

Congressional Human Rights Commission Hears Powerful Testimony Condemning Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON — The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC) of the United States Congress held a high-stakes hearing on June 21 to address the immediate and critical need to safeguard the lives and rights of the vulnerable Armenian population living in Artsakh (also known as Nagorno-Karabakh), reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

Co-chaired by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA), the Commission heard compelling testimony from four key panelists: former Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Michael Rubin, Director of Peace-Building and Human Rights Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University, David Phillips, and former Ambassador of the United States to Armenia, John M. Evans. Additionally, see TESTIMONY, page 9



At top, David Phillips, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and Former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, John Evans



Ara Oshagan, Beirut Memory Project #56, 2018-2021

Ara Oshagan Exhibit, 'Disrupted, Borders,' Connects Fragments of Armenian World

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN— A new exhibit of photographs at the Armenian Museum of America tries to weave together the different strands of Armenian communities around the world. The exhibit, "Ara Oshagan: Disrupted, Borders," opened on June 7 and will continue through October 29.

The disparate corners of the diaspora and Armenia, coming together as a whole to represent the Armenian nation in its totality, are formed by photos from Los Angeles, Beirut and Shushi. Along the way, Oshagan deploys several dualities among the photos: black and white photos are spliced into and color collages; photographs are inserted into ancient scrolls and Shushi residents' larger-than-life portraits are superimposed on ancient manuscripts, some by the famed illuminator, Toros Roslin (1210-1270).

The result is both beautiful and mel-

ancholy, showing images from diasporas that once were powerful or simply existed, but are either decimated or gone altogether.

Interviewed at his home in Los Angeles, Oshagan, who is both a photographer and installation artist, said, "A lot of the series deal with different crossings of different types of borders," such as "the Shushi portraits, where you have residents who are no longer living on their indigenous lands and Armenian manuscripts in the background. There is a border crossing there by Azerbaijan. It is a physical and real border crossing that has caused them to be refugees."

The Shushi photos are so large that the viewer feels they are seeing these people face to face. We know that these folks are not in Shushi now and wonder: Just where are they? Have those two young boys with their arms around each other's shoulders fought in the war? Are they safe? So many questions.

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Azerbaijan Rules Out Guarantees For Karabakh Armenians

By Heghine Buniatian and Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Azerbaijan has made it clear that it will not agree to any special arrangements for guaranteeing the rights and security of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population.

In an interview with Reuters news agency published on Friday, June 23, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov also indicated that Armenia should make more concessions in addition to recognizing Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh.

"The most fundamental is the following. This is an internal, sovereign issue," he said. "The Azerbaijan constitution and a number of international conventions to which Azerbaijan is a party provide all the necessary conditions in order to guarantee the rights of this population."

Yerevan has been pressing for an "international mechanism" of dialogue between Baku and the Karabakh Armenians during ongoing talks on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Thursday again called for the launch of such a mechanism while continuing to accuse Baku of "ethnic cleansing" in Karabakh.

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Red Cross Resumes Medical Evacuations From Karabakh

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Ten days after blocking the movement of humanitarian convoys through the Lachin corridor, Azerbaijan allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Sunday, June 25, to resume the evacuation of seriously ill persons from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

"We resumed yesterday the transfer of patients to Armenia through the Lachin



Red Cross vehicles are seen outside Stepanakert, January 4, 2023

corridor," Eteri Musayelian, a spokeswoman for the ICRC office in Stepanakert, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Monday, June 26. "We evacuated 15 patients yesterday and 16 others today."

Videos released by Azerbaijani government-controlled media showed those patients, family members accompanying

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Submissions for Azadian Commemorative Book Requested



WATERTOWN — The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) Press Council plans to publish a commemorative volume containing the many letters and articles that were prepared upon the death of the great intellectual and editor Edmond Y. Azadian. The volume will be published in the middle of March next year, on the anniversary of his death.

For this purpose, we request

the authors of such articles and letters which have already appeared in the pages of the ADL press to edit (if necessary) their articles and send them in final form to the editorial offices of the Armenian-language *Azg* and *Baïkar*, or the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* English-language newspapers.

Similarly, we ask all those who for any reason did not have time to send their writings to the ADL

press previously to carry out the dictates of your hearts and minds and contact the editorial offices of the abovementioned newspapers, at the following e-mail addresses: for *Azg*, ani.grigoryan.73@mail.ru, for *Baïkar*, hh-vartivarian@gmail.com, and for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, aram@mirrorspectator.com.

The deadline for revised or new submissions is Sept. 15, 2023.

WALES

Armenia Defeats Wales and Latvia In European Qualifiers

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SWITZERLAND

Exhibition in Geneva Dedicated to 105th Anniversary of First Armenian Republic

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Mirror-Spectator Annual Vacation

WATERTOWN — The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close for its annual two-week vacation in early July. This issue is our last for two weeks. The first issue back will be that of July 22.

Enjoy a safe and healthy summer.



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Protesters in Yerevan Urge Concrete Action to End Blockade

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Demonstrators in Yerevan urged the international community to take concrete action to end Azerbaijan's brutal blockade of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) as they staged a sit-in outside the Russian Embassy on Tuesday, June 27.

The ARF Armenia Supreme Body announced the start of one-day sit-ins outside the embassies of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries and the EU Delegation office in Yerevan at 8:30 a.m.

"We call on the international community to go beyond mere statements and calls and take practical measures to stop Azerbaijan's policy of ethnic cleansing in Artsakh," Anna Grigoryan, an MP from the opposition Hayastan bloc, told reporters at the protest outside the Russian Embassy.

She insisted on international sanctions against Baku.

"They further deepen cooperation with Azerbaijan instead of sanctioning the country. It's about all international actors," Grigoryan.

Talks between Armenia, Azerbaijan Take Place in Washington

WASHINGTON (Panorama.am) — A new round of talks between the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers is taking place in Washington on June 27-29, U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on June 26.

"They're very sensitive diplomatic discussions that will take place here. We expect the talks will commence tomorrow, on Tuesday, continue through Thursday of this week. Secretary Blinken will meet with the foreign ministers from both Azerbaijan and Armenia. We'll have more details as the week progresses," Miller told a [press briefing](#).

"We continue to believe that peace is within reach and direct dialogue is the key to resolving the remaining issues and reaching a durable and dignified peace," the spokesperson added.

State Department Senior Advisor Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — U.S. Department of State Senior Advisor Justin Friedman visited Armenia on June 26 and 27, the US Embassy in Yerevan announced.

Friedman is a Senior Advisor in the Department of State's Bureau of International Security and Non-proliferation.

"During his June 26-27 visit, Senior Advisor Friedman will meet with senior Armenian government officials, as well as subject matter experts, to discuss opportunities for U.S.-Armenian cooperation on a secure and safe energy future for Armenia," the US Embassy said in a statement.



The Armenian Church of Holy Resurrection in Berdzor

Architect: Berdzor Church Facing Same Fate as Church in Kars

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Azerbaijan is turning the Armenian Church of Holy Resurrection (Surb Hambardzum Church) in the Artsakh town of Berdzor (Lachin) into a mosque. Berdzor, including the Church of Holy Resurrection, was handed over to Azerbaijan on August 25, 2022. Prior to its surrender, the church was in good condition. Azerbaijani media reports suggest the dome and bell tower of the Armenian church will be dismantled and two minarets will be built.

The construction of the church was completed in 1998 and its dome cross was consecrated on May 31, 1998.

Its architect, Hrachya Gasparian, said he is deeply upset by the news.

"I can't put my feelings into words," he said in an interview, highlighting its construction required great efforts at the time.

"God knows what will happen to the church. Probably, it is suffering the same fate as the Holy Apostles Church in Kars, which was converted into a mosque," Gasparian said.

The architect expressed the hope that Armenians would regain and restore the church in the future. He also called for strong efforts to preserve the Armenian cultural heritage.

"If a nation wants to survive for long, they must have a good knowledge about the heritage inherited from their ancestors and cherish it," he stated.

Monumental Armenian *Khachkar* in Vayotz Dzor Destroyed by Lightning Strike

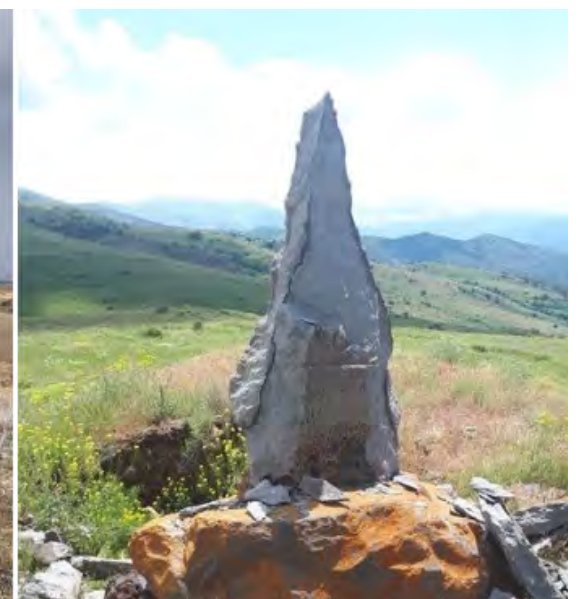
YEREVAN — Information obtained from the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports has confirmed that a 13th century *khachkar* (Cross-Stone) located in Vayotz Dzor has been irreversibly destroyed as a result of an unexpected lightning strike. The monumental stone, found in Karmashen District, sustained damage to the upper structure and façade. Fortunately, the base and lower engravings were preserved.

According to the United Nations, *khachkars* are a recognizable Armenian cultural symbol. In 2010, UNESCO declared *khachkars* as a world cultural heritage stele, further acknowledging their cultural and religious significance to the Armenian people. This specific *khachkar*, dating to the 13th century, represents Armenia's long-lasting devotion towards Christianity.

According to reports by the Public Radio of Armenia, the



The khachkar before and after



damage to the structure was first discovered by representatives of the Republic of Armenia Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum-Reservations. The disposition of the damaged monument awaits determination by experts.

—Levon Karamanoukian

Armenia Defeats Wales and Latvia in European Qualifiers, Advances to Second Position in Group

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — The last time the Armenian squad defeated a national soccer team in a match outside Armenia was over two years ago. The last time Armenia played with Wales was in 2001: back then, the teams drew twice in the World Cup qualifying games.

On June 16, the statistics changed in favor of Armenia: in Cardiff, the capital of Wales, the hosts lost 2:4.

Armenia and Wales (the country of Wales is part of the United Kingdom) are in group D of the Euro 2024 Cup qualifying games. The Dragons, as the team of Wales is nicknamed, scored a goal 10 minutes after the first kick-off, but it took Zelarayan only 9 minutes to level the game. Attacking midfielder Lucas Zelarayan, of Armenian descent through his father, is from Argentina and began playing for the national team of Armenia in 2021. German-Armenian forward Grant Leon-Ranos doubled the score before the break and hit another goal after the break: 1:3 in favor of Oleksandr Petrakov's squad.

The host team tried hard to catch up. Harry Wilson didn't miss the target after his teammate dropped the ball to him: 2:3 was still in Armenia's favor. When in the 74th minute, Zelarayan sealed Armenia's victory by scoring another goal, *SkySports* live commentators noticed: "Hard to be-



The Armenian squad (Courtesy Armenian Football Federation)

lieve this team is ranked 97 in the world - they have attacked with such velocity and quality." The British *Guardian* also noted that in FIFA's ranking list, Armenia is 71

places below Wales: the Dragons ranked 26th before Armenia pulled off a shock win in Cardiff. "This stadium, so often a cacophony of noise, silenced but for around

200 Armenia supporters who rejoiced at their first win in 10 matches," summarized the *Guardian*.

On June 19, the Armenians hosted Latvia, another team of group D. The Latvians had had only defeats before coming to Yerevan. The expectation that Oleksandr Petrakov's squad would win again proved true soon: Nayir Tiknizian didn't miss the target in the 35th minute. After the break, at Latvian midfielder Roberts Savalnicks' attempt the ball hit Armenian player Mkrtchian and appeared in Armenia's goal. The referee counted a self-goal by Styopa Mkrtchian: 1:1. In the 91st minute, Armenians, however, pulled out the much needed victory: Tigran Barseghian didn't miss the target from the penalty spot. With two back-to-back victories, Petrakov's squad climbed to second place in the D group leaving only Turks ahead of us. The two challenging games with Croatia, the world's 7th strongest team, according to FIFA's index, are expected this fall. Armenia will also play a game with the Dragons in Armenia, Latvians in Latvia and the Turkish squad in Turkey. The top two winners of the group will qualify for the final European playoff games in Germany next June.

Accompanying videos at mirrorspectator.com feature snapshots of the game, including Tigran Barseghian's final goal.

European Championship Qualifying - Group D 2023/24

#	Team	Pl	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Turkey	4	3	0	1	7	5	2	9
2	Armenia	3	2	0	1	7	5	2	6
3	Croatia	2	1	1	0	3	1	2	4
4	Wales	4	1	1	2	4	7	-3	4
5	Latvia	3	0	0	3	3	6	-3	0

The Group D ranking

Azerbaijan Rules Out Guarantees for Karabakh Armenians

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Pashinyan pledged to recognize Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan after a recent meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev held in Brussels. That was condemned by Karabakh's leadership and the Armenian opposition. They say the restoration of Azerbaijani rule would only force the Karabakh Armenians to flee the territory.

Bayramov, who is holding another round of negotiations with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan in Washington this week, noted with satisfaction that

Pashinyan is the first Armenian leader to have made such a statement. But, he said, Armenia should also take "some practical steps" to build on progress in the peace talks and make peace with Azerbaijan. He did not specify those steps.

Despite that progress, tensions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and "the line of contact" around Karabakh have steadily increased over the last few weeks, with the sides accusing each other of violating the ceasefire on a virtually daily basis.

Karabakh's army said that Azerbaijani

forces fired at its frontline positions throughout Thursday, wounding one of its soldiers. It also accused them of targeting the tractor of a Karabakh farmer who cultivated agricultural land outside the town of Chartar.

The Karabakh police said separately that Azerbaijani troops opened fire at a civilian house in another village and damaged its roof on Thursday.

The Azerbaijani military regularly claims to shoot at tractors to stop Karabakh Armenian forces from fortifying their positions. The authorities in Stepa-

nakert dismiss this as a smokescreen for justifying systematic Azerbaijani gunfire at Karabakh farmers.

Following a June 15 shooting incident in the Lachin corridor, Azerbaijan completely halted relief supplies to Karabakh through the sole road connecting the disputed region to Armenia. Karabakh had received limited amounts of food, fuel and medicine from Russian peacekeepers and the International Committee of the Red Cross since Baku blocked commercial traffic through the corridor last December.

INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijani Envoy Threatens EU Observers With Sniper Fire

BRUSSELS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Belgium and Luxembourg, Head of Mission to European Union Vaqif Sadiqov has threatened that his country's military will deploy sniper rifle if members of the EU's monitoring mission in Armenia approach the border between the two countries.

"The Istiglal IST-14.5 anti-materiel sniper rifle produced in Azerbaijan has the effective firing range of about 3,000 m. Guys, keep clear of Azerbaijani state border..." Sadiqov wrote on Twitter on Monday, June 26.

The Ambassador's threats came after members of the European Parliament visited the border and urged Azerbaijan to withdraw immediately from all parts of the territory of Armenia, respect its international legal obligations and end the blockade of Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh).

Russian Deputy FM, Armenian Envoy Discuss Karabakh

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin discussed with Armenian Ambassador Vagharshak Harutyunyan the situation in the Lachin corridor and around Nagorno-Karabakh as a whole, the press service of the Russian Foreign Ministry reported on June 26.

Other issues on the agenda included bilateral trade.

The Russian Foreign Ministry also confirmed the importance of strict compliance with the entire set of agreements reached between the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020-2022 on the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations.

Azerbaijan Will No Longer Issue Visas to Iranian Citizens at Airports

TEHRAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan will stop issuing visas to Iranian citizens at its international airports, local media reported on June 17, citing the Iranian embassy in Baku (via Sputnik Armenia).

The embassy recommended that citizens who want to visit Azerbaijan obtain visas in advance online or at the Consulate General in Tabriz.

The diplomatic mission also reminded that the land border between Iran and Azerbaijan has been closed since 2020.

It was reported earlier that the cultural representation of Iran in Baku was closed.

In early April, Baku declared personae non grata and expelled four employees of the Iranian embassy in Azerbaijan from the country. In response, Tehran also declared four Azerbaijani diplomats personae non grata in early May.

Red Cross Resumes Medical Evacuations From Karabakh

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them and ICRC vehicles undergoing meticulous checks at an Azerbaijani checkpoint controversially set up in the corridor in April.

According to health authorities in Stepanakert, nearly 190 Karabakh residents were waiting to be evacuated to Armenian hospitals for urgent treatment as of Saturday.

