

## Pashinyan Confirms Readiness to Accept Azeri Control of Karabakh

### Enclave Leadership Reacts Furiously

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on May 22 gave the clearest indication yet that he has agreed to recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh through a peace treaty currently discussed by Yerevan and Baku.

“If we and Azerbaijan correctly understand each other, Armenia recognizes Azerbaijan’s 86,600-square-kilometer territorial integrity, assuming that Azerbaijan recognizes Armenia’s 29,800-square-kilometer territory,” Pashinyan said, repeating statements made following his May 14 meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

“The 86,600 square kilometers include

Nagorno-Karabakh,” he told a news conference. “But it must also be noted that we are saying the issue of the rights and security of Karabakh’s Armenians must be discussed in a Baku-Stepanakert format.”

Pashinyan again stressed the need for the “creation of international mechanisms” for such talks between the Azerbaijani government and Karabakh’s leadership. Yerevan, he explained, is specifically seeking international guarantees against “ethnic cleansing” in the Armenian-populated region which he said is planned by Baku.

While expressing readiness for dialogue with Baku, the authorities in Stepanakert have repeatedly rejected any settlement that would restore Azerbaijani control over Karabakh.

In a joint statement with Armenia’s lead-

ing opposition groups issued last week, the five political parties represented in the Karabakh parliament warned Pashinyan against formally recognizing Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan. They said that such a deal would be “devoid of legal basis.”

Despite this warning, Pashinyan made it clear that he hopes to sign the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty “as soon as possible.” He said that Yerevan presented Baku with fresh proposals regarding the remaining sticking points after marathon talks held by the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers outside Washington earlier in May.

“We are now waiting for their reaction,” added the Armenian premier. He did not disclose those proposals.

see CONTROL, page 2



Nikol Pashinyan at his press conference on May 22, 2023

## ADL Press Council Calls For United Support of Jerusalem’s Armenian National Heritage

While the Armenian people in Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora face among the most difficult and fateful days of their modern history, disturbing news of a serious crisis has arisen from one of the historical centers of faith of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

This news which shocked the Armenian world concerns the rental of the Armenian national property called the Cows’ Garden, in the old city of Jerusalem, and probably other properties. Its ill-fated contract, signed for a period of 99 years, has already been the subject of turmoil for some time now.

Given the politically delicate aspect of Jerusalem’s status in general, this lease issue has crossed over from being solely an Armenian concern to one that reverberates on regional and international state levels. Let us recall that its signing was immediately followed by an expression of concern and anger by the Palestinian authorities, conveyed to the attention of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

In this already difficult situation, the Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority have proclaimed most recently that they have decided to withdraw their recognition of the patriarchal status of Archbishop Nourhan Manougian, the current Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) Press Council held an urgent meeting to discuss this alarming state of affairs. Hakob Asatryan, the editor-in-chief of the well-known magazine *Ozer* from Prague (Czech Republic) who was recently in Jerusalem on a journalistic mission, was present at this meeting as a guest.

see JERUSALEM, page 6



Kev Orkian

## Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary With Kev Orkian and Kevork Artinian Band

TENAFLY, N.J. — On Saturday, May 13, 2023, the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group (MMTG) kicked off its 25th anniversary celebrations with a gala banquet at the Clinton Inn Hotel and Event Center in Tenafly, NJ, featuring renowned artist Kev Orkian and the Kevork Artinian Band. Honorees in attendance included Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop

Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and Very Rev. Fr. Sahag Yemishyan, Vicar of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Current and past actors attended the celebrations from NY, NJ, and Philadelphia to pay tribute to the Megerdchian Theatrical Group.

see ANNIVERSARY, page 10



Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group members and friends with Kevork Artinian

## Tekeyan Cultural Association of US and Canada Elects New Executive

WATERTOWN — The Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) held its first plenary meeting since the passing of its long-time president Edmond Y. Azadian on May 16. It elected unanimously Dr. Arshavir Gundjian as president and Kevork Marashlian as vice president. Hagop Vartivarian was reelected as secretary and Maro Bedrosian as treasurer, while



Ara Tcholakian was elected as assistant treasurer and Mihran Toumajan as assistant secretary.

The remaining members of the board currently include Carl Bardakian, Hilda Hartounian, Arto Berdige Manoukian, Mihran Minasian, Vatche Semerdjian, and Hratch Torikian, while Aram Arkun is the executive director.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association is a

worldwide charitable, cultural and educational network of organizations devoted mainly to the progress of education and dissemination of Armenian literature, publications, music, art and other fields of culture. It was founded in 1947 and named after the famous Armenian poet Vahan Tekeyan. The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada was established in 1969 in Massachusetts, and has its headquarters in Watertown. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com or call 617 924-4455.

### YEREVAN

Pashinyan Defends Arrest Of Fallen Soldier’s Mother

Page 4



### BERLIN

All Victims of Genocide Perpetrated by Young Turks Honored

Page 6



### ILLINOIS

Friendship city Established between Granite City, Illinois, And Artsakh’s Ashan

Page 12





ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Armenian-Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Economy Established

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The Armenian-Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Economy was registered in Armenia, the Union of Employers of Armenia reported on May 23.

The Chamber, registered on May 12, aims at boosting economic cooperation and development of trade between Armenia and Bulgaria, uniting Armenian entrepreneurs in Bulgaria and solving existing problems by joint efforts, supporting implementation of interstate agreements ratified by the countries, creating favorable business environment.

### 15.6% Increase Recorded In Armenia Construction Sector in January-March

YEREVAN (News.am) — A 15.6-percent increase was recorded in the construction sector of Armenia in January-March 2023. Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan announced this at the session of the National Assembly on Tuesday, March 23, answering the questions of the MPs.

He noted construction is one of the fastest growing branches of Armenia's economy, and last year it recorded an increase of more than 12 percent.

"In one year, 3,300 new jobs were created in the construction industry [of Armenia]. Their number has increased from 11,000 to 14,300," the minister added. Kerobyan emphasized that last year housing with a total surface area of 320,000 square meters was commissioned in Armenia, which is 0.3 percent of the country's total housing.

### President Visits Qatar

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan is in Qatar to participate in the opening ceremony of the Qatar Economic Forum.

Following the official ceremony, he met with Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on May 23, the president's office said in a press release.

Khachaturyan thanked the Emir for the invitation and congratulated him on organizing the Qatar Economic Forum at a high level.

During the meeting, Khachaturyan highlighted the importance of the consistent development of close friendly relations between Armenia and the Arab world and the willingness of both sides on this matter.

In his speech, the President presented to the Emir the details about the realities in the South Caucasus region and the essence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He emphasized that Armenia is committed to establishing peace in the region and good relations with neighboring countries.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani noted he is aware of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and hopes the developments will lead to peace. The Emir noted that currently there are 10 flights from Qatar to Armenia and vice versa on a weekly basis. Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani also stressed that the establishment of stability and peace in the region will contribute to the further development of relations.

# Pashinyan Confirms Readiness to Accept Azeri Control of Karabakh

CONTROL, from page 1

Pashinyan and Aliyev are scheduled to meet again in Moscow on Thursday. They will hold on June 1 another meeting in Moldova which will be attended by European Union chief Charles Michel, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Nagorno-Karabakh's leadership strongly condemned Pashinyan's comments.

"Today's statement by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in which he reaffirmed his readiness to incorporate Artsakh into Azerbaijan has caused great indignation and anger in the Republic of Artsakh," read a statement unanimously approved by the Karabakh parliament during an emergency session.

"For us, any statement by Nikol Pashinyan ignoring the sovereignty of the Republic of Artsakh, the right of self-determination of our people and the fact of its realization and any document based on it are unacceptable and null and void," it said.

The statement said that Pashinyan's plans run counter to Armenia's constitution and other legal acts as well as a 1991 referendum held in Karabakh.

"What rights, security and dialogue can we talk about when Azerbaijan has been illegally keeping Artsakh under complete blockade for 162 days?" countered by Artur Tovmasyan, the Karabakh parliament speaker, referring to Pashinyan asking for the enclave to directly negotiate with Azerbaijan.

Ashot Danielyan, another lawmaker al-

lied to Arayik Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, branded Pashinyan a "capitulator."

Karabakh leaders have repeatedly criticized Pashinyan since he stopped invoking the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination a year ago. The region's main political factions charged in April that his current views on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict are "consistent with the position of official Baku."

Adding his voice to those angry with Pashinyan's statement was former Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) State Minister, Russian-Armenian billionaire Ruben Vardanyan. He said he cannot remain silent when "human values are being violated and all sanctities destroyed."

"I don't know how long you will remain the leader, Mr. Pashinyan, but what you say is very dangerous. You are trying to put us in the position of slaves and turn us into a worthless people, but you will not succeed," said Vardanyan in a video message from Hakobavank.

"When we allow ourselves to say that we had thousands of defectors, without facts, when we say that Armenian women are not happy, we consider it normal to spit in a someone's face, we allow an anti-church campaign to begin, when we can say that we have nothing to do with Artsakh, shake a finger from the podium of the National Assembly and say: 'who are you to say anything to us?' When you can understand that there will be thousands of victims, but the war will not be stopped, and this becomes the standard. We are betraying the

motherland, our roots, values. That is the biggest danger."

Earlier, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's wife, Anna Hakobyan, had declared that there were 11,000 deserters during the 44-day war. The National Security Service did not confirm that number.

In a related story, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan presented details from the Washington negotiations. Mirzoyan, during a press conference on May 22, said that some progress was made in the negotiations in Washington in the sense that it was possible to agree on two more articles of the draft peace treaty.

"I can say that during these conversations, the parties understood each other's concerns, intentions and ideas very well. Apart from the two articles I mentioned, I think there is a possibility of agreement regarding the other articles as well. This is not only my assessment. I was assured by other parties as well.

"Of course, there are articles and topics where the positions of the parties are quite far from each other. These are the articles that deal with the most difficult issues. But there was also quite an effective discussion in this direction," said Mirzoyan.

He also reaffirmed Armenia's commitment to establishing a long-lasting, stable and dignified peace in the South Caucasus.

"Armenia cannot take constructive steps alone," said Mirzoyan.

(Stories from Azatutyun, Armenpress and PanArmenian.net contributed to this report.)

## Brad Sherman and Chris Smith Press USAID's Power on Devastating Impact of Azerbaijan's Artsakh Blockade

WASHINGTON — US House Foreign Affairs Committee senior members Brad Sherman (D-CA) and Chris Smith (R-NJ) called for concrete answers from US Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Samantha Power regarding the Biden Administration's two-year-long failure to operate any US humanitarian aid programs in Artsakh, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

During the May 17 House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on President Biden's Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) foreign assistance budget, Rep. Sherman asked Administrator Power, "We've got a blockade of Artsakh, part of an effort to ethnically cleanse the area. People need food aid. Does this area meet USAID's definition of a crisis?"

Administrator Power dodged the question, instead referencing the US State Department's non-earmarked funding for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has been able to deliver limited assistance through the Azerbaijani blockade to Artsakh's 120,000 indigenous Armenian population. US funding is available for all of ICRC's global humanitarian efforts, but Artsakh aid is solely offered at the ICRC's discretion.



USAID Administrator Samantha Power



Rep. Brad Sherman, left, and Rep. Chris Smith



Smith, referencing Azerbaijan's Artsakh blockade, asked how assistance is getting to Artsakh's Armenian population.

Power noted, "I gather that an ICRC convoy did, in fact, get in today. But access has been very, very limited. Many, many staples are in short supply. [...] It should be coming in through commercial means as it always was, but since the road has been blocked and the checkpoints have been erected, commercial access has not been possible. So we understand it to have been a combination of Russian peacekeepers and ICRC deliveries when those can go in."

Power touted that, "USAID has sent two assessment missions to the [Nagorno Karabakh] region and we are encouraging the UN to send an interagency assessment

mission as well." The most recent Artsakh aid assessment was in response to a provision in the Fiscal Year 2023 spending bill that directs the Department of State and US Agency for International Development to provide Congress with an assistance strategy for addressing humanitarian and recovery needs arising from the Artsakh conflict and identifies the US "resources and programs," available for this purpose. Though the assessment was due on March 1st, the results have not been made widely available to Congressional offices.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez (D-NJ), in a contentious exchange with Administrator Power two weeks earlier, asked USAID to send him the assessments.



## ARMENIA

# Russia Sounds Caution on Armenian-Azeri Peace Deal

MOSCOW (Azatutyun) — The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan have narrowed their differences on a bilateral peace treaty, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday, May 19, after hosting fresh talks between them in Moscow.

But he suggested that the two sides need to restore Armenian-Azerbaijani transport links, start delimiting their long border and bolster the ceasefire regime in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone before they can finalize such a treaty.

Lavrov held separate talks with Foreign Ministers Ararat Mirzoyan and Jeyhun Bayramov of Azerbaijan before sitting down with them in a trilateral format.

“Work on the peace treaty is undoubtedly fundamental,” he told the press after the trilateral meeting. “But our partners confirmed today that without solving the issues of delimitation, unblocking transport and economic links and an overall improvement of the security situation in both Karabakh and on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border it’s very hard to make progress on concrete aspects of the peace treaty. We discussed all this together.”

Lavrov said in that regard that a Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani task force dealing with practical modalities of the transport links will meet next week after a long pause.

“We hope that a positive result will be achieved as a result. The parties are already very, very close to a final agreement,” he said without elaborating.

Lavrov further announced that a separate Armenian-Azerbaijani group working on the border delimitation and demarcation with Russian assistance will also resume its activities soon.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov hosts talks between his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts, May 19, 2023.

“Regarding the peace treaty, I think that on a number of articles which we discussed today we managed to bring the two sides’ understandings closer to a common vision,” added the top Russian diplomat.

As Lavrov spoke, Bayramov and Mirzoyan continued their negotiations in his absence. Mirzoyan’s press office said afterwards that the two ministers had a “constructive exchange of views on issues on which the parties have differences.” It did not disclose those issues.

According to the US State Department, Bayramov and Mirzoyan made “tangible

progress” towards the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal during their four-day talks held outside Washington earlier this month.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev tried to build on that progress when they met in Brussels on May 14. Pashinyan afterwards reaffirmed Armenia’s readiness to recognize Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity through the document currently discussed by the two sides.

The two leaders are due to meet again in Moscow on May 25 at the invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Another Armenian-Azerbaijani summit is slated for June 1. Aliyev and Pashinyan will be joined by French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and European Union chief Charles Michel. Analysts believe that the United States and the EU are pressuring the parties to sign the far-reaching deal.

Moscow has repeatedly accused the West of trying to use the Karabakh conflict to drive Russia out of the South Caucasus. It maintains that Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Putin are the only viable blueprint for settling the conflict.

## Armenian PM, Church Trade Fresh Barbs

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has accused the Armenian Apostolic Church of meddling in politics, prompting a scathing response from the office of its supreme head, Catholicos Karekin II.

“Nothing prevents them [the church] from setting up a party and embarking on political activities through that party,” Pashinyan said during a visit to Armenia’s Tavush province on Saturday, May 20. “That would be more honest towards voters, and they would be on the same plane with other political rivals.”

“When the state and the church mix together there is nothing more dangerous than that. The state must mind its own business, the church must mind its own business,” he told a group of local schoolchildren in remarks made public on Saturday.

The church was quick to hit back at Pashinyan, underlining its strained relationship with the Armenian government.

“If some people want to practice ecclesiology, they can try to get admitted to the Theological Seminary; of course, if they overcome the educational threshold set for admission and present convincing arguments about their good health,” said Archbishop Arshak Khachatryan, the chancellor of the church’s Mother See in Echmiadzin.

Pashinyan’s relationship with the church has increasingly deteriorated in recent years and especially since the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Karekin and other senior clergymen joined the Armenian opposition in calling for Pashinyan’s resignation following Armenia’s defeat in the six-week war.

The Catholicos last month defended those calls and deplored the prime minister’s statements on the Karabakh conflict condemned by the opposition as pro-Azerbaijani.

A pro-government parliamentarian responded by accusing the Armenian Church of interfering in political processes. She also denounced Karekin’s homily read out during the Easter mass at Yerevan’s Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral on April 9.

