

US Insists on ‘Immediate’ Reopening of Lachin Corridor

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The new US ambassador in Yerevan, Kristina Kvien, called for the immediate reopening of the Lachin corridor on Friday, March 10, as she visited an Armenian province adjacent to the sole road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Kvien posted on Twitter photographs of her and Syunik province Governor Robert Ghukasyan standing at an Armenian border checkpoint leading to the corridor that has been blocked by Azerbaijani government-backed protesters for the last three months.

“Syunik governor Ghukasyan reported the effects of the ongoing blockade, including the impact on hundreds of separated families,” she wrote. “The Lachin corridor should be opened immediately.”

The United States has repeatedly called on Baku to lift the road blockade that has caused serious shortages of food, medicine and other essential items in Karabakh.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken insisted on the restoration of “free and open commercial and private transit through the Lachin corridor” when he hosted talks between Armenia’s and Azerbaijan’s leaders in Munich on February 18.

The Azerbaijani side has dismissed such calls, also made by the European Union and Russia, claiming that the lifeline road is not blocked and that the protesters have the



US Ambassador Kristina Kvien visits a border checkpoint leading to the Lachin corridor, March 10, 2023, with Syunik Province Governor Robert Ghukasyan.

right to demand an end to “illegal” mining in Karabakh.

“We will continue to press this matter,” Louis Bono, the US special envoy for South Caucasus peace talks, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on Tuesday, March 7.

But he made it clear that the US is not considering imposing sanctions on Azerbaijan. “Sanctions would be counterproductive,” he said at the end of a visit to Yerevan.

Bono met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku earlier this week.

The US State Department spokesman,

Ned Price, reiterated on Thursday that Washington will do “everything we can” to support a peaceful settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

“We’re going to continue to do that by working bilaterally with these countries, trilaterally with Armenia and Azerbaijan, supporting their own efforts at dialogue and diplomacy, but also through all appropriate mechanisms to help these countries themselves conduct the diplomacy and reach the agreements that we hope that they will be able to do,” he said.

Armenia Spurns Leadership Position In Russian-Led Bloc

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia has refused to name a deputy secretary-general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in a further sign of its estrangement from the Russian-led military alliance.

An Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman declined to give any reason for the rebuff on Friday, March 10.

The development comes two months after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called off a CSTO military exercise that was scheduled to take place in Armenia this year. He again accused the alliance of refusing to defend Armenia against Azerbaijani military attacks in breach of its statutes.

Late last year, Armenia also turned down other CSTO member states’ offer to deploy monitors along its volatile border with Azerbaijan, citing their reluctance to acknowledge and condemn the “Azerbaijani aggression.”

Yerevan appealed to the CSTO for support during the September 2022 border clashes which left at least 224 Armenian soldiers dead. Armenian leaders later accused the alliance of ignoring the appeal in breach of its statutes.

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Yerevan Links Armenian-Azeri Peace Deal to Karabakh’s Security

By Karlen Aslanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia will not sign a peace treaty with Azerbaijan without negotiating security guarantees for Nagorno-Karabakh, a senior Armenian official said on March 10.

“There is no question that agreements to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh issue need to be reached,” Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, said in an interview. “And our understanding with our international partners is that the peace treaty could be finalized if there is progress on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, if there are guarantees of ensuring [the Karabakh Armenians’] security and rights, and if Armenia is certain that there will be no ethnic cleansing in Karabakh.”

Grigoryan said that such guarantees could include the establishment of a “demilitarized zone” around Karabakh or “international presence” in the Armenian-populated territory. He indicated that Baku and Yerevan have reached no agreements on that so far.

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Akçam Shares Research Revealing When Decision to Launch Genocide Was Made

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

FRESNO — Dr. Taner Akçam shared new revelations about the planning of the Armenian Genocide during a lecture at Fresno State University on March 3. Akçam, director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program at the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA, has discovered new telegrams and validated previously known documents sent by members of the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, or “İttihad” – in Turkish, İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti) political party during the First World War which shed new light on how and when the decision was taken to implement a full-scale annihilation of the Ottoman Armenian population.

Conflicting Theories on Intent

Akçam related how some of the leading scholars of the Armenian Genocide have disagreed on the extent to which the Genocide was premeditated. Vahakn Dadrian, known as the father of Armenian Genocide scholarship, and Akçam’s mentor,



Taner Akçam

believed that there was always a long-range goal to eliminate the Armenian people, and the First World War merely gave its perpetrators, CUP, the political party that ran the Ottoman Empire as an authoritarian one-party state from 1913-1918, the pretext and cover to enact their plans.

Other scholars, such as Ronald Suny and Donald Bloxham, have opposed this thesis, arguing that the decision to eliminate the Armenians was taken during the war in connection with the Russian defeat of the Ottoman military at the battle of Sarikamish on the Caucasus Front (January 1915), and the British and Allied assault on Gallipoli (March 1915), beginning a campaign which threatened to capture Constantinople. These scholars have argued that as the Ottomans began to see the Armenian population as an internal threat in a war that they were starting to lose, they resorted to drastic measures.

Akçam stated that both schools of thought were ultimately based on speculation, as there was not enough evidence at the time to really understand the development of the CUP’s “Final Solution.” While the evidence clearly pointed to genocidal intent and state-sponsored extermination, when and how the plan was decided upon was unclear, and scholars would make

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Pashinyan Warns of 'High Likelihood' of Border Escalation

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Tuesday, March 14, warned of the “high likelihood” of an escalation on the border with Azerbaijan and in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).

“There is a very high probability of an escalation both along Armenia’s border [with Azerbaijan] and in Nagorno-Karabakh,” he said at a press conference, pointing to Azerbaijan’s increasingly aggressive rhetoric and several other factors.

Pashinyan said he had raised his concerns with the Russian peacekeepers’ responsibility in Karabakh in a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday.

“In a phone conversation with the Russian president, I spoke of a risk of escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh and said that there are problems in the Russian peacekeepers’ zone of responsibility,” he noted.

He described the months-long blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan, which has caused a humanitarian crisis in Artsakh, as “preparation for ethnic cleansing of Armenians” and reiterated the call for the deployment of an international monitoring mission to the corridor and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Also, the premier said that Armenia recently received Baku’s response to its proposals for a peace treaty submitted in mid-February and noted some progress in the peace process.

However, he said “fundamental problems” remain unresolved because “Azerbaijan is trying to put forward territorial claims against Armenia, which is a red line to the country.”

ICRC Facilitates Transfer Of 13 Seriously Ill patients from Artsakh to Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) facilitated the transfer of 13 severely ill patients from Artsakh to Armenia amid the ongoing blockade, the Artsakh Ministry of Health reported.

The patients with serious oncological and cardiovascular diseases were transported to specialized medical facilities in Armenia on Tuesday, March 14, the ministry said in a statement.

Ten patients who had been transferred to Armenia for medical treatment, returned to Artsakh together with an accompanying team.

Planned surgeries remain suspended in Artsakh hospitals due to Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the sole road connecting Artsakh to Armenia, which started back on December 12.

Six children are in neonatal and intensive care in the Arevik Medical Center.

Seven patients, including two critically ill, remain in the intensive care unit of the Republican Medical Center.

The Red Cross has helped transfer a total of 182 patients from Artsakh to Armenia for urgent treatment since the start of the blockade.



Peace Corps members arriving in Armenia

Peace Corps Volunteers Return to Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Peace Corps Armenia this week welcomed a new group of 16 American Peace Corps Volunteers to serve alongside the Armenian people in different regions of the country.

This is the first group of Volunteers to arrive in Armenia since they were evacuated in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since that time, Peace Corps Armenia staff and former volunteers have continued to engage with schools and community groups through Virtual Service and training activities.

“We are very excited to witness this historic return of Volunteers to Armenia,” said Peace Corps Armenia Country Director, Joanne Fairley. “I know that the Volunteers will bring great passion and energy to their projects, and I am sure they will form new partnerships and friendship with the Armenian people.”

At the request of the government of Armenia, Volunteers will work in schools and community groups alongside their Armenian partners in regional communities of the country. They will engage in projects to support English teachers and students, and equip youth with the knowledge, skills and confidence to contribute to the development of the productive communities across Armenia.

Peace Corps is an international service network of volunteers, community members, host country partners and staff who are driven by the agency’s mission of world peace and friendship. At the invitation of governments around the world, Peace Corps volunteers work alongside community members on locally prioritized projects in the areas of education, health, environment, agriculture, community economic development and youth development. Since President John F. Kennedy

established the Peace Corps in 1961, more than 240,000 Americans have served in 142 countries worldwide.

In 1992, the Government of Armenia invited Peace Corps to establish a program in Armenia. Since then, more than 1,100 Volunteers have served in the Armenia Peace Corps Program.

Yerevan Links Armenian-Azeri Peace Deal to Karabakh’s Security

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The two sides have exchanged in recent months written proposals regarding the peace treaty which Baku hopes will help to restore full Azerbaijani control over Karabakh. Armenian parliament speaker Alen Simonian said late last month that they continue to disagree on “three or four” elements of the would-be treaty.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev spoke of “progress” in Armenia’s position on the issue after holding US-mediated talks with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Munich on February 18. Still, his foreign minister, Jeyhun Bayramov, accused Yerevan of obstruction.

Grigoryan insisted that it is the Azerbaijani side that is not interested in negotiating in good faith. He pointed to the March 5 armed incident near Stepanakert which left three Karabakh police officers and two Azerbaijani soldiers dead.

Pashinyan on Thursday described the incident as an Azerbaijani “terrorist act” aimed at torpedoing dialogue between Azerbaijani and Karabakh officials. He said that Baku is preparing the ground for a “new military provocation.”

Earlier this week, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry threatened to “disarm and neutralize” Karabakh Armenian forces as it accused Armenia of continuing to send military personnel and weapons to Karabakh. The authorities in Yerevan and Stepanakert strongly denied the allegations.

The deadly shootings occurred four days after a meeting between Azerbaijani and Karabakh officials organized by the commander of Russian peacekeepers. During that meeting, the Karabakh representatives refused to discuss the Armenian-populated territory’s “integration” into Azerbaijan demanded by Baku.

Former NATO Chief Decries Lachin Blockade During Armenia Visit

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The European Union must push Azerbaijan to lift the blockade of the Lachin corridor, NATO’s former Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said after he visited the entrance of the corridor on March 13, during his visit to Armenia.

“In December last year, it was blocked by Azerbaijanis. Since then, no civilian or commercial traffic has been able reach Nagorno-Karabakh. This has left some 120,000 residents without access to essential goods and services, including life-saving medication and health care,” he said.

“Europe cannot close its eyes to a humanitarian crisis happening on our borders. The EU must use its relationship with Azerbaijan and push them to lift the blockade and fulfil their international commitments. If we do not, a humanitarian risks becoming a humanitarian catastrophe,” he said.

Chairman of the international political consulting organization Rasmussen Global, Rasmussen held meetings with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other officials on March 13.

He, with a delegation, visited the en-



Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in Armenia

trance of Lachin corridor.

In Goris, Rasmussen met with people stranded in Armenia due to the closure of the corridor.

The Lachin corridor – the only road connecting the Republic of Artsakh to Armenia and therefore the rest of the world – has been closed by Azerbaijanis since December 12, leading to a humanitarian crisis in Artsakh.

He visited Jermuk on March 14.



ARMENIA

DiasporArm Hopes to Help Invigorate Armenian Communities in Lebanon

YEREVAN — Fulfilling DiasporArm's mission to accumulate the resources of institutions and individuals, to raise socio-economic level of Armenians in the homeland and the Diaspora, a DiasporArm team visited Lebanon in October and December 2022.

The team met with numerous community leaders and organizations' representatives as well as several schools in Beirut and Anjar to study and develop economic initiatives for the communities. DiasporArm has recruited key individuals to form an advisory council to gather information and coordinate the development of the projects. This advisory council will begin to compile a needs-assessment for each project. They will also recruit professionals to prepare business plans, recruit a communications and marketing team, as well as a grant writer to ensure the projects are sufficiently funded. Each project will have a board of trustees, be financed and managed independently.

The DiasporArm team conducted meetings in Beirut and identified three economic opportunities for the Burj Hammoud community.

The first, to address the continual energy crisis, provide solar panels to public buildings for energy security and reduced interruptions to operations.

Second, develop a co-working space with generators to provide reliable electricity and Wi-Fi for students, self-employed, remote or freelance workers, using the Impact Hub franchise model. The co-working space will utilize available community owned property and will offer mentoring and seminar spaces.

Third, establish a Fab Lab (digital fabrication laboratory) in association with a local university's engineering department

DiasporArm met with the Impact hub management in Armenia where there are currently two locations, in Yerevan and Syunik, and shared with Rev. Sebouh Terzian, director of the Center for Armenian Handicapped in Lebanon (CAHL) who is leading the feasibility plan of establishing an Impact Hub location in Burj Hammoud on the CAHL campus.

Regarding the need for solar panels, DiasporArm supports the work of Raffi Parseghian who has competitive sources for Chinese-produced solar panels, cargo and import options as well as local installers. DiasporArm is connecting community leaders with Raffi to participate in group purchase and installation rates.

For the Anjar community, the need is to keep talent local while also attracting individuals and families. The discussions centered on providing training and creating employment opportunities, three separate programs were suggested.

Cultivating in-demand skilled remote workers by establishing an institution to provide training in IT, communication, graphic design, video editing, and social media management (SMM) was the first solution identified.

Second, to develop high quality, unique handicrafts to be marketed sold internationally providing jobs mostly to women. In addition, to make the products more attractive to global markets it was suggested pursuing fair trade and fair labor credentials.

And finally, cultivate agrobusiness ven-

tures around fruit derived products, specifically apples which are amply available.

"Beyond the many hardships which afflicted widely Lebanon, Anjar and its farmer were further hit by the 'apple tragedy.' There is no demand. The apples of Anjar cover the ground," posted Yessayi Havatian on Facebook on October 11, 2022.

DiasporArm team members met Hrand Karapetyan, the founder of Armenia's Kanach group, which cultivates 50 hectares of orchards, utilizing advanced irrigation systems, has cold storage facilities for 3,500 tons of crops allowing for a year-round supply of fruits on the market. Beyond producing apples, Kanach Group processes the fruit, ensuring organic and waste-free production of vinegar, juice, dried fruit and apple chips.

Philanthropists Arthur Nazarian and Hagop Demirdjian have purchased mature orchards in Anjar to ensure lands and the production remains in the hands of the Armenian community.

Since the December meetings, DiasporArm is working on a joint venture project between Anjar farmlands, Lebanese entrepreneurs and the Kanach group from Armenia to develop fruit cultivating, refrigerating, and processing facilities to market products cultivated and developed by Armenians, to for export.

DiasporArm is proud to provide updates on these critical projects for the Armenian communities of Lebanon. Subscribe to updates on our website, www.diasporarm.org to learn more about these and other initiatives bridging individuals and organizations to advance global Armenian interests.

Gas Supply To Karabakh Blocked Again

STEPANAKERT (Azatutyun) — Azerbaijan offered to hold more talks with Nagorno-Karabakh's representatives on Monday, May 13, three days after reportedly again blocking Armenia's supplies of natural gas to Karabakh.

The flow of gas through a pipeline passing through Azerbaijani-controlled territory stopped late on Friday almost three months after Azerbaijani government-backed protesters blocked Karabakh's sole land link with Armenia and the outside world.

The gas supply has been regularly disrupted during the blockade, adding to shortages of energy, goods, medicine and other essential items experienced by Karabakh's population. Armenia's electricity supplies to Karabakh were similarly cut off by Baku on January 10, leading to daily power cuts there. They have still not been restored.

Arayik Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, held on Sunday an emergency meeting with other officials in Stepanakert to discuss his administration's response to the latest disruption.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's office said on Monday that it is inviting "representatives of Karabakh's Armenian community" to visit Baku for further talks on Karabakh's "reintegration" into Azerbaijan and "infrastructure projects." The authorities in Stepanakert did not immediately respond to the move.

Azerbaijani and Karabakh officials already met at the headquarters of Russian peacekeepers near Stepanakert on March 1. The two sides gave different accounts of the agenda and purpose of the meeting.

Karabakh's leadership said its participants discussed the restoration of "unimpeded" traffic through the Lachin corridor and Armenia's energy supplies to the Armenian-populated region.

Meanwhile, Aliyev's chief foreign policy aide, Hikmet Hajiyev, made it clear on Monday that Baku continues to oppose the creation of an "international mechanism" for its dialogue with Stepanakert which is sought by Yerevan.

"There is no question of creating any international mechanism to discuss the rights and security of the Karabakh Armenians," he told report. az. "We have never agreed to this."

Hajiyev said the issue is Azerbaijan's internal affair and Baku is not willing to discuss it with Yerevan or any other third party.

The Azerbaijani official responded to comments made by the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, Armen Grigorian, in a March 10 interview with RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Grigorian said, among other things, that Armenia will not sign a peace treaty with Azerbaijan without negotiating security guarantees for Karabakh. Such guarantees, he said, could include the establishment of a "demilitarized zone" around Karabakh or "international presence" there.

Yerevan Vice-Mayor Arrested

By Narine Ghalechian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A former deputy health minister currently serving as vice-mayor of Yerevan was arrested over the weekend on charges stemming from what an Armenian law-enforcement agency called misuse of government funds provided for the fight against COVID-19.

