appropriate; it is also harmful. Had the signatories of the Cease-fire Statement intended the connections to be “corridors,” they would have used that term in the Statement, which they have readily done to characterize the Armenia-Karabakh connection. Transport connections, as is used in the Statement, or transport routes are less ominous terms and facilitate discussion or negotiations on the subject.

Nonetheless, by using the term “corridor” the Nakhichevan connection(s), Baku, and often Ankara, are presuming and are aiming at creating an equivalence between the predicament of Nagorno Karabakh and that of Nakhichevan.

This is a false equivalence. Karabakh and Nakhichevan have different needs, exist in very different realities; and they do not face the same threats and dangers.

1.Nakhichevan does not have a history of being blockaded by Armenia as Nagorno Karabakh has been by Azerbaijan more than once. Karabakh was blockaded even before the start of the first war in 1991. At least during the first phases of the first war, when Armenia was trying to convince Baku to end its military aggression against Karabakh and it was still possible to do so, Armenia offered to keep its roads open between Western Azerbaijan and

ONE WAY TO APPROACH THE PROBLEM OF THE NAKHICHEVAN TRANSPORT ROUTE IN QUESTION IS TO ASK A SIMPLE QUESTION: WHAT PROBLEM IS THAT TRANSPORT ROUTE SUPPOSED TO RESOLVE?

Nakhichevan. It was Baku that refused to take that offer.

2. Armenia has never threatened to bomb or actually bombed the population or structures of Nakhichevan at any time, as opposed to Azerbaijan’s treatment of Nagorno Karabakh, when it used its air force and artillery to shell villages and towns in Karabakh. There were border skirmishes early in the conflict but the Nakhichevan border was quiet throughout the two wars.

3. Nakhichevan cannot be blockaded by Armenia as Karabakh was and as currently is by Azerbaijan. Nakhichevan has borders with Turkey and Iran which gives it access to two neighbors of Azerbaijan and offer options to avoid humanitarian crises, should there be any action by Armenia. These borders have been used for decades. In fact, both borders are extremely active, and last year Baku signed an agreement with Iran to develop existing routes that bypass Armenia. Karabakh is an enclave, surrounded by Azerbaijani lands; Karabakh has no such option but the Lachin corridor.

4.Finally, Nakhichevan has a legal status within Azerbaijan as an autonomous republic, a status that is enshrined in many treaties, including the 1921 Treaty of Kars. Azerbaijan is refusing to recognize even the Soviet era status of Nagorno Karabakh as an autonomous region.

Azerbaijan’s request for an expedited transport regime is understandable. That could be achieved through various mechanisms; Yerevan seems to have offered such a formula; there could be others. But it’s not reasonable for Azerbaijan to demand more, such as sovereignty over a corridor, when the problem can be resolved without demanding something Armenia or any other sovereign

country cannot possibly cede. Especially since such a concession is justified neither by any need nor by the terminology used in the November 9, 2020, Statement.

We should also take note of the fact that the Lachin corridor, which Baku would like to see replicated for Nakhichevan, remains under Azerbaijani sovereignty, and the Russian presence is problematic in two ways: (a) Russian peacekeepers have no clear mandate, not even to remove demonstrators that are obstructing these forces from doing their job, securing a functioning transport connection between Karabakh and Armenia; and (b) According to the November 9 Statement, Baku can request that Russian forces leave the territory of Azerbaijan without offering any alternative transport security guarantees, except for Baku may offer.

Since last December Azerbaijan has closed the Lachin road, Karabakh’s only connection with Armenia and the outside world, creating a humanitarian crisis in the enclave. It is not possible to take seriously Baku’s explanation that the blockers are environmentally sensitive Azerbaijani citizens concerned with mining issues in Karabakh. It has been a long time since any public demonstration has been allowed in a country whose economy depends on the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources. Obviously, Azerbaijan is using the blockade of Karabakh as a form of pressure on Karabakh Armenians as well as a tactic against Armenia in their negotiations, including on the Nakhichevan transport route. By doing so, Baku is proving the point of this article, that there is no comparison between Armenian and Azerbaijani policies and there is no equivalence between the threats to the people of Karabakh compared to threats to the people of Nakhichevan.