The medical evacuations have been carried out only by the ICRC ever since Azerbaijan stopped last December commercial traffic though the sole road connecting Karabakh to Armenia. Baku blocked them as well as Russian peacekeepers' food supplies to Karabakh on June 15 following a shooting incident near the Azerbaijani checkpoint.

The evacuations resumed one day after Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov met with an ICRC delegation in Baku. The situation in the Lachin corridor was reportedly high on the meeting's agenda.

Gegham Stepanyan, Karabakh's human rights ombudsman, linked the development to serious concerns expressed by Russia, the European Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) at the tightening of the Azerbaijani blockade, which aggravated food shortages in Karabakh.

"But we cannot consider [the international pressure] fully effective because although the transport of patients and medicine through the Red Cross has been restored, 120,000 people are still denied access to food and other essential items," said Stepanyan.

The European Union expressed serious concern on Friday over the tightening of Azerbaijan's seven-month blockade of the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Baku stopped on June 15 the movement through the Lachin corridor of humanitarian convoys organized by the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Karabakh and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The move followed a shootout near an Azerbaijani checkpoint controversially set up in late April by a bridge over the Hakari river, the starting point of the Lachin corridor.

Armenia said its border guards opened fire to stop Azerbaijani servicemen manning the checkpoint from placing an Azerbaijani flag on adjacent Armenian territory. Azerbaijan insisted, however, that they did not cross into Armenia.

"The near total blockage of the Lachin corridor, in place since June 15 is very worrying," Nabila Massrali, the EU's foreign policy spokeswoman, said in a statement.

"It directly threatens the livelihoods of the local population and raises serious fears of a potential humanitarian crisis."

The EU was also alarmed by heightened tensions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the Karabakh "line of contact." "Following the series of recent high-level meetings, the EU continues to be engaged at the highest political level to help defuse these tensions and find mutually acceptable solutions," added Massrali.

Her statement came two days after a group of European Parliament members and the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, Andrea Wiktorin, joined EU monitors for a patrol near the Hakari bridge. Nathalie Loiseau, who led the visiting parliamentary delegation, demanded an immediate end to the "illegal" blockade.

The Azerbaijani side showed on Friday no signs of planning to lift it. A video released by Karabakh's leadership showed that Azerbaijani security personnel placed concrete road blocks on the bridge, making renewed traffic through the corridor even more difficult.

Several other bodies as well as governments have spoken out against the blockade.

The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) has called on Azerbaijan to reopen the sole road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh Armenia and unblock electricity and gas supplies to the Armenian-populated region.

In a resolution adopted late on Thursday, June 22, the PACE deplored the December 2022 "interruption of the free and safe passage through the Lachin corridor and the subsequent deliberate cutting of electricity and gas supplies to the region."

It said Baku should "urgently" comply with a ruling handed down by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in February. The UN court ordered the Azerbaijani government to "take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles, and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions."

"The Assembly stresses that the current situation is not sustainable and may well lead to the Armenian population being forced to leave their homes and communities if there is no resolution to the conflict," reads the PACE resolution adopted by 48 votes to 16.

"In this context, it urgently calls for addressing the issues of the rights and security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh through dialogue between Baku and Khakendi/Stepanakert and a neutral international involvement in any peace implementation mechanism to be put in place," it says.

Such a mechanism is strongly supported by Armenia but opposed by Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said last month that the Karabakh Armenians "will either live under Azerbaijani rule or leave" their homeland.

The PACE resolution does not mention Baku's decision to completely block the movement of special humanitarian convoys through the Lachin corridor which followed a shooting incident there on June 15. The move aggravated the shortages of food, medicine and other essential items in Karabakh.

Paul Gavan, an Irish lawmaker who drafted the resolution, acknowledged and criticized the tightening of the blockade during a PACE debate that preceded the adoption of the text. Gavan cited information received from the European Union's monitoring mission deployed along Armenia's border with Azerbaijan.

Russia urged Azerbaijan to unblock the road.

"We call on Baku to take steps to completely unblock the [Lachin] corridor for humanitarian purposes and not to hold Karabakh's population hostage to political disagreements with Yerevan," said Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman.

Zakharova said Moscow keeps trying to restore vital supplies of food, medicine and other essential items to Karabakh.

Karabakh's leadership charged on Wednesday that Baku's actions amounted to a "war crime." It demanded that the international community take "coercive measures" to end the blockade.

"Azerbaijan has elevated to a new level its systematic policy of ethnic cleansing of Artsakh and the destruction of its people," read a statement released by the foreign ministry in Stepanakert.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan raised the "illegal blockade" with a group of members of the European Parliament at a meeting held in Yerevan on Tuesday. Pashinyan renewed his calls for the dispatch of an international fact-finding mission to Karabakh and the Lachin corridor.

On Wednesday, the visiting parliamentarians joined members of a European Union monitoring mission in touring an Armenian border area adjacent to the corridor. They discussed the security situation there and in Armenia's Syunik province as a whole with Robert Ghukasian, the provincial governor.

"I reaffirm the European Parliament's position that the blockade of the Lachin corridor is illegal and must end," the head of the delegation, Nathalie Loiseau, told reporters afterwards.



Jersey of AC Milan's Giroud Auctioned to Benefit Artsakh

PARIS (Combined Sources) — On June 15, at the Saint-Honoré Church in Paris, the shirt worn by the AC Milan striker Olivier Giroud during the quarter-final match between France and England at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar was auctioned off for 35,000 euros. The proceeds were donated in support of persecuted Christians in Artsakh, as reported by Milanpress.it.

Giroud's jersey was auctioned off during the third edition of the "Night for Mission" charity event. He had scored for France in the 78th minute of the match.

The proceeds from the sale will be allocated to two Christian organizations, including "Portes Ouvertes" and "Hope for Armenia."

The representatives of the two organizations, Anne-Florence Roche and Pastor René Léonian, were present at this event. They thanked the organizers and donors for their solidarity with the Armenians in Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh.



INTERNATIONAL

Exhibition at UN Office in Geneva Dedicated to 105th Anniversary of First Armenian Republic

GENEVA — On June 26, the Permanent Mission of Armenia inaugurated an exhibition dedicated to the 105th anniversary of the first Republic of Armenia. The exhibition was organized in the United Nations Office in Geneva within the framework of the session of the Human Rights Council. The exhibition was entitled “Women in State Building.”

The stands presented the role played by Armenian women in the social, political, religious, cultural and educational spheres during the first Republic of Armenia and in various other historical periods.

The Permanent Representative of Armenia, Ambassador Andranik Hovhannisyanyan, Director General of the UN Office in Geneva Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director of the UN Library and Archives Mr. Francesco Pisano delivered remarks at the opening ceremony. The speakers referred to the importance of empowering the women and ensuring equality of rights worldwide, presented episodes about the significant contribution of Armenian women in state building.

Ambassador Andranik Hovhannisyanyan introduced prominent Armenian women

who made an important contribution to the development of the statehood, referred to the medieval Armenian legal texts to this end and dwelled upon the role and rights of Armenian women during the first republic. He also presented the achievements registered in Armenia in terms of empowerment of women.

Ambassador Hovhannisyanyan concluded his speech by drawing the attention of the audience to the statue of Mother Armenia depicted on the invitation card of the exhibition. He emphasized that it symbolizes the woman who protects the heart of Armenia, the capital Yerevan. She stands as an unwavering symbol of sovereignty, strength, peace and endurance.

Ambassadors of a number of countries, diplomats, officials of the UN Office in Geneva, representatives of the Armenian community were present at the exhibition. At the conclusion of the opening ceremony the guests tasted Armenian wines.

The exhibition was created, compiled and displaced last year in New York with the efforts of the Permanent Mission of Armenia at the United Nations headquarters.



Part of the exhibit at the UN Office in Geneva

Land Sale Puts Jerusalem Armenians on Edge

By Yolande Knell

JERUSALEM (BBC News) — Wearing peaked black headdresses and long robes, a procession of Armenian priests is led along the stone streets of Jerusalem’s Old City by two suited men in felt tarboosh hats with ceremonial walking sticks.

Quietly, apart from the tapping of the sticks, they file into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for prayers.

Nowadays, Jerusalem is at the core of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. But Armenians have been here since the 4th century, when their country was the first to adopt Christianity as a national religion.

They have a share in the Old City’s holiest Christian sites and their own quarter tucked away in its south-western corner, home to some 2,000 Armenians.

But now the community here feels under threat because of a murky real estate deal by its own Church leaders. Amid angry protests, the Armenian patriarch has hidden himself away and a disgraced priest, who denies any wrongdoing, has fled to California.

“It’s like a puzzle. I mean, we are trying to know what happened, when it happened, and how,” explains community activist Hagop Djernazian.

What has emerged is that some 25 percent of the Armenian Quarter has been sold on a 99-year lease to a mysterious Jewish Australian businessman for a luxury development.

The land includes a large car parking area — one of the few areas of open land inside the Old City walls — which his company has already taken over. Many Armenians had hoped the site could be used to build affordable housing for young couples from their tiny, shrinking community.

According to plans seen unofficially by Hagop and others, an Ottoman-era building housing five Armenian households, a restaurant, shops and the seminary are all

part of the sell-off. Many fear this could affect the viability of living in the quarter in the long-term.

But the controversy extends far more widely.

“It is historical land that we have had for 700 years. Losing it with one signature will affect our cultural daily life, but it will also change the picture of Jerusalem,” Hagop says. “It will change the status quo, the entire mosaic of Jerusalem.”

Changing Character

As the Orthodox Easter celebrations took place in April, panic was spreading among Armenians. The Armenian Patriarch, Nourhan Manougian, admitted that he had signed away the land but said he had been deceived by a local priest who worked for him.

That priest was defrocked and later there were heated scenes as he was banished from the Armenian Quarter, escorted away under Israeli police protection as residents yelled out “traitor”.

Recently, many Armenians have been joining weekly protests, linking arms and singing nationalistic songs below the window of the patriarch who now stays cloistered in his rooms at the convent. They demand that he revoke the land deal.

Amid a recent rise in attacks by extremist Jews targeting Christians in Jerusalem, some Armenians see the sale as an act of self-inflicted harm on the Christian presence here.

“The look of the city, its character is changing very much,” says Arda, who lives in the Old City and complains that religious nationalists already feel emboldened by the drift of Israeli politics.

“Priests walking in the streets find settlers spitting at them, people say they don’t want to see Christmas trees in the city, and restaurants are being attacked for no reason. It’s all going in a certain direction.”

Israel captured East Jerusalem — including the Old City — from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East War and went on to occupy

and annex it in a move that is not recognized internationally. In the decades since, it has been at the heart of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, claimed by both sides as their capital. Plots of land here are fiercely fought over.

There is a reminder of that near to the Armenian Quarter, at Jaffa Gate — the iconic entrance to the Christian Quarter.

Here, two landmark hotels, run by Palestinians, were secretly sold to foreign firms acting as fronts for a radical Jewish settler group. The Greek Orthodox Church lost a two-decade-long battle to cancel the deal in the Israeli courts and last year settlers moved into part of one of the hotels.

Armenian elders say that in the past, there have been frequent approaches by settlers wanting to buy land in their quarter and increase the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem. The Armenian Quarter is located next to the Jewish one, which makes it especially desirable.

However, a spokesman for the settler group which bought the Jaffa Gate properties told the BBC he had no knowledge of the Armenian land sale.

Patriarch Sanctioned

Meanwhile, in interviews in the US, the cast-out priest, Baret Yeretsian, has dismissed the idea that the buyer of the land lease — named as Danny Rothman but also Daniel Rubinstein in some documents — is driven by ideology.

Nevertheless, Palestinian Christian leaders say the sale has political implications.

“It undermines any future political solution to Jerusalem,” says Dimitri Diliiani, president of the National Christian Coalition of the Holy Land. “According to international law, it’s on occupied land that is subject to negotiations and this kind of reinforces the illegal settler presence in Palestinian East Jerusalem.”

He believes that “the diversity” of Jerusalem will also be badly affected.

Highlighting the significance of the Armenian Church’s actions, both the Palestin-

ian President and Jordan’s King Abdullah II — custodian of Jerusalem’s Christian holy sites — have suspended their recognition of the patriarch. This affects his ability to attend ceremonies and sign off on official church business.

Israel’s foreign ministry has said it is aware of the Armenian patriarch’s deal but due to the political sensitivity it refrains from commenting on it.

Meanwhile, in the walled courtyards of St James Convent, which has been home to many Armenian families since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and has its own clubs, school, library and even a football pitch, the talk nowadays is about little else.

Relations have been strained between the residents and clergy members, who act here as the religious and civil authority. On Friday, dozens of Armenian Jerusalemites gathered to hear from a group of international Armenian lawyers who have been visiting and have agreed to draw up recommendations on how to handle the case.

A group of international lawyers say they will make recommendations on what could be done about the case

Nearby, in his ceramics shop, Garo Sandrouni paints glaze onto an ornately decorated bowl wondering what the future will bring.

He is from one of the families that brought the colorful tradition of Armenian pottery to Jerusalem a century ago, when they fled from what is widely seen as a genocide by the Turks.

He says that Armenians historically donated money to buy land in this holy city — their spiritual homeland — and that the Church has no right to sell it.

“This is what makes us angry. These lands belong to the Armenian nation. They don’t belong to the Armenian patriarchate of Jerusalem,” he tells me.

“The Armenian patriarchate of Jerusalem has to take care of these lands to keep them to preserve them, to protect them.”

Community News

A Reporter Investigated Sexual Misconduct. Then the Attacks Began.

By David Enrich

MELROSE, Mass. (*New York Times*) — One drizzly Saturday in May last year, a slender man in a blue raincoat approached a house in the Boston suburb of Melrose. It was just before 6 a.m., and no one was around. The man took out a can of red spray paint and scrawled “JUST THE BEGINNING!” on the side of the white house. Then he hurled a brick through a large window and sprinted away.

The house belonged to Lauren Chooljian, a journalist at New Hampshire Public Radio. Hours earlier, her parents’ home in New



Lauren Chooljian (New York Times photo)

Hampshire had been vandalized, too — for the second time in a month. Weeks earlier, her editor’s home had also been attacked.

The vandal’s three-word message in red would prove accurate. What started as a string of vandalism incidents has mushroomed over the past year into a bare-knuckle legal brawl with important implications for the First Amendment.

Attacks on journalists in the United States have become common. Last year, the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker identified 41 journalists who were physically assaulted. In one extreme case, a Nevada politician was charged with murdering a reporter investigating him.

Libel lawsuits have been on the rise, too, according to the latest data collected by the Media Law Resource Center. Many legal experts said such suits were often used to punish smaller news organizations for aggressive coverage and to deter others from speaking out.

And sometimes, as Ms. Chooljian and New Hampshire Public Radio have learned, the physical and legal threats converge. Their ordeal is a striking example of the perils facing news organizations in an era when politicians regularly demonize journalists and some judges want to curtail the First Amendment protections

see REPORTER, page 10



Hasmig Karayan of the TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter presenting a photo of Catholicos Vasken I from 1960 to Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate

Tekeyan Cultural Association Delegation Visits Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

BURBANK, Calif. — On Saturday, June 24, a delegation representing the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) visited the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church. Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate, warmly welcomed the representatives of the Tekeyan Cultural Association. On behalf of the delegation, Deacon Mihran Toumajan, Assistant Secretary of the Central Board of the TCA in the United States and Canada, congratulated Archbishop Derderian on his recent re-election. Archbishop Derderian updated the delegation on a wide range of ongoing projects in the Western Diocese. The TCA representatives provided the Primate with information regarding upcoming events to be organized by the three Los Angeles based TCA chapters.

On behalf of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Hasmig Karayan of the TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter presented a photo to the Primate from Catholicos Vasken I’s historic visit to the Western Diocese in 1960.

Also participating in the meeting were Parsegh Kartalian, Chairman of the TCA Los Angeles chapter, and his wife, Ani, Mayda Kuredjian, TCA West Coast Executive Secretary and Deacon Carl Bardakian, Chairman of the TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter and a member of the Central Board.

Archbishop Derderian commended the Tekeyan Cultural Association for their dedicated service and offered his blessings and encouragement.



Seated, from left, Parsegh Kartalian, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate; standing from left, Very Rev. Fr. Yeremia Abgaryan, Ani Kartalian, Mayda Kuredjian, Hasmig Karayan, Deacon Carl Bardakian and Deacon Mihran Toumajan

ARF Bureau Chair Offers Party’s Perspective On Global Armenian Issues

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) is one of the three main political parties in the Armenian diaspora and is also active in the Republic of Armenia. The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is an organ of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, similarly active in the Armenian world, and as such it can be understood that the approaches and ideas of these two parties may differ. The *Mirror-Spectator* strives to present a wide spectrum of views and so despite such differences, it is happy to have the opportunity to interview Hagop Der Khachadourian, chairman of the ARF Bureau since 2019 and president of the ARF-affiliated Armenian National Committee (ANC) International. Based in Montreal, Der Khachadourian had come to Boston to participate in a celebration of the 105th anniversary of the founding of the first Republic of Armenia.