Gevorg Simonyan was remanded in pre-trial custody after investigators searched his office and rounded up a dozen medical workers on Friday, March 10. One of them, Babken Shahumyan, runs a private clinic in Yerevan that has treated thousands of COVID-19 patients.

The Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC) claimed that the Medline Medical Center rigged records to defraud the government of 119 million drams (\$305,000) in 2020 and 2021. It said that Simonyan did not properly monitor the use of the funds because of his close personal relationship with Shahumyan.

Simonyan and Shahumyan denied any wrongdoing. Nevertheless, a Yerevan court allowed the ACC to hold them in detention pending an investigation.

The criminal case is based in large measure on a report leased by the Armenian parliament's Audit Chamber last year. It suggested that officials from the Ministry of Health embezzled and/or wasted some of the 26 billion drams (\$66 million) in emergency government funding allocated following the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

In particular, the chamber said, the ministry inflated the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients and channeled 900 million drams into hospitals that did not treat

people infected with the respiratory disease. It also questioned the integrity of relevant state procurements, saying that many of them were administered without tenders.

The alleged abuses were committed during former Health Minister Arsen Torosyan's tenure. Torosyan, who is now a parliament deputy representing the ruling Civil Contract party, rejected the Audit Chamber report as untrue and misleading.

In a lengthy Facebook post, Torosyan decried the "fictitious" accusations lev-

eled against his former deputy. The former minister also pointed out that investigators have still not questioned him despite the fact that he is the one who "issued those orders" which landed Simonyan in jail.

Torosyan was sacked by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in January 2021. Throughout his tenure he was criticized not only by opposition groups but also by some pro-government parliamentarians.

The criticism intensified during the pandemic which hit Armenia hard. Torosyan repeatedly defended his and other government officials' response to the unprecedented health crisis.

Armenia Reports \$1-billion Turnover In High-Tech Industry for First Time

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — In 2022, for the first time in the history of Armenia, a turnover of more than 1 billion dollars was recorded in the field of high-tech industry, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Hakob Arshakyan said at the "Investor's Day for the IT Sector" event on March 10.

He said the number of employees in the sector exceeded 40,000 for the first time.

Referring to the activities of "Enterprise Armenia" investment support center, the National Assembly Vice-Speaker emphasized the support of the structure in supporting investments in the country. "We welcome the entry of international companies into Armenia, which contributes to the creation of similar Armenian companies," said Hakob Arshakyan.

The speaker referred to the increase in funding for science, noting that it amounts to more than 30 billion drams in 2022.

Arsahkyan urged to join forces to train high-quality specialists in order to overcome the challenges in the changing and developing geopolitical environment.

Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Khachatryan, Minister of High-Tech Industry Robert Khachatryan, Director General of "Enterprise Armenia" investment support center Levon Ohanesyan, US Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien made speeches during the event. They referred to the problems of the sector and outlined ways to solve them.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan Fires toward Armenia Positions

YEREVAN (news.am) — From 7 to 7:30 p.m. on Monday, March 13, units of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan opened fire — from rifles of various calibers — toward the Armenian positions located in the direction of Verin Shorzha village of Armenia's Gegharkunik Province, Armenian News-NEWS.am has learned from the press service of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) of Armenia.

"The Armenian side has no losses. As of 10pm, the situation on the frontline is relatively stable," the Armenia MOD statement added.

Azeri Wrestler Loses To Armenian Rival, Is Disqualified after Losing Cool

BUCHAREST (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Azerbaijani athlete who hit Armenia's Karapet Manvelyan after the latter won gold at the U23 European Wrestling Championships has been disqualified, the Armenian Wrestling Federation reported on March 14.

After the win in the 55-kg category, Manvelyan approached Rahim Hasanov to shake his hand but the Azerbaijani hit him in the head instead.

The International Wrestling Federation immediately disqualified Hasanov.

Karabakh Responds to Azerbaijan's Invitation to Baku

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Karabakh (Artsakh) Foreign Ministry responded to Azerbaijan's invitation to Baku for discussions on "reintegration," maintaining that any meeting can be held only with the mediation of the Russian Peacekeeping Contingent in the same venue as on March 1.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement on March 13, that the Armenian side was committed to its position and is ready to discuss humanitarian, infrastructural and technical issues, "without undue politicization."

"At the same time, we emphasize that the blocking of the Lachin Corridor and the ongoing humanitarian crisis are unacceptable and do not contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for negotiations. We are convinced that Azerbaijan must properly implement both its obligations under the Trilateral Statement of 9 November 2020 and the Order of the International Court of Justice, refraining from the use or threat of force and unilateral maximalist approaches. Only in that case, favorable conditions can be created for further discussions," the statement reads.

"As for the political issues of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict settlement, we reiterate that Artsakh is committed to negotiations aimed at a comprehensive settlement of the conflict, which should be held within an agreed and internationally recognized format, with international guarantees for equal rights of the parties and implementation of assumed obligations."

Erdogan's Challenger Faces Delicate Balancing Act to Win over Turkey's Kurds

By Fehim Tastekin

ANKARA (AI-Monitor) — Turkey's main opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu faces the tough task of enlisting crucial Kurdish support for his bid to unseat President Recep Tayyip Erdogan without antagonizing nationalist voters in the diverse opposition bloc that nominated him as a joint candidate in the upcoming elections.

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), whose mainly Kurdish base is seen as a kingmaker in the May polls, has expressed readiness for dialogue with Kilicdaroglu in what is emerging as the opposition's strongest challenge yet to Erdogan's two-decade rule. Yet collaboration with the HDP, which risks being outlawed for alleged links to armed Kurdish militants, remains a hot-button issue for the six-party Nation Alliance, which includes nationalists hostile to the HDP.

The alliance came back from the brink of collapse on March 6, after its second-largest member, the nationalist Good Party, backed down from objections to Kilicdaroglu's nomination as a joint candidate. The Good Party, however, remains staunchly opposed to letting the HDP join the alliance or negotiating any HDP terms in return for its support. Nevertheless, the party's leader, Meral Aksener, has left the door open to individual contacts between Kilicdaroglu and HDP leaders.

Amid his sagging popular support, Erdogan could count on two scenarios to win reelection. The first is the Good (Iyi) Party abandoning the opposition alliance — a prospect that appeared imminent last week when Aksener fired broadsides at her allies for insisting on Kilicdaroglu as a presidential candidate. But after a weekend of political drama, she stepped back in return for the nomination of her favorites — Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas — as vice presidents.

The second scenario is to keep the Kurds and the opposition bloc apart. One way to achieve that would have been to draw the Kurds closer to the ruling party by proposing a new peace process on the Kurdish issue, even if a token one, but Erdogan's alliance with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) is precluding such an option. Alternatively, many Kurds worry that escalatory tactics could be used to fan political tensions and polarization around the Kurdish issue to undermine any collaboration prospect between

the HDP and the opposition bloc.

Some wonder whether Erdogan could try to use Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), as he did in the 2019 local polls, when the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost the mayoral races in Ankara and Istanbul to Kilicdaroglu's Republican People's Party (CHP). In a desperate attempt to use Ocalan's influence and deter Kurdish support for the opposition, the government got Ocalan to pen a letter urging the HDP to stay neutral. The move failed as HDP voters heeded an opposite appeal by former HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas, who is also behind bars, and helped the opposition win.

"The government might try its luck again, but we don't expect Ocalan to go along," a source close to the PKK told AI-Monitor. "We don't believe Erdogan could launch a new opening [to the Kurds]."

The Kurds are cautious against any moves that could raise tensions, the source said, recalling that the PKK declared a cease-fire after the Feb. 6 earthquakes in southeastern Turkey.

Defense Minister Hulusi Akar's March 6 meeting with top army commanders brought to mind another scenario that could stir nationalist passions ahead of the elections — a fresh Turkish military operation against Kurdish-held areas in Syria. Yet the US and Russian red lights to Ankara remain unchanged.

Still, one could hardly rule out provocations at home. The racist attacks against Amedspor, a soccer club from the mainly Kurdish south-east, during a recent match in Bursa show that Turkey's ethnic fault lines remain under strain. Erdogan's ally, MHP leader Devlet Bahceli, went as far as to "salute" Bursa's fans for their "nationalist stand," while AKP and MHP lawmakers blocked a HDP proposal for a parliamentary probe into the attacks.

Essentially, the compromise that salvaged the opposition alliance smoothed the way for the Kurdish vote as well. Kilicdaroglu has been the most agreeable candidate for the Kurds, while the Istanbul and Ankara mayors enjoy bigger popularity in other segments of the opposition.

The HDP had said it could field its own candidate for the presidential race, but following Kilicdaroglu's nomination, HDP co-Chair Mithat Sancar was quick to congratulate him and invite him to talks. Sancar signaled that the HDP would back Kilicdaroglu to help him win in the first

round of the vote should the parties agree on a democratic agenda — a formulation that appears aimed at finding a minimal common ground that would not annoy the nationalists in the opposition bloc.

Aksener has said she will not object to a CHP-HDP dialogue, but rejects discussion on any HDP demands or a role the party in the joint government that the opposition alliance is promising to form if it wins.

CHP parliamentary whip Ozgur Ozel said on March 8 that Kilicdaroglu and was planning to visit the HDP.

In an open letter from prison, Demirtas, who remains hugely influential over Kurdish voters, called on Aksener to review her objections. "To resolve our problems, we embrace no other method than dialogue in a peaceful and civilized manner and on the ground of democratic politics," he wrote. "Is there any other method you propose?"

Other wings of the opposition bloc have voiced support for contacts with the HDP.

At the end of the day, the Kurds could back Kilicdaroglu without insisting on any concrete assurances in return. They know that extracting a promise on resolving the Kurdish issue is beyond reach at present, but would like to at least see some acknowledgement of partnership from the alliance. The Kurds hope that a victory for the opposition could lead to a degree of normalization, the release of political prisoners, the removal of government trustees from mayoral offices that were originally won by Kurdish politicians and, ultimately, a political atmosphere where the resumption of efforts to resolve the Kurdish question could be discussed.

Fielding its own candidate instead of backing Kilicdaroglu could produce a high political cost for the Kurdish political movement. Having suffered extensively under Erdogan's rule in recent years, it cannot afford to face accusations of indirectly helping Erdogan to win reelection. The optimistic forecast is that, despite her tough rhetoric, Aksener will tacitly shelve her reservations to dialogue with the HDP. Of course, she could turn those reservations into constraints limiting Kilicdaroglu's wiggle room.

Armenia Spurns Leadership Position In Russian-Led Bloc

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Pashinyan went as far as to question on January 11 the need for close military ties between Armenia and Russia. He said that they may be putting his country's security and territorial integrity at greater risk. The Russian Foreign Ministry dismissed the claim as "absurd."

These tensions have fueled speculation about a pro-Western shift in Armenia's geopolitical orientation. Armenia's leading opposition groups are seriously concerned about such a prospect.

Tigran Abrahamian, an opposition parliamentarian, criticized Yerevan's refusal to fill one of the three posts of CSTO deputy secretary-general. He said Pashinyan is thus downgrading Armenia's membership in the alliance uniting six ex-Soviet states.

"I have the impression that with this step Armenia is starting a process of dissociating itself from the CSTO or giving new impetus to a course that started earlier," Abrahamian wrote on Facebook.

Intensive Summer Armenian Language and Culture Course to Take Place in Venice

VENICE — The Association Padus-Araxes is accepting applications for the 37th edition of the intensive summer course of Armenian Language and Culture, in collaboration with the "Studium Generale Marcianum" of Venice. The session will take place from August 1 to 18.

The application deadline is March 30. All students must be at least 18.

Four basic levels are available, from absolute beginners to the proficient; 65 hours of classroom lessons Monday to Saturday, in the morning. Attendance is compulsory. Lessons will be held at Seminario Patriarcale di Venezia: <https://www.seminario-venezia.it/cms/galleria/il-seminario/>.

Free after-class cultural and leisure activities will be offered in the afternoons and evenings. Attendance is not compulsory. Extra-curricular activities include guided tours to the Mkhitarist monastery of San Lazzaro, participation in the Armenian Divine Liturgy in the Armenian church of the Holy

Cross, and in occasion of the feast of the Assumption at the Monastery of San Lazzaro with the traditional blessing of the grapes, scholarly lectures on Armenian studies (the program will be available in Spring).

A free class in Armenian dance and a master class in duduk will also be offered in the afternoons (as regards the Duduk master class, the instrument must be held by the participant himself/herself).

Tuition is 850 euros.

Lodging fee is 988 euros per person, double occupancy, 1178 euros for a single room.

The applicant is required to send 600 euros as enrolment fee by March 30. After this deadline, the amount to pay for enrolment is 850 € to be transferred by June 30. Contact the Secretary (info@padus-araxes.com) to get the Association's bank details for the transfer. ALL bank expenses are to be paid by the applicant.

Meals are not included.



Community News

Rep. Pallone Spearheads Appropriations Letter for Assistance to Armenia, Artsakh

WASHINGTON — This week, Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), is circulating a letter for his colleagues to sign outlining key congressional priorities for Armenia and Artsakh. The letter, to be sent to House State Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Mario Díaz-Balart (R-FL) and Ranking Member Barbara Lee (D-CA), specifically calls for \$100 million in aid to Armenia, \$50 million in aid to Artsakh, \$2 million for demining efforts, as well as enforcing Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and releasing Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians who were supposed to be freed under the terms of the trilateral statement signed in November 2020.

Citing Azerbaijan's "inhumane" and illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor, which is now in its third month, the letter emphasized that the region's Armenian people are "on the brink of a humanitarian crisis" that "threatens to have lasting consequences on the region's security."

While the Armenian people are still trying to recover from the "severe hardships caused by the deadly 44-day war" that Azerbaijan, with the full and open support of Turkey, waged on Artsakh in September 2020, the letter highlighted that these ongoing "cruel actions" of blockading the Lachin Corridor and denying access to medical treatments, food, and essential goods, have created "overwhelming needs" and therefore "the assistance provided to date by the U.S. government is wholly insufficient."

In order to bolster the security of Armenia and champion democracy in the region, the letter also urges assistance to Armenia to "protect their sovereignty" in the face of constant "Azerbaijani expansion and authoritarianism." The "critical investment" will build on the past support for Armenia and Artsakh and further strengthen U.S.-Armenia relations and partnerships.

Cutting off military assistance to Azerbaijan is another point underscored in the letter, which states that it is "abundantly clear that the continued waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, amidst Azerbaijan's unabated policy of aggression, has emboldened this violent pattern of behavior."

Tracing President Ilham Aliyev's brutal 2020 assault on Artsakh not long after receiving over \$100 million in security assistance through the Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program in Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, the letter states that "holding Azerbaijan accountable is long overdue and must begin with Congress encouraging the Administration to fully enforce Section 907, restricting the Administration's authority to waive this law, and enacting statutory prohibitions on any new or pending U.S. military or security aid to Azerbaijan."

Azerbaijan continues to detain over 130 Armenian prisoners of war, hostages, and detained persons, and the letter urges their immediate return.



St. Vartan Camp

Arpi Kouzouian Returns as St. Vartan Camp Director

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese announced recently that Yn. Arpi Kouzouian will return to oversee the St. Vartan Camp program this summer. She will serve as Camp Director, partnering with Fr. Khatchatur Kesablian, Fr. Vart Gyozyan, and Fr. Sevak Gabrielyan, who will serve as Spiritual Directors of Sessions A, B, and C respectively.



In taking up this role at St. Vartan Camp, Yn. Arpi Kouzouian is returning to a program she was instrumental in expanding from 1995 to 2006, in partnership with her husband, Fr. Vasken Kouzouian. Taking over the two-week summer program at the Marvelwood School in Kent, CT, St. Vartan Camp developed into a seven-week program at the Ararat Center in Greenville, NY—a status the camp enjoys to this day. (Originally, the camp ran for many years at the Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor, CT, under the vision and leadership of its founding director, the late Fr. Paree Metjian.)

As St. Vartan Camp Director, Yn. Arpi will oversee all aspects of the preparations and execution of the camp program, including recruitment and development of staff and CITs, implementation of New York State regulations and Diocesan camp guidelines, curriculum development, and day-to-day operations.

Aiding her in the pre-camp administrative and registration process will be Lorie Odabashian, who also has a long, productive association with Diocesan Youth Ministry. The Eastern Diocese is grateful for her involvement in St. Vartan Camp this year.

Kouzouian is excited to welcome children, youth, and young adults to the Diocese's St. Vartan Camp this summer. "I feel the time has come, and the opportunity has presented itself, for me to return to the summer program I love so deeply," she said. "I look forward to sharing my perspective, acquired from years of parish ministry, which will allow me to give back in new ways and help our Diocesan youth grow in their faith, heritage, and fellowship. My philosophy has always been to 'lead by example,' and I am excited to help lead this year's St. Vartan Camp family."

She started on February 1.

To register for this summer's St. Vartan Camp, complete the online applications on the Diocesan Camps website (available beginning March 3). For information and inquiries, contact the camp at stvartancamp@armeniandiocese.org.

