

Russian Envoy
Downplays Rift
With Armenia

By Anush Mkrtchian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russia and Armenia will remain close allies despite unprecedented friction between them, the Russian ambassador in Yerevan, Sergei Kopyrkin, said on Monday, April 10. “There can be differences of opinion and evaluation between us, that’s normal,” Kopyrkin told reporters. “The volume of our relations is such that there may arise practical issues on which the parties have differing positions. But on the whole, I am confident that what unites us remains and will be reinforced. Our relations were, are and will be allies.”

Those relations have deteriorated in the last several months mainly because of what Yerevan sees as Moscow’s lack of support for its main South Caucasus ally in the conflict with Azerbaijan.

The rift between the two nations deepened further late last month after Armenia’s Constitutional Court gave the green light for parliamentary ratification of the International Criminal Court’s founding treaty. The ruling followed an arrest war-



Ambassador Sergei Kopyrkin (Artsakhpress photo)

rant issued by the ICC for Russian President Vladimir Putin over war crimes allegedly committed by Russia in Ukraine.

Moscow warned on March 27 that recognition of The Hague tribunal’s jurisdiction would have “extremely negative” consequences for Russian-Armenian relations. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government has since given no indications that it will press ahead with sending the treaty to the Armenian parliament for ratification.

Pashinyan and Putin spoke by phone on Friday for the fourth time in two months. According to the Armenian readout of the call, they discussed regional security, bilateral ties and “other developments taking place in them.”

According to the official Armenian readout of the call, Pashinyan raised with Putin the “humanitarian crisis” in Karabakh resulting from the four-month blockade.

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Principal Houry Boyamian with teachers at the school’s 35th anniversary gala

End of Era as St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary
School Principal Boyamian Is Set to Retire

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Houry Boyamian, principal of St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School (SSAES) for the past 35 years, is looking forward to a well-deserved retirement. For Boyamian, the position has not been so much a job but a calling, and Armenian schools are vital for the diaspora.

Boyamian noted, “If we want the diaspora, the Armenian nation, to continue, if we want our language and culture to perpetuate, then we need Armenian schools. I am a firm believer in Armenian education. Those regions that have Armenian schools, they can keep their identity



longer thanks to Armenian schools.”

(Full disclosure: My daughter, Tenny A. Gregorian, is an alumna of the school.)

Boyamian is set to officially retire in July, when Dr. Garine Palandjian will take over.

“After that, if she will need my help, I am ready,” Boyamian said in a recent interview.

She noted that she is happy with the choice of Palandjian and added that she was involved in part of the interviews

“My main objective was to find someone who will continue the job. I wanted

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Senior Armenian
Official Visits Iran

By Nane Sahakian

TEHRAN (Azatutyun) — The secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, reportedly praised Iran’s policy towards the South Caucasus when he visited Tehran on Sunday April 10 amid escalating tensions between the Islamic Re-public and Azerbaijan.

Grigoryan’s office said that he discussed with his Iranian counterpart, Ali Shamkhani, the “security situation in the region” and Armenian-Iranian relations. It gave no details of their “working dinner.”

Iranian news agencies reported that Grigoryan praised Iran for “promoting regional peace and stability” and said forging closer links with Tehran is a “top priority” for the Armenian government.

Shamkhani was reported to reaffirm Tehran’s opposition to any “geographic change” in the region.

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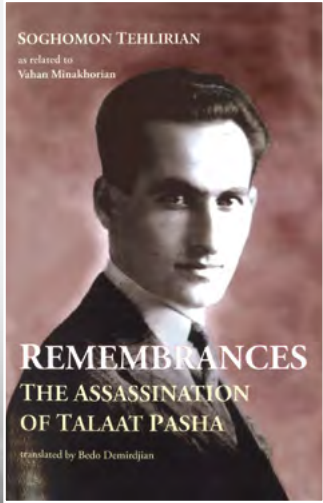


The secretary of Iran’s Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, hosts his Armenian counterpart Armen Grigoryan in Tehran, April 9, 2023.

Tehirian Memoir, Translated Into English, Sheds Light on Historical Figure

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff



BELMONT, MA — March 15 was referred to by the Romans as “the Ides of March.” A day for settling debts, it became infamous as the date of the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC. Whether or not this day was chosen on purpose by the planners of Operation Nemesis or it was a coincidence, it was also the day that Talaat Pasha, de facto dictator of Ottoman Turkey during the First World War and chief perpetrator of the Armenian Genocide, was gunned down by Soghomon

Tehlirian in 1921 on a Berlin street in an act of vigilante justice carefully planned and executed.

On March 15 of this year, a virtual talk was sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) with the participation of the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the Armenian Film Foundation on the publication of *Remembrances: the Assassination of Talaat Pasha*, featuring translator Bedo Demirdjian and documentary filmmaker Carla Garapedian.

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Talaat Pasha, the Turkish Grand Vizier (right), in a German staff car at the peace conference with Russia at Brest-Litovsk.

WASHINGTON D.C.

Assembly Convenes
Successful
Advocacy Summit
On Capitol Hill

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MASSACHUSETTS

Armenian Nursing
Home Resident
Anahid Khanbegian
Turns 100

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INDIANA

Artist Shanoor
Varjabedian Devarj Wins
Participation in World-
Wide Gallery Tour

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Quake Hits Turkey-Iran Border, Felt in Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — A magnitude 4.3 earthquake struck the Turkey-Iran border on April 11.

The quake was 7 kilometers northeast of the city of Maku and at a depth of 10 km, the Rescue Service of the Armenian Interior Ministry reported.

The tremors were felt in Yerevan, as well as Ararat Province, measured at 2-3.

Families of Armenian Captives Hold Protest

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Parents and relatives of Armenian captives in Azerbaijan held a protest on Tuesday, April 11, demanding their repatriation.

They blocked the Gyumri-Bavra highway in Shirak Province to paralyze traffic, photojournalist Gagik Shamshyan reported from the scene.

A team of the Shirak Regional Police Department arrived at the protest site.

The servicemen in question were captured by Azerbaijani forces in Hin Tagher and Khtsaber villages of Artsakh's Hadrut region, which were under the control of Russian peacekeepers on December 16, 2020.

OSCE Chief to Visit South Caucasus this week

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani will visit Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on April 10-13 for meetings with government officials and other stakeholders, the organization [reported](#).

Meetings with parliamentarians, civil society representatives and other interlocutors will take place as well.

The trip will focus on strengthening the co-operation between the OSCE, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, addressing existing security challenges and promoting peace and stability through dialogue in the South Caucasus region.

Four Killed as Azerbaijan Fires on Armenian Soldiers Conducting Engineering Work

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Four Armenian servicemen were killed, another six were wounded as Azerbaijan resorted to provocation on April 11, the Ministry of Defense reported.

A number of casualties are reported from the Azerbaijani side.

At around 4:00 p.m. local time, units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces opened fire at the servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia carrying out engineering works in the area of Togh community, the Ministry of Defense reported.

The Armenian side resorted to retaliatory actions, the Ministry added.



Catholicos of All Armenians and the faithful celebrate Easter, or the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Easter Celebrated at Echmiadzin

ECHMIADZIN — On April 9, the Armenian Apostolic Church celebrated the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. On this occasion, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, celebrated a Pontifical Divine Liturgy in the St. Gregory the Illuminator Mother Cathedral of Yerevan.

Assisting him at the Holy Altar were Bishop Musheg Babayan; Grand Sacristan of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin; and Bishop Vasken Mirzakhanyan, Director of the Ecclesiastical Conceptual Issues Office of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

During the Holy Service, the Catholicos addressed his message to faithful Armenians throughout the world on the occasion of Holy Easter, conveying the angelic tidings "Christ is Risen from the dead."



Lyon Mayor Pays Tribute to Armenian Genocide Victims, Karabakh Wars' Martyrs

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Mayor of the French city of Lyon Grégory Doucet visited the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex in Yerevan on April 10.

Doucet and his delegation were accompanied by Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Suren Grigoryan.

Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Director Harutyun Marutyan presented the story behind the three cross-stones erected in the Tsitsernakaberd area dedicated to the memory of the Armenians who were killed in the Azerbaijani state-sanctioned massacres in Sumgait, Kirovabad and Baku in the end of the previous century and the five fallen troops from the First Nagorno Karabakh War who are buried in front of the Memory Wall, stressing the link between these events and the Armenian Genocide.



Grégory Doucet and his delegation in Armenia

Grégory Doucet placed a wreath in honor of the Armenian Genocide victims. Then, Doucet and members of his delegation

laid flowers at the Eternal Flame and observed a moment of silence in honor of the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims.

The delegation also visited the Armenian Genocide Museum.

The members of the delegation planted a tree in the Memory Park.

Russian Envoy Downplays Rift With Armenia

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"In the context of overcoming the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian prime minister emphasized the importance of consistent steps by the Russian peacekeeping mission," said the statement.

The Kremlin reported that the two leaders "continued the discussion of various aspects of the current situation in Nagorno-Karabakh" and reaffirmed their commitment to Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Moscow during and after the 2020 war. It was their fourth phone conversation in two months.

Armenian leaders have repeatedly accused Russian peacekeepers of doing little to unblock the sole road connecting Karabakh to Armenia. Moscow has rejected the criticism. It has called for an end to the blockade.

Pashinyan phoned Putin three days after meeting in Yerevan with Alexei Overchuk, a Russian deputy prime minister mediating negotiations on restoring transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Kopyrkin said Pashinyan and Overchuk held "constructive" talks on the "entire complex of issues related to the region and their settlement." The diplomat did not elaborate.



ARMENIA

New BioScience Lab to Be Established at AUA

YEREVAN, Armenia — The American University of Armenia (AUA) recently announced the launch of the future Akian BioScience Laboratory, to be established through a gift to the University by major benefactors Zaven and Sonia Akian. The Akian BioScience Lab will be a modern science laboratory equipped with the necessary research equipment and resources to expand the University’s endeavors within the field at AUA. With the upcoming construction of the new AUA Science & Engineering building, funded through the Build a Better Future with AUA capital campaign, the Lab will be the first of many other endeavors to lead technological and scientific advancement in a rapidly evolving landscape taking hold in Armenia.

In their role as supporters of the sciences with the founding support of the Akian College of Science and Engineering (CSE), the Akian family have also contributed to the 200 ChangeMakers of AUA campaign, with their children Lori, Lena, and Haig investing in the effort to nurture a culture of research and innovation among AUA students and faculty. This new initiative of creating the Akian BioScience Lab will further bolster their commitment to fostering advanced research in the field.

Speaking of what has inspired them to fund the inception of this groundbreaking new lab, Zaven Akian said, “I have always been interested in expanding CSE’s programs beyond computer science, data science, and engineering. Indeed, the field of bioscience was a target to introduce in CSE’s list of prospective disciplines, especially following the devastating pandemic

the world experienced starting in 2020.”

The lab will serve as an experimental platform for both research and educational activities and will be led by Dr. Narine Sarvazyan, who was recently appointed to the position of the William Frazer Endowed Professorship, established with funds donated to the University by the late visionary philanthropist and AUA benefactor Edward Avedisian.



Sonia and Zaven Akian at the Akian College of Science and Engineering ribbon-cutting in 2017

With her husband, Arthur Petrosian, Dr. Sarvazyan is among the 100 Pillars of AUA, through which she continues to support AUA students and is committed to investing in their future through education. “I feel a great responsibility to utilize my expertise and knowledge to teach and inspire many talented AUA students, making it possible for them to develop their own careers in bioscience without having to leave the country,” she says. In her outstanding research career, she has focused on the

basic mechanisms of cardiac arrhythmias, cardiotoxicity of cancer drugs and environmental contaminants, stem cell therapies and new imaging modalities to visualize ablation lesions and other pathophysiological tissue states. Her extensive experience in the field will be instrumental in leading the new Akian BioScience Lab at AUA.

Sarvazyan will play a major role in the lab, developing and teaching several hands-on life science courses with the ultimate goal of training a new cadre of young scientists to lead research in the field in Armenia. “In the United States, over 60 percent of all scientific research occurs in university labs. These labs play a crucial role in fostering innovation, providing hands-on learning opportunities, facilitating collaboration, and elevating the standing of universities. I hope that creating a similar environment at the AUA Akian BioScience Lab will contribute to bringing a research-oriented culture to Armenia’s higher education ecosystem. The ultimate goal is to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations among different AUA programs, as well as to engage AUA faculty and students in collaborative research with other academic and educational entities in both Armenia and abroad,” Sarvazyan remarks.

AUA students will be exposed to a “wet-lab” environment where they will be enabled to apply their theoretical knowledge to conduct hands-on experiments, which will in turn help them to innovate and develop advanced practical skills advantageous to their future career endeavors. Dr. Sarvazyan adds that “studies conducted at the lab will eventually lead to the devel-

opment of new life sciences technologies in Armenia. This will help to form local spinoffs and startups in a variety of disciplines, including agriculture, medicine, environmental protection, and other related fields.”

In addition, the Akian BioScience Lab will provide grounds and open doors for partnering with local industry and collaborating with foreign institutions.

“Sonia and I were delighted to support Professor Sarvazyan’s mission with the Akian BioScience Laboratory, which is essential to her research. We are looking forward to her leadership and the impact she and her associates will have in Armenia in this exciting field, eventually establishing a Ph.D. program in biosciences and bioinformatics. We believe that one day in the near future, Armenia will be at the forefront of research and discovery, even production of medications, vaccines or other genetically modified products for human consumption,” Akian added.

In her research experience over the course of three decades, Dr. Sarvazyan’s laboratory, currently at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, has been continuously supported by funding from the United States National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the National American Heart Association, and other major funding agencies. Speaking of funding, Dr. Sarvazyan states, “The Akians’ gift will be a wonderful start for creating such a lab, and more donor and grant support will be sought to finance the procurement of additional equipment required for the lab.”

Russian Deserter Detained in Yerevan

By Ani Avetisyan

YEREVAN (OC Media) — Armenian Police have detained a Russian citizen wanted by the Russian authorities for deserting the army.

In a statement on Saturday, police said 23-year-old Yuri T. was taken into custody on April 7.

No details have been made public about the case by either Russian or Armenian authorities.



Protesters hold the white-blue-white flag of Russia, which has come to symbolise opposition to the war among Russians. Image via epress.am.

Evgenia Baltatarova an anti-war activist from the Russian group Point of No Return, told TV Rain that “Russians wanted by the homeland are not safe in countries with ‘easy access.’”