The Bureau, elected by the ARF World Congress once every four years, is the supreme executive body of the ARF, which is active in 33 regions of the world (regions may represent sections of countries, entire countries, or grouping of more than one country). Der Khachadourian rose to this leadership position as a result of decades of involvement in the party and Armenian affairs. Born in Aleppo, he received his education in Armenian schools in Lebanon until the age of 17, when he moved to Canada. A graduate of Montreal’s Concordia and McGill Universities, he earned an MBA in New York and currently is CEO of Alcerio, a Montreal-area company providing IT consulting, document management, and creation and maintenance of business software applications.

“I was very much involved in all kinds of *Hai Tad* [Armenian Cause] activities from day one,” he emphasized, working his way up from the ANC of Canada to become the chairman of the ANC International in the 1990s.

In 2004, when Der Khachadourian was first elected to membership in the Bureau, he was responsible for coordinating the Western chapters of the political party as well as its *Hai Tad* activities. “The Bureau,” he said, “is responsible for ideological direction and overall policies.”

Ideology and Agendas

Der Khachadourian said that as members of the Socialist International and the PS (party of European socialists), “we do consider ourselves as center left. Our ideology is based on human rights, the rights of the working people, and also on justice and fairness.” This economic outlook

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

is one of the four pillars of the ARF Program, which also include democracy, a revolutionary nature, and national ideology.

When asked how the ARF deals with the dominant capitalist ideology in the West that appears to have even led to some party members in the US being conservative Republicans, Der Khachadourian explained that the socialism espoused is for the homeland. However, he said that ARF party members “live in such different countries that just being strongly insistent on one of the four pillars might bring disadvantages to the various communities there. Therefore, there is a certain flexibility in that regard.”

What is different for the ARF in Armenia today compared to most other parts of the world, he said, is “in the diaspora we have the luxury of concentrating only on national issues.” He defined that as working to preserve Armenian identity, running schools, Armenian Cause activities, and participating somewhat in political life through the political parties of each country. However, he said, “In Armenia, you have to manage the day-to-day affairs of the country, not just the nation as a concept.” In other words, it is “managing the social sphere, the economic sphere, the security issues of Armenia.”

This leads to different agendas and approaches, to a degree. He concluded, “Of course we can be more pure in a conceptual fashion in the diaspora because we are dealing with issues where we think we have the monopoly of wisdom on 100 percent of the issues; whereas in Armenia, it becomes a day-to-day struggle in order to adapt to the changing requirements that the population is demanding of us. As such, it is also managing a country vs. managing a community, and these are two different things.”

International Armenian Cause Politics

The independence of Armenia by the early 1990s had a major effect also on the ARF’s Armenian Cause activities throughout the world. In essence, Der Khachadourian said, “we had to change our outlook. We had to change our assumption of responsibility. Now Armenia became the responsibility of the Armenian nation. We couldn’t just say that it is being dictated by Moscow.” Hai Tad was defined by the issues connected with the Armenian Genocide in the 1950s through 1980s, both recognition and reparations, but now there was the need to support the Republic of Armenia and the struggle to get recognition for Artsakh’s right to self-determination and, whenever possible, independence.

In the last 20-25 years, there were some major achievements concerning international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Der Khachadourian said, “Now, we are looking into the legal aspects of reparations, of the issue of the homeland, and that is why we have established the Armenian Legal Center for Justice and Human Rights, based in Washington but with a board composed of international scholars and experts. That is what I would define as being the second major point of Hai Tad.”

“The third objective,” he said, “is a more refined determination and defense of Armenian minority rights. What I mean by that is that in different areas of the world, depending on [the circumstances in] different countries, we have to defend what is ours.” In some countries where the Armenian community has constitutional rights, as in Lebanon, these rights must be constantly protected so they will not be lost. In Turkey, an international treaty, the Treaty of Lausanne, bestows upon Armenian certain rights. In Georgia, the rights of Armenians to their culture and identity in Javakhk have to be supported. Der Khachadourian

gave many more examples throughout the world of ongoing struggles in this vein.

“The fourth” aspect of the current approach, he said, “which we have put more emphasis on, is the politicalization of people in general, but especially the youth, so that we encourage them and create special programs in order to be able to get them involved in the political and major economic arenas of the countries in which they live.”

Armenia and Artsakh

After Armenian independence and the end of the first Karabakh war, Armenians considered themselves a victorious nation. Der Khachadourian said, “One of the major advantages we had since 1994 was that we had a certain feeling of invulnerability.” But then came the 2020 war: “That’s when some of those dreams were shattered,” he exclaimed.

He blamed the government of Nikol Pashinyan for not being able to avoid this war: “First of all, knowing the situation of the Armenian army, and also the situation of our enemy, everything should have been done to avoid that war, and that is something about which we had even talked to the Armenian authorities before.”



Hagop Der Khachadourian (photo Aram Arkun)

Der Khachadourian said, “In this period of our history it is essential for the Armenians to have unity because we have so many enemies outside. We have to concentrate on the major threats to Armenia and try to minimize as much as possible the internal divisions.” However, he said, “unfortunately for that, the Armenian authorities also have to accept that direction, which is not the case today.”

Der Khachadourian declared, “At this stage, the priority is for Artsakh, for its right to self-determination. Unfortunately, the Armenian government has abandoned the pursuit of that right because of the defeat in the war and because of some verbal commitments it has made to Azerbaijan. That is sad, but nevertheless it is something that we want to reverse. In the meantime, we will continue our activities worldwide to make sure that Artsakh is not alone, Artsakh is not abandoned, and Artsakh will be able to stand on its feet again, prosper, and then eventually join Armenia.”

In particular, Der Khachadourian said, “One of the important things is that though it [the war] was a disaster and the November 10 agreement is not pro-Armenia at all, nevertheless it has enough articles and vagueness in it for us to be able to navigate and maximize the advantages for Artsakh.

This government is not doing it.”

Der Khachadourian said that the November 10 agreement does not forbid Armenia to push on the question of the status of Nagorno Karabakh, as it merely postpones the issue but does not bury it. However, the Armenian government insisted on the recognition of Armenia’s territory as encompassing 29,800 sq.km. which allowed Azerbaijan in turn to give its figure of 86,600 square kilometers, which includes Karabakh. “That was a serious strategic error,” he said, “which Armenia should not have done.”

Armenia could have stressed that there was a specific mention of Karabakh in the Alma Ata Agreement of 1991, that Karabakh declared independence from the Soviet Union at roughly the same time as Azerbaijan, and that the first Republic of Azerbaijan after World War I, to which today’s Azerbaijan is a successor state, did not include Karabakh, Der Khachadourian said.

When asked whether this was under duress, or in other words why he thought the Armenian government was acting this way, he replied, “I think that there is a certain

make sure that the question of Artsakh is not forgotten and the principle of self-determination is emphasized – it is not just about territorial integrity.”

Armenian Politics

Der Khachadourian is critical of the Pashinyan regime’s domestic politics and connects it with the West, meaning the US and Western Europe. He said, “It is true that the West was definitely behind the so-called Velvet Revolution that happened in Armenia. ... NGOs were extremely active during the revolution, most of them financed by Western sources.” While Armenians share most of the Western values espoused by these NGOs, he said “there are some extreme manifestations of those values which are not necessarily appropriate for Armenia, so you cannot simply copy them and instill them in Armenia.”

While the West is putting pressure on Armenia, he said the East was also doing this. “The most intelligent approach would have been that yes, we would like to maintain friendly relations with the West, but this does not mean that you have to give in to every request that is coming from the West.”

In this situation, he said, the main objective of the West is Russia and Iran, not Armenia, “but we should not become the tragic pawn in this game. We should maximize our advantages. This is the major problem that we have with these [current Armenian] authorities, that they are not maximizing our own energies, because regardless of what external powers do for you, you have to rely on your own forces. Others will not fight your own battles.”

The ARF in Armenia currently is a member of the opposition camp in the Hayastan bloc, led by former President Robert Kocharyan. Der Khachadourian said that immediately after the November 2020 agreement it coordinated a movement under the leadership of Vazgen Manukyan, first prime minister of Armenia, which was to include every major opposition group, but he said, “unfortunately during the election that unity of purpose did not continue. I would say because of the two [former] presidents not being able to be brought together in an electoral coalition, this created those two blocks of opposition.”

Their objectives are similar but tactics and outlook different, he said, so “the path forward lies in creating – and again, we are going to attempt to do that – a unity among all of what we classify as healthy national political forces, by national meaning people who have a national outlook, who have not abandoned Artsakh, who believe in the issue of unity of the Armenian people, who do not want to fight others’ wars unnecessarily, and who on the contrary concentrate on our internal unity.”

In this coalition, he said, “we would like to be a catalyst of, if you wish, bringing them all together, because we are able to talk to all of them and make sure that everybody understands that we must reestablish our traditional Armenia-Artsakh-diaspora unity.” For this purpose, the ARF will organize a conference in October or November of this year, he said.

Furthermore, he said they need to “create an alternative so that it becomes visible to the Armenian people in Armenia, new faces and leadership that people can identify with as a replacement for Nikol [Pashinyan].” Der Khachadourian admitted that “there is a mood in Armenia that the return of the *‘nakhgins’* [people associated with the former Armenian regimes] is not welcome by, I would say, even the majority of the population. By *nakhgins* they usually look at [Robert Kocharyan] and [Serzh] Sargsyan as symbols. I think this is why those chapters [of history] have to be closed and we have to look forward.”

see ARF, page 11



COMMUNITY NEWS/ OBITUARY

Rev. Dr. Peter Doghramji

Active in Armenian Missionary Association of America

HAVERTOWN, Penn. — Rev. Dr. Peter B. Doghramji, age 93, of Havertown passed away peacefully on June 14, surrounded by his family.

Born in 1929 in Aleppo, Syria he was the son of the late Pitris and Rosa (née Shekerji) Doghramji.

After his father's tragic death, Peter was raised by his grandparents in the Armenian

who wanted to pursue her career in Christian education. They were married in 1953 and headed to Rev. Doghramji's first parish in Hassakeh, Syria, where their first son, Karl, was born in 1954. Rev. Doghramji preached in Arabic to a congregation of mostly Arabic, but also Armenian-, Aramaic-, Kurdish- and Russian-speaking people. He also was principal of the elementary school and taught English at the public high school. He was ordained in 1955 by the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon

The following year, Peter joined the faculty of Aleppo College as a teacher of religion and philosophy. Paul, their second son, was born in 1957. In 1959, he was elected as the first national President of Aleppo College. He was given a year's leave for graduate study at Harvard University Divinity School, where he studied under such luminaries as Paul Tillich. He received a Master of Theology (Th.M.) degree in 1961.

From 1961 to 1966, he served Aleppo Col-

lege as president and professor of religion. He was also the interim pastor of the National (Arab) Evangelical Church in Aleppo. Their third son, Jimmy, was born there in 1963. He resigned his position in 1966 to continue his doctoral studies in a joint program between Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1970, he was awarded a PhD, degree, magna cum

Evangelical community of Aleppo. He completed his basic education in the region of his birthplace, and his higher education and theological training at the American University of Beirut and the Near East School of Theology.

It was at the Near East School of Theology, where Peter met his future wife, Mary Bedikian, an elementary school teacher



laude, from Princeton Theological Seminary (U.S.), on his dissertation on "Christian Ethics in the Muslim Context."

During his last year at Princeton, Rev. Doghramji served the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church (AMCC) in Havertown, as part-time interim pastor. He declined the invitation of the church to be their permanent pastor due to his commitment to teach at NEST as professor of theology. But after two semesters of teaching there in Beirut in 1969-70, he and his family moved to Havertown, where he resumed the ministry of the church on a full-time basis.

After serving the church for nine years he resigned in 1979 to join the staff of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ as an assistant to the conference minister. In 1985, he became the President and Minister of the Conference. Having served a full term of six years, he retired in 1991. During his tenure in Collegeville, Penn., he received the Doctor of Divinity (D.D.) degree from Ursinus College in 1986.

His retirement was interrupted several times: first, in 1993 as interim pastor of Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church of Downey, CA; next as interim (1993-94) and then senior pastor (1994-96) of the United Armenian Congregational Church in Hollywood, CA; twice as interim pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York (2000-03 and 2006-12); and as Executive Director, Armenian Missionary

Association of America in 2004.

Rev. Dr. Doghramji was a trustee and adjunct professor of theology at Lancaster Theological Seminary. He served the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America as the first executive secretary (1979-84), Moderator (1984-86), and chairman of the Theological Commission (from 1996). He was widely known as a theologian, Biblical scholar, preacher and teacher. He was the author of the book on the Apostles' Creed, *Exploring Our Faith* (published jointly by the AMAA and the AMCC), as well as the 2004 collection of reflections, *In Other Words*, (published by the Armenian Evangelical Church of NY and AMAA), both of which are available through the AMAA office.

Rev. Dr. Doghramji was fluent in five languages, and preached in all of them. Throughout his life's work he remained a teacher at heart, and served as he was able until recent months.

Peter was the beloved husband for 70 years of the late Mary Doghramji (née Bedikian); the father of Karl Doghramji, MD (Laurel), Paul Doghramji, MD (Kathleen), and James Doghramji, MD (Rose); the grandfather of Paul Jr., Mark, Kristen, Alex, Matthew, Leah, and Harold (Nicky), and the great-grandfather of Jasper and Finnick.

Funeral services were on Saturday, June 24, at the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church, Havertown. Interment was private.

Alex Karnig Kalaydjian

Dedicated to Armenian Language

WOBURN, Mass. — Alex Karnig Kalaydjian of Woburn passed away peacefully on April 28, 2023 after a brief illness, he was 79.

Alex was born in the Old City of Jerusalem on October 7, 1943 to the late Karnig and Mary (Chinchinian) Kalaydjian.

He was educated in Jerusalem in the St. Tarkmanchatz School and AGBU Melkonian Educational Institute.

After completing his education, Alex began working at the printing press of the St. James Monastery as a typesetter. He was also responsible for copying old manuscripts and rare publications. He was an instrumental part of establishing the printing press in the Theological Seminary and was later named assistant dean of the seminary.

He was ordained a deacon in Jerusalem by the late Patriarch Yeghishe Derderian in 1980.

In 1985, Alex and his parents immigrated to America. Alex began working as executive secretary of the local AGBU Watertown Center. There he met the love of his life, Annie Yetimian, and the couple were married a short time later.

Alex worked in the banking industry for more than 20 years, most recently at Belmont Savings Bank.

Alex had a great passion and expert knowledge of the Armenian language. He shared this passion and expertise with hundreds of students over the years. Together with his wife, Annie, he taught as part of the Mesrob Mashdotz Adult Armenian School and St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Saturday school at St. James Armenian Church.

Alex also assisted daily at St. James with translations of various documents from Armenian to English and English to Armenian. He was the librarian of the Kalaydjian library at St. James which was built in memory of his late brother, Ara Kalaydjian, who was the former chief editor of the *Armenian Mirror Spectator*.

In December 2022, Alex and other Ar-



menian language school teachers were the recipients of the St. James Armenian Church 91st Name Day Banquet for their decades of teaching the Armenian language, history, and culture. His presence and knowledge will be missed by everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him.

He was predeceased by his wife, Annie, in 2020. He leaves son Nareg Alex Kalaydjian of Woburn; brothers Arek Kalaydjian and his wife Lisa of North Andover, Dr. Antranig Kalaydjian and his wife Rosie of Germany; sisters-in-law to Mayda Yetimian of Woburn and Shoushan Kalaydjian of Belmont. He leaves his nieces, Kerstin and Ruth Kalaydjian, his nephew Dr. Antranig Kalaydjian his wife Talin. He was great-uncle to Areni Kalaydjian. He is also survived by many additional cousins, relatives, and friends.

He was also predeceased by his brother, Ara Kalaydjian.

Funeral Services were held at St. James Armenian Church on May 2. Interment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery in Watertown. Expressions of sympathy may be made in his memory to St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472.

(This obituary originally appeared in the May 6 issue with an error.)

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COMMUNITY NEWS/ OBITUARY

Arthur Haig Panosian

Professional Engineer, Air Force Veteran

BELMONT, Mass. — Arthur Haig Panosian of Belmont and South Yarmouth, MA, passed away peacefully at the age of 92 on June 22, 2023.

He was an engineer and author, and the devoted husband of the late Louise (Berberian) Panosian for over 63 years.

He was the only son of Victoria and Haig Panosian, who were survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

He was the father of Arthur Jr, Steven, David and his wife Linda, and Jennifer (Panosian) Esserian and her husband John; grandfather to Zachary, Victoria, Slater and Alexandria Panosian, John and Robert Esserian.