Speaking Effectively to Young Souls

With an abiding passion for working with young people, Kouzouian has long worked to instill in them a love for the Armenian Christian faith and heritage, within a warm environment of family and belonging. She brings to her role a lifetime of hands-on youth ministry experience and training, having served as director of the Diocesan Department of Youth Ministry (1999-2004), and Director of Youth Ministries for Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge, MA (2004-present). During 18 years in the latter role, Kouzouian has gained a deep understanding of the changing needs of our Diocesan youth, and the ways in which the Armenian Church can effectively speak to their young lives.

Kouzouian grew up in the Armenian Church, born and raised in Toronto, Canada, where her extensive youth ministry experience can be traced back to organizing her first retreat at age 15 in Toronto after attending St. Nersess Summer Conferences in 1983. Her involvement in her home parish continued to expand, as she helped to create a summer camp for the children in her parish (known today as Camp Ararat) and chaired the first ACYOC Sports Weekend in 1988.

She has been actively involved in the Armenian Church in the U.S. since her arrival in 1994. A graduate of York University with an Honors Degree in Psychology and English, she has been an active member of the National Council of Churches for more than 20 years, having served three terms on its governing board and having chaired its Nominating Committee for six years. Most recently, she represented the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin as a delegate to the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Germany last year.

Kouzouian has been married for 29 years to Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, pastor of Holy Trinity Church (Cambridge, MA) and a member of the Diocesan Council. Their daughter, Alina, is a third-year student at the University of Toronto.

Elyse Semerdjian Named Chair Of Mugar Kaloosdian Chair at Clark University

WORCESTER — Armenian Genocide Scholar Elyse Semerdjian was recently named as the holder of the Stephen and Marian Mugar and Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian Chair at Clark University.

The Kaloosdian and Mugar families established the first-ever endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History and Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University. This innovative professorship honors Stephen and Marian Mugar, as well as Clark alumnus Robert Aram Kaloosdian '52 and his wife Marianne. The appointment of Elyse Semerdjian as the next Kaloosdian Mugar Professor represents a fresh chapter in the development of Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University and the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Semerdjian will begin in fall 2024 following a year-long fellowship at the University of Erfurt's Max Weber Kolleg as part of an ongoing study, Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations.

As part a research group titled "Group Formations and Fragmentations," she will document the co-spatiality between Aleppo's Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities



Elyse Semerdjian

in order to better understand how multireligious communities lived together and, ultimately, fell apart in the modern era.

Semerdjian's study will cover the formation of the Christian and Jewish quarters of the city of Aleppo, religious segregation in Aleppo's confessional cemeteries, and inter-communal relations in public spaces with an aim of exploring group identity, sectarian tensions, and urbicide during the decade-long Syrian War. This research program will form the core research for two book projects she is currently developing. Currently a Professor of Islamic World/Middle Eastern History and Chair of the History Department at Whitman College (Walla Walla, WA), Semerdjian, teaches a broad range of courses on gender, sexuality, social history, culture, and politics of the Middle East.

A specialist in the history of the see SEMERDJIAN, page 7



COMMUNITY NEWS

Dr. Shushan Karapetian Named New Director of USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies

LOS ANGELES — Shushan Karapetian, Ph.D, a celebrated scholar in the field of Armenian Studies, begins her tenure as the director of USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies with a strong mandate for academic expansion and integration.

“The global disruptions of the past decade have deeply impacted how institutions and communities engage with and challenge Armenian heritage, witnessing soaring demand for content on the Armenian experience,” says Karapetian. “I am eager to build on the Institute of Armenian Studies’ culture of world-class programming that has made scholarship accessible.”

Having joined the Institute as deputy director in 2019, Dr. Karapetian has brought her interdisciplinary expertise in Armenian Studies, applied linguistics, and linguistic anthropology to nearly every facet of her work. In addition to actively publishing and presenting her work on Armenian as a heritage language in numerous academic forums, she has launched a ground breaking research project that investigates how the Armenian language is mobilized to perform masculinity in diasporic contexts. Since coming to USC, Dr. Karapetian has taught courses every semester on Armenian heritage, highlighting the multipolarity and diversity of the Armenian experience. As the producer and host of the popular *Language Therapy with Dr. K* podcast, she has created an intellectual space for scholars, educators, artists, and practitioners to critically debate the intensely relevant role of language in all social contexts – from the burdens of diasporic mother guilt, to myths about bilingualism, to comedy in times of war, to post-colonial hybrid identities, to artificial intelligence, and so much more.

Prior to USC, Dr. Karapetian spent nearly two decades researching, writing, and

teaching at the University of California, Los Angeles. She earned her doctoral degree in Armenian Studies from the UCLA Department of Near East Languages and Cultures. Her doctoral dissertation, which is the foundation of her forthcoming book, tackled the intersection of language and diasporic identity and the challenges of transmitting the Armenian language from one generation to the next. In addition to receiving the Society for Armenian Studies Distinguished Dissertation Award, she was also the recipient of the Russ Campbell Young Scholar Award in recognition of outstanding scholarship in heritage language research.

The major thrust behind Dr. Karapetian’s vision for the future of the Institute is the generation, expansion, and integration of academic work on contemporary Armenian Studies both within and outside the USC campus. At a time where major universities throughout the United States are looking inward and assessing the critical role of the humanities, the Institute leader is looking bright-eyed toward the possibilities in the coming decades. “The Institute is the pioneering intellectual hub for the examination of the contemporary Armenian experience, in the Republic, in Artsakh, and in the global diaspora. Through targeted academic collaborations with world-class scholars and resources at USC and symbiotic partnerships with peer institutions across the world, the Institute is primed to be at the forefront of defining and steering the direction of the field.” As for the Institute’s visibility and presence on its home campus, “there are no limits to where the Institute can go on a campus like USC,” said Dr. Karapetian. “Academic integration — making the presence of Armenian Studies a part of all aspects of USC life through



Dr. Shushan Karapetian

intellectually stimulating classes, conferences, workshops, scholarships, and events — is a top priority.”

Laser-focused on the Institute’s mission to produce and promote cutting edge scholarship in the field of Armenian Studies, Dr. Karapetian places a heavy bet on what she feels is the university’s greatest resource: its students. Indicative of the tide change in Armenian Studies at USC, Dr. Karapetian’s spring course on Armenian heritage has the highest number of students in the history of the course, from a wide array of disciplines, and more than half with no Armenian connection by heritage. “They are drawn to the class for a variety of reasons, but they come out of it with an understanding that the Armenian experience is relevant to the human experience, not siloed or marginalized in an

insular bubble. They often surprise themselves with how much they relate to the narratives we cover in class.”

The undergraduate class is one of many student-focused initiatives led by Dr. Karapetian. In fall 2022, she guest edited USC Dornsife’s multilingual journal, *Trojan Bloom*, which featured five Armenian poems, four of which reflected on the 2020 Artsakh War. Carving out space for Armenian Studies within existing university platforms is just one of the ways Dr. Karapetian sees the Institute’s reach growing in the coming years. “The level of collaboration between students and the Institute team is truly what makes this place of scholarship exemplary,” said Dr. Karapetian when reviewing the breadth of work created by undergraduate and graduate students during her last four years at USC. Dr. Karapetian does not hesitate to invite promising students to initiate, collaborate, and take ownership of projects. A strong example is a student-led project on trauma and resilience post 2020 Artsakh war, that with Dr. Karapetian’s support evolved into a large-scale study involving two USC psychology professors and a UCLA clinical psychologist.

“The students on this campus bring with them passion and curiosity; it’s on us to engage them in a manner that is intellectually rigorous and stimulating, demonstrating the potential for impact in a field that is growing exponentially.” The new director’s ambition with student engagement is crystal clear. “I want student engagement with the Institute, whether it’s through classes, student work or research, to be the defining highlight of their USC experience. I’ve already achieved that in the last four years. Now I want to amplify both the platform and the results. There is no better place than USC for this type of exciting work.”

Assembly’s Khaloyan Submits Testimony On ‘Second Genocide’ in Karabakh

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America submitted testimony by Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related programs, urging Congress to help prevent a second Armenian Genocide. To that end, in its testimony the Assembly requested \$100 million in assistance to Armenia, \$50 million in assistance to Artsakh and \$2 million in demining assistance, enforcement of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, as well as bolstering of the peace process.

The testimony comes on the heels of a letter, circulating in the House, spearheaded by Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) to the House State Foreign Operations Appropriates Subcommittee. (See Page 5.)

The Assembly made clear its concerns about the humanitarian crisis surrounding Artsakh and is making these requests in the face of an impending genocide, “given the overwhelming passage of the Armenian Genocide resolution in the House in 2019, followed by the Senate the same year, [the Assembly] hopes Congress will do its part to prevent a second Armenian Genocide.”

The Assembly stated in its testimony that the assistance requested for Artsakh will “help protect a vulnerable Christian people as well as empower them to reconstruct their communities, rebuild their lives, and resettle in their homes.”

Due to Azerbaijan’s unchecked anti-Arme-

nian policies, providing aid will also serve “as an opportunity for the U.S. to have a presence in the region and sends an important message about America’s commitment to democratic governance in the face of autocrats.”

Despite the trilateral statement signed in November 2020, which made it clear Azerbaijan had to “guarantee the security of persons, vehicles and cargo moving along the Lachin Corridor in both directions,” Azerbaijan has once again defied an international accord and blocked the Lachin Corridor.

Regarding the request of \$100 million to Armenia, the testimony states that the democratic country “continues to face existential threats” from the dictatorial Aliyev regime that now is also laying unfounded claim to the territories of the Republic of Armenia.

“Azerbaijan should not be rewarded for its blatant and ongoing violations against the Armenian people, including the holding of prisoners of war (POWs) and captured civilians. In this regard, the Assembly strongly supports the inclusion of report language calling for the immediate release and repatriation of all POWs and captured civilians held by Azerbaijan,” the testimony emphasized.

The testimony concluded by urging the United States, a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, to bring stability and advance peace in the South Caucasus region, and to “uphold the fundamental principles of democracy, the right to self-determination, and the universal human rights of the people of Artsakh.”

ATP to Host Fundraiser for Artsakh Greenhouse Program at Tufenkian Fine Arts Gallery

GLENDALE — On April 1, the Tufenkian Fine Arts Gallery will host a benefit reception for the Armenia Tree Project’s “Artsakh Greenhouse Program” at 5 p.m.

Proceeds from this benefit will directly support ATP’s work in Artsakh, focusing on the Artsakh Greenhouse Project. Since the program’s inception in 2021, more than 51 families and academic institutions have received the proper tools, vegetable seeds, and training to grow food they can consume or sell as necessary. The social and economic rehabilitative program provides critical aid to families in the hard-hit areas of Martuni and Askeran in Artsakh following the 44-Day War in 2020.

ATP has found new ways to secure more families with this opportunity, as well as providing much-needed vegetable seeds to those in need. With their partner, Greenlane NGO’s help, they plan to grow the greenhouse program to 75 families. Despite the devastation of the continued closure of the Lachin corridor, the organization remains hopeful that the Artsakh Greenhouse program will continue to grow and provide the necessary financial aid to those with the fewest resources now, when they need it the most, and into the future.

The fundraiser will feature wine tastings from Armenian wineries, tasty hors d’oeuvres, and much more set against the backdrop of the gallery’s current exhibit, “The Fabric of Memory.” ATP Executive Director, Jeanmarie Papelian, will also share insight on the organization’s current initiatives in Artsakh. She shares,

“The Artsakh Greenhouse Initiative is more important now than it was when the program was first established. It is clear that for Artsakh to survive, it must be able to sustain its own food sources and ATP is prepared to scale up the Artsakh Greenhouse Initiative to continue to grow hope for the people of Artsakh.”

Each greenhouse costs \$5,000, and the goal of the fundraiser is to provide 24 new families with greenhouses in Artsakh.

For more information, please contact Armenia Tree Project at info@armeniatree.org





COMMUNITY NEWS

Columbia Armenia Center Awards \$85,000 in Research Funding

NEW YORK — The Armenian Center at Columbia University has granted \$85,000 in research funding to seven scholars and one artist, for projects exploring cultural-heritage loss, ethnic cleansing, architectural site location, and medieval literature, among other topics.

The center first issued a call for applications two years ago, at a time when the pandemic was disrupting many academic opportunities. Although Armenian-related scholarship at Columbia was a primary focus, applications from academics at other institutions, as well as independent artists, were also considered. All grants were issued in 2021 and in 2022.

The awardees and their projects are:

•Ararat Sekeryan, PhD candidate, Columbia University, Department of Slavic Languages. Project: “Literary Ethnic Cleansing of Armenians in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijani Literature.” In 2004, the Republic of Azerbaijan launched an effort to transliterate Soviet-era Azerbaijani literature from the Cyrillic alphabet into the Latin script. More than two thousand works of fiction have been transliterated so far, Sekeryan notes in his proposal, but they are also being edited to remove or alter references to Armenia and Armenians. His research will examine these changes.

•Whitney A. Kite, PhD candidate, Columbia University, Art History and Archaeology. Project: “The Lay of the Land: Armenian Monasteries in their Local Landscapes.” Focussing on three monasteries—Hoʻʻomos, Geghard, and Tat’ev—Kite’s dissertation will explore the relationship between Armenian monasteries and their landscapes, seeking to discover “how medieval monks encountered their natural surroundings, and how those encounters are a reflection of or reflected in their theology.”

•Christina Mehranbod, PhD candidate, Columbia University, Epidemiology. Project: “Alcohol Use Environment in Armenia” Mehranbod will conduct field work in Armenia to study how alcohol is distribut-

ed and promoted, as a step toward developing “preventative intervention to reduce alcohol use and related harms.” Research assistance will be provided by student interns from the American University of Armenia, who will be mentored in data-collection techniques and GIS technology.

•Ares Edvart Zerunyan MA candidate, Columbia University, International and World History. Project: “The Lost and the ‘Dammed’: The Social, Ecological, and Political Implications of the Southeast Anatolia Project.” Zerunyan will be exploring dam construction in Anatolia, and how it “forcibly imposes state planning” on the population “yet fails to account for the actual desires and needs of the local people.”

•Simon Maghakyan PhD candidate, Cranfield University, Defence and Security

Studies. Project, “The Application of Remote-Sensing Technologies to Detect and Deter Heritage Crime.” The grant will be used to further Maghakyan’s ongoing geospatial studies into the erasure of Armenian heritage in the South Caucasus, and support “an academic article on innovative applications of satellite and other technology for early detection and deterrence of heritage crimes in the Nagorno-Karabakh zone.”

•Aram Ghoogasian PhD candidate, Princeton University, Near Eastern Studies. Project: “The Second Printing Revolution: How the Industrialization of Print Transformed a Diasporic Culture.” Ghoogasian will examine the impact of the “second printing revolution” on Armenian culture in the nineteenth century.

•Rachel Goshgarian, Associate Professor, Lafayette College, History. Project:

“Armeno-Turkish and the Space of Language in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Worlds: Manuscript Production and the Circulation of Ideas, Literature, and People.” Goshgarian is investigating the role that Armenian authors played the Turkish “linguistic and literary world in the late medieval and early modern periods.”

•Kirill Gerstein, Pianist. Project “Debussy/Komitas Project.” Funding will support “a substantial booklet containing four long essays: one each on Debussy’s late music, Komitas’ compositions and ethnomusicological work, WW1, and the Armenian Genocide.” The booklet will be produced in conjunction with a double album featuring works by both composers.

The Armenian Center at Columbia University is not taking applications for research grants at this time.

First-Ever Conference on Genocide Restitution to Take Place at UCLA March 25

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Genocide Research Program at The Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA, the Center for the Study of Law and Genocide at LMU Loyola Law School, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) present the first-ever conference pertaining to Armenian Genocide restitution.

Titled “What’s Next?: Armenian Genocide Restitution in the Post-Recognition Era,” this historic conference will be held in UCLA’s Mong Learning Center on Saturday, March 25.

“If every genocide has its own peculiar character and afterlife, the afterlife of the Armenian Genocide has been the long-standing denial of its existence by successive Turkish governments. It has been of great importance for Armenians worldwide that the great catastrophe they experienced during and after World War I be recognized as what it was: genocide,” stated Taner Akçam, director of the Arme-

nian Genocide Research Program at the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA.

“Through our one-day conference, we will explore questions such as: what are the possibilities of creating an Armenian Genocide reparation movement post-recognition by President Biden and Congress in 2021? What opportunities does the American legal system offer for reparation? Can the Holocaust restitution movement serve as a model for the Armenian Genocide?” Akçam noted.

The first session will feature Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat as the opening Keynote Speaker, who will discuss his critical efforts during the Clinton administration and those of several successive U.S. administrations in achieving some measure of justice for the post-Holocaust restitution movement.

The conference will then host panels examining past efforts at Armenian Genocide restitution through litigation and goodwill settlements, as well as the current land-

scape concerning looted art from the genocidal period and future avenues for redress.

Pre-registration is required for this hybrid event, which will offer remote online participation. The program starts at 8:45 a.m. and registration begins at 8 a.m. (Pacific Time). Lunch and refreshments will be provided for in-person participants. For event details and to register for in-person attendance or participation via the Zoom webinar platform visit the event webpage at bit.ly/whatsnext03-25-23.

This conference is co-sponsored by the Armenian Bar Association, the Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA School of Law, and the Ararat-Eskijian Museum.

The Armenian Genocide Research Program (AGRP) was established within The Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA in early 2022. Led by Taner Akçam, the AGRP engages in research and scholarly activities pertaining to the study of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire during the early 20th century.