Baltatarova said this included former Soviet states, and countries with extradition treaties with Russia. She added that some of those countries faced a “dilemma” as they maintained a neutral position on the war but had agreements obliging them to extradite those wanted in Russia.

Baltatarova said the man had been released while the case continued.

Following Russia’s full scale invasion

of Ukraine in February 2022, tens of thousands of Russians have fled to the South Caucasus, with over 60,000 settling in Armenia.

The influx of Russians has had a significant impact, especially on the economy, with the Armenian dram gaining value against Dollar and Euro and rent prices doubling.

Russians have also organized protests against the war in Ukraine in Yerevan, resulting in some confrontations with local police.

Despite some tensions, Russian activists who settled in Armenia following the war largely say they feel safe in the country.

Anti-war activist Yuri Alekseev told OC Media he felt “extremely safe” in Armenia despite being detained during several anti-war protests and once being beaten up by a Putin-supporter in the street.

Alekseev did raise concerns about the latest arrest and that of anti-war activist Nikita Kamensky.

Kamensky was detained upon arrival in Yerevan airport in late February and released several hours after later with no further comment from Armenian law enforcement. He is wanted by the Russian authorities for painting anti-war graffiti in Moscow.

“The case of the deserter is not unambiguous for me,” he said. “On the other hand, the case of Kamensky is undoubtedly political, and therefore under international agreements, Armenia has no right to extradite him to Putin’s regime.”

But Alekseev said he had “little doubt that as long as Armenia maintains its course towards democracy, none of the politically persecuted Russians will be extradited to Russia.”

Alekseev also raised concerns about the presence of Russian special services in Armenia.

“Theoretically, criminal activities by these services are possible on the territory of Armenia, and here I can only hope for adequate work by the relevant services of Armenia,” he said, adding that the presence

of Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers was another issue.

The Russian special services operate in the airport, and the Armenia-Iran and Armenia-Turkey border is observed by Russian border troops. There are also around 5,000 Russian troops located in Gyumri’s 102nd military base. Some of the base’s troops were deployed to the country’s east and south, following the tensions with Azerbaijan.

‘Azeri Soldier’ Detained in Armenia

By Ruzanna Stepanian and Tigran Hovsepian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian security forces on Monday, April 10, detained one Azerbaijani man and hunted for another, who is also thought to have crossed into Armenia for unclear reasons.

The man was apprehended in Ashotavan, a village in Syunik province situated not far from Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan exclave. Local residents said that he wore civilian clothes and carried no firearms.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said the Azerbaijani claims to be a soldier. “In his words, there was another serviceman with him, the search for whom is continuing,” he said in a short statement.

The Azerbaijani military reported, meanwhile, that two of its soldiers serving in Nakhichevan have gone missing due to heavy fog. It did not identify them.

The Azerbaijanis were reportedly first spotted overnight in Bnunis, another village just a few kilometers south of the Syunik town of Sisian. Several local residents told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that they knocked on the door of fellow villager Shoghik Matevosyan’s house.

“They didn’t talk,” said one of them. “They left when she shut the door.” Matevosyan and members of her family refused to comment.

Bnunis and Ashotavan are located about 20 kilometers from the nearest Azerbaijani army positions on Nakhichevan’s border with Syunik. It was not clear how they managed to cross the heavily militarized border and advance deep into Armenian territory undetected. Armenia’s Defense Ministry said nothing in this regard.

The incident left some local residents worried about their safety. They want the police or the military to patrol their streets.

“We now always lock our gate and entrance door,” said Khachik Manucharyan, a 70-year-old man living in Bnunis. “I don’t know what could happen.”

INTERNATIONAL

Red Cross Visits Lebanese Armenian Prisoner in Baku

YEREVAN (news.am) — Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on April 10, visited Vicken Euljekjian, a Lebanese-Armenian man who is being detained in Azerbaijan, Armenian News-NEWS.am has learned from the ICRC Armenia office.

Euljekjian was permitted to speak with his family over the phone.

Euljekjian was arrested on November 10, 2020, one day after the end of the 44-Day War, in Shushi, as he and his fiancée were getting ready to leave the city, which had been taken by Azerbaijan. He was sentenced to 20 years, charged with being a mercenary, terrorist and illegally crossing into Azerbaijan.

Iran Slams Expulsion of Its Diplomats from Azerbaijan

TEHRAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Iran thinks that Azerbaijan's actions against Iranian diplomats, who have been declared personae non grata, run counter to the principles of good neighborly relations, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on Friday, April 7, Tass reports.

The Iranian diplomat called on Baku to demonstrate "mutual respect, follow along the path of good neighborliness" and "stay away" from the "enemies of the region, including Israel.

The Azerbaijani foreign ministry said on April 6 that four employees of the embassy were ordered to leave. A complaint was sent to the Iranian ambassador "for his country's recent provocative actions against Azerbaijan."

EU Concerned with Azeri Actions, von der Leyen Says

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen on April 10 responded to a letter from the women of Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) who in early February drew the EU official's attention to Azerbaijan's closure of Karabakh amid freezing temperatures.

Aravot asked the head of the EU delegation in Armenia, Ambassador Andrea Wiktoria, whether von der Leyen had read the letter and what her response is.

"The European Union has been following with serious concern the various developments around the Lachin corridor since the beginning of December last year. We understand that restrictions of movement along the Lachin corridor cause significant distress to the local population and create humanitarian concerns," the response reads.

"Let me assure you that the EU continues to mobilize diplomatic efforts to solve the situation, and has repeatedly called on Azerbaijan and others involved to take measures that are within their jurisdiction to ensure freedom and security of movement along the corridor, in line with obligations deriving from the trilateral statement November 9, 2020. To this end, the EU has been involved in regular contacts at multiple levels with the leadership of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Yerevan Reaffirms Conditions For CSTO Mission to Armenian-Azerbaijani Border

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) must condemn Azerbaijan's military aggression against Armenia before it can send a monitoring mission to the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, a senior official in Yerevan said on Tuesday, April 11.

Armenia appealed to the CSTO for military aid during the September 2022 border clashes which left at least 224 Armenian soldiers dead. Armenian leaders later accused the Russian-led military alliance of ignoring the appeal in breach of its statutes.

Russia and other CSTO member states proposed such a deployment during a summit in Yerevan last November. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan turned down the offer on the grounds that they refused to condemn Azerbaijan's offensive military operations along the border.

Moscow has since repeatedly made clear that the offer remains on the table. "The ball is in Yerevan's court," Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, said on April 5.

According to Sargis Khandanyan, the chairman of the Armenian parliament committee on foreign relations, Yerevan is continuing to discuss the proposed monitoring mission with its ex-Soviet allies.

"The Armenian side insists that the draft decision [on the dispatch of CSTO monitors] must note Azerbaijan's aggression

against Armenia's sovereign territory ... before we can talk about the deployment and parameters of the mission," Khandanyan told reporters.

Russia, Belarus and Central Asian members of the alliance have still not agreed to do so, he said, according to the Armenpress

the EU mission launched in late February, saying that it is part of Western efforts to squeeze Russia out of the region.

Earlier this year, Yerevan also canceled a CSTO military exercise planned in Armenia and refused to appoint a CSTO deputy secretary-general, raising more questions



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan meets CSTO Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov in Yerevan, March 17, 2023.

news agency.

The Armenian government has initiated instead the deployment of 100 or so European Union monitors to Armenia's border with Azerbaijan. Moscow condemned

about the South Caucasus country's continued membership in the organization.

A senior Russian diplomat said late last month that Moscow hopes to end Yerevan's growing estrangement from the CSTO.

Sparks Fly in Georgia as US Sanctions Judges

By Giorgi Lomsadze

The United States slapped sanctions on four Georgian judges in an unprecedented display of frustration with the democratic stagnation in the nation once hailed as the poster child of Western-style reforms in the Caucasus.

Leveling accusations of corruption, Washington barred three Georgian judges, Mikheil Chinchaladze, Levan Murusidze, and Irakli Shengelia, plus former judge Valerian Tsertsvadze, and their immediate family members from entering the US. "These individuals abused their position as court Chairmen and members of Georgia's High Council of Justice, undermining the rule of law and the public's faith in Georgia's judicial system," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement on April 5.

US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan further spelled out the move's intent in a recorded statement. "The State Department determined, based on credible and corroborated evidence, that these individuals abused their public positions by engaging in significant corrupt activity," Degnan said, adding that the four men coerced judges to pass politically motivated verdicts and manipulated judicial appointments to their benefit.

Murusidze, one of the sanctioned judges, initially said that sanctions were not going to kill him. "My grandfather was not moseying around the US and EU, and he was fine, living an honest life," he said on April 5.

But the following day, the judge claimed that the US indeed might try to kill him. "They are not going to stop there. I believe they may make an attempt on my life," Murusidze said at an April 6 press conference.

The sanctions hit a nerve in Georgia's governing party, Georgian Dream. The party's hard-line chairman Irakli Kobakhidze responded on the night of April 5 with his own accusations of corruption.

"I'm afraid I have to make a harsh assessment of the statement [by Blinken]," Kobakhidze told Imedi, a pro-government TV channel. "Corrupt machinations stand behind this statement and, as you know, corruption is not necessarily about money. The most disconcerting part is this statement tarnished the name of Secretary of State Blinken."

The following day, the Georgian Foreign Ministry called the move "totally incomprehensible and unacceptable." In an open letter to his counterpart, Georgian Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili listed the government's democratic accomplishments.

"We remain hopeful that the State Department will either present appropriate evidence or take back its decision," Darchiashvili wrote.

Independent rule-of-law watchdogs long maintained that the Georgian judiciary system is dominated by a clan with fealties toward the ruling Georgian Dream.

(Giorgi Lomsadze is a journalist based in Tbilisi, and author of *Tamada Tales*. This article originally appeared on the website Eurasianet.org on April 6.)

Senior Armenian Official Visits Iran

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Iranian leaders have repeatedly made such statements in response to Azerbaijan's demands for an extraterritorial corridor to the Nakhichevan exclave that would pass through Syunik, the only Armenian province bordering Iran. They have warned against attempts to strip the Islamic Republic of the common border and transport links with Armenia.

Lingering tensions between Iran and Azerbaijan have flared up in recent weeks partly due to Baku's deepening ties with Tehran's archenemy Israel, highlighted by the opening of an Azerbaijani embassy in Tel Aviv.

Meeting with his visiting Azerbaijani

counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov late last month, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen reportedly declared that the two nations will form a "united front" against Iran. The Iranian Foreign Ministry challenged Baku to explain the implications of that statement.

Last week, Azerbaijani authorities expelled four Iranian Embassy employees and arrested six men who they said are linked to Iran's secret services. They also alleged Iranian involvement in an assassination attempt on an anti-Tehran Azerbaijani lawmaker.

Bayramov and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian discussed the rising tensions in a phone call on Saturday.

Amir-Abdollahian's deputy, Ali Bagheri Kani, visited Yerevan late last month for what the Armenian Foreign Ministry described as "regular political consultations" between the two neighboring states. Kani spoke out against the presence of "external forces" in the South Caucasus.

Hakob Badalyan, an Armenian political analyst, suggested on Monday that Yerevan has intensified diplomatic contacts with Tehran and other foreign partners recently to try to reduce heightened risks to regional security.

"I regard the interaction with Iran as one of the most important directions in this [endeavor]," he told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.



INTERNATIONAL

US-Backed Syrian Kurdish Leader Mazlum Kobane Says Turkey's Attempt on Life not the First

By Amberin Zaman

ISTANBUL (AI-Monitor) — A top American ally in the fight against the Islamic State has confirmed this week that he was targeted for assassination Friday within the vicinity of the international airport in Iraqi's Kurdistan's city of Sulaimaniyah when a drone exploded nearby, setting off a small fire but causing no damage or casualties. Turkey is widely believed to have carried out the attack, though Turkish defense ministry officials have denied any involvement in the affair, according to Agence France Presse.

Speaking exclusively to AI-Monitor, Mazlum Kobane, the commander in chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces, said "Yes, the attack took place near a convoy that was taking us to the airport." Ilham Ahmed, the head of the Syrian Democratic Council, a top governing body in Kurdish controlled northeast Syria, was with him when the drone struck the airport perimeter.

Kobane called the drone strike "a flagrant attack on Iraq and its sovereignty."

US Central command said late Friday that three US military officials were also in the convoy. The Pentagon said the strikes "directly threatened the safety of US personnel," working to defeat IS, but did not indicate who was responsible. Kobane was traveling to the airport to board a plane belonging to the US military to carry him back to northeast Syria.

Kobane said he was in Sulaimaniyah on routine US-led coalition business "within the framework of a joint program to fight [IS]."

The White House and the State Department had not yet commented on the incident as of time of publication of this article. However, the Biden administration will likely come under strong pressure from Congress, where anti-Turkish sentiments run high over Ankara's hostility to the Syrian Kurds and its cozy ties with Russia, to react strongly once Easter celebrations end.

Asked whether Turkey was responsible for the drone strike, Kobane referred to the Iraqi Presidency's statement today calling on Ankara to apologize. Turkey had no legal justification to continue "intimidating civilians under the pretext that forces hostile to it are present on Iraqi soil." The presidency was likely referring to Turkey's continued attacks on Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants based in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The PKK has been waging an armed insurgency against the Turkish army for Kurdish autonomy since 1984 and is designated as a terrorist group by the United States and the European Union. Ankara insists that Kobane and other Syrian Kurdish officials running northeast Syria are no different to the PKK because many previously served within the rebels' ranks and has long urged the United States to scotch its partnership with the group. Turkey has justified three separate large scale assaults against the SDF since 2016, which resulted in the loss of the majority Kurdish enclave of Afrin and large swathes of territory further east along the Turkish border, on these grounds.

Kobane noted that this was not the first time that Turkey had sought to kill him. "There were previous attempts by the Turkish state, the latest of which was the attack that targeted the headquarters of the counter-terrorism forces affiliated with our forces in al-Hasakah," Kobane noted. He was referring to a Turkish drone strike in No-

vember on a base used jointly by the SDF and US-led coalition forces where Kobane holds meetings with foreign officials and members of the international media.