Born in Boston, he was raised in Cambridge and Watertown.

He was a registered professional engineer in Massachusetts and a member of the National Society of Professional Engineers.

He enlisted in the U.S Air Force in 1951 during the Korean War and was trained as a radar operator, later radar mechanic, operating and maintaining airborne bombardment systems and associated radars. Assigned to the Strategic Air Command,

15th Air Force, 43rd Bombardment Wing he worked on the B-29 and B-50 bombers.

After active duty in the Air Force he worked at Laboratory for Electronics, Inc. (LFE) where he engaged in the miniature tube and transistor design and development of self-contained Doppler navigation systems installed in the F-105 Thunderchief Fighter/ Bomber aircraft used in the Vietnam War.

Concurrently he attended Northeastern University obtaining degrees in electronic engineering, engineering and management, and a graduate degree in business (MBA).

After 15 years at LFE he joined Avco Everett Research Laboratory, Inc. (AERL) as a project engineer. As senior staff member he became engineering operations manager and eventually the director of management information systems. As project engineer, he was assigned responsibility for the design, development, and delivery of two RTOS (real time optical systems) known as HAVE KIT to the U.S. Air Force. These one- of -a- kind highly classified airborne remote intercontinental ballistic missile reentry monitoring systems were used by the U.S. Air Force Strategic Air Com-



mand's Cobra Ball aircraft. As Operations Manager, was responsible for the airborne and ground-based reentry monitoring of domestic (Minuteman-III) and non-domestic intercontinental ballistic missile tests. These missions took him to Hawaii, Alaska, and other aircraft staging areas in the Pacific. The monitoring was conducted by U.S. Air Force KC 135 aircraft TRAP-1 (terminal radiation program) and TRAP-7

over the Pacific Ocean as well as White Sands Missile Range. In 2014, he wrote and published his first book, *From Vacuum Tubes to ICBMs and my Subconscious: Autobiography of an Armenian-American*.

His career at LFE and AERL was dedicated to maintaining his country's strong military presence through the advancement of technology.

Arthur's favorite youth pastimes included violin, shooting pool, competitive card games and various sports. He went on to coach recreational youth hockey in Belmont for many years. He enjoyed summers at Cape Cod and frequent travel, Aruba being a favorite destination with Louise. He served as a trustee at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston.

We were truly blessed with every day we had with this incredible, brilliant man. He enriched our lives with his intelligence, wisdom and valuable lessons with genuine love, devotion and pride for each of us. Always emphasizing and encouraging his grandchildren to pursue their dreams through education. Although heartbroken, we take comfort knowing he is reunited with his true love.

Funeral Services were held at Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge, on June 28. Interment followed at Ridgeway Cemetery, Watertown.

Congressional Human Rights Commission Hears Powerful Testimony Condemning Azerbaijan

TESTIMONY, from page 1

Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) submitted testimony for the record.

In gripping opening remarks, Smith (R-NJ) demanded adequate safeguards for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. He stated, "As our government is leading discussions with Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders, we in Congress have a responsibility to ask: Where is all of this headed? What is the Azeri quality of mind? Above all, as these discussions continue, what would constitute adequate safeguards for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh? What is the administration doing to make sure that Karabakh is not starved into submission or ethnically cleansed? The Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh have a right to survival in their ancestral homeland."

Drawing attention to the forced displacement of Armenians and the threat of ethnic cleansing, Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) stated, "During the 2020 war, some 90,000 residents of Nagorno-Karabakh were forcibly displaced. Today, more than 40,000 are still displaced. Before the 2020 war, the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh was about 147,000. Today it is estimated to be down to lower than 120,000. Forced displacement can be a tactic used to achieve ethnic cleansing."

Former Ambassador Brownback, who had just returned from an inspection tour of the border regions of Armenia where he observed Azeri military installations, expressed concern over the historic Christian populations being driven out, saying, "We have seen historic Christian populations being driven completely out of the Middle East -- virtually. There's a [Christian] population left in Egypt, but it's been driven out virtually everywhere else. This is another historic Christian population that's going to get driven out if we don't take some policy moves, and thankfully, we have some that are available to us, but how many more of these do we have to see? And you can see that's what's taking place in Nagorno-Karabakh, that Azerbaijan's going to squeeze the place - just force the people to leave. You can leave but you can't return."

Addressing regional security concerns and highlighting the potential dangers posed by Turkey, Michael Rubin warned, "When it comes to Turkey, the fact of the matter is the F-16s which Erdogan demands are more likely to be used against Iraq, against Northern Syria, against perhaps Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh as they were during the 2020 war."

corridor has left 120,000 Armenians without life-saving medication and health care. Azerbaijan established checkpoints on the border with Armenia. It cut gas, electricity, water supplies, mobile communications, and is engaged in well-documented daily attacks. The ultimate aim, and let's be clear, is emptying Artsakh of its native Armenian population."



Armenian Assembly Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program Intern, Colette Nishanian; Armenian Assembly Congressional Relations Director, Mariam Khaloyan; Assembly Intern, Juli Arakelyan; Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Co-Chair, Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ); Assembly Intern, Seran Goudsouzian; Assembly Intern, Katya Hovnanian; Armenian National Institute (ANI) Director, Dr. Rouben Adalian; Very Rev. Fr. Simeon Odabashian; ANI Assistant to the Director, Robert Arzoumanian

David Phillips emphasized Azerbaijan's aim of cultural erasure and the adverse effects of the blockade. He stated, "The overall goal of Azerbaijan was and remains the cultural erasure of Armenians. In violation of the trilateral ceasefire statement of November 9, 2020, Azerbaijan blocked the Lachin Corridor on December 12 [2022]. Mr. Rubin referred to a recent photo on the bridge leading to Artsakh where an APC has been parked and is blocking the passage of civilians, many of whom are seeking medical services. Blocking the

Former Ambassador Evans stressed the real danger of genocide, stating, "One of the points that is sometimes disputed is whether there really is a danger of genocide. I would say absolutely there is. It's been stated here today that the second genocide has already begun. That may be questionable but I think that there is a real danger of it. And it's not only in view of the 1915 precedent, but it's also, as David has said, it's in view of the actions — recorded actions — and speech of Azerbaijani officials and politicians, and that also includes

politicians in Turkey."

Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chair Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) called for an end to the Section 907 Waiver, stating, "While we can't change the past, we must act now to stop another Armenian genocide. I appreciate the testimony from this esteemed panel and the calls for an end to Section 907 Waiver of the Freedom Support Act, which would prohibit the sale of military equipment to Azerbaijan. You're selling it to Azerbaijan, it's just like selling it to Turkey. There's no justifiable reason to continue this waiver when Azerbaijan has clearly used this equipment to wage an aggressive war against Armenia, commit war crimes against innocent Armenians, and enforce the current blockade."

Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) highlighted the premeditated steps taken to remove the Armenian population from Artsakh, stating, "Aliyev has not been subtle about alluding to the Armenian genocide when discussing Artsakh and removing people from there, nor has he attempted to hide his ongoing, deadly incursions into Armenia itself, and he is clearly taking premeditated steps to remove the indigenous Armenian population from Artsakh and depriving them of the opportunity to live freely, democratically, and with dignity in the land of their ancestors which is a clear sign of what I would call ethnic cleansing that we can't ignore."

"The testimony presented to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission by the distinguished panelists shed a powerful light on the critical conditions under which Armenians are living in Artsakh," said Armenian Assembly Congressional Relations Director, Mariam Khaloyan. "It also revealed the need for the Administration to revisit U.S. policy to address Azerbaijan's and Turkey's genocidal policies against the Armenian people. We commend Co-Chairs Chris Smith and Jim McGovern for holding this timely hearing on the need to safeguard the indigenous Armenians of Artsakh. It is incumbent on the U.S. to defend and support the democracies of Artsakh and Armenia in the face of ongoing and existential threats by autocrats Aliyev and Erdogan."

COMMUNITY NEWS

Reporter Investigated Sexual Misconduct. Then the Attacks Began.

REPORTER, from page 6
that the press has long enjoyed.

Heightening the freedom-of-the-press stakes, a state judge in New Hampshire last week ordered NHPR to let him review transcripts of its interviews with certain sources, including those who had agreed to speak on an anonymous basis. Legal experts called the ruling unusual and alarming, saying such decisions could make it harder for journalists to investigate potential wrongdoing by public figures.

Shortly before the houses in Massachusetts and New Hampshire were vandalized, Ms. Chooljian had published an investigation into alleged sexual misconduct by Eric Spofford, the founder of New Hampshire's largest network of addiction rehabilitation centers. Her house was attacked less than two days after New Hampshire Public Radio refused Mr. Spofford's demand to take down Ms. Chooljian's online article.

Mr. Spofford has denied the allegations of sexual misconduct and has said he had nothing to do with the vandalism. (The man in the blue raincoat, who was caught on video, is not him.) Last year, he accused New Hampshire Public Radio, which has about two dozen journalists, of trying to pin the attacks on him "to try to deter me from bringing legal action, because they know I will win." Mr. Spofford soon sued NHPR and Ms. Chooljian, among others, for libel.

Ms. Chooljian and her colleagues do not know who was behind the vandalism, but they are convinced that it was connected to their investigation into Mr. Spofford.

"That's being a journalist in America today," Ms. Chooljian said in an interview.

Mr. Spofford said in a statement that The New York Times was spreading the same "false accusations" that NHPR had aired.

"We should all be concerned when media outlets team up in an unfair character assassination," he said.

This week, New Hampshire Public Radio is releasing a podcast, "The 13th Step," about its investigation into Mr. Spofford and the broader recovery industry, as well as the threats the news organization has faced along the way.

On the advice of NHPR's security consultants, Ms. Chooljian and her family will be hunkering down out of state.

A Vulgarity in Red

Mr. Spofford, the founder of Granite Recovery Centers, was a big fish in New Hampshire. He had testified to Congress and advised the state's governor, Chris Sununu, about the opioid epidemic. He built a personal brand — including more than one million social media followers — in part by regaling audiences with tales about his history of abusing drugs.

NHPR's reporting on Mr. Spofford began in 2020 when Ms. Chooljian wrote an article about a Covid-19 outbreak at a Granite Recovery facility. She then got a tip about sexual abuse allegations against Mr. Spofford. Over the next 15 months, she interviewed dozens of current and former Granite Recovery employees and patients. (Mr. Spofford sold his company in late 2021 for what he said was \$115 million.)

In February 2022, Ms. Chooljian presented her findings to Mr. Spofford. His lawyer at the time, Mitchell Schuster, said his client "vehemently denies any alleged misconduct." Mr. Schuster accused Ms. Chooljian of engaging in "disingenuous reporting and malicious conduct." He also phoned Ms. Chooljian's editor, Daniel Barrick, to complain.

On March 22, NHPR published the in-

vestigation that is at the center of Mr. Spofford's libel suit. A former Granite Recovery patient described how Mr. Spofford had sent her inappropriate chat messages. A former employee said Mr. Spofford had sexually assaulted her. Piers Kaniuka, Granite Recovery's former director of spiritual life, said he resigned in 2020 after an employee told him that Mr. Spofford had sexually assaulted her.

The day after the exposé ran, Mr. Spofford's lawyers sent letters to several people who had spoken to Ms. Chooljian. The letters warned that Mr. Spofford was planning a lawsuit and that recipients of the letter must preserve any written communications and other materials related to the reporting.

A few weeks later, on April 24, Ms. Chooljian and her husband were in Colorado when she received a text from her mother. Someone had thrown a rock through her parents' window and sprayed a vulgar word on their garage door in red paint.

Ms. Chooljian called Mr. Barrick, the editor who had recently fielded the call from Mr. Spofford's lawyer. He told Ms. Chooljian that the same word had been spray-painted on his house.

The next day, Ms. Chooljian learned that a house she and her husband previously lived in had also been vandalized.

Her parents urged her and Mr. Barrick to reconsider their investigation of Mr. Spofford. "Maybe this is not a good idea," her father, Barry Chooljian, recalled saying.

Running Into a 'Buzzsaw'

Ms. Chooljian's sources, meanwhile, were under pressure from Mr. Spofford's lawyers. After the lawyers threatened to sue Mr. Kaniuka, Granite Recovery's former head of spiritual life, he wrote a notarized letter to Ms. Chooljian that expressed "regret" for, among other things, comparing Mr. Spofford to Harvey Weinstein. He did not retract his claims about having resigned because of an alleged assault.

Misty D. Marris, another of Mr. Spofford's lawyers at the time, wrote to at least one of Ms. Chooljian's sources that Mr. Kaniuka had recanted and insisted that she do the same — or risk being sued. (The source refused.) A similar message went to NHPR's board of trustees, demanding that Ms. Chooljian's article be removed from its website.

The next day, May 19, Sigmund D. Schutz, the lawyer representing NHPR, replied that the radio station would not take down the article. If Mr. Spofford sued, "he will run into a buzzsaw called the First Amendment," Mr. Schutz wrote.

Around 1 a.m. on May 21, someone attacked the home of Ms. Chooljian's parents for the second time. About five hours later, Ms. Chooljian's doorbell camera captured video of the man in the blue raincoat smashing her window.

F.B.I. agents and federal prosecutors in Boston are investigating the vandalism, according to three people with knowledge of their efforts. They are looking into Mr. Spofford's potential involvement, one of the people said.

One of Mr. Spofford's lawyers, Howard Cooper, said that "no member of law enforcement has ever requested to interview Mr. Spofford about his possible involvement." Mr. Spofford speculated last year that the perpetrator might have been one of Ms. Chooljian's sources. Or, noting that he had many supporters, he said that "perhaps one of them felt compelled to do these acts in a misguided attempt to defend me."

NHPR hired security guards to protect Ms. Chooljian's home, which was soon outfitted with security cameras, driveway

alarms and motion detectors. The network's offices in Concord were equipped with reinforced doors. To foot the bill, the station privately solicited money from a small circle of donors.

Ms. Chooljian said new sources had agreed to speak for the longer podcast series. The attacks led some to change their minds.

In September, Mr. Spofford filed a 90-page libel lawsuit against NHPR, Ms. Chooljian, Mr. Barrick and others, including three of the sources in the March article. The suit, in state court in New Hampshire, claimed that the article had used unreliable sources to smear Mr. Spofford. It said Ms. Chooljian was "tainted by a selfish ambition for personal acclaim."

NHPR moved to dismiss the suit. Mr. Schutz, the radio station's lawyer, argued that Mr. Spofford's national prominence made him a public figure, which meant that to win damages, he had to prove that NHPR knew that what it was publishing was false or acted with reckless disregard for its accuracy. Mr. Schutz wrote that the suit "offers not a hint of factual support" for the claims that Ms. Chooljian acted recklessly.

"The objective of this litigation is that just by filing, win or lose, is to silence critics," Mr. Schutz said at a court hearing in January.

In April, a judge, Daniel I. St. Hilaire, granted the motion to dismiss, noting that the lawsuit failed "to allege that the NHPR defendants acted with actual malice in their reporting." He said Mr. Spofford could file an amended complaint that better established the necessary facts.

Before refiling the suit, Mr. Spofford's lawyers told the judge, they needed the recordings and notes of Ms. Chooljian's interviews with certain sources, including two who had spoken to her on a confidential basis. Otherwise, Mr. Spofford argued, it was all but impossible to prove that NHPR acted recklessly.

NHPR argued that would be a dangerous infringement on the freedom of the press.

Last week, Judge St. Hilaire ruled that NHPR must provide him with Ms. Chooljian's notes and interview transcripts, with identifying details about the anonymous sources redacted. The judge said he would assess the materials' relevance before ruling on whether NHPR must share them with Mr. Spofford.

"I am confident that those materials will show they knew they were defaming me," Mr. Spofford said in his statement.

The ruling addresses what some lawyers say is an unfair imbalance in libel law: The best way for a plaintiff to show that a journalist acted recklessly is by gathering information in the discovery process. Yet many lawsuits are dismissed before discovery begins, because the plaintiff didn't present evidence of recklessness.

But media lawyers expressed concern about the ruling. Chad R. Bowman, a lawyer who has represented many news organizations in libel cases, including The Times, said it was "deeply troubling" for a judge to force journalists to hand over unpublished materials when the plaintiff hadn't yet made a viable legal claim.

On a recent Tuesday evening, Ms. Chooljian was asked how she felt about her soon-to-be-released podcast. "I'm worried someone will get hurt," she said.

She was sitting in her house near a framed poster with the words "Ask More Questions." It hangs next to the window that the vandal smashed. Small gouges from the brick and broken glass are still visible on the windowsill.

Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School 6th Grade Graduates

BAYSIDE, N. Y. — On the evening of Friday, June 16, the 41st graduation ceremony of Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School (HMADS) took place. The church auditorium was decorated specially for the graduating class and beautiful banners and flowers greeted the guests. The evening began with the much anticipated *Pomp and Circumstance* as the graduates entered the hall and took the stage. The program continued with the singing of the American and Armenian national anthems, followed by an opening prayer by Fr. Davit Karamyan.