Elyse Semerdjian Named Chair of Mugar Kaloosdian Chair at Clark University

SEMERDJIAN, from page 5

Ottoman Empire and Syria, she has published on gender, law, violence, and Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. She published “Off the Straight Path”: Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo (Syracuse University Press) in 2008 and her next book project, Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide (Stanford University Press) is forthcoming in 2023. Semerdjian currently serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, the *Journal for the Society of Armenian Studies*, and she recently finished her term as book review editor for the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

A two-time Fulbright scholarship awardee, her research is primarily focused on Syria, the social history of Aleppo’s Armenian community, and gender and the Armenian Genocide.

In the Spring 2013, she was awarded the Dumanian Visiting Professorship in Armenian Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Cultures and Languages at the University of Chicago. Her article “Naked Anxiety: Bathhouses, Nudity, and Muslim/non-Muslim Relations in Eighteenth-Century Aleppo,” published in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, won the Syrian Studies Association Best Article Prize in 2014.

She was awarded a fellowship at Cornell University Society for the Humanities in 2016-2017 to support research on “Skin” for her forthcoming book *Remnants*.

She recently received a German Research Grant with the “Religion and Urbanity” Research Group at University of Erfurt, Germany to write *Aleppo: An Urban Biography*, an inclusive pre- and post-war urban history of the city’s Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants.

In 2002, the Kaloosdian Mugar Chair was inaugurated in the History Department with its holder serving as a constituent member of the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Taner Akçam joined Clark University as Kaloosdian Mugar Professor in fall 2008. The first scholar of Turkish origin to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and to conduct groundbreaking research on this topic, Akçam spent 14 years strengthening the program through his innovative research, outstanding publication record, and strong commitment to training students. With his departure, Semerdjian is well prepared to advance the Strassler Center’s commitment to mentoring Ph.D. students in Armenian Genocide Studies. Under her leadership, our mandate will remain strong: to train graduate students, host conferences with leading scholars, and advance significant research on the Armenian Genocide.





COMMUNITY NEWS

UCLA Promise Armenian Institute Announces Kerr Family Lectureship

LOS ANGELES — The UCLA Promise Armenian Institute (PAI) and the Kerr Family have come together to create an endowed lectureship with the aim of amplifying the stories of heroes and heroines who dedicated themselves to providing humanitarian support for victims and survivors of violence and mass atrocities in times of crisis.

The lectureship will be named in honor of the Kerr Family, whose progenitors include Professor Stanley and Elsa Reckman Kerr, who not only worked for many years with the Near East Relief organization, rescuing and caring for survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–23, but also documented their experiences. The Kerrs’ descendants include the late Malcolm Kerr, former UCLA professor and president of the American University of Beirut, and his wife, Ann Kerr, who has served UCLA for many decades as the Coordinator of the Fulbright Enrichment Program.

The first Kerr Family Lecture at UCLA will feature documentarian Ani Hovannisian, who will present the extraordinary humanitarian work of Stanley and Elsa Kerr during and after the Armenian Genocide in Marash, Aleppo and Beirut. Hovannisian has gathered and will share extensive archival material and footage on the history of the Kerrs and their longstanding contributions, which continue through their family to the present day. Historian and UCLA Professor Emeritus Richard Hovannisian, who knew the Kerrs and wrote the introduction to Stanley Kerr’s 1973 memoir, “The Lions of Marash,” will deliver an introduction and commentary prior to the talk.

The inaugural Kerr Family lecture will take place in person on Wednesday, April 12.

Subsequent lectures in the Kerr Family lecture series, which aims to inspire courageous humanitarian efforts by future generations, will focus on the contributions of individuals — especially those who are not widely known — who have played similarly critical roles in helping alleviate the suffering of those facing war, famine, genocide and other mass atrocities. Annual talks provided by distinguished scholars will make the life stories of these heroes more widely known.

“It is particularly fitting that the Promise Armenian In-



Ann Kerr and her children

stitute will host this annual lecture series. The actions of numerous heroes during the Armenian Genocide no doubt inspired and found parallels throughout the century that followed and well into the 21st century. Drawing such connections in a visible way, year after year, will encourage future scholarly research and humanitarian action in response to mass tragedies,” remarked Steve Kerr, head coach of the Golden State Warriors and a grandson of Stanley and Elsa Kerr.

“As a scholarly organization with a focus on Armenia and Armenians — an ethnic group that has unfortunately suffered subjugation and genocide, as well as a century of

systemic denial of that genocide — it is fitting for the PAI to celebrate not only the Kerr family’s contributions, but those of unsung heroes associated with other mass atrocities,” said Ann Karagozian, director of PAI and distinguished professor in the UCLA Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering.

“The commemoration of both historical and contemporary events will place the Armenian experience within a global context and clearly demonstrate the chilling effect that indifference, denial and lack of accountability can have on the repetition of mass violence, as we are witnessing even today,” she noted.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

A Manti to Remember

By Aida Zilelian

LONG ISLAND, N.Y. — It sees dreams — especially those of *manti*, at least — can come true.

“Something I dreamt about for the last 35 years is finally coming to fruition,” said Hilda Apikoglu. She is the owner of Medz-Mom’s Manti, a family-owned enterprise Hilda and her daughters, Janine and Najda, always talked about.

“Life got in the way,” said Hilda, “but I always hoped there would come a time when my daughters and I could make traditional *manti* accessible for mass distribution.”

I became acquainted with the family several months ago at Holy Martyrs Armenian Language School in Queens, NY when the school was preparing to host their



Hilda, with her daughters, Janine and Najda



annual Manti Night. It is a much-anticipated event that has been part of the community for decades, and tickets sell out quickly. Hilda and her daughters donated 160 pounds of *manti* for the evening and as expected, it was very well-received.

Hilda’s *manti* venture is not her first foray as a business owner. For more than two decades, she was the president and owner of the textile business company Trimland. “It’s in the Apikoglu blood,” she says. “My life’s work prepared me for this.”

As a family business, they pride themselves on the product’s quality and their ability to manufacture a uniform shaped *manti* with the utmost attention to detail and cleanliness. Although, they contended with significant challenges. The first was searching for a pasta manufacturing plant that was able to create a mold that produced the traditional canoe-shaped pasta. Then came the process of trademarking the *manti* shape, along with their company name. They are currently finalizing an agreement with MODA Foods, which will manufacture their *manti* with sole exclusivity to Medz-Mom’s Manti.

The business is truly a family operation. Janine oversees the sales and distribution and Najda delegates the marketing and promotions. They are currently working on the packaging and retail distribution. For now, they are able to offer one-pound retail packaging to local grocers, or bulk packages to individuals and restaurants. Medz-Mom’s Manti is available for purchase by emailing medzmoms-manti@gmail.com

Hilda said, “Remaining persistent and dedicated to make my dream a reality, I have been able to accomplish this project with my two daughters by my side helping me along the way. My hope is that our *manti* reminds the next generation of what our grandmothers made by hand, working hours to prepare it, which can now be ready to enjoy and eat in under thirty minutes.”

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

Notice to Our Subscribers Regarding Print Version

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

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

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

We apologize and ask for your continued understanding.

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Taner Akçam Shares New Research Revealing First Decision to Launch Armenian Genocide

REVELATIONS, from page 1

suppositions based on circumstantial historical facts, (i.e. “Enver Pasha blamed the Armenians for the defeat at Sarikamish.”)

With newly discovered and/or verified telegrams from the Ottoman Archives, Akçam revealed new insights as to how the atrocities unfolded, which challenged some of the accepted historical assumptions.

Decision Was Made in Erzurum, Not Istanbul

Akçam stated that while the ultimate decision to eliminate all Armenians in Anatolia and Western Armenia was taken by the CUP’s Central Committee in Constantinople (led by the triumvirate of Mehmet Talat, Ismail Enver, and Ahmet Jemal), he displayed new evidence showing that the “first decision” to annihilate Armenians was taken in Erzurum on December 1, 1914.

It was the Central Committee of the Teshkilat-i Mahsusa (“Special Organization,” the corps of ex-convicts and Kurdish tribesmen who were answerable directly to the CUP leaders), headquartered in Erzurum, which on that date gave the order to their forces that “those suspected of being potential leaders of the revolt or liable to carry out attacks against Muslims should be arrested and eliminated.”

While on the surface this is an order to arrest and execute suspected revolution-

given to him in Aleppo by Turkish official Naim Bey. The telegrams were purportedly sent from high-level Ottoman officials and included orders to wipe out the Armenians. The telegrams, written in Ottoman Turkish, were for decades claimed to be forgeries by Turkish denialists. The fact that these telegrams were the clearest proof of intentional state-sponsored genocide against the Armenians, made it very hard to write clearly about the history of the genocide in an “unbiased” manner when many scholars could not agree on whether the telegrams were genuine. Akçam’s research, published in *Killing Orders*, proved that the telegrams were indeed authentic.

One of the most important telegrams was written on March 3, 1915 and sent to the party secretary of the Adana branch of the CUP. The telegram reads, in part, “The Committee...has decided to annihilate all of Armenians living within Turkey, not to allow a single one to remain, and has given the government broad authority in this regard. On the question of how this killing and massacring will be carried out, the [central] government will give the necessary instructions to the provincial governors and army commanders.”

If this telegram is authentic, it would be the earliest evidence of an empire-wide plan to annihilate all Armenians. However, even though Akçam proved that most of the telegrams were authentic, this particular telegram was still in question as the signature at the bottom was too hard to read, though it seemed to say “Beha,” the meaning of which was unclear. But a 2017 book by a Turkish scholar from Ankara published the entirety of a CUP “notebook” still in a library in Istanbul, which included all the telegrams sent by Dr. Bahaeddin Shakir, head of the Teshkilat-i Mahsusa and widely considered one of the architects of the Armenian Genocide. Through this recent research, as well as research into Ottoman Turkish newspapers which Shakir wrote articles for, Akçam was able to verify that Shakir used the nickname “Beha” to sign many of his articles, and the signature at the bottom of the telegram was identical to that of Shakir, a fact that even Andonian was unaware of.

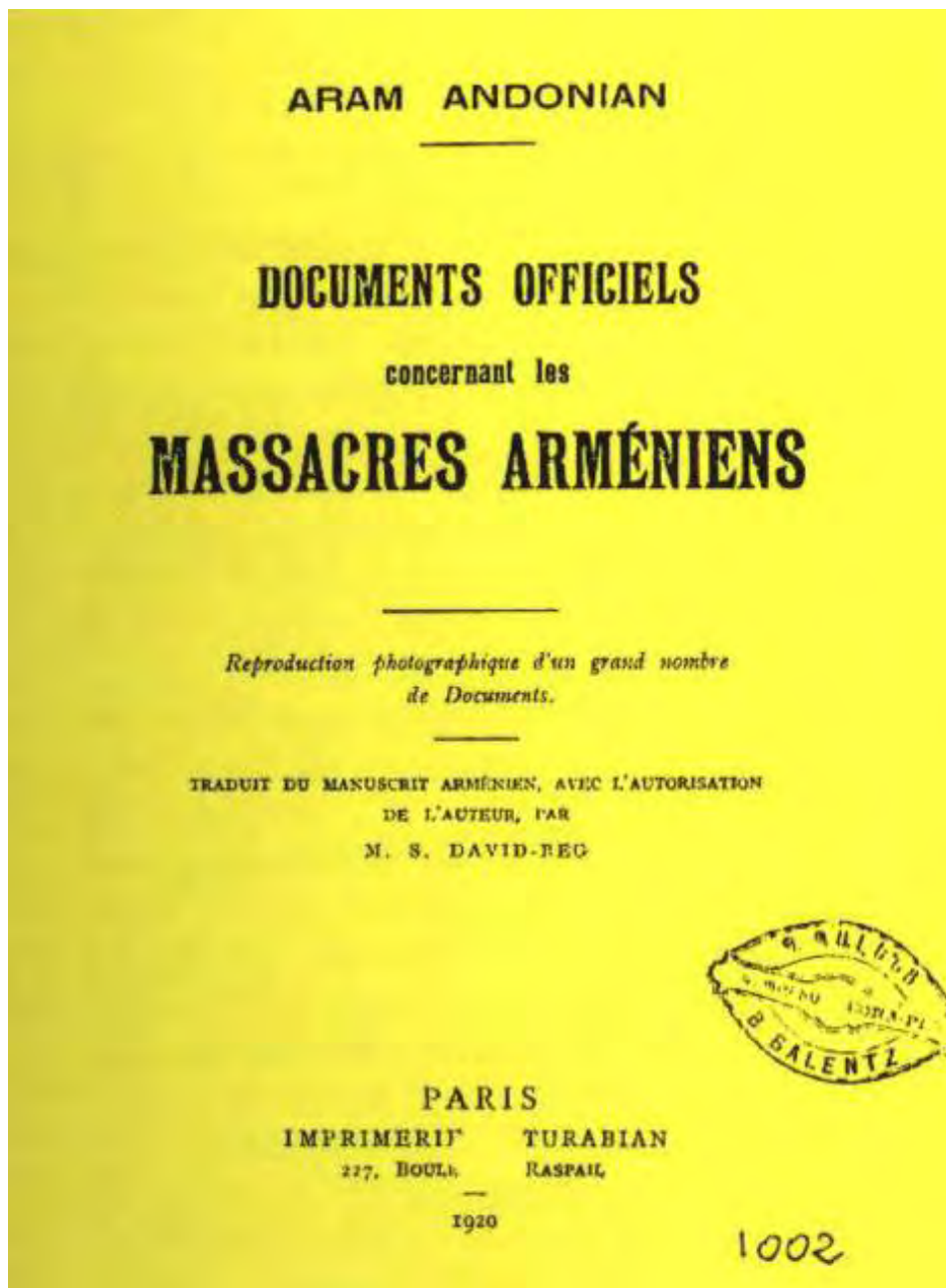
Shakir was in Erzurum in August 1914, returned to Istanbul in March 1915, and went back to Erzurum in April 1915, and thus Akçam deduced that the decision to commit the Genocide was taken by the Central Committee of the CUP, of which Shakir was a part, during the time he was in Istanbul, which coincides with the time that the telegram was sent. On March 14, another telegram was sent which stated “refer to Third Army Command in regard to the urgent measures to be taken in response to Armenian actions,” while an April 7 telegram stated, “the committee has decided to annihilate all Armenians living within Turkey.”

Based on these and many other telegrams, Akçam concluded that the final decision must have been taken between February 16 and March 3, 1915.

Tracing Clues Back to Erzurum

But why was this decision made at this particular time, when Shakir was in Istanbul? To answer this question, Akçam traced the history of the telegraph correspondence between Talat Pasha, the de facto dictator of Turkey during the war, and Shakir.

On November 26, 1914, Talat had sent a telegram to the government office in Er-



Original French Translation of Andonian’s Book Including the Telegrams Saved by Naim Bey



Aram Andonian

aries, it was quite easy to construe “potential leaders of the revolt” as “all Armenian adult males.” Furthermore, as Akçam pointed out, the Nazi leadership of Germany used the exact same wording when ordering all Jewish men discovered beyond the front lines to be killed during “Operation Barbarossa” (the German invasion of the Soviet Union). Akçam notes that instead of killing just men, the German SS exterminated the entire Jewish population in the area.

Andonian Papers and Dr. Bahaeddin Shakir

Akçam set the stage for his new research by overviewing some of his earlier discoveries in regard to the so-called “Andonian Papers,” which he published in his 2018 book, *Killing Orders*.

In 1921, Armenian writer Aram Andonian published a book in Paris called *The Great Crime*, which included telegrams



Dr. Bahaeddin Shakir, head of the Teshkilat-i Mahsusa (Special Organization)

zurum, asking them to call for Shakir to come to the city of Erzurum and to the telegraph office so that he could communicate directly with the Central Committee. At the time, Shakir was in the region but not in the city of Erzurum.

On February 16, Shakir arrived in Erzurum and began to communicate with the party leaders in Istanbul; this was most likely when the final decision was being

made, argued Akçam, but he pointed out that we don’t have a record of these communications.

However, Akçam’s research shows that earlier decisions had been made in Erzurum, even before Shakir arrived there. Although the final decision affected the whole Ottoman Empire, the decision taken in Erzurum on December 1, 1914 affected also the provinces of Mush and Van, or in Akçam’s words “half of Historical Armenia.”

Akçam mentioned that once again, there are not many documents related to the December 1 decision, but “it’s not just because the Turkish

government or deniers take them away.” Akçam noted that during the original communications, the officials were often supposed to burn telegrams after reading them, so that although some survived, many telegrams are long gone. In another telegram to Talat, Shakir stated that he had to come to Istanbul “because I have some thoughts and opinions that cannot be put down on
continued on next page

COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

paper.” Akçam surmises that these related to increasingly drastic measures against the Armenian population.

Akçam discussed that during all of December 1914, the CUP Committee in Erzurum as well as Tahsin Bey, the Governor of Erzurum Province, sent telegrams to Istanbul, making a list of the decisions they made. One telegram read that “those Armenians, both in the city centers [Bitlis and Van], and in surrounding villages who are suspected of being potential leaders of the revolt or who would attack Muslims are to be arrested in advance and in case of attacks on Muslims they [those arrested] are all to be deported to Bitlis immediately in order that they be exterminated.”