“When justice and truth cease to be the core of our undertakings and activities in state and public life, we will continue to face manifestations of Pilates,” Karekin told hundreds of worshippers during the mass.



## US DoD Officials Visit Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — United States Major General Keith Phillips and Patrick Prior, from the US Department of Defense, pictured above, have arrived in Armenia, the US Embassy announced Monday, May 22.

“The US Embassy in Armenia welcomes to Yerevan Major General Keith Phillips and Mr. Patrick Prior from the US Department of Defense. They will meet with Armenian government officials and members of the Armenian Armed Forces to discuss opportunities to strengthen the US-Armenia defense and security relationship,” the US Embassy said.



## ARMENIA



Photolur

Protests in Yerevan broke out in support of Gayane Hakobyan.

## Pashinyan Defends Arrest of Fallen Soldier's Mother

By Anush Mkrтчian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sought to justify on May 22 the arrest of a grief-stricken woman accused of attempting to “kidnap” his son which has sparked street protests and widespread condemnation in Armenia.

Gayane Hakobyan, whose son Zhora Martirosian was killed during the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, was detained last Wednesday after an argument with Ashot Pashinyan. Citing the latter's testimony, Armenia's Investigative Committee said that Hakobyan tricked the young man into getting into her car after she ran into him outside a court building in Yerevan.

The younger Pashinyan jumped out of the car shortly after Hakobyan drove it towards the Yerablur Military Pantheon, according to the law-enforcement agency.

Hakobyan strongly denies the accu-

sations, carrying between four and eight years in prison. Her lawyers say she simply wanted to talk to the 23-year-old.

A Yerevan court approved her pre-trial detention on Saturday, May 20, triggering an angry demonstration attended by several dozen other parents of fallen soldiers and hundreds of their sympathizers. The parents announced afterwards a non-stop sit-in outside the prime minister's office in the city's central Republic Square.

The protest continued on May 22 as Nikol Pashinyan held a news conference amid tightened security in and around the building.

The prime minister made it clear that he will not tell his son to withdraw the complaint lodged against Hakobyan because they both believe that “in Armenia all issues must be resolved in a legal way.”

“If there was no crime, let them close the case,” he told a news conference. “If there

was a crime, let them finish the investigation and send the case to the court and let the court make a decision.”

Pashinyan did not comment on why Hakobyan has to be kept under arrest pending the outcome of her trial.

to muzzle the families of deceased soldiers who have staged demonstrations over the past year to demand his prosecution on war-related charges. Several female opposition parliamentarians visited the woman in custody at the weekend.



Photolur

Protests in Yerevan broke out in support of Gayane Hakobyan.

He also declined to answer a question from the protesters which was put to him by a reporter. They wanted to know “what you felt when ordering the arrest.”

“Gayane is not guilty and the accusation brought against her is fabricated,” one of the protesting parents told journalists. “I consider her a political prisoner.”

“So his son cannot be told to sit in a car so that we just talk to him and they consider that kidnapping. But who will be held accountable for the deaths of me and Gayane's sons and the 5,000 other boys?” said another.

Armenian opposition leaders and other critics of the government claim that Pashinyan ordered Hakobyan's arrest in a bid

Former President Levon Ter-Petrosian also condemned the woman's arrest, saying that it is an “even greater disgrace” than a recent incident during which Armenian parliament speaker Alen Simonian spat at a heckler in Yerevan. Ter-Petrosian said that the Armenian authorities are only heightening political tensions in the country with their “impudent and short-sighted actions.”

“If things continue like this, a much sadder, if not explosive, prospect awaits our country,” he warned in a statement.

The Armenian Apostolic Church likewise expressed “deep concern” at Hakobyan's prosecution and called for her release from custody.

### Armenia to Appoint Defense Attaché to India

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia's government decided on Thursday, May 18, to appoint a defense attaché to its embassy in India, citing deepening military ties between the two countries.

A government statement attributed the decision to “strong interest shown recently by state structures, private organizations and companies of the military-industrial complex towards bilateral cooperation.”

It said that the Armenian military attaché in New Delhi will be tasked with coordinating ongoing Indian-Armenian defense programs and proposing new ones.

The move follows a series of defense contracts signed by Yerevan with Indian arms manufacturers last year.

In particular, Armenia reportedly purchased \$245 million worth of Indian multiple-launch rocket systems, anti-tank rockets and ammunition. Defense Minister Suren Papikyan explored the possibility of more such deals when he visited India in October.

Indian media reported afterwards that the two sides signed in November a \$155 million deal to supply Indian 155-millimeter self-propelled howitzers to the Armenian army in the coming years. Yerevan did not officially confirm that either.

The reported deals may undermine Russia's status as the main supplier of weapons and ammunition to Armenia. In an apparent reference to Moscow, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan complained last September that “our allies” have failed to deliver weapons to Armenia despite contracts signed with them in the last two years.

The secretary of the country's Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, similarly said earlier this month that “we are not receiving what we ordered from Russia and what we paid for.” But he too did not go into details.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Archbishop Aykazian Visits Kiev with World Council of Churches Delegation

KIEV — Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director of the Eastern Diocese, was one of the global church leaders visiting Ukraine last week, to meet with church and government officials, and to survey sites ravaged by the ongoing war.

The high-level delegation from the World Council of Churches (WCC) arrived in the capital city of Kiev on May 10 and held consultations through May 12. In addition to Archbishop Aykazian, who serves as Vice Moderator on the WCC's central committee, the delegation included WCC General Secretary Rev. Jerry Pillay, Moderator Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, WCC's international affairs director Peter Prove, and its ecumenical relations executive Dr. Vasile-Octavian Mihoc.

The delegation visited Kiev Pechersk Lavra (Monastery of the Caves), one of the holiest sites of Orthodox Christianity



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, second from left, with the World Council of Churches delegation outside the Kiev Pechersk Lavra



Meeting with the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC)

in the region, and led an ecumenical prayer service in Bucha. The group also met with members of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO), and with the country's Minister of Culture and Information Policy Oleksandr Tkachenko.

In meetings with senior leaders of both the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), the WCC delegation confirmed their readiness to host discussions among the two churches to seek a resolution to the

issues between them.

Leaders of both churches — Metropolitan Anthony of the UOC, and Metropolitan Epifaniy of the OCU — signaled their

willingness to engage in dialogue, a development that would offer a hope of healing one of the wounds which the present conflict has deepened.



Destruction in Kiev

## INTERNATIONAL

## Pashinyan, Colomina Discuss Border Situation

YEREVAN (News.am) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of Armenia on May 23 received Javier Colomina Piriz, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy and the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The interlocutors discussed matters related to Armenia-NATO partnership and cooperation, according to the prime minister's office. They conferred also about the Armenia-Azerbaijan border situation, ensuring the border demarcation and security between the two countries as well as stability, the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh — in particular, the humanitarian crisis created there due to the ongoing illegal blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan and the need for the introduction of an international mechanism for Karabakh-Azerbaijan dialogue.

## Security Council Secretary, UK Minister for Europe Discuss Regional Security

YEREVAN (ArmenPress) — Armenian Secretary of the Security Council Armen Grigoryan held a meeting on May 23 with the United Kingdom's Minister for Europe Leo Docherty. Grigoryan and Docherty discussed regional security and stability issues, Grigoryan's office said in a readout. In this context, Grigoryan attached importance to the efforts aimed at democratization by Armenia in ensuring security.

Grigoryan and Docherty attached importance to the positive dynamics of development of relations between Armenia and the UK and exchanged views on further expansion of the bilateral relations agenda.

## Withdrawal from CSTO Still not Out of Question, Pashinyan Says

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia's withdrawal from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is not off the table, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at a press conference on May 22.

Pashinyan noted that Armenia will de jure leave the CSTO if it turns out that "the organization has left the country in terms of fulfilling its obligations."

Such a decision can also be made if the status of a CSTO member interferes with discussions of security issues with other countries.

According to him, it was precisely the membership in the CSTO that prevented Yerevan from discussing the acquisition of weapons from third countries.

"We were told: you are a member of the CSTO, what should we discuss with you?" Pashinyan said.

Asked whether the decision to withdraw from the CSTO would harm the Armenian-Russian relations, the prime minister said that recent opinion polls in the republic showed that the level of trust in the Russian Federation had decreased in the country.

# Azerbaijani Officials, Media Certain of Erdogan Victory in Turkey Election Before Second Round

By Heydar Isayev

Though the winner of the presidential election in Turkey has yet to be decided, Azerbaijani officials and the country's pro-government media appear certain in the victory of incumbent strongman Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whom they enthusiastically boosted ahead of the polls.

In the first round of the elections on May 14, there was no winner. President Erdogan led with 49.50 percent of the votes, while his rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu, head of the Republican People's Party and joint opposition candidate, gained just under 45 percent. As no one received a majority, a second round - the first in Turkey's history - is to be held between the two on May 28.

Despite the lack of a decisive outcome, Azerbaijani officials leaped to celebrate Erdogan's performance. President Ilham Aliyev called his Turkish counterpart the next day and congratulated him "for winning

the majority vote in presidential and parliament elections". (Elections for Turkish parliament were held in tandem with the presidential poll; Erdogan's bloc won 322 of the 600 seats, while Kilicdaroglu's allies received 212.)

"President Ilham Aliyev noted that under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Republic of Turkey has made great progress, and as a manifestation of this, the fraternal Turkish people have shown their trust in their leader in these elections as well," Aliyev's press service noted.

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, meanwhile, called his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavushoglu to offer congratulations.

Parliament members and pro-government media in Azerbaijan had been ardently supporting Erdogan - and denigrating Kilicdaroglu - ahead of the election, and the trend was cemented after the results in the first round of elections.

One of the main news agencies, Report.az, called the May 14 elections "a successful test of democracy and demonstration of trust in Erdogan. ... Some were thinking that an era would end with these elections. However, the elections proved that he is still capable of being a leader for the Turkish state," one piece read.

"Although he did not win in the first round, Turkish voters once again supported R.T. Erdogan. He is expected to win the second round brilliantly."

"Turkey and the brotherly Turkish people, who have successfully passed all the tests of history, have successfully passed this test as well. On May 14, the state and people of Turkey taught the world a lesson in democracy," Azerbaijani MP Vugar Iskandarov told another news agency, APA.

(Heydar Isayev is a journalist from Baku. This article appeared on Eurasianet.org on May 17.)

## INTERNATIONAL

# All Victims of Genocide Perpetrated by Young Turks Honored

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — During World War I it was not only the Armenians who fell victim to genocide under the Young Turk regime; other Christians, Greeks and Syrian Orthodox, Aramaeans, were targeted as well, deported, and massacred. At times, this fact is forgotten, obfuscated, or denied, perhaps in the attempt to highlight the suffering of one group. The historical record shows that, if the perpetrator was one party, the victims were from several communities.

On the weekend of May 19-21, in Berlin and Munich, members of these communities joined to pay tribute to the Pontic Greek victims of the Ottoman genocide. The ecumenical gathering on May 19 in the Bavarian capital, organized by the Association of Pontic Greeks in Munich, in cooperation with groups from other cities, opened with *Krunk*, (The Crane), sung by Anna Ghazaryan. Prayers followed, offered by Zaven Asa of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Nina Sargon of the Assyrian Church of the East. Archimandrite Georgios Siomos, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Germany celebrated the service, and German political figures as well as the Greek General Consul Dr. Vassilios Gouloussis spoke.

In the state capital, on May 20-21, the “I Ipsilantides” Association of Pontic Greeks in Berlin joined with the Promotional Society for the Ecumenical Monuments for Genocide Victims of the Ottoman Empire (FÖGG) in a commemoration, which opened at the Hellenic Society and, on Sunday, continued at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension, and the Ecumen-



At the Ecumenical Monuments, Berlin

ical Monuments in the Luisenfriedhof cemetery. Nikolaos Xenidas, chairman of the “I Ipsilantides,” and Parthena Iordanidou, board member of the FÖGG, greeted guests, after which historian Konstantinos Samourkasidis spoke on “The Transformation of Excluded Remembrance of Refugees into Official Commemoration by the Greek State.”

Following prayers for the genocide victims, Sunday’s ceremony began with greetings by FÖGG and “I Ipsilantides” chairmen, Amill Gorgis and Nikolaos Xenidis, respectively, as well as Greek Orthodox priest Theofilos Sofitsis, and Greek General Consul in Berlin, Ilias A. Klouvatos.

#### Honoring all Victims

Genocide researcher and sociologist Dr. Tessa Hofmann, in her “Brief Outline of the Genocide against the Pontic Greeks,” made clear both the specific aspects of the Greek experience and the features shared with other victim groups. The persecution of the Greek Orthodox Christians lasted a full decade, from 1912 to 1922, and even earlier, in 1909, repressive economic measures had been imposed, in an attempt to “Islamicize” the Ottoman economy, she



Reverend Theofilos Sofitsis in chapel, Luisenfriedhof III, Berlin



Wreaths laid before the Ecumenical Monuments, Berlin

said. The approach adopted against the Greeks was similar to that wielded against the Armenians: lists were drawn up of those to be deported, the elites were among the first victims, civilians were sent off, barefoot and ill-equipped, on what were death marches. Harsh weather conditions – freezing temperatures for the Pontic Greeks or blistering summer heat for the Armenians – were instrumental in killing off deportees.

And, as Hofmann showed, the Germans, wartime allies of the Young Turks, knew what was happening, but did not intervene. She cited several reports sent by German diplomats to document this: Josef Maria von Radowitz, Chargé d’affaires at the embassy in Constantinople, wrote in October 1916 that if the Ottoman regime proceeded to deport 38,000 Greeks whose names had been listed, and send them to the interior, that would “take a course similar to that of the Armenian raids.” As early as June 1915, Interior Minister Mehmet Talaat had in fact informed the German embassy in the capital of the intention to exploit the war situation to get rid of “internal enemies.” By the end of January 1917, Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg could write, “Everything indicates that the Turks want to eliminate the Greeks as enemy of the state, as they did earlier with the Arme-

nians.” He compared the methods adopted, sending them on death marches, then looting the abandoned homes. “What was done to the Armenians is being repeated with the Greeks,” he concluded.

And the extent of the carnage was also comparable. Hofmann reported that the Pontic Greeks suffered 353,000 out of a total population of 500,000; more than one out of two Pontic Greeks died between 1915 and 1923. Indeed, the killing did not end with the war. In 1921, a “fateful year for the Pontic Greeks,” she said, the regime took all male Christians prisoner, then massacred them; priests were crucified, others hanged. She concluded with the somber reflection, “As the fate of the so-called Crypto-Christians shows, it has been impossible to live as a Christian Greek in the Pontos area ever since.”

Following remarks by journalist Micha Brumlik, on “The Expulsion of the Pontic Greeks—a Forgotten Genocide?” a member of the Bundestag (Parliament) from the Social Democratic Party, Takis Mehmet Ali, addressed “Remembering in the Future – Memory Culture in Times of Upheaval.” The SPD lawmaker, of Greek heritage, is engaged in an initiative on the centenary of the Lausanne Treaty, and efforts toward recognition of the Greek genocide.

## ADL Press Council Calls For United Support of Jerusalem’s Armenian National Heritage

JERUSALEM, from page 1

The participants of the meeting found it important at this stage to:

A. Distance themselves from irresponsible journalism that further aggravates the situation without verifying the facts.

B. Adopt a restrained and objective approach to the problem.

C. Consider in this very sensitive moment that making accusations does not provide any benefits, and so approach the problem accordingly, keeping in mind Armenian pan-national interests in general and the interests of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and its Brotherhood of Saint James, as well as the dwindling Armenian community of Jerusalem in particular.

D. Ensure pan-Armenian unification and the assumption of collective responsibility in order to get out of the crisis with minimal losses.

E. After all this is done, it will be necessary to undertake a very serious investigation in order to reveal all the actors of this deeply irresponsible crime and subject them to appropriate sanctions.

Finally, the ADL Press Council confirmed its responsible commitment to closely follow the situation and make the public aware of developing events.

We are confident that this most complex situation will soon enter a phase of desired resolution.

