

International Court of Justice Orders Azerbaijan to End Lachin Blockade

By Anugrah Kumar,
Christian Post Contributor

THE HAGUE (Christian Post) — The International Court of Justice has ordered Azerbaijan to end the more than two-month blockade of the Lachin Corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, essentially keeping 120,000 from accessing food, medicine and other essentials.

Under Thursday, February 23's binding order of the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, Azerbaijan must take all measures within its power to ensure the unimpeded movement of people, vehicles and cargo in both directions along the Lachin Corridor under its obligations to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

"The Court observes that, since 12 December 2022, the connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia via the Lachin Corridor has been disrupted. The Court notes that a number of consequences have resulted from this situation and that the impact on those affect-



The International Court of Justice at the Hague

ed persists to this date," an official summary of the order states.

"The information available to the Court indicates that the disruption on the Lachin Corridor has impeded the transfer of persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin hospitalized in Nagorno-Karabakh to medical facilities in Armenia for urgent medical care. The evidence also indicates that there have been hindrances to the importation into Nagorno-Karabakh of essential goods, causing shortages of food, medicine and other life-saving

medical supplies."

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a long-standing dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The region is recognized internationally as part of Muslim-majority Azerbaijan even though it has a majority Armenian population and is controlled by ethnic Armenians as the unrecognized Republic of Artsakh, a de facto independent state not recognized by the United Nations.

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Stepanakert and Baku Meet Following Vardanyan's Dismissal

By Ani Avetisyan

YEREVAN (OC Media/Azatutyun) — Officials from Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan have met to discuss the Lachin Corridor's closure and the region's energy crisis a day after the dismissal of State Minister Ruben Vardanyan.

The authorities in Stepanakert confirmed earlier media reports about the meeting on Saturday, February 25.

According to Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh's and Azerbaijan's representatives discussed the blockade of the Lachin Corridor and the disruptions to the region's energy supplies.

Baku has yet to confirm taking part in the meeting.

Aramayis Aghabekyan, an

MP from the ruling Free Motherland party, told RFE/RL that the meeting was not "unprecedented" and was purely technical and devoid of "political context."

This marks the first time Stepanakert and Baku have held talks since the blockade



Ruben Vardanyan

of Nagorno-Karabakh started in December last year, taking place only a day after President Arayik Harutyunyan dismissed State Minister Ruben Vardanyan.

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Aid Campaign for Aleppo's Tekeyan Cultural Association

WATERTOWN — The recent earthquake in Syria and Turkey was yet another blow to the Armenian population of Aleppo. The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada has sent aid to help its sister branch in Aleppo repair some of the recent damage to its

center and is conducting additional fundraising for this purpose.

The 12-year war in Syria had already spread devastation throughout the country, especially in the lively commercial city of Aleppo, where the majority of Syrian

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A street scene after the earthquake in Aleppo

A Spiritual Journey Musically Binds New World with Medieval Armenia

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN — The Naghash Ensemble of Armenia for the first time is embarking on a North American tour and that is indeed a cause for celebration.

The ensemble's music is hard to define: it is un-

mistakably Armenian and yet, it fits squarely in world music. It is religious and mystical and yet modern. It has the intimacy of folk music and the grandeur of Bach.

The Yerevan-based group is the brainchild of prolific composer and pianist John Hodian, a native of Philadelphia, who moved to Armenia in 2005. He has written music for the poems of the 15th-century poet, Mkrtych Naghash, performed by three vocalists as well as musicians playing dhol, duduk and oud, and himself on piano.

"Normally we tour in Europe. It's the only place we have toured," Hodian said in an interview this week from his Yerevan home.

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The Naghash Ensemble of Armenia

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NEWS from ARMENIA

Davtyan Wins Gymnastics World Cup Gold

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Tokyo 2020 Olympic bronze medalist and reigning World champion Artur Davtyan of Armenia reigned supreme at the International Gymnastics Federation's World Cup in Cottbus, Germany on Sunday, February 26.

The event was the first stop of the 2023 World Cup season for artistic gymnastics, the International Olympic Committee says.

Disease Incidence Rises in Artsakh under Blockade

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — Disease incidence and health complications have increased in Artsakh this year amid Azerbaijan's ongoing blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the sole road connecting the Artsakh Republic to Armenia, as well as the constant stress caused by uncertainty and threats emanating from Azerbaijan's criminal actions.

According to data released by the Artsakh Ministry of Health on February 27, they include ischemic heart disease (58 percent), ischemic stroke (cerebral ischemia) (36 percent), birth complications (11.6 percent) and a number of other diseases.

Among adults and especially children, an increase in neuro-psychological problems is recorded compared to last year, as evidenced by a rise in children's (46 percent) and adults' (47 percent) visits to neurologists and psychologists.

Compared to the same period of 2022, the cases of surgical interventions due to intestinal obstruction, which may be caused by a lack of gluten in the diet, have increased by 25 percent in 2023.

4 Cases Filed by Armenia Against Azerbaijan under Consideration at ECHR

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Four cases filed by Armenia against Azerbaijan are under consideration with the European Court of Human Rights, Armenia's Representative for International Legal Matters Yeghishe Kirakosyan told a press conference in Yerevan on Monday, February 27.

According to him, the first lawsuit concerns the 2020 war and subsequent events with the capture of the Armenian soldiers, while the second deals with the unlawful trials against prisoners.

The third lawsuit was filed by Armenia after the incursion of Azerbaijan into the sovereign territory of Armenia in May 2021, and the fourth is about the occupation of the positions of the heights by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces near the village of Parukh in Nagorno-Karabakh and the blocking of the Lachin corridor.

Weighing in on the fate of 33 Armenian prisoners of war, the fact of captivity of which Baku recognizes, Kirakosyan stressed that all the terms of the interim measures applied by the ECtHR have already expired, but they continue to remain in Azerbaijani prisons.

Arpen Center Has Supported Pregnant Artsakh Women for Almost Three Decades

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Arpen Center for Expectant Mothers in Stepanakert has played an important role in maintaining demographic growth of the Armenian population of Artsakh for some 28 years. It was founded and supported by Dr. Carolann Najarian of Boston, with the aid of Prof. Guren Melikyan of Yerevan State University. It provided supplies necessary for pregnant women and assured their proper nutrition, and continues to do the latter to this day.

Melikyan declared, "The establishment of this center by Carolann Najarian and her husband George was one of the greatest patriotic acts possible. From December 1995 until the present, 37,026 children were born through that center. Can you imagine? 34,000 pregnant women have visited us, and this work continues today."

In other words, the children born with the help of the center form a substantial portion of the 120,000 population of Artsakh today. Melikyan remarked, "I must say that the founders of the Center, Carolann and George Najarian, have greatly aided in the growth of the Artsakh population by lessening their economic cares."

Tribute to Mother

Dr. Najarian, a graduate of the Boston University School of Medicine, began to travel regularly to Armenia after the terrible earthquake of 1988 to provide medical aid and supplies, and teach. Her assistance intensified during the first Artsakh War in the early 1990s. She related that she had been working with the Maternity Hospital

Initially, she said that the center accepted all comers, any pregnant woman, without questioning financial need or number of children. Even some of the wives of the top officials came, and this continued for many years until eventually people who didn't need the assistance stopped coming. To insure that the women were getting prenatal care, they had to show a card from the doctor stamped each month indicating they had been to a clinic, she said. In addition, a pediatrician, the wife of Arpen Director Sako Galstyan, worked at the center in the early years and monitored the women's condition in case there was some problem and got them the care they needed. The women would start coming at the third month of pregnancy and right through pregnancy and delivery they would continue to come every month.

The Arpen Center in the early years of its operations distributed supplies to villages. Najarian said that shortly after starting in 1995, a small warehouse was set up in Kashatagh (Lachin) and a woman worked there and distributed supplies to mothers in the area. Shushi and Karintak and several other nearby villages were visited every week or two by Sako Galstyan. Najarian said, "It was clear that the village people were not in as much need [as the city dwellers]. What they needed was the clothing, shoes and other stuff we gave out, but we still included them."

The more children a pregnant woman already had, Najarian said, the more supplies the center would give her. For example, if it were a woman's first child, she would get one bottle of olive oil, but if it were her fourth, with three others at home, she would get three bottles. The women would be given multivitamins, layette sets (Melikyan would always get the clothing), baby bottles and other necessities when an infant was born. There were also informational pamphlets on natal care.

Melikyan stated that at one point, the Arpen Center broadened its sphere of activities. For example, it began a separate program to aid orphans who had lost both parents until they reached 18 years old.

Najarian and her husband George supported the center through the Armenian Health Alliance, a small volunteer group shipping supplies, which she founded in 1989. It had a budget of around \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year, and a substantial portion went to the Arpen Center. The Najarians had to pay salaries and taxes, and conduct renovations of the building, as every now and then there would be leaks from the upper floor causing damages. They had to provide a car and pay for repairs and transportation expenses.

On the other hand, Guren Melikyan al-

ways worked as a volunteer. Najarian said, "He has never taken a penny for any of the work that he has done. It is pretty remarkable. He goes and comes back and never takes anything for it."

"The Arpen Center has helped people get more nutrition than they would get other-



A beneficiary with her baby and supplies provided by the Arpen Center



At the Arpen Center: from left, Director of Arpen Center Arpen Galstyan, Doctor Nick Akgulian of Wisconsin, Professor Guren Melikyan, and Sargis Galstyan, former director of Arpen Center

in Stepanakert, capital of Artsakh, for some time in 1994 when the chief doctor there, Brina Marutyan, spoke about the fact that many young pregnant women needed help.

In June 1995, when Najarian's mother passed away, she decided that in lieu of flowers she would ask for donations to found what became the Arpen Center. Arpen was the first name of her mother, who was born in Arapgir during or just before the Armenian Genocide. The center opened in December of that year.

"It was a small place, basically a storefront with storage for supplies and goods, and products in the back. Guren Melikyan and Sako [Sargis] Galstyan found the storefront. The government gave it to us at that time to do this work, so that was wonderful. It was right on Azatamartik Boulevard," Najarian recalled. "It needed a lot of work. We renovated it and made it pretty and colorful."

wise," Najarian said. Just as importantly, she continued, "I think that one of the things that it gives people, especially in the early years, from the 1990s to the early 2000s, is hope. When I would go and visit, which I would do often before, women would say to me that it is so wonderful to know that there is somebody thinking about us, that we are not forgotten. That was always very touching."

In 1999, Najarian published a memoir about her work in Artsakh and Armenia called *A Call from Home: Armenia and Karabagh, My Journal*.



Dr. Carolann Najarian and Professor Guren Melikyan at the Arpen Center

Improved Situation Leads to Scaling Down

About five years ago, the Arpen Center decided to only provide aid to women in need who already had at least three children and were again pregnant. Najarian said, "It is amazing that there were so many people in that category. In those circumstances you would think that there were not too many people. The reason that we did that was that on the one hand it was becoming very expensive there and difficult for us to sustain the program, plus things were better. People were working and the feeling that they were not getting food or were

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impoverished was not as great as before. There were other organizations helping and the government was giving supplements to pregnant women too.”

As part of this process, the Armenian Health Alliance closed about three years ago. Najarian said she stopped active fundraising even earlier, around 10 years ago. She said she was not a good fundraiser in any case, and hated asking for money. The Health Alliance established a small primary care center as a pilot program in Gyumri in 1994, which worked in difficult conditions for some years, and also helped hospitals.

Over its lifetime the Health Alliance was able to help other organizations, providing them with 501(c)3 status when they began, such as the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry, started by Dr. Frieda Jordan. It worked as an umbrella organization until the fledgling organizations went off on their own paths and didn’t need the help of the Alliance any longer, Najarian explained.

While the aid provided by the Arpen Center was reduced, the food supplementation continued. “It has survived all this time thanks to Guren [Melikyan],” Najarian said. “I am not there so I can’t do it. He goes every three or four weeks, when he can.”

There is only one staff person at the Center in Stepanakert, and she is the director, Arpen Galstyan, the daughter of former director Sargis Galstyan.

Melikyan reported that at present there are 72 pregnant women benefiting from the assistance provided by the center. The majority have already had some children, with forty being mothers of four or five children, and there is even a woman with 11 children in the group.

Geographically, the women hail from various areas: 14 women are from Stepanakert city, 19 from the Askeran region, 3 displaced from the Hadrut region, 8 displaced from Shushi, 7 displaced from

Kashatagh, 2 displaced from Martakert region, 1 displaced from the Shahumyan region, and 3 from the Martuni region.

The pregnant visit every month, starting when 3 ½ months pregnant, five times, Melikyan said. They receive sugar powder, rice, cracked wheat, vermicelli, macaroni, and oil. They are also given sweaters and clothing sewn in Armenia. One month after



Arpen Center aid beneficiary with child

giving birth, they again receive this aid. In recent years, the Guren Melikyan Multichildren Family Foundation of Kashatagh helped the Center.

This foundation itself also gave financial aid to those who have children. When a woman gives birth to a fourth child or

more, she is given 50,000 drams. As the average salary is 60-65,000 dram a month, Melikyan said this is a substantial sum. The Melikyan Foundation does other related philanthropic activities, such as supporting Armenians displaced from Berdzor, Shushi, Hadrut and other areas of Artsakh occupied by Azerbaijan with items like cows, refrigerators, washing machines, televisions and college tuition, planting trees in Artsakh and publishing Armenological books. The Melikyan Foundation (www.gurgenmelikyan.com) has nonprofit status in the US, where donors contribute to support its work (Guren Melikyan Multichildren Family Foundation of Kashatagh, 501 W. Glenoaks Blvd. #104, Glendale, CA 91202).

The Artsakh blockade that began last December has naturally affected the operations of the Arpen Center. However, it has found a way to continue to operate. Melikyan said that it pays the cost of coupons from the state which allow pregnant women to receive their provisions from stores in Artsakh. “The authorities believe in

our work. It is difficult but we are able to do this. The provisions right now are not sufficient but what we are doing is still a big assistance for the women, because the Arpen Center is giving the money. It is a little less than before the blockade, but we still give oil, rice, sugar and so forth.”