Akçam noted the importance of the wording of this document. The orders were to target Armenians “in advance” of their “potential” revolt. This was long before the Defense of Van in April 1915, which many Turkish denialists use as a proof of Armenian rebellion which was met with retaliation by the state. Instead of responding to actual Armenian rebellions, Akçam argues, the CUP began to view Armenians as “potential” revolutionaries and traitors to the Empire. Thus, any Armenian could be suspect as an “enemy of the state.”

Radicalization Came From the Provinces

Akçam made a compelling argument that not only was the first decision on the Armenian Genocide made in Erzurum, rather than Istanbul, but that the increasing radicalization of the Armenian-Turkish issue and the push for genocidal measures was less of a top-down phenomenon as and more the result of the demands by provincial governors.

In a telegram dated December 20, 1914, Tahsin Bey, the Governor of Erzurum, proposed to the central government that “the previous decision taken by the Erzurum central committee ... be immediately put into effect in other provinces too.”

Akçam’s argument is that the local governors were pressuring the central government in Istanbul to make a centralized decision to exterminate the Armenians in all provinces. As Akçam put it, this new information alters our current understanding of how and why the Genocide took place. The traditional view was that the atrocities were primarily planned and executed by the CUP triumvirate and their fellow party leaders, in Istanbul. Thanks to Akçam’s new research, we now know that governors played a more important role than we realized. They were not merely passive receivers of orders from Talat and Enver.

One important discovery, said Akçam, is that the governors communicated with each other and made decisions in the regions. It is significant that they were the ones who kept pushing the idea that the Armenians really need to be exterminated.

Even before the Erzurum Central Committee had made their decisions, Governor Tahsin was sending telegrams to Istanbul suggesting the same. For example, on November 17, he wrote “The time has come to take a permanent decision and issue an order in regard to the Armenians.” Meanwhile, the authorities in Istanbul replied that Tahsin should carry out whatever the situation demands “but with well-considered measures until a decisive order is given.” Akçam summarized this as “the governor is pushing, but Istanbul is staying calm.”

Another governor, Jevdet Bey of Van, wrote on November 19 that to “intentionally wait until the blaze gets of the control would be disastrous for us,” and “we stand before another disaster like what was experienced in Rumelia,” when the Ottomans lost territory to the newly-minted Balkan



Tahsin Bey, Governor of Erzurum

states. He suggested that “without waiting for the Armenian rebellion,” the Turkish authorities should act “as forcefully as possible.”

Akçam again pointed out that mirroring the Holocaust, the paranoia of the CUP led them to genocide, as their logic was “who-

ever seems suspicious” of disloyalty to the state could be a “potential threat,” and therefore “should be eradicated.” That essentially means that “all Armenians should be eradicated.”

If it took until December 1 for the CUP leadership in Erzurum to decide upon eliminating the Armenians in the Eastern Provinces, and until March for the leadership in Istanbul to follow suit for the whole Empire, telegrams had been pouring in from local governors before that time. Throughout November and December of 1914, the governors of Erzurum, Van, and Bitlis, were demanding a final decision on the Armenians and for the government to give them permission to use radical measures, but no decision was forthcoming until March.

Conclusions

Before making his final conclusions, Akçam noted the importance of the fact that in all of these secret telegrams, the word “extermination” is used, while most Turkish denialists have for years denied that there was any intent to “exterminate.” Some other synonyms used in the telegrams were “persecution and elimination,” or “annihilation and elimination.” In April,

telegrams spoke of “the annihilation of Armenians to the greatest extent possible, together with their material and moral power,” a clear reference to genocide.

The early decisions for extermination are significant for having been made in the period before either the British Gallipoli landing and the Ottoman defeat at Sarikamish, both of which have normally been posited as incitements leading to the genocide.

Akçam had been scheduled to also discuss new research on the role of the Kurds in the Armenian Genocide, but did not have time. Upon the request of the audience, he shared some tidbits of local provincial governors, including the aforementioned Tahsin, Governor of Erzurum, who in their telegrams complained of Kurdish tribes attacking and looting Christian, including Armenian, villages, and requesting more security forces to fight these Kurds. Why would Turkish officials who were simultaneously suggesting that the entire Armenian population be wiped out, ask for help to essentially stop Kurdish tribes from wiping out the Armenians? Akçam left this tantalizing question for the audience to ponder in expectation of his next lecture, when, he said, he would share his hypothesis.

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Arts & Culture

Spring Piano Recital at ACF to Pay Tribute to Baghdad Barcarolle

ARLINGTON, Mass. — The Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF) presents noted pianist and educator Anahit Truzyan in concert on March 26 at 6 p.m.

Truzyan is a pianist with undeniable talent and dedication to her craft, with a master’s degree and post-graduate degrees from Komitas State Conservatory. She has performed in the US, the Middle East, Armenia, and Russia.

In the United States, Truzyan pursued an artist diploma and continued to perform at various venues. She also served as a pianist and organist for church services. Her performances are breathtaking, manifesting a deep understanding and emotional depth of music.

Truzyan’s contributions to music go beyond just performing. She is also a dedicated instructor with a private practice in the greater Boston area where she has inspired and mentored students of all ages and levels of experience.

Also, featured in the program are two child prodigies, siblings Rebecca Lai (14) and Timothy Lai (12) students of Truzyan.

Rebecca Lai is an eighth-grade student at Lexington Christian Academy. She began her journey with the piano under the guidance of Truzyan at the age of 5. She has honed her skills and developed a strong technical foundation. With her unwavering dedication and hard work, she has won several awards including the First Place Honor in Crescendo International Competition and the Silver Award in the American Association for Development of the Gifted and Talented (AADGT) International Young Musicians Festival. Besides playing as a soloist, she also performs in various chamber ensembles and collaborates as an accompanist in different chorales. Since September 2022, she has been studying at the New England Conservatory Preparatory School.

Timothy Lai is a seventh-grade student at Lexington Christian Academy. Like his sister, Timothy began studying the piano at the age of 5 with Truzyan. Timothy’s exceptional musical sensitivity and quick absorption of new material is truly remarkable. He has won the silver award in the American Association for Development of the Gifted and Talented (AADGT) International Young Musicians Festival. Besides piano, he also plays trombone and performs with different ensembles.

The Lai siblings have performed in various recitals and festivals throughout the Boston area, such as the New England Piano Teacher Association see RECITAL, page 12



Michael Sarian

Jazz Night at the Tekeyan Center

Sarian Blows Away Audience at TCA Program In New Jersey

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, N.J. — This year’s first public event at the Tekeyan Center took place on Saturday, February 25, featuring trumpeter Michael Sarian, in front of a large, enthusiastic audience. Days before the event, it was announced that the event was sold out.

The event was organized by Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group (MMTG) and was dedicated to the 25th anniversary of MMTG. Harout Chatmajian, the MMTG president, initiated the event by welcoming all attendees and providing opening remarks that summarized MMTG’s 2022 activities and highlighted upcoming 2023 25th anniversary celebratory events. Barsoumian, a long-time MMTG committee member, actor, composer, and coordinator of the jazz night, presented Michael Sarian and his quartet. Wine and cheese were served before and after the performance.

Trumpeter/composer Sarian was joined by Santiago Leibson on piano, Nathan Ellman-Bell on bass and Dayeon Seok on drums. They performed his original compositions from his recent albums, as well as traditional Armenian works like *Dle Yaman* and *Chinar Es* by Komitas, as well as *Yis Kou Ghimetn Chim Kidi* by Sayat Nova. It drew an exceptional reception and congratulatory remarks from the audience.

Sarian was born in Toronto and raised in Buenos Aires. He has been calling New York City home since 2012. He has performed at some of the most iconic international stages, including the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, Getxo Blues Festival in Spain, Teatro Colon in Argentina, and at some of New York City’s most beloved venues such as the Blue Note Jazz Club, Jazz at Lincoln Center, BRIC JazzFest, The Beacon Theater, and Central Park SummerStage.

In celebration of its 25th anniversary, MMTG is planning two main events in 2023: a celebratory gala on May 13 at the Clinton Inn, featuring international actor, musician and comedian Kev Orkian and singer Kevork Artinian and his band and a theatrical performance of Shakespeare’s “Much Ado About Nothing” on November 4 at the Peter Norton Symphony Space in New York City, directed by Gerald Papasian.



The audience and Michael Sarian at the Tekeyan Cetner

Treasures Of Artsakh:

A Virtual Exhibition From 16 Armenian Museums

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America (AMA) and the History Museum of Armenia (HMA) are dedicated to the preservation, study, and promotion of the heritage of the Armenian people. This mission includes the presentation of the historical and cultural wealth of Artsakh.

The purpose of this online exhibition—jointly organized by the two museums — is to showcase the spiritual and material heritage of Artsakh during the ancient, medieval, and modern periods, spanning millennia of Armenian history. The virtual format combines collections to reflect the ethnocultural richness of Artsakh.

This collaboration brings together



Costume ensemble, 1819, Shushi, silk, cotton, History Museum of Armenia 851, 8430-2

er artifacts from the collections of 16 Armenian museums around the world. Over the centuries these historical artifacts have been created as eloquent testimonies of the spiritual values preserved in tangible form, and serve an important role in the preservation and study of Armenian culture.

The Artsakh and Utik provinces, located in the east of historic Great Armenia, played an important role over millennia, developing a multi-layered culture which adapted and persisted, maintaining its continuity. This particular heritage is presented here through artifacts of the Paleolithic and Bronze Age, ancient unique anthropomorphic stelae, weapons, pottery, jewelry, and objects of worship, as well as early medieval manuscripts, carpets, costumes, early printed books, journals, and photographs.

In 2020 as a result of the 44-day war, Azerbaijan seized a large number of Armenian settlements in Artsakh, including 12 museums and other private collections. The fate of the

ARTS & CULTURE




Beatrice Ohanessian

ACF to Pay Tribute to Baghdad Barcarolle

RECITAL, from page 13
(NEPTA) recitals and Passion of Music Festival at New York’s Carnegie Hall. The recital is dedicated to the memory of Baghdad Barcarolle, as the late Beatrice Ohanessian, Iraq’s foremost classical pianist, was known. Born on March 15, 1927 in Baghdad, Ohanessian received her early music training from the Institute of Fine Arts majoring in piano. Later, she continued studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London with professor Max Pirani. Four years later, she earned her LRAM (Licentiate from the Royal Academy of Music) in performance and pedagogy, with a major in piano and a second major in voice.
Born in Baghdad, Ohanessian took up music as a youngster, studied in London and New York, and went on to become pianist for the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra. After receiving a Fulbright Scholarship, she continued her higher education

at Juilliard School of Music in New York City. Upon returning to Iraq, Beatrice was appointed the head of the piano department at the Institute of Fine Arts in Iraq. From 1969 to 1972, Beatrice taught at the University of Minnesota and Macalester College. Then she spent the next two years teaching in Geneva and performing as a soloist through Switzerland.
In 1994, moved to the United States and settled in Minneapolis-Saint Paul with her siblings. In 1995, Beatrice resumed teaching at the University of Minnesota and Macalester College as well as the University of St. Thomas. She also served as the organist for the Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Paul. Ohanessian died of cancer on July 17, 2008, in Bloomington, at the age of 81.
The program will include works by Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt. The event is free, open to the public and will be fol-



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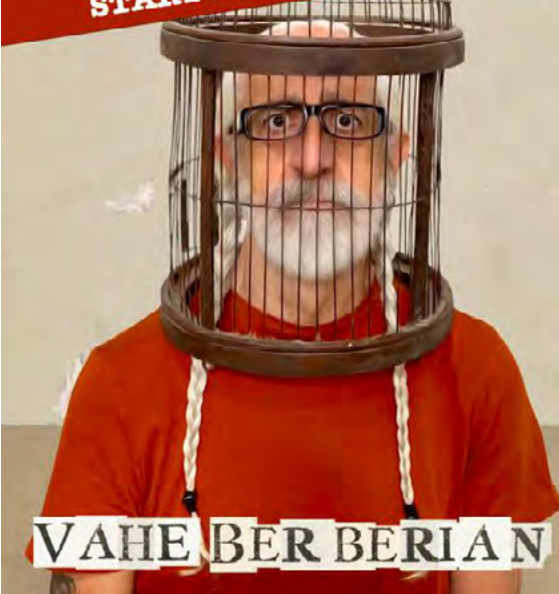
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VAHE BERBERIAN

A Virtual Exhibition from 16 Armenian Museums

TREASURES, from page 12
collections kept in those museums is unknown.

Exhibition Part IV
Artsakh in the 19th-21st Centuries

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Museum of History and Regional Studies (Martakert)

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Mekhitarist Congregation (Venice)

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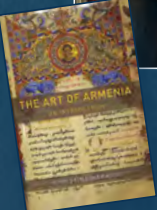


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ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Rejection, Forgiveness, Understanding And Pain: A Dazzling Polyphony in Genocide Fiction

By Prof. Tessa Hofmann

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Writing about genocide is one of the greatest literary challenges, especially when it involves one's own or family experience. Most often, the crime closes the mouths of the surviving victims for life, especially if the state or society that perpetrated the genocide deny the crime and, conversely, accuse the victims of having been perpetrators, as is still happening 109 years later in the case of the Ottoman genocide of some three million indigenous Christians — Armenians, Greek Orthodox, and Syrians.

However, this persistent silence and denial by the Turkish state as well as the Turkish majority society has promoted a remarkable literary phenomenon: the post-genocidal memory prose, which has developed in Turkish-language as well as in English- and French-language transnational narrative prose. It confronts readers with the darkest chapter of Turkish Ottoman history in deliberate challenge.

In the vast Armenian and Greek diasporas of the United States, a memoir prose has emerged since the 1980s that is as ample as it is impressive. German translations such as the memoir *Black Dog of Fate* (1997) by the U.S. poet and literary scholar Peter Balakian or Micheline Marcom Aharonian's debut novel *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* (2000) embody the range of this post-genocidal prose be-

At its center is Kaan, growing up in Munich, the son of a German-assimilated Turkish mother Nur ("Dazzling Light") and a German father, but they play little or no role in the plot. Above all, Kaan is the grandson of the "legendary hazelnut magnate of the Black Sea," Hüseyin Umut, and the Armenian Ani, who is left behind by her mother in the Black Sea port city of Ordu in 1915, when Ani's mother flees to Batumi with her son and her husband Artun. Hüseyin, an enterprising "dede" (grandfather) from his youth, serves as an auxiliary soldier in 1915, supplying the Ottoman troops with tea and tobacco; later, thanks to his good relations with the republican Kemalists, he takes possession of the lands of Artun, "the most respected Armenian far and wide," and marries Ani, Artun's heiress, who has since been raised in Islam by an adoptive Muslim family. Bringing heiresses of wealthy Armenians permanently into their possession through (forced) marriage to the often underage girls was a widespread practice among Ottoman Muslims during and after the 1915/6 genocide. Author Sinan, however, interprets the relationship between Hüseyin Umut and Ani/Vahide as a love match. Like the protagonists of his novel, Marc Sinan's grandparents and mother bear the names Hüseyin, Vahide ("the lonely one"), and Nur.

The birth of their daughter, Nur, whose conception takes place through marital rape, coincides with Hüseyin's economic ruin during World War II. Sinan describes the circumstances and reasons from different, sometimes contradictory points of view. Ambiguity as a design principle in character portrayal pervades his entire work and could be misunderstood as a weakness in structure.

Growing up in Istanbul, Kaan's mother Nur senses that she does not belong, but doesn't realize why. She wants to go to Germany to escape the constant tutelage of women in Turkey. She encourages her egomaniacal son's musical ambition to the best of her ability. Kaan studies in the US thanks to a scholarship, his German school friend Susanne ("Zizi") accompanies him,

but becomes increasingly estranged from the ambitious, arrogant young man, who is often aggressive and lacking empathy, at the same time depressed and with suicidal thoughts. Zizi is the first to recognize that Kaan is psychically "ill," but still accompanies him to the funeral of his grandmother Vahide in Trabzon (Trapezunta) in 1999. Ten years earlier, Vahide/Ani had already confided to her grandson her story of suffering and the loss of her Mayrik (little mother), whom, despite all her love, she calls a sinner "because she worships a false god." Ani/Vahide is not presented as an unambiguous character either. As a committed Muslim, she shares the religious prejudices of the majority population against Christians. She demands that her underage grandson prove his manhood by slaughtering a chicken.

The death of his once-Armenian grandmother does not cause Kaan any grief. It is only decades later that he will explain to Zizi, by now the mother of Kaan's daughter, Aurora, in a telephone conversation that his grandmother "had everything in her luggage, the genocide, the loneliness, the sadness. This unconditional link between self-worth and work." (232) It is a finding that fits the grandson as well and illustrates what is described as the intergenerational impact of genocide trauma.



The night after Vahide's funeral, Nur abruptly appears at his bedside and presents him with Vahide's jade dagger, demanding that he avenge her. Here, too, it remains unclear what crime is to be repaid. In post-genocide family novels, such heirlooms play a major role, such as a golden bangle in Laura Cwiernia's novel or an Armenian family Bible that Katerina Poladjian's protagonist comes across during her internship in Yerevan. The Armenian father in Cwiernia's family novel advises the protagonist against taking up her Armenian heritage: "Much too heavy to carry!"