It often helps to resolve issues by disentangling over-arching, ill-defined, ominous sounding words that are open to many interpretations and sometimes invested with mystical powers, such as the word “corridor.” One way to approach the problem of the Nakhichevan transport route in question is to ask a simple question: What problem is that transport route supposed to resolve? The answer has two parts.

The first is to facilitate the movement of citizens of Azerbaijan to move from one part of their country to the other. The second is the use of Armenian routes for international trade and travel. This is not the first time such issues have arisen between two countries. Neither requires Armenia ceding sovereignty over any parts of its territory. World experience offers common and proven solutions to these concerns that do not require countries to cede sovereignty.

There are additional problems in the way of a solution to the transit route(s) problem. First, when talking about a Nakhichevan corridor, Baku may have in mind one or more, additional strategic goals beyond the two needs commonly defined — the expedited movement of Azerbaijani citizens and the fostering of international trade and travel. Such goals may be suspected but have not been stated. Baku has not considered common sense and tried solutions offered by the international experience; it has also rejected at least one possible formula proposed by Yerevan that could, possibly, have been improved upon. We can presume that Baku is trying to solve a problem that is neither articulated nor reasonable. That would not be consistent with Baku’s declared goal of seeing a peaceful, good neighborly and cooperation-based future in the region. Second, it is not all that evident that Armenia is ready to comply fully with the letter of the November 9 Statement clause on the transport routes and, if that is the case, such unwillingness runs counter to the goals to achieve stability and security that it needs desperately.

The Cracks in Israel’s Toxic Relations with Armenia

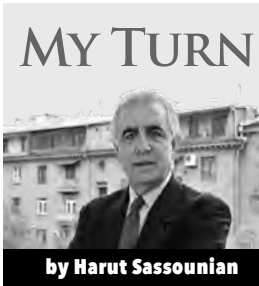
CRACKS, from page 17
Trump administration withdrew from the nuclear deal, allowing Iran to continue developing its nuclear program, and thus providing a *casus belli* to Mr. Netanyahu. On a broader scale, the Arab Spring offered two choices to the Middle Eastern nations: either suffer the fate of Saddam Hussein and Qaddafi or make peace with Israel. And all the kings, princes, potentates and emirs who cherish their golden bathtubs more than the Palestinian cause, lined up for the Abraham Accords and began establishing diplomatic relations with Israel. The only pariah who was left out was Iran, whose time seems to be up at this point as Israeli drones are hitting military installations in that country.

It seems the theocracy in power now in Israel is ready to confront the Shia theocracy in Iran. Recently, three unprecedented war games were conducted with the combined forces of the US and Israel. Visits to the region by CIA Director William Burns and Secretary of State Blinken seem to lay the groundwork for an escalation rather than taming Israel. Azerbaijan, which just this month sent its first ambassador to Israel, and Turkey, have been watching with whetted appetites as they would be stakeholders of the loot from an Iran-Israel war. President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan has been openly laying claim not only to the territory of the Republic of Armenia but also to northern Iran.

Even if Armenia is not part of Israel’s war plans, it will become one of the unintended casualties as a friend of Iran. Incidentally, Iran has openly challenged any claim on Armenia’s territory, a defiance whose impact will become questionable should war break out. Mr. Netanyahu has his hands full. The rise of religious extremism is a challenge to Israel’s democracy, before being a threat to Armenians, Christians and Arabs in the country. If he can manage the chaos, which is of his own making, inside and outside Israel and maintain healthy relations with the US, that will come to prove his extraordinary skills in statesmanship.



COMMENTARY



MY TURN

Israeli TV Spews Repulsive Azeri Propaganda Against Armenia & Iran, Part 1

On January 27, Israel’s international TV station, i24NEWS, aired a half-hour program full of falsehoods to glorify Azerbaijan’s relations with Israel and vilify Armenia, Iran and Russia. This scandalous program had nothing to do with journalism, and everything to do with Azerbaijan’s notorious “Caviar Diplomacy.”