Future

Najarian asserted that as soon as the Lachin road will open, Melikyan will visit, and, she said, “there will definitely be an ongoing need for the center’s work.”

“This is what in the future, if we continue, I would like to see more,” she related, “making sure they [pregnant women] get the multivitamins that are needed, to be sure that the nutritional substances meet the daily requirements of pregnant women.”

She said that with the help of Kim Hekimian, Assistant Professor of Nutrition in Pediatrics and the Institute of Human Nutrition of Columbia University, who also worked at the American University of Armenia’s School of Health, a study was done through the latter school assessing nutritional needs. However, Najarian said, “It is difficult to supply exactly what is needed because, for one thing, there are differences in what people think they need, and what a medical professional thinks they need. You might give them something but they are not going to eat it because it is not in their tradition.”

The Arpen Center experienced one such situation in the past, when it attempted to buy fresh milk from local farmers for the women. Najarian said it turned out too difficult to manage. Among other things, the children would drink the milk instead of the mothers, and that was not the real purpose. Some of the mothers also didn’t like milk. Najarian exclaimed, “It got really interesting, the cultural differences that you knock your head up against, and you say, I never thought of this.”

In her 80s now, Najarian remains active in Armenian humanitarian affairs. She is an advisory trustee for the Tufenkian Foundation, which is organizing a primary care project in the Martuni region. During the current Artsakh blockade, she has been working to get non-Armenian global health organizations involved in remedying the situation.

ICJ Orders Azerbaijan to End Lachin Blockade

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Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh (known to Armenians as Artsakh) are facing dire conditions due to the blockade that’s preventing much-needed food, medicine, and other resources from reaching the region.

The blockade has been in place for more than two months, with Azerbaijani protestors blocking the only road into the landlocked territory.

Despite the ruling, an independent news blog that reports on military developments in the region, Nagorno Karabakh Observer, tweeted Sunday that the blockade was still in place.

“#NagornoKarabakh authorities refute news on social media that #Azerbaijan’s roadblock has been lifted,” The *Observer* wrote.

The state-run Artsakh InfoCenter also wrote on Facebook that “The information circulating in social networks, according to which the only road connecting Artsakh with Armenia has been opened, is false.”

“The only way connecting Artsakh to Armenia has been blocked by Azerbaijan for 78 days,” the Artsakh InfoCenter stated in a post Monday.

Baroness Caroline Cox, a prominent member of the U.K.’s House of Lords, expressed her concern over the situation last week.

“The situation is now very, very serious. Indeed, it has been said by people, it may indeed be an impending genocide,” she told CBN News.

With Armenians suffering from a short-

age of food and medicine, patients in urgent need of medical attention are being hampered.

“The shortage of medicines is very, very serious, especially medicines like insulin for people with diabetes, and the transfer of patients from Karabakh into Armenia needing urgent medical treatment, that has been very, very much stymied,” Cox stated. “One has already died, so it is a very dire situation indeed.”

The potential destruction of Christian churches, historic landmarks and entire cultures is also a concern.

“This could be another stage of genocide, destruction of Christian people, destruction of Christian heritage. And we need to pray,” she said.

Gayane Beglarian, whose 4-year-old daughter suffers from liver cancer, recently told CBN News that the family was frightened and worried about her child missing life-saving treatment.

But after weeks of anxiously waiting, the Red Cross helped the family exit. Gayane emphasized that other ailing residents also need help.

“We have no necessary equipment; we have no doctors who can come there and have necessary treatment,” she said.

In a letter to U.S. President Joe Biden last month, John Eibner, the president of Christian Solidarity International, and Baroness Cox urged the United States to take action.

The letter called for a resolution at the United Nations Security Council that would authorize a humanitarian airlift into the region if Azerbaijan does not comply.

“You are the first American president to recognize the Armenian Genocide,” Eibner and Baroness Cox wrote. “We urge you not to allow another Armenian Genocide to occur on your watch.”

CSI, a Christian human rights organization that promotes religious liberty and human dignity, said it’s all part of an “ongoing” genocide.

“A process of genocide has been underway since the Ottoman massacres of Armenians in the late 19th century,” Eibner told The Christian Post at the time.

“What is generally called the Armenian Genocide (1915-’18) was, in fact, a broader genocide of Christians, including the Syrians/Assyrians/Arameans. It was the high point of a process that continues in waves until the present day,” the CSI president said.

“It continued in the Caucasus after the end of the First World War and was only suspended by the imposition of Soviet rule. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the process resumed in the first Karabakh war, again two years ago in the second Karabakh war and now in the strangulation of Karabakh by means of blockade.”

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has its roots in the early 20th century when the region, which has a majority Armenian population, was part of the Russian Empire and later, the Soviet Union.

In the 1920s, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within Soviet Azerbaijan. As the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late 1980s, ethnic Armenians

in Nagorno-Karabakh voted to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia. This led to a war between the two countries that lasted from 1988 to 1994, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of people and the displacement of over 1 million. A ceasefire was signed in 1994, but sporadic violence continued in the region.

In 2016, a four-day war broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan, resulting in hundreds of deaths. In September 2020, the fighting broke out again, escalated rapidly and resulted in a large-scale military operation by Azerbaijan, with the support of Turkey, to retake the regions of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding areas under Armenian control.

A ceasefire was signed again in November 2020, but tensions remain high, with both sides accusing each other of ceasefire violations and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh remaining tense.

Azerbaijan remained in no rush to restore traffic through the sole road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia on Friday two days after a relevant order issued by the United Nations’ top court.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Thursday described the injunction as “extremely important.” He said that the ICJ “obligated Azerbaijan to open the corridor” and that Baku must at least tell the Azerbaijani government-backed protesters to stop blocking the road. Failure to do so “could and should lead to concrete international consequences,” added Pashinyan.

(Azatutyun contributed to this report.)

Armenia Marks 35th Anniversary of Sumgait Massacres

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net/Panorama) — The Armenian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on the 35th anniversary of the massacres of Armenians in Sumgait on February 27. The full statement is provided below.

“Thirty five years ago, on February 27-29, 1988, amid the encouragement and criminal inaction of the Azerbaijani authorities, the massacres of the Armenians in the city of Sumgait were carried out, resulting in the killing of hundreds of Armenians, including children, women, elderly, while thousands were forcibly displaced.

The pre-planned massacres by the Azerbaijani authorities were carried out in order to brutally suppress the civilized struggle of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to live with dignity and peacefully in their historical homeland.

This mass crime committed on the grounds of national identity received a wide response and was condemned by the international community, including relevant

resolutions adopted by the European Parliament. However, the real organizers and perpetrators of the crime not only weren't held accountable but also, encouraged by impunity and indulgence, raised a new wave of Armenophobia and intolerance, carrying out new pogroms and massacres of Armenians in Baku, Kirovabad and other Armenian-populated areas of Azerbaijan.

As a result of these bloody events, hundreds of thousands of Armenians had to leave their homes in haste, leaving behind their possessions and property, and during all these years they never got a chance to exercise their violated rights.

The subsequent events demonstrated that the mentioned crimes of the Azerbaijani authorities were not separate episodes, but vivid examples of state-planned Armenophobia, while their continuous manifestations forced the displacement of tens of thousands of Armenians from the Shakhumyan region, Getashen, and as a result of the 44-day war also from Hadrut, Shushi and neighboring regions.

35 years after the Sumgait massacres, for about 80 days, Azerbaijan has illegally blockaded the Lachin corridor. The purpose of this operation is to displace the remaining 120,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh as well.

Henceforth, Azerbaijan continues its policy of depopulating Nagorno-Karabakh by subjecting the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to ethnic cleansing. In order to prevent it, targeted condemnation by the international community and the



Members of Parliament stand to mark the Sumgait massacre anniversary.

implementation of relevant international mechanisms is imperative.

Even today, ignoring the orders of the reputable international courts, Azerbaijan explicitly continues to destroy, desecrate and vandalize the Armenian historical-cultural monuments and sanctuaries, aiming to erase the Armenian trace in the territories fallen under its control. Simultaneously, the propaganda of hatred towards Armenians continues at the highest level, which aims to prevent the two nations from overcoming the environment of enmity.

Today, paying tribute to the memory of the innocent victims of the pogroms against Armenians in Sumgait and other communities, we emphasize once again that

Azerbaijan's Armenophobic rhetoric, maximalist aspirations and aggressive actions in response to efforts of Armenia to build stability and peace in the region, are inadmissible.

At the same time, the Republic of Armenia expresses its commitment to the peace agenda, believing that the establishment of lasting and comprehensive peace and security in the region is an urgent imperative.”

On occasion of the anniversary, the United States Embassy released a short statement: “Today, we join with Armenians mourning and acknowledging all who lost their lives in Sumgait in 1988,” the Embassy said on social media on Monday, February 27.

Armenia Again Abstains From UN Vote on Ukraine

NEW YORK (Azatutyun) — Armenia abstained late on Thursday, February 23, from voting on a UN General Assembly resolution demanding that Russia immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops from Ukraine.

The resolution adopted on the eve of the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion reaffirmed support for Ukraine's “sovereignty” and “territorial integrity” and called “for a cessation of hostilities.” It was supported by 141 of the 193 UN member states.

“Russia is just as isolated with its war as it was a year ago,” German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba also expressed satisfaction, saying Russia has failed to “undermine the international order” and that the coalition in support of Ukraine remains broad and strong.

Russian Ambassador to the UN Vasily Nebenzia called Ukraine “neo-Nazi” during the debate preceding the vote. He accused the Western powers of sacrificing the country and the developing world in their desire to beat Russia.

Russia and six other countries — Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, Mali, Nicaragua, and Syria — voted against the resolution.

Armenia was among 32 nations that abstained. They included China, India, Iran, and South Africa.

Armenia also abstained when the UN General Assembly condemned the Russian invasion in March and October 2022. Its government has not publicly condemned the Russian military campaign, let alone joined the Western sanctions against Moscow.

Prior to the invasion, Armenia had voted against General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea and upholding Ukrainian sovereignty over the Black Sea peninsula. For their part, Ukraine's current and former governments have repeatedly voiced support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Military Property Selloff Comes into Question

By Naira Blughadarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Armenian government has come under fire from opposition and civil society figures over its plans to privatize more than 70 mostly disused facilities belonging to the country's military.

The properties include a former military base located in the center of Yerevan as well as plots of land and buildings outside the capital that used to house various army units and services. The government decided to put them up for sale in April 2022, saying that their maintenance is meaningless and costly and that the proceeds from their sale will be used for the Armenian army's needs.

Some civic activists dismiss this explanation as too vague. They are also concerned about a lack of transparency in the planned privatizations.

“They must better substantiate the need for privatizing those properties,” Artur Sakunts, a human rights campaigner, said on Monday.

Sakunts also said that the government has failed to explain how it will go about setting the right price for the facilities.

Varuzhan Hochtanyan, who heads the Armenian branch of the anti-graft watchdog Transparency International, also stressed the importance of “maximum transparency, professionalism and impartiality” in the planned selloff. The market value of the properties in question must be evaluated by independent experts, he said.

The government plans came under the spotlight earlier this month as the pro-government majority in Armenia's parliament allowed prosecutors to bring criminal charges against Seyran Ohanyan, the parliamentary leader of the main opposition Hayastan alliance.

Ohanyan, who served as defense minis-

ter from 2008-2016, was charged with having illegally allowed the privatization of four abandoned properties that belonged to the Defense Ministry. He and his political allies reject the accusations as politically motivated.

Gegham Manukyan, another Hayastan parliamentarian, said on Monday that the government is intent on doing what Ohanyan authorized during his tenure.

Deputies representing Prime Minister

Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract voiced support for Ohanyan's indictment during a February 8 session of the National Assembly which discussed lifting the opposition leader's immunity from prosecution.

As one of those lawmakers, Gevorg Papoyan, put it. “Can you imagine what an outcry some corrupt journalists, analysts or editors would make today if it turned out that a particular military base in Armenia is shut down or put up for sale?”

Russian Anti-War Activist Detained Briefly in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Police in Armenia briefly detained on Tuesday, February 28, a Russian man prosecuted in Russia for painting anti-war graffiti.

The 31-year-old man, Nikita Kamensky, was detained at Yerevan's Zvartnots airport shortly after his flight from Istanbul landed in the morning. A police officer there told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that he was set free a few hours later after signing a pledge not to leave the country.

A short statement released by the Armenian police said Kamensky was put on Russian law-enforcement authorities' wanted list in December for “vandalism.” It said nothing about his possible extradition to Russia.

Armenia's National Security Service (NSS), which usually deals with extradition cases, refused to comment.

According to OVD Info, a Russian human rights group, Russian authorities launched criminal proceedings against Kamensky in July after he painted graffiti at a Moscow subway station protesting against Russia's war in Ukraine. They interrogated him and searched his home at the time. He report-

edly pledged not to leave Russia during the investigation.

Kamensky could not be reached for comment. Yury Alexeyev, a Russian anti-government activist based in Armenia, said his friends have already asked Armenian lawyers to represent him and help prevent his extradition to Russia.

Alexeyev and several other Russian expats have staged protests in Yerevan over the past year against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. None of them are known to have been deported from the country.

“Nikita's case is interesting in the sense that we will see what Armenia can do,” said Alexeyev.

Artur Sakunts, an Armenian human rights activist, said that despite a Russian-Armenian treaty on mutual extradition of fugitive criminal suspects, the Armenian authorities must not extradite Kamensky or any other Russian critic of the war facing “political persecution” at home.

The Russian government enacted last spring laws that effectively criminalized vocal opposition to the military campaign in Ukraine.



INTERNATIONAL

Russia Objects to Azerbaijani Checkpoint at Lachin Corridor

BAKU (Combined Sources) — Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated on Tuesday, February 28, Russia's opposition to Azerbaijan's desire to set up a checkpoint on the sole road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia which has been blocked by Baku since December 12.

Visiting Baku, Lavrov said traffic through the Lachin corridor must be regulated in strict conformity with a 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani agreement that placed it under the control of Russian peacekeepers stationed in Karabakh.

"It calls for the free movement of purely civilian and humanitarian cargo and ci-

today," he added.

