

Karabakh's Energy Crisis Worsening

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The authorities in Stepanakert have urged the international community to force Azerbaijan to unblock Armenia's electricity supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh, saying that a reservoir which feeds Karabakh's main power plant is rapidly drying up.

An Azerbaijani-controlled section of the high-voltage transmission line coming to Karabakh from Armenia was knocked down on January 9, almost one month after Baku blocked commercial traffic through the Lachin corridor.

Karabakh's leadership responded by restricting energy consumption and introducing daily power cuts. It was left to rely only on electricity generated by six hydroelectric plants that met less than a third of the Armenian-populated territory's energy needs before the blockade. Baku's subsequent disruption of Armenia's gas supply to Karabakh further increased the load on the local energy network.

The Sarsang reservoir located in the northern Martakert district supplies water to by far the biggest of Karabakh's power plants. Aerial images publicized by the Karabakh premier, Gurbanguly Hradachi, over the weekend show that Sarsang has shrunk by more than half since the beginning of January due to the increased use of its water.

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Armenians Refusing to Use New Azerbaijani Border Post



Border guards at a newly established border post on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border (photo: State Border Service of Azerbaijan)

By Joshua Kucera

Azerbaijan is trying to present a new border checkpoint as a demonstration of how peacefully Karabakh Armenians could live under Azerbaijani rule. But they continue to face deep skepticism from Armenians who are refusing to use the crossing and submit to Azerbaijani border control.

Azerbaijani forces first set up the post on April 23 on the sole road connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh, known as the Lachin corridor. A week later, Azerbaijani state TV released video of the border post in action, with a handful of Armenians using

the crossing.

Azerbaijani state-affiliated media reported that on that day, April 30, eleven people had used the checkpoint: eight to cross from Karabakh to Armenia and three going in the opposite direction. Since then, though, no new numbers have been released.

A spokesperson for Azerbaijan's State Border Service had not responded to a query from Eurasianet by the time this story was posted. Since April 30, no residents of Armenia or Karabakh have crossed the border, Artak Beglaryan, an adviser to Karabakh's de facto state minister, told Eurasianet.

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Pashinyan Highlights 'Humanitarian Crisis' in Nagorno-Karabakh on Visit to Prague

PRAGUE (Public Radio of Armenia) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has urged the international community to give a "clear and targeted" assessment of the "humanitarian crisis" in Nagorno-Karabakh, claiming that Azerbaijan's actions to cut the Armenian-populated region from Armenia amount to "preparations for ethnic cleansings."

Speaking at a joint press conference with his Czech counterpart Petr Fiala on an official visit to Prague on May 4, Pashinyan said that the situation in the South

Caucasus region remained tense and accused Azerbaijan of continuing its policy of using force and threat of force to escalate tensions on the border with Armenia, in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the Lachin corridor, the only road that connects the region with Armenia where Azerbaijan installed a checkpoint on April 23.

"Azerbaijan's decision to install a checkpoint in the Lachin corridor and the blockade of the corridor before that are a gross violation of the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020 and



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (L) and Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala during a joint press conference in Prague, May 4, 2023.



Alexandra Hedison

Alexandra Hedison: Capturing the Photographic Moment And Everything in Between

By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — The ever-intriguing and talented photographer Alexandra Hedison opened her travelling show "A Brief Infinity" on April 22 at Von Lintel Gallery in Los Angeles. The polymath daughter of actor David Hedison (Albert Hedison Jr.) whose original fam-

ily surname was Hedsitian, she creates work that is both aesthetically pleasing and intellectually challenging.

"A Brief Infinity" comes to us from its previous incarnation at H Gallery in Paris, where it garnered glowing critical reviews. In this series of photographs, Hedison uses a rarely employed technique called chemigrams, see HEDISON, page 16

the interim decision of the International Court of Justice made in February," Pashinyan said.

The leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a trilateral statement on November 9, 2020 on the cessation of Armenian-Azerbaijani fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh that claimed the lives of nearly 7,000 people on both sides in a matter of a little more than six weeks.

Under the terms of the Moscow-brokered ceasefire agreement, Russia deployed around 2,000 peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh and along a five-kilometer-wide strip of land connecting it with Armenia and known as the Lachin corridor.

Yerevan and Stepanakert insist that Azerbaijan dismantle its

checkpoint at the entrance to the Lachin corridor from Armenia and that only Russian peacekeepers remain there as agreed in the trilateral statement.

Azerbaijan rejects the demand, insisting that the checkpoint was installed in response to Armenia's "illegal use" of the road for military supplies, a claim denied in both Yerevan and Stepanakert.

The United States, France and other Western powers have urged Azerbaijan to ensure free movement of commercial and private vehicles along the Lachin corridor, expressing concerns that the situation could undermine peace efforts in the region.

Russia has also described Azerbaijan's "unilateral steps" in the see CRISIS, page 4

YEREVAN

History and Wine Collide In Armenia

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MASSACHUSETTS

Hovsepian School Students Meet with Berj Najarian at Gillette Stadium

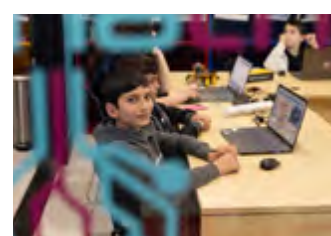
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GLENDALE

Armath Laboratories Are Coming to America

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Karabakh Hosting Matena Leadership School Program

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On Saturday, May 6, the third program of Matena International School of Leadership and Professional Development kickstarted in Stepanakert, former Minister of State of Nagorno Karabakh (Art-sakh) Ruben Vardanyan has said.

The project is implemented in cooperation with the territorial development agency We Are Our Mountains established by Vardanyan.

The two-day program will focus primarily on strategic leadership, the role of leaders in the modern world, issues of trust and management. Participants will have the opportunity to listen to local and international experts.

Azerbaijan to 'Restore' Monastery as 'Albanian'

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan is going to "restore" the Armenian monastery of the Nagorno Karabakh town of Hadrut as an "Albanian church," Apa.az reported on May 6.

Azerbaijan's government announced in February 2022 that it intends to erase Armenian inscriptions on religious sites in the territory that it reclaimed.

It justified the move by arguing that the churches in fact were originally the heritage of Caucasian Albania, an ancient kingdom once located in what is now Azerbaijan. The theory, which is not supported by historians, has long been propagated by nationalist Azerbaijani historians and has been embraced by the current government in Baku.

Concerns about the preservation of cultural sites in Karabakh are made all the more urgent by the Azerbaijani government's history of systemically destroying indigenous Armenian heritage.

Serzh Sargsyan Issues Victory Day Message

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia's third President Serzh Sargsyan issued a message on Victory and Peace Day on May 9. The full message appears below.

"Now, when the former glorious victories of the Armenian Army won in the liberation war have been treacherously wasted, the Army is disrespected, and peace is a target for the enemy snipers, the glorification of Victory and Peace Day might look like irony, irony toward our own people and the state.

Under these circumstances it is only STRUGGLE that must be glorified, the heroic deeds of our martyrs, the relentless warriors who STRUGGLE for freedom and independence of our Fatherland must be glorified.

Glory to those who once created victories and will create new victories again.

Gratitude and appreciation to the heroic generation of our fathers and grandfathers, who as a part of the multinational army, 78 years ago, in the Great Patriotic War cast a mortal blow to fascism and decided the outcome of the war, rejecting violence and barbarism."

Pashinyan Points to Lingering Differences Between Armenia, Azerbaijan After US-Sponsored Peace Talks

By Hekhine Buniatian

PRAGUE (RFE/RL) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan still sees a "huge difference" between the wording of a draft peace agreement for Armenia and Azerbaijan and the two sides' positions despite reported progress in bilateral talks hosted by the United States this week.

In an exclusive interview with RFE/RL's Armenian Service on May 5, Pashinyan said the key differences concern not only Nagorno-Karabakh but also territorial and security guarantees.

"We are still unable to reach agreement in the draft peace agreement on the wording that will give us confidence that Azerbaijan recognizes 29,800 square kilometers of Armenia" within its Soviet-era borders, he said.

Pashinyan also highlighted the need for guarantees as "any agreement, even the most unambiguously written one, allows for interpretations."

Pashinyan, who spoke with RFE/RL while on a two-day official visit to Prague, referred to the draft bilateral Agreement on Peace and Establishment of Interstate Relations that was discussed by Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov, during the U.S.-sponsored talks.

A joint statement issued on May 4 at the conclusion of the talks said Mirzoyan and Bayramov and their teams "made progress in mutual understanding on some articles of the draft bilateral [peace agreement]" but noted that positions on a number of key issues remain different.

Despite U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's optimism that "with additional goodwill, flexibility, and compromise, an agreement is within reach," Pashinyan assessed the progress as minimal.

"While the difference between the sides was one kilometer before, now it is 990 meters. It is progress, but there is still a huge

difference," he said in the interview with RFE/RL.

Pashinyan reiterated Armenia's position that the issue of the rights and security of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians should be discussed in a dialogue between Baku and Stepanakert with international engagement.

"Otherwise, this topic and agenda can simply be forgotten by Azerbaijan," he said,



Nikol Pashinyan being interviewed

adding that there are different interpretations in Yerevan and Baku on how to address the rights of Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenians.

He also said that both international and local mechanisms should be applied to such matters as the withdrawal of troops and the establishment of a demilitarized zone.

Pashinyan said the discussion that started in Washington can continue in Moscow, denying claims there are differing "Western" and "Russian" drafts.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh for decades. Some 30,000 people were killed in a war in the early 1990s that left ethnic Armenians in control of the predominantly Armenian-populated region and seven adjacent districts of Azerbaijan proper.

Decades of internationally mediated talks failed to result in a diplomatic solution, and the simmering conflict led to another war in 2020 in which nearly 7,000 soldiers were killed on both sides.

The six-week war in which Azerbaijan regained all the Armenian-controlled areas outside of Nagorno-Karabakh as well as chunks of territory inside the Soviet-era autonomous region ended with a Russian-brokered cease-fire under which Moscow deployed about 2,000 troops to serve as peacekeepers.

Tensions along the restive Armenian-Azerbaijani border and around Nagorno-Karabakh leading to sporadic fighting and loss of life have persisted despite the cease-fire and the presence of Russian troops.

They flared anew last month when Azerbaijan installed a road checkpoint at the start of the Lachin Corridor, the only route linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia says the checkpoint, set up on April 23, is a violation of the cease-fire. Azerbaijan insists it established it in response to what it says were Armenian military supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia denies that accusation.

Azeri Soldier Gets Long Jail Term in Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An Armenian court on May 8 sentenced one of the two Azerbaijani soldiers detained in Armenia last month to 11.5 years in prison.

The conscript, Agshin Bebirov, was apprehended on April 10 in Ashotavan, a village in Syunik province bordering Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan exclave. According to the Armenian military, he claimed to have crossed into Armenia together with the other Azerbaijani serviceman, Huseyn Akhundov.

Akhundov was detained on April 13 at a section of the main provincial highway located about 100 kilometers southeast of Ashotavan. He was charged a few days later with murdering a Syunik resident in what Armenian law-enforcement authorities called a failed attempt to flee to neighboring Iran.

The 56-year-old victim, who worked as a security guard at an Armenian mining company, was found shot dead on April 12 several kilometers from where Akhundov was caught. It is still not clear whether the latter accepts the murder charge.

Bebirov, the other Azerbaijani soldier, was accused of illegally crossing the Armenian border and smuggling weapons. The prison sentence given to him was announced on Monday, May 8, by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), which oversees Armenia's courts.

A statement released by the SJC did not specify which court handed down the long sentence. It said that Bebirov's trial, apparently held in closed session, was short because the defendant pleaded guilty to the accusations leveled against him.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed on April 12 that the two Azerbaijanis deserted their army unit stationed in Nakhichevan because of being systematically ill-treated by fellow servicemen.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said, for its part, that Akhundov and Bebirov accidentally crossed into Armenia due to heavy fog. It asked international organizations to help repatriate them.

Karabakh's Energy Crisis Worsening

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"Currently, Sarsang's water resources have reached a critical limit of about 88 million cubic meters (about 15 percent of the total capacity), approaching the 'dead' (unusable) volume of about 70 million cubic meters," Nersisyan said in a Facebook post.

"This situation not only puts at risk the prospect of electricity supply for the population of Artsakh and deepens their daily suffering but has also resulted in a significant negative impact on the environment," he wrote, warning of a "humanitarian catastrophe" in Karabakh.

Nersisyan said the international community should take "immediate measures to

make Azerbaijan abandon such medieval, terrorist and cruel behavior."

The United States, the European Union and Russia have repeatedly urged Azerbaijan to end the four-month blockade which has also led to serious shortages of food, medicine and other essential items in Karabakh.

Baku has dismissed those calls. It went further late last month, setting up an official checkpoint on the sole highway connecting Karabakh to Armenia. The Armenian side condemned the tightening of the blockade as another gross violation of a Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war.



Satellite photos of the Sarsang reservoir taken on January 1 and April 28, 2023.



ARMENIA

History and Wine Collide in Armenia

By Paul Vartian Sookiasian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — While winemaking in Armenia is a fabled tradition going back 6,000 years, it was abruptly halted due to the centralized Soviet economy decreeing a focus on brandy instead. Only restarting in the years after independence, Armenian wine's rebirth is a new phenomenon, however some of the companies now making it have surprisingly deep historical roots which long predate the stoppage. They serve as a link between ancient tradition and the modern industry. Two brands in particular have fascinating stories of reclaiming a lost history, not just that of Armenia wine culture but of their own families' links to it as well.

One example is Alluria, run by the Machanyan family from their vineyards near their

(GO2 ARMENIA PHOTO)



Samvel Machanyan of Alluria

ancestral home of Echmiadzin. Even before starting the company in 2016, winemaking wasn't just a hobby for them; it's in their blood. According to Samvel Machanyan, Alluria's co-creator and Chief Wine Enthusiast, growing up he assumed that every Armenian family made wine because it was such a part of his family life. Despite the end of commercial wine production in Soviet Armenia, Samvel's grandfather kept it up as a hobby. He used techniques which had been passed down to him from his father, who had settled in Echmiadzin after fleeing his hometown of Aylur near Lake Van during the genocide. Thus it was a natural decision for the Machanyans to join the Ar-

menian wine rebirth a decade ago, doing it the only way they knew how: "We want to present to the public our family's traditional methods rather than follow the established techniques."

This independent streak resulted in Alluria being Armenia's first brand of "natural wine," a niche variety mainly known among serious connoisseurs. Natural wines are set apart by only using native wild yeasts rather than commercial ones to start fermentation, and have no added sulfites. Drinking a natural wine is a different experience, and can be divisive amongst wine lovers, but the taste for it is growing internationally, and a few other brands in Armenia have followed their lead. While the Armenian populace is still mostly unfamiliar with it, Samvel notes the influx of Russians has brought with it a great many natural wine lovers. Alluria started with two wines, both reds, and now has nine varieties. What they plan next however will be the culmination of Alluria's motto "a renaissance of family traditions," and an incredible story of emotional discovery.

In 2017, Samvel and some of his brothers made a pilgrimage back to their ancestral home of Aylur on a mission: find the vineyard their great-grandfather was forced to leave behind in 1915.

The Machanyan family had been engaged in winemaking, grape growing, and horse breeding there for centuries until being uprooted in 1915. The village is now inhabited by Kurds, and after asking around, the brothers were told of the site of an old vineyard which had belonged to Armenians, abandoned but with the grapes still growing wild. The vineyard was in the same place where the Machanyans were said to have lived, and as Samvel said, "We immediately felt a connection between our blood and those grapes. I was very emotional imagining my great-grandfather running around this vineyard as a child."