Here are excerpts from the TV program which I have transcribed. My comments are in brackets:

The narrator, Israeli journalist Henrique Cymerman, said: “Azerbaijan has problematic neighbors, especially Vladimir Putin’s Russia in the North and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s Iran in the South. Yet, its main historical enemy is another neighbor, Armenia, a country with a Christian majority that has clashed with Azerbaijan in two major wars, causing thousands of victims. In the first war of Nagorno-Karabagh in 1991, Armenia, backed by Russia, [first lie] managed to conquer 10,000 square kilometers in the border zone, a region the size of Lebanon. The official objective was to create a buffer zone. For Azerbaijan, 2020 was the year of victory in the second Karabagh war. Pres. Ilham Aliyev’s army reconquered all areas [second lie] occupied by the Armenians only to find dozens of villages and small towns completely destroyed and booby-trapped. [Third lie]. Such was the case in Khodaafarin area, just a few meters from the Iranian border on the banks of Arax River. In this scenario, Iran supported Armenia [fourth lie] and Israel supported Azerbaijan.”

The reporter interviewed Mubarak Qurbanli, Azerbaijan’s Minister of Religious Affairs, who said: “Armenia seized our lands. [Fifth lie]. It took a huge heroic effort for our army to win them back in the last war. The Azerbaijani people know that during this war, Iran was on the side of Armenia. [Sixth lie]. So you can understand these unpleasant feelings, not towards the people, but towards the Iranian regime.... Iran reproaches Israel it seems from the point of view of Orthodox Islam. But, where was Iran for 30 years when Armenia, violating all international laws [seventh lie], occupied Azerbaijani lands, including the Iranian border. Why did Iran remain silent then?” [Eighth lie].

The narrator continued: “The ceasefire was finally achieved by Vladimir Putin. At the liberation celebration in Baku, the army viewed the offensive drones it had acquired from Israel and which caused many casualties among Armenian forces [shameful boast about killing Armenians]. One of the strong men in the Baku government is Hikmet Hajiyev, Pres. Aliyev’s top advisor and his foreign policy strategist. He claims that Israel is one of the first countries that recognized Azerbaijan’s independence in 1991 and delivered news that angered Tehran.” Hajiyev said: “The President of Azerbaijan and National Parliament made a decision to open a full-fledged Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the State of Israel, and with the opening of the Azerbaijan Embassy in Israel we will be able to manage to bring to a quantitatively new level the Israel-Azerbaijan strategic partnership.” [Hajiyev did not mention that due to Pres. Aliyev’s fear of a backlash from Islamic States, Azerbaijan opened an Embassy in Tel Aviv only in 2022—almost 30 years after Israel opened its Embassy in Baku in 1993. And then, to soften the negative reaction of Islamic states, Azerbaijan opened a representative office in Ramallah, the West Bank].

The reporter then added: “The closer the strategic relation between Baku and Jerusalem is, the more Tehran threatens both countries. In a video broad-

cast by the Islamic Republic of Iran, it clearly defined that the path to the Holy Mosque of Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem passes through the capital of Azerbaijan. It is the first time that Tehran has threatened the two countries, saying ‘you are digging your graves. Anyone who defies Iran will be destroyed.’ Tehran also attacks Israel’s new Arab partners that support the Abraham Accords: the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and even Saudi Arabia.... This is one of the most explosive borders in the world. On this side, we are in Azerbaijan which is a secular Muslim country, a strategic ally of Israel, and there we can see the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran which defines the U.S. and Israel as ‘the big Satan and the little Satan.’ According to Iran, the road through Jerusalem passes through Baku, the Capital of Azerbaijan. In October 2022, the Iranian army decided to launch an act of intimidation against Azerbaijan accusing its Northern neighbor of being agents of Israel. Thousands of Iranian soldiers crossed the Arax River on the border between the two states with tanks, planes, helicopters and military trucks. The Iranian army also dropped hundreds of paratroopers over the border area. There were dozens of videos of military maneuvers which showed time and time again, the target of their missiles: The Jewish State’s Star of David. Tehran points to the growing ties between Baku and Jerusalem.” Then a video is shown of an Iranian General saying: “We are turning at the crossing of the Arax River on the border with Azerbaijan so that they will take us seriously. We do not accept the presence of Zionists next door.”

The i24NEWS program continued: “Many of the military drills took place on the Iranian side of the river, but at times, there were air and ground infiltrations within Azerbaijani territory. Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev responded to Iranian Generals with a tweet that enraged Tehran: A photo of the leader of Azerbaijan embracing the Israeli Harop type kamikaze drone. Azerbaijan bought the SkyStriker and LORA drones from Israeli companies Elbit and Israel Aerospace Industries.”