Fr. Davit then read a letter of congratulations to the graduates from Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan. Principal Seta Megherian warmly welcomed the graduates and guests, offering her words of wisdom to the graduates. The program continued with vibrant dedications and poems by the graduates.



Talene Nigdelian, Class of 2002, offered her inspirational remarks to the graduates. Her moving speech spoke of the importance that HMADS has had on her life. After the diploma ceremony the graduates took to the stage once again to perform a special Armenian dance they had learned. The program was completed with energetic Armenian songs that were greatly enjoyed by all in attendance. Fr. Abraham closed the program with prayer and his reflection on the importance of our one and only Armenian Day School.

After the program, guests were invited to Kalustyan Hall in the church, which was beautifully decorated for the graduates. The graduates watched a photo montage reflecting all their special and amazing memories as students at our school. The night continued with song and dance and a great celebration for our 41st graduating class.

HMADS thanks all its benefactors, board members, administrators and faculty who have helped shape and guide the children while building the strongest foundation. Congratulations to: Alexa Gebian, Hakob Karamyan, Evelina Malkhasyan, Taleen Papazian, Nicholas Tutuyan, Gregory Tutuyan and Joseph Vetrano!



COMMUNITY NEWS



Party for the Park

BOSTON — On Tuesday, June 13, more than 135 people gathered for Let's Party for the Park! to raise money for the care of Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at the InterContinental Hotel. Front and center at the event was Storica Wines from Armenia. At left, Storica Wines Co-Founder and President Zack Armen with Ara Sarkissian, General Manager and Head of Wine; Simon Balatian, National Sales Coordinator and Garo Safaian, Community Engagement Manager.

In the second picture, at right, Zack Armen delicately pours while Gary Mardiros looks on. Well-received and attended, the benefit for Armenian Heritage Park was generously and graciously hosted by Storica Wines: Wines from Armenia and the InterContinental Hotel. The benefit launched Let's Meet at the Park!, the newest initiative of the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to meet/greet, network and socialize.

(Photos by Arlan Fonseca)



ARF Bureau Chair Offers Party's Perspective On Global Armenian Issues

ARF, from page 7

Diasporan Affairs

Der Khachadourian is more optimistic than he used to be about the perpetuation of Armenian identity in the diaspora. He said, "Definitely, the more we get away from that magical date of 1915, the more weakened some Armenians feel their links with their identity and roots. But we are also seeing the reverse happening."

When Der Khachadourian came to the West in the 1970s, he said, "At that time, it was all in black. I saw everything more pessimistically...My first stop was New York, then Boston, and then I went to Montreal. During that trajectory, all I could see was vanishing language and dwindling numbers. I can say that is not necessarily the case now."

Though a lot of conscious effort is necessary for Armenians to survive as such in the West, he said there is "a return to Armenianness, which we even see in the United States." He gave examples of friends whose parents had completely assimilated while their children returned to their Armenian heritage with a vengeance.

While language is more difficult to preserve, in certain countries like France, new Armenian schools have been popping up in recent years, reversing the trend of closings, and in Canada, in Montreal and Toronto they are flourishing, Der Khachadourian said. These schools are not just places to learn language and history but also means to imbibe Armenian values and pride, and establish life-long friendships.

When asked about the involvement of the most recent waves of Armenian emigrants from the Republic of Armenia in diasporan community life, Der Khachadourian said, "It is a tragedy for us that so many Armenians are leaving Armenia, but we cannot just abandon them. Therefore, there was a strong directive sent by the [ARF] Bureau to all regions stating that we should start dialogue with them. We should start to integrate them within our structures." He said that initially these immigrants don't generally participate in Armenian life but would like to use Armenian services. Instead, volunteerism needs to be encouraged since this is the basis for the survival of diasporan Armenian communities.

He said, "We are trying to do outreach. We are trying to convince them why this is important. We are also concentrating on

their young ones, because if they are attending Armenian schools, they are at least trying to get the diaspora way of thinking."

In Europe, in countries like Poland and Romania, he said that there was some success in getting Armenian intellectuals originally from Armenia active in the ANC organizations there. Nevertheless, overall, he said, "we have to do better in our outreach."

Der Khachadourian sees two models for cooperation of Armenian organizations in the diaspora. One is a permanent council with representatives of various political, cultural, sports and other organizations. He gave the example of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF), "which brought tens of organizations together in order to create one voice vis-à-vis the French government in order to maintain the relationship between Armenia and France, so that no party would monopolize it or try to act independently. That has been a successful model."

Another approach is for pan-Armenian councils working for specific goals or events, and sometimes on a local level. He said in Canada they have been successful in commemorating certain historic dates like April 24, May 28 or September 21 or doing certain specific lobbying work with the government.

He said, "These models work, more or less. It is not necessarily whether it is a good model or a bad model, because it has to be appropriate to the context of the given community, but it is the intention of the members which is very important. If they are truly representative of the organizations and associations they claim to represent, it can definitely have value. If it becomes a forum of personal ambitions, then it will definitely not work."

Apart from these types of unifying bodies, Der Khachadourian said, "We believe that the ARF can play the role of a bridge between Armenia and the diaspora. We have excellent relations with the Armenian Church — with both Catholicoses — and we have very good relations with the Armenian General Benevolent Union as well, because we try to consult those associations that are active in pan-Armenian affairs, and of course the other political parties, the *azkayin gusagtsutiunner* as we call them — the Ramgavars [Armenian Democratic Liberal Party] and the Hunchagians [Social Democrat Hunchakian Party]. Despite some dif-

ferences in outlook and opinions regarding the current authorities in Armenia there are many areas of common interest which we can pursue together."

The Armenian Church has its own issues about unity, with a divided administrative situation in various parts of the world, like North America. Der Khachadourian said, "It is definitely the case that this situation cannot be considered normal in the long term." Without going into details, he said, "These are very complicated questions. What I say is that one day we should seriously sit down with the two catholicoses and the major pan-Armenian organizations and decide that this issue has to be addressed, and it has to be addressed by reorganizing the whole issue of the diaspora."

He finds the Pashinyan government has not been able to take advantage of the full potential of the Armenian diaspora or help in unifying the latter. "We had called upon the Armenian government to concentrate on what we called a national agenda and establish certain red lines that everybody accepts. For example, start from what we had already achieved in the centennial of 1915, and build upon it and create a strong consensus of Armenians worldwide

and make that a weapon that Armenia can use in its negotiations. They haven't done that," he said. On the contrary, he said that he felt that the government has had a divisive effect, working with only certain elements abroad.

The ARF has had its own internal issues concerning unity in Los Angeles, where there is a split between two different groups. Der Khachadourian said, "the issue arose when there were certain deviations from the ARF bylaws which the Bureau tried to correct, but certain people rebelled against it by trying to keep their power. And then, through their pronouncements and through some of the meetings that they have had, they started arguing also about differences in approach regarding the Armenian authorities, or our Armenia policy, or the ARF overall Armenia policy. So yes, there seems to be some differences in outlook, which is unacceptable in a political party like the ARF."

He pointed out that "There are efforts trying to solve the issue. We hope that people will realize that this is going nowhere, that this is an untenable situation and that we would like to reestablish unity as soon as possible."

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

Seeking Summer Intern

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

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

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

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



Arts & Culture

Kayzakian, Akbar Shine During 'Literary Lights'

By Sharisse Zeroonian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BELMONT, Mass. — On Saturday, June 17, lovers of literature came from far and wide on Zoom to attend this month's iteration of the "Literary Lights" reading series. The series, curated by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA), and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center in New York, primarily highlights authors of Armenian descent and gives them a platform to share their work in a public setting.

This edition featured author Arthur Kayzakian in conversation with poet Kaveh Akbar. Kayzakian discussed his most recent book, *The Book of Redacted Paintings*, the form of which combines poetry, prose, and visual art. According to the IALA's



Arthur Kayzakian, Kaveh Akbar

Literary Lights web page, the story "takes place in the present day yet alludes to the Iranian Revolution." The plot centers around a young man looking for his father's painting — which may or may not actually exist. The book, a poetry collection, also includes pictures of various paintings which are all either real, incomplete, and/or missing, but most of them have been totally erased — or, as the book's title denotes, "redacted" from history. The concept of redacted paintings is meant to be a stylistic reflection of what can happen to the human psyche in the aftermath of trauma — specifically, the phenomenon of grieving certain lost aspects of the human experience.

"When Arthur first came, he was this new guy with this new voice and incredible ideas.... seeing his work now and reading his book has been so exciting for me..." Shahe Mankerian told viewers at the beginning of the event. "...I saw some of these poems actually take birth at.... gatherings with our friends".

After being introduced by Mankerian, the two writers, who are friends and fervent supporters of each other's work, gave some background information about how they came to be acquainted both professionally and socially.

"I found your work when I was in an MFA program at San Diego State....my mind exploded from the second I read it from the precision of the imagery and how clean and deep [the imagery] was...." Kayzakian told Akbar. "...I heard that you see LITERARY, page 13



"Untold Stories of Grandma's Quilt #4" (Mixed-media on canvas 8"x8")

'Soaring'

Ani Babaian's Art Exhibited at Armenian Cultural Foundation

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

ARLINGTON, Mass. — On Saturday, May 13, the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF) in Arlington, MA, hosted a remarkable solo art exhibition titled "Soaring" displaying the latest works of Ani Babaian. Visitors had the opportunity to explore new realms, guided by the magical power of colors and engagement with profound emotions evoked by the artwork on display.

The collection of artworks reflects the artist's own journey of self-discovery and growth. "Soaring" is Babaian's third solo exhibition, following her first solo exhibition of paintings at Gallery Classic of Isfahan in 2008 and her second exhibition titled "The Spectrum of a Legacy" at the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Gallery of the Armenian Museum of America in 2016. She has also participated in group exhibitions in various locations, including Isfahan and Tehran in Iran, Yerevan in Armenia, and several cities in the United States such as Massachusetts (Lowell, Lexington, Watertown), New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Maine since 1994.



Ani Babaian (photo Aram Arkun)

Dr. Ara Ghazarians, curator of the ACF, opened the exhibit and gave some background information about the ACF, which a few years ago celebrated its 75th anniversary, and the history of its support by the Mirak family.

Ani Babaian then greeted the audience and provided a brief introduction to the event. She expressed her excitement and gratitude upon seeing all the art lovers and supporters present and conveyed her deep appreciation of Dr. Ghazarians for providing

her with this incredible opportunity to showcase her artwork in such an exquisite venue. She acknowledged a few individuals who played significant roles in making the exhibition possible: Anna Nazarian for generously assisting Ani with the details of the exhibition, particularly the reception, and David Elizian and David Medzorjian for their documentation of the opening. Finally, Ani expressed her gratitude to *Artscope Magazine* for a preview of her exhibition in its issue of May/June 2023.

Babaian dedicated her work, "Soaring," to her late parents, who served as her inspiration, encouragement, and provided a nurturing environment for her creative pursuits. "My parents played a crucial role in fostering my creativity. Growing up in New Julfa, a historically significant Armenian community which is part of Isfahan in Iran, she see EXHIBIT, page 13

Project Save Photograph Archives Announces Move And JumpStart Campaign

BOSOTN — Project Save Photograph Archives announced this week a major move to a new space this summer. The new location — 600 Pleasant Street in Watertown — will feature an exhibition gallery and larger office space.

When its doors open this fall, Project Save will be one of the few hubs for photography not just in the Boston area but in the entire region, featuring exhibitions from the archives, various workshops and lectures, as well as exhibits of contemporary photographers.

The move represents a significant milestone and comes less than two years under the leadership of the new executive director, Dr. Arto Vaun, who has brought a fresh perspective and transformative vision to Project Save. Vaun's commitment to elevating Project Save's profile and highlighting its true value has already produced a wider impact and attracted a larger audience.

Through initiatives such as the annual Artist and Research Residency, the Conversations on Photography series, and interactive new website, Project Save has launched a bold new vision to claim its rightful place in the national and international field of photographic cultural work.

Founded in 1975 by Ruth Thomasian, Project Save Photograph Archives is a groundbreaking nonprofit that champions photography as a means of preserving and sharing the global Armenian experience and social history in general. Its collection spans over 80,000 hardcopy original photographs from around the globe, making Project Save the oldest and largest such archive in the world.

According to Vaun, "We're living in a time when once again there are forces actively trying to rewrite history and erase any traces of Armenian culture. There's no clearer, more powerful and direct evidence to counter such attempts than photographs."

In the past year, Vaun has also built a new Advisory Board with experts from premiere institutions such as the Getty Museum, the Smithsonian, Harvard, the Library of Congress, Boston Public Library, and Oxford. The members range from curators and archivists to scholars and acclaimed photographers and artists.

"The fact that such successful professionals who are non-Armenian have enthusiastically joined our board tells me that Project Save has great potential that's beyond just the Armenian world," Vaun said. "It also reaffirms the fact that Project Save's legacy is extremely unique, important, and must be secured for future generations."

see CAMPAIGN, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Ani Babaian's Art Exhibited at Armenian Cultural Foundation

EXHIBIT, from page 12

said, "I was fortunate to have parents who wholeheartedly supported and motivated me to follow my passion and forge my own path in art education. During those times, pursuing an art degree at university was seen as absurd and a waste of time within our community."

In particular, she said, "I vividly remember the immense excitement I felt when my father constructed a new house for our family on the corner of West Nazar Ave. and Khoja Petros Ave. It was a turning point in my artistic journey. Later on, I was granted



"Soaring #1" (Mixed-media and gold leaf on canvas, 32"x42")

my own studio in that house, which eventually became officially recognized by the Ministry of Culture as Arpi Studio."

Though her father died at the young age of 50, while Ani, 22 years old, was preparing to write her thesis, her mother and other strong women of her family buoyed her

with their resilience, and perhaps not by coincidence, the exhibition's opening date is her mother's birthday, as well as the day before Mother's Day. Ani said that for this reason she dedicated the exhibition to all strong Armenian women, especially those in Artsakh under blockade.

She said that her style is defined by her identity, thoughts, personal experiences and beauty that she found around her. She recalled that her friend Shushan Teager's encouraging voice to paint in a way reflecting who she really was continually inspires her.

Ani concluded by saying, "I hope viewers will find meaning and inspiration in my art. I always believed that art has the power to connect people, and I am excited to connect with the audience through this exhibition."

The exhibition included 49 pieces from the series "Soaring," "Untold Stories of Grandma's Quilt," "More than Words" and "Legacy." Within each artwork, hidden narratives and layers of symbolism await discovery. What at first appears from a distance to be as an abstract design warrants closer attention. The artist's meticulous attention to detail encourages viewers to delve deeper into the pieces, unearthing their hidden meanings and unraveling the stories they hold.

Her works are very bright and colorful. Many of their titles telegraph the intent to connect with heritage. Armenian themes like the "Wishing Tree" present the viewer



"Legacy #12" (Mixed-media on canvas, 30"x30")

with time-old customs, while many of the women in her works appear to be wearing traditional Armenian dress. There is some

Persian influence as well in her worldview, and of course it is all done in a modern and charmingly expressive manner.

After Ani's talk, audience members had the opportunity to discuss various aspects of her art with her directly. The exhibition remained on view from May 13 to May 26, with over 300 visitors.

Babaian is an independent researcher, artist and art conservator who holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Alzahra University in Tehran. She is a fine arts painter who works in mixed media. She also has worked on numerous conservation projects, including the murals at the historic 17th century St. Amenaprkich Vank [Holy Savior Cathedral] in New Julfa, Isfahan, murals painting in the Museum of Decorative Arts of Isfahan, paintings of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, and others.

She is the curator of the Mardigian Library of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), where she has worked since 2013.



A panel of paintings at the exhibition (photo Aram Arkun)

Kayzakian, Akbar Shine During 'Literary Lights'

LITERARY, from page 12

were Iranian, and I heard that you were reading in L.A., and I came...What really helped was taking your workshop.... We stayed on for eleven weeks during the pandemic.....nothing brings me more joy than to do this with you here today."

Akbar, too, had nothing but high praise for his former protege's work.

".....One of the things I love so much about this book is that it is a straight narrative from the beginning, middle, and end...." said Akbar when presenting Kayzakian to the audience. "It has characters....It has a narrative arc....There's a story being told, and a propulsivity to it despite the fact that poetry is made of endings....This is a book that is so engrossing and engaging...One of the things that feels so exciting to me about it is how crafted it is in these quiet ways...."

The event culminated in a question-and-answer session between the authors and the audience.

"It's been a pleasure to co-sponsor this year-long reading series along with IALA and NAASR to showcase the works of talented Armenian writers working today across a variety of literary genres," Zohrab Center director Dr. Jesse Arlen said of "Literary Lights."

The series will continue in the fall.