They set out with their task, taking cuttings of the vines and transporting them back to Echmiadzin. Of those, one survived the transfer, which they call the "Mother



January in Artabyunk high altitude vineyard

Vine," from which they planted a vineyard with fifty of its roots. Samvel estimates in five years they will have enough of these ancestral grapes to create the first hundred bottles of pure wine from it, but even prior to that they will be placing a few drops of it into each of their wines to infuse every bottle they make with that piece of family history.

Alluria isn't the only modern Armenian brand with deep family roots. Maran Winery boasts a family two-hundred history going back to 1828 when their ancestors, led by the matriarch Maran, were able to repatriate to modern Armenia's Vayots Dzor region from Persia due to the Treaty of Turkmenchay. After settling Maran planted a vineyard which the family cultivated until it was confiscated a century later by the Soviets, but a new vineyard was later acquired and Maran Winery, named for their ancestress, was founded as soon as independence was declared. Just like Alluria, Maran recently reclaimed part of their history when in 2021 they were able to purchase the original ancestral vineyard planted by Maran two hundred years ago. Though it had been abandoned for decades, the family is working hard to bring its vines back to life and expect it to bear fruit soon.

With this strong dedication to the past also comes a steady focus on the future. Maran has multiple forward-thinking projects, such as an experimental vineyard it calls the highest one in Europe, which was planted as part of a USAID-funded project in order to observe the effects of climate change. While it is currently not an effective place for growing, in the coming decades rising temperatures will reduce the suitability of the Ararat valley for wine, which makes the study and potential development of alternatives like this one an important goal. Maran also started Armenia's first ever un-

derwater-aged wine Halde in 2018, which uses the freezing, silent waters of Kari Lake on Mount Aragats to study how the wine is affected. Scientific inquiry showed that the underwater-aged wine was smoother and kept its freshness better than traditional wine.

Samvel of Alluria says these kinds of stories demonstrate Armenia's wine heritage, which as he knows from personal experience "was kept alive by hobbyists through the artificial Soviet pause, and is now being combined with modern techniques and technology to make something even better." Both Alluria and Maran are members of the Wines of Armenia umbrella brand, which promotes Armenia's wine culture both at home and abroad. Samvel appreciates how organizations like it and the government's Vine & Wine Foundation foster a family environment amongst the Armenian wine industry. "There isn't competition between the member companies like you'd expect. We see wine as a creation or work of art rather than a product. There are different wines for different moments, different feelings and energies, which might vary day to day even in the same person. Wine lovers are very curious people, they won't just find a single wine and never drink anything else, they are always searching for new feelings. There's enough for everybody- and since our market isn't just Armenia but the world, the potential demand is way more than any one of us could meet." In this sense, the better Armenian wines get as a whole, the better it is for all involved.

"We're here to showcase our region as the land where wine was born, and to return Armenia to the wine world map. If you're a wine-lover looking for a different experience you are used to you should definitely drink Armenian wine. You will fall in love with it," concluded Samvel Machanyan.



Russian peacekeepers and Armenian clergy at Dadivank Monastery

Armenian Clerics Continue to Serve at Dadivank Monastery

STEPANAKERT (ArtsakhPress) — Armenian clergymen continue their spiritual service at Dadivank Monastery thanks to the Russian peacekeeper mission, according to a May 2 report from the press service of the Mother See of Echmiadzin, although this territory after the 2020 Artsakh war was to be transferred to Azerbaijani control.

The statement from Echmiadzin added that as far as the false claims of Dadivank being a Caucasian Albanian church, "It is an undeniable historical fact that the monastery was originally Armenian and had no connection with the Albanian Church, let alone with today's newly discovered Caucasian Albanian-Udi religious community."

INTERNATIONAL

Turkish Official: US Wants Ankara to Accept Armenia's 'Conditions'

ANKARA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Turkish Presidential Spokesman Ibrahim Kalin claims that the United States wants Turkey to accept all the “conditions” put forward by Armenia.

Kalin made the remarks in an interview with Haber Türk on Sunday, May 7, APA's Istanbul correspondent reports.

He noted that Washington is “putting pressure on Ankara” regarding sanctions against Russia and the return of S-400s, but Ankara “continues to pursue an independent policy.”

Armenian and Turkish negotiations for the normalization of relations between the two countries — Ruben Rubinyan and Serdar Kılıç — have so far held four meetings on the matter.

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Iran MFA: Azerbaijani Diplomats Expelled in Response to Expulsion of Iranian Diplomats

TEHRAN (news.am) — Four Azerbaijani diplomats were expelled from Iran on May 8 in response to Baku's expulsion of Iranian diplomats. This was stated by the Iranian foreign ministry spokesman, answering the question about the expulsion of four Azerbaijani diplomats from Iran.

Nasser Kanaani confirmed this news, saying that it was a response to Azerbaijan's “destructive actions” regarding the expulsion of four Iranian diplomats, IRNA reports.

“We have always clearly and transparently expressed our views on relations with the Republic of Azerbaijan,” he said in response to the recent statements by the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev.

“The relations between the two countries are strong, and we should not take any action that is not in the interests of both countries, but in the interests of those parties who want to harm those relations,” Kanaani added.

Armenians Refusing to Use New Azerbaijani Border Post

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The de facto authorities are discouraging Karabakh residents from using the border crossing. Given Azerbaijan's record of violence against and intimidation of Armenians, Karabakh residents shouldn't trust the assurances from Baku that the passage through the border will be safe, Beglaryan argued.

“Since there are real security risks for our citizens, we cannot ensure proper security there,” Beglaryan told Eurasianet. “That's why it is not recommended to freely travel using the checkpoint, even if it seems possible at first glance.” Beglaryan said officials had been giving public interviews recommending that residents not use the checkpoint.

Azerbaijan has tried to present the checkpoint as a normal border crossing no different from any other around the world. A video released by state television on May 1 depicted a handful of Armenians going through standard border procedures, handing over their passports to Azerbaijani border guards, submitting to cursory examinations of their car trunks, and communicating easily in Russian with the guards.

What really happened, though, is difficult to discern.

Some observers noted that the video appeared to have blurred out the presence of Russian peacekeepers' vehicles that were on the scene as the Armenians were crossing the border; a key part of Baku's narrative about Karabakh is that its Armenian residents can live freely under Azerbaijani rule without any international presence or monitoring.

Karabakh officials called the video a “cheap show” and said it had been manip-

ulated. A statement from the de facto state minister effectively blamed the Russian peacekeepers: it said that the Armenians who had been filmed had first crossed from Karabakh into Armenia, with an escort of Russian peacekeepers, who “gave assurances that there would be no monitoring by the Azerbaijani side.” But when the people returned back home to Karabakh, they “encountered Azerbaijanis at the checkpoint,” the statement said. “The latter, having put our citizens in an impossible position, forced them to carry out their demands, filming the process to show another staged show.”

Since then, the border post has been unused, though Baku continues to present it as a demonstration of their good will. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan complained on May 4 that the establishment of the checkpoint “escalated” the humanitarian crisis there; the Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry said in its response that “Armenian residents have already begun to pass [the border checkpoint] transparently in both directions.”

Some Karabakh residents have launched demonstrations against the border post, with protesters holding signs reading “The checkpoint is a red line” and “We won't accept it, we won't pass.” Participants appealed to the international community, including the United Nations, the United States, Russia, and Armenia, to take action to remove the checkpoint.

The use of the checkpoint is amounting to a real-life test of a potential Azerbaijani control over the territory, as the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan have just completed four days of negotiations in Washington on what could be a compre-

hensive peace agreement to resolve their decades-old conflict.

The most fraught issue continues to be the status of Karabakh. Armenia is seeking some kind of international security guarantees for the ethnic Armenian population there, while Azerbaijan insists that the rights of its citizens are a matter for Baku alone to decide.

A Western diplomat familiar with the negotiations argued that the checkpoint, in the absence of efforts to convince Armenians that they will be safe under Azerbaijani control, only undermines the trust that would be necessary for the Armenians to come to an agreement on Karabakh.

“It [the checkpoint] unsettles the Armenians and the Karabakhis,” the diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity. “If Baku is genuine about wanting to reassure the Armenians of Karabakh that they can stay in safety and security then, whether you have a checkpoint or not you have to send some reassuring signals.”

Meanwhile, the Russian peacekeeping contingent abruptly announced that it had rotated commanders; on April 26, just three days after the post was first erected, Russia's defense ministry announced that it had appointed a new commander, effective the day before.

That officer, General Aleksandr Lentsov, then quickly headed to Baku for consultations. On May 4 he met with Azerbaijan Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov, the Azerbaijani MoD reported; neither side made any comments following the meeting.

(Joshua Kucera, a senior correspondent, is Eurasianet's former Turkey/Caucasus editor and has written for the site since 2007.)

Pashinyan Highlights Crisis in Karabakh on Visit to Prague

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Lachin corridor as “unacceptable.”

Earlier, on February 22, when the Lachin corridor was still blockaded only by a group of pro-government Azerbaijani protesters, the International Court of Justice ordered the Azerbaijani government to “take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions.”

Speaking in Prague, Pashinyan reiterated that the current situation required a broader international presence in the region.

“In this context, we consider it necessary that an international fact-finding group be sent to Nagorno-Karabakh and to the Lachin corridor. At the same time, despite all the difficulties, the Armenian government has adopted a peace agenda,” Pashinyan underlined.

The Armenian prime minister's visit to Prague comes amid ongoing peace talks between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Washington.

After meeting Ararat Mirzoyan and Jeyhun Bayramov in the White House on Wednesday, Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor to the US President, said Washington “welcomes the progress Armenia and Azerbaijan have made in talks and encourages continued dialogue.”

Bilateral negotiations between Mirzoyan and Bayramov that began on May 1 are expected to end today, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expected to join the two ministers for a closing session.

Pashinyan reiterated today that Armenia is fully involved in the negotiation process with Azerbaijan and will remain involved in it in the near future. He said that Armenia seeks to have results and “not just negotiate for the sake of negotiations.” He expressed a hope that Azerbaijan “will abandon its policy of force and threat of force.”

“We expect that the international community, too, will send a similar message to Azerbaijan,” Pashinyan said.

Besides meeting with Fiala, on his two-day visit to Prague the Armenian premier also met with Czech President Petr Pavel and the leadership of the country's legislative body.

Brussels Confirms Upcoming Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan will have a trilateral meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and the President of the European Council Charles Michel on May 14 in Brussels, the European Council announced May 8.

The European Council said in a press release that Charles Michel “has continued to be in close contact with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to advance the EU's efforts to promote stability in the South Caucasus and normalization between the two countries.”

The leaders will also hold a meeting together with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on 1 June.

“Their discussions will also be flanked by a meeting together with President Emmanuel Macron of France and Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, in the margins of the upcoming European Political Community summit in Chisinau on June 1. The leaders have also agreed to continue to meet trilaterally in Brussels as frequently as necessary to address ongoing developments on the ground and standing agenda items of the Brussels meetings. President Michel equally expressed his intention to invite the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, France and Germany to meet a second time in the margins of the next EPC summit in Granada in October 2023,” the European Council added.

News on the upcoming Armenia-Azerbaijan talks in Brussels was first reported by the *Financial Times* earlier on Monday.



INTERNATIONAL



An image from the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory

23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory Named Winner of Kenneth Hudson Award for Institutional Courage

ISTANBUL — The 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory was awarded the 2023 Kenneth Hudson Award for Institutional Courage and Professional Integrity at the European Museum of the Year Awards Ceremony, which has been given by the European Museum Forum since 1977.

The award is named after Kenneth Hudson, a journalist, museologist and writer who is also the founder of the European Museum of the Year Awards (EMYA).

The Kenneth Hudson Award for Institutional Courage and Professional Integrity is given by the European Museum Forum board to a museum, a group or an individual to celebrate courageous museum prac-

tices that challenge and expand common perceptions of the role and responsibilities of museums in society. 33 candidates from 19 countries competed at the European Museum of the Year Awards where 6 museums received awards in different categories.

The EMYA jury awarded the prize to 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory for its holistic and universal approach to human rights, for its contributions to social transformation and democratization and for shedding light on the past while acting for the future.

The recipients, in turn, issued a statement thanking the organizers for giving

them the Hudson Award.

“Each award is a celebration, however for us each award also represents a dilemma. We wish we lived in a world where we only built and created museums that would celebrate life, cherish diversity, co-existence, human rights, peace and acknowledge the courageous efforts of wonderful people while they were alive,” the statement noted. “Remembering and dealing with the past is a sort of resistance and a different form of activism that sparks transformative change within communities. 23.5 acts as a space that encourages people to deal with the past while also functioning as a space for dialogue,

communication and comprehension. Since January 19th 2007, which marks the day when Hrant Dink was killed, our hearts are wounded and we are trying to heal our wounds through our mission and work. 23.5 offers a unique life story - not every life story can be exhibited. But at the same time killing someone doesn't mean that that person is dead. As Hrant Dink's wife Rakel Dink said, each death is a journey to eternity and we are aware how his death produced thousands of seeds.”

They also paid tribute to their namesake, saying “his vision and the values he endorsed are inspiring, encouraging many minds and many hearts.”

Armenian Parliament Speaker ‘Regrets’ Turkish Reaction to Yerevan Monument

By Karlen Aslanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan on Thursday, May 4, voiced regret over Turkey's reaction to a memorial to genocide avengers in Yerevan that he said was erected by the decision of local authorities and did not necessarily reflect Armenia's foreign policy.

Speaking at a press conference in Ankara where he was attending a meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, a regional organization embracing over a dozen countries, including Armenia, Simonyan commented on Turkey's decision to close its airspace for overflights by Armenian airlines.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoglu said on Turkish television earlier this week that banning Armenian airlines from operating flights through Turkish airspace was a response to “Armenia's provocations,” including the recent inauguration in Yerevan of a memorial to participants in Operation Nemesis.

The operation pursued by a clandestine cell of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was a 1920s program of assassinations of Ottoman perpetrators of the 1915 Armenian genocide and Azerbaijani figures responsible for 1918 massacres of Armenians in Baku.

Following the unveiling of the monument in the center in Yerevan on April 25, one day after Armenians in Armenia and around the world marked the 108th anniversary of the Ottoman-era Genocide, the Turkish and Azerbaijani foreign ministries issued statements condemning the event that was

also attended by Yerevan's Deputy Mayor Tigran Avinyan, a senior member of Armenia's ruling Civil Contract party.

Simonyan stressed in Ankara that the decision on the memorial was made by a local government body. “I do not want it to be perceived here as a manifestation of Armenia's foreign policy or as an unfriendly step,” he said, clarifying that the state for-



Operation Nemesis Monument in Yerevan

ign policy in Armenia is carried out by the prime minister and the foreign minister.

“You have all witnessed the decisions made at their level in recent months,” the parliament speaker added.

At the same time, Simonyan said that “if one wants, he can always find excuses for worsening relations.”

“I could, too, find a thousand different reasons for not coming to Turkey. But I am here to tell the Turkish society that Armenia is ready for peace and normalization of relations without preconditions,” the speaker of

the Armenian parliament said.

Simonyan discussed the issue of the closure of airspace to Armenian airlines with his Turkish counterpart Mustafa Sentop when the two met on the sidelines of the international event in Ankara on Thursday.

According to the Armenian parliament's press service, Simonyan expressed hope that his meeting with Sentop would promote a solution to the problem.

Armenia and Turkey embarked on their second attempt in the past decade or so to normalize their historically strained relations in early 2022. The governments of the two countries appointed special envoys who held several rounds of negotiations aimed at paving the way for establishing diplomatic relations and opening the currently closed border.

Since then Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan exchanged messages and had a phone call to discuss prospects of settling relations.