The journalist then interviewed Efraim Sneh, a former Israeli minister, who is described as “the architect of the alliance between Israel and Azerbaijan.” He said: “I recognized the importance of friendly Azerbaijan, given its very close proximity to Iran and the fact that a big part of Iran is Azeri. [Ninth lie]. I thought this is a case for us to establish a strong, sound bridge between Israel and Azerbaijan.... The Azeri people took a major role in the combat against Nazi Germany. Hundreds of thousands of Azeris who went to the war against Hitler during the ‘Great Patriotic War,’ didn’t return home. They fell in the battlefield in Europe and Germany. And this is something that a Jew can never forget. We remain always grateful for the contribution of Azerbaijan to the defeat of the Nazis.” [Tenth lie. The Israeli Minister seems unaware that fighting for Nazi Germany were 70,000 Azeris who participated in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising. Hitler called these Azeris his reliable allies].

The narrator continued: “During our journey along the 700-kilometer border, we saw other Israeli technologies being used to surveil the Iranian side, for example, high-precision cameras and very sophisticated electronic sensors. According to several sources, these systems support operations conducted by special units and Israeli secret agents who infiltrate Iran to fight against its nuclear projects. It’s a delicate surgical fight, according to the international press. Israel permanently maintains pilots of its Air Force in Azerbaijan as well as several [US] F-35 fighter jets, the fifth generation of combat aircraft considered to be the most sophisticated on the planet. Following the Iranian drills, an F-35 apparently infiltrated Iranian airspace to assess the efficiency of its anti-aircraft system.” [If true, this is a clear admission that Israel has violated its agreement with the United States not to transfer the F-35’s to another country].

[Part 2: To be continued next week]

Maine Voices: World Leaders Can Stop Azerbaijan in Its Tracks. Start with Sanctions

By Judy Saryan

PORTLAND, Maine (pressherald.com) — Azerbaijani “eco-activists” have now blocked the only road that links the outside world to Nagorno-Karabakh, known as Artsakh to the Armenians, for more than 40 days.

Artsakh is a small piece of land, not much larger than the size of Rhode Island, that is connected to Armenia by a narrow corridor. The freedom of movement of Armenians in and out of Artsakh has been blocked.

Only the International Committee of the Red Cross can deliver an infinitesimal amount of food and medicine to 120,000 Armenians living in Artsakh, including 30,000 children. Gas used for heating during the cold winter months has been cut off several times. The same is true of electricity and the internet. Schools have had to shut down because of lack of food and heat.

The goal of the blockade is clear: to terrorize the Armenians and force them to leave their homeland.

Azerbaijan started a war in the fall of 2020 that lasted 44 days. With the help of Turkey and advanced weaponry including drones, Azerbaijan won the war and took a large swath of land from Artsakh. The war ended in a cease-fire agreement, which guaranteed free movement in and out of

Artsakh through the now-blocked corridor.

Azerbaijan has broken the cease-fire agreement several times by continuing to hold and torture prisoners of war, attacking sovereign Armenian territory and blocking the road.

The “eco-activists” claim that Artsakh is illegally operating a mine that is causing pollution. This is a cruel, ironic twist on the whole question of environmental protection. When it comes to the Artsakh region, the government has created and weaponized the activists in order to hold the Armenian population hostage.

Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan, is demanding the creation of a new corridor, cutting Armenia in two, which will be under Azerbaijani control. This goes way beyond the cease-fire agreement and would not be in the interests of the West, let alone Armenia. Yet Aliyev said in a New Year’s Eve message: “The opening of Zangezur Corridor will happen whether Armenia wants it or not.” This is not eco-activism. This is terrorism.

History has demonstrated a close link between the colonizers and the destruction of the environment. The indigenous Armenians of Artsakh have been much more protective of the land than the Azerbaijanis, who have an abysmal record of environmental stewardship.

This same situation holds true in Turkey, which participated in the 2020 war against Artsakh, providing direct military assistance, weaponry and mercenaries. For over 100 years, Turkey has been destroying the cultural monuments, land and rivers of the former indigenous Armenian inhabitants and covering the evidence with the dammed

water that has buried entire ancient cities, like the city of Hasankeyf.