ADL Press Council  
May 18, 2023



# Community News

## US Sanctions Another Armenian Firm

By Robert Zargarian

WASHINGTON (RFE/RL) — The United States has added an Armenian trading company to its long list of entities accused of helping Russia evade US sanctions imposed since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The US Department of Commerce blacklisted the company, Medisar, along with 69 Russian entities on May 19. It accused them of supporting Russia's military and defense industry.

Founded in 2001, Medisar is based in Yerevan. It owns a large warehouse there.

A company executive, who did not want to be identified, acknowledged that Medisar has imported chemicals and laboratory equipment from the United States and the European Union and re-exported them to Russia. He insisted that the company has not violated any Armenian laws and that the Armenian authorities have been aware of its operations.

Company representatives said they do not know yet the likely impact of the US sanctions on Medisar's continued activities. It was not clear whether they will stop doing business with Russia.

Medisar, which paid over \$1 million in taxes last year, is the second Armenian-registered entity blacklisted by the United States. The other firm, TAKO, was sanctioned by the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) in April.

TAKO was registered in May last year about three months after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. According to the Armenian state registry, it is fully owned by a Russian national and specializes in wholesale trade in electronic and telecommunications equipment and parts.

US officials apparently pressed the Armenian government to comply with the sanctions during a series of meetings held earlier this year.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan admitted on May 22, that the issue is on the agenda of his government's dealings with the US and the EU. He said that despite its "strategic" relations with Russia and membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, Armenia "cannot afford to be placed under Western sanctions."

"Therefore, in our relations with Russia we will act on a scale that allows us to avoid Western sanctions," he said, adding that Yerevan is "in constant communication with our Western partners."

In a joint "compliance note" issued in March, the US departments of Justice, Treasury and Commerce said that third-party intermediaries have commonly used China, Armenia, Turkey and Uzbekistan as "transshipment points" to Russia as well as Belarus.

Russian-Armenian trade skyrocketed last year, with Armenian exports to Russia nearly tripling to \$2.4 billion. Goods manufactured in third countries and re-exported from Armenia to Russia are believed to have accounted for most of that gain.



An architectural rendering of the museum

## Glendale Lauds Museum's Rise

By Zane Hill

GLENDAL (LA Business Journal) — From its inception, the Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center project in Glendale has garnered a wealth of support from local residents, public officials — and the business community.

For many of those business owners, the cause is personal, a classic American story of giving to the community that allowed them to live a successful life after immigrating here. Ron Arakelian III, owner of Athens Services in City of Industry, said he was motivated to become a major donor to the project to "ensure the legacy of our collective families' history."

"We're Armenian by descent and we've been supportive of Armenian causes," he said. "This was a really interesting, important project and being so entrenched in the Los Angeles area as a business family, it just seemed like a really good opportunity to jump in."

After breaking ground in 2021, the museum is slated to open its doors in 2025. Its planners hope it will become a signature museum space in Los Angeles County, home to a living history of the Armenian diaspora and other local communities who wish to exhibit or perform there about their own cultures.

"It is exciting to see the entire community come together to support a project that is primarily intended for education, cultural enrichment, but also recognizing the significant impact it's going to have on the local community, Glendale businesses and quality of life," said Shant Sahakian, executive director of the museum. "The business community is one of the key partners to have stepped up and provided support financially but also in terms of spreading the word and spreading awareness for the project."

### An Easy Sell

When he received a mailer about the then-potential museum in 2018 and inquired further about it, Kevonian said it was an easy sell.

Among a worldwide Armenian diaspora, a large number reside here in the United States. And California, especially Southern California, is where they have become most influential.

"America has been great to our family. It's been a lot of hard work and perseverance, but they call America the land of opportunity for a reason," Arakelian said. "To be in a position 100 years later from an immigrant coming here with literally just a shirt on his back to being able to support a museum that honors the legacy of the Armenian American community feels good."

The Arakelians are among a swath of significant donors among the business community and will have naming rights to the main entrance plaza. Arakelian also serves on the museum's board of governors.

Other business-affiliated donors include Valencia-based Armen Living as well as the Massis Kabob restaurant chain and Pacific BMW dealer, both based in Glendale.

Sahakian said it has been helpful for the project's development to garner the support from local entrepreneurs, who can be influential.

Of the \$35 million construction budget, \$19.6 million has come through state funding following successful lobbying efforts from state Sen. Anthony Portantino, Assemblywoman Laura Friedman and then-Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian. The Los Angeles County government kicked in \$1 million courtesy of Supervisor Kathryn Barger, and Congressman Adam Schiff secured \$950,000 in federal funding.

see MUSEUM, page 8

## A Celebration Of Church Builders at the 2023 Diocesan Assembly Awards Banquet

DALLAS — The 2023 Diocesan Assembly Awards Banquet, like the other events throughout the weekend, combined a warm "family reunion" feel with a forward-looking optimism for the future.

Gathering in the magnificent "Hall of Lights" of St. Sarkis Church of Dallas, TX, the banquet provided an elegant stage on which to honor church leaders for their contributions to the life of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

Following a prayer service in the church sanctuary, and a social hour on its expansive outdoor pavilion, guests took their places in the beautifully appointed hall, whose West-facing glass wall framed a beautiful Texas sunset.

Diocesan Legate Archbishop Vicken Aykazian delivered the invocation. Warm words of welcome and encouragement were offered by master of ceremonies Jeff Andonian, parish council chair Arlen Haruthunian, and host parish executive committee co-chairs Sylva Dayian and Daron Bolat.

Among the artists performing for the evening were vocalists Sona Tashjian, Sarkis Altunian, and Lucy Grimes; pianists Hasmik Virabyan and Satenik Muradyan Raphael; and saxophonist Holy Lee.

Diocesan Council chair Fr. Krikor Sabounjian introduced the evening's honorees, before Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan presented each award and invited the award winners to offer remarks.

"One has very few opportunities to work on a project like this," said architect David Hotson as he received the "Friend of the Armenians" award. As the designer of Dallas' St. Sarkis Church, he said that "the building has a deep respect for the remarkable history of the Armenian people — which is something Americans need to know about."

In the year since the consecration, he said, "The church does seem to be raising awareness and recognition of Armenia, its story, and its tenacious people. Also, it is raising awareness of Armenia's imperiled history, that is still going on." He expressed sorrow that the church's façade, which dramatically commemorates the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide, "was being installed at the exact moment that the Genocide was being resumed in Artsakh."

"If this building could contribute to bringing greater world attention to these things, I would be immensely gratified," he concluded.

Elie Akilian, speaking on behalf of his wife Ela as the couple received the "Armenian Church Members of the Year" award, spoke passionately about the origins of the new Dallas edifice. "When we embarked on the

see DIOCESE, page 9



## COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

# Glendale Lauds Museum's Rise

MUSEUM, from page 7

The rest has come from fundraising and donations — and one business chipping in opens the door for others, Sahakian said.

“It has a major impact because what it does is that it helps attract other members of the business community and other leaders to help us contribute to realizing this vision of a cultural center in the community,” he said. “Certainly, the Armenian American community is playing a significant role in promoting the project, but we have a lot of businesses who have significant number of employees of Armenian descent. We also have a sign number of businesses here who recognize that a lot of their customers are Armenian and are looking for ways to support that community.”

Phase one of the museum's construction — what will essentially be the subter-

ranean portion — is complete. Now, the work will rise upward, where two stories and 50,820 square feet of museum space will be built on Colorado Street on the edge of downtown. The general contractor is Irwindale-based PNG Builders and the principal architect is Glendale-based Alajajian Marcoosi Architects.

### Armenia's Importance

The facility will house permanent and temporary exhibition space, as well as an archives center, auditorium and demonstration kitchen. While much of the education and news coverage on Armenia and Armenians relates to the genocide perpetrated upon them by the Ottoman Empire during World War 1, this museum promises to paint the whole picture — it being the first nation to adopt Christianity, its involvement in the Silk Road and the Crusades and how the diaspora has

integrated with its new communities.

“Of course, you have the genocide, which is a big unfortunate portion of our history,” said Gevik Baghdassarian, co-owner of Massis Kabob, “but they're focusing on the present, what Armenians have accomplished in this country, how they've become American and benefitted this country and from this country.”

The United States shines as a special beacon for many in the Armenian diaspora, in many cases for its relative stability as a refuge. Other nations that have historically housed pockets of Armenians — Iran, Lebanon, Syria — have periodically experienced instability that created a new stream of refugees. As examples, Armen Living President Kevin Kevonian's family immigrated here in 1975, during the Lebanese Civil War, and his wife's family from Argentina during its so-called Dirty War.

“We're spread out across the world, but half of the countries that Armenian immigrated to had turmoil of their own. Many of us were forced to move again,” Kevonian said. “America has been able to bring all of us together and I think the museum unifies us even more.”

For local Armenian families, the museum exhibits will not necessarily be anything new or different for them. Rather, it'll be a way for others to learn about Armenian history and, through its temporary spaces, even a way for other groups to explore their own histories.

However, it may also be a draw for those still living in Armenia or in other nations. Sahakian said people reach out from overseas constantly inquiring about the museum, which he is hoping to turn into “part of their journey as a must-visit” whenever they visit family here or come as tourists.

“We know that there is a lot of people that are itching for the day that we are open and can start welcoming people,” he said.

## OBITUARY

### Betty (Papazian) Boole

Active in Armenian Memorial Church

WELLESLEY, Mass. — Betty (Papazian) Boole of Wellesley, formerly of Watertown and Waltham, passed away peacefully on May 18, 2023, at age 93.

Betty is survived by her loving husband of 68 years, George Boole of Wellesley and her three children Philip Boole (Kathryn) of Medfield; Donna Boole Yerganian (Richard) of Medfield; and Dana Boole (Lauren) of Raleigh, NC. Betty is further survived by her sister, Astrid Bozkurtian of Belmont. She was the adored Nana to seven grandchildren: Sarah Boole Murphy (Stephen) of Boston; Matthew Boole (Lee) of New Canaan, CT; Eric Boole of New York, NY; Nicole Yerganian Woeste (Matthew)

of Darien, CT; Scott Yerganian (Christine) of Newton; Kelsey Boole Owen (Brewer) of Raleigh, NC; and Taylor Boole of New York, NY. Finally, she is survived by seven glorious great grandchildren, as well as her nieces, and nephews. She was predeceased by her sisters Carol Kasparian of Lincoln and Mazie Diran of Belmont.

Betty was born and raised in Worcester, to Eskoohi and Tatevos Papazian. She was gifted with a beautiful voice, and she developed this talent in high school and in the Church of our Savior choir. She attended the New England Conservatory of Music, majoring in Voice.

She was proud of her Armenian heritage

and an active member of the Armenian Memorial Church, Armenian Women's Educational Club, and Armenian Women's Welfare Association.

Betty's kindness, love, and compassion had no bounds. She was an angel of God; devoted to her husband, children, cherished grandchildren, sisters, relatives, and friends. She was passionate about classical music, gardening, antiques, needlepoint, and welcoming family & friends around her bountiful dinner table. For everyone in Betty's presence — whether day to day or for a fleeting glimpse — they knew she was someone special.

Funeral services took place at the Armenian Memorial Church, Watertown, on Friday, May 26, followed by interment at Mount Auburn Cemetery.



### Dr. Armine Meghrouni

Helped Established UCI Armenian Studies

IRVINE, Calif. — Dr. Armine Meghrouni, a foundational figure in the establishment of Armenian Studies at UCI and a beloved longtime supporter of the Armenian Studies community on campus, she passed away peacefully on May 6, 2023, with her family by her side.

Meghrouni, the eldest child of parents who survived and were displaced by the Armenian Genocide, grew up within a tight-knit East Coast Armenian communi-

ty comprised of people who shared similar experiences of leaving their homeland. She developed an interest in life sciences at an early age, attended college, went to medical school and became an anesthesiologist, all when it was rare for women to pursue and achieve such ambitions. Armine and her husband Vahe met as resident physicians at LA County General Hospital, each having found a fellow Armenian in the medical profession. Armine continued her practice through the raising of her four daughters, while nurturing her interests in music, the arts and the outdoors. Her passion for Armenian Studies was a natural outgrowth of her heritage as a child of genocide survivors and her personal interests.

In 2015, Armine, along with her husband, was instrumental in the establishment of the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies within UCI's History Department. Guided by their commitment to encouraging the research and study of Armenian history, literature, and language, the Meghrounis have continuously supported the growth of the program and the Center. In 2016, they established the Vahe and Armine Meghrouni Lecture Series and since then have faithfully attended our events in person or virtually, becoming sources of inspiration for our guest speakers, our faculty, students, and community members.

Armine Meghrouni is survived by her husband Vahe Meghrouni, their daughters, grandchildren, and extended family.



Telephone (617) 924-7400

### Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET  
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN  
PAUL BEDROSIAN  
LARRY BEDROSIAN

### Giragosian

FUNERAL HOME

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC  
Mark J. Giragosian  
Funeral Counselors

576 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, TEL: 617-924-0606  
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

### Nardolillo Funeral Home

Est. 1906

John K. Najarian, Jr.

Rhode Island's Only Licensed Armenian Funeral Director

1278 Park Ave. Cranston, RI 02910 (401) 942-1220  
1111 Boston Neck Rd. Narragansett, RI 02882 (401) 789-6300

www.nardolillo.com





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Celebration of Church Builders at Diocesan Assembly Awards Banquet

DIOCESE, from page 7

project,” he recalled, “we wanted to create a place where people could come to pray, and children could come to play. A place where people could come together.”

“This church with its extensive campus of facilities embodies these goals,” he said.

Akilian credited the parish community for showing the will to move forward by undertaking the initial fundraising for the project. “It showed their commitment to building the new church,” he said, as he acknowledged a number of individuals who had supported

to our hearts,” he said with reference to honoree David Hotson. “It’s an important part of our identity. Of course, for many of the architects of our monuments, their names are lost to history. But those that we do know are precious to us, and inspire pride in our hearts. And now David is part of that tradition. He has joined that very elite company.... And I want him to know that not just this Armenian Church, but every Armenian church, is now his home.”

Directing his thoughts to the Akilians, the Primate said: “Elie and Ela are not

rum in the field, and has received international honor and recognition.

Born in Pennsylvania and raised in Colorado and Ontario, after receiving a Master’s Degree in Architecture from Yale University, David established his own architectural firm in 1991, based in New York. His office has produced many award-winning projects, including one that received a “Design of the Decade” award from Interior Design Magazine.

David is also the architect of St. Sarkis Armenian Church of Dallas — also an award winner, thanks in part to the enthusiastic voting of Armenians around the world. In a field of 40 nominated structures, St. Sarkis received an amazing 64 percent of the votes cast, to become named as the “2022 U.S. Building of the Year” by the prestigious World-Architects forum.

But Hotson’s involvement with Armenia goes back nearly 20 years, when he was tapped by the late philanthropist Gerald Cafesjian, of Minnesota, to work in Yerevan on the renovation of Tamanyan Park and the unforgettable Cascade, culminating in the opening of the Cafesjian Center for the Arts.

Armenia is a land of architectural wonders; and its spirit clearly entered into David when he was engaged to work on the design of St. Sarkis Church and Community Center, working with patron Elie Akilian and fellow architect Stepan Terzyan. One can recognize in its design the harmonious lines of Armenia’s great St. Hripsime cathedral — a “family resemblance” that St. Sarkis shares with the Diocesan cathedral of St. Vartan.

Also like St. Vartan Cathedral, the Dallas church stands as a memorial to the Genocide, with 1.5 million unique engravings etched into the façade of St. Sarkis: a remarkable testimony to the Armenian martyrs who perished

more than a century ago. The Dallas Morning News called the effect “the most emotionally moving work of architecture produced in North Texas in a generation.”

Creating an emotional impact was part of Hotson’s intention in designing the church. And he has brought the same sense of moral responsibility to his advocacy for Genocide recognition and, more recently, for the plight of Armenia and Artsakh.

In naming Hotson as the 2023 “Friend of the Armenians” the Eastern Diocese honors a man of great artistic vision and deep moral conviction.

## Church Members of the Year

“Armenian Church Members of the Year” Elie and Ela Akilian are a married couple beloved at St. Sarkis Church, and admired throughout the Diocese.