Also, Armenia sent rescuers and humanitarian aid to Turkey when a devastating earthquake struck the country in February, with Ankara temporarily reopening a crossing point at the border with Armenia for the humanitarian supply. Armenia then said it expected Turkey to reopen the border per-

manently at least for third countries' citizens and diplomats in the near future.

Earlier this week, a spokesperson at the US State Department noted “with disappointment” Turkey's announcement that it would suspend overflight permits for Armenia's airlines.

“The agreement that had previously been reached between these two countries to resume air connections had been a very important confidence-building measure not just between these two countries but... for regional stability broadly,” spokesperson Vedant Patel said during a press briefing on May 3.

“It's our sincere hope that Turkey and Armenia can continue to rebuild economic ties and open transportation links as well,” he added.

Official Yerevan did not immediately comment on Turkey's condemnation of the Operation Nemesis monument inauguration in the Armenian capital or its ban on overflights for Armenian airlines that began to affect air traffic still last week.

But in remarks in parliament on Wednesday, May 3, Prime Minister Pashinyan said that the closure of Turkish airspace for Armenian planes was primarily a problem for Armenia, because “those who block our routes experience practically no problems themselves.”

Pashinyan admitted that the decision to erect the monument made months after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh reflected the desire “to avoid being called traitors.”

“But by being always guided by the logic of doing so as not to be called traitors we actually keep betraying the state and national interests of our country,” he said.

Community News

Glendale Unified School District Gender Policy Sparks Divisive Talk

By Camila Castellanos

GLENDALE, Calif. (*Glendale News-Press*) — Glendale Unified School Board of Education (GUSD) members urged decency and respect among meeting attendees and the community at large at the April 18 school board meeting as public speakers crowded the board room to speak on issues regarding gender support plans or the management of files for transgender students.

In the same meeting that saw the board approve resolutions titled “Holocaust Remembrance Day” and “Remembering the Armenian Genocide and Reaffirming a Better World,” a GUSD 5th-grade teacher held up a swastika sign arranged using four transgender flags and another person held a sign calling for the assistant superintendent to leave her position. Counterprotesters held signs that read “No room for hate.”

Glendale Police Department officers were also present, prepared to keep the decorum and escort public speakers who would not leave the dais after their allotted time ended back to their seats or out of the room. After the meeting, police officers were available to accompany some GUSD board members and administrators to their vehicles safely after they had received threatening emails.

Toward the end of an otherwise, routine board meeting that reviewed a textbook change, issued accolades and announced school events, board members reflected on the public speaker comments and urged people to understand the facts when it comes to gender policy — standards set by the California Department of Education.

“It really breaks my heart when I see the audience that I saw earlier today, because the intent that we have as a community is to bring our kids into an environment in which they can learn without hesitation, without pressure, without the fear of not being accepted, of who they are,” said a visibly upset Superintendent Vivian Ekchian.

“And many of us in different settings have felt that not being accepted does not help us do our best. And our intent has always been to offer environments in which every child can do their best. And we as adults have an obligation to find ways to work with each other so that the burden isn’t on our students to feel that there is separation or division among our community on various topics.”

Public speakers varied from sharing personal experiences to political diatribes. A few speakers showed support for a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan, though most expressed distrust or anger over district policy regarding LGBTQ+ students.

see GLENDALE, page 7



Joe Cahaly with Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, pastor of Holy Trinity Church

Teaching in Armenia: An MIT Student's Experience

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Joe Cahaly, a member of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Class of 2024, spoke about “Teaching in Armenia: An MIT Student’s Experience at the TUMO Center” on Sunday, April 30, during “Trinity Talks,” the monthly parishioner-led presentation following church services at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge.

During January, Cahaly, along with 20 fellow MIT students, undergraduates and graduates in all majors, participated in the four-week MIT International Science and Technology Initiative (MISTI) in Armenia. This past summer, he participated in a similar teaching program in Singapore through the MIT-Singapore MISTI program.

In preparation for teaching in Armenia, Cahaly was asked to develop a curriculum on Artificial Intelligence (AI) that he would teach at two TUMO Centers for Creative Technologies. The first two-week “learning lab” was at the flagship TUMO Center in Yerevan and the second two weeks were at the TUMO Center in Dilijan. At each center, the daily, four-hour after-school “learning labs” were held from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The TUMO Centers offer free after-school educational programs for 12- to 18-year-olds. The standard curriculum begins with a “self-learning period” followed by classes taught by TUMO Instructors, Joe explained. Additionally, there are more intensive “learning labs” to which he was assigned and led.

“The students are highly motivated, curious, intelligent and eager to learn. They share a strong work ethic and are invested in learning,” Cahaly commented. Most students were in high school, a few in college. All had prior coding experience, which was a prerequisite for the class.

Most of the students in his class in Yerevan were girls and lived nearby. In Dilijan, however, most were boys who lived in villages and commuted. Some from far away stayed at the TUMO Center. Six students from Artsakh, due to the blockade, were unable to make the journey to join the classes or participate virtually because of lack of electricity. The classes were videoed to be available later.

When asked about resources and materials available for the students, he shared that they were ample, as benefactors are generously providing the financial resources needed. The TUMO Center in Yerevan, founded in 2011 — its flagship location — is presently undergoing a major expansion of its facility to accommodate more students. To date, TUMO Centers serve over 20,000 students with a waiting list. TUMO offers programs throughout Armenia. Some are fully functioning centers including TUMO in Yerevan, Dilijan, Gyumri and Stepanakert. Also, TUMO Boxes, easy-to-move units, low-cost and technically equipped, are located throughout the country to provide access for students from more remote villages.

Impressive as well is that TUMO Centers have also opened in Paris, Beirut, Moscow, Tirana, Berlin, Kyiv, Lyon, with additional centers expected to open in Los Angeles and Portugal. Licensing revenues in international locations contribute to the long-term sustainability of TUMO in Armenia and Artsakh.

Cahaly spoke about the presence of multi-national information and communication technology (ICT) companies in Armenia, naming Pixar and Nvidia as examples. These companies are providing an economic incentive to prompt many to stay in Armenia, he noted.

In addition, he shared that excursions and programs were thoughtfully planned for the MIT students. These included visits to historical sites, monasteries and

see TEACHING, page 7

Glendale, Statewide Leaders Address Rising Anti-Armenian Racism in LA County

LOS ANGELES — Leading LA County elected officials, dignitaries, civic leaders, and community members gathered on Thursday, May 4, for the Truth And Accountability League (TAAL) anti-racism Town Hall at the Glendale Central Library.

TAAL’s town hall, “stand Taal to Hate,” partnered with the LA County Commission on Human Relations’ “LA vs. Hate. Moderated by TAAL’s founder and Chair, Vic Gerami, the event addressed the rise in anti-Armenian hate crimes in LA County, including the anti-Armenian flyers posted in Glendale in March and similar ones in Beverly Hills a month earlier, calling for the massacre of Armenians, and general hate incidents against different groups.

The panel included Glendale Mayor Daniel Brotman, Glendale Police Chief Manuel Cid, Chief of Staff Joseph F. Iniguez from the LA County District Attorney’s Office, State Commissioner Sam Kbushtyan, West Hollywood Mayor Sepi Shyne, and the Executive Director, L.A. County Commission on Human Relations Robin S. Toma, Esq.

The Town Hall was also live-streamed on TAAL’s website, with ONNI Group as the Presenting Sponsor. The panel discussed creating awareness, educating the public, and finding solutions to the rising anti-Armenian racism, Armenophobia, and hate incidents against various minorities in Los Angeles.

“The recent anti-Armenian flyers posted around LA County, home to hundreds of thousands of Armenian-Americans, remind us that we must be vigilant about racism, hate acts, and propaganda. It’s unfathomable that on the heels of the Armenian Genocide anniversary, Armenians are terrorized by flyers around schools and churches that call for the extermination of Armenians,” said Gerami, founder of TAAL.

He added, “But we mustn’t allow the hate of a few to create division, pin us against each other, and get us stuck in the problem. The Truth And Accountability League is focused on the solution. We want to bring together, not only members of the Armenian community, but everyone to create awareness, educate, and find answers. Our panel of leaders and experts will discuss ways to handle malice that aims to victimize, dehumanize, and diminish us. Hate acts affect everyone, regardless of ethnic background, race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. TAAL’s Town Hall is a forum to empower everyone.”

Gerami worked closely with the LA County Commission on Human Relations, its LA vs. Hate program, and executive director Robin S. Toma to produce this first-of-its-kind Town Hall.

“The Armenian-American community is such an essential part of our LA County community, but the amount of discrimination and negative stereotyping they’ve experienced

see RACISM, page 12



COMMUNITY NEWS

Jirayr Sefilian, Armenian Opposition Activist, Visits Washington

WASHINGTON — Jirayr Sefilian, a a Governing Council member of Armenia's National Democratic Alliance (NDA), visited Washington April 9-18 to draw the attention of US policy-makers to the Russian-Armenian relationship, the humanitarian catastrophe in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), and the role NDA can play in bringing Armenia out of the Russian orbit and into closer relations with the West.

NDA was the first political party to raise the Ukrainian flag in Armenia in the aftermath of Moscow's aggression against Kiev.

The Livingston Group (TLG) formally represents NDA and arranged for Sefilian's meetings.

A former Brigade Commander and decorated veteran of the first war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Sefilian resigned from his position in 1998 and rose to prominence for his political activities.

Sefilian met with the following members of Congress and/or their offices: Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Senator Rick Scott (R-FL), Senate Armed Services Committee; Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Rep. Jason Crow (D-CO), House Foreign Affairs Committee; Rep. Keith Self (R-TX), House Foreign Affairs Committee; Rep. Representative Darrell Issa (R-CA), House Foreign Affairs Committee; Rep. Brian Mast (R-FL), House Foreign Affairs Committee; Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), Senior Republican, House Foreign Affairs Committee; Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Co-Chair of Congressional Armenian and Congressional Hellenic Caucuses. In addition, TLG facilitated contacts between NDA and Biden Administration officials.



Jirayr Sefilian with John Bolton

Glendale Unified School District Gender Policy Sparks Divisive Talk

GLENDALE, from page 6

Ray Shelton, the GUSD teacher who held up a swastika sign [which was later confiscated], spoke to his opposition of transgender identities, though he himself identifies as a gay man, he said during public comments.

Shelton's retirement after 25 years of teaching was announced at the meeting, effective June 9. Shelton, who is listed on the GUSD website as a teacher at Mark Keppel Elementary School, has not been on campus since Tuesday, said GUSD Communications Director Kristine Nam. She declined to elaborate, citing personnel privacy policy.

Board member Ingrid Gunnell addressed the hate symbol Shelton displayed, saying, "I just want to say on this Holocaust Remembrance Day, and moving towards Armenian genocide recognition on Monday, that it very much saddens me that there is a swastika in this boardroom today," she said, though praising the "swift action" taken to remove the sign.

Ekchian urged parents or community members who have questions regarding district policy or teachings to reach out directly to a school principal or an administrator.

"I think there are a number of misunderstandings and I do think there are individ-

uals who take advantage of bits and pieces of information and then post it widely into the larger world that creates misunderstandings that harm our children.

"We are in it for the sake of our kids so that they can be successful. But the reality is there are so many misunderstandings or miscommunications put out there to divide this community that we have to fight. We have to come together and find a way to really speak the truth, but speak to advocacy for all children," she said.

Board President Nayiri Nahabedian emphasized the recognition GUSD and its leaders, including Ekchian, have received for their outstanding achievements. She

also warned people to not fall into negative rhetoric.

"It's important to be able to distinguish between myths and facts about what happens at Glendale Unified School District, what is taught at Glendale Unified School District, and how students are treated," she said. "Let us take the time to distinguish myths from facts, and to think about miscommunication and misunderstanding and taking things out of context and using that ... to create more misunderstanding."

Ekchian concluded by encouraging people to practice kindness when engaging in public debate.

"My only request from the community and from everyone [who] participates in this dialogue is let's please try hard to understand each other for the sake of our students so that we can advocate for their rights because they are minors. We are here as adults and we have an obligation to create a better world," she said.

(First published in the April 22 print issue of the *Glendale News-Press*.)



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His Eminence
Archbishop HOVNAN DERDERIAN, Primate
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Teaching in Armenia

TEACHING, from page 6

museums as well attractions such as waterfall hiking. Joe also spoke of exploring Armenia on his own daily, taking a taxi to a site and then walking or hiking back many miles, sharing memorable encounters along the way.

Innovative initiatives both at the TUMO Center and MIT are impacting the lives of students in extraordinary ways. This is an investment in human capital that is strengthening ties and commitment, a win-win.

The "Trinity Talks" reception was hosted by Glenn and Rebecca Tellalian Cahaly, Diana Topjian and Don and Barbara Tellalian.



OBITUARY

Rev. Barkev Darakjian

Dedicated to Evangelical Church

By Ani Darakjian, M.D.

(The Armenian Missionary Association of America [AMAA] announced the passing of Rev. Barkev Darakjian on Thursday, April 6. He leaves behind his wife, Mrs. Agnes Andreassian Darakjian; and daughters Dr. Ani Darakjian (Dr. Nazareth E. Darakjian) and Mrs. Houry Darakjian Vitale (Mr. Michael Vitale). Funeral arrangements are pending.)

My father, Barkev, was the youngest of five boys born to Pastor Nazareth and Mrs. Arousiag Darakjian. Pastor Nazareth died from malaria when my father was 18 months old leaving his mother, Arousiag, to raise five boys on her own. My father is said to have been a fairly chubby school-boy and was called “Tomboulig” or “Tombig.” Many years later he would write a children’s book called *The Adventures of Tombig*, based on his childhood memories.

After father finished elementary school at the Bethel Armenian Evangelical Church of Aleppo, he could not continue his education because of the family’s financial situation. He spent his teenage years being apprenticed first to a tailor and then to a goldsmith, but he was not suited to either of these trades. He subsequently opened a bookstore, which was closer to his heart. He loved to read. His motto was to not sell a book, be it in Armenian or in English, without having read it first. During these years, Barkev stayed close to the church, teaching Sunday school and serving as a youth group leader. His bookstore became the hang out place for the church youth. His friends at church saw in him the potential for a future pastor, and urged him to attend a Bible college, but he had neither the money nor the high school diploma necessary to attend college.

By this time my father had married Armine Andreassian, daughter of Rev. Dikran Andreassian, who was the Chair of the Musa Dagh Defense Council which had defended the population against the Turkish hordes whose aim was to wipe out

Armenians in the area. I am the first child of the couple. Father was not a very good businessman. It has been told that a customer walked into his bookshop and asked the price of an item. Thinking that the man would bargain with him, he gave him an inflated price. The man did not bargain. He paid the money and left with his purchase. Father’s conscience bothered him so much that he ran after the man, apologized for overcharging him and returned the amount he had overcharged.

My mother soon realized that if her husband did not attain his goal of serving the Lord as a pastor, he would be miserable for the rest of his life. She encouraged him to study for, and take the exams for the British high school equivalency test called the GCE. This is where Barkev’s extensive reading and self-education, as well as his wife’s and sister-in-law’s (his present wife’s) tutoring, paid off. He passed the exams and together with my mother, they went to see President Dr. John Markarian at the newly opened Haigazian College in Beirut. Dr. Markarian agreed to give my father a chance and thus he became enrolled as a college freshman at the age of 33. After successfully completing his year at Haigazian College, he took additional exams and was accepted to the American University of Beirut and the Near East School of Theology. He graduated with Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Divinity degrees in 1965, at the age of 40.

After graduation, he became the Director of the Christian Endeavor Society, the youth organization of the churches of Syria and Lebanon, and eventually the editor of its three publications *Chanasser*, *Badanegan Artsakank*, and *Louys*. He was well suited to the position of youth director, because he had so recently been a college student himself. He was loved and respected by the youth whom he served.