From 1915 to 1923, the Turks carried out a systematic genocide against the western Armenians living on their ancestral homeland. Ever since, the Turks have dammed one river in western Armenia after another, destroying the native habitat and burying history. Today, the Azerbaijanis are attempting a second genocide of the Armenians using eco-activism as their cynical pretext.

The leaders of the world can do something to stop Azerbaijan from carrying out its plans. Start with sanctions.

Reinstate Section 907, passed by the U.S. Congress in the 1990s to prevent foreign aid to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan received over \$100 million in aid from the U.S. in 2019.

Instead of enforcing Section 907, the U.S. government provided a waiver that allows continued so-called “security” assistance to Azerbaijan even though the country has attacked the sovereign Republic of Armenia. Aid should be stopped immediately.

Second, employ the Magnitsky Act, which authorizes the U.S. government to sanction and freeze the assets of those found to be violating human rights and to ban them from coming into the U.S.

Time is of the essence. Sanction Azerbaijan.

(Judith Saryan, a resident of Georgetown, recently became the chairperson of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research. She is writing a memoir about her father and grandmother, both survivors of the Armenian genocide.)



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 despite international condemnation and sympathy.



How Much
Longer Must
the People
of Artsakh
Suffer?

The people of Artsakh have appealed for aid but diasporan Armenians hesitate, not knowing what can be done. 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 large families with many children whose fathers were killed during the 2020 Artsakh war. With our help these families can purchase much needed life-sustaining supplies. TCA has already sent an initial \$10,000. All money raised will be immediately transferred, with TCA paying all administrative fees.


**LIVES, AND THE VERY FUTURE OF
ARTSAKH AND ARMENIA ARE AT STAKE.**
The Time to Act is NOW!

Please donate as much as you can by making your donation online by clicking **HERE** or mail checks made out to the Tekeyan Cultural Association, memo: Artsakh Aid, to Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, or in Canada, 825 Manoogian, St-Laurent QC, H4L 1Z5. For more information, see <https://mirrorspectator.com/2023/01/05/tekeyan-cultural-association-launches-artsakh-crisis-aid-campaign/> or email tcadirector@aol.com.

Int’l Crisis Group Warns of
Real Danger of New War

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The threat of a third war between Armenia and Azerbaijan is very real, the International Crisis Group said in a report on Monday, January 30. “In three bursts of major fighting over the course of 2022, Azerbaijan gained ground in and around Nagorno-Karabakh and also challenged Armenia along its own border, moving troops into Armenian territory,” the ICG said. “Recently, a weeks-long blockade by Baku-backed Azerbaijani activists of the Lachin corridor, the only road to Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia, has left as many as 120,000 people there without medical and food supplies. Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts have stalled, and the EU has approved the deployment of a two-year monitoring mission to try to keep war from breaking out along the neighbors’ increasingly contentious border.” According to the organization, the European Union and its member states should do the following in order to avert another war and get peace talks back on track: — Most urgently, and via high-level diplomacy, the EU, in close collaboration with member states, should seek to persuade Azerbaijan to ensure free movement through the Lachin corridor so as to stave off a humanitarian crisis in Armenian-populated Nagorno-Karabakh. — The EU, as the best-positioned candidate to mediate between Azerbaijan and Armenia under present conditions, should redouble its efforts to set the goals and pace of negotiations – with the active engagement of member states. In partic-

ular, Brussels should encourage a direct dialogue between Baku and de facto authorities in Stepanakert. All should avoid framing mediation efforts as part of the Russian-Western standoff over the war in Ukraine. — As Brussels prepares to deploy the new two-year civilian monitoring mission to the region, it should prepare a flexible mission mandate that permits monitors to play essential roles in fostering communication and coordination between the two sides, as well as with Russia’s presence in the area. While Armenia has made clear it will cooperate, Brussels should also seek Azerbaijan’s buy-in so that EU monitors can have necessary access on both sides of the border. — Both for humanitarian reasons and as a signal to all parties of its good faith, Brussels (already the largest donor to South Caucasus countries) should provide additional funding to assist persons from both sides who have been displaced by fighting, including through vocational training, and support demining efforts. In developing an assistance package for displaced persons, it should include support for projects that promote inclusion of women and challenge stereotypes about their roles. 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.




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Mikael Mouradian
Bishop Of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg
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Mr. Aram Arkun
Managing Editor of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator
And Executive Director of the Tekeyan Cultural Association



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Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont, MA
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