Their story is an international one. It began in Beirut, where Elie Akilian was born and raised. In 1975, while still a teenager, he moved to the United States, to study electrical engineering at the University of Texas at Arlington. After graduating he started his career in Dallas, working in the defense industry. But he had dreams of striking out on his own, and building his own business ventures.

On a trip to Poland, Elie met the person who would become his partner and inspira-

tion in every undertaking of life: his wife, Ela. Eventually they were married in Warsaw, and the Akilians returned to Texas to start a family. The local Armenian church was in its earliest phase at the time, with Elie and Ela an active part of its life from the very beginning. Their children Natalie and Michael—now adults—grew up in the community, and Michael has the distinction of receiving the first baptism in the old sanctuary.

Elie’s career took a vital turn in 1989, when he became co-founder of Inet Technologies. As the computer age took off, the company attracted customers from around the globe, and after a decade Elie took the Inet public. He sold it in 2005, and started a new company producing video games, including the successful Wizard-101. Having sold that company in 2020, Elie now leads his third start-up, this time in the emerging field of virtual reality gaming.

Even as the Akilians’ success grew, they remained deeply committed to the Armenian community that had been their home, a source of strength, and the stage for many loving friendships. Elie and Ela had joined the parish when it was small, and they had seen it grow, and contributed to that growth. They dreamed of giving something to the community that would match its vitality, and inspire further expansion.

Their dream started to become a reality when Elie and Ela decided to become the main benefactors for a new church. They envisioned a distinctively Armenian structure, supported by a complete complex to serve the community’s needs. They sought out a brilliant architect who could give shape to this vision. They rallied the community, alongside pastor Fr. Ghevond Ajamian and other bold parish leaders. They made their personal generosity an example for others to emulate, and to give



This year’s “Friend of the Armenians” honoree, award-winning architect David Hotson, with (left) Diocesan Council chair Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, and (right) Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, during the Diocese Assembly Gala Banquet on May 5, at St. Sarkis Church in Dallas

the effort throughout the process.

With the new St. Sarkis Church now a vital and visible part of the Diocese and its surrounding city of Dallas, Elie Akilian said, “We want this place to be a model for the future — a model for what can be, for Armenian churches throughout the world.”

Parish pastor Fr. Ghevond Ajamian affirmed that the church had become a model in other ways, as well. “Since winning the World-Architects Best Building Award, St. Sarkis has become a place of pilgrimage for architects from around the world,” he said. “They visit to study the structure; but they leave studying the Armenian story.”

Ajamian applauded the honorees whose “collaboration has made this Armenian story known to greater numbers of people: people of influence in the larger world.”

Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, presiding over the Assembly Banquet for the first time as Primate, concluded the program with reflections of his own.

He thanked Dallas pastor Fr. Ghevond and Yeretzgin Hasmik Ajamian; the host parish co-chairs Sylva Dayian and Daron Bolat, and the committee they led; parish council chair Arlen Haruthunian, and the people of the Dallas community. “The hospitality and warmth, the commitment and dedication all of you have shown this weekend, has been remarkable,” he said.

He also thanked the chairmen and officers of the Clergy Conference, the Diocesan Assembly, and the Women’s Guild Assembly, before addressing the evening’s honored guests.

“Armenians hold architecture very close

merely dreamers of a vision: they are practical, detail-oriented, hands-on workers—who know the effort it takes to realize a vision in the community. Their generosity to our church has been very impressive: St. Sarkis is a magnificent expression of that. But their philanthropy has extended in many directions, embracing our Diocese, our homeland, and individual children in Armenia.”

He added: “Above all, their efforts always speak to the heart of the church: with confidence, imagination, and sense of unified purpose.... And in these troubling days, when the elder monuments of our history are in danger, are threatened with destruction, building a new church—and cherishing our existing ones—is one of the most powerful statements we can make, as a people.”

## 2023 Diocesan Award Winners

Every year the Eastern Diocese bestows its “Friend of the Armenians” and “Armenian Church Member of the Year” awards to express gratitude to people who have profoundly benefitted the church; to deepen existing relationships with important figures in the community; and to strengthen the honorees in their continuing efforts.

The 2023 honorees are people of extraordinary creative vision and determination, motivated by a belief in something greater, and a responsibility to share the fruits of their accomplishment with others.

“Friend of the Armenians” Hotson is a celebrated architect, whose work has been featured in every major publication and fo-



Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan with Mr. and Mrs. Elie and Ela Akilian, of Dallas, TX, honored as the “Armenian Church Members of the Year” for 2023, at the Diocese Assembly Gala Banquet on May 5, at St. Sarkis Church in Dallas.

confidence to the Armenian community — not just in Dallas, but across the Diocese.

Elie has spent the last seven years intimately involved with the construction project — and not even a worldwide pandemic could divert him from seeing it to completion. The church was consecrated on April 24, 2022, in the name of St. Sarkis the Brave by the hands of two former Primates — Bishop Daniel Findikyan and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian — as well as Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian: all great friends of the Dallas community, with deep connections to its people.

As the Eastern Diocese’s 2023 “Armenian Church Members of the Year,” Elie and Ela Akilian embody not only the high aspirations of the Armenian-American community, but also its tender values of faith and family.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

ANNIVERSARY, from page 1

Harout Chatmajian, chairman of the MMTG, welcomed everyone and started the evening's program. Kev Orkian, a renowned comedian and pianist from the UK, entertained the guests first with his news show entitled "Covid Movid." After an hour and a half of laughter, the guests were ready to dance to the music of Kevork Artinian and Band. Kevork Artinian entertained the crowd until midnight. The evening ended with everyone on the dance floor.

A commemorative booklet was prepared to showcase the group's dedication to cultural preservation. Three committee members were honored in the booklet for their commitment to the Theatrical Group: Ta-



Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group Chairman Harout Chatmajian



The Kevork Artinian Band

lar Sesetyan Sarafian for being a founding committee member with 25 years of continuous service; and Harout Barsoumian and Talar Zokian for being key committee members serving the MMTG in dual capacities — as actors as well as committee members.

The 25th anniversary celebrations honor the theatrical group's dedication to preserving the Armenian culture and language in our community. The TCA theatrical group is named after the renowned Armenian actor and director Mher Megerdchian, also known as Frounzik. Established in 1997, it had its premiere performance on April 17, 1998, with the production of "...And, again



Kev Orkian at the piano



Kevork Artinian sings among the dancers



Kev Orkian

Baronian" directed by Tamar Hovannisian, in the Armenian General Benevolent Union Nazarian Hall in Saddle Brook, NJ. It was established with nine founding actors and five executive committee members.

The TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group has had 24 productions to date. It has produced the works of such writers as Hagop Baronian, William Saroyan, Eduardo De Filippo, Zareh Melkonian, Carlo Goldoni, Robert Thomas, William Shakespeare, Morris Henniker, Jirayr Ananian, Raffi Shart, B. Ziajind, Yervant Odian, Perch (Berj) Zeytuntsyan and Agatha Christie. It has had eight directors, including Tamar Hovannisian, Vartan Garniki Oganessian, Berj Fazlian, Harout Chatmajian, Hovhannes Babakhanyan, Gagik Karapetyan, Krikor Satamian and Gerald Paspasian.

It has staged 69 performances in New Jersey, New York City, Boston, Los Angeles,

Montreal, Philadelphia, Chicago, White Plains (NY), as well as performing on stage in Yerevan and Gyumri, Armenia. It has enjoyed the participation of more than 92 young and old actors as well as over 50 backstage and technical helpers. The TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group is not just a theatrical group but serves as a school for Armenian culture. It's a place where the Armenian language and culture thrive and where Armenian history is preserved.

The 25th Anniversary celebrations will continue with a special theatrical production of Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing" directed by Gerald Paspasian on Saturday, November 4, 2023, at the Peter Norton Symphony Space in New York City.



Head table, seated, from left Fr. Sahag Yemishian, Fr. Mesrob Parsamyan, Primate, Ed and Carmen Gulbenkian, Hagop Vartivarian; standing, Marie Zokian, Vahe Kurdian, Harout and Ani Chatmajian, Maria Vartivarian



The Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group with comedian Kev Orkian



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# AMAA 104th Annual Meeting Banquet Celebrating Armenian Evangelical Education

By Elise Kalfayan

PARAMUS, N.J. — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) 104th Annual Meeting Banquet, Celebrating Armenian Evangelical Education, will be held at the San Francisco Airport Marriott Waterfront, San Francisco, CA, October 21, 2023, with Gasia Mikaelian, KTVU Fox TV News Anchor, as MC.

From its founding in 1918, the AMAA has prioritized education that fosters Armenian Christian identity as part of its



MC Gasia Mikaelian

mission. Hundreds of Armenian Evangelical elementary, secondary, higher education, boarding, and theology schools were founded and thrived in the decades before the Armenian Genocide, offering a high-quality education to all Armenians, and to girls and women for the first time. Armenian Evangelical leaders in the United States and abroad committed themselves through the work of the AMAA to

rebuilding schools for their nation in the years after the Genocide.

With its faithful benefactors, the AMAA opened elementary and secondary schools in the Near East throughout the 20th century, established Haigazian College (now Haigazian University) in Beirut, Lebanon in 1955, opened the K-8 Charlotte and Elise Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School in Los Angeles, CA in 1982, and established kindergartens in Armenia and Artsakh following the nation's independence. With visionary benefactor Edward Avedisian and his family, the AMAA built the state-of-the-art, private, tuition-free, K-12 Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center, which opened in Yerevan in 1998. Several graduates of the Avedisian School have now gone on to higher education and service to their country in prominent leadership and service roles.

"Education is the foundation of Armenians' spiritual, emotional and practical lives: we are fortunate to be the beneficiaries of institution builders, teachers, and learners as we carry AMAA's work well into the future," says Gasia Mikaelian.

Mikaelian is a news anchor at KTVU FOX 2 News in Oakland. She grew up in the Bay Area and is one of four children. Through her work at KTVU, Mikaelian has been able to highlight much of the good work that's happening in and by the Armenian American community. She is proud to work for a station that values and supports diversity in its newsroom and the larger community.

Mikaelian has reported live on everything from the North Bay wildfires to the Super Bowl. Some of her most fulfilling work came during the height of the COVID pandemic, in a series exploring the pandemic's effect on mental health. After



Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School, Yerevan, Armenia

graduating with a journalism degree from San Diego State University, she started her career as a reporter at KSWT in Yuma, Arizona. She then reported and anchored at WAFF in Huntsville, Ala., XETV in San Diego and KPRC in Houston before returning to the Bay Area in 2005 to join KTVU as anchor.

Banquet Co-Chairs Roushig Kalebjian and Vana Khanjian Vartanian invited Mikaelian to MC the Banquet, all sharing a commitment to education. "Growing up in an Armenian Evangelical household has played a significant role in shaping my educational journey. The emphasis on education and academic achievement, both within Evangelicalism and Armenian culture, created an environment that fostered and supported my passion for learning. As I reflect on my educational pursuits, I am grateful for the values instilled in me

by my upbringing, and the positive impact they have had on my life," says Kalebjian. Vartanian's sentiment is similar:

"Having grown up in the Armenian Evangelical Church and community, I've seen and experienced first-hand how our educational initiatives have instilled strong moral and spiritual values."

"Our Armenian Evangelical schools have educated generations of leaders who value Armenian culture and uphold our Christian faith," says AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian. "I look forward to the AMAA's 104th Annual Meeting Banquet at which we will honor Edward Avedisian posthumously and celebrate his beautiful vision realized in the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School, named in memory of his loving parents, and to joining our AMAA community in Celebrating Armenian Evangelical Education."

**Boutique Senior Living!**  
**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY**

**Manoogian Manor**, a licensed senior living facility, is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Executive Director of our "boutique residence" location in Livonia, Michigan. This is the top management position in our organization. Assisted by a dedicated management staff, this position is accountable for all aspects of running a successful business including resident care services, financial performance, compliance with local, state and federal safety standards, marketing, food service and property management. The position reports to the Manor's Board of Directors.

Requirements include a minimum four-year college degree followed by minimum five years' leadership experience in business, medical, hospitality or other relevant leadership environments. A compassionate, welcoming personality is essential. Conversational Armenian proficiency and a medical background are highly desirable, although not required.

A competitive compensation and benefit package accompanies this position, as well as financial assistance for a successful candidate who must relocate to the metropolitan Detroit area.

For more information about Manoogian Manor, visit: [www.manoogianmanor.com](http://www.manoogianmanor.com). Qualified candidates are encouraged to direct inquiries to David Karapetian at: [dkarapetian@comcast.net](mailto:dkarapetian@comcast.net).

**Over 70 Years of Serving the Armenian Community**

**MANOOGIAN MANOR**  
Senior Living  
A Home for the Aged Licensed Health Care Facility

15775 Middlebelt Road, Livonia, Michigan 48154 • Phone: 734-522-5780 • Fax: 734-522-5797 • [www.manoogianmanor.com](http://www.manoogianmanor.com)

**ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH**

**ARMENIAN FESTIVAL**

**SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 2023**  
NOON-5PM - RAIN OR SHINE!

**DELICIOUS ARMENIAN FOOD!**  
Shish, Losh and Chicken Kebab! Delicious vegetarian options!

**LIVE ARMENIAN MUSIC!**  
Bob Raphaelian \* Jay Baronian \* Leon Janikian \* Kenny Kalajian

**CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES!**  
Moon Bounce \* Face Painting \* Treats \* and More!

**FUN FOR ALL AGES!**  
Armenian Music & Dancing! Raffle! Armenian Vendor!

[www.stjameswatertown.org/festival](http://www.stjameswatertown.org/festival)

St. James Armenian Church | 465 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA  
info@stthagop.com | 617.923.8860



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Friendship City Established Between Granite City, Illinois, and Artsakh's Ashan

GRANITE CITY, ILL. — On April 18, 2023, the City Council of Granite City issued a proclamation establishing a Friendship City between Granite City and Ashan, Republic of Artsakh.

This proclamation, spearheaded by Granite City Mayor Parkinson, sets the foundation for long-term cooperation between the two cities and provides opportunities to “engage in critical exchange of ideas to further Ashan’s support of economic stability, cultural preservation, and strong social ties in Artsakh,” as outlined in the proclamation.

Ashan is a border village in the Martuni Province of the Republic of Artsakh, and has been severely impacted by Azerbaijan’s timeline of aggression, most recently their brutal blockade of Artsakh that has surpassed 145 days, hindering the delivery of vital necessities.

“Artsakhtsis, and more specifically the citizens of Ashan, have been subjected to the inhumane treatment of Azerbaijan for years. While resolute in our will to remain in our homes and on our indigenous lands, we have faced our fair share of hardships. This proclamation and the establishment of this Friendship City shows our people that the Diaspora and the communities in the Eastern United States have our back. With the support of the international community, we can continue to stand up to the enemy, amidst the threat of annihilation,” said Armen Balasanyan, Mayor of Ashan. “We have endured over 145 days of blockade and one thing remains certain, our right to live on this land is unalienable,” he concluded.

Through the efforts of the Armenian National Committee of Southern Illinois activists, this proclamation expresses that Granite City stands in solidarity with the people of Ashan – sending a clear message that



The signing of the sister city proclamation between Granite City, Ill. And Ashan, Artsakh

their plight is not one to face alone.

“We are extremely proud of the stance that Granite City Mayor Parkinson took by issuing this Friendship City proclamation. This step builds on the longstanding relationship the Armenian community has built

with the elected officials of Granite City. Through this proclamation, Mayor Parkinson powerfully demonstrates that he stands with the Armenians of Artsakh who are on the brink of genocide,” said Steve Hago- pian, ANC of Granite City co-chair.



## New Diocesan Council Meets in NY

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America announced recently that its newly-elected Diocesan Council met at the Diocesan Center in New York on Friday, May 19, with Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan presiding.

Outgoing Diocesan Council chair Fr. Krikor Sabounjian led the meeting and updated new members regarding various matters on the Diocesan Council’s agenda. The outgoing and incoming council members had previously met briefly during the 121st Diocesan Assembly in Dallas, TX.