Kaan, on the other hand, reaches for the dagger, albeit decades after his grandmother's death. He is now a scholarship holder in the villa of the German Academy in Tarabya (Istanbul), where he befriends the supposed gardener in the neighboring property. It is the property of the Turkish president's official villa. Kaan discusses music and art with the old gardener and talks himself into a mad frenzy. His remarks are anti-capitalist-anti-Western or anti-American and culminate in the demand for an indiscriminate art for all people, for a music that does not divide but unites.

The Dede accuses him of being a "fascist of the past," a person who lives in the past and believes in "the moral superiority of the losers. Free yourself from pain (...)! It means great injustice to future generations if we build our identity on the aberrations and injuries of past decades and centuries." (144) At the *iftar* celebration in the presidential garden, Kaan wants to pounce on the president as an avenger with his dagger, but the president turns out to be the nice gardener next door and invites Kaan to contribute music. In his second song, Kaan refers to the Turkish version of the *Song of the Nibelungs*, namely the eighth of twelve stories from the collection *Heroic Tales by Dede Korkut* (mid-15th century): A shepherd of the Turkic people of the Oghuz, the Central Asian ancestors of today's Turks and Azeris, rapes a nymph in a sacred place. She gives birth to a polyp-like child and curses the Oghuz invaders, for whom the one-eyed revenge monster quickly becomes a threat. At first, they drive him into the solitude of the steppe. In the end, the outcast is killed by his "milk brother" Basat.

Marc Sinan dealt with this theme years ago, which he interprets as an inner-Turkish fratricide. His "Docufictional Music Theater for Orchestra, Voice, Movement and Video Installation" was performed in 2014 at the Gorki Theater in Berlin. However, the ambassadors of Turkey and Azerbaijan, who had been invited to attend, did not attend and thus the challenging interpretation by the Turkish writer Sema Kaygusuz, who presented the figure of Tepegöz as the exemplary Other, who is excluded in order to make people forget their own guilt.

The crucial question is, of course, whether the Tepegöz material is suitable for symbolizing the intergenerational Armenian trauma and deriving future prospects for Turkish-Armenian relations from it. Kaan's song says: "But we are brothers, your dede is my dede. My forgiveness is your salvation. Your salvation is my salvation." The

continued on next page



Marc Sinan (WDR photo)

tween factual report and fairy-tale fictionalization of the Ottoman genocide and its psychological consequences. Internationally known Greek-born authors such as Jeffrey Eugenides (b. 1960, US; currently Berlin) and Aris Fioretos (b. 1960, Stockholm) also processed the genocidal extermination and uprooting of their ancestors in the late Ottoman Empire in their novels *Middlesex* (2002) and *The Last Greek* (2009), respectively.

Four generations after the World War I genocide of the Young Turks, these themes entered German-language prose. Actress and author Katerina Poladjian and journalist Laura Cwiernia (b. 1987, Bremen) are daughters of Armenian fathers and descendants of genocide survivors. Their novels, *Here Are Lions* (2019) and *We Have A Different Name on the Street* (2022), respectively, have hybrid styles. On the one hand, they belong to the genre of the family or generational novel, which was considered a "worn-out" genre after World War II but has experienced a resurgence since the 1990s. On the other hand, they are also conceived as travelogues.

In Marc Sinan's debut novel *Gleissendes Licht* ("Dazzling Light," February 2023), the genre hybridity is even more distinct, for it can also be read as both an artist's novel and a coming-of-age narrative.



ARTS & CULTURE

Literary Lights to Feature *We Are All Armenian* Editor Aram Mrjoian

NEW YORK — The Literary Lights program will host an in-person event featuring Aram Mrjoian, editor of the anthology *We Are All Armenian*. He will be joined by the contributors to the volume Chris Bohjalian, Nancy Kricorian, Scout Tufankjian, and Hrag Vartanian.

The event, hosted by the Columbia University Armenian Center and co-sponsored by the Armenian Society of Columbia University, will take place on April 3, at 7 p.m., in Room CO3 of Columbia University's School of Social Work. (No registration required).

Literary Lights is a monthly reading series organized by the International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center. The series will also feature a virtual event with Mrjoian and the book's contributors on April 29, at 1 p.m.

We Are All Armenian is a collection of personal essays by established and emerging Armenian voices exploring the multilayered realities of life in the Armenian diaspora. Anthology contributors include Liana Aghajanian, Naira Kuzmich, Sophia Armen, Kohar Avakian, Olivia Katrandjian, Chris McCormick, Nancy Agabian, Aline Ohanesian, Raffi Joe Wartanian, Anna Gazmariam, J. P. Der Boghossian, Raffy Boudjikanian, Mashinka Firunts Hakopian and Carene Rose Mekertichyan.



from previous page

convictions of the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was murdered for this in early 2007, resonate here.

In fact, however, Armenian-Turkish relations were never about a fratricidal war, but about centuries of subjugation and legal and social discrimination against indigenous Ottoman Christians, including Armenians, and their extermination in the course of Turkish nation-building. The novel's constructed antithesis of retribution and forgiveness is a bogus alternative, for retribution four or more generations post factum is as absurd as forgiveness is impossible in the face of ongoing official Turkish denial and threat.

Sinan seems to have recognized this himself by having his grandmother Vahide appeal to Kaan to look for a third way between forgiveness and retribution: "(...) don't be a Basat, don't be a Tepegöz. Only if you are not both, can you create a balance in the world, can you solve what happened to my *Mayrik*, what happened to me. Choose a path other than that of cruelty." (186) His Dede recommends therapeutic writing: "Finally write down the story, Kaan. Write so that you can forget it. For only in forgetting is there a chance to survive (...)."

Even Kaan must realize that his hope of triggering a nationwide revolution and thus a lasting improvement in the treatment of minorities by assassinating the Turkish president must fail, because "*the paranoia is too strong*." To overcome mistrust, fear and prejudice, it would take another thousand years. Sinan hints that Armenians could also currently become the victims of Turkish exterminationism, with a song

at the presidential iftar celebration in 2023 (236), a song that praises the Young Turkish War Minister Enver and the "martyrs of the great Islamic army" and threatens the "Armenian fascists."

Sinan's dystopian outlook on the near future in November 2023 matches this grim summary: An imagined tanker accident finally destroys the piano of Komitas, the Armenian clergyman and composer that sank in the Bosphorus in September 1913, through a mishap of the young Hüseyin Umut. Komitas saved him from punishment at the time, and when Hüseyin meets Komitas again in 1915, the Armenian deportee recognizes him and blesses him for Hüseyin's benevolence when the latter hands him water. Thus, a lasting bond is formed between the two.

Sinan's novel does not follow any chronology, but spans a plot time of one hundred years with frequent, unmediated changes of place and time. Not only the narrative styles — personal perspective, experienced character speech, inner monologue and auctorial narrator — change in rapid succession, but also the perspectives and evaluations, which lends the content statements an often irritating, dazzling ambiguity. At the beginning of the novel, there is a monstrous crime, which was characteristic for the Black Sea region and especially Trabzon: 15-year-old Hüseyin is hired by soldiers to row a boat with 14 children into the open sea, where they are pushed into the water one after the other. Hüseyin is surprised that the children do not scream: "*Armenians, that's all*." (26)

Dede Hüseyin is not only a relatively empathy-free eyewitness to this crime, but also a profiteer from the genocide and his

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 22 — The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut will hold its annual program, on the 108th anniversary of the Genocide, on Saturday April 22 2023 at 11:00 am. The event will take place at the historic Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. The program will include the Martyrs' Service, which was created in 2015 on the occasion of the centennial of the Genocide and the canonization of the Martyrs. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service. The keynote speaker will be Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America, (ANCA). A reception will follow the commemoration. For questions call Melanie at 860-651-0629

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 18 — Yerkir Nairi and Friends Unite to Present a Concert Celebrating and Preserving Armenian Cultural Treasures, featuring Victoria Avetisyan, Yeghishe Manucharyan, Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian, Sargis Karapetyan, Nuné Hakobyan, Levon Hovsepian, Haig Hovsepian, Ani Hovsepian and others. 6 p.m. First Parish in Bedford, 75 Great Road, Bedford. Tickets \$65, \$125. For tickets visit www.ticketsource.us/yerkir-nairi. All proceeds to benefit educational publications and digitizing of the Armenian National Music Library.

MARCH 26 — Piano Recital: Blossoming Keys, Performers: Anahit Truzyan, Rebecca Lai, Timothy Lai. Works by Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt. Sunday, 5 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation: 441 Mystic Street, Arlington. 781-646-3090.

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

OCTOBER 27-28 — SAVE THE DATE. Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, with two events, an evening panel discussion with journalists on October 27 and a reception and dinner benefit on October 28. Details to be announced.

NEW JERSEY

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

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

NEW YORK

MARCH 29 — The International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center will host the second event of their reading series, *Literary Lights*, featuring Deanna Cachoian-Schanz, translator of *A Book, Untitled* — written by Shushan Avagyan. Cachoian-Schanz will be joined by Dr. Lisa Gulesserian, Preceptor on Armenian Language and Culture at Harvard University. 7:00 p.m. Eastern, at the Guild Hall of the Diocesan Center in New York City (No registration required). *A Book, Untitled* unfolds an imagined encounter between two early twentieth-century feminist writers, Zabel Yesayan and Shushanik Kurghinian, juxtaposed with a conversation between the author and a friend.

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More." You can also mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication. There is no fee for calendar entries.

marriage to an Armenian heiress. How does one live as an heir to a family of victims and perpetrators? By drawing characters that are ambiguous and contradictory, neither really good nor bad? By interpreting the same events differently, even contradictorily, like the economic ruin and the death of Hüseyin Umut? Marc Sinan has attempted his literary liberation from the trauma of the genocide of his Armenian ancestors by

means of his primary art - music - in which simultaneity, contrariety and polyphony are possible. His debut novel is a largely successful translation of polyphonic rules into literary forms. However, this design approach also explains some weaknesses in composition and content.

(Marc Sinan: *Gleißendes Licht*; Roman. Bremen: Rowohlt, 2023. 273 S. ISBN: 978-3-498-00314-2)



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

Lenten Recipes from St. John Armenian Apostolic Church

SAN FRANCISCO — The St. John Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco offers these traditional Lenten-friendly recipes at its website. “The Great Lent is approaching and the Christian world is preparing for the season of fasting and self-reflection. Each recipe is modified to suit the taste of the cook and you are free to make changes based on your own preferences. A strict Lenten fast in the Armenian Church prohibits animal products, but if your health or circumstances cannot allow for it, start smaller. It shouldn’t become an obsession, but a precursor to spiritual growth,” says Fr. Mesrop Ash, Parish Priest at St. John Armenian Apostolic Church since 2012.

“The true understanding of Lent rests on a sturdy tripod of prayer, abstinence, and charity. Lent reminds us that man is always confronted with choices — choices that lead us to two paths in life. The first path is one of darkness, evil and sin. The second is that of light, God, righteousness, and goodness. At the juncture of these two paths stands the fortress of prayer, abstinence, and charity, which leads mankind forward to seek perfection. This is the purpose of Great Lent in the Armenian Church.”*

According to the book *Saints and Sacraments of the Armenian Church* by Bishop Shnork Kaloustian in 1969, Lent begins on the Monday following the Sunday of Poon Paregentan (Paregentan literally means “good living.”), and ends the evening of the Friday before Palm Sunday.

The oldest Armenian Lenten traditions hardly allowed for the consumption of any food at all. Indeed, the Armenian Church sometimes refers to Lent as Ag-houhatzk, meaning “salt and bread,” because at one time these elements were the only permitted foods. Over time, Lenten rules have changed to allow any food that does not derive from animals (meat and milk, e.g.). Alcoholic beverages were also forbidden.

Lenten Taheen Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, optional
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 cup margarine, soft
- 1/2 cup tahini, well stirred
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup water

PREPARATION:

Measure flour into a bowl and stir in the salt and baking soda. In a larger bowl, add margarine, tahini, and sugar, using a fork to mix together. Then add the flour mixture, blending together with a fork or your hands. Gradually add the water and continue to mix. When dough is well integrated, shape into 3/4-inch balls and place them on a cookie sheet, about 3/4-inch apart. Press down lightly on each one with the times of a fork. Bake in preheated oven to 375°F for about 20 minutes or until lightly browned on top. Yield: 6 dozen cookies

Armenian Potato Salad

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound small new potatoes
- 4-5 scallions, chopped
- 1/4 cup minced dill, salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

Boil potatoes, just until tender. Drain, rinse with cold water, peel and set aside to cool. Cut them into thin, round slices. Mix together in a bowl scallions, dill, salt, and pepper. Stir in potatoes. Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving. Turn potatoes into a flat dish, heaped in a mound. Garnish rim with tomatoes and cucumbers.

Yield: 4 servings
*This recipe is from The 40 Days of Lent by Alice Antreassian, published March 28, 1989 by St Vartan Press.
Go to:
<https://stjohnarmenianchurch.com/articles/90/lenten-recipe-armenian-pota-to-salad>

Red Lentils with Cracked Wheat Vospov (Kheemah or Kufta)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/4 cups red lentils, picked over and rinsed
- 3 cups water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup bulgur, fine
- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1 cup coarsely chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon red pepper, to taste

GARNISH:

- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- 1/4 cup finely chopped red and green pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped scallions or onions

Preparation:

Place lentils in a kettle, add water and bring to a full boil. Simmer for 5 minutes, removing thick foam that rises to the surface. Add salt and continue simmering, covered, for 40 to 50 minutes, stirring occasionally. When mixture has cooked to a thick, yellow mass and water is absorbed, remove from heat. Measure bulgur into a deep bowl and spoon cooked lentils over it, mixing to blend. Set bowl aside, covered for 10 minutes. Heat olive oil in a small skillet and add onions, sautéing them just until they begin to brown. Add pepper; then add skillet contents to the bowl and knead or mix thoroughly. Adjust seasonings. Moisten hands and shape mixture into finger-or-sausage-shaped patties: pinch off a piece, squeeze it gently in your clenched fist and release it. Arrange patties on a dish or platter. Combine garnish greens, sprinkle over patties, and serve. Yield: 6 or more servings

Spinach Soup

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups hot water
- 1/2 cup lentils, picked over to discard residue and rinsed
- 1/2 cup bulgur, large
- 1-2 cloves garlic, mashed
- 1-2 teaspoons salt
- 1 16-oz. can whole tomatoes, broken up
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 10-oz. package whole-leaf frozen spinach (or its equivalent in freshspinach leaves)
- 1 teaspoon crushed, dried or 2 tablespoons fresh minced basil

PREPARATION:

Bring water to a full boil, add lentils and bulgur, bring to a boil again, and let simmer for 20-25 minutes. Add garlic, salt, tomatoes and tomato paste and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes or until lentils are soft. Add the spinach and basil during last 5 to 10 minutes of cooking time. Add more water, if needed. Remove from heat and serve hot. Yield: 6 servings
*This recipe is from The 40 Days of Lent by Alice Antreassian, published March 28, 1989 by St Vartan Press.

Bean Casserole Loopyai Aghtsan (Plaki)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 20-oz. can white kidney beans (cannellini beans), rinsed and drained
- 1 cup water
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 medium celery ribs, diced
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup minced parsley
- 2 tablespoons minced dill
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon tomato paste, to taste
- 1 medium tomato, diced
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- Lemon slices

PREPARATION:

Rinse and drain beans in colander; set aside. Add drained liquid to saucepan; add water and all remaining ingredients, except the tomato paste, tomato, olive oil, and beans. Cook over low flame for half an hour, stirring. Add the tomato paste and tomato. Cook another 15 minutes. Add olive oil. Cook 10 minutes more or until vegetables are soft and mixture is of a thick-soup consistency. Add beans, bring mixture just barely to a boil, stir, and check seasoning. Pour into a bowl and refrigerate overnight to permit flavors to blend. Serve cold, garnished with lemon slices. Yield: 6 servings; 10 or more, serve as an appetizer
*This recipe is from The 40 Days of Lent by Alice Antreassian.



COMMENTARY

Will ICJ Ruling Actually Save Karabakh?



By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

There are many comments within the Armenian diaspora and Armenia about the order issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on February 22, 2023. It seems appropriate to provide a frame of reference to better understand the meaning or scope of the judicial orders. To get a complete and accurate picture, it is necessary to explain the establishment and purpose of this court, its judges, its functioning, the advantages and limits of its acts. Then, I will try to analyze the two orders binding Azerbaijan. In the end, I will elaborate on the political outcome of those. While what happens after the order is still up in the air, there is one positive: This was the first time that Armenia has filed a claim at the ICJ and thus moved from a passive role to an active one.

ICJ: A Primer

The ICJ was established in 1945 through the Charter of the United Nations, as a successor to the Permanent Court of International Justice, which had been the judicial organ of the League of Nations (1920-1945). It is an exclusively inter-state jurisdiction, meaning only states can file claims against other states. In certain cases, the court can hear cases regarding damages caused by a third state against its nationals. This is called the principle of diplomatic protection (e.g., Cyprus v. Turkey at the European Court, or Democratic Republic of Congo v. Uganda, Guinea v. DRC or Qatar v. United Arab Emirates at the ICJ).

To allege the responsibility of a state, the mere violation of its obligations under treaties and conventions is sufficient. It does not require material damages.

The court is composed of 15 judges from 15 different countries, elected for nine-year terms. The nomination and election processes are highly diplomatic. The candidates appointed by the states carry out campaigns orchestrated by their diplomatic apparatus. Candidates must provide guarantees of competence and of former high-level appointments. The UN system manages this election with the aim of reaching a fair geographical representation. However, countries with a strong background in international law are rarely absent from this college of judges. The diplomatic pressures and bargaining by powerful states within the UN's General Assembly and Security Council influence the election of judges and court's general opinions.

The sources of law taken into consideration are imposed by the statutes. They consist of treaties and conventions, customary international law and general principles of law. When a case is referred to the ICJ, the judges debate the admissibility of the application. Even before examining the formal application, the court verifies that both parties have tried to reach an amicable compromise through negotiations.

Indeed, the judges consider that their mission is primarily to settle disputes and disagreements between states. The court avoids in principle adopting firm doctrinal stances on ultra-sensitive legal questions if it is not forced to. For example, in the advisory opinion on Kosovo, the court did not take a position on the underlying question of remedial secession and left it open-ended. In the current circumstances (the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the secessions of Crimea and Donbass territories), the ICJ would not consider this topic in the best conditions, if ever the question were to be submitted in the case of Karabakh.

Armenia's Racial Discrimination Complaint

Armenia and its counsels made use of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) to launch proceedings against Azerbaijan. In the first case, the grievances refer to the non-protection of the Armenian prisoners of war (torture and ill-treatments), the non-protection of the cultural and religious heritage in Karabakh (destruction), and in the second case it refers to the non-protection of the health and the living conditions of the Armenian population of Karabakh (due to the blocking of the Lachin corridor).

The ICJ is increasingly solicited by States on the basis of the alleged violations of the CERD, particularly in the context of tense disputes, sometimes armed conflicts, between them. In consideration of increased allegations under this Convention, the ICJ is now pressed to define the scope of application. In the cases Georgia v. Russia, Ukraine v. Russia, Qatar v. United Arab Emirates, and the most recent Armenia v. Azerbaijan, none of them reached yet the judgment on the merits. In Qatar/UAE, the court concluded its lack of material jurisdiction (February 2021) because nationality is not within the scope of CERD. On the other hand, in Ukraine v. Russia, it confirmed its jurisdiction (November 2019).

If an urgent situation arises, a party may submit a written request for the indication of provisional measures at any time during the proceedings. That request has priority over other ICJ pending cases. Armenia submitted two urgent requests, both of which resulted in mostly positive orders (December 7, 2021 and February 22, 2023).

The court does not have, for the purposes of its decision to establish the existence of violations of CERD, but it must determine whether the circumstances require that provisional measures be taken when there is a risk of irreparable prejudice to the rights of the requesting state or of its nationals or when failure to respect these rights may lead to irreparable consequences. This obliges the court to examine whether the rights that Armenia has sought to protect are plausible and to verify that there is a genuine link

between the rights to be protected and the provisional measures requested. The Court also aims, for the sake of settling the dispute between the two States, at preventing any aggravation of the latter.

In the Order of December 7, 2021, the court observed that international humanitarian law governs the release of persons fighting for a state who have been detained during hostilities with another state. The court considered, however, that the right of Armenian prisoners not to be subjected to inhumane or degrading treatment based on their national or ethnic origin, while in custody or detainment, is a plausible right. The court also considered that the rights allegedly violated as a result of acts of incitement and encouragement of racial hatred and discrimination against persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin by senior Azerbaijani officials and degradation and desecration of Armenian cultural heritage are plausible rights too.

Azerbaijan, for its part, claimed that there is no connection between the measures that Armenia claims and the rights enshrined in CERD.

In the second request, Armenia demanded that Azerbaijan stop orchestrating and supporting the environmentalists' so-called "acts of protest", ensure that the free and uninterrupted movement of all persons and of all vehicles and goods along the Lachin Corridor is guaranteed in both directions, and to immediately and fully restore the supply of natural gas and of other goods supplied by utility companies to Nagorno-Karabakh, and refrain from interrupting or hindering it.

In its Order of February 22, 2023, the court considered that the blockade poses a risk of irreparable harm, since the health and life of the persons under blockade are endangered. It concluded that Azerbaijan must, pending the final decision, take all measures at its disposal to ensure the unimpeded movement of people, vehicles and goods along the Lachin corridor in both directions. It rejected at this phase the two other Armenian requested provisional measures relating to acts of protest and the supply of natural gas, lacking evidence.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan reacted officially by pointing up the two rejections. They also highlight the nuanced wording "at its disposal," (<https://www.azernews.az/nation/206662.html>), since the government agent had pleaded that the Lachin corridor was under the control of Russian forces. Azerbaijan tries to convince the court that it does not have control over all the measures enabling movement along the corridor due to the provisions of the ceasefire agreement of November 9, 2020.

Uncertain Legal Outcome

Judge Yusuf, in a dissenting opinion (for both orders), doubted that considerations of race and racial discrimination can apply to the protection of cultural and religious heritage and argued that there is no direct or causal link between the provisions of CERD and the protection of cultural and religious sites. He pointed out that the drafters of the convention decided not to refer to religious discrimination or intolerance. He denounced the "catch-all" approach of the court, which accepts grievances under CERD, while they, in reality, fall under international humanitarian law or under the legal instruments relating to the protection of cultural heritage.

The question has been left open until the preliminary objections stage. Could international politics (acceptation of Ukraine claim against Russia on the basis of the CERD) tilt the court's opinion towards a more generous interpretation of the scope of racial discrimination?

The issue of the blockade and siege of the Karabakh enclave raises another question: is it linked to the problem of racial discrimination or rather based on the general issues of the protection of human rights? We are no longer in a context of armed conflict between two states. It is therefore uncertain whether international humanitarian law is applicable. Indeed, the treatment of the Armenian inhabitants of Karabakh may be analyzed in the light of Azerbaijan's general human rights obligations vis-à-vis its own citizens, even if these "citizens" have lived in an independent "state," albeit an unrecognized one, for more than 30 years. The Azerbaijani authorities repeated on March 13 that "the issue of the rights and security of the Armenians living in Karabakh will be resolved under the Constitution and laws of Azerbaijan. There are no special privileges for them (...) this issue has nothing to do with Armenia and other countries."

Two Diplomatic Consequences

At the January 30, 2023 public hearing, the Agent of Azerbaijan first asserted that the Lachin Corridor was not cut off from traffic. Second, he affirmed that his government was committed and continues to take all measures in its power to ensure the safe movement of people, vehicles and goods on the Lachin road, including by continuously communicating with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Russian peacekeeping forces, trying to establish a dialogue with the people of Karabakh.

The ICJ took note of this statement, but considered that it did not completely eliminate the immediate risk of irreparable harm being caused by the disruption of movement. This is a strong position by the court to protect the Armenian population of Karabakh, but in no way prejudices future decisions.

Azerbaijan has also argued that the Lachin Corridor is under Russian control. The court emphasized that the trilateral cease-fire agreement provides that "the Lachin corridor which will provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia... shall remain under the control of the Russian Federation peace-making forces" and further that "Azerbaijan shall guarantee the security of persons, vehicles and cargo moving along the Lachin Corridor in both directions." This reminder of the provisions of the trilateral ceasefire declaration is not trivial and has an unexpected consequence: it reinforces the international legal value of the November 9, 2020 ceasefire agreement, while the Armenian Parliament has never discussed nor ratified it. This reference by the court, therefore, incidentally binds the two states to it.

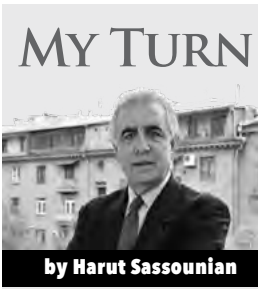
Binding vs. Enforced

A provisional order or a final judgment of the ICJ are judicial acts with binding legal force for both parties as soon as they are issued. Moreover, the court may at any time request information from the parties on any questions relating to the implementation of the measures.

On the other hand, any international jurist knows that the judgments and orders of the ICJ or of any other international court or foreign tribunal are neither self-enforcing nor can they be enforced on the territory of a state without the approval of the state's



COMMENTARY



Truth is Stranger Than Fiction: Israel’s Ambassador to Azerbaijan Is an Armenian

When I first heard that Israel’s Ambassador to Azerbaijan, George Deek, is an Armenian, I thought that it can’t be true. However, I was astonished to find out that it was correct. As Mark Twain said: “Truth is stranger than fiction!”

Long before he became Israel’s Ambassador to Baku, Deek tweeted: “My father’s grandmother’s name was Antaraan Hambarian, an Armenian. She is a survivor of the Armenian tragedy of... <http://fb.me/2WQnyz9Vu>. 8:43 AM. Apr 12, 2015.”

The Facebook link Deek included in his tweet was significant because it referred to an April 12, 2015 article titled: “Turkey angry at pope after ‘genocide’ remarks.” So Deek was aware that there was an Armenian Genocide, his father’s grandmother was a survivor of that Genocide, and her name was Antaraan Hamparian, even though he misspelled her first name which was most probably Antaram.

After Deek became Israel’s Ambassador to Azerbaijan in 2019, several Armenians angrily criticized him for referring to the Armenian Genocide as a “tragedy” in his 2015 tweet. Here are some of the disparaging replies: “Will you survive betrayal of your ancestors?” “She would be proud of you... serving two countries actively denying the very thing that robbed her of her own family,” “Probably she would be greatly ashamed of you,” “Your poor grandmother is turning in her grave, sorry you condone ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and genocide,” “I can’t believe you have Armenian roots! SHAME ON YOU 1,500,000 times then, for SUPPORTING TERRORISTS Azerbaijan and Turkey! IT’S A SHAME FOR US THAT YOU HAVE ARMENIAN BLOOD IN YOUR VEINS!” and “Your great grandmother will spit on your face if she would hear what you say!”

On Sept. 30, 2021, the ANCA (Armenian National Committee of America) posted on its Facebook page: “Most shameful diplomatic appointment in the history of diplomacy. Genocide survivor state Israel sending George Deek (a self-described ethnic Armenian descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors) as its ambassador to Azerbaijan, a country openly working to complete this crime.”

In July 2021, Deek angered Armenians again by tweeting: “Together with the diplomatic corps in Azerbaijan, I had the historic privilege of being the first Israeli Ambassador to visit the remarkable city of Shusha,” a noteworthy Armenian town captured by Azerbaijan during the 2020 war.

In an interview with The Times of Israel on January 13, 2023, Ambassador Deek described himself as “an Arab and an Israeli.” His father was an Orthodox Christian of mixed Armenian and Palestinian roots. Here is an excerpt from that interview:

The Times of Israel: “When you meet Azeris and they discover you’re an Arab Christian, what kind of reactions do you get?”

Ambassador Deek: “Naturally, it’s surprising and confusing for most Azeris. The sense of surprise is great for helping me explain about the diversity of Israeli society. But frankly, at this point, I’ve stopped correcting them because it gets tiring. It’s still funny when on December 24, they still wish me a Happy Hanukkah rather than Merry Christmas.”

The Times of Israel: “As an Israeli Christian, what’s your perspective on the Armenian community — which consists mainly of fellow Israeli Christians -- and the challenges they face in Israel, both in connection with the Jerusalem-Baku relationship and with other non-related issues?”

Ambassador Deek: “I have deep sympathy for the Armenian community in Israel, and specifically in Jaffa, where I grew up. We share the same faith and many cultural traditions. Many of my friends from school and from youth movements are Armenian. I had teachers who influenced me immensely who are Armenian, and I consider them as close friends.”

On January 5, 2023, the Azeri Caliber.az website quoted Ambassador Deek as declaring: “Israel is proposing its assistance to Azerbaijan in the setting up of ‘smart cities’ in Armenian districts occupied by Azerbaijan.”

On January 12, 2023, Ambassador Deek was interviewed by Caliber.az on video which was titled, “Beyond the visible: Excavating the depths of Israeli-Azerbaijani ties with Ambassador George Deek.”

In that interview, Ambassador Deek made the following alarming statement: “The most important event is when Azerbaijan entered the second Karabakh war and we [Israel] have been here standing shoulder to shoulder with our partner and friend Azerbaijan. Our strategic cooperation continued and intensified during that period but also on the humanitarian field. The fact that I took the risk to go to Ganja in the middle of the attacks on the city and to talk to the local community, to meet them, to provide humanitarian support with equipment like basic things from blankets and heaters and so on to people who lost their homes and everything they could. And I think that created also the connection in the hearts, not just in the minds, so I think the second Karabakh war showed Azerbaijan what we mean when we say friend, what we mean when we say partner. For us these are not empty words of diplomats.... These are things that come from the heart and they actually have a strong meaning for us.... Israel’s position has been clear about the Karabakh issue for a long time. Israel supports Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity. It has done so in words and in deeds before the second Karabakh war and after the second Karabakh war.”

He also wrongly added that “practically, the Arab-Israeli conflict is basically over.” Ambassador Deek not only does not have respect for his Armenian heritage, he also has no respect for his Palestinian heritage. He must have sold his soul to the devil for his job.

The most astounding aspect of Ambassador Deek’s appointment is that Israel’s Foreign Ministry officials sent an envoy with an Armenian background to Azerbaijan! Despite Ambassador Deek’s effusive words about Azerbaijan, I doubt if Pres. Aliyev and the people of Azerbaijan fully trust him. In Azerbaijan, they have nothing but hatred and contempt for any Armenian, even those who are partly Armenian.

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judicial or political authorities, even in the event of a final judgment. Execution depends on political will. This is one of the shortcomings of international law and of the effectiveness of its judicial organs.

The statute of the court provides that the Security Council is automatically informed of the court’s provisional measures and judgments. The UN Charter provides that “if any party to a case fails to perform the obligations incumbent upon it under a judgment rendered by the court, the other party may have recourse to the Security Council, which may, if it deems necessary, make recommendations or decide upon measures to be taken to give effect to the judgment.” Such provision is not clearly drafted for an order on provisional measures and such situation never happened. In LaGrand case (Germany v. United States), the Court confirmed that the recourse applies to “judgments” (the ICJ final judgments in the ongoing proceedings under CERD will be issued in a few years from now), meanwhile it highlighted the unclarity whether it could apply to provisional measures, due to the ambiguity of the wording used in the Statute.

Political, Diplomatic Significance of ICJ Judiciary Acts

The first benefit resulting from the ICJ order is that if Azerbaijan does not comply with the order, there is the possibility to convince other powerful states to apply sanctions of a diplomatic, economic and financial nature. This requires a continuous and convincing diplomatic action at the Security Council or at other interstate forums.

One problem: Ukraine is the focus of all attention and has rendered other disputes invisible. The Western undeclared war against Russia is poisoning all international affairs and does not leave room for other cases. No third state is willing to take a firm position or legal steps for Armenia, since Turkey is a spoiler and has paralyzed the West.

THE UN CHARTER PROVIDES THAT “IF ANY PARTY TO A CASE FAILS TO PERFORM THE OBLIGATIONS INCUMBENT UPON IT UNDER A JUDGMENT RENDERED BY THE COURT, THE OTHER PARTY MAY HAVE RECOURSE TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL, WHICH MAY, IF IT DEEMS NECESSARY, MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS OR DECIDE UPON MEASURES TO BE TAKEN TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE JUDGMENT.”

Second issue: the strategy of the Armenian side was unclear and it remains so: tensions between Armenia and Karabakh are now public.

Irrespective of this unclarity, the discourse that tends to defend at all costs the idea of a peace treaty may be a good excuse for the ICJ to take a balanced position in order to mitigate the aggravation of the dispute. If a peace treaty were to occur, it is likely that both parties would agree to abandon their respective interstate actions before international courts.

The second benefit is that other states feel freer to denounce Azerbaijan’s behavior without jeopardizing their bilateral relations. Their statements and requests recall and refer to the binding decision of the ICJ.

The third benefit is that, for the first time, the systematic balancing of the courts’ decisions in crossed Armenia-Azerbaijan petitions (Cf. European Court decisions) is broken. Even the order of December 7, 2021 had maintained a certain balance with Azerbaijani mirror application. Is the February 2023’s order the sign of a change in the perception of the dispute or a diplomatic warning to Azerbaijan?

The fourth benefit is to keep scoring legal and diplomatic points. During the examination of the merits of the case, all the behaviors of Azerbaijan will be scrutinized and if they were not in accordance with what the Court ordered, the judgment will reflect.

How Will Azerbaijan Behave?

Azerbaijan is using all stratagems to protect its interests by anticipating the next phases of the proceedings before the court. Although Azerbaijan did not change its political intentions, the order had a direct effect on its behavior before, both during and after the hearings.

The commitment made during the hearings obliges it to better protect the Armenian population of Karabakh. If this gives a little respite on the humanitarian level, it offers diplomatic prospects that do not meet the expectations of the Armenian side.

Indeed, direct talks between Azerbaijan and representatives of the Armenian population of Karabakh are happening and are the subject of noticeable publicity. Azerbaijan seeks to show another image of itself, that of a state that maintains a dialogue with its citizens of Armenian origin to solve their problems. The Karabakh authorities deny that this dialogue is political and Azerbaijan wants to demonstrate that its objective of restoring its sovereignty over Karabakh can be achieved while respecting the

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COMMENTARY

Reflections on the Karabakh and Ukraine Wars

By Alan Whitehorn

As we contemplate our current era of ongoing pandemics and wars, it is useful to utilize a comparative framework. In a geo-political strategic analysis of the 2020 Karabakh war and that of the ongoing 2022-2023 war in Ukraine, we have witnessed the continuing importance of the technological revolution in warfare. Newspaper headlines around the world have proclaimed the pivotal use of drones and satellite-based intelligence for targeting in both cases.

In the 2020 war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding territories, the extensive and critical use of Turkish and Israeli-made drones by Azerbaijan led to a swift and dramatic change in the military and geo-political landscape in the South Caucasus. The widespread impact of drones was somewhat of a surprise to the Armenian armed forces. The one-sided consequences were most notably Armenian losses of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, parts of Karabakh itself, and even the Armenian state at risk since the closing days of the 44-Day War.

By contrast, in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, both warring sides, albeit Russia later than Ukraine, realized the importance of and have used drones increasingly, as design, production and delivery permitted. Both Kyiv and Moscow have sought to acquire as many drones as they can from foreign sources. Turkey and the United States have been key suppliers for Ukraine, while Russia has purchased Iranian-made drones and hopes to purchase Chinese-made ones soon. Whereas Russia provided insufficient wartime assistance to Armenia during the 2020 Karabakh war, there has been a crucial and substantial supply of Western intelligence, technology, weapons (including various types of drones) and aid to Ukraine. The West has also applied major economic sanctions against the aggressor Russian state.

In the 2020 Karabakh War, Turkey provided extensive and key military assistance, including leadership personnel, to Azerbaijan. This greatly facilitated the Baku dictatorship's ability to make major territorial advances at the expense of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding territories. Armenian military losses in personnel and equipment were so extensive in 2020 that it resulted in grave threats to much of Armenia itself. It is a risk that continues to this day with the repeated cross-border military incursions by

Azerbaijan and the current Lachin Corridor humanitarian crisis caused by the recently-imposed Azerbaijani blockade of food, fuel and medical supplies to the Karabakh/Artsakh capital of Stepanakert. Only the earlier intervention of Moscow with its military deterrence and offer of "Russian peacekeepers" averted an even greater catastrophic Armenian loss in 2020. However, given Moscow's current preoccupation with the war in Ukraine, the Russian military presence in Karabakh and the South Caucasus region has proved to be less reliable and seemingly fostered only a "temporary pause" in the Aliyev dictatorship's expansionist ambitions in the South Caucasus. Baku continues to push for access to more Armenian lands and the development of a key "transport corridor" to Nakhichevan, the portion of Azerbaijan located west of the Armenian state. Such a corridor challenges Armenian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Aliyev and his ally Turkish president Erdogan seem determined to pursue a pan-Turanist linkage across the region. The situation in the South Caucasus continues to be unstable, fraught with risk of a renewed regional war, and is significantly affected by events in Ukraine. Given that Moscow's strategic attention and military troops are preoccupied with its war against Kyiv, both Baku and Ankara see opportunities in Karabakh and beyond.

In the larger overview, among the key lessons to be learned from the wars in Karabakh and Ukraine are the essential role of new, advanced modern technology and the important role of pioneering scientists in the wars' outcomes. These observations echo that of World War Two and the innovative work of the physicist Robert Oppenheimer and mathematician Alan Turing and their respective critical work on the atomic bomb and computer-based intelligence gathering and analysis. Today, it is scientists and engineers working on drones, communications and spy satellites, and other advanced weapons and technological forms of intelligence collection.

In the third decade of the 21st century, the scientific revolution of warfare continues at an accelerated rate. Mass formations of attack drones are one vivid and foreboding example of things to come. Also of growing importance also is the gathering of massive amounts of satellite and other computerized data for advanced intelligence-targeting. The rate of scientific-technological change today is accelerating, and we can expect even more significant advances in modern weaponry. The re-

sult may well be greater destabilizing of the global and regional geo-political landscapes.

While initially the capital of Kyiv was in serious danger, Ukraine has withstood the Russian invasion which now appears virtually stalled. Supported by substantial and increasing NATO assistance, Ukraine continues its efforts to reclaim the Russian-occupied territories. The war in Ukraine continues to have a significant impact on geo-political calculations both globally and in the South Caucasus. We already have witnessed increased defence expenditures, enhanced military technology research, accelerated production of weapons and armaments, greater troop deployments and updated military alliance agreements. It seems the world has become more mobilized for war.

While technology is crucial in modern warfare, it may be that ideology is ultimately the foremost topic that needs to be urgently addressed. Often in contemporary wars, we are confronted with the dangerous challenge of the expansionist mind-set of a ruthless dictator. Whether it was Hitler in 1939, Aliyev in 2020 or Putin in 2022, fundamental questions remain: 'How do you stop an aggressive, ultra-nationalist autocratic ruler, with his reckless imperialist ambitions? How do you constrain a dictator's military capacity to follow through in dangerous ways?'. Historically, appeasement has not halted dictators' ambitions, nor served the world's democracies well in the long-run. Determined collective action is necessary, but not always forthcoming.

In the meantime, while military analysts often tend to count the dead and wounded soldiers, we also need to document the enormously disruptive impact on non-combatant populations, whether it be in the form of massive forced civilian dislocations, extensive loss of life, widespread and incalculable damage to property and cultural heritage sites. As Raphael Lemkin, the pioneering human rights lawyer and activist, noted amidst WW II, all these violent acts correlate to war crimes, crimes against humanity and even genocidal acts targeting ethnic victim populations. The situation requires a global response. The question remains: Are we doing enough?

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principle of self-determination through the implementation of democratic rules. German leader Olaf Scholz's speech on the self-determination of Karabakh Armenians, during the recent visit of the Armenian prime minister, refers to this process and to nothing else. It should be recalled that international law, as it exists today, provides for the principle of internal self-determination based on the respect to democratic rules. The indigenous peoples are the exception. (They have an absolute right of self-determination in all circumstances recognized by all international instruments since 1948).

In his remarks during the Munich debate (February 23) with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, President Ilham Aliyev said that Baku was pursuing talks with "representatives of the Armenian community who were born and had lived all their life in Karabakh." Former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, the embodiment of resistance to the siege of the enclave, was sacrificed by Armenia for enabling this so-called dialogue.

Regardless of the intensity of the contacts, Azerbaijan makes it clear that it has no intention of recognizing Karabakh as a separate political entity.

Other Legal and Diplomatic Options

Because of unpredictable geopolitical factors (Russia, Turkey) and possible regional upheavals (likely attack by Israel on Iran), Azerbaijan is interested in signing a peace treaty as soon as possible and uses all kinds of threats and terrorist actions to reach that goal.

Since Azerbaijan intends to and declares clearly that it is ready to end the Karabakh issue, including by the use of force, Armenians need to take other legal and political actions and convince allies or supposedly friendly countries to engage in more ambitious legal proceeding on the basis of the Convention of prevention of the crime of genocide. An ethnic cleansing, which Azerbaijan is openly considering, constitutes a genocide.

Considerations of humanity and inter-state solidarity to prevent international crimes falling under peremptory norms of international law are the foundations of the Responsibility to Protect, which is a new paradigm in the prevention of international crimes. This collective international responsibility to protect is borne by the UN Security Council. It

has the authority to initiate military intervention as a last resort, in the event of genocide and other large-scale massacres, ethnic cleansing or serious violations of humanitarian law which sovereign governments have proven powerless or unwilling to prevent. The ICJ decision in favor of provisional measures in *Gambia v. Myanmar* confirms both the existence of such an option but also its weakness, since the lawyers worked hard to find a country (Gambia) accepting the role for holding Myanmar accountable, but finally succeeded.

There are two political prerequisites: First, Armenia and Karabakh must definitely coordinate their strategies. Second, the diaspora must lobby their respective governments to engage with this issue and take other measures that are not appropriate to disclose here.

There is at least one argument that could oblige Armenia and other countries to behave positively for the protection of Karabakh Armenians: numerous Karabakh Armenians are citizens of the Republic of Armenia or of Russia, and surely others have French, US, Lebanese, Syrian and other citizenship.

There are two major challenges: The hesitating position of Armenia and the false "neutrality" of Western countries and Russia, who care for their own interests, are working hard to reach an agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan at the expense of Karabakh Armenians. They have long accepted the reintegration of Karabakh into Azerbaijan. They did not prevent the 2020 war and nor did they join the current proceedings at the ICJ.

The focus on Ukraine is the second challenge. The heavy load of the ICJ with the case of *Ukraine v. Russia* (33 states joined the case on the application of the convention for the prevention and repression of genocide) may cause a certain weariness vis-à-vis collective action.

However, Armenians must do it. Azerbaijan is obviously nervous since the issuance of the order pronounced against it. Not doing anything is far worse than doing something and failing. Political gains are as important as legal outcomes.

(Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, based in Paris, is a lawyer, lecturer in international law and a former secretary general of FIDH ([International Federation of Human Rights]). He is a regular columnist for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.)



Georgian Protesters Win a Battle, War May Still Be Ahead

By Giorgi Lomsadze

Georgia has stepped back from the brink of civil confrontation after the authorities dropped their toxic foreign agent bills, but tensions continue to simmer amid mistrust towards the ruling party's commitment to democratic freedoms and European integration.

Keeping its promise from the day before, the Georgian parliament on March 10 voted down the draft law "on transparency of foreign influence" — a deeply polarizing piece of legislation that had been approved in the first reading on March 7. Put to a vote without any preamble or debate, the bill was thrown out after it gained only one vote in support from the 112 lawmakers in attendance.

After the result of the vote appeared on screen in the parliament hall, opposition lawmakers, who had fiercely fought the bill, jubilantly draped the flags of Georgia and the European Union over a rostrum, while a crowd of protesters erupted in celebration outside the building. "We are Europe! No to the Russian law," they chanted.

It was two days of mass protests and clashes that forced the ruling Georgian Dream party to reverse course on the bills widely seen as a direct attack on critical voices and national hopes for integration with the European Union. "In our final decision we were guided by a reluctance to see damage to the health and life of a single person or child," said senior Georgian Dream member Mamuka Mdinradze.

But mistrust toward the government's respect for the country's hard-earned democratic freedoms and the dream of joining the EU runs strong. "The government backed down," Georgia's figurehead President Salome Zourabichvili, an ally-turned-critic of Georgian Dream, told Bloomberg the night before the vote. But the win, she said, "is not the end of this road that we are going on to join the European Union."

When the Georgian Dream announced plans to jettison the bill on March 9, protesters gathered in the center to celebrate their victory, but mistrust filled the air. "Congratulations! We are one step closer to victory, but we should remain vigilant because we've heard many lies from this government," the famous operatic bass and government critic Paata Burchuladze said at the rally.

As the lawmakers convened in the legislative hall the following morning, protesters gathered outside parliament to keep up the pressure. "Don't make a mistake, make sure to press the red [nay] button," posters read.

Many take Georgian Dream's promises with a large grain of salt partly because they believe that holding on to power and serving the interest of its billionaire founder Bidzina Ivanishvili are a far bigger priority for party members than democratic freedoms and integration with the EU, a goal supported by the majority of Georgians.

"Nothing changed on the fundamental level," said Sergi Kapanadze, founder of the GRASS think-tank. "They never said that they pulled the law because it was bad, Russian [in its intent and style] and anti-European. No, they said that they pulled it because of the massive pressure."

The ruling party had indeed stuck to its guns, insisting that the bill did not threaten Georgia's European future, even though the EU said loudly and clearly that it did. "The law is incompatible with EU values and standards," the EU Delegation in Georgia said in a statement in response to the preliminary adoption of the bill on March 7. "It goes against Georgia's stated objective of joining the EU, as supported by a large majority of Georgian citizens. Its final adoption may have serious repercussions on our relations."

The United States echoed the sentiment. "Today is a dark day for Georgia's democracy," said the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi. "Parliament's advancement of these Kremlin-inspired laws is incompatible with the people of Georgia's clear desire for European inte-

gration and its democratic development."

Following the defeat of the bill today, Georgian Dream struck isolationist and ultraconservative notes in its justification of the law. Party chairman Irakli Kobakhidze praised the bill for having exposed organizations that engage, among other things, in "LGBT propaganda" and "denigration of the Church." This only reinforced the belief that the party borrowed the idea for the bill from Russia, where demonization and harassment of civil society and critical media was accompanied by rhetoric about Western-backed LGBT propaganda and attacks on Christian values.

Putting down the drama of the last few days to a misunderstanding, the party insisted that the bill was not intended to stigmatize the media and non-governmental sector, even though all prominent domestic and international watchdogs claimed otherwise. Georgian Dream officials blamed opposition groups for misleading the international community and Georgian youth. "They are keen to take any step that puts human life in danger," said Kobakhidze. "They egged on the young people to resort to acts of violence."

Political analyst Kornely Kakachia is convinced that after passions die down the Georgian Dream will again try to take an aim at civil liberties and might attempt to jeopardize the nation's European future. "The nature of this regime is such that the only way forward for them is to try to consolidate power," Kakachia, the director of the Georgian Institute of Politics, told Eurasianet. "Otherwise, they are headed for an electoral defeat." (The next parliamentary election is set to be held in fall 2024.)

Skepticism toward the governing party's intentions stems from its long record of hit-and-run politics. Georgian Dream's decade in power has been characterized by a penchant for making deeply unpopular moves and then walking back on them amid fierce public outcry.

Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili's off-hand comment that bucked global solidarity with Ukraine brought a massive crowd to the streets of Tbilisi early last year. He then spoke more strongly in support of Ukraine. Letting a Russian lawmaker make himself at home in the Georgian parliament sparked riots in 2019, leaving ruling party officials apologizing for the distress the appearance caused. A year before, a heavy-handed raid of a famed nightclub touched off a series of youth protests. The interior minister then offered an apology for the raid.

In these and other cases, the ruling elites found themselves vastly at odds with public sentiments, focused on their own, narrowly partisan interests, and pressing hot buttons until they blew up in their faces. In the case of the foreign agent bills it also took street clashes, vast damage to public health and property, and reputational damage internationally to bring the message home.

"Faced with a real crisis, they take a step back to take two steps forward later," commented Kakachia.

The authorities did make steps toward de-escalation beyond scrapping the laws. All 133 individuals arrested on administrative charges during the protests have been released, though investigations are pending. But skeptics are not assuaged about the long-term game of the Georgian Dream. "What we are seeing now is a tactical pause," Kakachia said.

Still, for now the mood in Georgia is celebratory and commendations are streaming in from European capitals. French President Emmanuel Macron even posted a statement in Georgian on his Facebook page. "The Georgian people's loyalty to democratic values, and freedom of press and assembly has been heard," the post reads. "Having turned its face toward Europe, Georgia can count on support from France."

(Giorgi Lomsadze is a journalist based in Tbilisi, and author of Tamada Tales. This article originally appeared on March 10 on Eurasianet.org.)

Artsakh in Focus At Future Armenian Convention

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Ninety three percent of participants in the first the Future Armenian Convention think that the entire Armenian Diaspora ought to assume responsibility for Artsakh rather than leave it for Armenia and its citizens, as well as residents of Artsakh to solve the issue.

The results of the vote during the first pan-Armenian Citizens' Assembly were released on March 11 by the convention's voting commission chairman Arik Gevorgyan.

Gevorgyan said that the Armenian nation must not be afraid of victories.

Thirty one percent of participants voted in favor of the opinion that so far the efforts by Armenia, Diaspora communities, Armenian organizations and individuals aimed at the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide have been effective, but now the pan-Armenian efforts must be aimed at solving security-related issues. But another 31 percent believe that the efforts haven't been productive and corrections are needed.

"And 61 percent of participants voted in favor of the opinion that it is our duty to preserve our historical-cultural heritage and pass it down to our next generations, and the state and Diaspora Armenians must spend as much resources as needed for this goal and carry out the work effectively," he said.

Summing up the first day of the convention, Gevorgyan said the biggest concern during all discussions is the issue of Artsakh.

"Everyone is concerned about it, every Armenian is concerned, Artsakh is a part of us," Gevorgyan said.

Another issue which was discussed is the Diaspora's role in the development of Armenia, that the "Diaspora must have a role in the development of Armenia both with money, knowledge and resources, and feel itself as a part of the homeland, because Armenia belongs to all Armenians," and that the Diaspora shouldn't be viewed simply as a donor and the homeland as a "beggar."

Security of Thousands Is no 'Internal Affair,' Armenia Tells Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia's Ambassador-at-Large Edmon Marukyan on March 13 responded to Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyev's remarks, reminding that latter that the secu-



Edmon Marukyan

urity of thousands of people is not an "internal issue" since World War II.

Hajiyev had said earlier that Armenia's conditions for signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan cannot include discussions of the rights of the people of Karabakh. Top Azerbaijani officials have claimed on numerous occasions that the Karabakh conflict is Azerbaijan's "internal affair".

"Hajiyev claims there won't be international mechanisms for security and rights of NK Armenians. He insists that it's Azerbaijan's internal affair," Marukyan tweeted on Monday, March 13.

"I must remind everyone again: fundamental human rights and freedoms, security of thousands of people aren't considered internal issue since WWII."