Lavrov alluded to Azerbaijani allegations that Armenia shipped landmines to Karabakh through the corridor in breach of the 2020 ceasefire brokered by Moscow.

Both Yerevan and Stepanakert have strongly denied the allegations voiced both before and after Azerbaijani government-backed protesters blocked Karabakh's land link with the outside world on December 12. The Armenian side views the blockade as a gross violation of the truce accord.

Lavrov called for a "swift and full unblocking of traffic along the Lachin corridor" during a January 17 phone call with Bayramov. He said the following day that Moscow told Baku that the Russian peacekeepers "can check each vehicle for the absence of prohibited, non-humanitarian, non-civilian goods in it."

The blockade has not been lifted yet. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said last week

that Baku wants to set up a checkpoint on Karabakh's lifeline road in order to ensure its "transparent" functioning. Yerevan rejected the idea.

The trilateral statement of the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan dated November 9, 2020 does not provide for the establishment of checkpoints on the Lachin corridor, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei

Lavrov told a press conference following talks with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov on Tuesday, February 28.

Lavrov revealed that he has reaffirmed Russia's readiness to provide an opportunity to continue trilateral negotiations between the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan and Armenia at the level of foreign ministers, "We reaffirmed our readiness to provide an opportunity to continue such meetings," he said.

The Russian Foreign Minister noted that the Azerbaijani side expressed readiness to hold a new meeting in this format. "The Armenian side said that it also does not object, but so far it hasn't given final consent," Lavrov added.

He said that Moscow provided a platform for a trilateral meeting of foreign ministers on several occasions.

In addition, Lavrov said earlier that Russia welcomes any efforts from other countries that are aimed at normalizing relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as at strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation in the region.

"Many of our international colleagues, including those far from this region, show a keen interest in helping to move towards a settlement between Azerbaijan and Armenia," Lavrov said, according to Tass.

"We, as President [Vladimir] Putin of Russia has repeatedly said, welcome any effort that will proceed from the interests of stabilizing the situation and creating conditions for all the countries here to have the opportunity to cooperate normally, on the basis of mutual respect, on the basis of mutual benefit, in the interests of their countries and peoples".

(Stories from Azatutyun and PanArmenian.net were used to compile this report.)



Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, left, with is Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov, in Baku on February 28

vilians," Lavrov said after talks with his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov. "In our contacts, we are trying to achieve that first and foremost through the peacekeeping contingent. The setting up of any checkpoint there is not envisaged."

"But it is possible to dispel, by technical means, suspicions that the corridor is not functioning as intended. We discussed that

Stepanakert and Baku Meet Following Vardanyan's Dismissal

BAKU, from page 1

A few days before his dismissal, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said that Baku was ready to negotiate with Stepanakert — but not with Vardanyan.

Tigran Grigoryan, a Yerevan-based political analyst, said Aliyev's statements, and others made by Baku about Vardanyan, were directly connected to his dismissal.

"There was not only one reason [to fire Vardanyan], but a set of reasons," Grigoryan told OC Media, adding that internal pressure also contributed to the decision due to "domestic and political turmoil, relations with Yerevan, and disagreements with Vardanyan's management strategies."

Ending weeks of speculation, Nagorno-Karabakh's president, Arayik Harutyunyan, announced on Thursday, February 23, the dismissal of his chief minister, Ruben Vardanyan, demanded by Azerbaijan.

"Artsakh will never give up its sovereignty, and there can be no question of integration with neighboring Azerbaijan," he said in an address to Karabakh's population aired during a meeting in Stepanakert.

Vardanyan is an Armenian-born billionaire businessman who was appointed as state minister, the second-highest post in Karabakh's leadership, last November two months after renouncing his Russian citizenship. Baku condemned his appointment, saying that it was engineered by Russia. Moscow denied that.

In recent weeks, there have been signs of a rift between Harutyunyan and Vardanyan related to the Azerbaijani blockade. Last month, Vardanyan publicly ruled out his resignation, which reportedly was also sought by Armenia's government.

Harutyunyan insisted that Vardanyan's sacking is not the result of pressure from Baku or Yerevan. He attributed his decision to "tactical differences" between the two men over a number of "factors," including the "interests of geopolitical actors."

Speaking during the cabinet meeting in Stepanakert, Vardanyan confirmed his "differences" with Harutyunyan but shed little light on them. He expressed hope that Harutyunyan's "words are turned into action" so that "people don't lose faith" in them.

Vardanyan also linked his dismissal to strong "outside pressure" exerted on Karabakh's leadership. He went on to make it clear that he will not leave Karabakh.

"Not only will I not leave, but I can't imagine myself without Artsakh. I will happily continue with the activities that I have been doing so far," the former investment banker said, pointing to his charity projects launched in Karabakh.

"Azerbaijan, which hoped to bring us to our knees and break us, made a grave mistake," added Vardanyan. "Azerbaijan saw that we became more united."

The Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia

and the outside world, has been closed since 12 December.

The region has since struggled to address a food and energy shortfall, resorting to rationing and rolling blackouts.

President Harutyunyan stated last week that the water reserves in the Sarsang Reservoir were declining sharply as they needed to allocate more water for the operation of the region's primary hydropower plant.

Grigoryan said the talks between Armenians and Azerbaijanis would likely exclusively center around the region's energy supplies.

He suggested that the end of the blockade was contingent on whether Armenia agreed to establish Azerbaijani checkpoints on the Lachin Corridor — a demand that Yerevan vehemently opposes.

As a compromise, Grigoryan said Azerbaijan had proposed that Russian peacekeepers install vehicle scanners along the corridor.

He added that Yerevan would likely agree to the proposal, despite it being "in violation of the 9 November agreement" — the ceasefire agreement that ended the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

The agreement stipulated that the road would be manned by Russian peacekeepers and that Azerbaijan "shall guarantee the security of persons, vehicles, and cargo moving along the Lachin Corridor in both directions."

INTERNATIONAL

Germany Foreign Ministry Says Azerbaijan Needs to Implement ICJ Order

BERLIN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The German Foreign Ministry has issued a statement demanding free movement through the Lachin Corridor.

"The International Court has made a decision to apply temporary measures in the case of 'Armenia vs. Azerbaijan.' It is important that the mandatory legal order is implemented and Azerbaijan ensures the unhindered movement of people, vehicles and cargo through the Lachin Corridor," the German Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The UN's top court on Wednesday, February 22 ordered Azerbaijan to restore "unimpeded" traffic through the sole road connecting Karabakh to Armenia.

Azerbaijan Implements Only 4% of ECHR Judgments

STRASBOURG (news.am) — Azerbaijan and Russia are among the countries that execute the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) the least.

According to 2021 statistics published by haqqin.az, only 4 percent of ECHR judgments are executed by Azerbaijan. The Russian Federation executed 10 percent of the judgments rendered against the country.

Estonia has executed all the judgments issued by the ECHR, the Czech Republic (96 percent) is second and Austria (89 percent) is third.

Azeri Lands 'Won't Get Enough Water' Due to Blockade

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Advisor to the State Minister of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan said in a statement on Monday, February 27 that 96,000 hectares of land in Azerbaijan will not receive enough water due to the blockade of Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh).

He noted that in his message dated February 23, Artsakh President Arayik Harutyunyan revealed some details about the energy crisis of Artsakh and the water resources of Sarsang.

"By interrupting the supply of electricity from Armenia since January 9, as well as regularly interrupting the supply of gas throughout the entire period of the blockade, the Azerbaijani side deliberately provoked an energy crisis as the main means of pressure," Beglaryan said.

"Since then, we have switched to crisis management of the energy system, using local hydroelectric power stations at full capacity and limiting consumption as much as possible, including through the suspension of large business enterprises and rolling blackouts," he said.

"In addition, during this period, the water resources of the Sarsang reservoir were greatly depleted, since for the operation of our main hydroelectric power station we released much more water resources, with a capacity of 50 megawatts, than they enter Sarsang."

INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Carnival in Wiesbaden

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WIESBADEN, Germany — After two years of pandemic restrictions, Germans were able to resume Carnival celebrations again this February. Carnival here is an age-old tradition, especially in the Catholic areas of Bavaria and the Rhineland. Large crowds gather in bright costumes and high spirits for festive sessions characterized by political cabaret and music. As the season comes to a close just before the beginning of Lent, cities like Cologne and Mainz host festive parades, again featuring huge, politically satirical floats, marching bands and costumed jesters.

This year on February 25, more than 80 residents of Hesse, predominantly Armenians, came together for a festive gathering marking the end of the carnival season. The event was organized by the Wiesbaden Demokratisches Volks- und Kulturzentrum (DVK), a social and cultural



Shushan Tumanyan (center)

was featured in the day's festivities, held in the group's social center. On the program were short plays based on works by Hovhanness Tumanyan, Armenia's beloved author of fables and fairy tales. This year marks the centenary of his death, and Germans now have the opportunity to read some of his works, thanks to a new translation by Agapi Mkrtchian, an Armenian author and teacher living in Wiesbaden. Host Karen Gharslyan, chairman of the DVK, welcomed the well-known writer, who briefly presented the beautifully illustrated volume.

Then the children brought his fables to life, by acting out three pieces on the stage.

The performance represented the results of their work on a project founded by the DVK in October 2021, called the KOMITAS Educational Institution (Կոմիտաս հայկական կրթօջախ). The idea was to promote knowledge of the Armenian language and culture in Wiesbaden and the region, through cultural events as well as local excursions with groups of children.

On a brightly decorated stage, with props and scenery made by the group's members, the children, starting with the youngest and proceeding to the older ones, delivered lively renditions of "Grandpa and the Turnip," under the direction of teacher Ofelya Abrahamyan, "The Barekandan," and "The Death of Kikos," directed by teacher Dr. Anahit Hovsepien. Displaying remarkable stage-presence, the children acted out the miniature dramas with theatrical gestures and confidently delivered their lines from memory. Parents and guests captured the performance on film and, as the youngsters took their bows, the audience cheered.

Members of the organization had prepared a sumptuous



Karen Gharslyan and Agapi Mkrtchian

buffet of Armenian delicacies, and wine was offered by the Aroma Aura vineyards (<https://www.facebook.com/Aromaauraweine/>). Vintner Garnik Harunyan founded the family enterprise in 2019, with the aim of combining European and Armenian wine-growing traditions to produce unique, high-quality wines. Part of the proceeds from wine sales will go to the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR <https://www.soar-us.org/>).

Following the buffet, Shushan Tumanyan, vice chairwoman of the Armenian Culture Society in Hesse, led a lively dance workshop. Inviting all those interested to take part, she introduced several Armenian folk dances with explanations, and then took up the white handkerchief to lead the winding snake of dancers. The children, needless to say, joined in.

Plans for the future include MINT education for the children, in mathematics, IT, natural sciences.



"Grandpa and the Turnip"

organization dedicated to promoting Armenian-German understanding and integration, in a spirit of peace, equality, and democracy. In addition to language instruction, it organizes cultural activities in theater, choral music, folk dancing, and sports. Founded in 1976 in Wiesbaden, the association has been expanding its activities over the past few years. Its Saturday and Sunday school, which offers free instruction supported by the Diaspora office in Yerevan, has recently welcomed Armenian children from Ukraine.

It was not political cabaret, but children's theater that

PACE Monitors: Situation in Lachin Corridor Requires Immediate Action

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Following their visit to Armenia on February 17-19 to assess the situation on the border with Azerbaijan and at the entrance of the Lachin Corridor, the co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for the monitoring of Armenia Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland, SOC) and Boriania Åberg (Sweden, EPP/CD) made a following statement, saying that the situation in the Lachin corridor requires immediate action.

"As of today, inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh cannot travel freely out of the region and, as we were informed, 954 are still stranded on either side of the corridor. Only International Committee of the Red Cross and Russian peacekeepers' vehicles are allowed to travel along this corridor, which is clearly insufficient to fulfill the needs of the population. Moreover, it is vitally important that goods can get through in time for the sowing season. The free circulation of all vehicles must be restored urgently in accordance with the Trilateral Statement of 10 November 2020," the co-rapporteurs said on Friday, February 24.

"Furthermore, the repeated disruption of gas and electricity supply to the territory has resulted in serious violations of the rights of the inhabitants: many people have already lost their jobs and children are deprived of education since schools had to close."

They recall the joint statement with co-rapporteurs for Azerbaijan of December 16, 2022, which urged the restoration of freedom of movement along the Lachin corridor, and the European Court of Human Rights' decision of December 21, 2022, calling on the authorities of Azerbaijan to take all measures to ensure safe passage through the Lachin Corridor of seriously ill persons in need of medical treatment in Armenia and others who were stranded on the road.

"We also take note of the International Court of Justice's order of February 22, 2023 indicating that "Azerbaijan shall (...) take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions." We invite all members of the Assembly to bring this situa-

tion to the attention of their respective national parliaments and join our call for the immediate cessation of the unlawful and illegitimate obstruction of the Lachin corridor," they added.

"Regarding the situation on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, we observed the consequences of attacks from Azerbaijani troops on civilian infrastructures in the city of Jermuk and the village of Sotk. We noted that evidence of the use of cluster ammunitions in civilian zones had been collected and kept for further expertise. We were shown the presence of Azerbaijani military positions within Armenian sovereign territory, sometimes well beyond any disputed border line.

"We commend the deployment of a civilian mission from the European Union at the border, noting the significant tangible effects of the previous mission in reducing tensions. We call on both parties to advance discussions on border delimitation and to agree on a mirror withdrawal of troops from the border as an immediate confidence-building move.



Community News

Archbishop Aykazian Participates In Interfaith Prayer Service for Victims of Earthquake

WASHINGTON — Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director of the Eastern Diocese, was among the religious leaders taking part in an interfaith prayer service at Georgetown University on February 14, in the wake of a series of earthquakes that have shaken the Near East this month.

The service was led by Archbishop Elpidophoros, leader of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. He was joined by clergy from church communities with ancient roots in the region, including the Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, and Armenian churches. Alongside other faith figures from the United States, the attendees prayed for those who lost their lives, or who were injured, displaced, and devastated by one of the worst natural disasters to impact the region.

According to news reports, the death toll from the quake approaches 50,000 individuals, with untold numbers of people injured, missing, and homeless. More than a million people are estimated to be living in temporary shelters or tents.