During the May 19 meeting, the new council elected its Executive Committee (or “Tivan”). The new council and its officers are:

Chair: Richard Papalian (St. Gregory the Enlightener Church, White Plains, NY)

Vice Chair: Lisa Esayian (St. James of Nisibis, Evanston, IL)

Treasurer: Alex Topakbashian (St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, Wynnewood, PA)

Assistant Treasurer: Gregory Kolligian (Holy Trinity, Cambridge, MA)

Secretary: Dr. Garo Garibian (Holy Trinity, Cheltenham, PA)

Assistant Secretary: Mona Karoghlanian (St. Gregory of Narek, Cleveland, OH)

Advisors: Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian (St. Peter, Watervliet, NY); Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan (St. Mary, Washington, DC); Fr. Ghevond Ajamian (St. Sarkis, Dallas, TX); Fr. Hratch Sargsyan (St. Gregory of Narek, Cleveland, OH) and Dn. Levon Altiparmakian (Holy Cross, New York, NY).

In an installation ceremony in the sanctuary of St. Vartan Cathedral, the Primate congratulated the new council members and the newly-elected officers.

He also expressed his deep gratitude to the outgoing council members — Fr. Krikor Sabounjian (Holy Translators Church, Framingham, MA), Fr. Vasken Kouzouian (Holy Trinity, Cambridge, MA), Roseann Manoogian Attar (St. John, Southfield, MI), and Lisa Kouzoujian (St. Gregory the Enlightener, White Plains, NY) — for their dedication to the Armenian Church.

## ACEC Elects New Board of Trustees and Executive

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC) corporate meeting held on April 11, at the ACEC, concluded with the election of a new 21-member Board of Trustees comprising of representatives of the affiliated organizations and at-large members.

On Monday, May 15, the newly elected Board of Trustees met again at the ACEC and elected the following seven members to the Executive Board for a term of two years: George Bashirians, PhD, Vahé Ghahraman, PhD, Dikran Kaligian, PhD, Armen Khachatourian, Martha Mensoian, Esq., Vatche Seraydarian DMD, and Raffi Yaboujian.

Following the meeting, the new Executive elected its officers as follows: Vatche Seraydarian, DMD, President, Martha Mensoian, Esq., Vice-President, Vahé Ghahraman, PhD, Secretary, and Armen Khachaturian, Treasurer.

The meeting concluded with the official transition from the previous executive to the newly elected members, who are experienced professionals in their respective fields. Outgoing president Stepan Chiloyan expressed his appreciation to his colleagues for their hard work, dedication, and cooperation in the past term and wished the new executive a successful term.

In his remarks, the elected president of the ACEC, Vatche Seraydarian expressed gratitude to the two outgoing board executive members Stepan Chiloyan and Ara Sarkissian for their years of dedication, generosity and service. He added that it is with great pride that he takes on this responsibility, expressing his confidence in all seven executive members’ commitment to continue the work started by the former Executives and to contribute their

skills and experience towards achieving new milestones for the ACEC. Seraydarian concluded that the new executive will spare no effort to advance the mission and collective purpose of the ACEC that has been ongoing since its foundation in 1980.

Following the meeting, a social reception was held for the Board of Trustees with catering provided by Anoush’ella, which will start operating at the ACEC premises in Watertown in the coming few days.

The ACEC mission is to build a sense of community among Armenian Americans living in and around metropolitan Boston, and to foster awareness in the Armenian heritage and American civil society. The ACEC also prides itself for welcoming and hosting the events and activities of many non-Armenian families, diverse groups, and organizations.



# Arts & Culture

## 2023 Armenian Night At the Pops to Feature Violinist Eva Aronian In Boston Pops Debut

BOSTON — The Friends of Armenian Culture Society will present the 70th annual Armenian Night at the Pops on Friday, June 9 at 8 p.m., to be held at Boston's majestic Symphony Hall.

This year, Boston-educated violinist Eva Aronian will appear as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra. She will join the orchestra and music director Keith Lockhart in a performance of the violin concerto by Aram Khachaturian (3rd movement), marking the 120th anniversary of the composer's birth.

The program for the evening, titled A Symphonic Journey, will feature travel authority and writer Rick Steves who will team up with the Boston Pops for a performance that combines Europe's most stirring Romantic-era anthems with beautiful high-definition cinematography and Steves' insights into European history.

Praised as an artist "balancing emotional weight and technical virtuosity [...] conveying the music's power with a persuasiveness matched by few" (Culture Spot LA), Canadian-Armenian violinist Eva Aronian

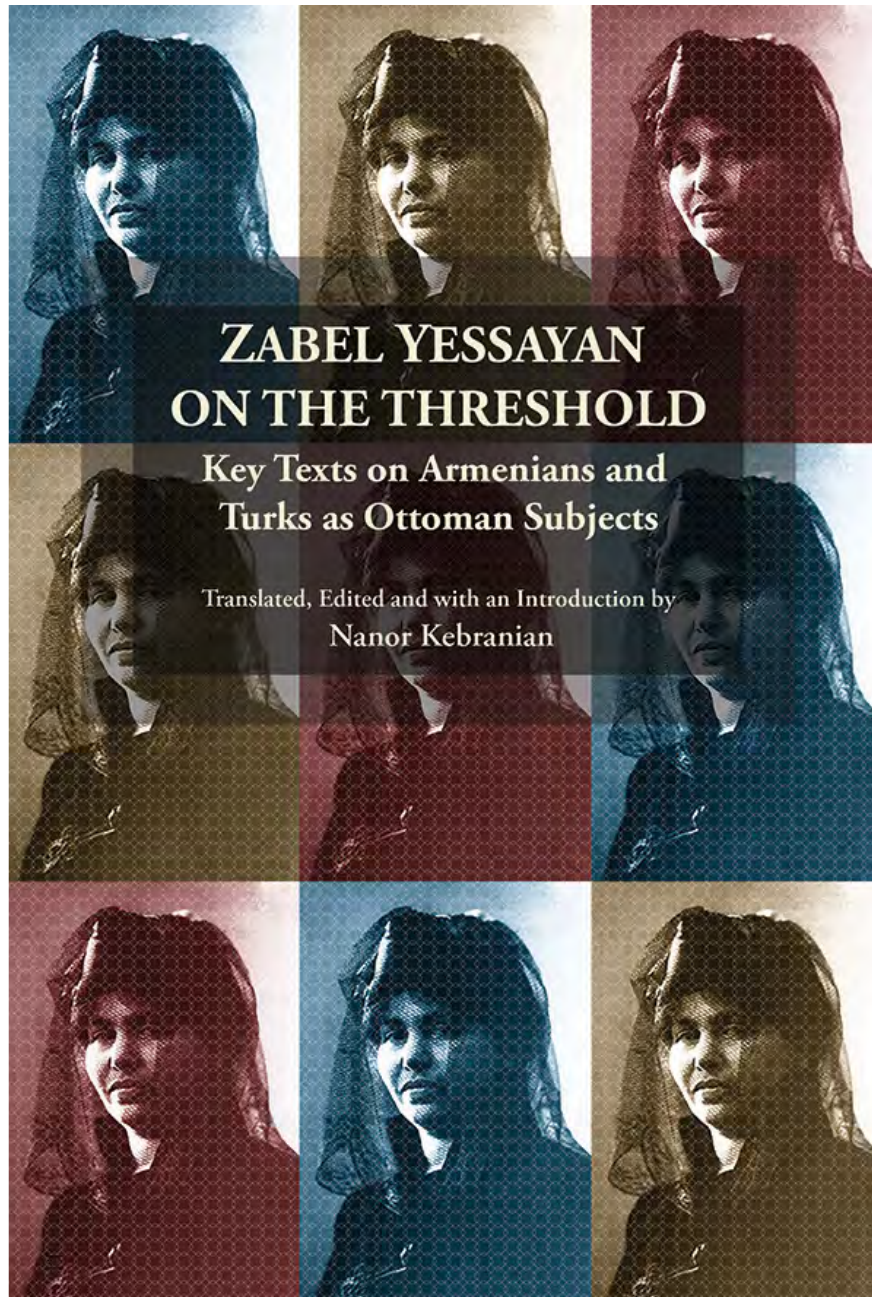


Eva Aronian (left) and Rick Steves

is in high demand as a chamber musician, orchestral musician, and soloist across the world. Her performances have brought her to Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Boston's Jordan Hall, the Kimmel Center (Philadelphia), and the Maison Symphonique (Montreal), among others. She is the recipient of top prizes at the Minnesota Orchestra Young Artists Competition, the Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal Competition, and the Canadian Music Competition, and she has performed as a soloist with the Calgary Civic Symphony, Orchestra Philharmonica di Bacau, and the Brookline Symphony Orchestra. She began her position as Principal 2nd violin of the Royal Northern Sinfonia in 2021.

Aronian earned her undergraduate and Master's degrees from the New England Conservatory in 2017 and 2019 respectively, under the tutelage of Donald Weilerstein; she was his teaching assistant from 2017-18. During her time at NEC, she was also an intern for Music for Food, a musician-led initiative founded by Kim Kashkashian to help fight hunger in local communities through chamber music concerts. She received her Artist Diploma with Distinction from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 2021, with David Takeno.

Tickets for this concert are available from [www.FACSBoston.org](http://www.FACSBoston.org).



## New Collection of Translations of Zabel Yessayan Released

LONDON — Author and social advocate, Zabel Yessayan (1878 – 1943?), was one of the most outspoken critics of sectarianism and one of the greatest proponents of solidarity across identities and creeds. These significant aspects of her literary and political interventions have nonetheless failed to garner much attention.

A pioneering new edited volume of translations by Dr. Nanor Kebranian – *Zabel Yessayan on the Threshold: Key Texts on Armenians and Turks as Ottoman Subjects* – sheds an entirely fresh light on these forgotten yet timely aspects of Yessayan's legacy. This collection of hitherto unread, unrecognized, and even previously unknown pieces comment on the need for unity across imposed identities and against the horrors of social inequality.



Dr. Nanor Kebranian

Through meticulous archival research and unparalleled close readings, Kebranian unearths and presents a series of 11 seminal but overlooked writings that speak directly to current engagements with the history and contemporary realities of Armeno-Turkish relations. This book is therefore a first of its kind in broaching the often hidden or lost experiences of the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Ottoman past. It is also one half of a larger project, which will culminate with the forthcoming publication of Yessayan's original Armenian texts – as well the Armenian version of Kebranian's introduction – in the second volume of *Pakine Literary Journal's* monograph series.

Readers can traverse a span of approximately twenty-five years – from the period just prior to the First World War, through the Armenian Genocide, and ultimately the exclusionary 1923 founding of today's Turkey – to discover the often startling and prescient dimensions of Yessayan's confrontation with imperialism. From interracial love and religious violence to the prospects of Islamo-Christian women's solidarity, the stories and essays in this book resist received versions of Ottoman history and Armenian memory.

As valuable, perhaps, is Kebranian's introduction, which leaves no doubt regarding the immeasurable worth of Armenian literature — and, accordingly, of Armenian language proficiency — in advancing both scholarly knowledge and broader

see YESSAYAN, page 15

## Navid Mikhak

'Armenia Is Like Something Holy for Me'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / LONDON – Iranian film and theater director and writer Navid Mikhak was born in 1990, in Khorramabad, Iran. In 2005 he began to study theater in Khorramabad School of Fine Arts; after he went to the University of the Arts in Tabriz, from which he graduated with a degree in theater direction. He received his B.A of Theatre Directing from University College of Nabi Akram in Tabriz, Iran. During his 17 years of independent activity and cooperation with Iran's national radio and television, he gained experience as an assistant director, actor, writer, producer and director. In the theater he staged "Varazil," "Good sleep," "Belbsho," "Exorcist," "When the Theater Grows," "Arash." He directed short films and documentaries: "A Message on the Way," "We Have No Problem with Each Other!" "Who Will Receive This Aid?," "Marousia," "Paamei Darrah," "Akam," "Nun," "Colostomy." Navid Mikhak has also published a collection of stories, poems, articles and interviews in magazines, newspapers and domestic and international festivals in Iran.



**Navid, you have written articles and made documentary films about Iranian Armenians. What piqued did your interest?**

When I was a teenager, I met a person who was from Isfahan. As he was talking about himself and his city, he also talked a little about his Armenian friends and neighbors. He explained some things about the religion and culture of the Armenians of Isfahan that were new to me and it was the first time I had heard about. Until later, when I went to the Academy of Fine Arts and studied theater, this basic information and attractive image of Armenians remained in my mind. In a part of Iranian theater history, I accidentally came across the description and information of Armenian actors, writers and directors in the theater who played an effective role in the birth and growth of Iranian theater. Then I went to the Tabriz

see MIKHAK, page 15



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine  
Vartanian



## A Mid-East Redo of The Potato Salad

A red, white and blue potato salad for the Fourth of July. What makes it different is Middle Eastern seasoning. This recipe is from the late Barbara Hansen, the longtime *Los Angeles Times* food and wine writer, food blogger and cookbook author who died at the age of 90 on January 28, 2023.

One of the first food writers to bring attention to international cuisines in Los Angeles through her work at the *Los Angeles Times*, Barbara contributed to many publications, including *Bon Appetit*, *Daily Dish*, *Saveur*, *LA Weekly* and the *Cook's Cook*. She was a James Beard Award winner in the wine and spirits category for an article on Mezcal in Oaxaca. Her six best-selling books include: *Mexican Cookery*; *Southeast Asian Cooking: Menus and Recipes From Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines*; *Cooking California Style: Good Bread*, and a revised edition of the Southeast Asian cookbook with new format and new recipes. “She created the Border Line food column at the *Los Angeles Times* beginning in 1974 ... chronicling LA’s Mexican food scene, including the newspaper’s first recipe to be printed in Spanish. But even before Border Line, Barbara was a champion for the city’s international flavors. In the single year of 1969 she wrote about Israeli consul dinners, kosher caterers, L.A. soul food and the cuisines of Egypt, Haiti, the Philippines, Colombia, Portugal, Nicaragua, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay



Barbara Hansen (Photo: Sally Ann Field)

and Honduras, all with recipes.” Barbara was an avid world traveler and considered an authority on Indian and Mexican food.

Her love of many delicious new flavors led her to explore LA’s varied international cuisines. After *California Cooking Style*, she wrote a cookbook called *Mexican Cookery* followed by *Taste of Southeast Asia*. In 2013 she wrote a Korean restaurant guide for Los Angeles, commissioned by the Korean Food Foundation in Seoul. Barbara inspired the main protagonist Joan Bergstrom in Kim Fay’s 2022 novel *Love & Saffron*, a character who discovered herself in 1960s Los Angeles. Barbara Hansen excelled in documenting LA’s hidden cuisines and newly arrived cultures with fierce curiosity.

“Tired of the same old potato salad? It’s time to try something new, like skip-

ping the usual creamy dressing (and all that fat!) and dressing up the potatoes with Middle Eastern flavors. Then you’ll have a salad that’s all bright greenery, light and fresh. Borrowing from two popular Middle Eastern salads, fattoush and tabbouleh, this recipe incorporates generous handfuls of parsley and mint along with colorful vegetables. Instead of the fried pita used in fattoush and the bulgur wheat basic to tabbouleh, it is based on potatoes,” wrote Barbara.

“I left the potatoes unpeeled in order to heighten the contrast and added more color with roasted red bell pepper, baby heirloom tomatoes, green onions and a mini cucumber. The dressing incorporates olive oil, lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, za’atar, harissa and cumin, and I added honey to offset the tanginess. You can substitute any hot pepper for harissa or leave it out. And you can omit the za’atar, although it has become trendy enough to be widely available,” she said. “This salad is good served for any occasion, picnic, or holiday celebration throughout the year.”

### INGREDIENTS:

1 1/4 pounds red, white and blue potato medley  
Salt, pepper  
1 cup baby heirloom tomatoes, cut in halves  
1 mini-cucumber, unpeeled, diced, about 1/2 cup  
5 green onions, including some of the tops, finely sliced  
1 sweet red bell pepper, roasted, peeled and diced  
1/2 cup (packed) Italian parsley leaves, coarsely chopped  
1/4 cup (packed) mint leaves, chopped  
Mid-East Dressing

### PREPARATION:

Cook the potatoes in boiling salted water 12 to 15 minutes, or until fork tender. Drain and cool. When the potatoes are at room temperature, cut them in halves or thirds, depending on size. Place in a serving bowl and sprinkle lightly with salt, if desired.