A recording of the event will soon be available online for public viewing.

Project Save Photograph Archives Announces Move Campaign

CAMPAIGN, from page 12

According to Vaun, the upcoming move is part of a larger plan for growth. "Our 50th anniversary in 2025 will be a major milestone. The goal is for Project Save to secure its own permanent building in the next five years. It would further solidify Project Save's identity as one of the few important photographic archives and museums in North America, and one of the most vital organizations dedicated to social history and the global Armenian experience."

Project Save has launched the JumpStart campaign to rally investors around its new vision and plan. "Amazingly, we're like a 48-year-old startup," said Vaun. "The product is already built, unique, and strong. It has incredible potential and wide appeal. But there's never been the proper kind of investment to realize that potential. So this is a very exciting and rare opportunity not only for our organization but for all those who care about introducing a wider demographic to Armenian culture and history."

Visit projectsave.org



The Kevorkian-Bogdasarian Family, St. Louis, Missouri, 1885. Courtesy of Souren Stevens. Project Save.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Barbara Hovsepian's Baghaj

Baghaj, Bagharj, Pagharch, Nazook, Katah: are they different or one in the same?

This recipe is reprinted with permission from Robyn Kalajian at her essential Armenian food blog, <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/>. Robyn is a retired culinary teacher whose passion for cooking and knowledge of Armenian and Middle Eastern cuisine has earned her an international following as the creator and chief cook at the site.

According to Irina Petrosian, author of *Armenian Food: Fact, Fiction and Folklore*, baghaj/bagharj is defined as an “unleavened flatbread made without salt.”

“As much as the recipe’s spelling varies, so do the recipes themselves. Some recipes refer to this as baghaj, others call it pagharch, yet there are those who say it is nazook or even katah (gata). It’s enough to make one’s head spin,” says Robyn. “So far, we’ve posted a recipe for nazook, katah (gata) and another for pagharch at our site, but here is a wonderful recipe for baghaj from my dear friend, Barbara Hovsepian. This is a flaky, sweet pastry that pairs well with Armenian coffee or tea. The nice thing about this recipe is that it can easily be made using a food processor.”

EQUIPMENT: food processor

DOUGH INGREDIENTS:

3/4 cup butter (1 1/2 sticks)
3/4 cup milk
1/4 scant teaspoon
1 egg
1 package dry yeast (proof in 1/2 cup warm water and 1 teaspoon sugar)
4 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra flour, if needed
1/2 cup sugar

FILLING INGREDIENTS:

3 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup walnuts (chopped)

TOPPING INGREDIENTS:

1 egg (beaten for egg wash)
Nigella seeds or sesame seeds (to use as garnish, if desired)

DOUGH:

Put 2 cups of flour in the food processor fitted with a steel mixing (knife) blade. Melt butter in a pot. Remove from the heat and add the milk. Pour into food processor. Add salt and pulse a bit.

Add 1 egg and proofed yeast. Process for second to mix. Add the remaining 2 cups of flour and process to mix well. If mixture is not balling up and is straining processor, add more flour a heaping tablespoon at a time until it balls up and doesn’t stick to sides.

Put the dough in large pot. Cover and let rise until double in bulk at least 2 hours.

FILLING:

Melt butter in frying pan. Add flour and blend with the back of wooden spoon. Remove from the heat. Add the sugar and mix well. This should produce a fine crumbly mixture. Add the chopped walnuts.

ASSEMBLING:

Turn out the dough onto a floured work surface and separate into two parts. Roll one part into a large rectangle. Spread filling almost to the edge. Roll from one long side to the other, creating a log-shape, and ending with the edge underneath. Do the same with the other half of the dough.

Brush surface with egg wash and sprinkle surface with Nigella seeds or sesame seeds. Let sit and rise for about 30 minutes.

Cut logs into 1-inch to 2-inch diagonal slices to achieve diamond-shape portions.

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Line ungreased baking sheets with parchment paper. Place individual baghaj slices about half an inch apart and bake until golden brown, about 30-40 minutes. (See in Barbara’s Note below information for baking time.) Rotating trays from one rack to another about half-way through baking helps to prevent bottoms from burning and allows tops to brown evenly.

Note from Barbara Hovsepian:

If you prefer a more abundant filling, the amounts can be doubled. Baking time depends on the size of the pieces. It takes about half an hour in the convection oven to make the small ones, longer for the bigger ones. It takes longer to bake in a conventional oven. I give an estimate of time and tell people when it smells great and looks golden, it’s done.

Some people prefer it well done and almost brown while others like it pale. My sister puts cinnamon in the filling. My mother didn’t use it, but an aunt sometimes did. So cinnamon is an option. Also, my baghaj comes out firm while my sister’s recipe comes out soft as she uses butter and Crisco in the dough.

If any culinary experts can clarify the baghaj, bagharj, pagharch, nazook, <<http://thearmeniankitchen.com/2010/05/bread-from-past.html>>

katah (gata) confusion, please contact: <<mailto:robyn@thearmeniankitchen.com>> robyn@thearmeniankitchen.com.

We aim to capture and preserve the recipes that our Armenian grandmothers never had time to write down.

For this recipe, go to:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/baghaj-bagharj-pagharch-nazook-katah-are-they-different-or-one-in-the-same/>

For nazook, see:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/my-uncle-rafael-movie-nazook-dessert/>

For gata pastry, see:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/chef-nathan-kibarians-gata-pastry-recipe/>

For Takouhi (Queenie) Tashjian’s Pagharch, see:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/pagharch-bagharj-baghaj-nazook-katah/>

See:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/confused-about-pagharch-baghaj-gata-and/>

For gluten-free choreg, see:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/savory-gluten-free-choreg/>

Connect at:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/>

https://www.pinterest.com/TheArmenianKitchen/_saved/

<https://www.facebook.com/TheArmenianKitchen>

<https://www.instagram.com/cookeatkef/>

For Armenian food videos and more, go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/dkalajianTAK/videos>

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ARTS & CULTURE

Ara Oshagan Exhibit ‘Disrupted, Borders’ Connects Fragments of Armenian World

FRAGMENTS, from page 1

“The two boys, they are cousins. One of the brothers died in the war and the rest of the family has fled to Stepanakert. It is really heartbreaking when you think about it and think about our own history. We connect to it in a very visceral way,” he said.

He continued, “For the Shushi portraits there is no specific one-to-one relationship between the page [of the manuscript] and the person, in that sense, but there is a general connectivity. They are all residents of Shushi who are now refugees. Those pages come from across the Armenian highland, from Cilicia to Van,” he said. The coupling decisions are made based on aesthetics. “The whole concept is that the two things come together.”

He noted, “The handwriting of the *Krapar* [classical Armenian] is almost in our DNA,” he said, adding to the heritage of the Shushi portraits.

The pictures were taken in 2012 as part of the “Shushi Art Project,” to repopulate the city.

Originally, the Shushi portraits were shown in the city, in a dilapidated building. “I knew I wanted to put these portraits in the windows and doors of this building,” he said. “I asked them [the subjects] to stand and I photographed them full length because that’s the way I wanted to show them and also connect them to the iconography of the area that depicts saints that way, full body, floating in midair,” he said.

“When the war happened in 2020, I started thinking about the fate of these men and women and children,” he said. “I wanted to bring portraits and history back together again.”

He said he kept in touch with a few of the people whose portraits are in display.

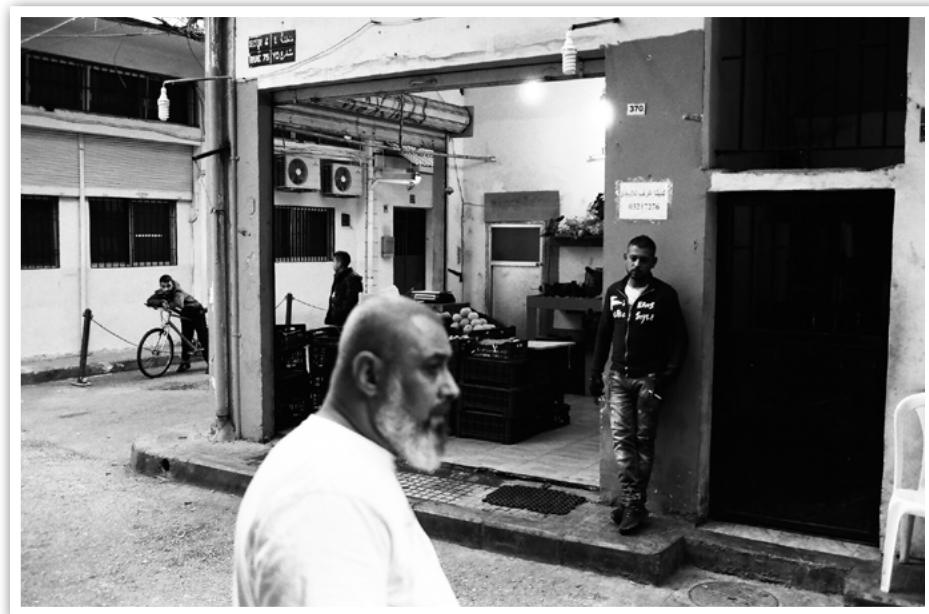
He added, “In any type of Diasporic work in Los Angeles or Beirut, there is a border crossing where you have left one space and have instead gone into another space and are recreating your life,” he said.

The question of identity and in particular “multiple identities” is a continuous theme. “I like to think of the identities as stacked, in a non-hierarchical way, where all identifies are there commensurate to each other. At any one moment you could be in one identity or another,” he explained.

To bring even more of his Armenian heritage into the exhibit, one wall is painted the crimson color that in nature is from a Cochineal insect, called Vordan Karmir, native to Armenia.

Also prominent in the exhibit is a series of hanging scrolls, “Hmayils,” of which the museum has several examples, in which Oshagan has inserted photos he has taken.

It is, he said, “the medieval form of outsider art,” he said, as people loved them but the church didn’t. “People used to commission them by scribes,” he said. “When church members found these scrolls, they would immediately burn them. These talismanic, mag-



Ara Oshagan, displaced #36, Nor Marash, 2018

ical attempts to ward off evil connect me with the hundreds of years of history,” he said. “I made them contemporary by adding my own images.”

In the medieval times, people would carry them for their travels. “I carry them with me sometimes myself,” he said. He connects it with the “right of return” to Western Armenia and now Shushi.

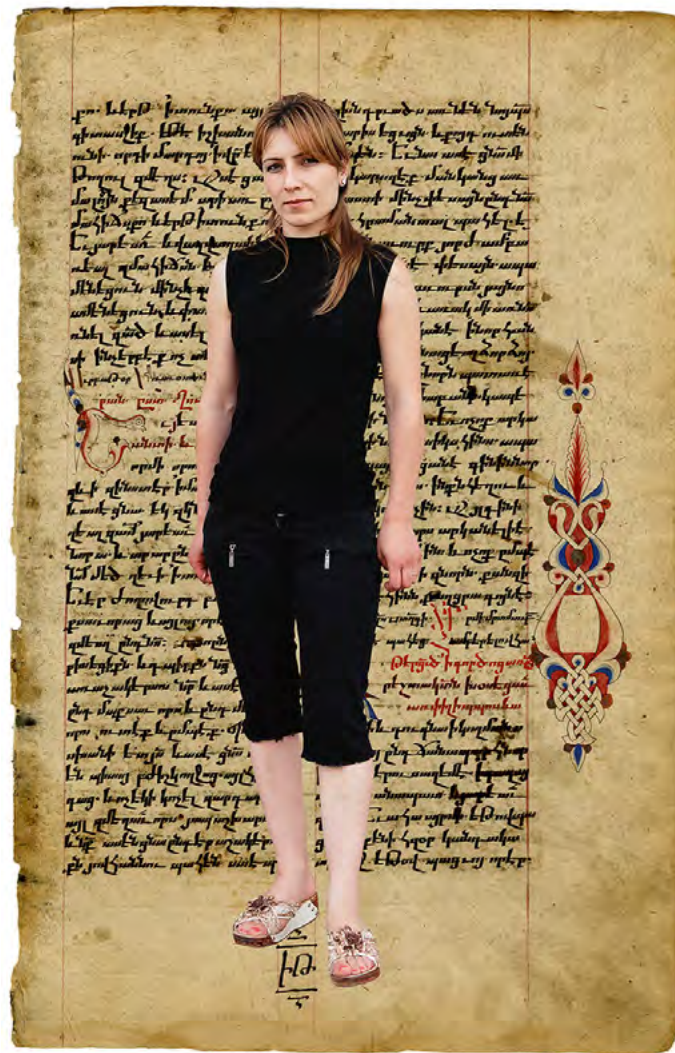
Beirut and Los Angeles

Beirut is special to Oshagan, as it is his city of birth. He moved from Beirut to Los Angeles with his family at age 10, when the war began. The aftershocks of that war permeated his life.

“We didn’t see war. Right when the war began, my father was able to get visas and we left,” he said. They moved to the US, but not Los Angeles. Instead, they went to Wisconsin and Tennessee first. Eventually, his parents separated.

“This kind of multiple layered moves for me physically, emotionally, familially, was a huge rupture in my life. Going back there and photographing there was dealing with a huge rupture that happened very early in my life. They never go away,” he said. “In fact, they multiply.”

He started going back to Beirut in 2014. “I lived in Bourj Hamoud and walk around in the same area, go to the same places again and again and again” in an effort to “make the camera invisible.”



Ara Oshagan, Shushi portraits #1, 2021

“I did a book, collaborating with my father [poet Vahe Oshagan] titled *Fatherland*,” he said.

“My LA work or the work in Beirut, are very different,” he said. In Beirut, he said, he focused on Bourj Hamoud and Ainjar. “I had my camera and engaged in the life there ... to become part of the way they live.”

Most of the LA and Beirut photos were not posed, but were candid, presenting slices of life there.

“Compositionally it’s really important for me the way I compose the images in that work. A lot of the images are layered and multiple things are happening,” he said. “The compositions of my work have these multiple layers and that all speaks to diasporic identity, and connects to who I am and how I articulate that.”

Spending time there as an adult changed his perception of Beirut. “Before 2014, Beirut was a different place for me. After 2014, after I went there and did this book, it’s a different place for me,” he said.

In one part of the exhibit, he creates new composition of photos which are half from Beirut and half from Los Angeles.

“When you show them together, there is a conversation that happens between them. There is an entanglement between Beirut and LA are connected. Artsakh and Beirut are connected. Medieval manuscripts and women on a boat on Big Bear Lake are connected. My grandfathers’ handwriting is connected to the medieval scribe Toros Roslin’s handwriting,” he noted.

“There is all this connectivity that happens when you are able to show multiple series together because in my mind they are all connected. Space, time, geographies, borders, entanglements are all really important to me,” he said.

His book of photographs of Beirut, *Displaced*, is on sale at the museum, as is *Fatherland*.

The exhibit was originally shown at the Tufenkian Fine Arts Gallery in Glendale, and then at Stockton University in New Jersey. The curator there, Ryan Casey, is also curating it for the Armenian Museum. This current exhibit is an expanded version.

Next for him are projects involving prisons, as well as Central Valley and Korea. The latter is “another border” that you can’t cross. “Korea is the only country divided into two,” he said. “There is a lot of connectivity for me.”

He also plans to go to Turkey, as part of the Diaspora experience, from where his grandparents hailed, and to find Armenians there.

This exhibition has been sponsored by Michele M. Kolligian in memory of Haig Der Manuelian.

To learn more about the exhibit, visit www.armenianmuseum.org. To learn more about Oshagan and his exhibits and books, visit www.araoshagan.net.



Ara Oshagan, That you May Return #1, 2022

Florin Kevorkian's Romanian Odyssey With Film

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREFVAN/BUCHAREST — Theater and film actor, director, casting director, PhD lecturer, writer Florin Kevorkian was born in 1970 in Bucharest. He studied acting at Caragiale National University of Theatre and Film, where he is a lecturer now. In 1999, Kevorkian graduated from the High School of the University of Theater and Cinema in Bucharest, specializing in film directing and script writing. He is a casting director of about 20 films, actor in more than 15 and director of seven films. His acting credits include “The Shrunken City,” “Train of Life” (1998), “Amen” (2002), “The Wind of Change” (2013), “Pioneers’ Palace” (2015), “Hotel of the Damned” (2016), “A Study on Anxiety” (2016), “Lilith” (2019), “Adrenaline” (2022), etc. Florin Kevorkian has also published a novel (“My Love... Izabela”) and articles on theater.

Dear Florin, how did it happen that you went from being an actor to a casting director?