At the Georgetown prayer service, Archbishop Elpidophoros shared that his own family members living in the earthquake zone had been impacted by the disaster. He noted that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese was partnering with International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) to help address both the immediate needs and the longer-term implications of the devastation.

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, interim President and General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., gave greetings on behalf of the ecumenical organization and offered a message. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian—himself a former NCC President, and a current member of its Governing Board—also offered remarks and a prayer.

Ambassador Hasan Murat Mercan of Turkey's Embassy in Washington, DC, gave a personal message, naming churches, mosques, and temples damaged or destroyed. Also at the prayer service were representatives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore, Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, International Orthodox Christian Charities, as well as representatives of Jewish and Islamic groups.

In the earthquake zone, the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople has been reaching out and delivering aid to the Armenian communities affected by the disaster.

Hye Hopes Launches 'Standing with Syunik' Live Telethon March 5

GLENDAL, Calif. – On Sunday, March 5, 2023 Hye Hopes Inc will host a Live Telethon and Celebration at the Phoenicia Restaurant airing LIVE from 7:00 pm PST to 9:00 pm PST supporting the students, teachers and schools of the Syunik region of Armenia.

Hye Hopes is entering their 3rd year and continues to equip schools in the Syunik Region with innovative technology, laptops, projectors, printers, social emotional and mental health, essential educational resources, and staff development.

Since its inception November 23, 2020, Hye Hopes has successfully provided over 200 laptops, printers and other technology to Kapan, Goris, Verishen, Meghri in the Syunik Marz. Our mission is to support the displaced students from Artsakh living in Syunik with essential educational support and collaboration with our partner organizations.

“We are so excited that with our efforts and partnership with Tumo, recently has opened a Tumo Box in Kapan at N3 school. This is a tremendous opportunity for the students of Kapan and it is vital that we continue to collaborate and stand with Syunik.” Stated Greg Krikorian, Founder and Chair of Hye Hopes.

We are hopeful the Telethon will provide much needed financial support to continue our educational resources for the schools in Kapan, Goris, Meghri and Verishen. We are excited to announce our next Phase delivering laptops, essential educational resources and technology to the schools in Agarak and Sisian spring of 2023.

We are pleased to announce special performance and appearances from Greg Hosharian Composer Musician, Ara Dabandjian Musician Element Band, Shant Massayan Musician, Lori Tatouljian Actress/Playwright and Anthony J. Portantino California State Senator 25th District, Chris Holden Assembly member 41st District, Ardy Kassakhian Mayor City of Glendale, Dr. Vivian Ekchian Superintendent Glendale Unified School District, and other special local and state elected officials.

Also, joining throughout United States are special guest from Boston, New York, Tennessee, Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles Also, presenting and performing at the Telethon. Connecting live with the students in Kapan, Meghri and Verishen during the live Telethon.

The program can be seen on YouTube live and other media outlets March 5, from 7 to 9 pm PST. For more information on attending Standing with Syunik at Phoenicia Restaurant and to donate early visit HYEHOPE.org or email info@hyehopes.org

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian Reaffirms Strong Support of ABMDR

LOS ANGELES — On Tuesday, February 7, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese, received a delegation from the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR).

During the meeting, which was held at the Diocese, in Burbank, ABMDR Board members and volunteers acquainted Arch. Derderian with the organization's most recent accomplishments and current activities, as well as some of the challenges it faces in carrying out its work, including the ongoing blockade of Artsakh.

On his part, Derderian reaffirmed his strong support of ABMDR's mission. Accordingly, the Primate informed the ABMDR delegation that on March 26, prayers will be offered at the Diocese's Saint Leon Cathedral for ABMDR patients and families. The archbishop also announced that the Diocese will host several ABMDR community-outreach events this year, including presentations at Hye Camp, the Diocese's youth camp program, held in summer in Dunlap, California, near Fresno.

“We are deeply grateful to Archbishop Derderian for continuing to mobilize broad community support for our mission and helping raise awareness of our work,” said ABMDR president Dr. Frieda Jordan and continued, “Today, we'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Primate specifically for his invaluable leadership in helping us organize several donor-recruitment drives at the Dio-



Arch. Hovnan Derderian with the ABMDR delegation, including Board members and volunteers, at the Western Diocese. (Photo courtesy of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry)

cese in 2022. The purpose of these drives was to find potential donor matches for ABMDR patients and help save their lives. Hundreds upon hundreds of young supporters participated in these events, and Arch. Derderian had an instrumental role in their success.”

Established in 1999, ABMDR, a nonprofit organization, helps Armenians and non-Armenians worldwide survive life-threatening blood-related illnesses by recruiting and matching donors to those requiring bone marrow stem cell transplants. To date, the registry has recruited over 33,500 donors in 44 countries across four continents, identified over 9,000 patients, and facilitated 39 bone marrow transplants. For more information, visit abmdr.am.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Portantino to Continue Chairmanship of Committee On California, Armenia and Artsakh Mutual Trade

SACRAMENTO — State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D – Burbank) announced that the Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art, and Cultural Exchange has been re-established for the 2023-24 Legislative Session. The Senate Rules Committee, chaired by Senate Pro Tem Toni G. Atkins, reauthorized the committee on February 15, 2023.

“California and the Republic of Armenia have a long history of partnership, cooperation, and trade,” stated Portantino. “I am proud to once again serve as Chair of the Select Committee on California, Armenia, and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art, and Cultural Exchange. By approving this Select Committee, the California State Senate expresses its commitment to expanding relations not only with Armenia, but also with the Republic of Artsakh. Given the recent tragic events that have devastated the country, it is more important than ever that California reaffirms its commitment to Artsakh’s sovereignty and that we continue to strengthen this important partnership.”

At the request of Portantino, the California State Senate Rules Committee first established the historic Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia, and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art, and Cultural Exchange in 2017 to expand business opportunities through trade, economic development, cultural awareness, and education between California,

Armenia, and Artsakh. Senator Portantino also helped negotiate the historic Memorandum of Understanding between California and Armenia and joined Governor Newsom in New York for its historic, official signing.



State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino

Both California and Armenian benefit from collaboration and cooperation. Armenia has a flourishing high-tech industry, robust arts community, and a digital business corridor that is underutilized. California is at the forefront of these sectors and continues to be a

leader in these areas. Tourism is also a place where California would benefit from direct marketing of our modern Golden State, while also highlighting the amazing and vast historical sites and landmarks of Armenia.

As California recently passed Armenian Genocide Education Curriculum for inclusion in social studies textbooks, the opportunity to encourage teacher training and professional development trips would also be a priority of the committee. Armenia’s educational systems are highly respected, including the after school programs at TUMO Center for Creative Technologies, an institution that is highly regarded across the globe.

Portantino was instrumental in securing state financial support for the Armenian American Museum in Glendale. In addition, he facilitated state funding for the City of Glendale’s Tech Week grant to the Hero House Incubator. Hero House has an office in Yerevan and Glendale.

Members of the Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia, and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art, and Cultural Exchange include Senators Bob Archuleta (D-Pico Rivera), María Elena Durazo (D-Los Angeles), Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger), Brian W. Jones (R-Santee), Susan Rubio (D-Baldwin Park), Henry I. Stern (D-Los Angeles), Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), Caroline Menjivar (D- San Fernando Valley) and Scott Wilk (R-Santa Clarita).

2023 Diocesan Assembly to Meet In Dallas

NEW YORK — The 121st Diocesan Assembly will convene May 4-6, at the Marriott Hotel in Plano, TX. St. Sarkis Church of Carrollton will host the Diocesan Assembly and the Clergy Conference (meeting May 2-4), bringing together hundreds of Armenian Church leaders from the Eastern Diocese. Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan will preside.

The Dallas-area church is hosting the assembly for the first time in its history. The parish was originally scheduled to host the 118th Diocesan Assembly in the spring of 2020, but that event was postponed due to the pandemic. In the intervening years, St. Sarkis completed construction and consecrated its magnificent (and award-winning) new facility, which will be the place where the 121st Assembly’s social and liturgical gatherings will go forward.

The annual awards banquet will take place in the parish’s Hall of Lights on Friday, May 5. Elie and Ela Akilian will be honored as this year’s “Armenian Church Members of the Year,” and architect David Hotson will receive the “Friend of the Armenians” award.

The Divine Liturgy, with the Primate celebrating, will conclude the gathering on Sunday, May 7.

The hotel for the Clergy Conference and Diocesan Assembly, the Dallas/Plano Marriott at Legacy, is within walking distance of restaurants and shops. Online hotel reservations and online assembly registration are now open and can be accessed via St. Sarkis’ Diocesan Assembly website.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

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.

Condolence Note

It is with deep sorrow that we learned the news of the untimely death of Richard Asadourian, the son of the famous writer Hagop Asadourian, in New Jersey. On this sad occasion, we express our deepest condolences to his wife Silva (Kantardjian), his daughter Mr. and Mrs. Ian and Melo (Asadourian) McFarland, his sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Dickran and Melo (Kantardjian) Ekizian, members of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles Chapter board, and all mourners.

May his memory be a true blessing.

Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles Chapter

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OBITUARY

Anahid Chatmajian Kurdian
Intellectual, Descendent of Genocide Survivors

FORT LEE, N.J. — Anahid Chatmajian Kurdian passed away on Friday, February 17, 2023. She was 76.

Anahid is survived by her husband, Vahe Kurdian, her twin daughters, Joyce Shoghig Kurdian and Grace Shaghig Kurdian, her brother and sister-in-law, Harout and Ani Chatmajian, her sister Armineh Berberian, her nephew, Haig Berberian and wife Paige and their children, her nephew Arek Chatmajian and wife Alissa, her dear aunt Araxie, and many cousins and extended family.

Anahid was born on February 8, 1947, in Jaffa to Hagop Chatmajian and Bayzar (Soultanian) Chatmajian, both children of Armenian Genocide survivors. A year later, her family was displaced due to the Arab-Israeli conflict, moving to Beirut. Amman was the next stop, where her father found work.

At the Christian Missionary School (CMS) high school in Amman, she formed some of her closest lifelong friendships with peers from Taiwan, Slovenia, throughout Europe and the Middle East, reconnecting and traveling the world with them and their spouses decades later.

She attended the American University of Beirut (AUB) on a scholarship. Anahid was the first in her family to attend college and the first to earn two masters' degrees.

She loved to read and was always happy surrounded by books. At the time, Beirut was the "Paris of the Middle East" and AUB was the best university in the entire Middle East. While a minority in Lebanon, Armenians were very well represented at AUB in the 1960s. Survivors of the Genocide who were orphaned and displaced valued family, faith, and education above all else: they can confiscate all your material possessions, but no one can take away your faith or education. At AUB, Anahid studied linguistics, had a natural love of languages and was always at the top of her class.

One auspicious day, over coffee at a friend's apartment, Anahid met the man who was her true equal and would soon be her partner in life and best friend, Vahe Kurdian. After their twin daughters were born, civil war erupted in Lebanon and Vahe and Anahid decided to emigrate to the US, seeking a life of stability for their young family. New Jersey became home.

Anahid lived her life with grace and dignity. She placed family and loved ones first, all while balancing work demands. She honored and loved our rich Armenian culture and language. She gracefully faced all



of life's challenges with faith and resolve. We were blessed to enjoy the many years of love, warmth, and happiness Anahid contributed to our lives.

Memorial Services were held on Monday, February 20, at St. Leon's Armenian Church in Fair Lawn, NJ.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Armenian General Benevolent Union's (AGBU's) Global Relief Fund) or to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital (<https://www.stjude.org>)

Clara Margossian

Survivor of Genocide, Donor to Armenia

FRESNO, Calif. (KSEE/KGPE) — A Fresno woman passed away at the age of 104 earlier this month, but not before securing a legacy that will benefit families in Armenia now and in the future.

Clara Margossian of Fresno passed away on February 7. Her parents and older brother were survivors of the Armenian Genocide, leaving Armenia for Russia in 1915. Eventually, the family settled in Fresno in

heritage was so deep that, with no family left, she made a generous gift of \$1 million to [Armenia Fund](#), an organization that provides humanitarian relief to Armenians victimized by the fighting.

According to Armenia Fund, with the money Margossian donated they were able to build new apartments in Gyumri, Armenia that provided housing to families affected by the Artsakh War.

With the news of Margossian's passing, the Armenia Fund released this statement:

"It was with a heavy heart that we learned about the passing of Ms. Clara Margossian. Ms. Margossian personifies the will and resolve of the Armenian people for survival and prosperity. Her one million dollar donation to Armenia Fund provided housing for the displaced families and families who lost their breadwinners during the Artsakh war. A plaque in her name adorns the wall of the new building. Ms. Margossian's name will remain in shiniest pages of our history, highlighting the will of Armenians who give for survival of our people."

The apartment building funded by money from Clara Margossian

Even with Clara Margossian's passing, she will continue to make a difference.

A friend of Margossian told [YourCentralValley.com](#) that there were five other projects to be put into motion after her death, including scholarships for students and an orphanage.



the 1940s as Margossian's father had other friends from the old country that had also settled in the Central Valley.

Despite living in the U.S., a piece of Margossian's heart was always with her mother's country. For decades she found comfort at Saint Paul's Armenian Church in Fresno.

Margossian's love for Armenia and her

ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR

COMMUNITY NEWS

ACYOA Seniors Serve on Mission Trip in Atlanta

NEW YORK — Members of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Seniors from across the Eastern Diocese just returned from the third annual ACYOA Seniors Mission Trip. The ACYOA Central Council partnered with Habitat for Humanity of North Central Georgia and the Armenian Church of Atlanta mission parish in Roswell, Ga., over the weekend of February 16-19.

The Mission Trip was underwritten by a grant from the Dadourian Foundation, along with funds from the ACYOA Central Council proceeds from the 2022 Bishop's 5K, which covered the participants' lodging, ground transportation, meals, and donation fees to take part in a Habitat for Humanity house build.

Fifteen young adults, ranging from college students to working professionals, participated in the trip and were immersed in service, education, witness, worship and fellowship. They traveled from nine states (Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Wisconsin), representing ten parish communities of the Eastern Diocese. They were joined by group leader Rev. Yeprem Kelegian, along with Jennifer Morris of the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries and Dn. Arin Parsanian, a St. Nersess Seminarian.