Add the tomatoes, cucumber, green onions, red pepper, parsley and mint. Add 1/2 cup of the Mid-East Dressing, or more to taste, and toss the salad carefully. Refrigerate any remaining dressing. Taste and add more salt, if needed.

### Mid-East Dressing

1/2 cup mild olive oil, to taste  
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice  
1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses  
1 tablespoon honey  
1 teaspoon za’atar, optional  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon harissa paste, Aleppo pepper or other spicy pepper, optional  
Combine the olive oil, lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, honey, za’atar, salt, cumin and harissa in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Cover and shake well before using. Makes about 3/4 cup.

Makes 4 generous servings.

For this recipe, go to:

<https://www.tableconversation.com/middle-eastern-cuisine/page/2/>

Barbara Hansen, a legendary *L.A. Times* food writer and journalist. After she left the *L.A. Times*, Hansen continued working as a contributor to *LA Weekly*’s Squid Ink blog and maintained two blogs: Table Conversation and EatMx.

See:

“Remembering Barbara Hansen, pioneering food journalist and 90-year-old influencer,” at:

<https://www.latimes.com/food/newsletter/2023-02-11/pioneer-food-journalist-barbara-hansen-dies-tasting-notes>

“Barbara Hansen, Legendary Chronicler and Champion of LA’s Diverse Cuisines, Has Died,” at

<https://la.eater.com/2023/1/31/23579690/barbara-hansen-los-angeles>  
Dedicated to exploring ethnic food at home and abroad, Barbara posted many dishes on her Instagram site @tableconversation.

For more food articles, see: <https://localfoodeater.com/barbara-hansen/>  
<https://muckrack.com/barbara-hansen/articles>

For Armenian recipes, see:

<https://www.tableconversation.com/recipes-armenian/>

References:

<https://thecookscook.com/author/barbarahansen/>

<https://www.melissas.com/>

<https://www.edhat.com/news/renowned-journalist-and-la-times-food-writer-barbara-hansen-has-died>

Connect with:

Instagram:

[www.tableconversation.com](http://www.tableconversation.com)

[www.eatmx.com](http://www.eatmx.com)

<https://twitter.com/foodandwinegal?lang=en>

Korean Restaurant Guide: Los Angeles

All contents copyright 2023 Barbara Hansen. All rights reserved.

## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Navid Mikhak: 'Armenia Is Like Something Holy for Me'

MIKHAK, from page 13

University to continue my education in theater directing. Tabriz city has one of the largest Armenian communities in Iran and is one of the most important cities in Iran in terms of politics, culture, art, economy, etc. During my education in the field of theater in this city, the topic of Armenian theater and art attracted my attention again and made me do more serious studies and research in this field. In this atmosphere, where I was participating in student theater performances, I decided to publish an article and interviews about the history of Azerbaijani and Armenian theaters. I met one of the Armenian artists named Garin Sarkisian, who helped me a lot in this field and after introducing several people for interviews, he suggested an interview with one of the most important Armenian artists of Tabriz and Iran, Mrs. Marousia Vahramian. After conducting that interview and publishing it in *Theater* magazine, I became interested in making a documentary film about her personality and life, also to rebuild the last performance that she staged a few years ago. Maroussia also agreed with my idea of film and was enthusiastic for the performance. She would like to reunite and work with her cast members, who each lived in a different city or country. The script of the play I had written, made her more passionate because in her talks, I felt that this play is a debt repayment to Armenian culture, history and art. This play was "Komitas," and as the name suggests, is about the life of famous Armenian composer who, as it is known, became mentally ill witnessing the Armenian Genocide. Marousia Vahramian's view of this issue and her loyalty to Armenian art and society, the Armenian Genocide, and the gathering of her group members for the last time attracted me. At that time, I remember saying to myself that definitely considering my experience in the field of theater the process of rehearsing and performing a theater where her group rehearses for the last time with a 94-year-old artist after many years creates attractive and beautiful moments, which will be very interesting for the audience.

We tried to create the conditions for Maroussia to start her work, but unfortunately, after the first filming session, with the death of Marousia's younger sister and her own illness, and other problems that arose outside the group, the group never gathered completely and did not do any rehearsals. In this situation, in order to save the matter and preserve a brief image of Marousia's life, I tried to make possible her last wish, which was to see an old building belonging to the Armenian community, that was a school and place for art classes. Fortunately, this happened and she saw that house and her wish became one of the important events of the film. And then Maroussia died. In fact, this was the point that moved me towards the art of Armenians and Christians, and after that I tried to continue my activity in this field.

**What about Marousia Vahramian made her so special?**

Firstly, the age of Mrs. Vahramian was important. Because we did not have any women at that age who gained so much experience in theater, music and painting, especially in the Armenian community. She was the only person in the Armenian community from those days who lived to the age of 94 and continued her artistic activity. When in Yerevan I met and talked with the old theater researcher Mr. Bakhtiar Hovakimyan (who published articles about Mrs. Vahramian) for this documentary, he confirmed my words that Mrs. Vahramian is currently the oldest Armenian artist in

the world. Another thing that attracted me to her was the character of a woman who herself had experienced different eras of the contemporary socio-political history of Caucasian Armenians and finally, she had turned them into a work of art, works that were influenced by the Armenian Genocide, the Bolshevik Revolution, the migration of Armenians from the North Caucasus to Iran, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and other historical events that occurred in the history of Armenia, Iran, Georgia and Russia.

**In an interview Bahman Kiarostamian said that Iran is the best place to make documentaries. Do you agree with him?**

Yes, I completely agree with him, because Iran is a big country with a rich history and a large population, as well as many historical, social and political events, which has deep cultural roots with the international community and its neighbors. So, this gives you, as an artist, especially a documentary filmmaker, the courage and interest to make a documentary in this country. According to my immigration experience and my contacts with other countries over the years, I have come to the conclusion that even in European countries you can find common issues related to Iranian society. Such an experience is rarely seen in other cultures and countries, and if you follow international news and media, there are usually news to be told about Iran on a daily basis, which shows the historical, political and social importance of this country in the international community.

**We met ten years ago, when you came to participate in Yerevan Golden Apricot Festival. What was most memorable from your visit to Armenia?**

I was very young at that time and had gained my first experiences of filmmaking and independence and had a lot of enthusiasm. I think about those days in Armenia with a regretful mind, I would like to return to Armenia and to that era. Because I feel that a window was opened to my thoughts and beliefs during that time in Armenia and communication with different people helped me a lot to find my own filmmaking path. The respect and friendship of Mr. Harutyun Khachaturian, the president of the Golden Apricot Festival, of Atom Egoyan, jury chairman, and other filmmaker and film specialist friends like you, who made me feel that cinema and the festival are a place to find friends and learn new things. Meanwhile, Armenia is not just a friendly and neighboring country with a common history and culture for me! Rather, it is exactly like the place where one makes love, finds himself, and passion, hope, and motivation are created inside him. Actually, if I want to explain from a religious point of view, Armenia is something like a temple, church or mosque for me.

**I am delighted by Iran. You are delighted by Armenia. Our two people need deeper understanding and knowledge of each other.**

I love Armenia and I feel that it is my country. If you remember, whenever we talk, I ask you: "What is going on in my beautiful country, Armenia?"! The Iranian people has very colorful feelings towards the Iranian Armenians and the country of Armenia. This feeling was formed in me when I traveled to this country for the first time and experienced the warm and sincere communication of the Armenian people and found friends among artists and ordinary people and had the experience of visiting different regions of Armenia. Now, I can boldly say that this interest of mine is not due to excess or exaggeration! Rather, it was because of the commonalities that I



Navid Mikhak in Yerevan, 2013.

have found with the people and this country during that period and after that. In the past few years, the issue of the Artsakh war and the recent events have caused me and other Iranian people to turn their attention to the behavior of the Turkish and Azerbaijani governments towards the Armenian people and let us show a negative reaction and extreme concern to this matter. So, that the people and political and social activists put pressure on the government that you should not allow the Armenian territories to be invaded or occupied.

**Unfortunately, our region is in trouble again. Before I was naïve enough to think that arts and culture can make some positive changes in peacemaking...**

Art has always played its role in people's lives. But nowadays, it has been influenced by social media and television networks and has made us think that it is no longer important and has lost its effect in creating peace and social bonds between nations. Considering the war and cultural problems that have arisen between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the events that have happened in other parts of the Middle East and the world, we must check whether art has had a chance to play a role in those countries and for the nations. For example, when social media and TV channels are bombarding news and giving false information and "false truth" to people, is there any chance for art to play its role properly? In the 2020 war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, when we see the propaganda of extremist, ethnocentric and racist groups, we realize that they focus on the emotional mind and fleeting thoughts of their audience, so that they can control people's emotions and thinking power. In fact, by doing this, they get the opportunity to think correctly and judge correctly. Well, in such a situation, in your opinion, how many percent of the audience have the conditions and ability to read, hear and see a work of art so that they can make the right decision and act correctly based on the purity and humanity which is the essence of art? Imagine, when you constantly see images of killings and bombings, you develop anger and hatred and a desire for war and revenge. And it is in the nature of the media to create false and biased information, and unfortunately, today art has lost its position and influence in this way! And social media and television have taken their place for people, and this is exactly the point that makes art ineffective in peace-building.

**Now you live in London. What does a young Iranian filmmaker lose there?**

Almost everything. By immigrating to

another country, you are actually committing suicide, but how much luck you have in this action to survive depends on the time and the situations you get. I am condemned to start over in this new country, new culture, new language, new relationships and new life, and the possibility that I can succeed or fail depends on the mental, psychological conditions and relationships that I get.

**Do you have any Armenia-related project for the future?**

First of all, I hope that peace and security will be established in Armenia, because this is more important to me than making a film. But in answer to this question, I should say: Yes, I have been planning to make a film in Armenia for years. Of course, everything depends on the conditions to work there as an independent filmmaker. If financial conditions arise for me, I will make two films in Armenia with an attractive human theme. Because I don't have such conditions as an independent filmmaker at the moment, I only hope to find financial support in the future.

In the end, I have to say, I miss Armenia and my good friends very much, and I wish peace and happiness for its cultured and kind people. I hope that there will be an opportunity and I will participate in the Yerevan Golden Apricot Film Festival again and come to meet you!

## New Collection of Translations of Zabel Yessayan Released

YESSAYAN, from page 13

cultural receptions of the Ottoman-Armenian past. With its probing analyses and questions, the introduction initiates productive debates regarding the possibilities and limits of both Armenian and Ottoman Studies today. Kebranian's breadth of knowledge and expertise in history, literature, and law serve to direct readers towards a clearer and more complex understanding of the Armenian literary heritage.

Kebranian is a published scholar and translator, having received her doctorate from Oxford University with fellowships from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation and Oxford's Clarendon Fund. In addition to her appointment as Assistant Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University, she has also held research positions at Queen Mary University of London and Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Aside from her own published translations, she has commissioned and edited several published translations of Armenian literature and scholarship. Her much-lauded edited volume, "Captive Nights: From the Bosphorus to Gallipoli with Zabel Yessayan" (Trans. G. M. Goshgarian), appeared with The Press at California State University, Fresno in 2021.

**BIBLIOINFO:** Nanor Kebranian (Transl., Ed., and Intro.), "Zabel Yessayan on the Threshold: Key Texts on Armenians and Turks as Ottoman Subjects" (London: Gomidas Institute), 144 pp., illust,

ISBN 978-1-909382-75-6, pb., UK£20.00 / US\$24.00. To order contact books@gomidas.org

## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Books

## All for Beauty And Truth: Micheline Aharonian Marcom's *small pieces*

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

*small pieces* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2023) is truth distilled to its purest essence. Through conversations, spoken and unspoken, over distance and in time, two women, a writer and an artist, both in their late 40s, reach deep into their souls to access the truth that resides in the “dim interiors of the self.” “I am and I am and I am in the pages of books,” avers visual artist Fowzia Karimi, creator of the watercolors paired with pieces written by Micheline Aharonian Marcom, the celebrated author of seven novels. *small pieces* compresses the artists’ exchange into twenty-five beautifully rendered texts and images.



Micheline Aharonian Marcom

The texts, each about a page or less long — Micheline calls them “miniatures” — are stunningly condensed. There is not a word to skip or a line to jump. In just a few sentences, “Time Apart” conveys a young woman’s anxiousness, as she watches the hands of the clock that will bring her lover “to his home . . . for dinner at six-thirty,” so they can be “together again.” In another piece, in just four lines, Marcom shocks the reader into consciousness of mankind’s abuse of the holy environment. “A wide assortment of synthetic polymers weighing all together 5.9 kilograms were extracted from the sperm whale’s stomach after the young male had already died in the waters near Kapota Island,” she writes.

“The book has been a long time coming,” says Fowzia in “Dialogos,” a candid conversation that reveals the relationship each woman has to her art. Fowzia’s “I write and paint to get to the truth, the essence of a thing,” echoes Marcom’s “The writing life is a slow, yet continual awakening to higher levels of awareness, of consciousness, from the various mirages that pass for ‘reality.’” *small pieces* celebrates this higher level of consciousness.

It is, in fact, humanity’s move away from this transcendent reality, the spirituality rooted in each one of us, and excessive focus on the “things . . . for sale inside the monstrous retail store,” that Marcom laments. The anguish the two women feel over the destruction of the natural world is at the core of their thinking.

In “Both Beautiful and Strange,” Aharonian joins in her young son’s excitement to see the solar eclipse. She celebrates “The Miracle of Photosynthesis and Its Waste Product,” while she deplores mankind’s abuse of the creatures inhabiting the sacred Earth. Marcom mourns the others that have been slaughtered to extinction, bees just disappearing to insecticides, and the lobsters in supermarkets, whose front paws have been clamped with “thick red and yellow rubber-bands” to restrict their mobility—all done for profit and greed.

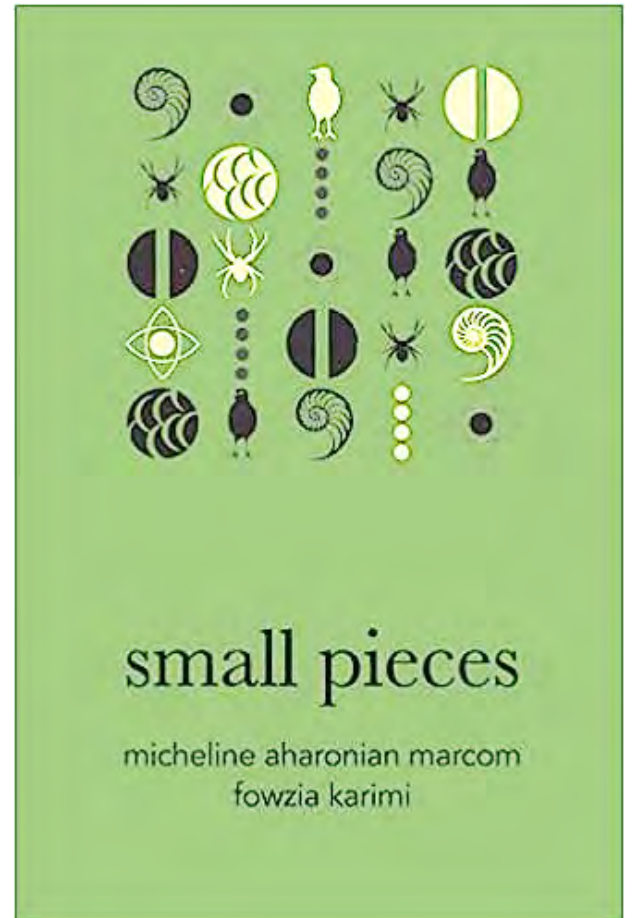
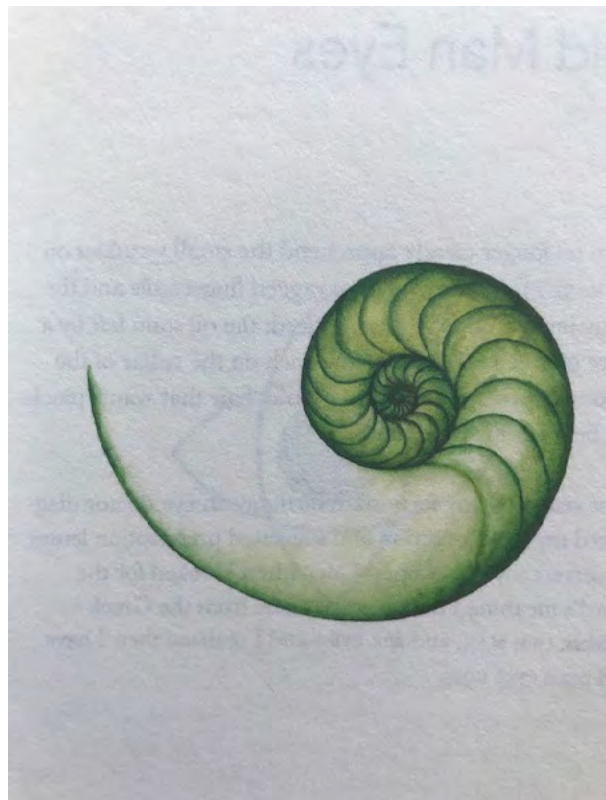
Aharonian also bemoans the brutal killings and the needless loss of human lives. “The dry riverbed, the not road . . . to Der Zor . . . the abandoned villages and bones of the old Armenian clans in old Turkey; the newer (unrecovered) ghostly dead in Afghanistan,” evoke the bloody histories of both women. Wars have disrupted their lives. They now live in a new world: “We can none of us ever return.”