For me, this transition from actor to casting director happened in 1999 when I was invited by Mrs. Irina Charita — one of the great film directors and executive producer of two of the biggest film studios in the country, Castel Film and Media Pro Pictures — to be part of a new department organized in Buftea for the development of national and international cinematographic projects. The meeting with her was in the film “Train of Life” by Radu Mihaileanu, the film in which I debuted, along with many other casting directors from Romania, as assistant director, extra coordinator. It should be noted that in that film a new team of cinema makers was born in all fields of film production and direction: Tudor Giurgiu (well-known director, at the moment and director of two major film festivals, TIFF and GOPO), his casting assistant was Catalin Dordea (the current casting director of Cristian Mungiu’s films — one of the most successful directors in Romania and Europe), Cristian Mungiu (who was then assistant director), Marian Pascale (at that time, the producer’s driver, and now one of the biggest film producers in Romania). We were a young team and full of the desire to assert ourselves in a professional way and at a high level of cinematic culture. We were all in love with cinema and fervent art followers of the Romanian Cinematheque. We have all remained friends and good colleagues and have reunited on countless projects over the years, from then until now.

The next step was when, after two other training films, as a casting director, I dove in with an award-winning and world-acclaimed director, Costa Gavras, who won an Oscar for the film “Z.” On the film “Amen,” I went into the fire in an international casting with 125 characters of which 77 were Romanian actors, therefore, if we put a minimum of four proposals for each role, in my mind there were, at that moment, a number of 300 Romanian actors of all ages and bills. It was not for nothing that I had nightmares, with images of the Romanian actors who played in this film and in another 30 films for which I did the casting.

Then, I was lucky enough, also as a casting director, to work with Francis Ford Coppola, on the film “Youth Without Youth,” where I met again a wide variety of Romanian and European actors, including: Tim Roth, Bruno Ganz, Alexandra Maria Lara, Adrian Pintea, Dorina Lazar, Ana Maria Marinca. It was a joy to meet with “Lord of the Rings” make-up artist Jeremy Woodhead, along with Anahid Nazarian, the film’s script supervisor and executive producer.

If I would list all the European actors and all the personalities I met, I would answer only one question and I don’t want to leave out the others. The transition from actor to casting director is done naturally, out of love for actors and to give them what I would have liked to receive in the castings that I joined: attention, patience in searching and discovering the character, small defining details for the sequence at work, the patience to find the best double, the organization of the shooting space, objects for the actor, costumes, set and even the interpretation of the other character to look for the emotion. The casting action is not only “Choose, brother, you find the actor quickly, put the contract, that the project must go and that’s it!” Casting is, as Billy Wilder used to say, 85% of the value of a film.



I remember your film “Birth” in the first Golden Apricot in 2004, where the prosaic, “bloody” process of human birth later turned into something poetic. Already in 1929 Dziga Vertov in his famous “Man with a Movie Camera” had filmed the human birth. So why film this very intimate (although mystical!) scene again and again?

For my film “Birth” I almost failed the directing exam, as my film teachers considered the detailed filming of the operated and bloody uterus, as well as the child whose umbilical cord is cut and is drawing its first breath. They appreciated me again when I reminded them that on my video camera I was seeing it in black and white, so I was deprived of the bloody image, the throbbing of life and the specter of death. The fact that the great Dziga Vertov chose between the moments of life, filmed for the first documentaries of the cinematographic world, and this essential moment in the evolution of the world — the birth of a new child — only proves to us one more time what are the essential points that any man unfolds the thread of his life: birth, deep love and marriage, the birth of the new being and death or the great crossing towards “that border beyond which no traveler has returned.”

You have done five documentaries on Armenian subjects. Could you please present them to our readers?

The first film with an Armenian subject is “Armenopolis, Armenian Soul,” dealing with the population of the central area of Transylvania with a group of Armenian refugees in the face of the vicissitudes of history in the 17th century, when the ruler, Duca Voda, of Moldavia, expels, through legislative pressure and threats, almost 13,000 of people — men, women, elderly, children of Armenian origin — and forces them to move to Transylvania, where they spread in important communities: Armenopolis, Somesujvar, Gherla, Elisabetapolis, Dumbraveni, Frumoasa and Gheorgheni.

“Hagigadar” is about the monastery built five centuries ago on a hill near Suceava, by the Donavac brothers. Hagiui Gadar means “fulfilment of wishes” in Armenian and is the place where people, for five centuries, climb the monastery hill on their knees, praying to the Mother of God for support in the hardest moments of life: illness, death, poverty, separation, broken loves, broken hearts, shaky health... Many times, those who prayed to the sacred icon regained their strength to hope and dream and then they returned in the same way to the monastery and thanked the Saint Virgin Mary and to Our God for the fulfillment of fervent desires.

“Noravank,” a film produced and directed in Armenia, with the best cinematographer of Echmiadzin, about the love story between a great teacher, architect, Momik Vardapet and the daughter of King Orbelian, who was only 17 years old. From this passion, imagination and science of the teacher, the Noravank monastery was born, one of the most beautiful monasteries in Armenia and in the whole world. Through the sacrifice of Momik Vardapet, at the completion of this monastery, the root of another great legend is born, the legend of the craftsman Manole.

“Recognize 1915,” filmed at the Genocide Museum in Yerevan, is a tribute to a historical gesture, which made more than 1,500,000 Armenians disappear, in the futile attempt of the Turkish juries to revive the economy of an empire adrift.

“Bukovina, the land of beech people, the land of true love” is a film about the real power of living together of 12 different cultures and faiths — Jews, Armenians, Italians, Greeks, Russians, Lipovians, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Hutus, Hungarians, Germans, Gypsies and Romanians — who for over 300 years, since the time of Empress Maria

Teresa, have managed to live organically together, having a common binder: the grandmother of the family. The grandmother is the one who has the necessary wisdom, after a lifetime, to know the meaning of gentleness, love, tenderness, the importance of embracing, as well as the unity between people, in difficult moments of life, regardless of history, religion, culture, language, all different.

What else you do aside from films?

First of all, I love my wife more than anyone in the world and I thank God every day for giving me the joy of having such a beautiful soul by my side now. And in this joy are included all the other activities of my life: acting in the play “Face to Face” by Peter Quilter, where I have four different roles, together with my wife, in four life moments that talk about the union between people through love; “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” by William Shakespeare, where I am the master-donkey, literally and figuratively, Bottom; other performances, “Easter Mystery,” based on the biblical books, “Nameless Star” by Mihail Sebastian, “Matraguna” by Machiavelli; we are also opening a social school of communication through art, “Aristotle” — dance, speech, singing, bodily expressiveness, acting — through which people can learn again, after the pandemic period, to reach out, hug, communicate.

The surname Kevorkian is famous in the US because of “Dr. Death” Jack Kevorkian. How is it having a famous name?

My name in Romania is assimilated a little with the name of a well-known man in the world of football, Chevorchian, and only for those who have relations with foreign countries, I tell them that I have a distant relative and if they are not fair in business, I tell them about him. Of course, I’m joking. But, I admit, that the sick world in which we live motivates Dr. Kevorkian, through public mercy, to eliminate those people who have nothing but to suffer. I have often felt that all the debts that are placed on my shoulders, from the administration and the banks, are like a wound that hangs on our souls and minds, it is a disease from which we cannot be cured, and not infrequently I have felt, in front of the banks, to apply Dr. Kevorkian’s methods. Death and Taxes follow us beyond the laws of nature, taking the joy out of our stomachs, out of our blood, out of everything...

Speaking of names, I am also called, especially among Armenians, the Actor of Death, the Director of Death, or the Artist of Death in general. It is our dear, Armenian humor, without which we would not have been able to go through such difficult moments of the two genocides — from 1894 and from 1915 — we would not have gone over dead separations and continuous pain... We are, part of a strong people and KEVORKIAN is one of the Armenian families, always predestined to find themselves between life and death...

What is the history of your family? And how do you transfer your Armenian heritage to your children?

The history of the Kevorkian family begins in Adana, where they raised and sold pigs and cattle. There are family histories dating back to the 19th century, about a great-grandfather who so closely resembled Franz Josef that he was the only one to be received with his animals at the imperial court in Budapest during a swine fever that blocked trade with animals all over Europe. During the first genocide, 1894-1896, the family left Adana for Lvov, Poland, where they stayed for a decade and where my grandmother, maiden name Moisesowitch, married grandfather Kevorkian and they crossed over to Armenia around 1914-1915. On the way to Armenia, they stopped in Bessarabia, in the city of Balti. The horror of the First Genocide of the 20th century, against Armenia, stopped them in Balti until the 40s, when during the Second World War, Bessarabia was taken over by Russia and its inhabitants were threatened with deportation to Siberia. Then my family, Kevorkian-Moisesowitch, left for Transylvania, for Alba Iulia and from there they went down to Bucharest, where my father and uncle were sent to study at high schools. Dad graduated from the Faculty of Romanian Language and Literature, as well as the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Until the end of his life he learned five foreign languages: French, Russian, Bulgarian, Polish, Czech, becoming one of the few specialists of the National Tourism Office in Romania. My uncle, Anton Chevorchian, graduated at the highest level from the Faculty of Romanian Language and Literature, and became one of the greatest teachers of his time, recognized by the large number of students who passed through his classes and graduated from important faculties throughout the country and abroad. I am also part of a family where all my uncles and aunts on my mother’s and father’s sides are teachers, which is why, although I was against it, my path

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MAINE

JULY 30 — 3rd Annual Armenian Picnic, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Searsport Shores Ocean Campground, Rt 1, Searsport Maine, featuring Leo Derderian & Friends. Eat Dance Laugh Play all on cool Penobscot Bay. free admission. For more information: makersguildmaine.org

MASSACHUSETTS

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.

JULY 13 — Thursday, at 8:15 pm UNDER THE RASPBERRY MOON. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Walk the moonlight Labyrinth. Meet & Greet. Refreshments. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JULY 19 — Wednesday, 4 pm, TEA & TRANQUILITY. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Marvel at Abstract Sculpture. Write a Wish on a Ribbon for The Wishing Tree. Refreshments. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JULY 22 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Men's Club New England Clambake Church Fundraiser, 1280 Boston Road (Rte 125) Haverhill MA. Menu: lobster or steak, clam chowder, steamed clams and mussels, corn on the cob, coleslaw, baked potato, tossed salad, strawberry cheesecake or shortcake. Children's menu: hamburger, hotdog, corn, chips, ice cream. 3 p.m. appetizers and cash bar, Dinner served promptly at 4 p.m. Donation \$95.00 per adult, children 12 and under \$20.00 Please RSVP by July 17, 2023, by calling the Church office at (978) 372-9227, or texting Myles Couyoumjian at (978) 852-2859, Ed Kibarian at (781) 838-1056, Mark Kazanjian at (508) 633-7447 or Michael Bebirian at (603) 785-6090. 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.

JULY 31 — Saint James Armenian Church 23rd Annual Harold Partamian Memorial Golf Tournament, on Monday, Oakley Country Club, Watertown. Hosted by the St. James Men's Club, Rain or Shine/ Scramble Format/ Raffle, Silent Auction. Following the tournament-banquet dinner at Oakley Country Club. \$195.00 per player by July 17th/ \$40.00 dinner only. For full details and online registration please visit www.stjameswatertown.org/golf. Various sponsorships are available. Contact Robert Berberian, chairman of Men's Club, 339-293-2514.

AUGUST 13 — Sunday, 7:30pm, UNDER THE AUGUST MOON. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Featuring Black Sea Salsa Ensemble. Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Refreshments. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

AUGUST 16 — Wednesday, 4pm, TEA & TRANQUILITY. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Marvel at Abstract Sculpture. Write a Wish on a Ribbon for The Wishing Tree. Refreshments. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 9 — Saturday, at 11am, LET'S MEET AT THE PARK! FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN BOSTON & BEYOND. Meet & Greet. Eat & Enjoy. Welcome at 11am. Walk the Labyrinth. Write a Wish on a ribbon for The Wishing Tree. To receive the e-invite, please email first and last name of the student(s), college each attending, year graduating and email to hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org. We will ask they invite their roommate(s) to join us, too.

OCTOBER 14 — The Armenian Friends of America, Inc., presents Hye Kef 5, a five-hour dance featuring Harry Bedrossian, John Berberian, Leon Janikian, Bob Raphaelian and Jason Naroian. Saturday, 6.30 p.m. to midnight, The Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill. AFA rooms available at Double Tree by Hildong, Andover. Ask for AFA room rates. Ticket prices \$50 for the dance and mezza platters. Coffee and dessert to follow. Cash bar. Tables of 8, \$385. Advance tickets only. No tickets will be sold at the door. Ticket sales final. Online at armenianfriendsofamerica.org or call Lu Sirmaian 978-314-1956 or Mary Ann Janjigian 603-770-3375. Proceeds to benefit The Armenian Churches of Merrimack Valley.

OCTOBER 27-28 — Mark your calendars. Celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator with two spectacular events. First, a panel discussion on Friday, October 27, with renowned journalists including David Ignatius from the Washington Post, Ken Dilanian from NBC News, and Eric Hacoopian from CivilNet, at Tufts University. Second, a spectacular gala benefit on Saturday, October 28. The gala, at the Burlington Marriott, will be MC-ed by the irrepressible Sona Movsesian, who calls herself the Worst Assistant in the World, in her capacity as assistant to the one and only Conan O'Brien, and feature as keynote Speaker Artsakh's Representative to the US Robert Avetisyan.

NEW YORK

JULY 2 — A Precarious Armenia: The Third Republic, the Karabakh Conflict, and Genocide Politics, Book Launch, Zoom Event, with Dr. Gerard Libaridian, Sunday, TIME: Yerevan 10.00 pm ; Paris 8.00 pm; London 7.00 pm; New York 2.00 pm ; Los Angeles 11.00 am ZOOM LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7ZYrd...> A presentation followed by a discussion with Dr. Gerard Libaridian, a respected academic, former adviser to the president of Armenia, and chief negotiator during the Karabakh conflict. Hosted by Ara Sarafian (Gomidas Institute). For more details visit <http://gomidas.org/books>

NOVEMBER 4 — SAVE THE DATE! 12 Vocations: The Ongoing Promise of St. Nersess Seminary. Help us celebrate the vocations of the next 12 priests and lay ministers who studied at St. Nersess and St. Vladimir's Seminaries. Details, invitations, and booklet donations can be found on www.stnerssess.edu.

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

from previous page

as a teacher was part of my DNA.

My children, present and future, have learned and will learn that they are free people of this land, wherever we live they respect their name of Armenians, religion, education and culture of this beautiful and special nation of this world. Wherever my children live, they are taught to choose to do the job they want in life and try to be the best in their field. My children learn to love clear skies and fresh land, mountains and waters, literature and poetry, sweets and books, music concerts and Italian ice cream, baklava and good movies... to generally love what pleases people and brings joy to live, in a world where hatred, misunderstanding, suspicion, accusation, lack of generosity, deepening in the darkness, in the special administrative arrangement, correct for the state and not for the individual, teaches people to sink into social correctness, cold and without a soul, by which we learn that it is better to pay the rent than to buy a chocolate, it is better to pay the bank than to buy a flower, so, my children will learn to live free.

God gave us a paradise on earth, very resistant, which we have been trying to kill for thousands of years, by providing it with strict laws for operation, organization, administration, taxation — punitive laws — which become much more important than cosmic laws, than divine laws, than natural laws. It seems to me a violation of social laws to enjoy, to love, to hold hands, to kiss,

seriousness dries up, directing false relationships, this "it is inappropriate" stops the shine of natural human relationships and gives value to the psychological prison in which we are allowed to live through the primary education we receive. We have forgotten the simple, human joy that comes from the soul, body and mind, beyond the existence of restrictive financial forms imposed by the states where we live... the joy of a kiss, the joy of a hug, the joy of touching the hand of a person who loves you, the joy of movement, the joy of dancing, we learned to buy our joys. I fight with my children together with my wife, Denisa, to continuously re-teach them that the true beauty is that of nature, of a pure soul, of a clear thought, of the divinity that exists in every moment, the joy of loving like a breath, to feel that life means the bright passage through love from one breath to another. Finally, I can say, my children know that any country in the world can be their country, for the simple fact that their true country was, is and will be for always, Armenia.

Florin, do you have any Armenian-related project in near future?

Of course, I have theater, film, screenplay writing projects, and by the simple fact that I am Armenian, these projects have no way for me to come out, without my Armenian soul leaving its mark on them, without the education and culture my oriental love does not leave its mark on them, without love, deep human love not show-

ing through the fiber in these projects. I am in love as any man on this earth should be and I thank God for giving me the woman I have been waiting for a lifetime and then all my projects are started from love and are about love. I have two Armenian pieces by Karine Khodikyan, that talk about the modern period of Armenia.

The second project is about Apafi and Anne, and it covers the historical period in which 13,000 Armenians crossed from Moldova to Transylvania, it is somehow, if we want, a prequel to the film "Armenopolis — Armenian soul." In this film we talk about the love between Count Apafi and Anne de Bornemisa, about the importance of having a family, about her lifelong struggle to have a living child.

Another project is "Stephen," about the great ruler who also encouraged the existence of Armenians in the Moldavian fairs of his time. And even if it is not the main topic, I will not pass it without correlating the existence of Armenians during the time of Stephen's Moldavia.

There is also a project about the culture of Byzantine music and psalms, in which, again, I will evoke the foundation of religious music as part of the founding period of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

So, I can say that directly or indirectly, deeply or tangentially, whether I am talking about theater, film or pedagogical and educational projects, my Armenian origin will always be like a basic structure in everything I do, in everything I create, in everything I breathe and love.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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Lemkin Institute Issues Red Flag Alert for Genocide—Azerbaijan—Update #8

(The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention on June 22 issued a Red Flag Alert for Genocide, its eighth against the actions of Azerbaijan. It appears in full below.)

June 12 marked six months since the beginning of Azerbaijan's blockade of Artsakh. While the so-called environmental protest has ended, Azerbaijan concurrently erected an illegal checkpoint in the Lachin Corridor on April 23rd. Azerbaijan has used this checkpoint as a means to continue abusing the Armenians of Artsakh by impeding humanitarian aid from reaching Artsakh and restricting the right to free movement and safe passage through the Lachin Corridor. The Lemkin Institute leadership team traveled to the Corridor to highlight the impact of this illegal act.

This new checkpoint means that Azerbaijan remains in violation of the February 22nd International Court of Justice (ICJ) order to unblock all channels of communication in Artsakh. On May 24th, Armenia applied to the ICJ to take notice of the fact that Azerbaijan had erected a checkpoint in violation of the Court's February 22nd order.

Prime Minister Pashinyan, during talks in Moldova, stated that Armenia is ready to recognize Artsakh as part of Azerbaijan, subject to rights guarantees for the Armenians of Artsakh. The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, again parroted Azerbaijani official talking points by referring to the Armenians of Artsakh as "Armenians living in former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast." This puts the European Union in a position where it is directly complicit in Azerbaijan's denial of the legitimately elected government of Artsakh, which is in turn a denial of the right to self-determination of the Armenians of Artsakh. The Lemkin Institute believes it important to highlight that the right to self-determination is one of the most important principles and rights of contemporary international law, and in the case of Artsakh it is a crucial component to preventing the genocide of the Armenian population. The Lemkin Institute thus demands that the international community act to compel Azerbaijan to respect these rights through mechanisms such as sanctions, penalties, and other admonitions, including arms embargoes.

Routine ceasefire violations by Azerbaijan continue on almost a daily basis. The Artsakh

authorities reported ceasefire violations, occurring on June 8th and June 13th, to the Russian peacekeeping forces. Azerbaijan also opened fire on the Armenian border village of Yeraskh, which resulted in the injury of two foreign national civilian employees working for a US-affiliated company. Further stirring the pot was Azerbaijan's request to postpone peace talks that were supposed to be hosted by the US and were slated to begin on June 12th. On June 19th, the Armenian branch of the Red Cross warned about the worsening humanitarian condition in Artsakh due to Azerbaijan's blockade. The constant ceasefire violations and ongoing blockade, accompanied by what the Armenians say is Azerbaijani misinformation purporting to place the blame on the Armenians, has sparked concerns from the Armenian side that Azerbaijan seeks to start a new war over Artsakh.

The Lemkin Institute would like to remind international actors about its previous statement regarding the danger in the way they approach the prospects of peace. Instead of pushing Armenia to reach a settlement at any cost, the international community needs to pressure Azerbaijan to respect and guarantee the political, economic, cultural, and human rights of the Armenians of Artsakh as a prerequisite to any peace agreement. Finally, the Lemkin Institute reminds the international community that the voice of the Armenians of Artsakh should be respected and taken into consideration in the peace negotiation meetings. It is only them who have the right to decide their future and it is the international community's obligation to support their will and right to self-determination as a fundamental principle of international law. People have suffered too much from the lack of respect for the principles that the majority of the States in the world have accepted as fundamental values to ensure peace and security. Let us not allow this to happen once again; the world has the opportunity to stop a possible new genocide against the Armenians and respect their long-awaited right to have an autonomous and independent state that allows for their development and survival without oppression and persecution.

Lavrov says West Has 'Little Desire' To Support Peaceful Armenian-Azerbaijani Settlement

By Artin DerSimonian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Following a meeting of top diplomats from the member countries of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in Minsk, Belarus on June 20th, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, made comments regarding the involvement of Western states in the ongoing negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Mr. Lavrov stated that the United States and the European Union are not demonstrating their interest in helping the sides reach an agreement. Rather, the West is seeking "to win a foothold in the region, edge out Russia's legal interests and establish themselves as a force that will play a decisive role" in the South Caucasus.

These comments follow a delay in US mediated talks between foreign ministers that were initially scheduled for June 12, but that were postponed as a result of a scheduling issue on Azerbaijan's part. The scheduling issue, confirmed by the US State Department, resulted from the visit of recently reelected Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to Baku alongside his newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Fidan, who previously served as the director of the National Intelligence Organization from 2010-2023.

The CSTO has often been lamented by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for its unwillingness or inability to support Armenia as its border continues to be the target of Azerbaijani attack. Such public rebukes by Mr. Pashinyan have led many to question the enduring commitment of Armenia to the CSTO if it continues to remain ineffective from Yerevan's perspective. Following the same meeting in Minsk, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko hinted that Armenia's complaints about the CSTO were justified, while also commenting on the need to address border issues between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These comments are a marked departure from Lukashenko's previous comments regarding Armenia and Azerbaijan, having recently said that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev is "totally our guy."

"The Russian position is very clear: The West, first of all the US, wants to kick out Russia from the South Caucasus – or at least decrease Russian influence," says Benjamin Poghosyan, Chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies and Senior Research Fellow at APRI, a Yerevan-based thinktank (and a regular columnist for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*). "From the Russian perspective, everything done by the EU and the US moves the situation" towards the direction of removing Moscow's influence from the region.

Interestingly, Lavrov noted that Russia is "not against other international players trying their hand at mediation." He warned, however, that "the most important thing is to ensure that this mediation is geared toward agreements that reflect a balance of interests between the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples, the Armenian and Azerbaijani states."

Negotiations are expected to continue in the US in the coming weeks, as well as an upcoming Brussels meeting with European Council president, Charles Michel, on July 21. Poghosyan notes that "There are rumors that a peace agreement may be signed by the end of 2023." However, it remains to be seen if Baku and Yerevan will be able to sort out their differences under the auspices of Brussels, Washington, or Moscow, and if the sides will be able to come to an agreement that will ensure a peace that is both enduring and respective of the rights and security of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians.

(Artin DerSimonian is an analyst and writer whose works have focused on Armenian foreign policy, US-Russia relations, and European Security. Artin holds a MSc in Russian, East European, and Eurasian studies from the University of Glasgow where he graduated in 2022 with merit.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Russian-Israeli Blogger's Bold Efforts To Support Armenia and Artsakh

I just read a very important article in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in which Aram Arkun interviewed Russian-Israeli blogger Aleksander Lapshin who is currently on a tour of Canada and the United States. He already met with Armenians in Toronto, Canada, on June 3, and New York City on June 11. He also met with the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists to brief them about the dire situation in Artsakh.

Lapshin was born in Russia and moved to Israel when he was 13. His wife is from Moldova and moved to Israel 14 years ago. However, she is still waiting for approval to become a citizen of Israel since 2017.

During his many visits to Armenia, he travelled three times to Artsakh from 2011 to 2016. Azerbaijan's government issued a warrant for his arrest and asked Belarus to send him to Baku for "illegally crossing Azerbaijan's border" from Armenia. Belarus extradited him to Azerbaijan in 2017 where "he was sentenced to three years in prison, but was given a pardon in September and flown to Israel after what he describes as an attempt by four masked men in prison on his life. The Azerbaijani government, however, claimed that he had tried to commit suicide," Arkun reported.

Lapshin said that Israel's Security Agency repeatedly urged him to stop supporting Armenia because "Azerbaijan is our ally." He was also advised to withdraw his complaints against Azerbaijan from the European Court of Human Rights and United Nations. Lapshin replied: "No, no way. I will go to the end and I will win."

On May 21, 2021, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in Lapshin's favor in his lawsuit against Azerbaijan for attempted murder, torture and illegal imprisonment. However, Azerbaijan has refused to pay him the compensation of 30,000 euros. "Meanwhile, the United Nations Human Rights Committee adopted a resolution on July 19, 2022 condemning the Belarusian authorities for illegally arresting Lapshin and extraditing him to Azerbaijan," the *Mirror* wrote.

Lapshin told the *Mirror* that because of his criticisms, he cannot visit Russia and the former Soviet countries, "except Armenia," but added, "I just said except Armenia, but who knows? Armenia is under huge Russian influence."

"Lapshin continues to pursue his own case against Azerbaijan's violations of human rights but is committed also to helping Armenia. He understood, he said, that 'it would be better for me, my family and for our safety, to just

leave it aside and continue our old life.' However, he continued, 'I just cannot abandon what I do in favor of Armenia and Artsakh because I have many friends in Armenia. Some of them were killed during the second Karabakh war. I actually love this country, so I feel in Armenia like my second home,'" Arkun reported. "Lapshin added, 'Look, six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. A lot of Armenians actually supported Jews and saved their lives. So, I feel the same.'"

Lapshin told the *Mirror*: "Of course I do not receive any support from the government of Armenia.' Furthermore, the fact that Armenia, facing an existential threat, is trying to sign a peace agreement with both Azerbaijan and Turkey, seems to create complicated motivations. 'Even some of the politicians in Armenia tried to convince me to leave it aside, for some political reasons. What I do against Azerbaijan, somehow, in some ways, is against the national interests of the current Armenian government...So I feel a bit alone in this fighting, but this time, fortunately, I have a lot of friends, both Armenian friends, and American and European friends, who actually support me.'"

"While in Armenia, Lapshin met several former prisoners of war who had been raped in [the Baku] jail and tried to convince them to go with him to the US and Europe to testify about this, but, Lapshin said, they felt uncomfortable about talking about such experiences openly due to Armenian social norms or culture," Arkun reported. The former Armenian prisoners of war told Lapshin: "there were strict warnings from Armenian intelligence services for them not to communicate with journalists or human rights activists. One can speculate that if true, this is due to the precarious current situation of Armenia, which is doing anything in its power to avoid a new war of aggression by Azerbaijan."

Lapshin told the *Mirror* that members of the U.S. Jewish community do not support his human rights activities for Armenia. They told him: "Why do you need to deal with Azerbaijan, because Azerbaijan is actually the ally of Israel. Okay, you had a bad experience with Azerbaijan, but still, you have to think globally. This is realpolitik. What you do against Azerbaijan is against the national interest of Israel."

Lapshin regretted that the American "Armenian community is so divided and weak." "There is mistrust of the Armenian government and each other, he said, and this situation made him feel emotionally depressed," Arkun reported.

"If someone wants to invite me for meetings with human rights activists or politicians even on the state level I will be more than happy [to oblige]," Lapshin told Arkun. After Toronto and New York, he is going to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Las Vegas, Seattle, Portland, Dallas, Miami, and probably Chicago, as well as Vancouver, Canada. Later this year, he plans to visit Armenia again. However, he added, due to the unstable political situation, "I can never know if I am going to be allowed to enter Armenia."

Netanyahu And Turkey's Erdogan Reportedly Aiming to Meet In July

ANKARA (Times of Israel) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are planning to meet in Ankara in July, according to a report Friday, as ties between the two countries thaw.

The talks between the two may revolve around potentially exporting natural gas from a field off Gaza to Europe via Turkey, Bloomberg said, citing people familiar with the matter.

According to the sources, supply chain disruptions caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine have pushed the two countries to further boost ties after a decade-long breakdown in relations.

Netanyahu said this week that Israel would work to develop the gas field, after a decade of false starts, in a move geared to boost the Palestinian Authority's faltering economy.

Turkey has been eager to build a pipeline to deliver gas from Israel to Europe, but according to some experts, there is little Israeli interest in energy cooperation with Ankara.

Israel's embassy in Ankara and the Turkish government declined to comment on the report.

The news of the potentially imminent meeting comes amid a warming of ties between Israel and Turkey after years of animosity between the two countries' leaders. President Isaac Herzog was hosted by Erdogan last year in Ankara — the first high-level visit since 2008 — and Foreign Minister Eli Cohen met the Turkish leader in February.

Both Netanyahu and Herzog called Erdogan in May to congratulate him on his victory in the presidential elections and urged a continued improvement in ties between the two regional powers.

Israel was a long-time regional ally of Turkey before Erdogan came to power but ties imploded after a 2010 Israeli commando raid on the Gaza-bound Mavi Marmara ship, part of a blockade-busting flotilla, that left dead 10 Turkish activists who attacked IDF soldiers aboard the ship.

Despite an official apology by Netanyahu, Erdogan went on to accuse the Jewish state of "keeping Hitler's spirit alive" during Operation Defensive Shield in Gaza in July 2014.

Ties later saw a moderate improvement, but both countries withdrew their ambassadors in 2018 after Erdogan leveled charges of "state terrorism" and "genocide" at Israel when dozens of Palestinians were killed in Gaza rioting on May 14 of

that year, the day then-US president Donald Trump controversially moved the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Facing hardening diplomatic isolation and economic woes, Erdogan began to publicly display an openness to rapprochement in December 2020. In August of last year, Israel and Turkey announced a full renewal of diplomatic ties.

DESPITE AN OFFICIAL APOLOGY BY NETANYAHU, ERDOGAN WENT ON TO ACCUSE THE JEWISH STATE OF "KEEPING HITLER'S SPIRIT ALIVE" DURING OPERATION DEFENSIVE SHIELD IN GAZA IN JULY 2014.

LETTERS

Jerusalem in Disarray

To the Editor:

After reading the article by Isabel Debra, I've been sick to my stomach because I am witnessing the disappearance of the Armenian state and institutions due to all the unholy acts by others for the sake of money.

From what I understand, the cleric, who has disappeared to Ca, did this without the permission of the church head and the board. As far as I am concerned, this is an illegal transaction and must be stopped immediately.

We are supposed to be very intellectual and smart, but we fail at all the times when we should be protecting, preserving and defending what we have as a nation and people.

Why can't we have this shadow cleric extradited back to Jerusalem to stand trial and have this transaction nullified? We have many smart Armenian attorneys, and should use them before it is too late.

I have been to Armenia countless times and the country and the people are dear to me as are my relatives who still reside there, but I see the demise of the Armenian State.

I hope I'm wrong, but time will tell in the near future.

Pray for a miracle,

Vahan Sarkisian

Condolences to Family of Egypt TCA Member

To the Editor:

We learned with great sorrow the very sad news about the untimely death of Gassia Deovletian Djeghalian of Cairo, Egypt. Gassia was the sister of long time active member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Maral Deovetian Voskian. On this sad occasion, we extend our deepest condolences to Maral Deovletian Voskian and Gassia's husband Hrayr Djeghalian and all bereaved families and friends, wishing them all the comfort of the Holy Spirit

TCA Los Angeles Main Chapter Committee and Members



‘Monsieur Aznavour’ Biopic Filming Begins

By Jean Eckian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — Shooting began recently on the Charles Aznavour biopic, titled “Monseieur Aznavour,” by Grand Corps Malade (Fabien Marceau) and Medhi Idir, co-directors of several feature films since 2017. The project was known to Aznavour, who had given his approval to his son-in-law, producer Jean-Rachid Kallouche, married to Katia Aznavour.

The inspired Tahar Rahim plays Charles Aznavour. Rahim had already played an Armenian as Nazareth Manoo-gian, hero of the film “The Cut” (2014), directed by Fatih Akin.

Shooting “Monsieur Aznavour” is taking place in Nor-mandy, as well as a suburb of Paris and Paris itself. One

of the sequences takes place at the Armenian church on Jean Goujon Street, for the sad evocation of the funeral of Knarig (October 1, 1966), Charles’s mother. That same evening, the singer and songwriter of *Paris au mois d’août*, released that same year, was back on the road again for his world tour.



Tahar Rahim

(I was at the funeral on Jean Goujon Street with my father, who had performed with Knar as part of the Armenian theater. I’ll be reliving this scene with emotion, but this time in cinematic fiction.)

The film covers the periods of the international giant



An advertisement for a 1966 Carnegie Hall performance by Charles Aznavour

of French chanson, from 1950 to 2014. It stars Hovnatn Avédikian (Micha Aznavourian), Marie-Julie Baup (Edith Piaf), Bastien Bouillon, Lionel Cecilio, Nariné Grigoryan (Knar, Charles’s mother) and Tigran Mekhitarian.

The film will be released in autumn 2024 to mark the 100th birthday of Aznavour, born on May 22, 1924 as Shahnour Vaghinag Aznavourian.



Knar Baghdassarian Aznavour with son Charles Aznavour

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