Despite the fact that he had grown up in a Turkish-speaking Aintabtsi household, he had acquired a depth and breadth of knowledge in Armenian language, literature, and history, through extensive reading and



self-education. He was asked to fill the position of Armenian language teacher for four upper classes in a local high school. During these years, my father was not the pastor of a particular church. But I remember him getting up early on Sunday mornings, and taking some form of public transportation – since we did not own a car – to preach to shut-ins at the Armenian old age home, or the tuberculosis sanatorium located in the eastern suburbs of Beirut. He would also accept invitations from different churches to preach on special occasions.

In 1974, Barkev was invited to become pastor of the Armenian Congregational Church in Chicago. He was almost 50 years old then. During his 21 years in Chicago, he served not only his church, but the entire Armenian Community. He established close ties with the clergy of the Armenian Apostolic Churches. He taught Armenian language classes at the request of the local AGBU chapter. He mobilized his church to help the Armenian refugees arriving in Chicago from Baku, by providing everything from furniture and clothing, to orientation and help with filling out forms. His love of learning led him at age 60 to attend Mundelein College, a Catholic college where my mother served for many years as Registrar (now part of Loyola University) in Chicago. He subsequently received a Master’s

degree in Religious Studies specializing in Historical Theology.

My father began to write at the age of 15, and his love for literature led him to a career of writing along with his pastoral work. He has written extensively on various subjects, such as, Armenian Evangelical church history, theology, ecclesiology, philosophy, literature, and on issues of educational and national interest. He has translated several mystery and detective story books for young readers into Armenian under the pen-name Never. One of the books that he authored, *The Adventures of Tombig*, won an award for best Armenian children’s book in modern times. His more serious works include *The History of Protestant Thought: From Luther to Our Times*; *Armenian Evangelical Identity: Historical and Theological Perspectives*; *Indispensable Heritage*; and a Prayerbook for worship services.

My father began his service as editor of the FORUM, a bi-lingual quarterly publication of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA), in the 1980s, while he was still in Chicago. After his retirement in 1996, the family moved to Glendale, California, where he continued as editor for a number of years and continued to write articles in the FORUM and other publications, such as the AMAA NEWS and the UACC HERALD.

In 2000, my father became the Founding Pastor of The First Armenian Evangelical Church of Glendale. After losing his wife to leukemia, he married Agnes Andreassian in August of 2004.

Looking at the life of this fatherless and penniless young man who attained his goals of continuing his education and serving God as a minister, one might say that he was lucky, or that he was smart, or that he married the right woman, who worked to support him for many years as he went to school. But we Christians don’t believe in luck. We believe in God’s providential care for us, and “we know that all things work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 *Vartsked gadar, hayrig.*

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

Seeking Summer Intern

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer (mid-July through August). The intern will receive a \$150 weekly stipend provided through the Armenian Students’ Association of America’s Internship Program. The *Mirror* also is looking for interns during the regular year.

The intern should be in college or graduate school and does not necessarily have to be studying journalism. Most likely, the internship will be done long distance, via electronic communications, so location is not an issue (but native speaker knowledge of English remains important).

Aside from writing for the paper and working on the *Mirror* website, the *Mirror* is looking for help in sparking new marketing campaigns and obtain more digital advertising.

If interested, email tcadirector@aol.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com with your resume and tell us of your interests and relevant skills.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Hovsepian School Students Meet with Berj Najarian at Gillette Stadium

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — On Tuesday, May 3, St. Gregory Alfred and Marguerite Hovsepian School students, parents, teachers, and administration visited Gillette Stadium, home of the six-time Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots, in Foxborough, Mass., and met with Berj Najarian, the director of football/head coach administration of the New England Patriots.

Najarian graciously welcomed the 40-member Hovsepian School family from Pasadena, California, at the entrance of the



From left, Berj Najarian, Hovsepian School Coach Sako Karaoghlanian and Shahé Mankerian

stadium and gave a behind the scenes tour of the Patriots organization. The students and parents congregated in the debriefing room of the football players and had an intimate question-and-answer session with Najarian. He encouraged the students to work hard at whatever they do. "People will notice your hard work," he said. He also expressed the joy of working with the Patriots football team and particularly with Coach Bill Belichick. He then led the group of awe-struck students and parents



The 7th and 8th grade Hovsepian School students with Berj Najarian (standing second from the left) at Gillette Stadium

to the field where the championship team practices and plays. The tour concluded by visiting the adjacent office of Mr. Najarian and Coach Belichick where students witnessed the Armenian flag proudly displayed in Coach Belichick's office.

Hovsepian School Principal Shahé Man-

kerian, stated, "I've been doing these trips since 1999, and this is the first time meeting Mr. Najarian and visiting Gillette Stadium. I definitely think this has been one of the highlights of my trips."

Since 2005, Hovsepian School 7th and 8th grade students have visited the city of

Boston on their weeklong trip to the East Coast. By visiting famous landmarks, this year-end trip familiarizes students with the rich history of New England. The journey starts from the city of Boston, makes memorable stops at New York and Philadelphia, and concludes in Washington, D.C.

St. Hagop Annual Madagh Picnic in Racine Set to Take Place June 25

RACINE, WI — This year's annual St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church Madagh Picnic will be held on Sunday, June 25, 2023 at Johnson Park in Racine. The church is now accepting donations and thanks supporters in advance for their generosity.

Donations may be made by cash or check and brought to the church on any Sunday, or by check and mailed to: St. Hagop Armenian Church, 4100 N. Newman Road, Racine, WI 53406.

On-line donations can also be made through VENMO at <https://account.venmo.com/u/sthagoparmenianchurch>.

"On behalf of the St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church, we'd like to thank you in advance for your ongoing support during such challenging times," says Zohrab Khaligian. "We will continue with our Sponsor a Madagh Item program for who-

ever would like to list their donation as a sponsor of a madagh item. If you have questions or are interested in becoming a sponsor, contact Zohrab Khaligian at khaligian@netzero.net.

"We will print any donation and message received by June 1, 2023 on the reverse side of this year's Madagh Menu that is distributed on the day of the event," he adds. In addition, they will post any donation and message received at any time on the Armenian Madagh Picnic Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Armenian-Madagh-Picnic-St-Hagop-Church-Racine-Wisconsin/100082328348415/>

This annual event at St. Hagop Armenian Church, located at 4100 N. Newman Road, Racine, is open to the community/public with free admission.



A scene from years gone by

Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter & The Armenian Mirror-Spectator Present



Yerevan Political Scientist **Suren Sargsyan**



Lecturing on Current
Geopolitical Challenges
Facing Armenia

**Friday, May 19
7:30 p.m.**

Baikar Building
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Complimentary admission
For more information, email
tcadirector@aol.com or
telephone 617-924-4455

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. He is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan.

Dr. Taner Akçam Speaks at Providence Genocide Commemoration

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee of Rhode Island hosted two important events commemorating the 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on April 29-30.

The weekend began with a panel discussion with Dr. Taner Akçam on Saturday, April 29, at the Providence Marriott Downtown. Akçam was joined by panelists consisting of *Armenian Weekly* columnist Stepan Piligian, who also served as moderator, George Aghjayan, director of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Archives and member of the ARF Central Commit-

tee of the Eastern US, and Hrag Arakelian, chairman of the ARF Providence "Kristapor" Gomideh and member of the Armenian National Committee of RI.

One does not have to look too far to see the atrocities taking place today in Artsakh and to some extent Armenia by Turkey's ally Azerbaijan. Following the lecture, the entire panel weighed in on two specific topics of interest: how Turkish denial actively manifests itself today as it relates to the diaspora, Armenia, and Artsakh and how to respond to denial campaigns with advocacy and what are the challenges. This proved to be an educational session where the panel was able to bridge the past with current events today.

The afternoon concluded with a lively question and answer segment with the audience's participation.

On Sunday, April 30, in the Sanctuary of Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, the 108th Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide took place with a service of Remembrance of the Holy Martyrs with Melanie Zeitounian as emcee. A large procession commenced with flag bearers, clergy, invited guests and wreath presenters surrounded by able-bodied honor guards as a beautiful hymn was sung by choir members of the three local Armenian churches under the capable direction of Konstantin Petrossian.

Officiating clergy Rev. Fr. Kapriel Nazarian, Rev. Shnork Souin, Rev. Dr. Ara Heghinian, and Rev. Hagop Manjelian conducted a service for the Holy Mar-

tyrs with the able assistance of deacons and service participants from Armenian Evangelical Church, Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church and Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church. It began with "The Lord's Prayer" ("Hayr Mer") being recited by the clergy and all those present; readings from St Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and the Holy Gospel according to St. Paul; the Litany of The Saints and concluding with the singing of "The Lord's Prayer" by the



Dr. Taner Akçam

tee of the Eastern US, and Hrag Arakelian, chairman of the ARF Providence "Kristapor" Gomideh and member of the Armenian National Committee of RI.

The discussion centered on past and present Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide. Akçam shared a slide presentation and presented a strong and convincing argument that Turkey's denial on Genocide fuels the politics of continuing aggression, both inside and outside of Turkey today.



The Armenian Genocide memorial in Providence.

choir and congregation. In addition, soloist Joanne Mouradjian sang a beautiful rendition of *Hrashatsan Bagoosmamp* to the Holy Martyrs.

Akçam also served as the keynote speaker where he delivered a riveting speech to an audience of approximately 250 individuals. The focus of Akçam's address was to replicate what the Jewish people did with Nazi Germany on reparations and restitution. With President Biden's statement on Armenian Remembrance Day acknowledging the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman authorities on April 24, 1915,

Akçam is a historian and sociologist and one of the first Turkish intellectuals to acknowledge and openly discuss the Armenian Genocide. In 2002, Clark University established the first-ever endowed chair in Modern Armenian History and Armenian Genocide Studies through the generosity of the Kaloosdian and Mugar families, and in 2008, Akçam became the first Kaloosdian Mugar Professor. An internationally recognized human rights activist, he has been an outspoken advocate of democracy and free expression since his student days at Middle Technical University in Ankara.



Scouts at the Armenian Genocide commemoration program

now is the time to focus on reparations and restitution with Turkey. Following the guest speaker were the Armenian School children of Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church and Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church where they sang *Ov Hayots Kacher/Hayer Miatsek* under the direction of Director Raffi Rachdouni.

There were a few elected officials invited to speak at the Commemoration to say a few words including: the 39th Mayor of Providence, Brett Smiley who welcomed the community to the City of Providence, Gov. Dan McKee, and United States Senator Jack Reed. There were several other political leaders in the audience who were recognized individually.

Akçam received his doctorate in 1996 from the University of Hannover. He moved to the United States in 2000 and served as a visiting scholar at the University of Michigan for one year followed by visiting associate professor of history at the University of Minnesota from 2002-2008. Currently, he is the inaugural director of the Armenian Genocide Research

Program housed at the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute. Dr. Akçam has authored many books on the Armenian Genocide and most recently released "The Genocide of the Christian Populations in the Ottoman Empire and its Aftermath (1908-1923) (Mass Violence in Modern History)".

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Holy Resurrection Parishioners Make Mini Pilgrimage to St. Nersess Seminary

ARMONK, N.Y. — On Sunday, April 30, members of the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection, (ACHR) of New Britain, Conn., led by Rev. Haroutiun Sabounjian, went on a pilgrimage to St. Nersess Seminary. Sabounjian stressed that he had deliberately designated the trip as a pilgrimage and not simply a visit, as a pilgrimage is made to a holy or sacred place, which St. Nersess is for all Armenians.

Almost 30 parishioners made the trip representing a good cross section of ACHR membership. A number of parish council members also attended and participated. All attended Badarak, celebrated by Sabounjian, in the intimate and stunning St. Hagop chapel, where they were lovingly greeted by Rev. Mardiros Chevian, dean of the seminary since 2012, having previously served from 1984 to 1991. Chevian explained the meanings of several of the icons, paintings and sacred fixtures of the chapel and pointed out that it does not usually contain the folding chairs made available to the visiting parishioners as it is used primarily by the seminarians in the course of their instructions and devotions.

Adrienne Damian, longtime choir director, led the talented ACHR choir members during the service while Sabounjian was

quired in New Rochelle. In 2012 the Board of Directors approved the purchase of the current site in Armonk.

Father Mardiros delighted the audience with his description of the challenges and opportunities of converting the current property, which had been a farm, into the current use. It combines the majesty and strength of Armenian themed main building with the charm, quaintness, and early American look of the ancillary structures. Through the generosity of donors, large and small, the seminary has been able to grow and carry out its mission as an independent entity. He explained the corporate structure of the Seminary and how a large number of very energetic and generous individuals and entities nourish its growth and sustenance and the continuing challenges of doing so. St Nersess is an independent entity and is responsible for its own fund raising. He further described the administration and faculty, courses of study and numerous programs hosted by the seminary during the course of the year, including conferences, retreats, lectures and other gatherings. Following his talk, Chevia presented a gift of a wooden olive wood cross from Bethlehem to each of the attendees and responded to a number of questions.



The participants of the pilgrimage at St. Nersess Seminary

assisted by Sub Deacons Michael Connors and Jordan Paré and Altar Server Leland Oxendine. The impressive voices of seminarians complemented the singing of the choir. Yerezkin Lucine adeptly served as organist. Elisa Griego offered the Scripture readings and Deacon Garen Hamamjian a seminarian, gave an eloquent and moving homily.

Following the Badarak, all enjoyed a sumptuous lunch prepared by the seminary staff. Following the luncheon Chevian gave a talk on the history and purpose of the seminary, infused with his unique style of combining a learned and limitless knowledge of the Armenian Church and the purpose of the seminary with his traditional wry humor with frequent references to several of those in attendance. As he often does, Chevian referred to the visiting priest, who is a graduate of the seminary, as one of the most impressive seminarians ever to have attended.

Chevian explained that the seminary had actually been founded in Evanston, Ill. in 1962 to serve the Eastern and Western Dioceses (The Primate of the Eastern Diocese serves as Board President and the Primate of the Western Diocese as Vice President) and today the Primate of the Armenian Church of Canada serves as ex officio Second Vice President of the Board of Directors. The late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan conceived of the founding of the seminary and became its first dean. The seminary was named after one of the most revered fathers of the Armenian Church, St. Nersess Shnorhali. The seminary moved to New York in 1967 and became affiliated with St. Vladimir Orthodox Theology Seminary. A property was ac-

quired in New Rochelle. In 2012 the Board of Directors approved the purchase of the current site in Armonk.

Those in attendance were able to interact and learn more about the current seminarians, all of whom gave generously of their time and all of whom had inspiring backgrounds. Chevian led a tour of the facilities, undeterred even though sometimes interrupted by cloudbursts. The “pilgrims” from New Britain, to a person — those who had visited previously and those who were there for the first time — came away with a deeper understanding of the significance of the seminary and the central role it plays in the Armenian Church. (The seminary has produced more than 50 priests, including four primates, and many lay leaders, since its creation.) All expressed gratitude to Father Mardiros for his keen insights and warm hospitality and to Father Haroutiun for conceiving and planning the pilgrimage.

Gary Hovhannessian, chairperson of the ACHR parish council, stated that all in attendance were inspired to learn of how much thought and planning goes into the seminary process and further that “Father Mardiros is a gem—a true gift and inspiration—in our Armenian church circles.”

Father Haroutiun summed up the day by stating that, “It was truly a blessing to extend the worship experience of our parish beyond the confines of our sanctuary walls, and in joining in prayer at St. Nersess Seminary with the seminary community, to be inspired by the palpable holiness of this precious institution of our diocese; being reinvigorated in the Lord’s sacred mission for us as children of the Armenian Church to serve the community of New Britain in his love.”

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armath Laboratories Are Coming to America: Armenia's Engineering Lab School Takes On a Global Scale

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

GLENDALE — Perhaps appropriately, the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE), an enterprise to foster the progress of high technologies in Armenia, came into being with the new millennia, in 2000. Back then, Armenia's economic recovery was just picking up, and the new group sought opportunities to make the country the Silicon Valley of the region. By 2011, UATE came up with the vision of opening engineering laboratory schools for Armenian children to be known as Armaths. In a dozen years, Armath branches were established in dozens of settlements of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as in Georgia, Kuwait, Germany, India, and Bangladesh.

In some circumstances, the Armath engineering school labs function under the auspices of local community organizations (as in France and Kuwait); in other cases, foreigners basically purchase the Armenian brand to set up their own Armath schools.

"We provide the concept and the curriculums that they adapt to their requirements and circumstances," Lilit Haroutyunian, the PR manager, said in an e-communication commenting on franchising the Armenian brand in foreign countries.

UATE has effectively cooperated with several Armenian-American IT companies like Sada, ServiceTitan, Disqo, BluIP, Zero Systems, as well as VMWare, with the lat-



Children at the opening of Armath in Glendale, California

ter becoming a partner in establishing Armath engineering schools.

After setting up offices in Europe and several countries in the East, Armath came to the United States last month by opening the first Armath lab school in Glendale, CA. "This is an important beginning to

launch the program in the world's second most Armenian-populated center," noted Hayk Chobanian, the executive director of UATE, at the opening ceremony.

Armath was established at the Academy USA Center of Glendale, in close cooperation with [AESA](#) (Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America) in the presence of a delegation from UATE's headquarters in Armenia, their American partners, and local Armenian community representatives. As Hayk Chobanian noted, Armath has successfully become a pan-Armenian brand and has effectively gained international recognition. He was, he continued, sure that the opening of future laboratories will not be delayed. Council-member and former Mayor of Glendale Ardy Kassakhian was present at the event.

After Glendale, the UATE delegation visited and held meetings in Cupertino, at the heart of Silicon Valley, and at St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco. There are 622 Armath engineering laboratories around the world at this stage.

An accompanying video at [mirrorspectator.com](#) presents snapshots of the opening of the first Armath laboratory in Glendale.



At the opening ceremony in Glendale, California

ARF of Boston Commemorates Armenian Independence Anniversary

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Revolutionary Federation of Boston invites the members of the community to an in-person event celebrating the 105th anniversary of Armenia's independence. This free and open event will be held at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown) on Friday, May 19, at 7 p.m.

This event, hosted by Nanor Nerkizian, will feature Hagop Der Khatchadurian, the Chairman of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Bureau and the President of the Armenian National Committee International. The event will also feature performances by the Armenian Youth Chorus of Boston under the directorship of Artur Veranian.

Der Khatchadurian has been a member of the ARF Bureau since 2004, having been elected as the Bureau Chairperson in 2019. Previously, he had served at local, regional, and national levels in New York, Montreal, Laval, Eastern United States, and Canada, respectively. For his longstanding service to the Armenian nation, Catholicos Aram I has awarded him the Cilician Prince title and medal.

Touching upon the momentous occasion of the establishment of the first republic against all odds in those years, Mr. Der Khatchadurian will discuss the need for heightened vigilance and renewed esprit de corps on the part of the Armenians worldwide to rise yet again. Today, the Armenian nation, facing enemies from many sides, is at a critical juncture. Setbacks from military, demographic, and diplomatic losses in Artsakh and Armenia have given way to despair and detachment, further compounded by a lack of Armeno-centric policies and leadership by the Armenian authorities. However, the Armenian nation has weathered stronger storms. It must regroup and act now with vigilance and dedication toward restoring the nation's security and dignity and ensuring its long-term survival.

For all questions and additional information, contact the ARF of Boston at sardarabad@arfeastusa.com.

Glendale, Statewide Leaders Address Rising Anti-Armenian Racism in LA County

RACISM, from page 6

is too often understated because it is under-reported," said Robin S. Toma, Executive Director of the LA County Commission on Human Relations. "I look forward to sharing the data we collect on acts of hate in our county, and most importantly, what we are doing with LA vs. Hate to increase reporting and eradicate hate in all our cities and neighborhoods."

Glendale Mayor Daniel Brotman said, "I am proud to be the Mayor of Glendale, a city rich with diversity, including one of the largest Armenian diaspora communities in the world. The Jewel City has zero tolerance for racism, hate acts, and defamation. I strongly condemn the recent anti-Armenian flyers and work with Glendale Police and community leaders to find the perpetrator."

He continued, "I'm honored to be a panelist for the Truth And Accountability League's Town Hall. I applaud Vic Gerami and his team for launching a community outreach campaign to create awareness, ed-

ucate, and empower not only the residents of Glendale but all of LA County."

"I look forward to participating in the Truth and Accountability League Town Hall in May. Coming together to discuss hate, accountability, and transparency is a powerful act of solidarity and progress. This will be a great opportunity to educate our community on the efforts law enforcement is making to address these challenges, as well as to learn, share, and work together towards a more equitable future," said Manuel Cid, Chief of Police, Glendale Police Department.

The audience had a chance to submit questions in writing before the start of the town hall. Gerami read a few of the questions and allowed the panelists to answer them.

"As district attorney of Los Angeles County, home to more than 200,000 Armenians, I'm immensely proud to represent the largest Armenian population in the United States and the greatest number outside of Armenia itself," District Attorney George

Gascón said. "Our Armenian community makes tremendous academic, artistic, altruistic, and many other contributions to our region."

He continued, "These hate-filled flyers that incite violence are abhorrent and must be condemned. My office takes hate crimes very seriously, filing 86 percent of the hate crime cases referred to us, far above the statewide average of 54 percent. I commend TAAL for becoming an antidote for the poison that is racism and holding this important Town Hall to promote equality and protect human rights."

CA State Commissioner Sam Khushyan, an Armenian-American, believes in tackling the problem head-on. He's been a long-time community organizer and Mayor Karen Bass' Transition Team member.

"It's been shocking to see anti-Armenian flyers advocating Genocide against Armenians in Glendale and across LA County. We must all condemn this bigotry in the strongest terms. While our families and

loved ones in Armenia and Artsakh are under assault by Azerbaijan, LA County's Armenian community is being terrorized by hate, defamation, and propaganda," said Kbushtyan.

West Hollywood Mayor Sepi Shyne, who has an impressive track record for supporting the Armenian community, including sponsoring Gerami's TAAL resolution for West Hollywood to formally recognize the Republic of Artsakh in 2021 and condemning Azerbaijan's blockade of Artsakh and ethnic cleansing of 120,000 Armenians. She said, "I am honored to participate in the Truth And Accountability League's Town Hall and be a part of a panel with distinguished LA County leaders. As a person of color, a woman, and a lesbian, I know racism all too well. I've seen the damage caused by hate crimes, defamation, and dehumanization of different communities. So, it's important for me to speak up, create awareness, and show solidarity while there's been an increase in anti-Armenian hate acts in Los Angeles."



Arts & Culture

Artsakh's Drama Comes To Germany

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WIESBADEN, Germany — As the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, caused by Azerbaijan's blockade of the lifeline Lachin corridor to Armenia, continues, news of the plight of its Armenian population seeps through now and then in the German media, albeit in all-too-brief form. But on April 22, the reality of the crisis occupied center stage in a theater in Wiesbaden, the capital of the German federal state Hessen. There, in the Georg Buch House, a capacity crowd of 80 theater goers, mainly from the local German-Armenian community, attended a performance of the monodrama, "My Family in My Suitcase," which portrays the plight of a family in the contested region.

Starring Narine Grigoryan, prize-winning actress, director, and co-author with Sara Nabandyan of the piece, the hour-long play tells the story of a family with three children in Nagorno-Karabakh. When an opportunity arises to have one family member flee the war-torn area, they decide it should be the young Narinka. Her grandfather goes to the airport every day in hopes of finding a place for her in the helicopter which should take her to Armenia and safety, but to no avail: too many wound-



Narine Grigoryan in "My Family in My Suitcase"

ed soldiers, handicapped persons, the aged, and the very young, are seeking to escape as well. While her grandfather struggles to arrange her flight, Narinka remains behind, alone in the car, alone with her thoughts, torn between fond memories of the past, and dreams — but also fears — of the future. Her father, cast as the hero of the tale, ends up in an Azerbaijan prison.

Packed with suspense and emotion, the story is not all fiction, but is based on real events experienced by the family members of Narine Grigoryan. The Honored Artist of the Republic of Armenia completed see DRAMA, page 17



Mary and her eldest grandchild, Andranik, the author's father

Recovered Testimony Brings Light, More Questions, to an Armenian Family

By Sedda Antekelian

Over the past month, for the first time, I listened to the testimony of my late great-grandmother, Mary Antekelian, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. The interview is an audio recording, but I could picture the conversation as if I were in the room — my grandma, Sirvard Antekelian, sitting by her mother-in-law's side, interjecting throughout the oral history interview to make sure that Mary, then around 81, answered questions clearly and with historical accuracy.

I did not know until a few months ago that my great-grandmother had recorded testimony as part of the Richard G. Hovannisian Oral History Collection, which consists of more than 1,000 audio interviews of Armenian Genocide survivors, recorded under the direction of the esteemed UCLA professor starting in the 1970s. Mary Antekelian recorded her testimony on February 17, 1985. She passed away on August 1, 1986, just a little more than a year before I was born.

USC Shoah Foundation added the Hovannisian Collection to its Visual History Archive in 2018 and has since been working to digitize and index the testimonies. Upon learning that my great grandmother's testimony had become available, I could not wait to listen to her story and hear her voice for the first time. And, adding to my surprise, I could also hear the voice of my Grandma, Sirvard, which I had not heard since her passing in 2008.

The way in which Mary spoke and the dialogue between her and Grandma were so familiar to me. In fact, over and over while I listened to the testimony, many of my questions were preempted by my Grandma's demands for clarification. It was as if she could hear the questions that I would also ask 40 years later. My Grandma and I were very close, and I think I owe my deep interest in studying and teaching about my Armenian heritage, in part, to her.

It was following in Grandma's footsteps that I was called into the field of education. In my role as Learning and Development Specialist at USC Shoah Foundation, I develop educational resources and facilitate workshops for teachers worldwide, presenting effective strategies for how to teach with testimony to help students understand the history of the Armenian Genocide from various perspectives.

I am also a doctoral candidate of USC Rossier's Global Executive Doctor of Education program. With the knowledge and experience I have gained, I hope to continue to deepen my contribution to the field of genocide education.

Yet, even with my full immersion in Armenian history, I have never known much about my own family's history, especially on my father's side, though I have always been eager to learn more. After listening to my great-grandmother's 90-minute testimony, recorded in Armenian, I came away with both more information and more questions than before.

Born in about 1904 in the town of Gaziantep, Turkey (at that time in the Ottoman Empire), Mary Belamjian was the second eldest child of six, born into a loving family.

Her testimony revealed that her father, whom she described as pious and gentle, was a tailor specializing in the production of intricate textiles and garments who had converted the family from the Armenian Apostolic faith to Catholicism. I was raised following the traditions of both the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Protestant Church, and had not known until now that Catholicism had played a part in my family's history. I also learned that the Ottomans shut down the French Catholic school

see SHOAH, page 14

Cesar Gueikian Appointed President, Interim CEO of Gibson

By Jackson Maxwell

Gibson, the guitar manufacturing giant, announced that its Board of Directors has appointed Cesar Gueikian, formerly the company's Brand President, as its new President and Interim CEO.

The leadership change marks the end of James "JC" Curleigh's tenure as the guitar giant's CEO.

"I am honored to take on this important role with a company that means so much to me," Gueikian said in a statement. "Gibson has shaped sound for the last 130 years, and we now have the opportunity to drive the future of music and touch people's lives for the next 130 years."

"We have an obligation to continue innovating across instruments, sound and media and to continue inspiring fans and artists of all levels to create music."

Gueikian first joined the company in October 2018 as its Chief Merchant Officer. He — along with Curleigh and Gibson's Director of Brand Experience, Mark Agnesi — was part of a new leadership team at the company that emerged following the toppling of its long-tenured former CEO, Henry Juskiewicz.



Cesar Gueikian

Juskiewicz's reign was controversial, and its later period saw the introduction of new product features that proved polarizing, and ultimately culminated in the company's 2018 bankruptcy.

Rising to the new role of Brand President in 2021, Gueikian emerged as one of the public faces of Gibson.

"We are transitioning to new leadership at a time of strength to ensure the company continues its momentum and is well-positioned to execute on its next phase of growth," said Nat Zilkha, chairman of Gibson's Board of Directors, in a statement.

"Cesar has played a huge role in the company's recent success, including securing critical artist partnerships and overseeing the evolution of many of our most iconic product lines, and the Board has full confidence in his leadership."

"On behalf of the Board, I want to thank JC for helping to return Gibson to its status as an iconic brand over the last five years," Zilkha continued.

"It has been a privilege to lead Gibson, and I'm tremendously proud of what we accomplished as a team," added Curleigh in a statement of his own. "I am ready for my next challenge."

We'll be keen to see what Gueikian brings to the table, but for now — as evidenced by the fact that the company released new 80s Flying V and Explorer models the very day it announced Gueikian's promotion — it certainly seems that the company will continue apace...



ARTS & CULTURE

Recovered Testimony Brings Light to an Armenian Family

SHOAH, from page 13

Mary attended as the First World War began in 1914.

At the beginning of 1915, Armenian men who served in the Ottoman army were disarmed and forced to work hard labor under brutal and unbearable conditions. Mary's father was one of them. In her testimony, she shares that after a few weeks he managed to escape and then spent several months evading capture as he traveled back home to his family.

While Mary's father had been away, official orders from the leading Ottoman Young Turk government Committee of Union and Progress called for the deportations of Armenians starting in the eastern Ottoman provinces by the spring of 1915 and then extending to regions across Anatolia and Cilicia—which included Gaziantep—by that summer.

In 1914 about 30,000 Armenians — some 4,000 families — lived in Gaziantep. From the testimony, I gathered that Mary's mother was able to secure her family an exemption from the deportations, possibly because as tailors they could contribute to the war effort by committing to sew military uniforms. When Mary's father returned, close to a year after he was drafted into the Ottoman Army, he stayed in hiding in the house helping the family sew uniforms.

Mary shares that only a few other local Armenian families were also spared, as their skills and craftsmanship were deemed useful to the government. However, thousands were violently sent away in several waves of deportations to either the deserts of Dayr-al-Zawr, the region of Hama, Homs and Selimiye or the Jebel Druz region, in southern Syria and areas of present-day Jordan. Mary remembers that only a few Armenians returned to Gaziantep after the war.

Out of an estimated population of close to 2 million Armenians in the Ottoman Em-

pire in 1914, around 1.5 million Armenians were killed during the Genocide, mostly in 1915 and 1916 but continuing even after. Today, Armenians make up a small percentage of Turkey's minority population.

Mary expresses heartache reflecting on the loss of other family members and neighbors. I had assumed Mary had been orphaned during the Genocide, so I was shocked and heartened to hear that her parents and siblings survived.



Mary Antekelian with her husband Yeghia, and first cousins, Levon and Avetis Belamjian

While listening to her testimony, it was also endearing to learn the story of how Mary and my great-grandfather, Yeghia Antekelian, became engaged. Initially, when Yeghia's family had asked Mary's father for her hand, he had refused, since Mary was only 16. However, Yeghia continued to show up for months at their home every day until, exasperated and worn

down, Mary's father agreed to let them marry.

They were engaged in 1920, but a new war broke out in Gaziantep between Turkish Nationalists and the French Army who occupied the region. The Armenian community, including Mary and Yeghia's families, were forced out of the region during the Siege of Aintab (Antep). The couple finally reunited and wed in Aleppo, Syria, in 1921. Shortly after, they moved to Al-

Levon and Sirvard and their sons immigrated to Los Angeles in 1976, with Mary following in 1981 with her son Gevork and his family.

Though my Grandma and Grandpa have both passed away, they left behind a treasure trove of family photos.

On a recent Sunday evening, I visited my Uncle Hovik, hoping to rummage through these old photographs. I walked into his house to find that he, my aunt and my cousins already had the albums stacked on the dining room table and photos piled all around them.

I joined the expedition into family history. We passed around photos, laughing at familiar faces from a different era, and wondered at faces no one could name. My uncle and aunt shared memories about the photos—funny, sad, and heartwarming stories that my cousins and I had never heard.

Around that dining room table, I asked my uncle if he was ready to listen to some of the testimony. Yes, he said, he was. As I played a clip from my laptop—voices recorded nearly 40 years ago about events that occurred more than 100 years ago—I watched this man, who has the biggest heart, transported back in time, just as I had been.

More than a century after the Genocide, Armenian families still live with its reverberations. We inherited trauma, we inherited fear, we inherited a sense of indignity that our trauma was not recognized or honored.

But we also inherited a passionate and deep commitment to our culture, to our history, to remembrance, and to family.

(Sedda Antekelian is USC Shoah Foundation's Senior Learning and Development. She is a fourth-generation survivor of the Armenian Genocide. This article was originally published on the USC Shoah Foundation website.)

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St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall 22001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield, MI Cosponsored by the Cultural Society of Armenians from Istanbul, and AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School 7 pm; for more info call 248-505-6159	Cosponsored with Holy Trinity Armenian Church 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA For info call 617-924-4455 7:30 pm	Tekeyan Center 825 Manoogian St. Saint-Laurent, Canada 520/ticket, call 514 747-6680 8 pm

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MUSIC BY KOMITAS, KHACHATURIAN, MANSURIAN, KHOSROVIDUKHT, MIRZOYAN, SHOSTAKOVICH, SCHUBERT



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Downshiftology - Healthy & Gluten-Free

Lisa Bryan: SHAKSHUKA

“Shakshuka is an easy, healthy breakfast recipe (or any time of day recipe) popular in Israel and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa. It’s a simple combination of simmering tomatoes, onions, garlic, spices and gently poached eggs. Essentially, eggs in tomato sauce. It’s nourishing, filling, and one recipe I guarantee you’ll make time and again – whether it’s for breakfast, lunch or dinner,” says Lisa Bryan, the talented recipe developer and food blogger at Downshiftology.

Shakshouka, also spelled shakshuka or chakchouka) is a Maghrebi dish of eggs poached in a sauce of tomatoes, olive oil, peppers, onion and garlic, commonly spiced with cumin, paprika and cayenne pepper. According to Joan Nathan, American cookbook author and newspaper journalist, shakshouka originated in Ottoman North Africa in the mid-16th century after tomatoes were introduced to the region by Hernán Cortés as part of the Columbian exchange. Many variations of the basic sauce are possible, varying in spice and sweetness. Some cooks add preserved lemon, salty sheep milk cheeses, olives, harissa or a spicy sausage such as chorizo or merguez.

“Because eggs are the main ingredient, it is often on breakfast menus in English-speaking countries, but in the Arab world as well as Israel,

it is also a popular evening meal, and like hummus and falafel, is a Levantine regional favorite. On the side, pickled vegetables and North African sausage called merguez might be served, or simply bread, with mint tea.”

“The first time I had shakshuka was years ago on a trip to Egypt with my mother. I remember instantly loving the meal and the simple yet bold flavors and spices. So when I recently visited Israel, where shakshuka is almost a national dish, it was the meal I was most eager to dive into, once again. I spent two weeks traveling throughout Israel (on the most glorious trip) and was able to enjoy shakshuka many times over. To be honest, I considered it ‘research’ so that I could bring you an authentic, Tel Aviv-inspired rendition.”

“Spices may vary in this dish, but you’ll commonly find paprika, cumin and chili powder, along with fresh garlic. Though you can always add cayenne pepper if you’d like to heat it up,” says Lisa. “The photo below is one shakshuka I enjoyed in Tel Aviv. How attractive is that single-serving portion served up in a



mini sauté pan? Shakshuka with fresh squeezed juice and a side of fruit is a perfect meal.”

Lisa loves healthy foods, and foods from around the world made with fresh, simple and seasonal ingredients. She is the author of the best-selling cookbook, *Downshiftology: Healthy Meal Prep Cookbook*, 100+Make-Ahead Recipes and *Quick-Assembly Meals* published in 2022. Her cookbook is inspirational yet approachable, with easy prepping methods that will give you the feel-good meals you (and your family) have been looking for this season.

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 teaspoons paprika
1 teaspoon cumin
1/4 teaspoon chili powder
1 28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes
6 large eggs
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 small bunch fresh cilantro, chopped
1 small bunch fresh parsley, chopped

PREPARATION:

Heat olive oil in a large sauté pan on medium heat. Add the chopped bell pepper and onion and cook for 5 minutes or until the onion becomes translucent.

Add garlic and spices and cook an additional minute. Pour the can of tomatoes and juice into the pan and break down the tomatoes using a large spoon. Season with salt and pepper and bring the sauce to a simmer.

Use your large spoon to make small wells in the sauce and crack the eggs into each well. Cover the pan and cook for 5-8 minutes, or until the eggs are done to your liking.

Garnish with chopped cilantro and parsley.

PREP TIME: 10 mins

COOK TIME: 20 mins

TOTAL TIME: 30 mins

SERVINGS: 6 servings

Lisa’s Tips:

“If you’re not dairy-free, crumbled feta or goat cheese on top is a delicious addition. Traditionally it’s also served with pita, but I love to serve it with slices of avocado. Many photos online show shakshuka cooked in a cast iron pan. Tomatoes are acidic and may erode the seasoning on your cast iron pan as well as dull the finish. You may also get a slight metallic flavor to the dish. So I recommend not taking any chances and cooking it in a stainless steel pan.”

References:

1. Nathan, Joan (2017). *A Culinary Exploration of Jewish Cooking from Around the World: A Cookbook*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing. p. 16. ISBN 9780385351157. Shakshuka was born in Ottoman North Africa in the mid-sixteenth century.”

2. Clifford-smith, Stephanie (2011-06-07). <<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/restaurants-and-bars/three-of-a-kind--shakshouka-20110603-1flpc>> “Three of a kind ... shakshouka”. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney_Morning_Herald> Sydney Morning Herald. <<https://web.archive.org/web/20170808074827/http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/restaurants-and-bars/three-of-a-kind--shakshouka-20110603-1flpc>> Archived from the original on 2017-08-08. Retrieved 2017-08-07.

Also see: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakshouka>

For this recipe, go to: <https://downshiftology.com/recipes/shakshuka/>

For this video, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=3AC8thsvwW4&embeds_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fdownshiftology.com%2F&feature=emb_logo

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By prepping a handful of healthy ingredients at the start of the week, Lisa learned that she could enjoy a variety of meals and snacks without getting bored. And she found she could control what she ate with more clarity: It became easy to eat more vegetables and simple proteins, eliminate processed foods and gluten (to manage her celiac disease), and reduce refined sugar. Her debut cookbook is packed with 100+ simple and ingenious big-batch recipes that can either be frozen or repurposed into totally different, delicious meals.

For more Middle Eastern recipes, see:

<https://downshiftology.com/recipes/shakshuka/#search/q=middle%20eastern>

For Lisa’s easy and healthy food videos, go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Downshiftology>

You may also like Orange Shakshuka made with butternut squash at: <https://downshiftology.com/recipes/orange-shakshuka/>

To order Lisa’s cookbook, go to: <https://downshiftology.com/cookbook/>

Connect at:

<https://twitter.com/downshiftology>

Alexandra Hedison:

Capturing the Photographic Moment And Everything in Between

HEDISON, from page 1

pioneered by artists such as Maurice Tabard and Christian Schad, and by the Belgian artist Pierre Cordier who coined the term in the 1950s. Chemigrams do not require an initial image or photo to be developed. Instead, the images are produced in the darkroom by chemicals and light as they interact with black-and-white photographic paper, a form of painting with chemicals, if you will. Hedison uses clear packing tape, metallic paint, and varnish as “forms of resistance” before running the paper through the chemical wash. She then prints the images made by silver metallic paint initially meant to block the chemical process from occurring. Hence the photographer is unsure what colors and lines will appear once the work leaves the darkroom. Hedison’s use of chemigrams was initially a response to COVID-19 isolation in 2020: in the dark with only paper and chemical bath, the hidden/invisible gesture of the artist becomes part of the process itself. In doing so Hedison perhaps paradoxically reproduces the very essence of photography, which is to capture a moment, place and time that is as unique as it is arbitrary.



ABI_22

In the series at Von Lintel gallery, one marvels at the amazing variety of colors, the alternation between curve (ABI_54) and straight edge (ABI_039). The dizzying, sheer number of shapes in the brown hued ABI-056 (think: batik on speed) make for a geometric delight, while the more modular, box-like configurations in ABI_22 and ABI_23 remind one of mitochondrial cells, even perhaps rectangular-shaped spider webs after rainfall. As Hedison states elsewhere: “My work is drawn from the in between, the unfolding experience between the knowable and uncertain. It is as brief as it is infinite.” It is the “in betweenness” that fascinates the viewer, in both time, shape and form. Hedison’s fixed process in time, a nanosecond when flux is arrested to produce unique forms and colors that even she cannot anticipate. In a sense this does away with the concept of the artist as God or almighty creator. “The element of chance in this process intrigued me and kept me fascinated,” Hedison averred in a recent discussion, before going on to explain that

“without the instrumentality of the camera, art making in the darkroom has been both a self-discovery and self-creation — a way for me to enter into the unknown and attempt to articulate the unfamiliar.”

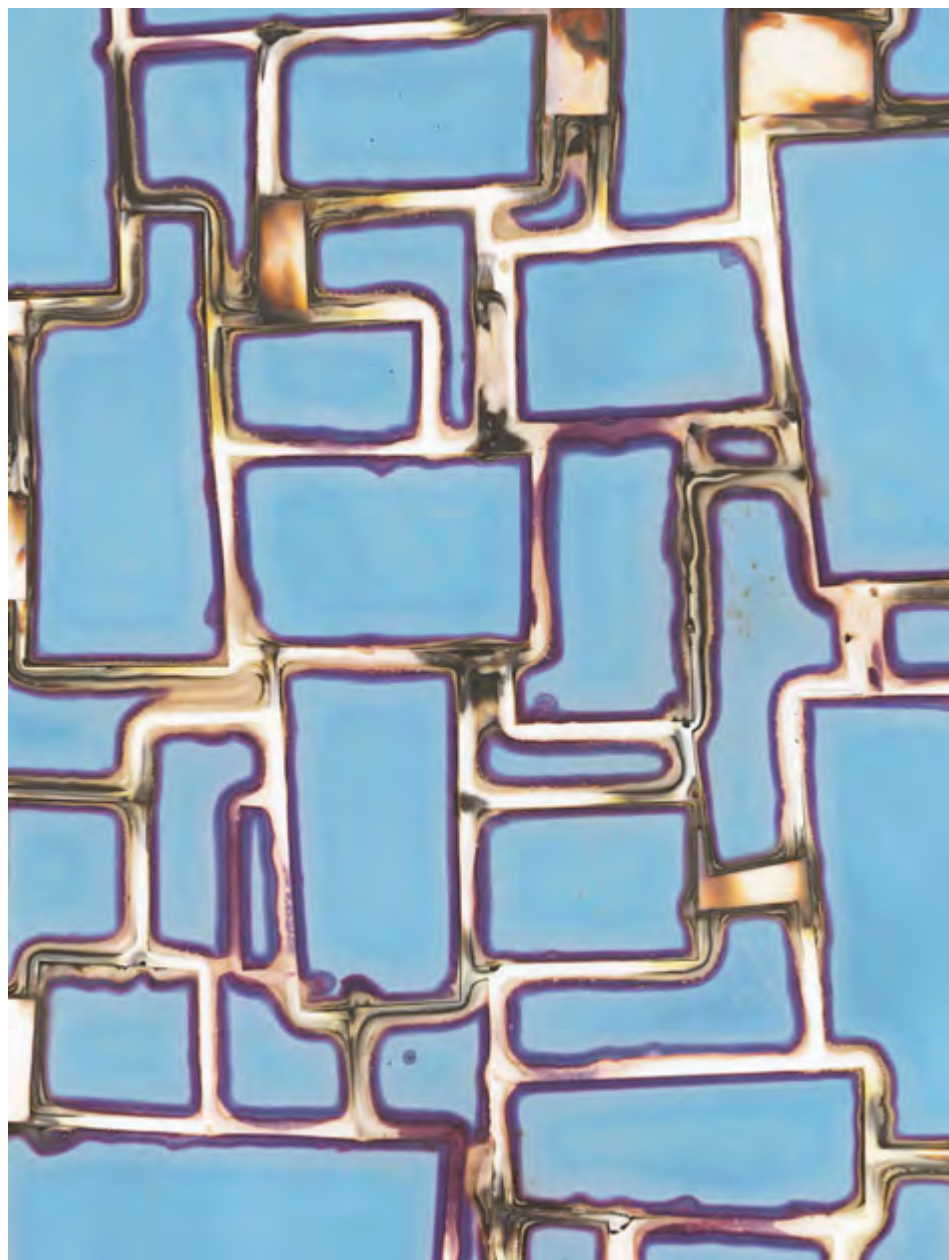
The chemigram process also lends a cinematic quality to the work, since film is essentially the juxtaposition of images in time, filtered quickly one after the other to simulate real movement. ABI_022 and ABI_023, processed on metallic gloss paper, possess an almost stained-glass quality and beautifully soothing hues of sky blue and darker, aquamarine backgrounds. The metallic pink and the crisscrossing plank-like forms in ABI_16 create a geography of shapes and color that seem to almost move or thrust outward. Both the in-between cream-colored spaces and the superimposed pink, blue and black shapes form similar overlapping triangular and rectangular forms, calling into question the notion of the border or limit.

Another favorite, the series of ABI_053, ABI_055 and ABI_007 whose mainly brown, yellow overflow with hundreds of tiny circular and oval forms that remind one of minute moving particles or cells dividing and recombining under a microscope.

The play on the liminal, the in-between, rejoins her previous 2017 series “The In Between.” Here Hedison photographed Parisian storefronts that were in the process of being replaced by new stores/facades. The painted facades put up during this “in-between” period act as “pretend” windows and building facades, or what Hedison cleverly calls “found paintings.” The question then becomes what moment the photographer has caught, if not a liminal space between viewer, window and what really lie inside, as construction workers continually shift the image seen from the outside. Going farther back in time, even her lush, exquisite 2008 “

anticipates her present theoretical concerns. Inspired by the Cavafy poem of the same title, these shots of North American rainforests problematize the spaces in between foliage and bark. Here both the empty spaces, and the greenery that outline these spaces are captured by her lens, anticipating the random unicuity of the infinite.

Hedison’s openness to new ideas and to readjusting her preconceived notions of reality are undoubtedly one of the forces that propel her work forward—as one engages in conversation with her, a refreshing intellectual exchange soon arises. “Letting go of the compositional control I would typically have with a camera, I discovered a new process that allowed for chance and accident,” Hedison explained recently: “I often think of Rosalind Krauss’s description of the grid as a coping mechanism within a world of curves and unpredictability. With this work I was most interested in the process of development, but also in surrender and possibility.” Philosophically, Hedison’s work rejoins Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard who



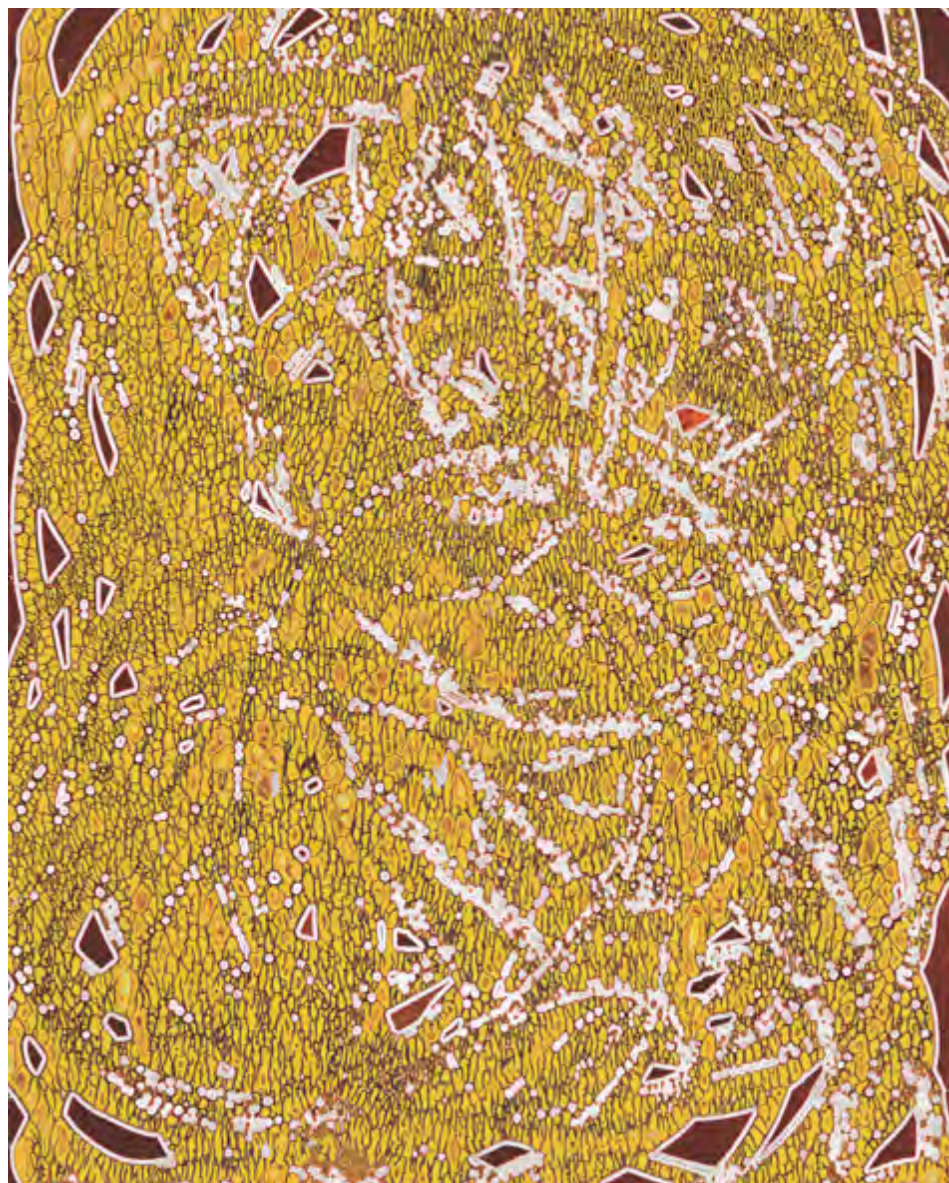
ABI_22

saw liminality as a type of transitional phase, a boundary between our world and another one beyond. Each one of the works produced here seems to open into another unknown world, theoretically limitless yet bound by the moment that Hedison chose to expose paper to light—indefinitely brief, briefly infinite, or as Hedison more poetically titles her show “a brief infinity.” For the viewer, Hedison’s work reproduces the “long road full

of adventure, full of discovery” that Cavafy wished upon his readers, while also serving as an anchor, an in-between where everyone can find a home, a many-splendored Ithaka of the senses.

Catch A Brief Infinity through June 10, at the Von Lintel Gallery in Los Angeles: <http://www.vonlintel.com/Alex-Hedison.html>

Learn more about the photographer’s work at: www.alexandrahedison.com



ABI_53



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

- MAY 13** — Opening reception for the solo exhibit “Soaring,” by artist Ani Babaian, at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington. 4-7 p.m. Exhibit to remain on display through May 26, weekdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., weekends 1-4 p.m.
- MAY 17** — **TEA & TRANQUILITY.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 4pm Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org
- MAY 19** — The Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown will hold its Annual Fair on Friday, from 5 to- 8 p.m. and Saturday, May 20, from 12 pm to 7 pm (rain or shine). Both days, the Church will be serving its delicious kebab dinners and exquisite desserts. Enjoy the fabulous Armenian beef, chicken and losh (ground meat) kebab dinners complete with sauce, rice pilaf, salad and pita bread. The selection will also include meatless meals. Visitors may enjoy eating at tables under the tent or may purchase take-out orders if they prefer. Proceeds will go to Syria Earthquake Relief through the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). 32 Bigelow Avenue in Watertown, just off Coolidge Square. Admission is free. The Church is wheelchair accessible. For more information call 617-923-0498.
- MAY 19** — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter and the Armenian Mirror-Spectator present a lecture by Yerevan political scientist Suren Sargsyan titled “Current Geopolitical Challenges Facing Armenia.” 7:30 p.m., complimentary admission, at the Baikar Building’s newly renovated downstairs hall, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com or telephone 617 924-4455
- MAY 21** — Celebrating the 65th anniversary of the ordination of Fr. Mampr Kouzouian, at a reception immediately following the Divine Liturgy, at the Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese, to preside.
- JUNE 4** — **MEGHRI DERVARTANIAN, CHILDREN’S BOOK AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 2pm shares the story of her recently published, «Դէպի Արարատ Լեռ» “Toward Mt. Ararat” (2022) Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Interactive Program. Book Signing. Refreshments hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers. Announcement. For all ages. RSVP appreciated
- JUNE 8** — **UNDER THE STRAWBERRY MOON.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 8:15pm. Meet & Greet. Chocolate Dipped Strawberries hosted by Ovenbird Cafe. RSVP appreciated, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org
- JUNE 9** — 70th Annual Armenian Night at the Pops, Symphony Hall, Boston.

Featuring violinist Eva Aronian and the Boston Pops Orchestra, in a performance of the Allegro Vivace movement from the violin concerto by Aram Khachaturian, marking the iconic composer’s 120th anniversary of birth. The evening will feature A Symphonic Journey, a musical tour of Europe and Armenia, presented by the Boston Pops and Maestro Keith Lockhart, in collaboration with European travel authority and writer Rick Steves. Visit www.FACSBoston.org to select seats and purchase tickets. **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.

JUNE 11 — St. James Armenian Festival – Annual Picnic! Delicious Armenian food, Live Armenian music, children’s activities with moon bounce, face painting, and more! Rain or shine. Noon-5pm. St. James Armenian Church - 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown MA. For more info visit www.stjameswatertown.org/festival or call 617.923.8860.

JUNE 11 — Mirak Chamber Music Series: Treasures of Armenian Classical Music, Organized by the Armenian Cultural Foundation and co-sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance. Naira Babayan, piano; Christina Gullans, cello. Works by Ghazarosian, Hovunts, Sayat Nova, Komitas, Baghdasarian, Harutyunyan. Sunday, at 4 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street, Arlington. (781) 646-3090. For tickets contact: amarasonline.com

JUNE 13 — **LET’S PARTY FOR THE PARK!** InterContinental Hotel, Boston, 6:30pm. Friends of Armenian Heritage Park’s fabulous Wine Tasting Party featuring the extraordinary Storica Wines: Wines from Armenia Advance Reservations required. Benefit for the Park’s Care during 2023. 21+ Party. For reservations, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support.

JULY 2 — Armenian Church of Cape Cod - Kef Time Fourth of July weekend - Dinner & Dancing. Sunday, 6 to 11 p.m. at The Cape Club - 125 Falmouth Woods Road, North Falmouth Chicken Kebab & Losh Kebab dinner; music by Leon Janikian, Harry Bedrosian. ages 21 & over \$85; 16 to 20 \$50; 8 to 15 \$35; under 8 free Tickets on sale Eventbrite Kef-Time. For more information: Andrea Barber (617)201-9807.

MONTREAL

MAY 13 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music’s Armenian School Program present the VEM Ensemble. 8 p.m. Tekeyan Center, 825 Manoogian ST., Saint Laurent, Canada. Tickets \$20. Call 514-747-6680.

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.

Artsakh’s Drama Comes to Germany

DRAMA, from page 13

her studies at the Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinema in 2002, with a degree in dramatic theater Directing. Continuing her development in association with theaters in Yerevan, Moscow, and St. Petersburg, she also studied Theater Management in Boston and Directing in Breslau, Poland. As an actress she has performed in more than 30 plays and films. Her career as a director includes work in the Tumanyan State Puppet Theater, in the Stanislavsky Russian State Drama Theater, in the State Pantomime Theater, and the State Theater named after. She has taught at the Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinema since 2009, and has served as artistic director of the Hamazgain State Theater since 2019. The winner of several prizes for her acting and directing skills, her performance in “My Family in My Suitcase” received the Grand Prix of the Aspindis International Solo Performance Festival in Lithuania, 2017, and second prize at the 11th International Monodrama Festival in Kiel, Germany, 2018. It has been performed also in Belgium, France, Austria and Armenia.

Victoria Bagoyan, the project director and coordinator, who flew from Yerevan to Frankfurt with Grigoryan, is a graduate of the Yerevan Economic and Juridical

University, with a major in linguistics and pedagogy. She has participated in numerous theater festivals between 2009 and 2019, in Belarus, the United States, Costa Rica, Wales, and Stuttgart, Germany. Sets and costumes were the work of Viktoria Riedo-Oganesian, who received her Bachelor degree in Architecture at the National University for Architecture and Construction, and master’s degree in Scenery at the Zürich College of Arts, 2013-2015.

Armenian-German Cultural Exchange

The celebrated performance was the second such cultural event in this Wiesbaden venue in recent months, organized by the Demokratisches Volks- und Kulturzentrum (DVK), a social and cultural organization founded in 1976, which promotes Armenian-German understanding and integration. It offers language instruction and sponsors cultural activities in theater, choral music, folk dancing, and sports. In February it hosted a wonderful theatrical performance of Tumanyan’s fairy tales, featuring Armenian children from the area. The monodrama was cosponsored by the German-Armenian Student Club “HAIK,” founded in 2003 in Mannheim. This group supports student exchanges, the development of an international network of young



Narine Grigoryan in “May Family in My Suitcase”

academics, and Armenian-German exchange in culture, language, and economics in both countries.

As Karen Gharslyan, Chairman of the Wiesbaden DVK has put it, the aim of these cultural events is to “build a bridge between Armenian and German cultures, to further build on their foundations.” He sees Wiesbaden as an appropriate setting, a city

with a proud heritage in “culture, art, and theater, where many Armenians (as well as others) take part actively in cultural life.”

A crucial component of cultural exchange is mutual comprehension; those attending the performance of the monodrama, performed in Armenian, were able to follow through summary subtitles in German.

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EDITORIAL

When Patience Runs Out: On the Founding of the Armenian National Democratic Party of Armenia

A new political party named the Armenian National Democratic Party was founded in Yerevan on April 25, according to the notice in the April 28 issue of our sister newspaper, *Azg*, published in Armenia.

The formation of a new political party in Armenia based on the democratic liberal ideology should not come as a surprise to anyone who closely follows Armenian domestic political developments, and in particular the internal crises of Armenian political parties.

It is well known that 102 years ago in Constantinople, now called Istanbul, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL or “Ramgavar”) was founded. It became known in the many decades that followed until the initial period of the post-Soviet independence of the Republic of Armenia for its exceptionally constructive and beneficial work for the Armenian nation. Unfortunately, for over two decades now, the party has been struggling with serious yet futile internal divisions, which have been extensively examined in the columns of this newspaper in the past. In particular, a number of the serious efforts to attempt to remedy this destructive and meaningless weakening of the party’s strength have been reported previously. However, these efforts have remained in vain to this day.

It is necessary to recall that the most recent and most serious efforts for the reunification of the party have been conducted by a group of leaders who have during different periods of the history of the ADL held the highest offices in the party. This group, under the name Committee of Leaders for the Unification of the ADL [Ռ.Ա.Կ.-ի միասնականութեան նախաձեռնող ղեկավարներու համախմբում], worked unceasingly for several months last year.

This unification committee began its labors through the appeal it issued on December 19, 2021, in which it specifically stated, “Today, the motherland is facing fateful challenges. The [Ramgavar] Democratic Liberal Party in its turn faces the necessity of putting its house in order throughout the whole world.”

However, during the seven months following that appeal, no matter how much the members of this unity group tried, in the end this attempt too remained fruitless.

The most grievous thing, which in fact is a national calamity, is that the vigorous Democratic Liberal Party that was successfully established in 1990 during the first days of independence in Armenia now has been completely taken over by a few people who have “preserved in their bosom” the party seal and placed this respectable political party in several years of a most condemnable state of absolute inactivity. Today, their status is also illegal, as five years passed during which they have not convened the general assembly of the party prescribed by its bylaws.

In the course of the aforementioned efforts at unification, many attempts were made to get this group to end its stagnant and unproductive situation and re-establish the unity of the ADL, at least on the territory of the homeland, by giving way to the group of well recognized capable party leaders. The latter has accomplished important work over the last thirty years, such as keeping the party press in an active and honorable state till the present.

As all such appeals have remained unanswered, it is completely understandable that today the time for waiting has long ended and the patience of those active elements has run out. Especially during the great existential crisis currently enveloping Armenia and Artsakh, the Democratic Liberal Party feels obliged to reemphasize its traditional mission and proceed to actively work as much as possible towards the goal of salvation of the homeland. It is evidently in pursuit of this patriotic goal that this new Armenian National Democratic Party has been formed, awaiting at the same time that most wished for day when the unity of the Democratic Liberal Party will be established.

When that highly longed-for day arrives, it is of course expected that this newly created democratic party will also join with all others to be part of the one and only ADL in order to work for the best interests of the Armenian people and the homeland.

Turkish Elections: The West Needs Turkey Without Erdogan, and Russia needs Turkey with Him

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

(Note: This article was already completed when news of Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s health issues spread at lightning speed, but the Turkish president is still considered the main contender for the office.)

There are only a few weeks left until the presidential elections to be held in Turkey. Various polls are being conducted on the main results of the elections to be held in May. For example, according to the results of reliable opinion polls by the leading European media outlets, one of the main candidates, Kılıçdaroglu is leading by a single digit, which means that a second round of elections is a possible scenario. Erdogan’s chances of winning in the second round are estimated to be higher, taking into account the participation of third candidates who are “stealing votes” from the opposition. Expert and academic circles, in contrast to sociologists, estimate Erdogan’s chances more highly, given the administrative levers that the current authorities can and will most probably use, which cannot be reflected in the polls.

Despite all this, attention should also be paid to the interests of external players, which will be the main topic of this article. It is necessary to present the interests and principled approaches of global players, such as the US and Russia, regarding the upcoming Turkish elections. This will allow us to correctly assess the trajectory

of Turkey’s foreign policy according to the election results.

The West

First, it should be noted that Western political circles still consider Turkey a strategic ally — a bad ally, but an ally. In these circles, there is the opinion that Turkey is sort of a “prodigal son” who left, but one day will definitely return to the “big family” of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the West and Western capitals should work actively for that purpose. There is also a claim that Erdogan’s Turkey seeks to minimize Western collective influence on itself and its economy, the goal of which is to be able to do whatever Erdogan wants to do in the Middle East, the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and its relations with Moscow. Among these circles, there is the position that the West should work with Turkey, not allow the final divorce from the West and flirtation with Russia.

Undoubtedly, it would be preferable for the collective West to have a pro-Western figure in Turkey with whom it would be possible to work without additional headaches. It is also obvious that Erdogan does not fit into that logic. For example, it is noteworthy that US Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden called on the Trump administration to work more actively with the Turkish opposition, and the most aggressive and weighty wing of the US Republican Party, represented by John Bolton, Jeb Bush, and other figures,

formed the so-called “Turkish Democracy Project,” which in Turkey is considered an anti-Erdogan movement. In other words, there is a unique consensus in the US that Washington needs Turkey without Erdogan, but with a more pro-Western and dependent political leadership.

One of the best proofs of this thesis is that only weeks before the Turkish elections, President Biden convenes a “Democracy Summit” to which he does not invite the Turkish president to participate. Everything seems to be logical here because it is difficult to include Turkey among democratic countries, but it is equally difficult to include Pakistan and Iraq among democratic countries. Yet their representatives were invited to participate in this summit. It is clear that Washington is guided by political calculations and is trying to send a clear message to the Turkish voters before the Turkish elections. In this regard, it is possible that the US, using its soft power or other resources, will try to have some influence on the results of the Turkish elections and bring more favorable candidates for it into power.

The Russian Factor

Quantitatively and qualitatively speaking, the overlapping Turkish-Russian interests are almost as many as the contradictions. This means that the two sides are always in active contact at all levels and directions. Russia, including at the presidential level, has repeatedly stated that

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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Under Turkish Pressure, Armenia's Leaders Make Excuses for Nemesis Monument

For over a century, successive Turkish governments hJust when we thought that we had heard everything about the current Armenian government's questionable positions on Artsakh, Armenia, and Armenian interests, we are now facing another monumental mistake by Armenia's leaders.

On April 25, 2023, the descendants of those who killed the Turkish masterminds of the Armenian Genocide inaugurated the Nemesis Monument in Yerevan. In attendance were opposition members of Parliament, and surprisingly, Tigran Avinyan, the Deputy Mayor of Yerevan, who is a member of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's political party.

Nemesis was the name of the operation which was organized by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation to eliminate several Ottoman leaders who were responsible for the Armenian Genocide. This operation implemented the death verdicts issued in absentia by the Turkish Military Tribunal in Istanbul, in 1919, against the Genocide perpetrators, since they had fled from the country. Talaat Pasha, the main culprit in the Armenian Genocide, was killed by Soghomon Tehlirian in Berlin, in 1921. A German court found him not guilty due to Talaat's massive crimes.

Talaat's remains were brought from Berlin to Turkey in 1943. The Turkish government 'honored' Talaat by naming avenues, mosques, schools, hospitals and a memorial after him in Istanbul. This would be just as shameful, had the German government named schools and avenues in Berlin after Hitler! Another Genocide organizer, Minister of War Enver Pasha, is buried in the same memorial in Istanbul. His remains were brought in 1996 to Turkey from Tajikistan where he was assassinated in 1922 by an Armenian.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu retaliated against the Nemesis Monument by announcing that Turkey banned overflights by Armenian airlines from Turkish skies. Furthermore, Cavusoglu brazenly announced that Turkey would take additional steps against Armenia, if the Nemesis Monument is not dismantled. Thus, Turkey violated the rules of IATA (International Air Transport Association) which states that countries cannot ban overflights for political reasons. Armenia should take legal action against Turkey under IATA rules and ban the overflights of Turkish Airlines over Armenia's skies.

This unwarranted Turkish retaliation is taking place at a time when the governments of Armenia and Turkey are negotiating for over a year to open their mutual border and normalize their relations. Even though it is announced that these negotiations are taking place "without any preconditions," in reality, Turkey has made several demands, such as Armenia declaring that Artsakh is part of Azerbaijan by recognizing its territorial integrity, allowing the so-called 'Zangezur Corridor' to cross Armenia's territory, linking mainland Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan, which would mean that the 'Corri-

dor' is under the sovereignty of Azerbaijan, not Armenia.

Even if Turkey would open the border someday, it will shut it down again if Armenia does not meet any of Turkey's future demands, thus continuously blackmailing the Armenian government. Turkey's current demand to dismantle the Nemesis Monument is an early warning of more demands to come from Turkey, such as dismantling the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex in Yerevan, banning the burning of Turkish flags on April 24, and removing from Armenia's Declaration of Independence the paragraph that states: "The Republic of Armenia supports the task of achieving international recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia in 1915."

This is the result of prostrating oneself in front of the unrepentant enemy and begging for peace. In response to the Turkish ban of Armenian overflights from Turkish skies, Armenia's leaders criticized their own country for erecting the Nemesis Monument in Yerevan, rather than telling Turkey that they have no right to interfere in Armenia's domestic decisions. In the process of trying to appease Turkey, Armenia's Prime Minister and the President of the Parliament made a number of anti-Monument statements. So, it is OK for Turkey to glorify Talaat, the Turkish Hitler, but not OK for Armenia to honor those who killed the butcher. Armenia's leaders, rather than making excuses for the Nemesis Monument, should have demanded that Turkey dismantle the Talaat Pasha Memorial in Istanbul.

Prime Minister Pashinyan made the excuse that the Nemesis Monument was authorized by the City of Yerevan, not the government of Armenia. The Monument was approved by the Yerevan City Council on Sept. 14, 2021. Pashinyan contradicted himself by first telling the Armenian Parliament that the decision to authorize the Monument was made "to avoid being labeled traitors.... But by doing so, we actually keep betraying the state and national interests of our country." He then went on to say that "a wrong decision was made and the implementation of that decision was wrong." Pashinyan also stated that "one of the shortcomings of democracy is when the authorities or the government leader is not controlling everything and everyone." This is a shocking statement from someone who came to power claiming to promote democracy, yet he does not seem to understand the basic principles of democracy. Pashinyan, in fact, controls everything and everyone in the country!

Meanwhile, the President of the Armenian Parliament Alen Simonyan, during a press conference in Ankara last week, also made excuses by saying that Turkey should not view the Nemesis Monument "as an expression of the foreign policy of the government of Armenia nor as an unfriendly act. The Armenian government's foreign policy is conducted by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister." Simonyan further said that only "opposition members of the Parliament had attended the inauguration of the Nemesis Monument." Cavusoglu replied that the Armenian government's excuses are "insincere and untrue. No one should try to deceive us by saying that it does not fall within their jurisdiction."

Armenia's leaders need to draw an important lesson from this episode. Unless Armenia immediately rejects Turkey's attempts to interfere in Armenia's internal affairs, I fear that the Turkish government will be emboldened to impose further demands which will severely restrict Armenia's sovereignty.

Armenia–Iran–India: An Emerging Partnership in Eurasia

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The ongoing transformation of the global order has created opportunities and challenges for countries worldwide. The unipolar world fades away, while the main features of the emerging world order are not apparent yet. Will the new world be an area of cooperation between different actors, or will it be a jungle, where everyone fights everyone and the strongest take everything? Amidst this strategic ambiguity, one pattern is clear: in the upcoming years and even maybe decades, the world will face instability, growing competition, and a struggle for regional hegemony.

Eurasia is the most vivid example of these developments. The war in Ukraine, the complete rupture of Russia–West relations, growing tensions between the US and China, and upheaval in Afghanistan are all features of an emerging mess.

Meanwhile, as great and middle powers struggle to expand their influence, small states face existential threats. Armenia is one example of a small state overtaken by the changing geopolitical landscape. Before 2020, the primary focus of Armenian foreign, defense, and security policy was Russia. Armenia hosted a Russian military base and border troops and joined the Eurasian Economic Union and Collective Security Treaty Organization. The primary logic behind this strategy was the belief that an alliance with Russia would prevent Turkey from direct involvement in any future war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

However, Armenian leadership failed to assess the changing nature of geopolitics in the region, including the transformation of Russia–Turkey relations and the growing role of Azerbaijan for Russia. As a result, Armenia suffered a

defeat during the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war, which put the existence of Nagorno Karabakh in doubt. It opened a path for Azerbaijan for further incursions into Armenia proper. Since the end of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, Armenia has faced a permanent escalation and aggressions by Azerbaijan. This resulted in the occupation of 200 square km. of Armenian territory by Azerbaijan, the emergence of the concept of "Western Azerbaijan," and growing pressure on the Nagorno Karabakh Armenians to accept Azerbaijani control or leave their homeland. The negotiations facilitated by Russia, the EU, and the US failed to bring peace and stability. At the same time, recent actions of Azerbaijan, including the establishment of the checkpoint on the Lachin corridor, have proved once more that Azerbaijan is determined to take as much as possible and to utilize its victory in 2020 war fully.

As Armenia struggles to grapple with multiple challenges — to save Nagorno Karabakh, to resist further Azerbaijani incursions into Armenia, to push out Azerbaijani soldiers from Armenia proper, and to survive the Russia–West confrontation, there is an acute need for reassessing Armenian foreign, defense, and security policy. The old schemes no longer work, and Yerevan needs to look for new partners and partnerships. Armenia was behind Azerbaijan in participating in multilateral cooperation formats, as Azerbaijan successfully launched the Azerbaijan–Georgia–Turkey and Azerbaijan–Iran–Russia platforms. Yerevan made some efforts to establish the Armenia–Greece–Cyprus (having the first trilateral meeting at the level of foreign ministers in June 2019) and Armenia–Turkmenistan–Iran cooperation platforms. However, these steps did not bring the expected results for several reasons.

In this context, relations with Iran and India and the establishment of a trilateral cooperation format offer a new strategic opportunity for Armenia. Both countries are interested in a strong Armenia and are against Turkish domination over the South Caucasus. Iran played a role in preventing or stopping recent Azerbaijani incursions into Armenia. At the same time, large-scale military drills along the Iran–Azer-

baijan borders in 2021 and 2022 sent a message to Azerbaijan that Iran may not restrict itself only by verbal statements.

India is a relatively new player in the geopolitics of the South Caucasus. However, the growing Azerbaijan–Turkey–Pakistan strategic partnership and the need to find an alternative transit route to reach Europe circumventing the Suez Channel and Russia–West border increases the significance of the South Caucasus for India.

Meanwhile, Armenia historically has enjoyed friendly relations with Iran and India. Yerevan appreciated the balanced approach of Iran in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, while India was always perceived as a friendly country and civilization. In recent years, we have also seen a growing India–Iran partnership, including Indian investments in the modernization of Chabahar port. India managed to get a sanction waiver for its investments in Chabahar from the US in 2019. India viewed Chabahar as a strategic gateway to reach Central Asia via Afghanistan. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 made this route quite complicated to be used. However, Chabahar may be vital for India to reach Europe via the Persian Gulf–Black Sea corridor.

In this context, the trilateral political consultations between the ministries of foreign affairs of the three countries, held in Yerevan on April 20, 2023, are of the utmost importance. The parties focused primarily on economic issues and regional communication channels and agreed to continue consultations in a trilateral format. Armenia has to increase its potential in all areas – economic, military, and diplomatic. Otherwise, it will only continue to lose in the face of a confident and assertive Azerbaijan. As the world enters the uncharted waters of multipolarity, the Armenia–Iran–India strategic partnership is a valuable tool to foster the strategic interests of all three states.

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The West Needs Turkey Without Erdogan, and Russia Needs Turkey with Him

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Erdogan is a real man and a reliable partner to work with. And the statement of the president of Russia that “Erdogan is a strong and solid leader who is guided by his own interests of the state and does not allow third countries to influence its decisions” ideally describes the Erdogan that Russia wants to see, or is already seeing. Naturally, an Erdogan who is independent from the West is the most suitable partner for Putin. Eventually, that is all Russia needs. So, it is in Russia’s interest to increase the weight and role of Erdogan in the region, which has been consistently done in recent years. This strategy largely works and pays off. Figuratively speaking, Putin tells Erdogan “It’s better to have a card in your hands than be a card in the hands of Washington,” which offer Erdogan cannot refuse. For example, in recent months there have been complaints in the West about Turkey’s stance on Ukraine. There is a seemingly permanent accusation that Turkey is not behaving like a real ally in the pan-Western struggle against Russia. It is true that Turkey’s involvement in the Ukrainian front with all its resources would significantly reduce the effectiveness of the Russian military campaign and the prospect of success, which already seems shadowy.

It is a very possible scenario that Russian military think tanks analyzed that the operation against Ukraine would not be effective at all if Turkey were to be involved and recommended Russian leadership to do whatever is possible to keep Turkey out of Ukraine. Therefore, Russia, which is giving priority to Ukraine, had to make certain concessions to Turkey, including perhaps Artsakh or the South Caucasus in general. In this sense, as the Russian president mentioned, “It’s always possible to get along with Erdogan.” And of course, let’s not forget that in 2016, during a military coup in Turkey, Erdogan was seriously supported by the Russian president himself, and was able to remain in power.

In essence, Erdogan is a predictable

person and is a strategic partner with whom Russia wants to work. At the same time, both Erdogan and Putin are political heavyweights not only because they are the leaders of the regional superpowers but because they have political instincts. Let’s not forget that Turkish-Russian interests stretch from Europe to Central Asia and the Middle East, and Putin and Erdogan are able to agree on many issues. Therefore, in contrast with the US, Russia needs Turkey with Erdogan. and the West needs Turkey without him.

Moreover, currently Turkey is important to both Russia and the West more than ever before, and it is natural that Erdogan plays

on those strings very competently. In its turn, Russia does not need a Turkey which serves Western interests. Moscow wants an independent Turkey, with which it will be able to come to an agreement. Alternatively, if Turkey is under Western influence, Russia will have to agree with the West rather than Turkey, which is a very difficult approach for Russia.

Erdogan definitely benefits from this environment, as he significantly increases the prestige and political weight of both his country and himself. In this situation, Turkey moves up to “play in a higher political league.” Therefore, it can be observed that Russia’s calculation to pull Turkey apart

from the West is also based on the personality of Erdogan. The way Russia, Turkey, and Iran worked together in Syria, pushing Washington out, established a good precedent, and Turkey sees it can be a serious regional player without being controlled by the West.

(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.)

Karabakh President: Artsakh Has Been and Should Remain Armenian

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — President Arayik Harutyunyan of the Artsakh Republic issued a message on Victory Day, the 31st anniversary of the Artsakh Defense Army and the Liberation of Shushi marked on May 9.

He wrote, “May 9 is one of the most glorious pages in the history of the Armenian people. The victory of our grandfathers along with other peoples in the Great Patriotic War, the formation of the Artsakh Republic Defense Army, the Liberation of Shushi are the unforgettable victories that rightly made that day a symbol of national pride,” he wrote.

“First of all, I want to bow my head to the holy memory of all our martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the defense of the Motherland at different times, as well as to the merits of living heroes. Their feats of bravery are immortal and will always be a bright example of patriotism and selflessness for future generations,” he noted.

“The aspirations of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem are not new for us. We know this well, as well as the strength



A wreath from former president Serzh Sargsyan and power of the unity of the Armenian people. ... Today again, national unity has become the imperative of the day. We have no right to hesitate or step back. There is only one way. Artsakh was, is and should be Armenian, with the free will of its people and the right and determination to manage their own destiny,” he added.

A wreath was laid at the Yerablur Military Pantheon in Yerevan on be-

half of Armenia’s third President Serzh Sargsyan marking the occasion.

“The wreath was laid at the memorial which immortalizes the heroic deeds of those who gave their lives for freedom and independence of Fatherland,” it said in a statement.

“Eternal glory to the dedicated martyrs of the Fatherland! Gratitude to the warriors of freedom and independence!” the office added.



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