Kobane continued, "Turkey plans to destabilize the region, encroach on its security and create chaos permanently." He speculated that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was deliberately sowing conflict to help clinch victory by mobilizing his nationalist base in the run up to watershed elections that are due to be held on May 14. "He can do anything to reach power again," Kobane noted, adding that Turkey was "constantly seizing any opportunity to strike at our partnership with the international coalition led by America." Kobane said Turkey's actions failed to dent his resolve to pursue the SDF's battle against jihadis together with the United States.

Kobane has repeatedly denied Ankara's claims that his group poses any threat to Turkey. The SDF has rarely if ever opened fire on Turkish forces across the border or inside Syria and only when attacked themselves. The SDF denies any organizational ties with the PKK, though the militants' imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan, is widely revered by backers of the self-styled Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria. Either way, the SDF is keenly aware that any hostile move against Turkey, a NATO ally, would imperil its partnership with the United States.

In a tweet that he posted earlier today, Kobane said "We strongly condemn the targeting of Sulaimaniyah airport by Turkey." The tweet was in response to a statement by Bafel Talabani, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the second largest party in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq which controls the Sulaimaniyah region. Talabani said, "Criminal acts and trespassing on the border of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq, guided by a local security intelligence agency, are not uncommon and we have a long history with them." Talabani was probably alluding to the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the senior partner in the coalition running the Kurdistan region which has close links to Turkey.

Relations between the KDP and Washington have soured recently over the latter's growing criticism of the Kurdistan Regional Government's poor human rights record. However, it is highly improbable that the KDP would jeopardize its relations with the United States, whose support to Peshmerga forces remains critical, and endanger the lives of US military personnel by sharing such intelligence with Turkey, knowing full well it would likely act on it.

Turkey's increasing brazenness is based on Ankara's calculation that it can get away with it. The war in Ukraine has raised Turkey's strategic stock and the need to keep Ankara out of the Kremlin's orbit apparently outweighs Washington's concerns over the safety of its SDF allies.

Today the PUK directly pointed the finger of blame at the KDP in an incendiary statement that said, "An intelligence and espionage plot executed in advance led to the attack on [Sulaimaniyah International Airport], equivalent to sending an occupying force into the Kurdistan Region. Hence, we strongly condemn this attack. We expected the relevant authorities to act, investigate, and shun this crime rather than blindly justifying it, but, as in the past, a self-imposed minority within the KDP, who have special and secret connections, have become guides for using the government's

institutions in service of other countries' intelligence agencies to undermine the security of the Kurdistan Region and [Sulaimaniyah] Province."

The statement will almost certainly escalate existing tensions with the KDP, which erupted last summer over the KDP's claims that the PUK had sanctioned the murders in Erbil, the KDP run capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, of two intelligence officials who had defected from the PUK's elite Counter Terrorism Group (CTG). Several well placed regional sources with ties to the intelligence community who spoke anonymously to AI-Monitor speculated that CTG officials disgruntled with Talabani's heavy-handed style had tipped off Ankara as to Kobane's presence.

Talabani, who has publicized his friendship with the highly popular SDF leader, is in hot water with Ankara over his alleged support not only for the SDF but the PKK as well.

Turkey last week imposed a three-month flight ban on Sulaimaniyah airport because of what the Turkish foreign ministry alleged was its "infiltration" by the PKK. Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin last week charged in an interview with the state-run Anadolu news agency that the PKK had "a very serious establishment in Sulaimaniyah." Turkey would not turn a blind eye to this, he said.

In an apparent effort to shield Talabani, the SDF initially denied that Kobane was in Sulaimaniyah, calling it fake news. Today SDF spokesman Farhad Shami said the denial was a deliberate move to ensure that Kobane made it back safely to northeast Syria. "As part of our emergency security response related to the safety of our forces' command, we deliberately restricted the release of information about the Turkish attack on Sulaimaniyah airport, where our commander-in-chief [Mazlum Kobane] was present," Shami tweeted.

Egypt's FM to Visit Turkey Ahead Of Restoration of Ties: Çavusoglu

By Ezgi Akin

ANKARA (AI-Monitor) — Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu said on Monday, April 10, that his Egyptian counterpart, Sameh Shoukry, would pay a visit to his country in the upcoming days, during which Ankara and Cairo could announce the full restoration of diplomatic ties between the two countries, which were severed in 2013.

Speaking on live TV, Çavusoglu described the prospect of the two capitals announcing the reinstallation of ambassadors mutually during Shoukry's visit as highly likely.

"We've already started the preliminary work. We will discuss further when [Shoukry] comes. It will highly likely happen," Turkey's top diplomat said.

Yet he reiterated his reserved position on a potential meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his once arch-enemy Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi before Turkey's fateful May 14 elections.

"I think it will probably take place after the elections," said Çavusoglu.

Egypt marks the most challenging leg of the regional diplomatic push Ankara launched two years ago in a bid to overcome Turkey's regional isolation by restoring ties with its former regional rivals including Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

The two eastern Mediterranean countries gradually severed their diplomatic ties after the events following the 2013 coup that overthrew Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood-led government, with Erdogan transforming anti-coup demonstrators' four-finger salute into his signature hand gesture. The two capitals are also at odds over the Libyan civil war and territorial claims in eastern Mediterranean waters.

Erdogan tamped down his outbursts against Sisi and cracked down on the Turkey-based Muslim Brotherhood leaders' criticism of the Egyptian government as part of Ankara's diplomatic charm offensive, which has seen Turkey improving its ties with Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The contacts between Ankara and Cairo remained largely limited to technical-level talks between the two countries and a brief meeting between Erdogan and Sisi late last year on the sidelines of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

The Feb. 6 twin earthquakes that killed more than 50,000 people in Turkey, and economic challenges in both countries, however, have oiled the fence-mending wheels between Ankara and Cairo with Shoukry traveling to Turkey for the first time since 2016 in February. His trip was followed with Çavusoglu's visit to Cairo last month, making him the first Turkish foreign minister to visit the country since 2012.

Rapprochement with Syria

Syria has also been brought into the fence-mending fold largely owned by the mediating efforts of Russia, which has long sought to reconcile Ankara and Damascus. The Russian, Syrian and Turkish defense and intelligence chiefs met in Moscow in a landmark three-way meeting in late December after nearly a decade of hostilities.

The talks later turned to a four-party format with the involvement of Iran. Ankara provides military and political support to Sunni rebels trying to oust Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while Moscow and Tehran back Damascus.

The latest meeting of the quadruple mechanism took place in Moscow earlier this month between the deputy foreign ministers of the four countries.

Speaking on April 10, Çavusoglu said the top diplomats of the four countries might gather in Moscow in early May.

Turkey seeks Damascus' cooperation against the Syrian Kurdish groups and aims to ensure the return of some 4.5 million Syrians residing in Turkey as part of its rapprochement efforts with the Syrian government.

Though speaking on Monday, the top Turkish diplomat dismissed a link between the Ankara-Damascus thaw and the election campaign, Syrian refugees in Turkey remain one of the top concerns of the country's some 65 million electorate.

Community News

California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Announces New Member Rick Zbur

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation is pleased to announce new member Assemblymember Rick Zbur (D-West Hollywood/Santa Monica).

The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation includes: Senator Bob Archuleta, Senator Brian Dahle, Senator María Elena Durazo, Senator Anthony Portantino, Senator Susan Rubio, Senator Scott Wilk, Majority Leader Eloise Gómez Reyes, Assemblymember Lisa Calderon, Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo, Assemblymember Megan Dahle, Assemblymember Mike Fong, Assemblymember Vince Fong, Assemblymember Laura Friedman, Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel, Assemblymember Mike Gipson, Assemblymember Chris Holden, Assemblymember Tom Lackey, Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris, Assemblymember Luz Rivas, Assemblymember Blanca Rubio, Assemblymember Miguel Santiago, Assemblymember Jim Wood, Assemblymember Rick Zbur, and Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian (Ret.).



Rick Zbur

“It is an honor to join the Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation and work on issues affecting the Armenian-American community in my district and beyond, including recognition of the Armenian Genocide, support for Artsakh, strengthening U.S.-Armenia relations, and promoting economic development in the Armenian-American community. Locally, we will work together to call out and fight anti-Armenian hate and discrimination, preserve Armenian culture, promote education and youth development, and address the needs of older members of the community. I am proud to represent Little Armenia, an important and historic symbol of heritage, community, and identity, and I am excited to work with leaders and members of the Armenian-American community to assure that the community’s needs are met and concerns are heard.” Assemblymember Rick Zbur (D-West Hollywood/Santa Monica).

The California Armenian Legislative Caucus serves as a forum for members from the California Senate and Assembly to identify key issues affecting Armenian Americans and develop and empower the Armenian American community throughout California. The Caucus encourages advocacy and participation in cultural, educational, governmental, and community efforts in California. Through advocacy, the Caucus strives to ensure that California Armenian American’s voices are heard and given a platform.



Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ)

With Artsakh and Armenia In Focus, Assembly Convenes Successful Advocacy Summit On Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON — With Artsakh and Armenia in focus, activists from coast to coast came together in the nation’s capital as part of the Armenian Assembly’s successful 2023 Advocacy Summit earlier this month.

Advocates from California, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, Texas, Tennessee, Ohio, Virginia, and Maryland gathered at the U.S. Capitol to hold over 100 meetings with congressional offices in response to the crisis surrounding Artsakh and continued threats against the Armenian people. They stressed the importance of U.S. support for Armenia and Artsakh and the obligation to prevent another Armenian Genocide.

In the Assembly’s meeting with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian discussed the ongoing blockade of the Lachin Corridor and ways in which the United States can take concrete steps to end it, along with securing a robust aid package to Artsakh and Armenia.

Participants also raised the community’s deep concerns over the ongoing inhumane blockade of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, along with the treatment of and failure to release Armenian prisoners of war, as well as the importance of humanitarian assistance to Artsakh and Armenia. They called upon their elected representatives to support for H.Res. 108, “condemning Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and ongoing human rights violations.”

During the culminating Hill reception, Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), alongside Reps. Judy Chu (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), and Seth Magaziner (D-RI), applauded the efforts of the Assembly advocates for forcefully representing their community both on the Hill and in their local districts. They stressed the importance of continuing to raise their voices on behalf of Artsakh and Armenia and keep Congress informed.

see LOBBY, page 11



Activists and members discuss key issues pertaining to Armenian people

Mass. State House Commemorations On April 21

BOSTON — Greater Boston Armenian Community will be commemorating the 108th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with events at the Massachusetts State House and at the Armenian Heritage Park on Boston’s Greenway.

The State House Commemoration will be held on Friday April 21 at 10.30 a.m. The annual commemorations at the State House were initiated by late Speaker George Keverian and continued uninterrupted until the State House was closed to the public in 2020 due to the pandemic.

The keynote address at the State House will be delivered by Robert Avetisyan, Permanent Representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the United States. Avetisyan’s participation is especially pertinent given the continued Azeri



Robert Avetisyan, Permanent Representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic

aggression toward Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, and especially in light of the Azeri blockade of Artsakh now well over 100 days.

During the commemoration a Joint Senate/House resolution acknowledging late Edward Avedisian’s many contributions to Armenia and Massachusetts will be presented. The program will include a musical presentation by Haig Hovsepian on the violin, and Ani Hovsepian on the keyboard. Saint Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School students and Homenetmen Scouts will also participate in the program.

An outdoor commemoration will be held at the Armenian Heritage Park on Sunday April 23 at 4 p.m. The annual gathering at the Park has become a tradition. The Keynote



Armenian Heritage Park

remarks will be delivered by Professor Christina Maranci, Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University. The program will include a musical performance by Teni Apelian, accompanied by Dat-ev Gevorgian.

For more information, contact Boston Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee at bostonag-cc@gmail.com.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Nursing Home Resident Anahid Khanbegian Turns 100

JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. — It was a joyous occasion at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center when Anahid Khanbegian celebrated her 100th birthday on March 2. Surrounded by family members, staff, residents, and friends, Anahid enjoyed the day's festivities, which included flowers, decorations, homemade chocolate pudding, cakes, ice cream and gifts. But most of all, she beamed with happiness being with her family. She was thrilled to have her son, Dickran (Richard), daughter-in-law Sandra, her grandson Peter Khanbegian and his wife Kwan, her niece Linda, and her husband Dennis Tarzian, on hand for the festivities.

Born on March 2, 1923, in Portland, Maine, Anahid (Parnagian) Khanbegian was always an active, happy child. After graduating from high school, Anahid met and married Hrayr (Harry) in 1946. They first lived in Brooklyn, NY and then relocated to Massachusetts, where they raised their son Dickran in Roslindale. Anahid spent 66 years in Roslindale, working as a hairdresser with her aunt Arousayag, her father Asadour and her uncle Dickran, both of whom were barbers, at the family-owned Metropolitan Barbershop.

Anahid also worked for McGraw Hill/Dodge Reports as a researcher and at Diane's Bakery in Roslindale Square. It was at the bakery that Diane developed her legendary sweet tooth.

Family was always important to Anahid and she made it a priority to take good care of her mother and her father throughout their lives.



From left, Kwan Khanbegian, Peter Khanbegian, Sandra Khanbegian, Richard Khanbegian and Anahid Khanbegian

A resident at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center for the past three years, she is a favorite among both residents and staff members. Salpy Yeterian, activities director at the Armenian Nursing Center, noted that Anahid has not slowed down at all, even at 100. "Anahid never misses the daily activities," remarked Yeterian. "Her favorites are Trivia, Bingo, religious services, and Resident's Council. Musical

activities, however, top the list. If there's any kind of music playing, you can be assured Anahid will be there, swaying to the melodies. She loves music."

Anahid is very proud of her Armenian heritage, praying in Armenian, listening to Armenian music, and savoring the traditional foods. In addition, she loves anything chocolate.

Life at the Armenian Center provides Anahid with socialization and support. She is beloved by residents and staff alike. "We appreciate all the staff does to elevate the care, maintenance of the Armenian Home for the elderly," said Anahid's niece, Linda Tarzian.

Salpy explained Anahid's personality best. "Anahid is always cheerful and friendly," stated Yeterian. "In fact, her favorite term of endearment is 'honey.' Every morning I end morning announcements by saying 'Have a nice day and God bless you.' Anahid never fails to respond first, always with, 'God bless you too honey.'"



Anahid Khanbegian's 100th birthday celebration at Armenian Center

NAASR to Celebrate Appointment of Maranci to Mashtots Chair at Harvard

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will celebrate the appointment of Dr. Christina Maranci as the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University, on Saturday, May 6, 2023, at the Charles Hotel in Cambridge. The evening will feature remarks by distinguished Harvard faculty, including the

guest of honor Dr. Maranci. The Master of Ceremonies will be Adi Ignatius, Editor-in-Chief of *Harvard Business Review*. The cocktail reception begins at 6 pm, with dinner at 7 pm.

Established in 1955, NAASR initiated the movement to create and perpetuate Armenian Studies in the United States, including initiatives to establish the first

two chairs in Armenian Studies at Harvard University and UCLA. It achieved its initial ambitious goal by establishing the first chair in Armenian Studies, at Harvard, and in 1959 marked the successful conclusion of the Harvard Chair campaign at a gala in Memorial Hall. The Mashtots Chair was the first at Harvard to be endowed by a community organization.

The evening program will include remarks by Dr. Robin Kelsey, Dean of Arts and Humanities and the Shirley Carter Burden Professor of Photography in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University. Dr. Khaled El-Rouayheb, the James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic and of Islamic Intellectual History and Chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard, will introduce Dr. Maranci, who is the third holder of the Mashtots Chair and the first woman and the first Armenian to do so.

NAASR will also honor Yervant Chekijian, who served as Chairman of the Board of NAASR from 2016-2022 and spearheaded the effort to construct a new headquarters building, and Marc A. Mamigonian, NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs, who recently marked his 25th anniversary with the organization.

Maranci has been appointed in both the Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the History of Art and Architecture. She earned a BA in Art History at Vassar, and an M.A. and PhD at Princeton in the Department of Art and Archaeology. Her work explores the art and culture of Armenia in all aspects, but with special emphasis on the late antique and medieval periods. She is the author of four books and over 100 articles and essays on medieval Armenian art and architecture,



Prof. Christina Maranci

including most recently, *The Art of Armenia* (Oxford, 2018). Her 2015 monograph, *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia* (Brepols, 2015) won the Karen Gould Prize for Art History from the Medieval Academy of America and as well as the Sona Aronian Prize for best Armenian Studies monograph from the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). She is co-founder of East of Byzantium, a workshop and lecture series designed to support doctoral students working on the Christian East.

Maranci has worked on issues of cultural heritage for over a decade, with a focus on the at-risk Armenian churches and monasteries in what is now Eastern Turkey. She is the author of op-eds and essays in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Apollo*, *The Conversation*, and *Hyperallergic*. She has also been featured on National Public Radio's Open Source with Christopher Lydon. At present, she is working on a book about the city of Ani during the tenth and eleventh centuries.

For additional information or to purchase tickets, contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center has been providing quality and comprehensive care to seniors within our community for over 100 years! Our outstanding team of professionals provide person-centered, short-term rehabilitation and long-term care, while maintaining a culture where our staff is not just valued, but rewarded. Join us in our mission to honor the rich history, and generosity of spirit of the Armenian community, by providing compassionate care in our 83-bed skilled nursing center, located on a beautiful three-acre lot in Jamaica Plain.

We are currently seeking qualified RN, LPN, CNA, and Dietary Aides to join our team.

If you are interested, visit our careers page at awwainc.org, or contact our recruitment specialist, Luerissa, at lphillips@germancentre.org.



OBITUARY

Sylvia Barmakian (Syrpouhi Tatigian)

Avid Sports Fan, Brimming with Humor, Dedicated to Family

Sylvia Barmakian (born Syrpouhi Tatigian), much loved and now deeply missed by a multitude of family and friends, passed on calmly and at peace in hospice care on March 27, 2023, four days shy of her 87th birthday.

She was predeceased by her identical twin sister Lillian, who passed in 2020, and their husbands Vahan and Diran, also identical twins. In 1958, the two identical twins married identical twins, a rare phenomenon called a “quaternary” marriage.

Sylvia and Vahan remained happily married for 60 years until Vahan’s death on Father’s Day in 2018. They raised three surviving children — Adreena, Nyree, and

Adam — living with Lillian and Diran and their four daughters in spacious homes in Arlington and later in Winchester.

Sylvia was born in Ville-Émard, Montreal to Ohonnes (John) and Youghaper Tatigian, who independently had left Armenia for Canada as youngsters to escape the Armenian Genocide. They met, married, and created a successful life in Canada, first owning a French bakery and later moving to Lachine, where they operated a hamburger joint that served as a favorite local hang-out for teenagers. Sylvia loved working at the bakery and the restaurant with her twin and their father, a sociable jokester. And she was quite the mischievous prankster, such as the

time she quietly poured marbles into the baker’s mixing bowl, destroying the French bread business for the day. Sylvia retained her inner child the rest of her life.

Sylvia traveled the world, but her favorite place by far was her summer home on Martha’s Vineyard, where she cherished every summer with the extended Barmakian families and many friends. In their later years, Sylvia and Lillian continually sat on their front or back porches while a steady stream of friends, family, and neighbors would stop by to chat. They were Oak Bluffs fixtures. Everyone loved their company.

Sylvia was an inveterate sports fan, primarily of baseball and hockey, but she was happy watching almost any sport; or in the days when all games weren’t televised, she would stay up well after midnight just to listen to radio broadcasts of West Coast games. Sylvia quickly became a Boston fan, replacing the Montreal Canadiens with the Bruins and causing frequent teasing with her brothers who remained in Canada, Charlie and Emile. A true fan, when the Red Sox lost the 1986 World Series, she barely spoke for two days after constant cursing during the final two games.

Sylvia was a fabulous cook, especially of Armenian delicacies; an energetic gardener; and a talented athlete. She enjoyed badminton and golf and excelled at tennis and bowling in leagues well into her 70s. With her feisty sense of humor and enthusiasm, Sylvia made every activity fun.

Her favorite quiet hobbies were painting, knitting, which she continued to her final days, and all manner of needlecraft. She was skilled at the most creative, intricate knitting patterns. Sylvia knitted countless sweaters and hooked many large rugs for her family. She knitted and donated hundreds of patches to be turned into quilts for charities.

A woman of understated elegance and uncommon grace and wisdom, Sylvia was humble and judgment-free, treating everyone magnanimously with the same warmth,



compassion, and understanding. Out of respect for others, Sylvia was always smartly but simply dressed, even when ill. She was comically uninterested in jewelry, ironic considering that was the family business.

Although Sylvia had short-term memory issues in her last years, she retained and regaled family and friends with meaningful and entertaining memories. And she never ceased reminiscing about her idyllic childhood and teen years in Canada.

In addition to her three children, Sylvia leaves Nyree’s husband, Eduardo Valdes; three grandsons, Evan Valdes (wife Sarah), Emil Valdes, and Oliver Valdes; four nieces, Lillian’s daughters to whom Sylvia was also a mother-figure, Sima (husband Bruce Seymourian), Liane (husband Edward Bush), Krista (husband Marc Janigian), and Deanna (husband Michael Jimenez); and grandnieces and grandnephews Ariana, Jacob, Gabi, Talene, Isabel, Greta, Leo, Lily, Diran, and Berj. Sylvia was a fiercely loyal and protective matriarch. Her love, warmth, and kindness are sorely missed.

Funeral and burial services were private. Memorial gifts may be made to Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary on Martha’s Vineyard. <https://www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/felix-neck/support>.

Rose (Voskanian) Ghoughasian

Hairdresser, Seamstress, Immigrant from Iran

BELMONT, Mass. — Rose (Voskanian) Ghoughasian of Belmont passed away peacefully on April 4, with her family by her side.

She was the daughter of the late Hamazasp and Shoghik Voskanian, and the wife of the late Souren Ghoukasian. She



became the primary location for many memorable celebrations. Rose quite literally always had her door wide open to welcome family and friends at any time of day. They would gather around a table filled with authentic Armenian cuisine, singing, dancing, and celebrating life.

Both Rose and Souren dedicated many years of their lives working at the Armenian Nursing Home, Souren as the maintenance supervisor and Rose as the primary hair stylist. She even began to see clients in her home where she had her own mini salon.

Rose loved to garden and spend time outdoors, a passion she passed on to her son Alfred, of whom she was so proud.

Rose was also a professional tailor specializing in wedding gown alterations. In 1986, when the Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston was formed, she became their official seamstress, hand-sewing intricate Armenian costumes. She was loved so dearly by the company’s members, many who considered her to be a mother figure in their lives.

Rose’s favorite pastime was gathering with family for Armenian coffee — a tradition which she carried on with her grandchildren who called her “amama.” She raised her grandchildren in her home where she taught them how to cook, bake, sew, and knit, all while blessing them with important life lessons which they will remember and cherish forever. One of her proudest moments was when she became a great-grandmother to her namesake Liana Rose Palanjian, who she loved so dearly.

Rose was the epitome of elegance, grace, class, and strength, and will be immensely missed by family and friends.

Funeral service were held at Saint Stephen’s Armenian Church, Watertown, on Monday, April 10. Interment followed at Highland Meadow Cemetery, Belmont.

leaves her children Arlet Ashjian and her husband Apo, and Alfred Ghoughasian; grandchildren Alina, Garineh, and Vrej Ashjian; great-granddaughter Liana Rose Palanjian; her sisters Adel Takvorian, El-eanora Ohanians, and Aida Zarookian and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was also predeceased by her brothers Andranik Vosganian and Hrach Vosghanian.

Rose and Souren immigrated to the U.S. from Tehran in 1968 with their two children, Arlet and Alfred. Shortly thereafter, they settled in Belmont, in a home which

Notice to Our Subscribers Regarding Print Version

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

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

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

We apologize and ask for your continued understanding.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Richard Melik Simonian Charitable Trust Scholarship



The Richard Melik Simonian Scholarship was established for students of Armenian descent living in or attending school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

While consideration is given to character, academic achievement, and involvement in the Armenian community, awards are based primarily on both the student's and the parents' financial need. Applications are now open to Students who fit these criteria and can be submitted for review by the Scholarship Committee.

Awards may be used towards college, graduate school, or higher educational programs.

Application deadline is April 15, 2023. Awards will be determined by June 1, 2023.

Requests for applications may be made to Christopher Mitchell at (508) 792-2800, Ext. 228 or cmitchell@chwmlaw.com.

NAASR to Host Talk by Peter Balakian On Literature, Medicine and Siamanto

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Armenian American Medical Association will present a special program by Peter Balakian on literature and medicine, “Witnessing the Armenian Massacres: The Story of a Physician, a Poet, and a Book of Poems: Dr. Diran Balakian, Siamanto, and Bloody News from My Friend,” on Thursday, April 27, at 7:30 p.m., at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

This will be an in-person event. Further details about livestreaming and/or recording will be announced.

Balakian will discuss the book of poems, *Bloody News from My Friend*, by Siamanto (1878-1915). His grandfather, Dr. Diran Balakian, at the time of the 1909 Adana massacres, was working as a physician tending to the wounded and was also an eyewitness to the atrocities. He wrote letters home to his family documenting what he witnessed. Siamanto, who was Dr. Balakian's friend, utilized the letters as a source for this famous book of poems published



Peter Balakian

in Constantinople in 1909 as Կարմիր լուրեր բարեկամն (Garmir lurer pare-gamēs).

Balakian's talk will be preceded by a musical performance by Lilit Shougarian. A question-and-answer period will follow the presentation, with time to explore the role of literature in medical practice and medical education.

Dr. Peter Balakian is the Donald M. and Constance H. Rebar Professor of the Humanities in the department of English at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. He is the author of many books, including *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*, winner of the Raphael Lemkin Prize; *Black Dog of Fate*, winner of the PEN/Albrand Award for Memoir; and *Ozone Journal*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

Bloody News from My Friend, translated by Peter Balakian and Nevart Yaghlian, and other books by Balakian, will be available for purchase the night of the program.

108th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide

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COMMUNITY NEWS

End of Era as St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School Principal Houry Boyamian Is Set to Retire

BOYAMIAN, from page 1

to have peace of mind and as I said, I am not going far. The school will always be in my heart and I am ready to help the school anyway I can," she added.

Since its founding in 1984, the school has had a large footprint in the Greater Boston area; altogether, about 1,000 students have attended the school and 368 have graduated.

This year 140 students are enrolled, with the number year to year fluctuating between 140 and 180.

The school belongs to St. Stephen's Armenian Church and the church is a part of the Prelacy of the Armenian Church of America. Students, however, come from many different segments of the community.

"We have been very welcoming to all Armenians from all churches, all different organizations and I want everybody to feel that St. Stephen's is their own school," Boyamian said. "We want to be the school for everyone. We try to give the best education possible with the same standard as all the other prestigious schools around us, with a minimal price," she said.

Currently, the tuition is around \$10,000, less than a quarter of that of other private schools.

Covid impacted the school indirectly,



Principal Houry Boyamian with Kindergarten graduates

happening in October.

She said that in addition to the high standards, the school strives to instill in students the importance of their heritage. "We made sure that our alumni understand that when they graduate, they have a responsibility because of their Armenian education, to serve their community, or to serve in Armenia. We have a good number of alumni

menian in 1992 and in English in 2015.

"This is how we found out what he went through," she said.

"My father was looking forward. He was optimistic by nature. His idea was we have lost so much and now we can't lose our language, culture and identity. That's what he worked on his whole life," she recalled.

She studied at the French University of Beirut and received her pharmacy degree. In 1986 she and her husband, Avedis, and their three children left for the United States. "It was no longer possible for us to stay there," she said.

Once in the US, Boyamian noted she stayed home one year to study for her pharmacy state board exam, after which she passed her test and started working as a pharmacist.

However, only a short while later, the members of the nascent SSAES board came to her, asking her to become the principal.

"The reason they came to me was some of them knew my father and they knew I was a graduate of the Djemaran and I could

He dedicated all his life to the Armenian nation. He was only five years old when the Genocide happened, so whatever he did, he did by himself. I appreciate more and more what he did," she said with obvious emotion.

She added, "For the past 35 years, there hasn't been a day when I've said I don't want to go to school today. Never. I know what I am doing is important and did everything so this school flourishes and advances."

"We need to continue offering a very good education to our students. Once we do that, the other challenges will not affect the school that much. There are challenges, of course," she said.

When the school was founded, Armenians around the world could scarcely dream to hope about an independent Armenia, much less an independent Karabakh.

For the past two decades, the school has organized an annual trip to Armenian and Karabakh (Artsakh) for graduating fifth graders and their parents.

"Those who went to Armenia returned as if they were baptized as Armenians. Whatever they had learned at the school, they went and saw with their own eyes. Armenia became a reality for them," she said.

Last year, the school hosted two trips, one in May and one in July, with the latter for the class of 2021, which had not gone to Armenia as usual in May because of the 2020 war waged by Azerbaijan, resulting in the loss of most of Karabakh, including the historic city of Shushi.

No firm decision has been made for the trip this year, she added.

"We are deeply, deeply saddened with this situation, but Armenia has gone through difficult times and Armenians are super survivors and hopefully, they will be able to come to a good solution. I am hopeful. I don't give up," she said.

"I am happy that I persevered and from day one, when I took the position, I said to myself, whatever happens, I will not give



Principal Houry Boyamian at the opening of the SSAES Noubar Afeyan Preschool Addition, with Noubar and Anna Afeyan in the back, with other board members.

Boyamian said. When the school was initially remote only, some parents, Boyamian said, decided to take their children out, including those where both parents needed to work. "We changed immediately, to in-person five days a week," she said.

Founding SSAES

The school, with grades pre-K through 5, is currently the only Armenian day school in New England. Its pre-school division is accredited by the state's Department of Early Education and Care, while the K-5 part of the school has been accredited by the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE), which requires an exhaustive set of tests and reviews.

"I knew that in order for the school to be successful, we needed to keep the academic standards high. Otherwise, the alternatives, the choices are too many and too good. We are surrounded by the best private and public schools in the nation. And our parents pay for their children's education when they send their kids to St. Stephen's, when they can send them to a free public school," Boyamian explained.

She worked hard for the accreditation of the school by AISNE, with the third cycle

students now who have moved to Armenia and are working there. Even here, my biggest joy is to see our alumni serving in different organizations and taking leadership roles in our area," she said.

Alumni from the school have attended some of the best universities in the country, including Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Tufts.

Boyamian said she hopes one day there will be a middle school. "The greater Boston area deserves an Armenian middle school," she said. "We need to give that opportunity to students who want it."

Importance of Armenian Schools

The Beirut-born Boyamian is an apostle for Armenian schools. She attended the Armenian Lyceum (Hay Djemaran) whose official name is the Nshan Palanjian Djemaran, where her father, Karnig Panian, was the vice principal.

"My father was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide — the only survivor of his family," she said. While he did not speak much about his horrifying experiences with his family, he kept a diary and wrote his memoirs, *Goodbye, Antoura: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*, published in Ar-



Principal Houry Boyamian with students and staff during the 2010-11 calendar year.

do the job. I didn't think twice. I thought there are a lot of pharmacists in the area, but that if you can't find a principal, I will take the position," she said. "I went back to college to receive my master's in education and also a certificate of directorship for early education."

Her father is her idol, she explained.

"My father is my role model, my inspiration, my hero. It is unbelievable what he went through and how he worked to get a good education and also to serve his nation. He was not only the principal of the school but also the head of the Armenian Education Committee of the Prelacy in Lebanon.

up. I will continue, because the mission is an important one," she said.

She had some advice for her successor. "From my experience, the most important requirements are the following: commitment, patience, perseverance, and of course, academic background, believing in the mission of the school and a lot of flexibility to work with different stakeholders, different groups, patiently, respectfully. Also, the new person should have the drive to bring the school to the next level," Boyamian said.

For more information about the school, visit www.ssaes.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Assembly Convenes Successful Advocacy Summit on Capitol Hill

LOBBY, from page 6

“As a result of these meetings, we look forward to more Members of Congress joining the Armenian Caucus and supporting legislation condemning Azerbaijan’s blockade of Artsakh,” said Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. “The Assembly thanks the greater Armenian community for its consistent activism and passionate support that resulted in an impactful Summit where we presented pressing Armenian issues to Members of Congress.”

Armenian Caucus Co-Chair emphasized the need to continue educating the Admin-

istration to formulate policies that take into account the lawless behavior of the Aliyev regime in Baku, while Members of Congress were vocal in their support for Armenia and Artsakh and condemnation of Azerbaijan.

Nagorno Karabakh Representative Robert Avetisyan conveyed his sincere appreciation for the commitment of the Assembly members who traveled to Washington in order to stand up for the rights of Artsakh Armenians. He noted that the debates over geopolitical calculations complicated relations in the region and that the fundamental



Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch with Assembly leaders



human needs and rights of the population to not be overlooked.

In addition to the meetings on the Hill, Assembly also had meetings with the Administration as well as an opportunity to meet with former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, Marie Yovanovitch, and presented her with the Morgenthau Award.

Prior to the Advocacy Summit, the Assembly held multiple briefings and training sessions both in person and online. These educational sessions provided participants with more detailed information about legislation and the legislative process, as well as specific actions to request from their representatives.



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Arts & Culture

International Armenian Literary Alliance Launches Young Poets Awards, Book Discussion

The International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA), in partnership with h-pem, announces the third annual Young Armenian Poets Awards, a contest for exceptional Armenian writers between the ages of 14 and 18. The deadline is May 31.

Over the past two years, the Young Armenian Poets Awards (YAPA) has provided a space for young Armenian writers from all over the world to express themselves and have their voices heard on the global stage. This year is no exception.

This year's entrants are asked to submit work that grapples with the notion of visibility as it relates to Armenian identity and experience. How visible are Armenia and Armenian issues on the world stage? What is the extent to which we feel visible as Armenians in our respective communities outside of Armenia?

Submissions — to be read by IALA board members and judges Gregory Djanikian, Armine Iknadossian and Raffi Wartanian — are encouraged from any young writer who identifies as Armenian, no matter gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, creed, national origin, socio-economic class, educational background, personal style/appearance, citizenship and immigration status, or political affiliation.

Monetary prizes will be granted for the top three poems, which will be published online on the h-pem website and shared on IALA's social media platforms in the fall. Winning authors will be invited to read their work at IALA's annual Emerging Writers Showcase.

"Literature is a vital element of a people and a culture — we are our stories," says founder Olivia Katrandjian. "As writers, we must support each other if we want to thrive not only as individuals, but as a literary community. As a people, Armenians must support our writers if we want the world to listen to our stories. IALA will provide a platform through which young Armenian writers can be heard."

"We continue to honor and create a platform for the next generation of exciting Armenian poets who have so much to teach us," says contest director Alan Semerdjian, "and we're thankful for those who will spread the word about this fantastic opportunity."

"Being involved in the Young Armenian Poets contest gave me a way to put the feelings I had been struggling to understand for years into flowing sentences and share them with the world, enabling me to see how my words can truly affect others and touch their hearts," says 2022 YAPA winner, Ani Apresyan. "Winning recognition and hearing what other like-minded Armenian youth have to say fills me with indescribable hope for the future that Armenia see AWARDS, page ?



Portrait in Venice Beach, Calif.

Artist Shanoor Varjabedian Devarj Wins Participation in One-Year World-Wide Gallery Tour

VALPARISO, Ind. — Devarj Design Agency announced recently that Shanoor Varjabedian Devarj, owner, creative director, speaker, and an artist from Valparaiso and Munster, Indiana, as well as Chicago, was one of the global award-winning artists who are exhibiting for World-Wide Gallery for one year. He will be joining 50 artists worldwide as they travel to major art hotspots and show their works at first-class galleries.

The first stops on this journey are in Los Angeles, at Art Lab, Calif., and Casa Del Arte Palma, Spain. The next destination is Thomson Gallery Fine Art, Switzerland.

They are followed by New York's Art Week in April and Miami Art Week in Florida, where he will be exhibiting his paintings at Johnathan Schultz Gallery. The tour will continue until December 2023, with Swiss Art Expo and Lelie Gallery Amsterdam, Netherlands exhibits at various dates.

From creating new forms of life to contemporary portraiture, to mind-blowing murals and art installations, Shanoor's work touches the soul. His unique style combines expressionism, pop art, street art and symbolism — creating new worlds that we can all imagine ourselves entering.

Alongside his fruitful career in branding and design for three decades, Shanoor continued to develop his personal artistic practice. Pairing his experience with graphic design, photography, digital imaging with his predilection for sculpting, painting, and illustrating, Shanoor developed a signature artistic language which he describes as Neo-Symbolic Expressionism, or Toto Coelo, "extreme conditions." Shanoor's Toto Coelo paintings have won numerous awards and have been exhibited internationally.

continued on next page



"Tears"

Tomoki Okuyama

Contributing to Armenian-Japanese Friendship

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Tomoki Okuyama is a 26-years-old Japanese man who has been residing in Yerevan since last February. He studied sports management at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto and worked as a staff member in the Japanese University Football League. Tomoki participated in CONIFA (Confederation of Independent Football Associations tournaments (London, Artsakh) and attended Annual General Meetings (Northern Cyprus, Poland) as a CONIFA volunteer staff.



Dear Tomoki, I was in Stepanakert in 2019, when the CONIFA games took place. No one could imagine what calamity would take place after a year and half. What are your memories about that year?

I participated in one of the referee team staff but only helping referees off the ground. That was an amazing tournament for everyone involved. I cannot forget the scene of everyone smiling at each other in the stadium. Probably the level of football was not like the English Premier League, but definitely there was value of football on and off the field.

Among the tournament, we had a cultural event day in Shushi. We visited some museums about Artsakh's culture. It was very meaningful day. Also, we were dancing under the big tree at Shushi without any borders, nationalities, races. There was nothing we cared about.

I have amazing memories from Artsakh and that is why I could not believe when the war happened the following year. I chatted with my friends from Artsakh in that time. I felt their suffering and sadness, but I could not find any words to tell them.

Was it after that you decided to study Armenian?

That is right. I became interested in Armenia after the tournament, so I wanted to study as soon as I returned to Japan, but there was no way to do it. After listening to my interview to the Armenian TV during the Tokyo see FRIENDSHIP, page 14



ARTS & CULTURE

Artist Shanoor Varjabedian Devarj Wins Participation In One-Year World-Wide Gallery Tour

from previous page

Displaced because of the Armenian Genocide, Shanoor’s parents relocated to Lebanon where he was born and spent his formative years until civil war broke out in 1975, forcing him to find a new adopted home in the United States. His journey as an Armenian-Lebanese-American informs a deep appreciation for freedom, justice and tolerance. These concepts reside at the heart of his artistic practice. Shanoor’s work is perhaps all the more relevant as we find ourselves at a crossroads in American democracy. He has experienced first-hand the devastation that occurs when society fails to value individual liberties.

The perspective he offers is both objective and empathetic, full of hope whilst recognizing the challenge ahead. Shanoor’s artwork stands as a testament to the fortitude and resilience of the human spirit. He was not born in Armenia, not born in the United States — yet, he is both an Armenian and an American. His viewpoint is charged with the immigrant experience — the pressure to assimilate, the universal desire to belong, an acute awareness that these ideas are not mutually exclusive, and in so many ways, they are never fully achievable. He understands there is power in that which is seen as peculiar. Through his art, Shanoor hopes to access and expand the viewer’s humanity. He uses bright colors and gestural brush strokes to depict vibrant new forms of life that team with magic. His style combines expressionism, pop art, street art and symbolism – at the same time, the art he makes is profoundly unique. By inventing original characters and creating an extraordinary visual landscape, one that is purposefully exotic, he challenges the viewer to step outside of their comfort zone, asking us to confront and overcome unseen prejudices. His artistic practice seeks to cultivate the radical acceptance he wishes for the world.

More information can be found at <http://www.shanoor.com> and <https://www.artboxy.com/profile/MCC5pGKssjPk-f6AKvown>



“Watching You”

International Armenian Literary Alliance Launches Young Poets Awards

AWARDS, from page 12 is taking steps towards fostering.”

For more details, full submission guidelines, and more information on past winners, visit IALA’s website, www.armenianliterary.org, or contact Alan Semerdjian at ialayoungpoet-sawards@gmail.com.

In addition, IALA, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center continue their reading series, Literary Lights, with another virtual event, featuring Aram Mrjoian, editor of *We Are All Armenian*, who will be joined by contributors, Kohar Avakian, Chris McCormick, and J.P. Der Boghossian. The event will take place on Zoom on April 29, at 1 p.m. Eastern.

We Are All Armenian is a groundbreaking collection of personal essays by established and emerging Armenian voices exploring the multilayered realities of life in the Armenian diaspora. Anthology contributors include Liana Aghajanian, Naira Kuzmich, Sophia Armen, Nancy Kricorian, Olivia Katrandjian, Nancy Agabian, Chris Bohjalian, Aline Ohanesian, Raffi Joe Wartanian, Anna Gazmarian, Raffi Boudjikianian, Hrag Vartanian, Mashinka Firunts Hakopian, Carene Rose Mekertichyan, and Scout Tufankjian.

Literary Lights is a monthly reading series, held from February to November in a mixed online and in-person format, featuring new works of literature by Armenian authors. Audience members are invited to read along with the series.



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ARTS & CULTURE

Tomoki Okuyama: Contributing to Armenian-Japanese Friendship

FRIENDSHIP, from page 12

Olympics in 2021, an Armenian from California (the owner of an online school) offered me an Armenian language class. He introduced me to a teacher who could speak Japanese. Since then, I have been studying little by little through online in Japan. But now I have to study harder.

What did you know about Armenia before your visit?

In 2019, I only knew about Armenia as one of the Caucasus countries and almost nothing about its culture, language and history. Nevertheless, I felt enthusiastic before visiting Armenia and Artsakh. And my feeling was right.

What are the main challenges for a Japanese person learning Armenian?

For me, the hardest thing is the pronunciation and listening to native speakers. There are also many sounds that do not exist in the Japanese. In addition, I am confused because people are using a lot of expressions in daily conversation that are different from textbooks. And sometimes they are mixing in Russian. I need to adapt their language culture.

You appeared in an interview on Armenian TV in Tokyo during the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. How did that happen?

An Armenian journalist I knew was reporting the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. There were only a few Japanese who had been to Artsakh and were involved in sports in Artsakh, so they decided to interview me. In that time, we talked about the Tokyo Olympics, our memories of Artsakh, and the conflict in Artsakh. It was hard to talk about the conflict. But I was also happy to receive

some messages from Armenian friends after the on-air my interview.

What do you do in Yerevan now?

I am taking Armenian online lessons about twice a week. Since the end of February, I also work several days a week at the Japanese restaurant "Tokyo" in Yerevan. And, if possible, I would like to play grassroots football with Armenians in Yerevan, so if there is any good idea, I would like to know.

Originally, I feel that Japan and Armenia have a very good relationship. Recently, the number of Japanese people who want to work online in foreign countries are increasing. For example, in Georgia, more online working Japanese people live than in Armenia. I think it is important to create an environment that makes it easy to do such work and promote it. Also, when I actually lived here, I thought that the public order of Armenia is a very good point.

The Armenians mostly are conservative with food. Do they like Japanese food?

Due to my working experience, I feel Armenian people like Japanese food. I think Japanese food has the potential to be spread in Armenia and feel also it has a positive effect on nowadays Armenia's food culture.

Do you have some special dreams regarding Armenia?

I would like to be involved in the cultural exchange between Japan and Armenia, including language and sports. Even if I will be in Japan in the future, I would like to contribute to maintain the Armenian-Japanese friendship!

Shnorhakalutyun!



Tomoki Okuyama in Artsakh

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Serge Madikians: Jingalov Hats (Armenian Flatbread)

AMENIA, N.Y. -- Serge Madikians is the chef and owner of the award-winning Serevan Restaurant, where he expresses his passion for Middle Eastern flavors filtered through the lens of fresh Hudson Valley ingredients. He is an Armenian-Iranian from Tehran, Iran who came to the U.S. in 1978 with his brother to avoid the Iranian Revolution. He completed his undergraduate degree majoring in history and philosophy. Later, he moved to New York and earned a master's degree in public policy and economics at The New School. Serge was also a contributing chef to *The Immigrant Cookbook: Recipes That Make America Great*.

He graduated from the French Culinary Institute in 1998. Upon graduating, he worked in the kitchen of Jean-Georges Vongerichten during a year-long externship. Afterward, he worked at David Bouley's Danube. In 2005, he opened Serevan whose name is a portmanteau of Yerevan and Lake Sevan in Armenia.

"K'ndzmenzdyuk, chercheruk, s'msemok, mokhratal are just a few of the over two dozen herbal plants, many of whose names are quite tough to pronounce, that the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic) use in baking the famous zhengyalov hatz," said Haykaram Nahapetyan in 2020 in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. "This delicious bread stuffed with local herbs is known as an authentic Artsakh food, although people of Syunik and some in the Tavush region also bake it. Its increasing popularity has recently been evidenced by the opening of Zhengyalov Hatz restaurants in various places of Yerevan. Twice a major national U.S. media outlet none other than the *New York Times* named zhengyalov hatz one of the best dishes of Los Angeles."

"Zhengyalov Hatz, which opened in Glendale in 2020, makes huge, juicy breads filled with chopped herbs and greens, cooking them to order all day so they're hot," *New York Times*'s Jill Cowan reported. On January 1, 2020, the newspaper ran another story on zhengyal bread, calling it 'the perfect snack.' In Artsakh typically not just some but all restaurants serve zhengyal. You can enjoy it at Stepanakert's market where the Artsakhtsi women cook authentic rolls in front of the customer on traditional stoves called 'sadj.' This organic, nutritious food is normally sold here for quite affordable prices."

Here's Serge's recipe for Jingalov Hats that he serves at Serevan.

Preparing Jingalov Hats at Serevan

"Our interpretation of this famous Armenian flatbread has become the most popular item on our appetizer menu. When I prepare a new batch, my heart is filled with both joy and sorrow: joy, because of the gracious and wonderful Armenians I met who took the time to teach me more about Jingalov Hats; and, sorrow, because I know the region is in turmoil, defending itself for the right to simply exist. With the serving of each Jingalov Hats, I hope to convey the thoughtful and loving spirit of the Armenians of Stepanakert, Republic of Artsakh, and Armenia, that in my heart is home to us all, the Armenians," says Serge.

"The 'hats' is stuffed with wild herbs and greens that are foraged from the nearby woods, so it convey a chorus of local flavors and tastes, and the person foraging and preparing the 'hats' creates the harmony and melody of its flavors. The composition of the flavors depends on the person preparing the 'hats' and the availability of herbs and greens. Spring and summer yield delicate, more fragrant finds, while autumn and winter give us darker, tart and more bitter bounties. With our gardens in full bloom, and the farmers markets full of summer bounties, Jingalov Hats could have plenty of herbs and greens. However, while some of the more aromatic herbs and young greens are no longer available, young salad mixes which are readily available in markets give us the lighter flavor notes that can offset the heavier, darker green flavors. A balanced 'hats' must have allium flavors such as leeks, chives, onion, scallions or shallots, anise notes such as fennel fronds, tarragon, dill, chervil, and earthy, darker notes, such as spinach chard, beet greens,

and kale," he adds.

DOUGH:

Makes about 10 2-3 oz balls:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour, extra as needed
- 1/2 cup labneh, Greek yogurt or plain yogurt
- 1 cup lukewarm water, or less if using plain yogurt
- 2 teaspoons fine salt/sea salt

Use a large enough bowl in which you could comfortably mix the dough, and in it add the flour and the salt and give it a good mix. Then with your hands, create a well in the center of the dough, in which you add the yogurt and the water. If using plain yogurt, reduce the water by 2 tablespoons. Using one hand, gently mix the yogurt and the water, and then slowly incorporate the flour. The dough will come together quickly, and it may seem dry initially; don't worry, keep mixing the dough, and try to maintain on direction, clockwise or opposite, so the gluten has a chance to develop uniformly.

Once the flour has absorbed the liquid, take the dough out of the bowl and knead the dough for at least four minutes, or until it's smooth in texture and no longer sticky. If the dough remains sticky sprinkle a teaspoon at a time of flour, until it's no longer sticky. The final dough should be soft and slightly supple, but not tough or hard.

Tip: When making this recipe, make the dough first, and while it rests in a bowl covered with a towel or plastic wrap, finely chop the greens and herbs. By the time you're done, the dough will be ready to portion.

INGREDIENTS:

Depending on what is available (and in season), the ingredients for the herb/green filling (for about 10 'hats') should include:

- 3 bunches flat-leaf parsley, washed, dried and large stems removed
- 3 bunches cilantro, washed, dried and large stems removed
- 3 bunches spinach, washed, dried and stems removed
- 3 bunches Swiss chard, washed, dried and large stems removed (optional)
- 3 bunches dill, washed, dried and large stems removed
- 3 bunches arugula, washed, dried and large stems removed
- 1 bunch tarragon, washed, dried, and large stems removed
- 1 large shallot, peeled, diced small, or 1/4 onion, diced small
- 1 large stalk leek, washed, dried and cut in half, sliced thinly
- 6 stalks green onions, washed, dried and roots trimmed, sliced thinly
- 3 teaspoons salt, to taste
- 3 teaspoons Aleppo pepper/paprika/ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup neutral oil or light olive oil

PREPARATION:

Keep in mind that the joy of making the 'hats' lies in what you have available in your garden, surrounding woods or the markets. The recipe above is only a guideline, and the measurements are approximates. A 2-3 oz. ball of dough once rolled out will turn into a 7" by 4" 'hats' that could comfortably enclose within itself about 2 cups of herb and green mixture. (At Serevan, they chiffonade the herbs, with a sharp knife, so the herbs and the greens do not bleed, which alters their flavor, rendering them more 'chlorophyll-y', a byproduct of chopping the herbs and the greens. To chiffonade the herb and green mixture, gather enough of each herb mixture which you could comfortably hold in one hand, and with the other, in a rolling motion, slice them about 1/4-inch to 1/2-inch thickness.)

Pick up two sides of the circle and pinch them together over the center of the filling. Continue to pinch the edges together from top to bottom so that the middle is wide and the ends form points. When you get to the end, tuck in the tip so it's sealed but ensure that there is filling all the way to the tip.

Do not worry too much about uniformity of the cut. Add all the cut herbs to the large bowl, then add the shallots, leeks and green onions, and toss well. Put the bowl aside. Once the dough has relaxed after about 30 minutes, divide the dough into 10 2-3 oz. balls. Work with one ball at a time and keep the rest covered with a kitchen towel. On a well-floured surface roll out the dough to about a 5-inch circle about 1/8 of an inch. In the smaller bowl, add about two handfuls of the cut herb and green mixture, and sprinkle about 1/2 teaspoon salt, pepper and Aleppo pepper or paprika or black pepper. Toss well.

Add about a tablespoon of oil and mix well. Mound the seasoned herb mixture in the center of the rolled out dough and with your fingers even it out to about an inch from the edges of the rolled out dough. With both your hands, lift the right and left edges of the dough, first pull it outwards then upwards towards the center of the circle and pinch the dough closed. Repeat the motion moving upwards towards the end of the dough, lifting and pinching, lifting and pinching. Then repeat again form the center of the dough toward the bottom of the circle, lifting and pinching, lifting and pinching, until you have sealed the dough fully. With your fingers, gently pat the dough down; as you pat it down, the dough will stretch and become thinner. Gently flip the dough onto its other side and repeat gently flattening it down.

Place the 'hats' on preheated griddle called "saj" or "sajin" (Armenian: սաջին), or a heated pan, or in a tandoor for a couple of minutes. Press it down so that it makes good contact with the griddle or pan surface. Allow it to cook for a few minutes on one side, then flip it over to the other side. This steps will be repeated a few times until the 'hats' is cooked through, and the dough has darkened in various places.

Serge says he likes to dip his jingalov hats in yogurt. "At Serevan, we serve it with a dollop of hummus and a refreshing, crispy salad of young celery and radishes tossed with lemon, a dash of salt and olive oil, he says. "In Armenia, it is enjoyed with beer, wine, or tahn, the traditional yogurt drink made with yogurt, cucumber, water, salt, and fresh herbs such as parsley or mint."

Tehirian Memoir, Translated Into English, Sheds Light on Historical Figure

TEHLIRIAN, from page 1

Remembrances is the first-ever translation into English of Soghomon Tehirian's memoir, *Verhishoumner*, originally published in Cairo in 1953 by the publishing house of *Housaper*, the ARF's affiliate newspaper in Egypt.

While the court proceedings of Tehirian's Berlin trial (where he was found innocent) and numerous historical and artistic works have been created in the years since the historic assassination, including Eric Bogosian's popular history *Operation Nemesis* and Marian MacCurdy's *Sacred Justice*, which brought to light the invaluable documentation in the personal papers of her grandfather, Aaron Sachaklian, to date nobody had translated for publication in English the entirety of the only book that could sufficiently tell the true story in its entirety: *Verhishoumner*, the memoir of Tehirian himself.

As explained in the talk, the genesis of this project came about when Garapedian became interested in making a feature film about Tehirian. Garapedian, a former television newscaster and producer who was the first American to anchor BBC World News, has in the past two decades made a name for herself as a documentary filmmaker. Her film, "Screamers," released in December 2006, used the music of rock band System of a Down to explore the horrors of Genocide in the 20th century, including the Holocaust, Bosnia, Darfur, Rwanda, and of course, the Armenian Genocide.

She is also closely connected with the Armenian Film Foundation, which was started by her father Leo Garapedian to support filmmaker J. Michael Hagopian in his efforts to document on video the stories of Armenian Genocide survivors. After the death of Hagopian, Carla Garapedian took over as project leader of the Armenian Genocide Testimonies collection which digitized these videos to be stored in the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, a project spearheaded by Steven Spielberg, based at the University of Southern California.

Demirdjian was born and raised in Beirut and attended school at the now-closed Melkonian Educational Institute in Cyprus followed by university in Greece. Having worked as a journalist and communications director for the Armenian National Committee – Europe as well as for the Permanent Representative of Artsakh to the Middle East, he settled in Armenia in 2020 where he headed the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) Smart Center in Lori and currently lives in Yerevan where he works as the communications director for the Tufenkian Foundation.

Garapedian told the story of how the translation of *Remembrances* came to be. When she became interested in making a film about the assassination, she discovered Tehirian's Armenian-language memoir, but her linguistic skills were not up to the task of reading it. She met Demirdjian, who had the benefit of a full-fledged Western Armenian education, in Amsterdam, and the two began corresponding with Demirdjian sending Garapedian on-the-fly translations of sections of the book by email.

Garapedian spoke about the importance of the Tehirian story for history and for international law. For example, one of the reasons that Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin gave for his development of the legal concept of Genocide was the question he asked himself upon learning of the Tehirian trial – why was the world unable to punish Talaat Pasha, a mass murderer, to the point where an Armenian vigilante had to take justice into his own hands? Even though Talaat was condemned to death in absentia at an Ottoman military tribunal in 1919, he was still living in Berlin in 1921. Yet, as Garapedian noted, the outside world seems to have heard the voices of almost everyone involved in the past 100 years except for Tehirian himself. Therefore, the publication of Demirdjian's translation was of utter importance. For this reason, Garapedian introduced the translator to Ara Sarafian of the Gomidas Institute.

Travels To Yerzinga

Garapedian shared with the audience a short film she had made about Tehirian and his memoir, which included footage of a trip she recently took to the Yerzinga region of Historic Western Armenia with Sarafian, known today as Erzincan, Turkey. The landscape of Yerzinga, where Tehirian grew up, and the Kemakh (Kemah) region, where he was born in the village of Pakarich, was also moving from the perspective of the history of the Armenian Genocide in general; the deep gorge which the Upper Euphrates

cuts through the mountains, starting in Kemakh and leading through the Agn region almost to Kharpert, was the site of mass slaughter in 1915, where the bodies of Armenians who had no way to escape the bare rock walls were thrown into the river, which is reported to have run red with blood.

Garapedian noted that the current inhabitants of Tehirian's home village welcomed them and showed them former Armenian sites. They apparently want to encourage tourism. Their economy, as it was when Armenians lived there, is mostly based on harvesting honey from bees. Garapedian's film concluded with a visit to the remains of the



Kemah Gorge

fourth-century Armenian Church in the village of Dogan (called Tortan in Armenian). While Garapedian did not mention it, the historic church, according to tradition, contains the tombs of Gregory the Illuminator, King Drtad, Queen Ashkhen, Princess Khosrovitoukht, and other figures connection with the conversion of Armenia to Christianity. (see link: <https://www.collectif2015.org/en/100Monuments/Le-Tombeau-des-Neuf-Saints-de-Tortan/>)

The Translation Process

The main portion of the talk featured Demirdjian. Describing himself as having been interested in Tehirian's story since his youth, he stated that the assassination of Talaat was a commonly discussed topic in the Armenian community of Beirut in the 1970s and 80s, when he was growing up there.

Demirdjian presented the challenges associated with the translation, such as the fact that Tehirian travelled to so many places and was associated with so many historical figures that the average reader would be confused by the plethora of references. To remedy this, Demirdjian began preparing footnotes explaining little known historical people and places in detail, but this would have proved to make the book too long. Therefore, Sarafian as editor helped him cut the annotations to only the most important. In addition, a preface written by someone else at the time was deemed obsolete and referenced the current political climate of 1953; Demirdjian felt its inclusion would take away from telling Tehirian's own story.

Demirdjian shared the general outline of how the book was created; Tehirian, who was living in Belgrade, Serbia at the beginning of World War II, told his life story to Vahan Minakhorian, who wrote it down. Minakhorian was a Genocide survivor and political figure from the World War I era; having been a member of Parliament in the First Republic of Armenia, he was a political exile during the Soviet Regime and also living in Belgrade, although he did

not belong to the ARF; interestingly enough, he had been a representative of the little known Social-Revolutionary Party. Minakhorian's deep understanding of the people, places and events, and his skills as a writer made him an excellent arranger for the book, but the memories are mostly Tehirian's.

Demirdjian discussed the contents of the book: the story starts with Tehirian in Serbia, where he had gone as a young man to help his father in business, leaving his mother and siblings behind in Yerzinga. When the war breaks out, Tehirian goes to the Caucasus to join General Antranig's battalion. Antranig and his men help occupy Western Armenia and reach as far as Yerzinga, Tehirian's hometown. There he finds his niece, who tells him that his mother, brothers, and sisters-in-law are all dead. The Armenians are forced to retreat and after the war Tehirian goes to Europe, where he is enlisted by Shahan Natalie and the ARF to participate in Operation Nemesis, the plan to assassinate the former Ottoman leaders responsible for the Armenian Genocide.

Shahan Natalie, who was the mastermind of the operation, had been ousted from the ARF ranks some years before, and by the time the book was written, had become the head of the AGBU's New England District Office. Since the original book's publication was supervised and edited by the editorial staff of *Housaper*, which included former Armenian Prime Minister Simon Vratsian and other members of the ARF's Central Bureau, they demanded that Natalie's name be left out of the book. However, Tehirian insisted that the true events be recognized, and therefore Shahan Natalie's part in the events is mentioned, but referring to him only as "the comrade responsible" and other titles.

The book concludes with Tehirian going to Berlin, the assassination, the trial and subsequent acquittal.

Importance of Truth in History

Demirdjian stressed that the importance of this publication is that it is the true version of the events of Operation Nemesis, or at least the closest testimony we have. When Tehirian gave testimony at his trial in Berlin, he stated that he was in Yerzinga during the massacres and saw his family, including sisters, killed. Tehirian was lying — the truth was, he was living in Serbia and he had no sisters. This raises some good philosophical questions about the nature of law and justice — as does the entire issue of the assassination and why it had to be done in the first place, which is what Lemkin had pointed out. Nevertheless, Tehirian's family was in fact killed and he did travel to Yerzinga and witness the aftermath of the decimation of its Armenian population.

However, since Tehirian's memoirs have never been translated into English, few people are aware of the true facts of his life and a popularized account of his story has circulated ever since the court transcripts from his trial were published by the Mekhitarists in the 1920s. Previous historians and scholars outside the Armenian-speaking world have relied on the court testimony to tell Tehirian's story; Demirdjian stated that Tehirian himself came clean about what really happened, and we too should be careful to tell the truth, because Tehirian's story can be incorrectly used by Armenians who don't know any better, as well as abused by our adversaries who can twist the story in order to condemn us. Demirdjian would like to see *Remembrances* serve as the foundation for future academic study of the Genocide and of the Armenian revolutionary movement and Operation Nemesis.

In addition, Demirdjian stated, the book would be an excellent tool for educators to teach about the Genocide and modern Armenian history, considering that it contains a sort of "micro-history" of the Genocide. There are numerous incidents in the book that tell the story of the Armenians in that time, as Tehirian traveled throughout Western Armenia, the Ottoman Empire, Europe, the Caucasus, and so on. His experiences included working with Sepastatsi Mourad's administration over Yerzinga as a "collector of orphans," rescuing Armenian orphans who had been taken by Kurdish families in the region, among other moving episodes and historical testimonies. In other words, the book is a historical primary source and should be treated and used as such. Demirdjian and Garapedian are both optimistic about the value of an English translation of this historic memoir, not only for the Armenian community and not only for justice for the Armenian Genocide, but for the world and for the understanding of genocide, law, and human rights in general.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

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

MASSACHUSETTS

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

APRIL 18 — "Opening Reception: From Cambridge to Yerevan: 35 Years of Friendship" exhibit of the Cambridge Yerevan Sister City Association, featuring the long term board members of the organization taking a trip down memory lane. The exhibit features documents, photos and posters connected to CYSCA's 35th anniversary. The exhibit can be viewed for free on the first floor. Tuesday, 7 to 8.30 p.m., Main Library Community Room, 449 Broadway, Cambridge. Light refreshments will be served. All are welcome. Registration required, at <http://www.cambridgeyerevan.org>

APRIL 20 — Conversation in Commemoration of the 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, "The Armenian Genocide Continuum: Deir ez-Zor Yesterday, Artsakh Today," with Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian, US Ambassador to Syria and Israel, and host Ara Nazarian, PhD., ARF Sardarabad Gomideh of Boston. Presented jointly by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation of Boston and the Armenian Assembly of America. Thursday, 7 p.m. Hy-brid event, at NAASR, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont and online via Zoom. For all questions and additional information, contact the ARF of Boston at sardarabad@arfeastusa.com or the Armenian Assembly of America at in-fo@aa-inc.org.

APRIL 21-23 — Greater Boston Armenian Community will be commemorating the 108th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with events at the Massachusetts State House and at the Armenian Heritage Park on Boston's Greenway. The State House Commemoration will be held on Friday April 21 at 10.30 a.m. Keynote address at the State House will be delivered by Robert Avetisyan, Permanent Representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the United States. An outdoor commemoration will be held at the Armenian Heritage Park on Sunday, April 23 at 4 p.m. The Keynote remarks will be delivered by Professor Christina Maranci, Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University. The program will include a musical performance by Teni Apelian, accompanied by Datev Gevorgian. For more

information, contact Boston Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee at bostonagcc@gmail.com. **MAY 9-13** — The VEM Ensemble, the cornerstone of the Armenian Music Program at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music and under the artistic leadership of Founder/Director Movses Pogossian, consists of the VEM String Quartet and mezzo-soprano Lena Marandi. They will have concerts on May 9 in Southfield, Mich., May 11 in at Holy Trinity Armenian Church (co-sponsored by Holy Trinity), and May 13 in Montreal. Details to follow.

APRIL 29 — The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe and the Amaras Art Alliance will present a special concert of the world famous Nairyan Vocal Ensemble from Armenia. Sponsored by Hye Pointe ACYOA. Saturday, 6 p.m. doors open, social hour. 7 p.m. concert starts. After concert, meet and greet with singers. \$50 per person. Cash bar, coffee and dessert intermission. Gata will be available for sale. 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill, MA. For reservations call (978) 372-9227.

MAY 12 — Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Music and Theater Arts Department, MIT History, and UCLA Armenian Music Program Present: "Intertwined Legacies: Gomidas Vartabed (1869-1935) and Koharik Gaza-rossian (1907-1967)" Lecture and mini-concert by Dr. Melissa Bilal and UCLA VEM Ensemble. Friday, 12:30 p.m. MIT Building 4, Classroom 231 <http://whereis.mit.edu/> Co-sponsors: National Association of Armenian Studies and Research, Tekeyan Cultural Association.

JUNE 9 — Save the date! 70th Annual Armenian Night at the Pops featuring violinist Eva Aronian, soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra, Keith Lockhart, conductor. Symphony Hall, Boston. 8 p.m. Presented by the Friends of Armenian Culture Society.

OCTOBER 27-28 — **SAVE THE DATE.** The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will celebrate its 90th anniversary with two programs, a panel featuring top-notch journalists on October 27 and a banquet on October 28. Details to follow.

NEW JERSEY

MAY 10 — The Armenian Missionary Association of America will host a book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian on her father's memoirs, *Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army*. Venue/ Time - AMAA Headquarters, 31 West Century Road, Paramus. 7 p.m. Registration requested - Call Magda Poulos at (201) 265-2607 x 107 or e-mail mpoulos@amaa.org Book signing during reception. All proceeds from the sale of books will benefit the AMAA Syrian Relief Fund.

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

APRIL 30 — The Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee of Rhode Island sponsoring the 108th Commemoration of the 1915 Armenian Genocide and Service for the Holy Martyrs Sunday, 12:30pm at Armenian Martyrs' Memorial. North Burial Ground, Branch Avenue, Providence. Guest speaker, Dr. Taner Akcam with participation of the 3 Armenian churches and local organizations and public officials. Public is invited to attend.

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

Connecticut Armenian Genocide Commemoration to Feature ANCA's Aram Hamparian

HARTFORD, Conn. — The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut will hold its annual program on the 108th anniversary of the Genocide on Saturday April 22 at 11 a.m. The event will take place at the Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Ave. The commemoration is returning to the State Capitol after an absence of three years because of COVID restrictions.

The keynote speaker will be Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA). He will speak on "Current Crisis in Artsakh-The Genocide Continues."

At the ANCA, he serves as the national advocacy organization's point-person with the administration, Congress, the media and the Washington, DC foreign policy community. He has testified before Congress, lectured at the National Defense University, the Foreign Service Institute, and USAID, been quoted by the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, AP, and Reuters, and appeared on CNN, BBC, RT, Al Jazeera, and many other

media outlets.

The mission of the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut, in addition to honoring the memory of the one and a half million victims, as well as survivors, of the Armenian Genocide begun by the Ottoman government in 1915, is to support programs and events, itself or with other organizations, to inform the public and remember the Genocide. It is in the process of establishing a suitable permanent Genocide Memorial. The committee also assists in the legislative mandate to provide Genocide related curricula in the public schools. Additionally, the committee seeks to present information about developments in the Diaspora and in Armenia.

Melanie Kevorkian Brown, chairperson of the Committee, stated that she is pleased that in recent years both houses of Congress and President Biden have formally recognized and condemned the Genocide. She also expressed gratitude to the Connecticut General Assembly for resuming the post COVID hosting of the annual com-



Aram Hamparian

memoration and commended the Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee for its diligence in conducting its annual commemoration.

Attorney Harry N. Mazadoorian, a longtime member of the committee pointed out that "even though the Armenian Genocide took place more than a hundred years ago

and thousands of miles away, it remains critical to recognize those tragic events today. Genocide unrecognized is genocide continued." He pointed to the current situation in the region of Artsakh where neighboring Azerbaijan continues physical aggressions, human rights violations, a blockade and cultural desecration against ethnic Armenians.

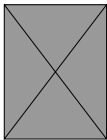
John C. Geragosian of New Britain, Connecticut State Auditor and a member of the committee, will serve as Master of Ceremonies at the commemoration. He stated that informing the public about the Genocide is particularly critical this year in light of the present hostilities by Azerbaijan against historic Armenian lands as well as the continuing war in Ukraine.

The program will conclude with the Martyrs' Service which was created in 2015 on the occasion of the centennial of the Genocide and the canonization of the Martyrs. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service.

A reception will follow the commemoration.



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COMMENTARY

Aligning Interests with Global Players Part 2: The Case of US-Armenia

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In my previous article, I tried to address the application of the principle of “aligning interests” in Armenia’s foreign policy, which I consider to be an extremely important issue in the currently tense situation of international relations. Today, Armenia is in a rather difficult situation where the main players in the region have very few common interests with each other. In such a tense international environment, Armenia cannot play on the contradictions of those regional and global powers, because it would bear dangerous consequences. Armenia cannot carry out processes against Iran to serve the interests of the US, or carry out anti-American policies for the sake of relations with Russia. Armenia must find bases for cooperation with different powers, combining common interests with them in such a way that they do not cause problems in relations with other capitals. This means Armenia should develop a very competent strategy and follow the path of its implementation.

In this article, let’s try to consider the policy of “aligning the interests” of Armenia with the US. Deep and active cooperation with this state seems to cause some sort of jealousy in Moscow or Tehran. However, there are directions that will not be problematic and we have to concentrate on these. In fact, they are mainly issues related to global challenges that will not be perceived negatively in other capitals. For example, Armenia can carry out serious cooperation with the United States in the fight against terrorism, for example, by founding an anti-terrorist center in Armenia which may be supported by the US. Let’s not forget that there are confirmed reports that during the 44-day war, Turkey and Azerbaijan brought Syrian mercenaries to fight against Armenia and Artsakh. In the same way, it is possible to create a center of cybersecurity for combating cybercrimes and actively work with the US in this direction. These directions are a priority for the US government under any administration, and would be beneficial for both parties. Recently, drug trafficking has also become a serious problem in Armenia. Combating drug trafficking is a significant possible direction for cooperation with the US.

Business and trade development is another field for matching interests and cooperation. Unfortunately, Armenia is the

178th trading partner of the USA in terms of trade turnover, which is an extremely negative indicator. Cooperation in this direction is also possible and should be prioritized. Armenia can create a positive investment environment for American capital by giving tax relief for investments which can cause significant economic development in Armenia.

The signing of a double taxation avoidance treaty and the launching of a direct flight between Armenia and the US (Yerevan-Los Angeles) could be a serious basis for this process. All of these are just a few examples from the point of view of the alignment of interests, which cannot cause problems with other regional players and can be essential for the security and economic development of Armenia.

Naturally, the deepening and development of business relations with the US will also lead to the development of political relations. This is extremely important, especially considering that the Armenian-American agenda is not particularly rich. It is obvious that business and trade growth will contribute to the development of political relations. Moreover, the deepening of relations with the US will also lead to the deepening of relations with the EU, including business ties.

Of course, this is not a complete list of everything that can be included in the agenda of Armenian-American relations. In fact, as a result of serious research and work, many other directions can be found, including relations and cooperation with third countries. □et’s not forget that the USA has always been a mediator in the settlement of Armenian-Turkish relations, has regularly tried to resolve Armenian-Saudi relations, and is now trying to resolve Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. It is not necessary to rule out that the USA can be a mediator in the settlement of relations between Armenia and Pakistan as well, which is equally important.

So, the best way to achieve these goals is through leadership with political will and a professional government in Yerevan, which unfortunately does not yet exist.

(Suren Sargsyan is an expert on US foreign policy, researcher and author. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University, American University of Armenia and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Suren Sargsyan is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan.)

EU’s Hopes of Using Azerbaijan as a Gas Station at Risk of Exploding

By Gabriel Gavin

Gas and oil from Azerbaijan are crucial to the EU’s effort to replace Russian fossil fuels — but that’s in danger of becoming entangled in the bloc’s bid to become a power player in the war-torn South Caucasus.

The EU has sent a civilian mission to help police the Armenian side of the tense mountainous border between the two countries, which has Azerbaijan warning of foreign interference in its affairs.

At the same time, a European Parliament report condemning Azerbaijan’s human rights record is sparking howls of outrage from the country.

All of that is casting a shadow over the EU’s high-profile deal with Azerbaijan to double its annual gas deliveries to the bloc to 20 billion cubic meters by 2027.

Speaking to POLITICO on condition of anonymity, a senior official in the EU’s diplomatic service bemoaned the fact that the monitoring mission seems to have soured relations. “We were hoping for a different scenario with Baku. We are sharing all relevant information on patrols and so on with Azerbaijan because we don’t want any issues.”

With Russia distracted by its catastrophic war against Ukraine, Brussels hoped to boost its presence in the South Caucasus, building economic ties with Azerbaijan while offering political support to neighboring Armenia in an effort to keep a balance between the two rival states.

But that’s not the way the 100 monitors — announced by Brus-

sels in January after a two-day war last September — are being seen by Baku.

In a speech last month, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev blasted outside interference in his country’s standoff with Armenia over the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh. “The mediators involved in the Karabakh conflict [try] not to solve the issue but to freeze it,” he declared, arguing Baku rejected efforts to “tire us out with meaningless negotiations.”

In 2020, Aliyev launched a successful military offensive retaking swathes of Nagorno-Karabakh, a breakaway region inside Azerbaijan’s internationally recognized borders but controlled since the fall of the USSR by its ethnic Armenian population. That conflict ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire, but tensions are rising and there’s fear of a return to full-blown fighting.

“Many Armenians believe there’ll be a spring offensive by Azerbaijan,” Markus Ritter, head of the EU mission, told Deutsche Welle. “If this doesn’t happen, our mission is already a success.”

Days before, the country’s state media alleged the EU mission is actually helping “provoke Azerbaijan into a new war,” leaving the “EU to bear the blame” for any new conflict.

“Azerbaijan and Russia are basically saying the same thing — that the EU mission is a military-intelligence operation under the cover of monitoring,” the EU official added. “They’ve been trying to discredit the mission, which is exclusively civilian and unarmed, from the beginning and there’s not much we can do about it.”

Vaqif Sadiqov, the head of Azerbaijan’s mission to the EU, told POLITICO that the presence of the monitors near the border with Azerbaijan is worrying Baku.

“This is a bilateral issue between Armenia and the EU, but it is happening a few hundred meters from our own border posts and in a heavily militarized environment where we have Russian border guards, Armenian border guards, Russian regular units, Armenian regular units and, closer to the Iranian border, Iran’s military. Now we also have EU peacekeepers. So we have legitimate security questions,” he said.

Sadiqov warned the mission could be seen as an effort by Brussels to bolster its presence in the region.

see GAS, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Turkey Bought Poison Gas From Nazi Germany to Kill Kurdish Alevis and Armenians in 1938

Prof. Taner Akçam of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) wrote a revealing article in Turkish, in Istanbul's Armenian Agos newspaper on March 31, 2023, regarding the Turkish government's brutal massacre of tens of thousands of minorities in Dersim, an Eastern province of Turkey, in 1938. The article was titled: "[President] Mustafa Kemal and [Prime Minister] Ismet Inonu ordered the use of poison gas during the Dersim massacre."

While this is not the first time this information has been revealed, Prof. Akçam uncovered additional Turkish documents that confirm the details of this horrible massacre ordered by Ataturk and Inonu. The two Turkish leaders issued a secret decree in 1937 for the purchase of 20 tons of poisonous mustard gas and 24 twin-engine airplanes from Germany to exterminate through aerial spraying and bombing of Kurdish Alevis and Armenians who were living in hiding in the mountainous caves of Dersim. The thousands of Armenian inhabitants of Dersim were survivors of the Armenian Genocide who had fled and converted to Alevism to save their lives.

Many articles and books have been published in recent years, documenting Hitler's admiration of Ataturk. The cooperation between the Turkish government and Nazi Germany is another indication of the criminal partnership of these two states. Even today, the Turkish military continues to use poisonous gas purchased from Germany in recent years, in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to exterminate Kurds in Turkey and allegedly in Northern Iraq and Syria.

One of the ironic twists of the Dersim massacre is the participation of Sabiha Gokcen, an Armenian girl orphaned during the Genocide of 1915 and subsequently adopted by Ataturk as his daughter. She became the first female pilot in Turkey and participated in the bombing of Dersim, renamed Tunceli. It is not known if she was aware that she was taking part in killing her fellow Armenians who were survivors of the Genocide, just like her. One of the two Istanbul airports is named after her, as a "War Hero."

A Turkish court ruled in March 2011 that the Turkish government's massacre in Dersim could not be considered genocide according to the law because they were not directed systematically against an ethnic group. However, Recep

Tayyip Erdogan, while Prime Minister in 2011, issued an apology for the 1938 Dersim massacre. Erdogan's apology was viewed with suspicion as an opportunistic move to win the votes of the large Kurdish population in Turkey from the government's main opposition political party, CHP, which is a continuation of Ataturk's Republican Party. Erdogan described the Dersim massacre "as the most tragic event in our recent history." He added that, while some sought to justify the killings as a legitimate response to events on the ground, it was in reality "an operation which was planned step by step.... It is a disaster that should now be questioned with courage. The party that should confront this incident is not the ruling Justice and Development Party. It is the CHP, which is behind this bloody disaster, who should face up to this incident." These comments were pointedly directed at opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who in fact is from Tunceli, and Erdogan's main opponent in the May 2023 presidential election. One wonders if Erdogan would have also apologized for the Armenian Genocide if there were millions of Armenian voters living in Turkey now.

In one of the footnotes of his article, Akçam referenced a document of the German Parliament where several members asked the German government in 2019 for the details of the Turkish purchase of poisonous gas and airplanes from Nazi Germany. German chemical weapons experts were also brought to Turkey in 1938 to train the military in the use of the poisonous gas. In its reply, the German government acknowledged "the suffering of the [Dersim] victims and their descendants" and added: "the federal [German] government is ready if the events of that time are processed by Turkey to examine German participation."

While these mass killings cannot be justified under any circumstance, the Turkish government was trying in the 1930's to suppress domestic opposition and impose its rule in the Dersim region. During a speech in parliament on Nov. 1, 1936, Ataturk described Dersim as "Turkey's most important interior problem." Pursuing a policy of Turkification of ethnic and religious minorities, the Turkish government adopted in 1936 the "Law on the Administration of the Tunceli Province" which aimed to resettle the local population to other parts of Turkey. Over 50,000 Turkish soldiers were dispatched to Dersim. They captured and hanged the ringleaders of the local rebellion and indiscriminately bombed and killed thousands of its inhabitants. Even though the Turkish government admitted that 13,806 inhabitants of Dersim were killed, some put the casualties much higher at 70,000 or more. Many of the survivors were moved to other parts of the country and Kurdish girls were given to Turkish families for adoption.

Regrettably, Turkey is still in denial about its past mass crimes. The Dersim massacre is just one example of the exterminations of various minorities be-

MESSAGE OF CATHOLICOS KAREKIN II ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF HOLY RESURRECTION

(Yerevan, Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral, April 9, 2023)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

(Luke. 18:8):

Dear faithful people in Armenia, Artsakh and Diaspora,

Today, united under the auspices of our churches, we glorify the resurrected Savior and share the good tidings: "Christ is risen from the dead." We glorify the miraculous Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered, was crucified and rose from the dead in order to free us from the power of sin and death; who through infinite divine love, opened the way to eternity and the kingdom of heaven for humanity with His salvific mission.

Christ dispelled the darkness of hopelessness, granted people the grace of resurrection, and also strengthened them to rise from the sufferings in this earthly reality, from the disasters and destructions that are raging in the world influenced by evil. From the crucifixion of Christ to this day, the pharisee intrigues, the betrayals like the one of Judas, the trials like the one of Pilate; bring forth disasters in the world, and impoverish the image and essence of the God-created man. Indeed, in the face of such realities Christ's words resound with renewed power, "When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Dear people, the 21st century was supposed to be an enlightened new era with scientific accomplishments and great technological achievements, with the international norms and laws for the protection of human life, human rights and dignity. But how many innocent people, how many nations, are subjected to tribulations and sorrows along the calvary of wars; are nailed to the cross of suffering because of injustice, one's obsession for power, discrimination, and fighting against existential threats. We too went through the disastrous realities of a 44-day war and attacks on the borders of Armenia. Our motherland is facing daily trials of ensuring a safe and peaceful life in the face of worrying

internal and external challenges. Our precious Artsakh has been under siege for a long time, and is facing untold hardships and deprivations. In face of such alarming and dangerous realities, bearing in our hearts the unrelenting pain of our martyred, missing, and injured sons and daughters, we are also witnessing another deplorable situation: how manifestations of enmity and hatred are setting dividing barriers in the lives of our people all over the world, undermining national unity.

We are witnessing how centuries-old sanctified traditions and our value system, which are the pillars of our identity, are being neglected; and the national-spiritual security of our people, which is critical for overcoming the most serious challenges we are facing, is being undermined. Such processes in our lives, especially in the post-war period, aggravate the pain of grief and losses. And in such a situation, Christ's questioning and rebuke resounds more strongly for all of us, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8), "Where is your faith?" (Luke 8:25).

Indeed, when justice and truth cease to be the core of our undertakings and activities in state and public life, we will continue to face manifestations of irresponsibility. Pharisaic intrigues will continue as long as slander and wrongdoing are spread by the impulse of spitefulness and vindictiveness. Treasons, similar to those of Judas, will continue. Meanwhile, the state, society and family are strong and powerful when they are anchored on God-ordained messages and unfading values, which are a benchmark for well-being, and guide the efforts to achieve success with heavenly support for the sake of people's security, progress and prosperity.

Beloved ones, faith is victory over trials, which is not characterized by the spirit of fear, despair, decline, or disastrous condemnable complacency. However difficult and hopeless the current situation may seem, our faith should be stronger and firmer. Faith should be expressed in every step and action, in personal, collective and national realities. It is through faith and togetherness, that we overcame many disasters throughout our history, rebuilt our independent

statehood, and re-launched a creative life on our native land. Today as well, it is faith in God and in our own strength that should fortify us to overcome crisis situations and build a bright future. Now, let us all as a nation renew our faith with the celebration of the miraculous Resurrection of our Savior; and with our lives, let us testify our loyalty to Christ through our every word and deed, testify our commitment to our Lord-bestowed faith and create a new resurrected reality with Christ.

With such wishes and the good tidings of "Christ is risen from the dead", we extend our fraternal greetings to the incumbents of the hierarchical sees of our Holy Church, H.H. Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude, Archbishop Nurhan Manoogian, the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, His Beatitude Archbishop Sahak Mashalyan. With all kind wishes, we bring the soul-stirring good news of the Holy Resurrection to the Heads of the sister Churches, asking for the support of the Almighty God in the fulfillment of the Christ-given mission. We send our pontifical love and blessing to all the clergymen of our Holy Church and to our faithful people in the homeland and in the diaspora.

On this bright day of the Holy Resurrection, we pray to God Most High and ask that the world be transformed and enhanced by the life-renewing graces of the Holy Resurrection of Christ; and that mankind, with heavenly support, be freed from sufferings and tribulations, and establish goodness and peace. We ask for the strengthening power of the Resurrection from the Savior, especially for our sons and daughters of Artsakh, so that they may be brave and unbreakable in spirit, and overcome all the trials they face with the strong and indomitable will, typical of Artsakh people. May the risen Savior spread His graces and mercy on our native land, Armenia and Artsakh, and keep all our worldwide people under the auspices of His Holy Right Hand in safety and prosperity today and always and forever. Amen.

Christ is risen from the dead.

Blessed is the Resurrection of Christ

108th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide

COMMEMORATION AT THE PARK




SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2023
ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK
BOSTON, MA
4 PM

1915

STOP THE DENIAL

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

THE ANNUAL COMMEMORATION IN TIMES SQUARE



Truth
Justice
Recognition

SUNDAY
APRIL 23, 2023
at 1:30pm

EU’s Hopes of Using Azerbaijan As a Gas Station At Risk of Exploding

GAS, from page 18

Parliament Gets Involved

Baku is also reacting with fury after the European Parliament last month backed a report that “condemns the latest large-scale military aggression by Azerbaijan in September,” accuses the country of undermining the peace process and “underlines the EU’s readiness to be more actively involved in settling the region’s protracted conflicts.”

The resolution, voted through by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, argued Azerbaijan’s “respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is still very negative and needs to be improved before the EU further deepens its political and energy partnership with the country.” Repression of opposition activists, cases of torture and the absence of an independent judiciary were all highlighted in the motion.

The international relations committee in the Azerbaijani parliament fired back, alleging the EU decision bore an “unbearable stench of corruption.” It accused MEPs of being swayed by “Armenia and the Armenian diaspora, long since a cancerous tumor of Europe.”

“Concerns about human rights from the EU irritate officials in Baku,” said Ahmad Mammadli, an Azerbaijani democracy activist and chairman of the opposition 1918 Movement. He’s now calling for sanctions on the country, arguing: “Western pressure on authoritarian states is always possible, as long as it is not exchanged for natural resources.”

Efforts by Brussels to calm tensions are falling short.

Last month, European Council President Charles Michel held calls with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to discuss the situation on the ground and “stress the EU’s readiness to help advance ... peace and stability in the region.” However, just hours later, Azerbaijan confirmed that its troops had again pushed into the ceasefire zone in Nagorno-Karabakh and asserted effective control over a road it alleges is being used by the Armenians to bring in weapons.

Tom de Waal, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe think tank, said Brussels is still holding out hope it can broker a solution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia — one of the world’s most protracted disputes.

“The EU is making approaches to both sides to try and restart the peace process. From the outside it looks menacing, but when you speak to people on the inside there’s still hope that we haven’t run out of road just yet,” he said.

But if that effort collapses, he warned there could be growing calls for sanctions on Azerbaijan from Western countries — which could spell trouble for the EU’s effort to use Azerbaijan as an alternative for Russian fossil fuels.