The poetry and the beauty of Micheline’s writing is nothing new. I encountered Micheline some two decades ago, when I stumbled upon her debut novel, *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*, first in a series of three novels about the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath. I remember being struck by the shockingly new manner in which the nov-

el did justice to her tragic past. Micheline resurrects the voices and the lost memories of the dead and tells their untold stories, as “seen” and “heard” through the imagination. She does what, twenty-three years later, Fowzia noted literature does: “Literature is where the dead go to live . . . It is the gravesite but not the tomb. It’s where the tree comes back to life, where the grass grows perennially.” Indeed, with her writing, Marcom transforms the pain of her loss into the beauty of her words. Beauty for her is the “ally of truth.” Two hundred years ago, in his “Ode on A Grecian Urn,” the celebrated Romantic poet John Keats had sung, “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty.” “I’m with the Romantics,” declares Fowzia.

When asked about the book’s origins, “It took many, many years before I had the facility of compression I sought . . . until each word, each phrase, the rhythms of the language, the images made in the mind, found a coherence and unity I was happy with,” Micheline tells “dear Fowzia” during their exchange.

Fowzia, in turn, responds to each miniature with a painting that is as condensed as the text itself. The artist refers to these paintings as “illuminations,” symbolic images that help elucidate the text, rather than illustra-



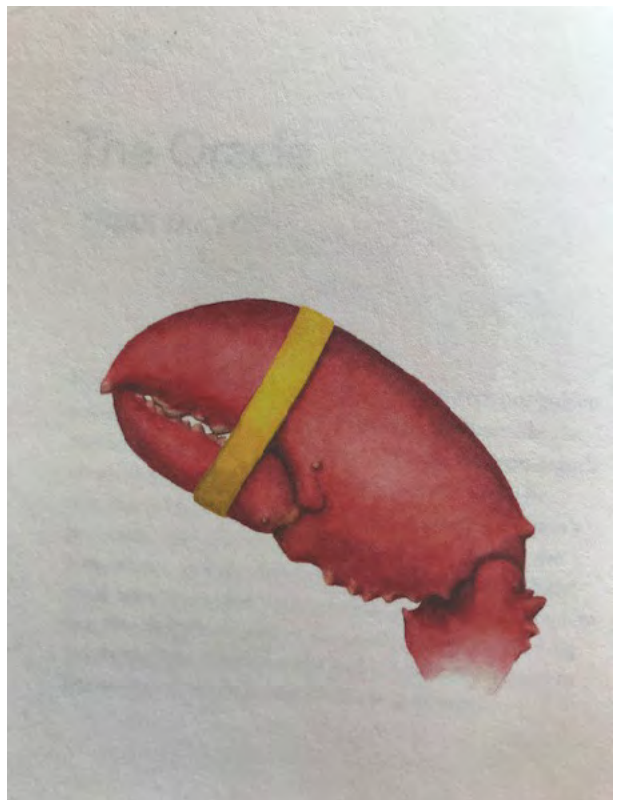
tions that simply represent it. To the reader’s great joy, the visual artist emerges as a beautiful writer as well. It is impossible not to be seduced by the cadence and the rhythm of her, “I grieved for the loss of their beautiful and innocent lives . . . I cried and mourned and wrote. “I create, therefore I am,” is a bold affirmation of her faith in her creativity.



Fowzia Karimi

Ultimately, what stands out is the two women’s devotion to their art. “Writing books has been and remains the great meaningful activity of my life,” admits Micheline. Ironically, it is that inner truth, the pain in the soul, in Micheline’s words, “that persistent feeling of out-of-placeness; an inability to communicate deeply with many of one’s neighbors, colleagues, friends,” that art communicates. That communication helps make life a little “less lonely, less alienated” for Micheline, and for the rest of us. As that other dear woman, Virginia Woolf, never ceases to remind us, “Communication is bliss.”

“I practice art for the joy of it,” states Fowzia. Once again, Keats’ words come to mind: “A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”



Some of the drawings from the book





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Pixar's 'Elemental': Why You Should Be Excited for This New Animated Film

By Hanu Manth

LOS ANGELES (movieweb.com) — “Elemental” is possibly Pixar’s most challenging project to date. Here are a few reasons why you should be excited about the film.

Since its founding in the 1980s, Pixar Animation Studios has brought out a slew of popular animated films, including Toy Story, Inside Out, Finding Nemo, and the most recent film, Lightyear. With every movie, the studio broke down barriers and reinvented itself in order to provide something new to viewers. In fact, almost all of its projects have been ranked among the highest-grossing animated films of all time, achieving enormous commercial and critical acclaim.

The renowned studio intends to roll out an innovative concept this year with the movie “Elemental”. You can tell by the name that it will have something to do with nature’s elements, such as fire, water, air, and earth. The film, directed by Peter Sohn, follows Ember (Leah Lewis) and Wade (Mamoudou Athie), who live in a city where its inhabitants live in the form of an element. Despite being two polar opposites (water and fire), they try to build a bond as they discover they have much more in common.

Most of us are aware of what happens when two opposites attract, especially when they are fire and water — they constantly struggle to adjust to each other’s environments and everyday lives. That is precisely what Pixar aims to convey in its



Paula Assadourian

new film, “Elemental”, but with a subtle message woven in.

“Elemental” is based on the director’s real-life experiences, as it depicts his childhood — growing up as the son of immigrants in New York in the 1970s and how difficult it was to acclimate to the new culture and diversity. In an interview with The Seattle Times, the film’s storyboard artist, Paula Assadourian, explained what the film truly meant beneath the story’s surface. As she put it, “I think ‘Elemental’ is a very special film because it’s about Ember kind of coming to face (with) who she is and what she wants to do; if she wants to pursue her path or if she wants to kind of stay close to

her roots and her family and what people expect her to be. Wade changes Ember, or he kind of awakens her to say, ‘there’s so much more you can do with your life.’”

## Seven Years in the Making

Many projects these days can be wrapped up in just a couple of years, yet most of them do not receive the recognition they deserve despite being in the works for years or decades. “Elemental” has reportedly been in the works for seven years since the director Sohn submitted the concept to the studio shortly after the release of his previous film, The Good Dinosaur.

Sohn has previously worked on several Pixar films, including Finding Nemo, The Incredibles, Ratatouille, Up, and more. It wouldn’t have been difficult for Sohn to execute another project given his background in making animated films, but “Elemental” meant more to him than just a project since both of his parents passed away during its production, and he described it as a personal story in an interview with The Hollywood Reporter. He stated, “It’s been a personal story, so I am quite emotional about getting the characters and the story out for sure. It’s a technically very difficult movie, just because everything affects, and the characters are constantly moving, especially the fire, water, and air characters. But this movie is about thanking your parents and understanding their sacrifices. My parents both passed away during the making of this thing. And so, it is hugely emotional, and I’m still processing a lot of it. But at the same time, there’s so much amazing work that the team has done that I’m quite

proud of what they’ve accomplished.”

Throughout the seven years of production, the “Elemental” crew faced numerous challenges, from designing the characters to selecting the cast to fit their nature precisely.

Since the advent of computer animation, animators have come to realize that fire and water are two of the most complicated elements to animate, and making a film whose entire theme focuses on that concept would undoubtedly render them with a new level of complexity. Furthermore, Colombian animator Luis Uribe stated that the production team struggled to bring these characters to life. In his own words,

“This is one of the most complex projects I think we’ve worked on at Pixar, just because of that; we are used to animating humans or animals, and you have references for that, but in this case, we were trying to figure out how a character made of fire or water would move. We had like three or four weeks just to test out stuff and watch videos of slow-motion fire or water behavior.”

To deal with these issues, the team behind its development had to break through numerous barriers, and they went above and beyond to master the designs of these elements, especially Ember and Wade. With many animators describing the film as “we haven’t had a challenge to the scale of ‘Elemental’ in a while,” it is clear that “Elemental” is the studio’s most demanding production to date.

“Elemental” opens in theaters on June 16.

## CALENDAR

### OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

#### MASSACHUSETTS

**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. Featuring the Leon Janikian Ensemble. 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](http://www.FACSBoston.org) to select seats and purchase tickets.

**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.stjames-watertown.org/festival](http://www.stjames-watertown.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, Hovounts, 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](http://amarasonline.com)

**JUNE 13 — Let’s Party for the Park!** InterContinental Hotel, Boston. Wine Tasting featuring the extraordinary Storica Wines: Wines from Armenia. Benefit for the Park’s care during 2023. Advance Reservations required. For details and link to reserve, [ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support](http://ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support)

**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](http://ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support).

**JUNE 21 — Tea & Tranquility.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 4 pm. Meet & Greet. Together at the Park. Marvel at the Abstract Sculpture. Tie a Ribbon on The Wishing Tree. Enjoy ice tea and luscious cookies. RSVP appreciated, [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**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.

**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.

#### RHODE ISLAND

**JUNE 8 — Armenian Mirror-Spectator editor Alin K. Gregorian** will speak at a program sponsored by the Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island (AHARI), titled “The Armenian Mirror-Spectator: Covering Vital Issues for the Community.” Thursday, 7 p.m. EST. Virtual. Zoom and Facebook live streamed. For Zoom link contact AHARI at [infor@armenianhistorical-ri.org](mailto:infor@armenianhistorical-ri.org). For more information, visit [AHARI.clubexpress.com](http://AHARI.clubexpress.com).

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email [alin@mirrorspectator.com](mailto:alin@mirrorspectator.com) or [alin.gregorian@gmail.com](mailto:alin.gregorian@gmail.com). You can also visit our website, [www.mirrorspectator.com](http://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.

## COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN  
**MIRROR  
SPECTATOR**  
SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE  
UNITED STATES

**EDITOR**

Alin K. Gregorian

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Aram Arkun

**ART DIRECTOR**

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

**SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST**

Edmond Y. Azadian

**STAFF WRITER**

Harry Kezelian III

**CONTRIBUTORS**

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

**REGIONAL  
CORRESPONDENTS**

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

**PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

**VIDEO CORRESPONDENT**

Haykaram Nahapetyan

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA  
02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirror-spectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirror-spectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

U.S.A.	\$80 one year
Canada	\$125 one year
Other Countries	\$200 one year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator  
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston,  
MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

**Postmaster: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472**

**Other than the Editorial, views and opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the policies of the publisher.**

# What to Expect from Moscow

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Whatever Armenia and Azerbaijan will agree upon regarding the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is not at all important, as Moscow has its own interests to promote in the South Caucasus region. If Moscow once lost Georgia and withdrew its forces from there, it does not mean that it will happen in the case of Armenia – and in Azerbaijan too, technically, as Russia's peacekeeping contingent is placed in Artsakh, which the Armenian prime minister has accepted as Azerbaijani territory. Russia therefore physically is not present only in one country of the South Caucasus but two. Most probably, the position of Russia will be presented to the concerned parties during the upcoming meeting between Aliyev, Putin, and Pashinyan in Moscow.

Moscow's stance may be characterized the following way: "You may agree on anything about the future of Artsakh but we have our interests to be addressed in the region and we are not going to give them up." Moscow understands perfectly that the policy of the West is to push Russia out of the South Caucasus region, and Moscow will naturally do everything to prevent this from happening. This is a very normal geopolitical struggle that has been present since the collapse of the USSR.

Is it even possible that Yerevan and Baku can decline Moscow's requests or not take into consideration Russia's interests? Most probably not. Although Russia's primary military and diplomatic resources are aimed at Ukraine, where Russia carries out military operations with great difficulty, it would be wrong to think that Russia will give up its "historical sphere of influence" where it has been present for centuries. As already mentioned, there is an opinion in the West that today there is a good opportunity for Russia's influence in the South Caucasus to be reduced and balanced by Turkish influence.

The same strategy was evident right after the collapse of the USSR, when there was an opinion that Russia was too weak and fragmented and could not maintain its spheres of influence. However, this did not happen and Russia continued to maintain its influence, though with considerable difficulties. Another example is the aftermath of World War

II. By the end of the Second World War, there was a similar opinion that although a winner in the war, the Soviet Union in fact endured excessive losses. As it became extremely weak economically and socially, it would not be able to maintain its zones of influence around Eurasia and the world. However, this did not happen either, and the Soviets kept their spheres of influence and even expanded them.

The question remains, is Russia in such a weak position today that it does not have any leverage to pursue its interests in the South Caucasus region? This does not seem likely. Though focusing on the Ukrainian war, it is still trying to serve its interests in the South Caucasus, and its goal remains to continue its presence there. Therefore, at the upcoming meeting in Moscow, regardless of what agreement Armenia and Azerbaijan will reach in terms of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and bilateral relations, it would be naive to think that Russia will not present its interests to the parties, which Yerevan and Baku simply cannot ignore.

Russia retains a significant influence on the domestic and foreign policy of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Besides the "standard" tools of influence, there are some other factors which are extremely important. According to some calculations, there are more Armenians living in Russia than in Armenia. They have significant financial wealth and therefore huge influence in Armenia. Russia is also home to wealthy Azerbaijani businessmen who are totally dependent on the Kremlin rather than the Aliyev regime. This means Russia can use these elements to significantly influence the internal political life of the two states.

Therefore, despite Washington's efforts to reconcile Armenia and Azerbaijan and push Moscow out, Russia will be able to put pressure on Yerevan and Baku to find solutions that take Moscow's interests into account. By not going to Moscow on May 9, Aliyev was probably trying to avoid potential pressure, but now he cannot avoid going there and meeting with Putin.

In sum, the effectiveness of the Western policy of reconciling the parties and reducing Russia's influence in the South Caucasus remains questionable, because the conflicting parties cannot ignore Russia's interests while finding solutions to their own problems.

# What an Opposition Win in Turkey Could Mean for the Caucasus

By Ismi Aghayev, Tata Shoshiashvili and Ani Avetisyan

Turkey's elections threaten to dislodge President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan after two decades in power. Amongst the country's neighbors in the South Caucasus, the impact of such a turn of events could have vastly differing impacts.

Turkey's parliamentary and presidential elections on 14 May will see President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan face his biggest challenge in years, facing an opposition alliance headed by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

Given Turkey's geographical proximity and geopolitical influence in the region, the country unsurprisingly looms large in the South Caucasus — whether in its close ties with and military support for Azerbaijan, which considers Turkey to be a "fraternal nation," trading ties and political cooperation with Georgia, or an increasingly tense relationship with Armenia.

A change in Turkey's political trajectory could potentially shift the country's political positions, international ties, and security positions in a way that could significantly reshape the political landscape of the South Caucasus.

Azerbaijan, with its shared cultural and linguistic roots, has long been the closest nation in the South Caucasus to Turkey, so much so that the slogan "two states one nation" has been coined to describe the pair.