The group arrived in Roswell, GA on Thursday evening and gathered together for a late night of icebreakers and deep discussion. Early Friday morning, Kelegian led the participants in prayer and reflection before the group took off for Acworth, GA, the site of the Habitat for Humanity house build. After meeting the Habitat for Humanity staff and acclimating themselves with the tasks ahead, the group got right to work — eager to lend a hand for two full work days as they diligently prepared materials and cleared the land for the build.

First time participant Karina Masoian



ACYOA Seniors and staff at the construction site

courage, we made so many memories and a lasting impact on one another and the individuals we served."

After a full first day on the build site, the participants broke up into three groups and visited three homes of parishioners from the Atlanta Mission Parish. The participants entered their homes as strangers and left feeling like family, sharing life stories and spending time getting to know each other. Participants gathered back at their hotel together and participated in another late night of engaging group discussions that provided space for the participants to be vulnerable and grow deeper in their faith and prayer life.

On Saturday their work on the Habitat for Humanity worksite was especially meaningful as participants worked alongside the future homeowner. This was Dn. Arin Parsanian's first trip with the ACYOA, and he quickly became skilled at sawing precise measurements of lumber for the group. He commented, "Working in the cold temperatures and muddy conditions wasn't an easy task, but seeing the homeowner's face filled with emotion while working side-by-side with her truly warmed my heart."

One of the participants, Emma Freeborn, reflected on her experiences by sharing, "I am very grateful to have been able to partici-

participate on this mission trip. The home visit and talking with the future homeowner were both inspiring experiences. Hearing the difficulties Sorayah has experienced caring for her mother after three strokes and recent hospitalizations, yet she still has a positive attitude and gratitude for all that God has done in her life. She explained how she found purpose in caring for her mother as her mother had

once cared for her. Before this trip, we were asked to write down our favorite Bible passage. I wrote the verse from 1 Chronicles 16:34: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever." These ex-



The participants pose with Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, left, at their Roswell, Ga. construction site.

periences show the importance and impact of gratitude for God's blessings, that there is always something to be grateful for, and that God's love does indeed endure forever through His blessings."

After a full day of work, with a little rest, and an emotional closing reflection, the group got dressed up for a special Poon Paregentan dinner dance celebration with close to 100 members of the Armenian Church of Atlanta, which was the first event of its kind for the community. The parish leaders did an outstanding job providing an enjoyable evening with great food and music that was truly appreciated by our young adults.

ACYOA Central Council Treasurer Michael Sarafian celebrated his birthday the evening of the dance and shared, "As I celebrated my 28th birthday, I had an overwhelming feeling of being incredibly blessed to have attended so many ACYOA events over the last decade that have afforded me the opportunity to meet fellow Armenian Christians that have become lifelong friends."

The trip concluded on Sunday as the group participated in the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Fr. Yeprem Kelegian alongside Dn. Arin Parsanian, Dn. Johnny

Chadoyan, and Sdn. Jonah Doudoukjian, along with Kareen Kaltakdjian singing in the choir. After Liturgy, Kelegian shared, "This four-day Mission Trip defined what Church is: People coming together to serve others as Christ would, be a people close to each other, and to love God. This was a remarkable group because of their deep desire to serve others; they were spectacularly effective in their work with Habitat and the homeowner, visits to the Atlanta parishioners, and reaching out to all they met. I was blessed to be with this group of young adults. As they lovingly related to each other and as they enthusiastically did their work of service, I saw the light of Christ through them."

After a closing fellowship meal and parting conversations with members of the parish community, the group said their tearful goodbyes until the next time they are able to be together again at future national and regional ACYOA programs and ministries. Before leaving, three-time Mission Trip participant, Taline Masoian reflected on the weekend by saying, "A group of young adults from all different walks of life together with one intention – to serve. Through that we strengthened our faith and gained lifelong friendships."



A young parishioner

shared, "Working with Habitat for Humanity was an incredibly fulfilling and rewarding experience. While giving community members a renewed sense of hope, our group engaged in exceptional teamwork and persevered through challenges. The workers and volunteers on the worksite enhanced our experience and showed us what true service work

looks like. With their patience and passion, we not only succeeded in our altruistic work, but we also built deep relationships with one another and grew both personally and spiritually. Accompanied by faith and



Fr. Yeprem Kelegian celebrates Divine Liturgy.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Talia Hovsepien, 10,
Makes Mark as Sole
Female Hockey Player
On Boys' Team

GLENDALE, Calif. — Ten-year-old Talia Hovsepien of Glendale plays left wing with the California Bears Youth Hockey Club, coached by former National Hockey League (NHL) player Alexander Frolov. Talia, the only female player on the boys travel team, has participated in

tournaments throughout the United States.

Talia fell in love with ice hockey at age 5, playing for the Little Kings Learn-To-Play Program sponsored by the NHL Los Angeles Kings.



Center for Truth and
Justice Establishes
Educational
Partnership between
University of Iowa
And Artsakh State
University

LOS ANGELES — In the midst of a blockade, the Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ) has established an educational partnership between the University of Iowa and the Artsakh State University.

CFTJ announced in February the realization of this collaboration — a direct outcome of the international human rights conference organized by CFTJ held in Yerevan. It was back in June 2022, while being in Armenia, that the guest speaker, Prof. Elke Heckner, expressed the intent to establish a partnership between the University of Iowa and Artsakh State University. Through the efforts of Associate Provost and Dean of International Programs Russ Ganim, Heckner, and CFTJ Conference committee member Arsiné Grigoryan, Esq., a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the above two universities.

“The University of Iowa is proud to collaborate with Artsakh State University under the auspices of this new Memorandum of Understanding,” remarked Dean Ganim. “Our purpose is to connect faculty and students on issues regarding human rights and social justice in conflict zones around the world. We look forward to learning about and from Artsakh as the partnership grows.”

The timing of this historic event is even more impactful since Artsakh is in the midst of a blockade by Azerbaijan. On December 12, 2022, Azerbaijan blocked the only highway, referred to as the Lachin Corridor, connecting Stepanakert to Yerevan, and essentially to the rest of the world. For over 70 days now, 120,000 residents, including 30,000 children are deprived of food, medicine and other basic supplies they are in dire need of. Hospitals have indefinitely put surgeries on hold. Schools have been closed due to the shortages. Additionally, vital services like electricity, gas, and internet shut offs during the freezing winter temperatures have created more hardships for these residents.

“For the Artsakh State University, this extraordinary collaboration is immeasurably important, with such prestigious universities like the University of Iowa, especially in these trying times that Artsakh is in a total blockade and such collaborations open a window of opportunity to the civil world,” said Vitya Yaramishyan, Vice-rector of Artsakh State University as he signed the MOU. “This partnership between two institutions will undoubtedly bring about significant progress in the promotion and protection of human rights in Artsakh and beyond,” stated Grigoryan.

CFTJ is a US-based non-profit organization formed in November 2020 immediately following the 44-Day War in Artsakh. CFTJ is not affiliated with any political or governmental organization and is entirely independent. CFTJ’s team of attorneys built a fact-finding infrastructure in Armenia and Artsakh, to gather testimonial evidence from victims of war-related human rights and humanitarian abuses. CFTJ has collected more than 400 testimonies from witnesses including returned POWs, displaced individuals, and victims of prohibited methods of warfare. CFTJ’s mission is to create a living memorial to crimes against humanity, for purposes of education and legal action.

1915

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THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

THE ANNUAL COMMEMORATION IN TIMES SQUARE

Truth
Justice
Recognition

SUNDAY
APRIL 23, 2023
at 1:30pm

Arts & Culture

Fresno Premiere Screening of 'Back to Ashtarak'

FRESNO —Director Tigran Nersisian and producer Armen Karaoghlanian will present their film, "Back to Ashtarak," on Friday, March 10, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus. The event is organized by the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State and co-sponsored by the Hamazkayin Fresno Taniel Varoujan Chapter and is free and open to the public.

"Back to Ashtarak" is a documentary about its director, who returns to his hometown of Ashtarak in Armenia to relive the happiest moments of his childhood.

Tigran Nersisian is a film director and video producer born in Armenia, raised in Russia, and currently based in Los Angeles. His work focuses on mental illness, identity, and self-exploration. He holds a BA in directing from UCLA TFT, where



Tigran Nersisian

he received various scholarships and grants. His films have been screened and awarded at numerous international film festivals worldwide. His latest film, "Back to Ashtarak," won the Best Short Documentary Award at the Pomegranate Film Festival in Toronto.

Armen Karaoghlanian is CEO of the Armenian Film Society. Founded in 2015 by the husband and wife team of Armen and Mary Karaoghlanian, the Armenian Film Society is dedicated to shining a spotlight on all the wonderful contributions Armenians have made in film.

The film screening is free and open to the public. Parking is available in Fresno State Lots P6, near the University Business Center, Fresno State. A parking pass is NOT required for the event.

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

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, please follow us on our Facebook page, @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState or at the Program website, <https://fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies>.



Young dancers from ArmFolk reach new heights.

Young Artists from Armenia Perform to Standing Ovations in Exhilarating Performance

PHILADELPHIA — A group of exceptionally talented young musicians from Armenia infused a powerful dose of pride into the Philadelphia Armenian community with their repertoire of exuberant Armenian dances, instrumentals, and songs in a one-of-a-kind intercommunal event in celebration of Vartanantz Day at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church in Philadelphia on Wednesday, February 15.

Draped in exquisite Armenian costumes, the group called ArmFolk, brought the audience of more than 225 guests to their feet multiple times during the hourlong performance. The musical extravaganza featured nine young dancers performing such favorites as Kochari and Shoushigi. An accomplished young qanunist, Kristine Yengoyan, inspired the audience with her mastery of the ancient instrument in such pieces as *Groong* and *Perpetuum*. And a celebrated singer, Hayk Avetisyan, exhilarated guests with a series of patriotic songs, concluding with *Yes im anoosh Hayas-dani* (My Sweet Armenia).

The incredible display was thanks largely to the efforts of Tigran Mnoyan, the artistic director of Prof Art Dance Studio of Yerevan, and Aleksan Zakyan, the president of the Armenian National Delphic Committee, an international initiative for peace and harmony through encounters of cultures. The committee partners with the Rotary Children's Fund through an international exchange program called Golden Gates to provide culturally enriching educational experiences for participants and Armenian and non-Armenian audiences alike.

see PERFORMANCE, page 13



Andrew Kizirian speaks as the young performers and their instructors listen.

A CONVERSATION WITH...

William Zeytounlian

*'The Work of Memory Can
Cure Our Anxieties'*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / SÃO PAULO — Brazilian fencer, psychoanalyst, poet and translator William Zeytounlian de Moraes was born in 1988 in São Paulo. He started to practice fencing at the age of 15. William is a four-time four times Brazilian fencing champion and South American champion in 2015, he represented Brazil at the 2011 Pan American Games in Guadalajara, as part of the team that won the bronze medal in the men's fencing. As psychoanalyst he graduated from Instituto D'Alma and took courses at Sedes Sapientiae. William holds a master's degree in French History from the Federal University of São Paulo. In 2015 his poetry book *Diáspora* has been published by Demônio Negro label. Zeytounlian is also the assisting editor at Aller, a publishing house specialized in psychoanalysis.



William, you combine three main professions. Can you see similarities between fencing and poetry and psychoanalysis?

I consider the three of them different forms of art. Fencing is a martial art: it's about using your body to defend and attack, anticipating the opponent's thoughts — or creating them so that you can control the bout. Poetry is an art of language: it's about using the linguistic material we inherit and share with others and creating new stuff with it — stuff that's memory and novelty at the same time. Psychoanalysis, in its turn, is the art of listening: listening beyond what's said, freeing an intimate truth hidden in the fabric of speech, thus relieving someone in pain.

In your essay "Political uncertainty in 2018: a collection of dreams and nightmares," co-authored with Fabio Zuker, you bring together the nightmares of some interviewees' regarding Brazil's presidential election. Armenia is in political uncertainty for many years and our society has nightmares since the war of 2020. As a psychoanalyst what do you recommend us, living in a country sandwiched between two threatening enemies?

see MEMORY, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

Exhilarating Performance by Young Musicians from Armenia

PERFORMANCE, from page 12

Vitaliy Bezrodnov, founder of the Rotary Children's Fund, helped make the journey possible. The Rotary is a global network working to create lasting change and make the world a better place.

"We are building up young Armenians and spreading the word of our culture throughout the world," said a proud Zakyan, who has been advancing Armenian causes through these and other educational initiatives with groups of Armenian youth for decades. He is motivated by what he calls the spirit of every Armenian to rise above through faith and initiative, not only to survive but to thrive.

stay. Several families had children of their own, who especially enjoyed the experience.

The day was made possible through the efforts of the Philadelphia Armenian Intercommunal Committee, led by chairman Andrew Kzirian. The intercommunal group has been bringing Armenians of all five area Armenian churches together for decades. This year's committee includes chair Andrew Kzirian, vice chair Arpy Minasian, treasurer Steven Keytanjian, secretary Emily Terjimanian, Ara Kahvejian, Maral Kaloustian, Tanya Parechan, Vicken Keshishian, John Paulson, and clergy Rev. Torkom Chorbajian of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian



Elegant young dancers in motion

Earlier on February 15, the Armfolk musicians shared their spectacular performance with children of the Armenian Sisters Academy in Radnor, the first Armenian day school of the East Coast. The academy students, who were to perform a Vartanantz celebration of their own the following day, were inspired by the Armfolk talent. They were delighted to share an afternoon of dance, song, food, and conversation with their peers in a unique exchange of bonding across the continents.

In what was a monthlong Armfolk venture, the group performed in Armenian and non-Armenian venues across the U.S. The group is no stranger to travel, but this was an especially long and rich tour, the organizers said. "The children became a family," said a very proud Mnayan, with Zakyan adding that he lovingly took on a fatherly role. The travelers' "family" grew in Philadelphia, as several area Armenian residents opened their homes to host their two-night

Church, Rev. Hakob Gevorkyan of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Rev. Fr. Asadour Minasian of St. Mark's Armenian Catholic Church, pastor Heather C. Ohaneson of Armenian Martyrs Congregational Church, and principal Sister Emma Moussayan of the Armenian Sisters Academy. The St. Gregory Church Ladies Guild presented an extensive table of Armenian sweets and refreshments after the performance.

Chorbajian offered a brief overview of Vartanantz and why it matters to Armenians. While the Persian emperor Yazdegerd demanded that Armenians renounce their Christian faith and adopt Zoroastrianism 15 centuries ago, the Armenian general Vartan Mamigonian and his soldiers fought to the death to hold fast to their Christian faith. Armenians did not succumb then, he said, and continue to stand strong against all odds today. Rev. Fr. Nerses Manoogian, former pastor of St. Gregory Church, offered the closing prayer.



The dancers and Kanoun player take a bow.

Books

Princess of December: New Fantasy Novel for Youth Released

SAN DIEGO — Author and composer George Kirazian's new book, *The Princess of December*, has been released by Laurel Publications and is available on Amazon.com in print and Kindle formats.

A fantasy adventure for young readers aged 8-13, *The Princess of December* follows the adventures of the young protagonist Yvette, who helps Lyanna, The Princess of December, against evil forces of The Ice Shadow.

"And now you know why you must come, Yvette," an excerpt of the book reads. "Tamo needs you, the Kingdom needs you, we all need you because we all need Lyanna, The Princess of December. Without her we will lose everything. The land will freeze and all the flowers and fruit trees will die. The seasons will disappear and leave only a cold, grey wasteland. Will you come, Yvette? Will you?"

And so, with help from Bomor and his magic arrow; the All-Seeing Waters; and a wise and friendly rose bush, Yvette and her new friends began to challenge The Ice Shadow and his dark powers.

Author, teacher, and composer, George Kirazian completed undergraduate and graduate studies at New York University, and for more than 30 years taught writing, literature, and music appreciation courses at Grossmont College and San Diego State University. In addition to his novella, *A Time for Fathers*, Kirazian has written and published extensively in poetry and fiction. He also wrote the children's books, *The Sleeping Violet*, *Perry the Peacock*, *Beyond the Koala Kingdom*, *Leo and the Mulberry Flute*,

and *The Princess of December*. He also published *Easy Writing*, a book on writing improvement for adults.

Kirazian's work as a composer have been performed by various choral groups in the San Diego area and includes various art songs, hymns, a new version of Armenian Apostolic Church Divine Liturgy (www.kirazianbadarak.com). His



latest composition, *The Book of Ruth: A Ballet*, is premiering in a production with Mojalet Dance Collective in San Diego in April 2023.

The Princess of December can be purchased on Amazon at <https://a.co/d/byhLaWU>. For more information, visit www.georgekirazian.com.



Institute for the Study
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THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

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in art and culture

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

Date: March 23, 2023

Time: 5 p.m.

Location: Heritage Hall

Reception to follow in Heritage Hall

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

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





ARTS & CULTURE

Spiritual Journey Musically Binds New World with Medieval Armenia

INAGHASH, from page 1

The Naghash Ensemble is composed of Hasmik Baghdasaryan (soprano), Tatevik Movsesyan (soprano), Arpine Ter-Petrosyan (alto), Harutyun Chkolyan (duduk), Aramayis Nikoghosyan (oud), Tigran Hovhannisyan (dhol) and Hodian (piano/composer).

Baghdasaryan is the singer whose voice was the impetus for Hodian forming the group. Hodian has said that he heard Baghdasaryan perform at the pagan temple of Garni in 2005, when he moved to Armenia, and was immediately captivated. He decided to create a project which would incorporate her voice.

Baghdasaryan, interviewed at the same time from her home in Yerevan, explained that she would not consider herself an opera singer or operatic performer, but instead a chamber performer. “My voice is big, but I prefer to be a chamber performer, where the repertory is much deeper,” she explained. She also stressed that she loved performed spiritual works, *sharagans*, as well as works by Komitas and Naghash.

“After I heard Hasmik’s voice, I knew I really, really wanted to work with her. It took me a long time to find a text that resonated. If you write for work you have to find a text, right? I needed to find a text that worked for me,” he said.

He and a trusted circle of friends and colleagues, Hodian explained, searched for just the right text to be a vehicle for Baghdasaryan’s voice and Hodian’s melodies. Nothing clicked, he said. “There was a lot of wonderful stuff but nothing that was exactly right, until I found this little fragment of a Naghash poem. Naghash is not a well-known poet, even in Armenian literary circles.”

Medieval Poet Naghash

Mkrtich Naghash, the inspiration for this group, lived between 1394 and 1470 in Dikranakert (Diyarbakir) and was a painter, poet and priest.

The 15 poems he left behind all deal with the theme of being a “ghareeb,” meaning someone in exile, or a stranger in a new land. All the poems, in Middle Armenian, have been recorded by the ensemble and released in three CDs, all named “Songs of Exile,” Volumes I-III.

“Roughly, about 3/4 of it, you can understand. There are a lot of Persian words, as well as Arabic,” Hodian explained about Middle Armenian.

Hodian himself is a *ghareeb* of sorts. “I still go to America sometimes and have a home, but I am hardly there.”

“It took me 12 years to set them all to music,” Hodian said. “A lot what struck me is the way he wrote about the problems of living life in exile. He was also a priest as well as a poet. While living in exile, he wrote these poems and in some ways they function as a way of summing up of all he had done in his life and his final words of advice to his flock, his followers.”

He added, “They [the poems] are really beautiful. Obviously the whole idea of living in exile and what is a homeland and so on and so forth are important to Armenians everywhere. I found the words very moving, plus the musicality of the language was incredible.”

“The melodies are not these abstract, crazy wild things. I love writing counterpoint and that’s my obsession with Bach and

medieval polyphonic vocal music and not always doing the obvious harmonically. That’s what I spend a lot of my time doing working out harmonies and counterpoints,” he continued.

He added, “It’s all intuition. I just do what I feel like doing. I don’t consciously try to do something that sounds Armenian, or something that sounds like Bach or something that sounds like anything. I think about what the texts are, I mediate on

I think up until that point, I spent a lot of time scoring films. I did a lot of film on television. I couldn’t do it anymore. I didn’t have anything left to say in that medium.”

He said he had scored about 300 documentaries in 12 years.

“One day I completely stopped which coincided with me coming here. Once I heard Hasmik and started this ensemble...” he decided to take a different path in life.

He added, “I was very, very lucky with

fairly harmoniously. You have Christians, Jews and Arabs and Armenians all inhabiting the same lands,” Hodian noted.

“It was still controlled by the Ottomans and we all know the history of the Armenians,” Hodian added.

A Vocal Powerhouse

“You don’t get what Hasmik has from training,” Hodian said, referring to her crystal clear voice.



the meaning. I have someone read them for me so I am always listening.”

Another part of the magic: “endless re-writes. I write very quickly, but it takes me a long, long time to finish a piece because it’s constantly changing.”

“It’s hard. It’s painful. It’s what Philip Roth says about writing: ‘Every morning I just come down and open up a vein.’,” he



John Hodian

joked, adding, “It’s not always fun. Sometimes it’s miserable but the only thing that is worse is when I am not writing.”

He came to Armenia first in 2005. “It was lifechanging, like it is for many diasporans.

the rest of the ensemble. Hasmik is phenomenal but the other members are incredibly great.”

Hodian said he has worked with Armenian scholars around the world for the songs. Among those are Theo Van Lint of Oxford University, Peter Cowe of UCLA and Ronald Sony of the University of Michigan.

“I found out in Naghash’s time, his poems were meant to be sung, or chanted or performed somehow as opposed to a written art, so they did have an inherent musicality to them,” he noted.

While the Naghash Ensemble has run out of Naghash poems, its work is still not done. Therefore, Hodian is finding other ancient poets to explore.

“I began to search for another batch of texts,” he said. “Now, at this point though, I had various people, scholars, that were interested in what we were doing.”

With the help of Van Lint, he has found another muse for the ensemble: Kostandin Erznkats’i, another Armenian medieval poet. The former is the world’s foremost expert on the poet.

“It’s stunning how similar the works are to Naghash’s poems. I’ve since learned that there was so much happening in that area, in Anatolia in the medieval period. All of these poets, including Persian poets, Arabic poets, Rumi, they were all bouncing things off of each other. There was so much sharing, intermixing of languages and ideas and thoughts.”

“What’s fascinating about this time period is all these people were living together

Baghdasaryan said that she has been singing from childhood, and always gotten attention as a result. Her teachers and elders would say this is clearly not the typical singing of a child, she recalled.

“I had dreamed of being an archeologist but after finishing music school, the head of the program asked my parents to come in for a meeting. He begged them not to allow me to go into any other field than music because the culture would lose a great talent,” she recalled.

After that she said that she applied to the Komitas Conservatory and decided to major in singing spiritual hymns and her teacher said she not a specialist in that field, and therefore would allow her to set her own agenda but help guide her in technique.

“This is your field and I can’t do much for you other than give you guidance on the side,” she recalled.

As for the Naghash Ensemble, she was delighted.

“It’s a very unique feeling,” Baghdasaryan said, to be the centerpiece of a project. “There are always composers who write for specific singers. When your voice becomes the centerpiece and foundation of this of this giant, universal effort, I just think to myself it is exceptional — just exceptional.”

“This seems to be my present that I’ve been given in life,” she noted.

Both she and Hodian stressed that the other two singers and the musicians are vital to the success of the ensemble.

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

Baghdasaryan said she has other projects she has maintained for years, including the Luys Vocal Quintet, comprising five female singers, who sing spiritual songs.

She also works at the Komitas Institute Museum as a program director. “There are performances, music lessons for children newborn to 3,” but she said, “For me Naghash has first priority.”

Baghdasaryan said, “I wish Armenians ourselves could understand what incredible culture we have, what we have to preserve and why we are fighting to survive,” she said.

“For me it is very important that people understand my country and its culture,” she said. “Many don’t know us. For many we their first exposure to Armenian culture and form an opinion about Armenia. After our concerts many become interested in coming to Armenia and finding out more.”

From the US to Armenia

Life in Armenia, “especially in the last 5-6 years,” has been very different from what he had been expecting when he first moved to Armenia.

He was there to witness the Velvet Revolution. “It was very, very exciting. It was thrilling,” at home in downtown Yerevan. “Then, of course, Covid and the situation with Azerbaijan. Just horrific,” he recalled. “It still is. The situation with Artsakh,” he added.

The loss of Artsakh and the current blockade He recalled that he would go to Artsakh often with his friend Narek Harutyunyan, who founded the Naregatsi Art Institute in Shushi, as well as Yerevan. “I would go and work with him there,” he said. “Last time I saw it, Aliyev was actually in the building.”

Hodian grew up outside Philadelphia, in a tight knit Armenian community. “My father only had Armenian records,” he said, such as Onik Dinkjian or Richard Hagopian. In addition, the music at church and weddings “that’s what I grew up in.”

He added that he didn’t do much else in terms of Armenian things, like camps and dances. “In some ways, I probably didn’t think it was that hip. What did I think was



From left, Hasmik Baghdasaryan (soprano), Tatevik Movsesyan (soprano), Arpine Ter-Petrosyan (alto)

hip? Who knows. I was an idiot,” he added. “It wasn’t until years later when I came here that I discovered how hip Armenia actually is and how much depths and wonderfulness are in the culture.”

He recalled that he bought a lot of Komitas folk song transcriptions which could be found for a pittance at the Vernisage

market. “I would play them, sight sing it first, then play it with my left hand, then right hand, and maybe harmonize it, then improvise. I didn’t know why I was doing it. It was my practice in the morning - it was kind of my ritual. .. Looking back on it now, I realize I was deepening some part of my education that I might have had if I had

grown up here.”
As for the origins of Armenian music, he stressed, “If you know the roots, it’s all tied, like we were talking about the poetry of that time. In this medieval period of Anatolia, things were all mixed up.”

Baghdasaryan said that the music is melodic and pure, and falls on receptive ears in Europe. She gave a lot of credit to Komitas for finding pure Armenian folks melodies.

As for recording the music of Komitas, “I think Hasmik should record Komitas for sure. We had talked about doing it at one point.”

However, he said that the ensemble should not do it because there are good arrangements already.

He added, however, that Baghdasaryan should record his music, and he would happily produce it.

He joked, after one of the first concerts of Naghash, “A little old lady came up to me and said ‘thank you for keeping those ancient songs alive.’ And I said, ‘you’re welcome,’” Hodian said.

The tour started on March 2 in Los Angeles and will wrap up on March 18 in Santa Fe, NM. Indeed, there are two New Mexico stops, as well as two Colorado ones, in addition to the more traditional sites, such as New York, Montreal, Los Angeles, etc.


“Ain’t life weird?”, joked Hodian.

In addition, Hodian explained, the tour stops for the Naghash Ensemble generally tend to be at classical music or world music venues rather than Armenian ones. For example, in New York, they will perform at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

“We love it when Armenians come. But it’s not really aimed at just them,” he said. “I like that. One of the things I’m happiest about is we’re not just preaching to the converted. We’re not just Armenians for Armenia. We want the rest of the world to know there is some interesting stuff going on here.”

Several of the shows are sold out. “We very much look forward to that,” he said.

For tickets and tour information, visit www.naghashensemble.com.



PwJTs

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Ellen Whitney’s Eetch

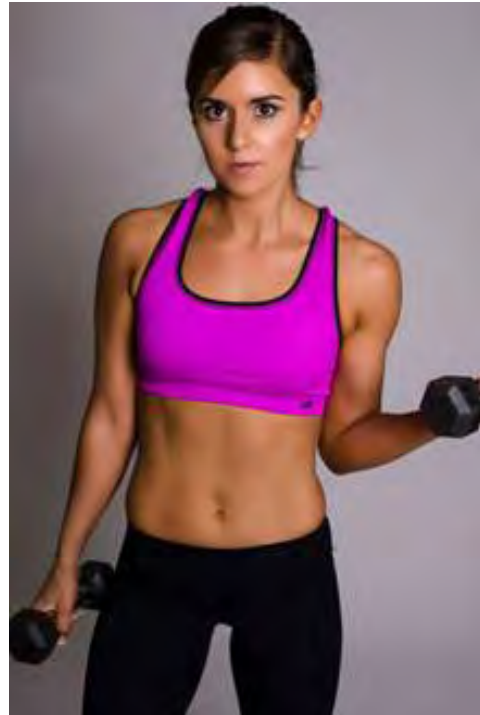
A “meaty” vegan salad that can be a delicious part of a larger spread or a satisfying one-dish meal.

“The Mediterranean diet, a meal plan that emphasizes fresh produce, whole grains, fish, and healthy fats has proven to not only prevent diseases such heart disease and cancer, but those who eat this way are also at a decreased risk for depression, dementia, and weight gain. My mom is Armenian, so I was raised on this style of eating, and as it turns out, many of my childhood favorite dishes are naturally vegan, including this holiday favorite, eetch,” says Ellen Whitney, a Certified Personal Trainer and Fitness Nutrition Specialist.

“Eetch (otherwise known as eech, itch, metch or one of several other variations) is a cooked grain salad made with bulgur, roasted red pepper, tomatoes and onions. I was introduced to this recipe while visiting my Armenian relatives in Philadelphia for Easter, and at first bite I thought I was eating meat because it had such a rich flavor,” says Ellen. “Now that I don’t eat meat, and remembering my first impression, I love serving it to my meat-eating friends, and throwing

in the ‘it’s vegan’ after they’ve raved about how much they love it in my mission to prove Health Tastes Good. My aim is to show that food that is healthy, nourishes the body, and gives it strength can continue to bring friends and family together to make lasting memories. Eetch is often served as part of an appetizer (meze) spread at gatherings, but it also makes a satisfying, easy-to-assemble one-dish meal. While this recipe is excellent served year-round, it’s extra special in the heat and height of summer, when cold dishes are welcome and vibrant fresh herbs, lettuces, and juicy, flavorful tomatoes abound.”

“It’s better to think of eetch as a meatless meat dish. Traditionally, Armenians were known for being pious and carnivorous in equal measure, and with some 160 fast days scattered throughout the Armenian Church calendar



Ellen Whitney

year (including the 40 days of Lent), they faced near-constant roadblocks to enjoying meat. Which means that Armenians have made vegetarian and vegan cooking something of an art form, and eetch is one of our greatest creations,” says baking teacher, recipe developer, and writer Andrew Janjigian in Serious Eats. “In eetch, the meat is left out. The meatiness and moisture of the dish is instead provided by additional tomato in various forms—paste, canned, and/or fresh—and the fat comes in the form of olive or vegetable oil. While it can be eaten with a fork, it’s more often consumed wrapped with a tender lettuce leaf or a shroud of lavash.

And eetch is a perfect Lenten recipe.”*

“Bulgur, the main ingredient in eetch, pleasantly surprised the first time I learned its nutritional breakdown—thinking since it was such a complex grain it would be very caloric, yet it actually contains less calories per cup than white rice, brown rice, and quinoa, adds Ellen. “Just 1 cup of cooked bulgur is approximately 151 calories, .5g fat, 34g carbs (8g fiber, 26g net), and 6g protein. Bulgur’s most dense nutrient is manganese, packing over 50% of your daily need per cup, which is great for skin health (because it helps produce collagen), bone health, and helps stabilize blood sugar. Another bonus for me is it provides 15% of my daily magnesium and 10% of iron, two minerals I always have to consciously consume since I’m so active and don’t eat meat.”

“In August 2015, I adopted a plant-based diet. So many of the recipes on this site will be vegan, however, I’m also a personal chef and recognize that not everyone eats this way, so recipes including organic meats will sometimes make an appearance as well. In addition to food and nutrition, my other passion is fitness. My favorite way to start each day is with movement. Officially, I am a Certified Personal Trainer and Fitness Nutrition Specialist through the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM); I have my 300-hour Modo yoga teacher certification, and have a marketing degree from the University of Georgia,” says Ellen.

Once eetch is garnished, it can be served for every occasion and throughout the holiday season.

“Since this is a cold grain dish, it can be made at the beginning of the week to eat over vegetables as a salad, as a main course or a side dish, or as an appetizer using crudité, pita bread or lavash for dipping. Here’s the recipe my family always enjoys, be sure to take lots of pictures and let me know what you think once you make this,” says Ellen.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 medium onions, minced
- 1/3 -1/2 cup olive oil, to taste
- 2 heaping tablespoons red pepper paste
- 1 28-oz. can crushed tomato
- 1 6-oz. can tomato paste
- 1 large lemon, juiced, to taste
- 2 teaspoons sea salt, more or less to taste
- Red pepper flakes, to taste
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups fine bulgur
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium bunch green onions, chopped
- 1/2 bunch parsley, finely chopped
- 1 medium red bell pepper, chopped

PREPARATION:

Heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan, add the 2 onions, and cook until lightly golden. Add the red pepper paste, crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, lemon juice, salt and pepper, and allow to simmer for 5 minutes. Add the water, bulgur, and remaining onion. Stir everything together, cover, and allow to simmer for at least 30 minutes. Check seasonings. Remove from heat, and transfer to a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. (The consistency should be like oatmeal). Cover and refrigerate. Garnish before serving with chopped green onions, parsley and red bell pepper.

References:

* “Eetch (Armenian Bulgur, Tomato, and Herb Salad)” by Andrew Janjigian, see:

<https://www.seriousseats.com/eetch-armenian-bulgur-tomato-herb-salad-5202151>

Note: “The original recipe calls for 1/2 cup of olive oil, which seems like a lot when you pour it in the pan,” says Ellen, “but some will be cooked off, and this recipe makes a large amount, so when broken down per serving, it’s likely you’d only be consuming a teaspoon of oil. You can reduce the oil to 1/3 cup if you’d like, but I wouldn’t go lower than that. If you don’t have red pepper paste, simply use ground roasted red pepper.”

For this recipe, go to: <http://healthtastesgood.co/food/eetch/>

For more vegan recipes, go to: <http://healthtastesgood.co/category/vegan/>

For Ellen’s Baba Ganoush, see: <http://healthtastesgood.co/vegan/baba-ganoush/>

See: <https://www.facebook.com/armenianandmiddleeasterncooking/photos/a.285937295793/10157128230700794/?type=3>

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Ellen Whitney: Foodie. Chef. Modo Yoga RYT. NASM CPT. MRM Ambassador. #Fitfluent Ambassador

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ARTS & CULTURE

William Zeytounlian: ‘The Work of Memory Can Cure Our Anxieties’

MEMORY, from page 12

The nightmares we collected were the effect of a traumatic, harsh contact with the real: the anxiety related to the uncertainty for our lives and futures. Unfortunately, our worst dreams were proved right. Due to denialism, Brazil went through a catastrophe this last four years, with almost 700,000 deaths by covid. Also, we had a brutal Genocide against the Yanomami indigenous people, event denied as well. As we all know, a Genocide is not only about killing: it’s about denying the very act of erasing a people. As a psychoanalyst, I’d recommend the intensification of two labors I suppose Armenians are way more used to than Brazilians: remembering and mourning. The work of memory can cure our anxieties, and by working through what we lost — with those we lost — we can decide better what’s to be done next.

What does it mean being Armenian in Brazil?

My mother was born in Brazil to Armenian parents. My father is Portuguese, his surname is Moraes. That means that I chose — and prefer — to use my mother’s surname socially, instead of my father’s. Psychoanalysis thing here (laughs).

I suppose it depends on the Armenian family you were born in. In my case, it was a delicate process. My grandma and grandpa were very, very fond of their Armenian roots. They cherished their language, history, songs, and foods, which were transmitted to their sons and daughters, my aunts and uncles. But also, my grandpa had the destiny of many Levantine, Jewish and Armenian survivors worldwide: despair, impossibility

origin of Zeytoun historical city of Western Armenia. Are your roots from there?

Probably, from my grandfather’s side of the family. He was born in Marash, therefore not far from Zeytoun. But I couldn’t name my ancestors who were born there. My grandmother was born in Adana in 1921.

Anyway, I remember that back when I was a kid, one of my favorite plays was to imagine me entrenched on the top of a mountain, holding a gun, and guarding it for hours and hours... It was not about killing: it was about defending, holding a piece of ground. More recently, I dreamt I brought olives, “Azeitonas” in Portuguese, to a beloved woman. Even if I can’t retrace its exact origins, I suppose I made this name fully mine...

My grandma’s maiden name was Mahseredjian. Among my relatives that still carry this surname, there’s a beloved cousin, Fabio Mahseredjian, who’s the fitness coach to the Brazilian National Team. He just got back from the world cup, without the cup unfortunately.

Diaspora writers usually refer to their roots at the mature phase of their creativity, while you dedicated your first book to your grandmother Efrazuhi Zeytounlian, a genocide survivor. How this book come about?

The book was born during the process of her decline and death. It was part of my mourning labor. I was raised by my grandmother. I used to call her Efrac, Vó (grandmother in Portuguese), *Digin* (Mrs.) Efrac (mostly as a joke) and *Mens mama* (no idea if that is Armenian, Turkish, or how

brance, resistance, loss and continuity.

You also make translations. From what languages? As far as I know, so far, the Armenian poetry is represented in Brazil with two translated anthologies. My sincere wish is that one day you study Armenian language and make translations also from Armenian!

I do translate from French, English, Spanish, and Italian. I worked for publishing houses specialized in poetry, literature, and, more recently, psychoanalysis. We do have anthologies of Armenian poetry, but they’re still few. We need more! The University of São Paulo has an Armenian Language Department doing a great work anyway.

I sincerely wish that too, for you to learn Armenian! Do you have any good translations from Brazilian Portuguese authors to Armenian? Brazil has great

literature and I wonder how Machado de Assis and Guimarães Rosa would sound in Armenian.

Well, very few samples from Brazilian literature has been translated from intermediary languages, although now there are some attempts to make translation directly from Portuguese. Do you have any Armenia-related projects and objectives for 2023?

I do. I just submitted a poetry project for the Gulbenkian’s Western Armenian Program. I want to write a book titled “The promised land” – Brazil? Armenia? Nowhere? – and I want to do it under the impact of learning my grandfather’s language, arevmdahayeren (Western Armenian). I also expect to go to Armenia for cultural and language research.

William, you are more than welcome any time!

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

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

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 6 — St. James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting, Father-Son Night. Monday, featuring Guest Speaker, Tony Massarotti, Author and former Sports writer for the Boston Globe and Boston Herald. Speaking about his book, *This is Our City, How Boston Became the most Dominant Sports City in the World*. Books will be available for sale and signing. Social Hour [mezza] 6.15 p.m., Dinner 7 p.m. Losh Kebab and Kheyima dinner. 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. \$20 a person. New members welcome.

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

NEW JERSEY

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

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

RHODE ISLAND

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

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.



William Zeytounlian with his grandmother. Photo by Ivan Shupikov.

to mourn, and trauma. He committed suicide in 1967. After that, all by herself, my grandma struggled to make her kids mingle with the Brazilians. The language started being used less and less within my family. I was raised to say it proudly – I am an Armenian. In some sense, in a struggling, survivalist, life-passionate sense, I feel that I know exactly what being an Armenian means. But, on the other hand, without knowing the language, without ever knowing my relatives in Lebanon and Armenia, without knowing how to say it — “I am an Armenian” — in this ancestral language, I somehow have no idea of what it means.

Your surname Zeytounlian hints the

it is written). And she used to call us many names, like *kuzum* or *iavre* (iavri?). No idea if that is Armenian or Turkish either. (I don’t think it mattered to her or us). She fed me, talked to me, told me stories and the history of our family, she protected me, gave me a past and a future. She was 94 years old when she died. I had to work on something to understand what I was losing and keep something of her. I used to write poetry already, but I always thought to myself I’d never spend clean sheets of paper to publish unimportant introspective bullshit. I felt that was different. It was an opportunity to use what I learned and felt until that moment as a mean to think about collective remem-

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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SINCE 1932



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EDITORIAL

Finally a Piece of Paper That May Serve as A Weapon for Armenia



**By Edmond Y.
Azadian**

After two years of a devastating war, Azerbaijan's unrelenting pressure, in terms of border incursions, false negotiations and constant demands for concessions, recently, a turn of events offered a respite, some breathing room to recover and maybe even return to normalcy.

In addition, nature's fury could lead to changes in regional politics.

The powerful earthquake in Turkey, which also devastated Syria, shook fundamentally the architecture of that country's foreign policy, which will become more apparent in the coming months. The Turkish-Russian quasi-alliance will be changing its vector, as Turkey more and more depends on the West, and particularly on Washington, for its recovery. The regional nations, which have been living under Ankara's bullying and aggression, will enjoy a window of opportunity to concentrate on their own priorities rather than worry about Turkey.

Turkey's predicament will also restrain Ankara in its unconditional support for Azerbaijan's maximalist policies vis a vis Armenia and Karabakh (Artsakh).

Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor, which began on December 12, 2022, could have lasted forever, had the situation not changed in the Caucasus. The intent of the blockade was to strangle the 120,000-strong Armenian population in Karabakh, who are not yet out of the woods, despite the verdict of the International Court of Justice last week, ordering Azerbaijan to cease its action.

For a number of reasons, Armenia had hesitated to move its case to the international plane, concerned that the courts are influenced by politics and favor the mighty. Yerevan finally mustered its courage and entrusted its case to a team of international lawyers headed by the firm Foley Hoag, and Yeghishe Kirakosyan of Armenia. The effort was also assisted by prominent Armenian lawyers in the diaspora. Azerbaijan, which allocates tremendous resources toward think tanks, lobbying firms and legal professionals, was finally defeated because its case failed to convince the judges at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Indeed, on February 22, 2023, the ICJ, the main judicial organ of the UN, ordered provisional measures to ensure that Azerbaijan unblocks the Lachin Corridor.

Since Armenia lacks military power, it has to rely on this paper weapon.

This reminds us of another episode in Armenian history, where a paper allegory was used: Khrimian Hairik, later the Catholicos of All Armenians, returning from the Berlin Conference of 1878, lamented that all the participant nations had come to Berlin with iron ladles to partake of harissa (soup) and were successful, but that his own ladle disintegrated as it was made of paper.

In this case, the ICJ has indeed presented a paper weapon for Karabakh Armenians rather than the previous reference, where the paper was a symbol for weakness.

The ICJ verdict, which is binding, states that "the Republic of Azerbaijan shall, pending the final decision and in accordance with its obligation under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

(CERD), take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along Lachin Corridor in both directions."

This ruling comes in addition to an earlier one from 2021 which demanded that Azerbaijan protect Armenian cultural sites on its territory.

In an effort to obfuscate the facts at the court, Azerbaijan, in a separate case, had accused Armenia of moving mines through the Lachin Corridor to Karabakh. However, the court struck down that case, which was based on false premises. According to Ara Ghazaryan, an international law expert, the rejection of Azerbaijan's claim is even more important than the partial satisfaction from Armenia's claim.

Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani government has been dragging its feet and delaying the implementation of the court's ruling. As of this writing, the corridor is still closed for regular traffic.

Armenia has hailed the ruling as a victory because non-compliance by Azerbaijan carries serious consequences. Ghazaryan, however, believes that the "court's decision cannot be called as a victory, but rather a sort of instrument that dictates the situation in the political arena."

Azerbaijan still has not complied. That country's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, in yet another blatant lie, claims "the Lachin Corridor is already open."



Indeed, long-term political implications are more significant and far reaching. Thus:

- Once again the Karabakh case has been the focus of international politics.

- Azerbaijan's leader Ilham Aliyev insists that the term Nagorno Karabakh must not be used because it is an impingement on Azerbaijan's sovereignty. The ICJ uses the term and legitimizes it.

- The ICJ ruling makes reference to the November 9 declaration, rendering it an instrument of international law and requests Azerbaijan to abide by its provisions, which sometimes are forgotten by Baku and Moscow

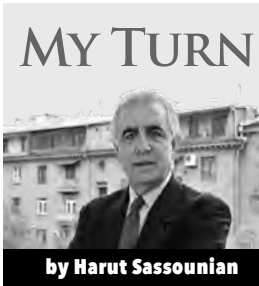
- Baku has been struggling to create a false parity between Lachin and the so-called "Zangezur Corridor," which Azerbaijan demands from Armenia. The ICJ, by its ruling, dissociates the two cases and refuses to condition the opening of the first with the creation of the second.

The ruling by itself would have remained an inert document if the Armenian government did not use it for its political

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



Artsakh’s President Made a Huge Mistake By Dismissing Vardanyan at Aliyev’s Orders

Artsakh’s President Arayik Harutyunyan made a huge mistake last Thursday when he succumbed to the pressure of President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, dismissing State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, a billionaire businessman who had made his fortune in Moscow. Last September, Vardanyan renounced his Russian citizenship and settled in Artsakh, saying he wants to be with his people at their greatest hour of need. Shortly after his move, President Harutyunyan appointed him as State Minister of Artsakh.

The President of Artsakh should not have fired Vardanyan or should have at least waited for a while so it did not look like he was carrying out Aliyev’s orders so promptly. Unfortunately, Vardanyan was dismissed right after the International Court of Justice increased the pressure on Azerbaijan by ruling against it.

Shamefully, Gurgen Arsenyan, a Member of Parliament from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s ruling party, made the following treacherous statement in Parliament in February: “there is no need to risk three million Armenians for the sake of Artsakh.” It is never a good idea when you and your enemy are on the same side!

Recently, several Azeri journalists and even President Aliyev denigrated Vardanyan by calling him “a Russian oligarch, criminal, and money launderer.”

In October 2022, Aliyev personally complained to President Vladimir Putin of Russia about Vardanyan. Putin told Aliyev that he knew nothing about Vardanyan’s presence and activities in Artsakh.

On November 17, 2022, during a meeting with Dirk Schuebel, Special Envoy of the European Union for the Eastern Partnership, Aliyev said that he refuses to negotiate with Vardanyan, whom he called “Moscow’s emissary” in Karabakh. Aliyev continued: “We are ready to talk...with Armenians who live in Karabakh, not with those who have been sent from Moscow hiding in their pockets billions of dollars money stolen from Russian people, like the man called Vardanyan who was transferred from Moscow there with a very clear agenda.”

On February 18, 2023, during a panel discussion in Munich, Germany, with Prime Minister Pashinyan, Aliyev said that he is ready to start practical communication with representatives of the Armenian community in the Karabakh region: “But, we can do it only when Russian citizen criminal oligarch, a person who was involved in money laundering in Europe, Vardanyan, is out of our territory.” Aliyev added: Vardanyan “was exported from Russia to have the leading position in Karabakh. Maybe exported is not the right word. I would probably prefer the word smuggled.”

It is not up to Aliyev to decide who should represent Artsakh in negotiations. That’s the decision of Artsakh’s government. It would have been wiser for the

President of Artsakh not to dismiss Vardanyan at all, just to show Aliyev who calls the shots in Artsakh.

I suggest that Vardanyan file lawsuits for libel in the European Court of Human Rights against all those who told lies about him, forcing the scandalous Azeri journalists and President Aliyev himself to pay a hefty penalty and publicly apologize to Vardanyan.

Finally, it is not a good idea to succumb to pressures from your enemies which only encourage them to demand further concessions from you. The list of their demands is endless. –

Here are some current and potential Azeri demands from Artsakh and Armenia:

- Azerbaijan to place its checkpoints on the Lachin Corridor;
 - The future ‘Zangezur Corridor’, linking Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan, to enjoy a status similar to the Lachin Corridor;
 - Seeking further concessions, even after the Lachin Corridor is opened, Azerbaijan will probably block it again;
 - After the fake Azeri environmentalists demanded to inspect the mines in Artsakh, its leaders unwisely shut down the mines, thus encouraging the Azeris to demand more concessions, instead of telling them: “that’s none of your business,” which led to the next Azeri demand that Armenians stop extracting metals from Artsakh mines;
 - Seeking further Armenian concessions, Azeri forces will probably occupy more territories of the Republic of Armenia.
- Similarly, Turkey will seek concessions demanding that Armenia:
- Delete from its Declaration of Independence the reference to the Armenian Genocide in “Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia.” If not, Turkey would threaten to shut down the border with Armenia after opening it;
 - Stop campaigning for the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide;
 - Accept the existing borders with Turkey, giving up any future claims for the territories of Western Armenia;
 - Ban the burning of the Turkish flag on April 24;
 - Give up any demands for restitution from Turkey for the Genocide losses.

The leaders of Armenia and Artsakh should understand that appeasing a bully leads to more bullying, not to peace. Regrettably, despite sacrificing Vardanyan at Aliyev’s request, expecting that Azerbaijan would then unblock the Lachin Corridor in return, the Corridor is still blocked as of February 27. Even after a closed door meeting on February 25 between the representatives of Artsakh and Azerbaijan, the Corridor remains closed. Vardanyan announced that despite his dismissal, he will continue to live in Artsakh. It is unknown what role is he able or willing to play without an official position.

Only one mystery remains. What did President Harutyunyan and State Minister Vardanyan do in Moscow earlier in February when both of them traveled separately to Moscow and returned to Artsakh within a few days? Why did they go to Moscow? Who did they meet with? What did they talk about? Neither one has said a word about that visit. Knowing the answers to these questions may shed additional light on Vardanyan’s dismissal.

Finally a Piece of Paper That May Serve as a Weapon for Armenia

from previous page

ends. Indeed, the next day after the ruling, Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan placed two phone calls, one to President Vladimir Putin and the second to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres. The contents of the first call has not been divulged, but during the call to Guterres, Pashinyan requested a UN fact-finding mission at the Lachin Corridor and in Karabakh itself. The second request will further infuriate Russia, which

danyan’s rise and fall there is in itself a grotesque political drama.

When Vardanyan, a billionaire from Moscow, gave up his Russian citizenship and showed up in Stepanakert a few months ago, the leadership in Yerevan would not touch him with a 10-foot-pole and they labeled him a Russian agent. That insinuation was employed by Aliyev himself, when he accused Vardanyan, during the forum in Munich last month, of being a “criminal oligarch” from

bakh, dismissed Vardanyan and replaced him with by Gurgen Nersisyan, the general prosecutor.

It looks like Aliyev received what he had wanted, since the very next day, a group of Karabakh representatives met with Azerbaijani government officials, to discuss the opening of the Lachin Corridor, as well as restoring the flow of gas and electricity. The meeting was mediated by the head of the Russian peacekeeping forces in Karabakh.

Along with this meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov arrived in Baku to celebrate the first anniversary of the signing of the strategic alliance treaty between Russia and Azerbaijan. Lavrov has also been discussing the peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

If and when the Lachin corridor is opened, Aliyev would like to give credit to Russia and pretend that he did not give in to the ICJ ruling.

Meanwhile, President Aliyev paid a visit to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to find out how much Turkish support remains for Azerbaijan’s unremitting pressure on Armenia, especially in light of the latter’s overtures after the earthquake.

The final episode of this Karabakh drama is the arrival of Samuel Babayan, a decorated war hero from the 1990s, with a checkered history. He claims that he has a plan, which when implemented, will save Karabakh. He is looking for a government position before divulging that plan.

These are trying times for Armenia and Karabakh and opportunists and bona fide statesmen can try their luck, hopefully, for some positive results.

The people of Karabakh have suffered enough, and people in Armenia are yearning for the restoration of normal life.

Hopefully our paper weapon will prove to be effective this time around.

“WHEN VARDANYAN, A BILLIONAIRE FROM MOSCOW, GAVE UP HIS RUSSIAN CITIZENSHIP AND SHOWED UP IN STEPANAKERT A FEW MONTHS AGO, THE LEADERSHIP IN YEREVAN WOULD NOT TOUCH HIM WITH A 10-FOOT-POLE AND THEY LABELED HIM A RUSSIAN AGENT.”

has already been complaining about the stationing of European Union monitors on Armenia’s border with Azerbaijan. Recently, Toivo Khaar, the EU special representative for the South Caucasus, commented that Russia is more concerned with the issue of the monitors than Azerbaijan is.

Azerbaijan has been under pressure from Western powers, and particularly Secretary of State Antony Blinken, to begin negotiating with the Armenian representatives in Karabakh. And it was looking for an excuse to take the initiative. That opportunity was afforded to him by the appearance of Ruben Vardanyan in Karabakh. Var-

Russia smuggled into Karabakh and involved in money laundering, never mind that the Aliyev family is implicated in many more proven money laundering cases in the Panama Papers and was also accused of pilfering state funds to acquire \$700 million in properties in London alone.

Meanwhile, Vardanyan was appointed state minister in Karabakh, which is equivalent to prime minister.

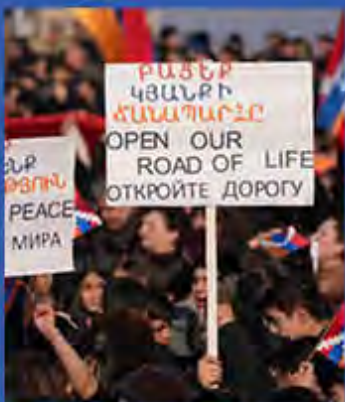
Aliyev announced that he was ready to negotiate with any representative born in Karabakh, which Vardanyan was not. (He was born in Armenia.) Lo and behold, within five days, Arayik Harutyunyan, the president of Kara-

COMMENTARY



Tekeyan Cultural Association Launches
**ARTSAKH CRISIS
AID CAMPAIGN**

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



How Much
Longer Must
the People
of Artsakh
Suffer?

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

TCA immediately sent an initial \$10,300. Another \$10,900 was raised from donations and sent at the start of February. So far, 212 families have been helped through TCA, and its fundraising campaign continues.

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

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

For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

Aid Campaign for Aleppo’s Tekeyan Cultural Association

AID, from page 1

Armenians lived close together. During the fighting, the TCA building, a center of cultural and social activity, was severely damaged and TCA activities had to temporarily move to a different building to await more favorable times for rebuilding.

Instead, TCA, along with the entire country, was subject to a new blow and further destruction when the recent earthquake struck. Syria is undergoing a severe economic crisis and the once prosperous Armenian community of Aleppo is in need.

Fortunately, the temporary building being used by TCA did not collapse despite the damage caused. However, like other members of the Aleppo community, TCA members remained in the streets, fearing new tremors. In this cold weather, obtaining shelter, warmth and nourishment is problematic.

In view of this unfortunate situation, the TCA of Montreal started a fundraising campaign. The TCA Central Board contributed some funds as well, and \$5,000 (US dollars) was transferred to the TCA administration in Aleppo.

The Central Board of the TCA of the United States and Canada is also continuing its campaign for the blockaded Armenians of Artsakh, for whom it has sent \$21,200 directly to 212 suffering families.

Despite the ongoing turmoil in Artsakh, TCA and its supporters cannot ignore our brothers and sisters in Aleppo. The need is great, so we are forced to continue the campaign. All those who wish to support the wounded community of Aleppo can send their donations to the TCA headquarters at the following address: Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472.

All such sums will be transferred in full to Aleppo to take care of community needs.

Students of Armenian Descent

Having Completed One Year of College by June 2023

Applications and other information may be obtained from

**ARMENIAN STUDENTS’ ASSOCIATION
Scholarship Committee
333 Atlantic Avenue • Warwick, RI 02888
Tel. 401 461-6114 • Fax 401 461-6112**

e-mail: headasa@aol.com

Deadline for returning completed Applications: March 15, 2023



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Ընկերային Ցանձնախումբ

Tekeyan Cultural Association
Beshgeturian Center Social Committee

FAMILY NIGHT
Ընտանեկան Երեկոյ

Musical Entertainment By
Renowned Vilonist
Merouzhn Margaryan

Friday, March 17, 2023 at 7:30 pm at the TCA Beshgeturian Center
1901 N Allen Avenue, Altadena

Ուրբաթ, Մարտ 17, 2023-ի երեկոյեան ժամը 7:30-ին,
ԹՄՄԻ Պեշկետուրեան Սրահին մէջ, Ալթադենա:

For reservations call 626-296-1806
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