As such Richard Giragosian, the director of the Regional Studies Center think-tank in Yerevan, tells OC Media that the elections are a "great worry" for Azerbaijan.

He says that this is evident in Azerbaijan's "rush" to conclude a peace treaty with Armenia, before the potential loss of

Erdoğan's "guaranteed blind support and backing for his Azerbaijani counterpart."

More than 11,000 Turkish citizens living in Azerbaijan are eligible to vote in the elections on Sunday, at polling stations in regions throughout the country, and since April, Azerbaijani pro-government media has been publishing material supporting Erdoğan's bid for a third term.

It focuses on the idea of Azerbaijan and Turkey having jointly flourished due to the close cooperation between Erdoğan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, as well as Turkey's support for Azerbaijan in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

This marks a distinct shift in the official Azerbaijani position on Turkey's politics: while Baku has previously asserted that "Turkey's choice is our choice," a position it maintained throughout the past 30 years, the government has now openly shown its support for Erdoğan in pro-government media, and criticised those who oppose him.

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the candidate backed by a six-party opposition alliance and the chair of the Republican Movement Party, also provoked Baku's ire with his campaign promise that he would set up a modern "silk Road" trade and transport corridor from Turkey to China. His description of the route named Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, but neglected to mention Azerbaijan.

Speaking on May 10, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev spoke out against "those who want to exclude Azerbaijan," and stated that Azerbaijan was a key transport centre in Eurasia on the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Middle Corridor.

However, the key concern of many in the region remains the impact the elections might have on the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Speaking to OC Media, independent Azerbaijani opposition politician and director of the Institute of Political Management, Azer Gasimli suggests that in the case of an Erdoğan win, the Russian peacekeeping force would remain in place, maintaining an indirect struggle for influence between Russia and Turkey in the region. However, in the event of an opposition win, Gasimli believes Turkey will reestablish communication with Armenia and the West, and so foster trilateral relations between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey.

*continued on next page*



## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Questionable Writers Spread Anti-Armenia Propaganda

Armenians firmly condemn and reject individuals with questionable motives who repeatedly write articles full of hatred and lies about Armenia in the international press. The hostile content of these articles leads one to believe that they are not honest expressions of opinion,

but reflect the writers' sinister aims. If you go on the [armenianpedia.org](http://armenianpedia.org) website and look under "Armenian Hall of Shame," you will find the names of a couple of hundred such anti-Armenian writers.

For example, James Wilson wrote an article last week titled "Why is France trying to play into Russia's hands?" which was posted on the EU Reporter website.

Wilson claimed that "France is starting to supply weapons to Armenia. Initially, it involves the delivery of 50 armored vehicles, but in the future, deliveries of French Mistral surface-to-air missile systems are also possible." This is pure speculation. Wilson quoted an unknown Artsakh Armenian who reportedly spoke on Armenian TV about French weapons coming to Armenia.

Wilson revealed his real intent in writing this article by stating that Ukrainian and Moldovan media have reported: "Western military equipment supplied to Yerevan could be used by Russians to counter the Ukrainian Armed Forces' counteroffensive." This is utter nonsense. Wilson wrote that Armenia's Defense Minister Suren Papikyan discussed French-Armenian military cooperation during his visit to Paris in September 2022. Even if this is true, nine months later, not a single French bullet has been sent to Armenia!

Wilson then accused Armenia of "serving as a trans-shipment hub for Iranian weapons sent to Moscow." This is fake news. Moscow does not need to use Armenia for such trans-shipments. Wilson then falsely claimed that Armenia used Iranian drones during its clashes with Azerbaijan. Without providing a shred of evidence, he alleged that French weapons shipped to Armenia can be transferred to Iran. Incredibly, Wilson concluded that French weapons shipments to Armenia "put France on a collision course with Israel," because of its military alliance with Azerbaijan.

Who is James Wilson and why is he writing such terrible things about Armenia? He is a Brussels-based British man who worked as a political consultant for mostly Eastern European clients, according to POLITICO. He spent almost two decades in the Hong Kong government. He founded MacMillan, a lobbying consultancy, first in Ukraine and then in Brussels, in mid-2000's. He is the Publisher and Editor in Chief of EU Political Report in Brussels and co-founder of Brussels ThinkLab, a consultancy established in 2019.

Mark Scott wrote a lengthy three-part series of articles in POLITICO, re-

vealing the inner workings of consultants in Brussels, under the title: "The web of connections behind Brussels lobbying: Despite a longstanding transparency push, large swathes of the bubble remain opaque."

Here is how the EU Reporter's publisher, Colin Stevens, presented his company on a YouTube video: "Our business model is to offer political parties, businesses, NGOs, industry associations, financial institutions and governments the opportunity to use EU Reporter to influence the European political decision-making process by sponsoring coverage and the placement of positive news stories and editorial comment related to them."

POLITICO replied: "Welcome to the murky world of EU lobbying dressed up as journalism. Stevens doesn't appear to have a particular agenda, or to work as a lobbyist. But his company has provided a number of companies and governments with a space to publish paid-for content as straight news articles without disclosing those connections."

The EU Reporter's website has posted dozens of anti-Armenia and pro-Azerbaijan articles. POLITICO disclosed that the EU Reporter published "a sponsored post by the Azerbaijani government.... Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have both received extensive positive coverage on the site — raising questions about editorial standards and whether paid-for content is correctly labeled."

Here is how the pro-Azeri propaganda works: Following the 2020 Artsakh War, "Baku's representative to the United Nations sent a letter to the secretary-general alleging that Armenia had relied on terrorists and foreign fighters during the months-long war. Among the evidence he cited were articles published in EU Reporter. In one article, written while the conflict was ongoing, the site accused Armenia of transporting Turkish fighters from Syria to train the country's militia. In another, it criticized Western media reports that accused Azerbaijan, not Armenia, of relying on foreign militants.... Three Azerbaijani experts told POLITICO that allegations of foreign fighters siding with Armenia during the conflict did not match the reality on the ground, and that EU Reporter's coverage of the conflict skewed significantly toward Baku's perspective.... POLITICO was not able to confirm whether Azerbaijan had paid for the favorable coverage in EU Reporter. Stevens said that his site retains full independence, that it had been even-handed in its treatment of Azerbaijan and that all articles were labeled with an author's name.... Still, the outlet and Baku have ties that date back almost a decade," POLITICO wrote.

The EU Reporter usually adds a sentence to its articles, stating: "EU Reporter publishes articles from a variety of outside sources which express a wide range of viewpoints. The positions taken in these articles are not necessarily those of EU Reporter." This is nothing but a fig leaf to hide behind publishing articles of questionable origin.

I wrote to the Publisher of EU Reporter asking if he had paid James Wilson to write his "article." If yes, how much did he pay him? Not surprisingly, I did not receive an answer.

from previous page

"The Caucasus region needs this type of cooperation," says Gasimli. "I think that choosing Kılıçdaroğlu is more suitable for our region in terms of security, conflict, and economic development."

However, he warns that Aliyev would oppose such a political shift, noting that the potential for such action is already evident both in the suspension of Turkey's government-critical FOX TV within Azerbaijan in 2017, and shifts in the government's rhetoric regarding the elections.

Gasimli concludes that Azerbaijan's relationship with Erdoğan will "improve" if he remains in power, but that a change in leadership is likely to prompt a cooling in relations.

He adds that he does not imagine Azerbaijani people will change their attitude towards Turkey in the case of a change of power.

"However, the government will try to form a dual opinion against Turkey in the population and adapt the formation of opinion against Turkey to dual standards," he says.

Ali Karimli, chair of Azerbaijan's opposition Popular Front Party, wrote that Aliyev understood that "the Putin government, which has always supported it, is currently involved in its own crisis."

He added that the Azerbaijani president "unequivocally taking sides" in the run-up to the election was "completely wrong."

"Undoubtedly, this is also based on widespread corruption. Because uncovering the corrupt cooperation between Aliyev and Erdoğan is not useful for Aliyev," wrote Karimli.

However, Zardusht Alizade, an Azerbaijani political analyst, conflict specialist, and former opposition politician based in Baku told OC Media that a change in Turkey's relations with Azerbaijan could also be politically risky within Turkey itself.

"The Erdoğan-Aliyev couple has created propaganda in such a way that Turkish public consciousness considers Azerbaijan's victory in the war as Turkey's victory, and the people will not forgive any Turkish government or political figure who refuses this useful factor," says Alizadeh.

While direct diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia have been cut since 1993, tensions between the two countries have risen further still in recent weeks.

Last week, Turkey closed its airspace to Armenian planes in response to the unveiling of a statue commemorating Operation Nemesis, a program to assassinate the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide. A few days later, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu threatened to halt negotiations on normalizing relations with Armenia if the country refused to demolish it.

Tensions between the two countries have historically been fueled by disagreements regarding the genocide of the Ottoman Empire's Armenian population, which Turkey does not recognize, and Turkey's support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey has explicitly tied the normalisation of relations with Armenia to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a position which Armenia has implicitly refused through its assertion that normalisation should be "unconditional."

The Regional Studies Center's Richard Giragosian believes that a shift in power in Turkey will mostly affect Armenia indirectly, through its effects on Azerbaijan.

"The process of normalization will continue, no matter who wins, with only slight variance or deviation in style but not substance in Turkey's approach toward Armenia," says Giragosian.

Turkey and Armenia previously attempted to normalize their relations in 2008 during the presidency of Abdullah Gül, when current president Erdoğan was serving as the country's prime minister. Despite intense talks and reports of progress, the attempt failed, with no resumption of negotiations until the end of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

However, Giragosian believes that an opposition win could affect Turkey's broader foreign policy, and so its interactions with Armenia's international partners.

"The possible return of the opposition will likely return a degree of "normalcy" in Turkish foreign policy, reverting to its traditional ties to the West, and with the United States and NATO in particular, and embarking on a "course correction" in the Turkish relationship with Russia, moving Ankara much further away from Mos-

cow," says Giragosian.

Regardless of outcome, the repercussions of the election on Armenia, including the economic impact, Giragosian says, are likely to be little to none. Armenia banned the import of Turkish products after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, early in 2021, but lifted the ban a year after, as the Armenian market struggled to find alternatives and the countries intensified talks on normalising relations and opening their shared border to citizens of third countries.

While some Turkish products are widespread in Armenia, their trade is conducted through Georgia, avoiding direct economic relations between Armenia and Turkey, and is unlikely to be affected by a change of political alignment.

The Georgian political experts and economists that OC Media spoke to were unanimous in their assessment that, no matter the outcome of the election, dramatic changes in Georgia and Turkey's relations should not be expected.

However, Kornely Kakachia, the founder of the Georgian Institute of Politics, told OC Media that while he anticipated only "cosmetic changes in foreign policy" an opposition win, and corresponding change in Turkey's relationship to NATO and the European Union, could have a significant impact on Georgia.

"The role of Turkey is very important for Georgia, especially when there is an aggressive Russia in our neighborhood," says Kakachia. "It is very important that we have strategic relations with Turkey, a member of NATO, because, in case of any complications, it could potentially play an important role."

He adds that the Erdoğan government has formally supported Georgia joining NATO.

However, Kakachia notes that Turkey's image has suffered both within Georgia and internationally as a result of Erdoğan's "autocratic tendencies."

"If until now Turkey was thought of as a NATO member country, a part of the West, during the period of his rule, this idea is increasingly doubted, and today's Turkey is seen from Tbilisi not as a part of the Western world, but as a Middle Eastern power state, which has slightly changed the image of Turkey in Georgia."

see OPPOSITION, page 20



## What an Opposition Win In Turkey Could Mean for The Caucasus

OPPOSITION, from page 19

He suggests that if Erdoğan loses the election, the opposition might try to improve transatlantic relations and get closer to the European Union, with the latter potentially playing “an important role” in Georgia’s participation in European projects.

Paata Aroshidze, an associate professor of economics at Shota Rustaveli State University of Batumi, told OC Media that a Kılıçdaroğlu victory would not change economic relations between the two countries.

Aroshidze notes that Turkey has often been Georgia’s largest trade partner.

“The main connection between us is the energy partnership and the joint involvement of Georgia and Turkey in international projects, which NATO and the European Union strengthen,” says Aroshidze.

“[In terms of strategic partnership], I cannot say that anything will change if Erdoğan stays or his opponent comes, because the oil supply of not one or two countries, but the whole of Europe, depends on [joint] energy projects.”

He also draws attention to the visa-free regime between Georgia and Turkey, and the fact that large numbers of Georgian citizens are employed in Turkey which, according to him, is another example of how important economic relations between the two countries are.

Kakachia summarises his view on the matter succinctly.

“Turkey has always been pragmatic in relation to Georgia,” adds Kakachia. “These good neighbourly relations will probably remain [no matter who wins].”

(This analysis originally appeared on the website OC-Media on May 22.)

## Defamation Case against GOP Official Will Proceed

By Jessica Hill

LAS VEGAS (*Las Vegas Review Journal*) — A Clark County District Court judge rejected the Nevada Republican Party executive director’s request to dismiss a defamation lawsuit against her on May 5.

Judge Jessica Peterson denied Alida Benson’s motion to dismiss the case that was brought in October 2022 by a trio of Republicans who claimed the executive director defamed them during a Clark County Republican Party meeting in September.

Amy Tarkanian, a political commentator and former chair of the Nevada Republican Party, and Republicans Elliot Malin and Jason Guinasso filed a complaint against Benson and James Blockey, a member of the Clark County Central Committee Republican Party, alleging that the statements they made harmed their reputation and ability to earn money in their respective fields.

At the meeting in September — when the county party’s central committee voted on a resolution to censure Republicans who had announced their support for Democratic Attorney General Aaron Ford rather than the Republican candidate Sigal Chattah — Benson had said Tarkanian and Malin, a registered Republican lobbyist, were “personally profiting” by supporting Ford in the 2022 election, according to the lawsuit.

Blockey had also said in the meeting that those named in the resolution to censure “are working for Democrats, getting paid,” the lawsuit says.

The plaintiffs alleged that those statements were both false and defamatory. Tarkanian, Guinasso and Malin were members of “Republicans for Ford,” a group of more than a dozen Republicans who crossed the aisle to support Ford and boost his re-election bid.

After the initial lawsuit was filed, Benson filed a SLAPP motion on Dec.

But she also had to show that she was telling the truth or did not know at the time that what she was saying was false.

Peterson agreed that the statements were made in a public forum and in connection to an issue of public interest, but did not find evidence that Benson’s statement was truthful or made without her knowledge of being false, according to Peterson’s order.

Benson had provided Peterson with Ford’s webpage, and an article from the *Review-Journal* about the Republicans endorsing Ford.

“Nowhere in any of those documents does it state that Amy Tarkanian, Jason Guinasso, or Elliot Malin were ‘fundraising, making money, or personally profiting’ from campaigning for Democrats,” Peterson wrote in the order, concluding there was no evidence to show that Benson knew at the time that the statement was true or made without knowledge of its falsehood.

The defendants have a right to appeal the decision to the Nevada Supreme Court; otherwise, the case will move forward.

In a statement to the *Review-Journal*, Tarkanian, Malin and Guinasso said they are “very pleased” with the ruling and “look forward to holding the Republican Party Executive Director further accountable for her reckless and damaging fabrications.”

Benson referred the *Review-Journal*’s request for comment to her lawyer Brian Hardy, who did not immediately return a request for comment.



Amy Tarkanian

13, 2022, as well as a motion to dismiss.

Anti-SLAPP laws, or “strategic lawsuits against public participation,” are ways for a defendant to quickly dismiss meritless lawsuits before they incur significant costs.

Benson had to prove that what she said was in advance of free speech, was made in public and was made in good faith.

Tekeyan Cultural Association

# SPONSOR A TEACHER

# 2023

*in Armenia and five villages in Artsakh*





Since its inception in 2001, the TCA Sponsor a Teacher program has raised \$828,060 and reached out to 7,253 teachers and school staff in Armenian and Artsakh.





Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Artsakh to continue helping them educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher’s name and address.

\$200  
  \$400  
  \$600  
  other

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to: Tekeyan Cultural Association  
 Memo: Sponsor a Teacher  
 Mail your check to:  
 TCA Sponsor a Teacher  
 5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056

YOUR DONATION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE