

In Jerusalem's Contested Old City, Shrinking Armenian Community Fears Displacement After Land Deal

By Isabel Debre

JERUSALEM (AP) — A real estate deal in Jerusalem's Old City, at the epicenter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has sent the historic Armenian community there into a panic as residents search for answers about the feared loss of their homes to a mysterious investor.

The 99-year lease of some 25 percent of the Old City's Armenian Quarter has touched sensitive nerves in the Holy Land and sparked a controversy extending far beyond the Old City walls. The fallout has forced the highest authority of the Armenian Orthodox Church to cloister himself in a convent and prompted a disgraced priest who is allegedly behind the deal to flee to a Los Angeles suburb.

"If they sell this place, they sell my heart," Garo Nalbandian, an 80-year-old photojournalist, said of the Ottoman-era barracks where he has lived for five decades among a dwindling community of



Members of the Armenian community protest outside the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem on May 19.

Armenians. Their ancestors came to Jerusalem over 1,500 years ago and then after 1915, when Ottoman Turks killed an estimated 1.5 million Armenians in what's widely regarded as the first genocide of the 20th century.

Alarm over the lease spread in April, following a surprise visit by Israeli land surveyors. Word got around that an Australian-Is-

raeli investor, whose company sign appeared on the site, planned to transform the parking lot and limestone fortress of Armenian apartments and shops into an ultra-luxury hotel.

As anger, confusion and fears of possible evictions mounted, the Armenian patriarchate — the body managing the community's civil

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"I HAVE SEEN HOW CONGRESS CAN WORK BETTER FOR PEOPLE AND I WANT TO BE PART OF THE CHANGE TO MAKE IT WORK BETTER FOR PEOPLE IN THE DISTRICT, IN THE CALIFORNIA 30TH"



Ratevosian Enters Crowded Race to Succeed Adam Schiff in Congress

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Congressman Adam Schiff has decided not to run for reelection in California's 30th

Congressional district in 2024 but to instead try for the Senate. This leaves this position in the House of Representatives open for the first time since 2020, and suddenly, very early in this race, there are some 16 candidates vying for it. While several of the current candidates are familiar to Armenian voters, such as California State Sen. Anthony Portantino, there are only two Armenian Americans formally in the race so far — Dr. Jirair Ratevosian and Dr. Alex Arto Balekian, M.D., and this is an evolving race the *Mirror-Spectator* will continue to cover.

Balekian has no party affiliation in this district which currently solidly votes Democratic, while the 42-year-old Ratevosian is a Democrat, which may give him an edge.

Ratevosian exclaimed, "This district has the largest number of Armenian Americans in the entire country." Indeed, the district includes areas with dense Armenian populations like Glendale, Burbank and parts of Pasadena. In 2021, according to the

see ELECTIONS, page 8

Baku, Yerevan Make Conflicting Statements on Transport Links

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Despite major progress reported during their most recent talks, senior Armenian and Azerbaijani officials over the weekend made conflicting statements on the practical modalities of planned transport links between their countries.

Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev said that in line with the Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian border guards will oversee "unfettered" commercial traffic between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave through Armenia's Syunik province. He told report.az that Baku, Yerevan and Moscow are now working out "technical details" of this arrangement.

The office of Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan countered, however, that he and Mustafayev reached no such agreement during their negotiations, including a June 2 meeting in Moscow. Citing Article 9 of the ceasefire agreement, it said that the planned road and rail links will be under full Armenian control.

The clause in question stipulates that the Russian border guards stationed in Armenia will "control" the transit of people, vehicles and goods between Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan.

The Sputnik news agency quoted Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk as saying in this regard on Friday, June 9, that Moscow and Baku are not questioning Armenian sovereignty over those transit routes. Asked about the possible role of the Russian border guards, he said that it depends on the Armenian side.

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Artsakh Ombudsman Issues Report after Six Months of Lachin Corridor Blockade

STEPANAKERT — Artsakh's Human Rights Defender has published an updated version of the trilingual [ad hoc report](#) on the violations of human rights as a result of the 6-months (182-day) blockade of Artsakh by Azerbaijan.

The report presents detailed data on the violations of 7 individual rights, 5 rights of vulnerable groups and 4 collective rights, which reflect the deepening humanitarian crisis and the genocidal policy of Azerbaijan towards the people of Artsakh.

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Newly constructed Lachin checkpoint

YEREVAN

AUA and AMAA Host Memorial Honoring Late Edward Avedisian

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PASADENA

Armenian Americans to Again Participate In Rose Parade

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Mirror-Spectator Annual Vacation

WATERTOWN — The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close for its annual two-week vacation in early July. The last issue before the vacation will be that of July 1. The first issue back will be that of July 22.

Enjoy a safe and healthy summer.



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Proceedings Against Artsakh Defense Leader Suspended

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The criminal proceedings against the former commander of the Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) Defense Army Lt. Gen. Jalal Harutyunyan has been temporarily suspended, the Investigative Committee said on June 12.

Investigative Committee spokesperson Gor Abrahamyan said the decision was made after an expert investigation was carried out to ensure the correct way forward.

The prosecution made the decision at the suggestion of the investigator.

Harutyunyan has been charged with negligence.

Armenia Grandmasters Won't Travel to Baku for World Cup

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia's leading grandmasters will not travel to Azerbaijan to participate in the Chess World Cup to be held in Baku July 30 to August 24, Vice President of the Armenian Chess Federation, Grandmaster Smbat Lputyan said on June 12.

According to him, the decision was made due to safety concerns.

Grandmasters Samvel Ter-Sahakyan, Gabriel Sargissian, Hovhannes Gabuzyan, Shant Sargsyan and Hayk M. Martirosyan, as well as Elina Danielyan, Anna Sargsyan and Lilit Mkrtychyan from the women's team had qualified for the World Cup.

The former leader of the Armenian team, Levon Aronian, who currently represents the US, had raised the question earlier: "I have a dilemma. As a person who enjoys the World Cup very much, I would love to take part in the World Cup 2023, but as an Armenian I don't feel safe traveling to Baku."

Armenia, Artsakh Ombudsmen Hold Discussion

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Artsakh Gegham Stepanyan and Armenia's Human Rights Defender Anahit Manasyan had an online discussion with representatives of the Armenian Bar Association of America, the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Artsakh reported on June 12.

During the meeting, the fact-finding activities carried out by the Human Rights Defenders' institutions regarding human rights violations in Artsakh and border communities of Armenia as a result of the crimes committed by Azerbaijan, as well as the work carried out on the international platforms regarding the humanitarian conditions created in Artsakh under the ongoing blockade and existing problems were discussed.

Representatives of the Armenian Bar Association presented the Association's work aimed at raising international awareness on human rights violations in Armenia and Artsakh and ensuring international engagement.

The necessity of using legal instruments for the protection of human rights and ensuring the continuity of effective partnership was mutually emphasized.

Fallen Soldier's Mother Freed After Jail Term Is Suspended

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A woman accused of attempting to "kidnap" Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's son was released on Friday, June 9, after a court in Yerevan gave her a four-year suspended prison sentence at the end of a short trial.

Gayane Hakobyan, whose son, Zhora Martirosyan, was killed during the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, walked free because of pleading guilty to the accusation strongly denied by her until then. She avoided talking to the press after the announcement of the guilty verdict. The final session of the trial took place behind closed doors.

The lawyers who represented Hakobyan for the last two weeks said earlier in the day that she fired them because of disagreeing with their defense tactics. They did not deny that she struck a deal with prosecutors.

"There is a conflict between Mrs. Gayane's and our positions," one of the lawyers, Hovsep Sargsyan, told reporters. "We planned on continuing our defense aimed at her acquittal, but Mrs. Gayane is of a different opinion now."

Hakobyan already replaced other lawyers who represented her right after her



Gayane Hakobyan is brought into a courtroom in Yerevan, June 5, 2023.

arrest on May 17, which sparked angry protests by several dozen other parents of fallen soldiers and hundreds of their sympathizers. That move fueled speculation that she is cooperating with what the protesters condemned as a politically motivated investigation into her argument with Ashot Pashinyan.

Armenia's Investigative Committee

charged Hakobyan with tricking the prime minister's son into getting into her car and trying to drive him to the Yerablur Military Pantheon where her son was buried along with hundreds of other soldiers killed in action. Pashinyan Jr. jumped out of the car on their way to Yerablur.

The grief-stricken woman insisted at the start of her trial on June 5 that Ashot Pashinyan was not forced into her and that she only wanted to talk to him at Yerablur.

The high-profile trial began hours after the Court of Appeals moved Hakobyan to house arrest. The lower court judge presiding over the trial promptly issued a new arrest warrant demanded by the prosecutors and Ashot Pashinyan. The latter told the judge that she committed a "grave crime" and must remain behind bars.

Armenian opposition leaders and other critics of the government claim that Nikol Pashinyan ordered Hakobyan's arrest in a bid to muzzle the families of deceased soldiers who have staged demonstrations over the past year to demand his prosecution on war-related charges. Hakobyan actively participated in them.

The prime minister triggered the regular demonstrations in April 2022 when he responded to continuing opposition criticism of his handling of the disastrous war with Azerbaijan. He said he "could have averted the war, as a result of which we would have had the same situation, but of course without the casualties." The soldiers' families say Pashinyan thus publicly admitted sacrificing the lives of at least 3,800 Armenian soldiers killed during the six-week war.

Armenian Church Again Warns Against 'Humiliating' Peace Deal

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Armenian Apostolic Church has again denounced Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's policy on the conflict with Azerbaijan and said Armenia must again champion Karabakh's right to self-determination.

The church expressed serious concern over the "difficult situation created in the country's life" in a weekend statement on a regular session of its Supreme Spiritual Council (SSC) chaired by Catholicos Karekin II.

"It was emphasized [during the meeting] that the authorities of Armenia should renounce actions that violate the dignity of the nation and oppose the humiliating ambitions and demands of foreign enemies with realistic and exclusively pro-Armenian positions, resolutely defending the non-negotiable right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination," it said.

"The SSC expressed its support to the people and authorities of Artsakh, noting also that the just right of the people of Artsakh to live freely and independently will

find protection in all national frameworks," added the statement.

The SSC held another, emergency meeting late last month. It joined Karabakh's leadership and the Armenian opposition in condemning Pashinyan for his readiness to sign a peace deal recognizing Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. It said that the restoration of Azerbaijan rule would leave the Karabakh Armenians facing a "new genocide and loss of the homeland."

The church also openly criticized the Armenian government's Karabakh policy last fall. Garegin authorized an Armenian archbishop to address an opposition rally in Yerevan that warned Pashinyan against recognizing Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh.

Tensions between the ancient church and Pashinyan have deepened further since then. Last month, the prime minister accused the church of meddling in politics, prompting a scathing response from Garegin's office.



Members of the Armenian Apostolic Church's Supreme Spiritual Council pose for a photo after a meeting in Echmiadzin, June 8, 2023.

Baku, Yerevan Make Conflicting Statements On Transport Links

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The issue topped the agenda of Russian President Vladimir Putin's trilateral meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev held in Moscow on May 25.

Mustafayev, Grigoryan and Overchuk met in the Russian capital on June 2 to try to settle what Putin called "purely technical" issues hampering the opening of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border to commercial traffic. According to an Armenian government statement, they made "substantial progress" on the functioning of the railway leading to Nakhichevan.



ARMENIA

Armenia Considers Nuclear Options

YEREVAN (*Nuclear Engineering International Magazine*) — Among the options for a new NPP in Armenia, the project for a Russian unit of 1,000-1,200 MWe is the best developed, according to Karen Sargsyan, Advisor at the Ministry of Territorial Administration & Infrastructure (MTAI). He was speaking at a panel discussion on the prospects for nuclear energy in Armenia organized by Rosatom and the Ministry. Sargsyan recalled that at the beginning of this year, a pre-feasibility study (preliminary feasibility study) was prepared for Armenia for the construction of a plant with a VVER-1200 reactor. Armenia and Russia signed an interstate agreement to build a 1,000-1,200 MWe plant and in May, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Rosatom Director General Alexey Likhachev held talks in Yerevan on the possible construction of a new NPP.

They were discussing a new modification of this type of station - a generation 3+ design with four levels of protection against emergencies and accidents, he specified. There is very little time to make a decision, he noted, because the construction of the station will take at least 10 years, and a lot of work needs to be done meanwhile to further extend the life of the existing station. The first stage of the extension made it possible to extend the life of the NPP from 2016 to 2026. Another 10-year extension until 2036 is now being considered.

The currently operating Armenian NPP (ANPP) at Metsamor was built in the 1970s with two Soviet-supplied VVER-440-V230 units, but was closed following a devastating earthquake in 1988. However, unit 2 was recommissioned with Russian help in 1995 following severe energy shortages. In March 2014, the Armenian government decided to extend the plant's service life to 2026. Most of the overhaul (until 2019) was funded by an interstate loan from Russia. Construction of a new nuclear plant has long been part of Armenia's overall plan, although finance has proved to be an obstacle. Likhachev confirmed Rosatom's continued support for co-operation and extension of the op-

erating life of the NPP was viewed as a priority.

Before the start of any construction, significant design work will be needed. "I think that a decision may be made in the near future. Moreover, the pre-feasibility study is already ready from the Russian side, I have not seen anything from other parties yet," Sargsyan said. However, other projects are being considered in parallel. A working group has been set up under the Ministry, which is discussing the advantages and disadvantages of French, South Korean, American and other possible technologies, he specified.

ANPP Director Movses Vardanyan said Armenia should begin considering the construction of a new power plant today. "In this regard Armenia is a specific country and has several demands," he said.

THE CURRENTLY OPERATING ARMENIAN NPP (ANPP) AT METSAMOR WAS BUILT IN THE 1970S WITH TWO SOVIET-SUPPLIED VVER-440-V230 UNITS, BUT WAS CLOSED FOLLOWING A DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE IN 1988. HOWEVER, UNIT 2 WAS RECOMMISSIONED WITH RUSSIAN HELP IN 1995 FOLLOWING SEVERE ENERGY SHORTAGES.

"First of all, the issues related to safety and seismic resistance are important to us, we also consider financial and logistic issues and many other aspects. As you know, in February 2023 our partners at the Rosatom Energy Projects submitted the preliminary technical-economic substantiation of building two 1200 MW reactors in Armenia. They take into consideration all our demands and issues, and we already have that project on hand. We are also working with our South Korean partners who have offered 1,000 and 1,400 MWe reactors, as well as small modular reactors (SMRs). We are also studying a French variant as well as American SMRs. I once again emphasize that we will prioritize safety, financial expediency and logistics."

MTAI has set up a working group "for the purpose of discussing the matters related to the expediency of deploying small modular reactors, as well as to carry out

analyses and define the sequence of further steps in order to select the necessary technologies". According to Minister Gnel Sanosyan, there is a lot of work to be done: "About two years is needed for preparatory work, from 8 to 10 years for construction." He added that it is necessary to understand what capacity the new NPP should have, and this must be decided by taking into account many factors – not for a short period, but for the next 100 years.

"For example, we must calculate how much electricity we will supply to Iran, whether we will supply it or not, whether we will supply electricity to Georgia. We need to understand what the relations between Armenia and Turkey will be like, whether Turkey will buy electricity from Armenia, because now the eastern regions of Turkey need it," he added. Sanosyan

ANPP Board member Vahram Petrosyan believes Armenia would do better with two smaller plants each with a capacity of 500-600 MWe. He noted that Armenia's total electricity demand does not exceed 1,200 MWe and that hydro, solar and thermal plants can easily make up the difference. "A high-capacity nuclear power plant can become a headache for the country. We must consider all options and send the right order to the government," Petrosyan told Hetq.

However, UN National Expert on Energy Ara Marjanyan has said that building a new nuclear reactor at Metsamor is essential to enable Armenia to constantly generate nuclear power and that a new 1,000-1,200 MWe reactor would be required by 2036. He stressed that the new reactor must be completed before decommissioning the existing one. He noted that under the agreement concluded with Russia a roadmap is to be developed and a final decision is to be made on the type and other technical parameters of the reactor. The construction work will commence by the end of 2024 or early 2025 and the cost is estimated at \$3-5bn. "I think this is a reasonable expenditure, and it is imperative for Armenia to have constant nuclear generation on its territory. I think the construction will take 10-12 years," he said.

Russia Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said recently that Russia is ready to discuss the financial issues and parameters of building NPPs in the territories of Eurasian Economic Union members, including Armenia. He was addressing the Eurasia Is My Home exhibition which was also attended by Prime Minister Pashinyan. The attendees were briefed on Rosatom's two-unit VVER-1200 project in Belarus. The first unit is already operational while the second is undergoing tests. Mishustin told Pashinyan that Belarusian companies financed just over 40% of the costs. Pashinyan reportedly noted that Rosatom was not offering reactors with capacity lower than 1,200MWe. In response, Rosatom Director General Likhachev told Pashinyan that Rosatom can build reactors with capacities of 1,000, 600 or 400 MWe, but it would be more expensive.

Artsakh Ombudsman Issues Report after Six Months of Lachin Corridor Blockade

REPORT, from page 1

Presented below are some basic excerpts from the Report on human rights violations as a result of the 182-day blockade:

- The movement of people passing through the Stepanakert-Goris highway (along the Lachin corridor) has decreased by about 198 times (2246 entries and departures instead of 445,900);
- Almost 58 times less car traffic was recorded on the road compared to what should have been in case of lack of blockade (2,867 car entries and departures, performed only by the Red Cross and Russian peacekeepers, instead of 167,440);
- Approximately 13 times less vital cargo was imported compared to what should have been before the blockade (5,574 tons instead of 72,800 tons);
- Due to the suspension of the pre-planned operations, about 1,400 citizens lost the opportunity to solve their health problems via surgery;
- Azerbaijan has completely or partially interrupted the gas supply from Armenia to

Artsakh for a total of 117 days;

- The electricity supply from Armenia to Artsakh has been completely cut for 154 days now, which led to the introduction of rolling blackouts followed by numerous accidents;
- According to preliminary estimates, about 11,000 people have actually lost their jobs and sources of income (including cases of job retention)
- The country's economy suffered loss in the amount of about USD 346 million;
- A number of violations of rights are more pronounced in case of vulnerable groups, in particular 30,000 children, 9,000 people with disabilities, 20,000 older people, 60,000 women (women and girls) and 15,000 displaced persons.

In addition to the continuous and multiple violations of the provisions of the Tripartite Statement of November 9, 2020, the mandatory execution of the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of the United Nations (UN) on ensuring unhindered entry and departure of people, cars and car-

go along the Lachin corridor has not been implemented by Azerbaijan, which once again tramples on the highest international values and principles. Moreover, after that the Azerbaijani side resorted to new aggressive actions which resulted in human losses and new sufferings among Artsakh people. Since April 23, the Azerbaijani side has installed an illegal checkpoint near the Hakari bridge. Consequently, the international community has not only the right, but also an indisputable obligation to implement the decision of the Supreme International Court of Justice by practical means as soon as possible and to prevent future Azerbaijani crimes, including the new planned and brutal crime against humanity.

All the violations of Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh are carried out within the framework of its state policy of racial discrimination (Armenophobia) and are deeply directed against their right to self-determination and the fact of its realization, aimed at finally resolving the conflict to their advantage via ethnic cleansing based

on the "no people, no rights" logic.

The systematic and consistent policy of ethnic hatred pursued by Azerbaijan, which manifested itself both during the aggression against the people of Artsakh in 2020 and after the establishment of the ceasefire regime, indisputably proves that any status of Artsakh within Azerbaijan is tantamount to ethnic cleansing of Artsakh and the genocide of the Armenians of Artsakh. Therefore, in the context of the Artsakh conflict, the right to self-determination is equal to the right of people to live in their homeland.

The fundamental right to self-determination of the people of Artsakh, as well as the Azerbaijani encroachments and threats against their physical existence on the basis of racial discrimination are more than sufficient grounds for the protection of the people of Artsakh by the international community, as well as the international recognition of the Republic of Artsakh based on the principle of "remedial recognition."

The full report can be downloaded from the website ombudsman.am.



ARMENIA

AUA and AMAA Host Memorial Honoring Late Edward Avedisian

YEREVAN — On June 8, the American University of Armenia (AUA), in collaboration with the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), hosted a remembrance event celebrating the remarkable life and legacy of renowned benefactor Edward Avedisian.

The event opened with a documentary film depicting Avedisian's legacy and his benefactions to Armenia and the United States. A professional musician, who staunchly valued education throughout his life, Avedisian also had a proclivity for business, literature, and media. Particularly

Armen Der Kiureghian spoke about Avedisian's path and philanthropy, highlighting his enormous contributions to AUA which resulted in the growth of the University. "The American University of Armenia is fortunate to have had Edward Avedisian as a Board member, as a benefactor, and as a thoughtful supporter who facilitated major growth and advancement of the University. His legacy will always remain present in our University and in our minds and hearts," he concluded.

In his turn, Chair of the AUA Board of Trustees Dr. Lawrence Pitts shared,

"The philanthropy that Ed has engendered has not stopped. AUA recognizes that there is a lot that the University can provide for Armenia's future."

The floor then was given to AMAA Armenia representative Aren Deyirmenjian, who remarked, "While I had only met Ed once in person, it was visible that his stance on the matter of education being Armenia's best bet toward a bright future was uncompromising. And he backed up that belief with much more than just words. Perhaps more than any other person, Ed Avedisian was both a visionary and a doer."

AMAA Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School Principal Melanya Geghamyan highlighted Avedisian's significant role in founding the award-winning Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian K-12 School, as well as the seven-building Community Center complex located in Yerevan's Matatia-Sebastia district. "Education was the highest value for Ed. During his talks with our school teachers, he emphasized many times that a true patriot must see the future of his country in an educated generation and must raise educated children for the nation," she remarked, highlighting that the Avedisian School is a true reflection of Avedisian's vision. Lusine Mnatsakanyan, Avedisian School graduate and AUA alumna (BAB '21, MSM '23), added, "Mr. Avedisian infected me with his vision of being a forward thinker, hard worker, and someone who strives to create a better future for Armenia."

The remarks were followed by a musical performance by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra. Directed by Conductor Eduard Topchjan and joined by solo clarinetist Arsen Grigoryan, the orchestra performed Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622*.

Following the musical performance, President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian introduced Pamela Avedisian and thanked her for her continuous commitment to AUA and to Armenia, and made a special an-

nouncement, "I am very pleased to inform you that the tradition of Avedisian philanthropy has not stopped with Ed's passing. Pamela has committed a very substantial donation toward the construction of Humanities and Social Sciences and Arts



Conductor Eduard Topchjan

buildings on lands that we have acquired on the northside of our campus. This new contribution will allow us to vastly expand the physical capacity of our campus and develop new academic programs and facilities in the next few years. Pam, we are eternally grateful for your generosity."

The event concluded with Pamela Avedisian's remarks, who thanked the organizers of the meaningful event and noted, "It is appropriate to celebrate Ed here in Armenia surrounded by all those at AUA and the Avedisian School and elsewhere who have been so impacted by his kindness and generosity. I'm doing my best to fill his extremely large shoes and look forward again to returning to Armenia and to AUA."



AUA Interim President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian with the widow of Edward Avedisian, Pamela.

his interests in the world of finance led him to achieve some of his greatest accomplishments, which allowed him to become such a seminal pillar of AUA's growth as well as that of other educational institutions.

Avedisian dedicated his wealth to a myriad of important projects. Together with his wife, Pamela, he supported various AUA development programs, including the Paul Avedisian Center for Business Research and Development and the Zvart Avedisian Onanian Center for Health Services Research and Development. He was the major contributor to the construction of the AUA Paramaz Avedisian Building, completed in 2008 and named after his brother, and the pioneering sponsor of two Endowed Named Professorships — the Dr. Judson King Endowed Professorship and Dr. William Frazer Endowed Professorship — in honor of two former University of California provosts who served as chairs of the AUA Board of Trustees and played an instrumental role in the development of the University.

In 2008 and again in 2014, Avedisian was awarded the Movses Khorenatsi Medal, Armenia's highest cultural award presented by the president of the republic, for his contributions to education, culture, literature, and the arts. Two years later, his exceptional philanthropy was also recognized by the United States with the conferment of the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor, an award granted to world renowned professors, U.S. Presidents, civil rights figures, philanthropists, and heads of states.

The screening of the documentary was followed by remarks from those who had the privilege of knowing Avedisian in person and collaborated with him on various undertakings. AUA Interim President Dr.

"Ed was a dream trustee: thoughtful, quiet, when he spoke, you listened carefully because he was a very, very wise trustee. He grew with AUA starting in 1999, so he was a trustee for 23 years — a long time. He saw the University evolve during that period of time. He participated in guiding the evolution of the University and in his mind, education was an investment in the country." In his speech, Dr. Pitts also un-



The performance at AUA



INTERNATIONAL

Blinken Calls Turkey's FM Hakan Fidan, Sweden's NATO Bid Tops Agenda

By Amberin Zaman

WASHINGTON (Al-Monitor) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Turkey's new Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on June 8 to congratulate him on his appointment, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Blinken and Fidan discussed regional matters and the importance of the US-Turkey relationship, including "our longstanding defense cooperation." The pair also highlighted the importance of NATO unity, and Blinken emphasized the need for Sweden to join the NATO alliance "as soon as possible." Secretary Blinken reiterated the importance of the [Turkey]-sponsored Black Sea Grain Initiative," Miller added.

Anadolu news agency reported that the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia was also brought up during the call.

The Biden administration is widely expected to continue to crank up pressure on Ankara to drop its objections to Sweden's accession to NATO ahead of the alliance's next summit on July 12 in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius. Last week, President Joe Biden called Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to congratulate him on his May 28 electoral victory, using the occasion to press Sweden's case.

Ankara's position appears unchanged. In a phone call yesterday with his Swedish counterpart, Tobias Billstrom, Ankara pressed for additional steps from Stockholm ahead of next week's NATO talks between Turkish and Swedish officials about the Nordic state's accession to the alliance.

Fidan trotted out the same talking points about the need for Stockholm to address Turkey's "security concerns." Turkey accuses Sweden of being a haven for "terrorists," notably for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and individuals associated with Fethullah Gulen, the Pennsylvania-based cleric accused of engineering the failed coup to oust Erdogan in 2016. Ankara wants Stockholm to extradite a number of people it claims are linked to these groups and prevent anti-Turkish demonstrations in the streets of the Swedish capital — in other words, to bend its own constitution, critics say.

Sweden's Supreme Court has given the green light for the government to extradite an alleged PKK supporter who was sentenced in 2014 to four years and seven months in a Turkish prison for possession of marijuana, according to the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet. The timing of the ruling has raised eyebrows.

"Right now all the administration's focus is on getting Sweden into NATO before Vilnius," said Alan Makovsky, a senior fellow at the Center of American Progress and a leading analyst of Turkish affairs. "The



Turkey's newly appointed Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan delivers a speech during a handover ceremony in Ankara on June 5, 2023. The Turkish president unveiled a new Cabinet lineup on June 3 after winning a historic runoff election to serve a third term in office. — ADEM ALTAN/AFP via Getty Images

United States is not going to throw bricks at Erdogan between now and then."

The broad consensus is that Erdogan's election to a third five-year term means that the United States will likely take a more proactive approach in relations with its prickly NATO ally. "Clearly a lot of things have been on hold ahead of the election," said Nicholas Danforth, a senior nonresident fellow at ELIAMAP, an Athens-based think tank. "There is a recognition that they have to work with Erdogan." Moreover, "A competent foreign minister who is effective at communicating with Washington and with Erdogan will be of benefit to both sides," Danforth added.

Eric Edelman, a former US ambassador to Turkey, believes that Erdogan "wants to cool things down at least for the peri-

od leading up to municipal elections [in March 2024]."

Edelman added, "But I suspect that will be a tactical adjustment since he has not given up his ambitions for Turkey to be a regional superpower and a global player."

He continued, "Fidan, who is well known to Washington, will faithfully execute that tactical adjustment, but both he and [his successor as Turkish intelligence chief] Ibrahim Kalin are totally creatures of Erdogan and will loyally carry out whatever twists and turns he finds necessary to suit his domestic political imperatives."

The tone in Washington has already shifted. In an interview with CNN's Fareed Zakaria, national security adviser Jake Sullivan called Turkey's one-man rule system "a democracy." Turkey is "charting an independent foreign policy, but one in which we can have a constructive relationship with them even in the defense space, where President Erdogan's major request to President Biden is for the US to provide F-16 planes, which President Biden has said he would like to do," Sullivan said.

The administration will need to convince Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Sen. Robert Menendez, who is implacably opposed to the F-16 sales, in order for the deal to go through. The New Jersey senator may relent if Turkey approves Sweden's membership, but Ankara wants watertight assurances on the F-16 before doing so. Its demands of Stockholm are seen as more of a foil.

Analysts say that even if a deal is worked out, an initial bout of enthusiasm about a reset in Turkey ties will soon be extinguished by a host of other problems bedeviling them. "There is not going to be any progress on any of the issues that have been choke-points for several years. As for opportunities to warm ties, it's a pretty barren landscape," Makovsky said. Foremost is Turkey's fury at the Pentagon's continued alliance with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in northeast Syria. Turkey insists the group is a PKK front and that the United States is effectively partnered with terrorists.

Claims attributed to a PKK operative that he had been flown from northeast Syria to Sulaimaniyah in northern Iraq in "an American helicopter" flown by "American pilots" were splashed all over the pro-government media this week.

Other major sticking points include the United States' refusal to extradite Gulen and the continued incarceration of Metin Topuz, an employee of the US Consulate in Istanbul. In jail since 2017, Topuz was sentenced to eight years and nine months in prison in 2020 for his alleged connection with the coup plotters — a charge he denies.

Last but not least is Turkey's deepening ties with Russia, which saw President Vladimir Putin defer natural gas payments and transfer billions of dollars to Turkey's state coffers to bolster Erdogan's election campaign. Turkey refuses to join Western sanctions against Russia or dispose of Russian-made S400 missiles that triggered congressional sanctions on military sales that the administration is now trying to skirt. Ultimately, the two countries will continue to "try to maintain the fiction of being allies when neither one really believes it and their interests increasingly diverge," Danforth said.

(<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/06/blinken-calls-turkeys-fm-hakan-fidan-swedens-nato-bid-tops-agenda#ixzz84X8v3J00>)

INTERNATIONAL

Turkish Company to Produce Military Goods in Azerbaijan

ISTANBUL (news.am) — The Turkish textile company Akincilar has signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan, Anadolu Agency reported on June 12.

Akincilar's news release noted that a joint production enterprise and laboratory will be established in Azerbaijan. Akincilar manufactures body armor, ballistic helmets, military uniforms, etc. in Izmir.

The military-use products, which will be manufactured in Azerbaijan in a joint venture, are planned to be supplied to third countries.

Speaker Simonyan Upbeat On Turkish Relations

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Armenian authorities are ready to normalize relations with Turkey if there is will to do so from the Turkish side, Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan said on June 13.

"The Turkish side can always bring reasons if it wants. If not the Nemesis statue [paying tribute to Operation Nemesis of the ARF, which assassinated several Turkish officials who had overseen the execution of the Armenian Genocide] then something else. I personally think it was a mistake to erect the Nemesis statue, because it is not, and cannot be, a state policy line, but I say again, that was simply an excuse for Turkey. I said earlier that I could have found a million reasons to not travel to Turkey. If there is will from Turkey, and I have an impression that there is, then we are ready for it, we are even ready to go through big criticism but bring lasting peace to the Armenian people," Simonyan said.

He added that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's visit to Turkey for Erdogan's inauguration went very well.

Aliyev: Opening of Corridor Is Inevitable

BAKU (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev again has claimed that the opening of the "Zangezur corridor" through Armenia is "inevitable," Interfax.az reported on June 13.

"Every time we meet [with the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan], we discuss transport issues. In the current geopolitical conditions, the importance of the Middle Corridor is growing even more. The volume of cargo transportation through the Caspian Sea, further through the territory of Azerbaijan is increasing every year and will continue to increase. Therefore, we in Azerbaijan are expanding our transport and logistics capabilities," Aliyev said in Baku on Tuesday, June 13.

"The opening of the Zangezur corridor is inevitable. The sooner it opens, the better. In any case, we will increase our efforts in this direction. The opening of this corridor will create new opportunities for all countries and will positively affect business cooperation in the region," Aliyev said.

Turkey Says It Is Considering Building New Consulate in Shushi

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said June 13 his country is ready to open a consulate in Shusha (Shushi), a city that Azerbaijan took in the war in 2020.

Erdogan made the comment during a visit to Azerbaijan at the start of his third term in office following presidential elections last month.

"We are ready to open our consulate whenever you wish," Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency quoted Erdogan as telling Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and other officials at the start of bilateral talks.

"If we can open a consulate in Shusha, this would be a message to the world and especially to Armenia," he said.

Shusha, a center of Azeri culture for centuries, came under Armenian control in 1992 in fighting over the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region. Its retaking by Azerbaijan's forces in 2020 was of symbolic and strategic importance because it sits high above the region's nearby capital, Stepanakert.

Turkey actively supported Azerbaijan in the last conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, in which Azerbaijan regained control of much of the region and Armenian-held surrounding territories. More than 6,000 people were killed in six weeks of fighting.

Turkey and Azerbaijan have close ethnic and cultural bonds. It is traditional for newly elected Turkish leaders to visit Azerbaijan following a trip to the breakaway Turkish Cypriot state in the island nation's north. Erdogan was in northern Cyprus on June 12.

INTERNATIONAL

In Jerusalem's Contested Old City, Shrinking Armenian Community Fears Displacement After Land Deal

JERUSALEM, from page 1 and religious affairs — acknowledged that the church had signed away the patch of land. The Armenian patriarch, Nourhan Manougian, alleged that a now-defrocked priest bore full responsibility for the “fraudulent and deceitful” deal that the patriarch said took place without his full knowledge.

The admission inflamed passions in the Armenian Quarter, where activists decried the deal as a threat to the community's longtime presence in Jerusalem. Jordan, with its historic ties to Jerusalem's Christian sites, said it feared for the “future of the holy city.”

Palestinian officials accused Manougian of helping Israel in a decades-long battle between Israel and the Palestinians over a city that both sides claim as their capital. For Palestinians, such struggles over real estate are the centerpiece of the decades-old conflict, emblematic of what they see as a wider Israeli effort to remove them from strategic areas in east Jerusalem.

“From a Palestinian point of view, this is treason. From a peace activist point of

view, this undermines possible solutions to the conflict,” said Dimitri Diliiani, president of the National Christian Coalition of the Holy Land.

In a dramatic move, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Jordan's King Abdullah II suspended recognition of Manougian, the patriarch who has served for the past decade in what is normally a lifelong position. That renders him unable to sign contracts, make transactions and make decisions in the Palestinian territories and Jordan.

The priest who coordinated the deal, Baret Yeretsian, was deposed, assaulted by a mob of angry young Armenians and whisked away by Israeli police before seeking refuge in Southern California. Manougian has barricaded himself in the Armenian convent, unwilling or unable to be seen publicly, according to residents.

“This quarter is everything to me. It's the only place we have for Armenians to gather in the Holy Land,” said 22-year-old community leader Hagop Djernazian. “We have to fight for it.”

The quarter is home to some 2,000 Arme-

nians with the same status as Palestinians in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem — residents but not citizens, effectively stateless. Israel annexed east Jerusalem, where the Old City is located, after capturing it in 1967, a move not recognized internationally.

For the past month, protesters have formed a human chain around the quarter and gathered under Manougian's window, shouting “traitor” and demanding that he

grow its portfolio of ultra-luxury resorts.”

Renowned Israeli architect Moshe Safdie told the AP that Rothman would fund the project and that he would design it. Construction, he said, would start following excavations at the parking lot. It is unclear whether residents will be evicted, but the patriarchate has promised to assist any residents who are displaced.

The saga reflects the struggle over pol-



Community leader Hagop Djernazian on the edge of a parking lot that is part of a contentious lease deal.

European Court Punishes Turkey Over 'Kurdistan' Remark

By Karwar Faidhi Dri

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Rudaw) — The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on June 13 ruled that Turkey should compensate a renowned Kurdish politician with more than \$1,800 for punishing him after he mentioned the word “Kurdistan” during a parliamentary session.

Osman Baydemir, former lawmaker for the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), said during a Turkish parliament's meeting in late 2017 that he represented Kurdistan. When he was asked by the deputy speaker of the legislature “Where is Kurdistan?” he replied “It is here,” clapping his hand on his heart. With this gesture, he won the hearts of many Kurds. The parliament banned him for two sessions and withheld two-thirds of his salary as a punishment.

The ECHR said in its ruling on Tuesday that Baydemir's right to freedom of expression, protected by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, was violated.

“Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers,” stipulates the Article.

The European court decided that Turkey, which is a signatory of the Convention, should pay the 52-year-old Kurdish politician nearly €16,957 (\$18,293): €1,400 for pecuniary damage, €9,750 for non-pecuniary damage, and €5,807 for costs and expenses.

Reacting to the ECHR's verdict, Baydemir, who lives in the UK due to legal cases against him at home, said in a tweet on June 13 that the ruling has “a historical importance in terms of endeavors for the freedom of speech.”

“It is the rightful glory of millions of Kurds who keep Kurdistan alive in their

hearts and dreams,” he added.

He told Rudaw in 2021 that Kurdistan would exist as long as Kurds continue to exist, defending the remark he made in the Turkish parliament.

The charismatic politician won the hearts of millions of Kurds around the world for his remark, with many Kurds clapping their hands on their hearts as support for what he did.

Baydemir is among a group of HDP lawmakers facing terror-related or anti-Turkish state charges. Ankara has accused the party of having ties with the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a charge HDP denies.

Few months before Baydemir made the remark, the Turkish parliament had adopted new guidelines, banning the use of terms “Kurdistan,” Kurdish regions,” and “Armenian genocide.”

Baydemir is not the only Kurd being punished for using the term “Kurdistan.” Many people have been arrested for the same reason — which is seen as a separatist move by Ankara.

Kurds consider Kurdish-populated areas in southeast Turkey, northern Iraq (Kurdistan Region), western Iran, and northeast Syria (Rojava) to be part of Greater Kurdistan, which was divided up by Western powers a century ago when they redrew the map of the Middle East.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan defended the usage of the word “Kurdistan” in September 2013 while he was prime minister, during the early months of a historic but short-lasting peace process between Ankara and the PKK.

Erdogan has told journalists that Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, founder of modern Turkey, had used the word Kurdistan around a century ago. “Is Hero Mustafa Kemal a separatist for using this word?” he asked. “These are facts in our history. If we take the matter all the way to the Ottoman Empire, it is already very clear there.”

come clean about who has leased the land and how.

While the Armenian church has refused to disclose details about the sale, Yeretsian identified the investor as Australian-Israeli businessman Danny Rothman. As the church's real estate manager, Yeretsian said he was acting at the request of the patriarch.

There is very little information available about Rothman, who also has used the last name Rubinstein, according to a 2016 Cyprus regulatory decision fining him for falsifying his academic background.

His LinkedIn page describes him as chairman of a hotel company called Xana Capital. Records show the firm — formed in the United Arab Emirates — was registered in Israel in July 2021. Weeks later, a dozen Armenian priests raised the first alarm about a property deal being struck without their consent.

A sign recently popped up marking the Armenian parking lot as the property of Xana Capital.

Rothman, who is based in London, declined to comment when reached by The Associated Press. “I never get interviewed by the press. I'm a private person,” he said before hanging up.

The self-exiled priest, Yeretsian, said that Rothman plans to develop a high-end resort in the Armenian Quarter. The project, he added, would be managed by the One&Only hotel company based in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, which established diplomatic relations with Israel in 2020. The deal appears to be one of the most high-profile — and controversial — to come out of the business ties that were forged under the U.S.-brokered agreements known as the Abraham Accords.

Israel's Foreign Ministry declined to comment, citing the political sensitivity.

Kerzner International, owner of One&Only Resorts, also declined to comment. The Dubai-based company said only that it is “always exploring opportunities to

politics and real estate that has bedeviled the Holy Land for centuries.

Jewish investors in Israel and abroad long have sought to buy east Jerusalem properties. The Armenian Quarter is desirable because it abuts the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall, the holiest place where Jews can pray.

Their goal is to expand the Jewish presence in east Jerusalem, cementing Israeli control of the part of the city claimed by Palestinians as their capital.

Scandals involving land sales to Jewish settlers have previously embroiled the Greek Orthodox Church, the custodian of many Christian sites in the region.

Two decades ago, the Greek Church sold two Palestinian-run hotels in the Old City to foreign companies acting as fronts for a Jewish settler group. The secretive deals led to the downfall of the Greek patriarch and prompted international uproar.

Yeretsian, in California, dismissed fears of an Israeli settler take-over of the Armenian Quarter as “propaganda” based solely on Rothman's Jewish identity.

“The intention was never to Judaize the place,” he said, claiming that Rothman has no political agenda. He insisted that the Armenian patriarch was fully engaged in the long-running negotiations and personally signed off on the contract.

“I did my job faithfully in the best interest of the patriarchate,” he said, declining to offer further details about the lease that he said expires after a century. The patriarchate declined to say what it would do with the money from the deal.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem's Armenians — long ruled by foreign powers, displaced by wars and squeezed between Israelis and Palestinians — are filled with nagging dread.

“Our lands were acquired inch by inch with blood and sweat,” said 26-year-old resident Setrag Balian. “With one signature, they were given away.”



Community News

Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee Donates 2023 Proceeds to FAR

HARTFORD, Conn. — The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut has elected to donate all income received from this year's annual program to the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) Orphan Initiative, which supports orphaned children in Artsakh. It was the Committee consensus that, given the current challenges in Artsakh, this year's speaker, topic and donations should focus on Artsakh.

"We are pleased to donate \$6,200 toward this worthy project" stated Melanie Kevorkian Brown, Committee Chairman. "We appreciate the generosity of our Armenian American community donating toward this invaluable effort to care for and nurture the orphaned children in Artsakh. The FAR orphan initiative was timely and fitting."

The Connecticut Committee held its annual program on the 108th anniversary of the Genocide on April 22, at the historic Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol. The keynote speaker was Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America, (ANCA).

The mission of the Committee, in addition to honoring the memory of the one and a half million victims and as well as survivors of the Armenian



A family helped by FAR

Genocide, is to support programs and events, itself or with other organizations, to inform the public and remember the Genocide. It is in the process of establishing a suitable permanent Genocide Memorial. The committee also assists in the legislative mandate to provide Genocide related curricula in the public schools. Additionally, the committee seeks to present information about developments in the Diaspora and in Armenia.

FAR is dedicated to honoring the past, empowering the present, and ensuring the future for people in Armenia, Artsakh and Javakhk. FAR gives hope, guidance, opportunity and empowerment to those in need. Its work is mainly focused through five chief program areas of education, child protection, economic development, healthcare and social services. Through critical projects in these areas, FAR implements life-changing support, some of which translates into providing refuge and help to children who have suffered abuse and abandonment; empowering youth to excel in school and access higher education; and transforming healthcare professionals into medical ambassadors in their communities.

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The Hye Pointe Armenian Church complex in May 2023

Hye Pointe Church Godfathers Take Oath to Support Completion of Sanctuary

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

HAVERTHILL, Mass. — In the presence of Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan and pastor Fr. Vart Gyozyalyan, 16 godfathers of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe

gathered at their church on June 10 to sign a covenant to support the completion of the construction of the sanctuary. A group of some 75 people were also present to witness the ceremony, which took place on the eve of the Feast of the Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin.

It should be noted that there are 16 godfathers because when consecrating a church there are 16 columns, representing the 12 apostles, 2 evangelists, St. Paul and St. Krikor Lusavorich. The godfathers all swore an oath to serve God and the prosperity of the church.

Fr. Parsamyan wrote the next day on social media: "Yesterday, we gathered with the Pastor and dedicated godfathers of Hye Pointe Armenian Church to sign a covenant—a solemn promise—to support the construction of their church and bring it to completion soon! This ceremony served as a profound testament to their unwavering commitment to our faith, heritage, and community. The signing of this covenant signifies our determination to create a sacred space where future generations will gather, worship, and connect with God and their Armenian roots."

He added, "I want to express my deepest gratitude to Fr. Vart and all the godfathers who have pledged their support, time, and resources to make this dream a reality. Your unwavering dedication is truly inspiring, and I eagerly anticipate the day when we consecrate your church and celebrate our faith together."

Fr. Vart in turn stated later, "For us, it was a very spiritually renewing day full of grace, eyewitnessing the long-awaited continuation of the completion of the sanctuary. All this took place with the help, fatherly blessings and pronouncement of our Primate of the continuation of the completion of phase 2, which will start July 1. This phase represents the major part of the completion of the work."

Fr. Vart added that if there are people who would like to support the completion of the sanctuary or the project in general they may contact the church at armenian-churchathyepointe@verizon.net. Donations may be sent directly to the Hye Pointe Building Fund at 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill.



Group picture of the godfathers of the Hye Pointe Church with several family members, Primate of the Eastern Diocese Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan and Hye Pointe pastor Fr. Vart Gyozyalyan

Arthur Ipek Awarded Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund Fellowship

NEW YORK — The late Mrs. Dolores Zohrab Liebmann was the daughter of the great early 20th-century Armenian intellectual, writer, and statesman Krikor Zohrab. During her lifetime, Liebmann supported students and educational and charitable organizations, with a primary concern to attract and support students with outstanding character and ability, who would hold promise for achievement and distinction in their chosen fields of study.

Through a generous bequest at her death, Liebmann created a perpetual charitable trust designated as "The Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund" for the purpose of funding advanced education and graduate study grants, which must be carried out entirely in the United States of America.

Beginning in 2022, the Trustees of the Liebmann Fund, at the suggestion



Arthur Ipek

of the Selection Committee, decided that the Eastern Diocese would be among the select institutions eligible to nominate one candidate per year for the Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Graduate Fellowship.

The Eastern Diocese is pleased to announce that Arthur Ipek, a master's student in Cognitive Neuroscience at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, has been awarded the Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund Fellowship for academic year 2023–2024. Fellowships cover the cost of tuition and provide an annual \$18,000 stipend for living expenses.

In 2020, Ipek earned two Bachelor of Arts degrees from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in psychology and linguistics. While still a high school student, he began interning at the Zohrab Information Center, where he worked for several years between 2015–2017. He has also taught music at Holy Martyrs Armenian Language School. On June 4 of this year, he was ordained to the diaconate at Saint Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church (White Plains, NY), where he has played the organ and served at the altar since 2020.

With experience in both natural languages (e.g., Armenian, Turkish, French) and programming languages (e.g., Python, R, SPSS), Ipek is see IPEK, page 10

COMMUNITY NEWS

Ratevosian Enters Crowded Race to Succeed Schiff in Congress

ELECTIONS, from page 1

US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 731,165 people lived there, while according to some estimates, 13 percent of registered voters were Armenian. While he did not know Balekian personally, Ratevosian said, "If there is another Armenian in the race, I welcome it. There should be five Armenians."

There are many Armenians focused on local politics and local seats, Ratevosian noted. However, he said, "We have to do it at all levels. Those who are at the local levels are championing local issues. Where is our voice in Congress? We don't have one now. That is why I decided to enter the race when I saw there was an opening for that." He added, "When an Armenian American is in the room, that is how you make real change on Armenian issues. That is irreplaceable."

A second group that Ratevosian would like to represent and from which he is presumably hoping for support is the LGBTQ+ community. He said, "One motivation for running that I have been talking about is that we need a Congress that looks like us. We need a Congress that really represents the people, first as a gay American and as an Armenian American... We are grateful for the support that we get from allies but I have seen the power of how, when an LGBTQ person is in the room, you make an impact on LGBTQ issues."

Like Armenian candidates, there are also several other candidates from the LGBTQ+ community, including West Hollywood mayor Sepi Shyne (an Iranian American), and drag queen Maebe A. Girl (G. Maebe Pudlo).

Ratevosian mused, "The thing is, I knew all of that ahead of time. I think we maybe should even expect, since this primary is not until March, that there could be more people who enter. There could be people that drop out too, right? I knew that it would be a crowded and difficult primary before I decided to leave my State Department job. But this is the beauty of democracy."

Perhaps a third realm of support would be that of various health organizations.

san caucuses on the Hill. When I worked with [Congresswoman] Barbara Lee, we worked with Republicans on foreign policy issues. We worked with George Bush on HIV issues. I am the one with the most Federal government experience. There is also nobody in the race who has also represented the United States government on behalf of the State Department for diplomacy.



President Joe Biden (prior to his election) and the Ratevosian family

I have done that all across Africa when I was working at the State Department."

Ratevosian served as a legislative director for Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) from 2011 to 2014, dealing with budget, appropriations, foreign policy, and health issues. He recalled, "When I was with Congresswoman Barbara Lee, we worked on appropriation amendments for increased funding for Armenia. I firsthand saw her in action and we had a hand in helping Armenia."

He had already got involved in lobbying and politics prior to that both on HIV-related issues and Armenian affairs as an activist and community organizer. He served

tions, Ratevosian joined the Biden-Harris Transition team as a volunteer in the National Security Foreign Policy Team (2020-21), advising on global health and HIV issues. He was tapped to then work in the US State Department. He first served as senior advisor at the office of the US Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy, becoming its acting chief of staff in 2021,

and finally serving as senior advisor for health equity policy. It was this job he quit in order to begin campaigning fulltime for Congress.

Armenian Background

Ratevosian points to his paternal grandfather, whose namesake he is, as the source of his inspiration, and includes him in his campaign video. "Before I started my campaign I went to his shoe repair store, which is still there, and memories were coming back of me sitting with him where he was teaching me how to engage with humans, how to be respectful and kind to people who walk into your door, and how to be a citizen in this world. That level of humility, that level of respect, that level of treating everyone equally are the things that have inspired me to run."

Ratevosian has both Western and Eastern Armenian ancestors, the latter coming to the US from Lebanon. His father's parents were exiled to Siberia because they were very anti-Communist. His father was born in Siberia in exile, and was given the name Azat, which means free in Armenian, Ratevosian said, because, according to his grandmother, the family was saying to God, let us be freed from here. His paternal grandfather thus was very involved in Armenian politics. Ratevosian said, "My grandfather was the most Tashnag person on the planet, I could say."

Nonetheless, Ratevosian himself is not involved in any Armenian political party or organization, declaring, "I've had no allegiances necessarily but I have worked with all of them." He said he worked with the Armenian Assembly of America, when he was in graduate school in Boston to obtain his master's degree in public health (2005-2007), and the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) in Washington, as well as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Ratevosian, who was born in Hollywood and grew up in Sun Valley, graduated three Armenian schools in the Los Angeles region, Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian School, the Mekhitarist Fathers' School, and Holy Martyrs Ferrahian High School. He speaks Armenian fluently, and, in fact, peppered his answers in this interview with

Armenian phrases.

When working on the Hill in Washington, Ratevosian said he worked with both the Assembly and ANCA to help young Armenians to get jobs in government. He said, "I have always believed, just because of my own experience, that Armenians need to come out of their bubble, come out of California, or LA, or wherever they might be, and come to Washington, where the power is, and help contribute to building that power. So I have always been passionate about creating those pathways, and supporting those pathways to jobs in Washington."

He has traveled many times to Armenia. In 2019, right before the Karabakh war, he had the unique experience to climb Mount Ararat with fellow Armenians. He trained for a year to do this. He said, "I went all the way to the top and put an Armenian flag on top of Mt. Ararat." He added, "I had never felt so connected to the homeland. I brought my *dede's* [grandfather's] picture to the top of Ararat. It just changes your whole world view, in terms of when you look 360 [degrees] and see what it was so many years ago, the Armenian empire. It really transformed my connection to the homeland."

Improving Armenian Health

He proudly proclaimed: "I have a long track record on working for Armenia no matter what my job has been. Even when I was in the pharmaceutical company, I worked to create the first ever Hepatitis C elimination project between Gilead and the Ministry of Health in Armenia. So I have always looked out for ways to support the homeland and to support Armenians." He went there in 2018 for this project, and went several times.

Hepatitis C is a major challenge for Armenia because, according to Ratevosian, injecting drug use is high, as is alcoholism, and people can live with this disease for a long time without showing symptoms. The Gilead company had developed a cure, and Ratevosian's job was to ensure that people all across the world, not just those in the West, had access to this cure at affordable or zero cost per patient. He said, "What we were able to create, with a few hepatologists who are champions in Armenia, was an awareness campaign so that Armenians can get tested and be educated about cures."

Later, during the Covid pandemic, Ratevosian secured priority meetings between Gilead and Armenian government officials, and worked behind the scenes to facilitate Gilead's donation of 3,000 vials of Veklury (remdesivir), an antiviral medication for Covid, to Armenia in the fall of 2021.

Ratevosian said he worked to get financial support for several organizations in Armenia working to fight homophobia and transphobia as well as to provide treatment and prevention medication for people living with HIV or at risk of infection even before his work on Hepatitis C. This was first through amFAR and then Gilead. Gilead provides a treatment, as well as a medicine for prevention called PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis).

Genocide and Artsakh

While working in the Biden-Harris transition team, Ratevosian worked on promoting President Biden's Armenian Genocide recognition, he said. When he started working in the State Department his focus was on the health side, so he was not directly involved in Armenian issues any longer.

Regarding what is going on in Karabakh, he said, "In my view, what is happening now is very concerning... It is an existential crisis. The future of the homeland and Armenia's role in the region are

continued on next page



Jirair Ratevosian, first in the right foreground, as part of the Gilead Sciences delegation meeting with the Armenian Ministry of Health in October 2018

Ratevosian just earned a doctoral degree in public health from John Hopkins University this May right before launching his campaign. He said, "I worked my entire life with physicians organizations and nursing organizations. I have worked in hospitals and so I very much want to be a champion for healthcare issues."

Federal Government and Political Experience

Ratevosian felt something else in his background made him stand out from his rivals: "I will tell you one thing and this is what I told my family last night. There is nobody in this race that has more Federal government experience than I do. I've worked with Republicans. I've worked with Democrats. I have created biparti-

on the Planning Council of the Boston Public Health Commission concerning Ryan White HIV Funding from 2007-2008, and then became the national field organizer for the Health Action Aids Campaign, for Physicians for Human Rights (2008-2009). He was chair of the Policy and Advocacy Committee of the American Public Health Association (2008-2011), and deputy director, public policy, for the Foundation for Aids Research, known as amFAR (2009-2011). In the genocide field, he was a community organizer for the Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur (2006-2009).

At the end of a stint working in the private sector for a biopharmaceutical company, Gilead Sciences, from 2014-2021, as executive director of global patient solu-



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

really at stake.” He said, “This is why all Armenians, the diaspora in particular, should be paying attention to this election, because we need an Armenian voice to be leading the charge in Congress.” He declared that while everyone wants peace, the question is at what cost. He said, “I am not going to stand for a so-called peace agreement that gives a license to the Aliyev regime to continue its goal of ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Artsakh. I don’t believe peace can be achieved by giving up the rights of Armenians in Artsakh to their own self-determination.”

As far as what the US could do about this, he replied, “America is the indispensable nation in the world, and if we can change the calculations to ensure that Armenian issues are a key part of our foreign policy agenda in America, then that will hopefully bring big change to the region and to the way America supports Armenia. I think that can be achieved, but I think part of that is building power in Washington, building representation.”

He emphasized, “Being *hayrenaser* [patriotic] is not enough. I say this all the time. You can come protest here in Los Angeles, where I am now, or on Facebook, but we need to take action into our own hands. We need to get jobs in government. We need to



Jirair Ratevosian participates in an annual AIDS Lifecycle event

get jobs on the Hill. We need to elect Armenian Americans to Congress. That is how we build power.”

When asked how realistic was it to hope that the US can defend Artsakh and Armenia from annihilation, and what did he think the US could actually do, he responded, “There are so many ways that the United States can lead. We have seen how America has led in the past on other crimes

against humanity, right? This should be considered as one. We have to hold the Azerbaijan government accountable. This is a regime that does not stand for peace. This is a regime that needs to be held accountable by the international community. So the United States should lead a charge at the UN, at the Security Council to bring that kind of accountability.”

Secondly, he said that the US should review military assistance to Azerbaijan. Finally, he said that any peace agreement needs to be mediated, monitored and reviewed by the international community. He added, “If the United States wasn’t leading part of the international community’s review and monitoring, then I think there could be risks that there could be backsliding or threats to whatever peace agreement that could be signed.”

Ideology

Politically, Ratevosian said, “I am a proud progressive...I have a track record of fighting for people who are disenfranchised and who are marginalized – some of the poorest people around the world and in our own communities. I will be informed by my own personal lived experience as I approach issues... I myself as a gay man have been discriminated against and have been pushed out of the system...Being a champion for progressive issues, I am a feminist, in addition to being a progressive.”

He said that while he worked for the

most progressive member of Congress, both Congresswoman Lee and himself had also been pragmatic in the way they approached issues, in order to be able to solve problems, but Congress now is not working for the people.

He said, “I have seen how Congress can work better for people and I want to be part of the change to make it work better for people in the district, in the California 30th. Being a progressive doesn’t mean you can’t get stuff done.”

He said that as a progressive, “It is also about taking care of people, and ensuring that people have more than a minimum wage to be able to support their families. It is about ensuring that mothers don’t have to have two jobs to be able to pay their bills, or if you go to school to be a nurse or a physician, you are not in debt to a loan company for the rest of your life. ... There is something wrong with the system and we need to encourage people to have educational opportunities without having to sacrifice supporting families.”

He observed that there are many healthcare challenges facing communities, including access and the pricing of prescription jobs, while healthcare workers face their own difficulties. Aside from such healthcare issues and homelessness, another issue he wants to tackle is crime. He said that it is high in California’s 30th District, and many business owners he spoke with told him that their businesses had been vandalized over the past few years.

In sum, he said, “I would say that I am one of the more progressive candidates in the race and I would hope to be the most progressive.” Compared to others, he said, “What I will do differently in terms of my strategy is that I will talk to all communities. ... So my approach to issues and to communities is to always build trust and to listen. I have the humility to be able to sit down, listen to communities, and understand what their challenges are. I will do that for Armenian Americans, I will do that for Philipino Americans, I will do that for African Americans, for all different communities in the district, because this district, like all of LA, is so beautifully diverse. I want to be that champion for all communities, and that is something different I think that I bring to the table because of my experience.”



Dr. Jirair Ratevosian atop Mt. Ararat

Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee Donates 2023 Proceeds to FAR

PROCEEDS, from page 7

FAR was born out of a rush to provide emergency assistance to those whose lives were destroyed by a devastating earth-

quake. More than 30 years later, FAR is a leading player in Armenia’s development, working in solidarity as a trusted partner with Armenians to craft a better future for

their nation through transparent, effective, and efficient programs.

According to Garnik Nanagoulian, FAR’s executive director, FAR has been providing support to families and children who have lost their fathers in the Artsakh wars since the 4-day war in 2016. This support has been made possible through the generosity of communities across the country, including the Knights and Daughters of Vartan and the Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee.

Nanagoulian stated, “Thanks to the support we receive, FAR has been able to reach out to about 400 children who have experienced the loss of their fathers on the battlefield in Artsakh. Among them are

Lina, aged 8, and Sergey, aged 12, from Syunik *Marz*. Their mother, Meri, shared, “It’s been tough for me to be a single mom, but my kids are my backbone, my motivation to live and move forward. I am grateful for the support we receive, as my only wish is to help my kids have a dignified future.”

He added, “The impact of the Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee’s contribution for these children cannot be overstated. It provides them with an opportunity to grow up in a healthy and nurturing environment, receive an education, and eventually be able to compete on equal footing with their peers.”

To find out more about the organization, visit www.farusa.org/.

Giragosian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

James L. Melikian Popcorn Man Scholarship Winners Announced for 2023-2024 Academic Year

FRESNO — Fresno State students Jiselle Cardenas and Heidi Ecker were awarded the James L. Melikian Popcorn Man Scholarship for the 2023-2024 academic year. Cardenas is receiving a \$2,500 scholarship, and Ecker is receiving a \$2,000 scholarship.

Both students are juniors majoring in Media, Communications and Journalism (MCJ) with an emphasis in Advertising and Public Relations and both are team leaders for TALK, the student-run AD/PR agency course. Cardenas led the team who ran this semester's TASTE (Take a Student to Eat) networking program that matched current MCJ students with area professionals, and Ecker is leading the team that is charged with coming up with ideas and sample materials for a campaign refresh for Yosemite National Park's Keep Bears Wild project.

The James L. Melikian Popcorn Man Scholarship is generously funded by James L. Melikian, who graduated from the MCJ Department when it was the Journalism Department. Melikian's studies focused on public relations and he has built a very successful business called The Popcorn Man. The company specializes in providing school districts in California and other states with healthy, nutritious items for the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program, the Child Care Program as well as the After School Snack Program.

Melikian graduated from Fresno State in 1969 with a degree in Mass Communication and Journalism, and was President of the Hye Society organization. He fondly reflects on the support and guidance he received from the late journalism and public relations professor Bernard A. "Bernie" Shepard, Ph.D. and Dr. Arthur H. Margosian. (Shepard established the Public Relations program at Fresno State. He was a member of the Fresno State Department of Journalism for almost 30 years, joining the staff in 1943. He brought vision and a wide-range of experience to the department.) "My public relations aptitude and people orientation was nurtured by my education at Fresno State and my relationships with Professor Shepard and Dr. Margosian," says Melikian. One of Melikian's efforts has been to provide funding for three scholarships for journalism department students specializing in public relations.

At Fresno State, Jim served as the manager for the legendary Bulldog baseball coach Pete Beiden the last two years of the Coach's tenure. Melikian was one of the donors for the "Pete Beiden Statue" that sits in the shadows of the aptly named Beiden



From left, Doug Yavanian, Shirley Armbruster, Heidi Ecker, James L. Melikian, Jiselle Cardenas, Dr. Wes Wise and Prof. Betsy Hays

Field. As an up and coming journalist, he wrote political articles and his column, "In the Dog House," which was a must read in the University's "Daily Collegian." As President of the Hye Society, he was responsible for bringing Fresno's celebrated Pulitzer prize-winning author, playwright and novelist William Saroyan to speak at one of the Society's meetings. Melikian was the keynote speaker for the mass communication and journalism department's convocation prior to the 100th commencement at Fresno State in 2011.

In 2014, he was a recipient of the Fresno State "Top Dog" award, recognizing outstanding alumni, and he has been an active supporter of both the Armenian Studies Program and the Department of Media, Communications, and Journalism at Fresno State. He is an Alumni Association Life Member and a Bulldog Foundation supporter. He was one of 13 honored by Fresno State and the Alumni Association. Honorees came from Fresno State's various Schools and Departments. Melikian was nominated from the School of Arts and Humanities.

"I have tried to build my life on the foundation based on faith, family, friends, fun and education. All of this has given me an entrepreneurial spirit to allow me to succeed in business," he says. "It has been a wonderful ride." Melikian has owned and operated his business for 46 years. As such, he has been a mainstay for advocating on behalf of healthy student nutrition at both the state and national levels. He has attended almost all of the California School Nutrition Association (CSNA) legislative conferences in Sacramento, and 33 such events in Wash-

ington, D.C., educating legislators on child nutrition and various Armenian issues.

Melikian has received the distinguished "Donald F. Flahiff Industry Appreciation Award" from the CSNA three times. In 2021, he received the Moscone Commitment to Child Nutrition Award for his long standing support of student nutrition. His "Popcorn Diplomacy" has been honored by the California State Senate and Assembly, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Los Angeles City Council and the United States Congressional Record. Melikian is a member of California CSNA and the Southern California, Northern California, Central California and Mother Lode School Nutrition Associations.

Melikian and his wife, Connie, are residents of Rancho Palos Verdes and have long supported and participated in a number of organizations including the Alumni Association, Bulldog Foundation, Los Angeles World Affairs Council, Knights of Vartan, Palos Verdes Chamber of Commerce, the Califor-

nia Triple X Fraternity and the Town Hall of Los Angeles. They are members of the St. James Apostolic Church in Los Angeles.

The Melikians support the Ararat Eskijian Museum located in Mission Hills, California, and commissioned a mother and child bronze statue at the museum entrance commemorating the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Through his enthusiastic "Popcorn Diplomacy," Melikian admits that he has probably given away more popcorn than he sells. In being honored at Fresno State, it was noted that "his business truly represents the true spirit of the free enterprise system."

The James L. Melikian family honors Melikian's mother, Audrey Melikian, by instituting an annual scholarship with the CSNA. Born in 1919 in Fresno, Audrey was a first-generation American of Armenian parents. She was also a lifelong, active member of the St. Paul's Armenian Apostolic Church in Fresno. The CSNA empowers and supports school nutrition professionals in advancing the accessibility, quality and integrity of school nutrition programs.

His ethnic up-bringing in Fresno has encouraged Melikian's involvement in several groups including serving on the Board of the Southern Region of the Armenian Assembly of America, and he is a Godfather of the Armenia Apostolic Cathedral of the Western Diocese. Since 1972, the Armenian Assembly promotes public awareness of Armenian issues, encourages Armenian-American participation in the American democratic process, and assists in humanitarian and development programs in Armenia and Artsakh, while strengthening the U.S.-Armenia and U.S.-Artsakh relationships. Melikian and his wife have endowed a summer internship for college students through the Armenian Assembly.

For information and to contribute, go to: <https://cah.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies/support.html>

Ipek Awarded Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund Fellowship

IPEK, from page 7

currently pursuing courses in behavioral neuroscience, the cognitive neuroscience of memory, and psycholinguistics during his master's program. He is also conducting research at the intersection of language, perception, and cognition, conducting studies that measure brain waves upon humans presented with sentences to process.

Ipek said, "My decision to apply to the fellowship was primarily driven by the legacy of Dolores Zohrab Liebmann and her earnest commitment to research, both to the American community at large, as well as the Armenian community. Apart from the scientific research that I intend to pursue with this generous scholarship, her establishment of the Zohrab Information Center in the heart of the Armenian community, at which I have interned for four years, has been a

center of research for scholars of Armenian Studies, looking to enrich their research through its invaluable collections. There I gained experience in the rigor of conducting scholarly research, and I am grateful to be able to continue my graduate research thanks to this generous fellowship."

The Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fellowships are awarded only to candidates who have outstanding undergraduate records, have demonstrated a need for financial assistance, are citizens of the United States of America, are enrolled in accredited colleges and universities in the United States, and have received baccalaureate degrees. The trustees welcome applications from students of all national origins who are United States citizens.

Applications for the next cycle of funding will be announced in the Fall.

Boutique Senior Living!

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY

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

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

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

For more information about Manoogian Manor, visit: www.manoogianmanor.com. Qualified candidates are encouraged to direct inquiries to David Karapetian at: dkarapetian@comcast.net.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Americans to Again Participate in Rose Parade

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — One of the oldest American parades, the Rose Parade, also known as the Tournament of Roses, began 133 years ago. On New Year's Day of 1890, the beautiful tradition of featuring roses and flowers was launched in Pasadena. Californians tried to keep the tradition alive during World War II, but the beautiful festivity was canceled in 2021 because of COVID.

The state of California hosts the larg-

est community of Armenian Americans, and Pasadena is one of the most densely Armenian-populated cities. Naturally, the famous parade could not go on without Armenian participation.

50 million people watch it every year. This is about four times bigger an audience than those who watch the World Series of Baseball," he remarked. "Խենթեր եկանք քով քովի [the crazy ones got together]" added Kokozyan in Armenian, recalling that in 2014 a group of Armenians who had what was at that point a seemingly difficult dream to participate and to gain an award at the rose float formed a committee.

"Eight of us, not tied to any politics, got together with this goal. We have had five floats and three awards," noted



Kokozyan

American-Armenian Rose Float Association team member working on a float

The Armenian American group has received trophies, including the top one, 60 percent of the time it participated. Kokozyan refers to the profound preparation they work on as a key reason for success.

"We have Armenian historians helping us. And we have our in-house designer that goes to elements and knows how to design a float. And has learned the techniques," added Kokozyan.

Once you win or receive a trophy, you have more airtime on TV and media; therefore, it's imperative to prepare a competitive float for Californian Armenians.

The floats feature details of Armenian history, architecture, and historical sites of Armenia/Artsakh: the Sardarabad monument, the We Are Our Mountains monument of Stepanakert, the Tatev monastery and Garni Temple, and many others. Armenian folk music and danc-



Rose Float Association team member showing off the team hoodie

es are performed on the float during the parade.

Coincidentally, next year the president of the parade is an ethnic Armenian – Alex Aghajanian.

An accompanying video to this article at mirrorspectator.com includes the interview with Martin Kokozyan and details of the Armenian Rose Float.



American-Armenian Rose Float Association team working on a float

AGBU and Tekeyan Cultural Association Backgammon Tournament Supports Armenian Basketball Squad

PASADENA, Calif. — The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Pasadena Glendale Chapter and the Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter joined forces to organize a back-

gammon tournament on Saturday, June 10, creating an evening of fun and excitement for a great cause. The aim was to raise funds for the talented Armenian National Team Boys U16 Basketball Squad, which is eagerly preparing to compete in the upcoming FIBA European Small Countries tournament in Kosovo. Led by the esteemed AGBU Coach Zorik Isajani, this young team is determined to shine on the international stage.

The tournament attracted a lively crowd, and 16 participants eagerly showcased their backgammon skills in friendly competition. As the dice rolled and strategies unfolded, it became clear that the tournament was a blend of skill, tactics, and a little luck. After several intense rounds, a triumphant victor emerged — Vick Kassardjian. With impeccable moves and a keen eye for the game, Vick proved himself as the undisputed backgammon authority of the day.

Barouyr and Angela Amirian donated an outdoor patio heater, which was awarded to the tournament champion. The prize not only added warmth to the winner's patio but also symbolized the community's collective support for the Armenian National Team Boys U16 Basketball's journey towards success.

The funds raised during this event will play a vital role in assisting the Armenian U16 Boys Basketball team as they strive to



Some of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and AGBU members at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center in Pasadena

surpass their achievements in the previous championship. Their remarkable performance resulted in a silver medal, and with the support of the community, they are determined to attain even greater heights this time.

"We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the participants, sponsors, and supporters who made this event possible," said Coach Zorik Isajani. "Your generosity and enthusiasm have helped to

fuel the dreams and aspirations of these talented young athletes. We are grateful for your unwavering support."

The AGBU Pasadena Glendale Chapter and Tekeyan Metro LA Chapter express their best wishes to the Armenian U16 Boys Basketball Squad and its esteemed head coach, Zorik Isajani. The entire community eagerly awaits their remarkable journey and stands united in the pursuit of their goals.



AGBU Pasadena Glendale Chapter Chair Krikor Demirjian, left, and Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter Chair Carl Bardakian, right, present Coach Zorik Isajani, at center, with a memento of the latter's silver medal achievement at the FIBA European Small Countries U16 Basketball Championship



COMMUNITY NEWS

Sam Kbushyan Enters Race for LA City Council

By Vic Gerami

LOS ANGELES — Longtime public servant, advocate, and non-profit board member, California State Commissioner Sam Kbushyan this month launched his campaign for Los Angeles City Council District 2 to replace Council President Paul Krekorian, who cannot seek another term due to term limits.

He has already raised \$150,000 from 230 small business owners and neighborhood leaders.

Council District 2 includes the Los Angeles neighborhoods of North Hollywood, Studio City, Sun Valley, Toluca Lake, Valley Glen, Valley Village, and Van Nuys.

Kbushyan is a zero-generation American. He was just a child when his parents moved to the United States from Armenia and settled in Los Angeles. Like most immigrants, his parents struggled to raise three kids, learn English, and adapt to their new homeland. Life was challenging at the time. His mother was a school teacher, and his dad was a small business owner. They worked around the clock to ensure a promising future for their children.

He and his brothers attended public schools, and he attended Valley College in Valley Glen right after high school. He got active in college and eventually became the Student Body President at Valley College. Later, he became the Commissioner of Political Affairs at California State University Los Angeles, where he earned his bachelor's degree. He went on to complete his graduate degree at Northeastern University in Boston.

The activist in him was born at an early age. Having watched his parents struggle to build a small business, face inequality and discrimination, and find it challenging to get simple city services, he decided to devote his life to activism and public service. He's since been a labor union organizer for the SEIU 2015, formerly known as Local 434b. He devised plans to help long-term healthcare workers advocate for improving wages, working conditions, and access to healthcare. He successfully mobilized over thirty-thousand long-term healthcare providers through advocacy workshops, collective bargaining, and education for union members.

Kbushyan started his career organizing

In Home Supportive Services employees represented by SEIU Local 2015. He now owns and operates SKG, which helps small businesses and non-profits navigate government bureaucracy to deliver services to those in need. He currently serves on the LA Community Alliance and the Immigrants Charitable Foundation boards. Sam and his wife, Suzanna, are raising their three children in North Hollywood.

Kbushyan, who recently served on Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass's advisory transition team, released the following statement: "As a small business owner, a husband and father of three schoolchildren, and a lifelong community organizer, I am running for City Council to fight for the residents, business owners, and all stakeholders of LA's District 2. For years, career politicians who are part of the establishment machine made promises at every election only to ignore the community. So, our challenges have gotten worse."

He continued, "It's said that if nothing changes, nothing changes. District 2 needs a grassroots person representing the people and values of our district's diverse neighborhoods. Politics are usual, and establish-



Candidate Sam Kbushyan and his wife, Suzanna, and their three children

ment politicians who want to represent the district in the interim in their long-term political ambitions have failed us. Unlike them, I'm not here to cater to the elite donors and special interests. I fight for our neighborhoods, homeowners, renters, and business owners. My focus is to restore trust in our government and hold City Hall accountable."

California Assemblywoman Friedman Announces Endorsement of Adrin Nazarian for LA City Council

NORTH HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — On June 5, former California State Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian announced the endorsement of California State Assemblymember Laura Friedman, who currently chairs the State Assembly's Committee on Transportation. Assemblywoman Friedman



Laura Friedman

formerly chaired the Assembly's Natural Resources Committee and the State Legislature's Joint Rules Subcommittee on Sexual Harassment and Response. "I am proud to endorse former Assemblymember Nazarian for Los Angeles City Council District 2, as he is the most qualified and the best prepared candidate to replace Council President Paul Krekorian on the City Council. Adrin has a track record of fighting and delivering for San Fernando Valley residents, and has been a mentor and teacher, while we served together in the legislature. I am proud to call him my friend. I would urge all of you to join me in supporting Adrin Nazarian for Los Angeles City Council," said Friedman,

advocate for expanding mass transit access and services throughout the state. Council District 2 is a transportation hub in the region, and I'm grateful to have transportation policy leaders, like the Chairwoman, supporting my campaign. There has been significant progress expanding transportation options and service in the San Fernando Valley and, I look forward to continuing that important work, when I am elected to the Council."

Assemblymember Friedman was elected

in 2022 to the newly drawn 44th Assembly District, which includes the neighborhoods of Studio City, Toluca Lake and portions of North Hollywood, which are all represented by Council District 2. Assemblywoman Friedman joins Assemblywoman Luz Rivas as an official endorser of the Nazarian Campaign. The two legislators represent over 90% of Council District 2 residents in the California State Assembly.

Former Assemblymember Nazarian served the East San Fernando Valley for a

decade in the California State Assembly, where he worked successfully to pass protections for renters, patients and seniors. Former Assemblymember Nazarian is also known for creating the CalKIDS College Savings Program, the largest college savings program in the nation, ensuring every child born in California after July 2022 has a path to college and career training.

Former Assemblymember Nazarian and his family are residents of North Hollywood.

Invitation on the occasion of the 120th Anniversary of the Dikran Yergat Cultural Association & the 50th Anniversary of the construction of its Center

Dikran Yergat's family, members and friends,

We, the undersigned, former and current Chairpersons and our committee members Invite you to commemorate these two anniversaries with a worldwide Zoom online event, similar to a formal program that would have been initiated to mark such a solemn occasion.

An ad hoc committee comprised of us two Chairpersons and former committee members was formed to best organize this historic event. Mr. Barkev Nazaretian (Montreal, Canada) is in charge of coordinating the event's various activities, and Mr. Hrant Vartzedian (Los Angeles, California) is the host of the Zoom event and the technical coordinator.

All former members worldwide, as well as the general public, who wish to participate in this historic online event, (final date to be announced soon) are asked to send their email addresses to DikranYergat120@email.com in order to receive an invitation to the zoom event and links to view and participate, as well as to be notified of future details and information.

Looking forward to seeing our global membership virtually gathered on this occasion.

Dikran Yergat 120th virtual Anniversary organizing Committee.
Chairpersons

Bedros Piandarian
(1971 - 1973)

Asdghig Alexanian-Papazian
(2004 -)



Former California State Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian

in a statement.

Former Assemblymember Nazarian welcomed the endorsement stating, "Assemblymember Friedman has been a fierce champion for the environment and a tireless



Arts & Culture

Rare Armenian Manuscripts to be Restored through Bank of America Art Conservation Project Grant

BOSTON — As part of its Art Conservation Project, Bank of America provided a grant to the Armenian Museum of America of Watertown to restore 21 illuminated manuscripts from its collection, one of which dates back to the 13th century, the museum announced today. Bank of America selected the Armenian Museum of America as one of the 23 cultural institutions that have been named recipients of the 2023 Bank of America Art Conservation Project, a program that provides grants to nonprofit cultural institutions to conserve important works of art.

This year's recipients represent a diverse range of artistic styles, media, and cultural traditions across China, Colombia, France, Lebanon, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, the U.K. and the U.S.

The Armenian Museum of America has the largest collection of Armenian artifacts in the United States. Among them is an extremely rare collection of 21 handwritten and hand-illuminated manuscripts, of which approximately 10 are on display in the museum's galleries at any given time. One example is a small hymnal, or *sharaknots* in Armenian, which contains hymns to be chanted and performed on feast days. Attributed to the prolific artist Karapet of Berkri, the illumination depicts the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

Since 2010, Bank of America's Art Conservation Project has supported the preservation of paintings, sculptures, and archeological and architectural pieces of critical importance to cultural heritage and the history of art. More than 237 projects across 40 countries managed by nonprofit cultural institutions received funding to conserve historically or culturally significant works of art that are in danger of deterioration.

"We are incredibly grateful to Bank of America for providing us with this grant so our manuscripts will be preserved so that they can be viewed by the public and studied in perpetuity without risk of further damage. This partnership will allow visitors to view the art and culture of the past, and to see it in the context of the present in our galleries," said Jason Sohigian, executive director of the Armenian Museum.

"By the medieval period, Armenians had a rich literary society. Since then, many manuscripts and illuminations have been looted or destroyed, a process that intensified during the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Preservation has taken on a renewed importance, as Armenia's cultural heritage remains at risk," he added.

"The Armenian Museum of America is an indispensable resource for the preservation of the rich heritage see EXHIBIT, page 17



Lusine Arakelyan with Mikayel Arabyan (Facebook photo)

One 'Small Step' for Young Musicians in Yerevan

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

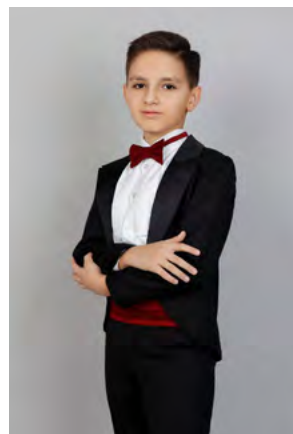
YEREVAN — The name of the competition may be "Small Step," but the voices of the singers were big and beautiful. This year the event, which has previously brought together participants from Armenia and Artsakh, is to be international, with contestants invited from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Georgia and the Russian Federation. The music festival is taking place from June 1 to 20 in the large concert hall of the Makar Yekmalyan Music school Nr. 1 in Vagharshapat. The aim of the competition is to identify talented children and youngsters, and help them on their way to the stage.

Lusine Arakelyan, an opera singer and music teacher who has been studying in Germany, reported on the achievement of Mikayel Arabyan, who is one of her students at the Aleksey Hekimyan Music school in Yerevan. The 12-year-old is in fifth grade and will graduate in two years. He has already impressed international juries and won several awards in prestigious contests in Italy, Vienna, Bulgaria, and the United States ("American Edition" International online Contest, June 10, 2021, First Prize).

This year in Vagharshapat, each participant was asked to present two songs, one by an Armenian composer. The other youngsters in his age group sang an Armenian song and a Neapolitan or Russian piece.

Mikayel sang Schubert's *Ave Maria* and Artemi Ayvazyan's *Caravan*, and listeners received his performance with enthusiasm. Some expressed disappointment that he received second prize. While youngsters his age are generally expected to choose children's songs, he selected a masterpiece of the German art song tradition. Schubert's beloved composition presents challenging voice problems for the performer and is particularly difficult for such a young singer to achieve the skill level to sing long, beautiful phrases in one breath, with nuances in dynamics and pure intonation.

The talented young Mikayel has reportedly not yet made up his mind, whether he will pursue a career on the stage, but at the age of 12, there is no need to rush. Teacher Arakelyan is justly proud of her student.



Mikayel Arabyan

Atamian Hovsepian Curatorial Practice Opens New Downtown Gallery Space

By Peter Khachadurian

NEW YORK — While the Atamian Hovsepian Curatorial Practice (AHCP) is new on the scene, it has been able to carve out an important niche in the city's art world. The space is a non-profit dedicated to exhibiting some of the best in contemporary art, particularly by what the curators Christopher Atamian and Tamar Hovsepian term underrepresented groups that include: people of color, women, Southwest Asian and North African artists, particularly Armenians: "Go to any major museum today and count the number of women in the permanent collections — I doubt you will find more than 10 percent. As for Armenians, there may be one in each collection, say a Gorky for example, at the Whitney. In this day and age, that is inexcusable." AHCP wants to help identify, exhibit, and place these artists in collections worldwide," they said.

On May 11, AHCP held a benefit opening.

As a non-profit all works in the gallery are for sale and the funds will go directly to the organization to mount future exhibitions. The practice was founded in 2022 by two colleagues with extensive experience in the art world, Christopher Atamian and Tamar Hovsepian.

Their first exhibition, in a Chelsea pop up space, was titled "The Future of Things Past," and featured four women artists and received critical praise and more than 1,000 visitors over the course of three weeks. They followed this up by curating "Art to Learn, Art to Live," a show of 53 of Lebanon's leading contemporary artists at Lebanese American University's midtown campus.

The gallery currently has three exhibitions up simultaneously, all of them impressive in their own right. Yerevan-based Arpi Adamyan's immersive installation piece, "The City of Dove Women," captivated visitors. Two TV screens lie flat on a table three feet off the air, as a video plays with narration describing an underwater world, telling the story of Dove women and placenta jellyfish. Atop the screens are "islands" of enticing multicolored porcelain objects, reminiscent of human body parts. The installation's title is derived from an Armenian fairy tale "Aregnazan," in which a young girl changes gender and eventually weds the King's daughter, Nenuphar. It touches on issues of identity, the environment and building a more natural and equitable society — all themes important to the concept of Armeno-Futurism.

see GALLERY, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Vegetarian Times' Cabbage Rolls With Toasted Walnuts & Tarragon- Mustard Sauce

Vegetarian Times is an American publication focused on food, culture, health and lifestyle for vegetarians, vegans, and all people interested in plant-based eating. Searching for plant-based recipes made with whole, unprocessed foods? At the *Vegetarian Times* website you'll find every recipe you need to follow a plant-based diet from morning until night, including vegetarian gluten-free recipes to vegan recipes and dairy-free recipes. It offers original, triple-tested recipes that deliver solid nutrition, whatever your plant-based lifestyle looks like.

Cabbage is Mediterranean in origin and believed to have been first domesticated in Western Europe and has since become a huge part of worldwide cuisines. Cabbage was most likely domesticated somewhere in Europe in ancient history before 1000 BC. Cabbage use in cuisine has been documented since antiquity. It was described as a table luxury in the Roman Empire.*

"Popular all over the world – think Southern-style braised cabbage, spicy fermented kimchi, stuffed cabbage rolls, tart sauerkraut and creamy and crisp coleslaws – cabbage can just about do it all. In addition to its low cost and lengthy fridge life span, it is packed with vitamin C and other nutrients. Roman historian Cato the Elder (234-149 B.C.) wrote, "It is the cabbage which surpasses all other vegetables," in reference to its medicinal value."

According to Healthline, "Cabbage is packed with nutrients while being very low in calories. Studies show eating cabbage may help reduce inflammation, protect the immune system, and lower blood pressure and cholesterol. Despite its impressive nutrient content, cabbage is often overlooked. While it may look a lot like lettuce, it actually belongs to the Brassica genus of vegetables, which includes broccoli, cauliflower and kale. It comes in a variety of shapes and colors, including red, purple, white and green, and its leaves can be either crinkled or smooth."**

In Armenian and nearby Middle Eastern cuisines, dolma refers to a family of stuffed vegetable dishes, most often wrapped in grape or cabbage leaves. You can use this same meat-and-rice filling—and a similar steaming technique—to hollow out and stuff zucchini, eggplant, tomatoes, or peppers. Dolmas taste best warm, and leftovers can be restewed one or more times as desired.***

"Almost half of the more than 71 million tons of the global production -by far- is harvested in China, followed by India, Russia, South Korea and the Ukraine. Indonesia, Japan, Poland, Uzbekistan and the United States of America complete the top 10. Overall cabbages are planted in more than 150 countries worldwide. Cabbages are least popular in South America, Western Africa and South-East Asia/Oceania."****

All in all, cabbage is a fresh and a true power food, like this healthy recipe from Lisa Turner featured at *Vegetarian Times*.

INGREDIENTS:

1 large head green cabbage
2 tablespoons coconut oil
3 cups chopped mushrooms of any variety
2 medium carrots, diced
2 medium parsnips, diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 cup walnuts, toasted and chopped

Sauce:

1/2 cup Dijon mustard
1/4 cup honey or agave
1 tablespoon walnut oil
2 tablespoons minced tarragon
1/3 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

PREPARATION:

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Using a sharp paring knife, cut the core out of the cabbage. Carefully lower the whole head of cabbage into the boiling water, and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, until outer leaves begin to loosen. Remove cabbage from water and carefully peel off 8 outer leaves. Reserve remaining cabbage for another use.

In a large skillet, heat coconut oil and sauté mushrooms, carrots, and parsnips until tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute longer, stirring. Stir in walnuts. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.

To assemble, place one cabbage leaf on a flat surface. Mound a few spoonful's of filling in the center of leaf. Fold bottom of leaf over filling, and roll up about 1/3 of the way. Fold sides in and continue rolling into a tight roll. Place on a platter, seam side down. Repeat with remaining rolls and filling.

To make sauce: Whisk together mustard, honey or agave, walnut oil, and tarragon in a small bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Drizzle over cabbage rolls, shower with parsley, and serve.

Serves 4.

For this recipe, go to:

<https://www.vegetariantimes.com/recipes/cabbage-rolls-with-toasted-walnuts-and-tarragon-mustard-sauce-recipe/>

* See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabbage#:~:text=Cabbage%20was%20most%20likely%20domesticated,luxury%20in%20the%20Roman%20Empire>

** See: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/benefits-of-cabbage>

*** See: <https://www.saveur.com/stuffed-cabbage-dolmas-recipe/>

**** See: <https://worldmapper.org/maps/cabbage-production/>

Vegetarian Times' healthy vegetarian and gluten-free falafel is snuggled in a bowl of crunchy veggies and drizzled with a creamy tahini sauce. Go to https://www.vegetariantimes.com/recipes/vegan-falafel-buddha-bowls-recipe/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=vegetarian+times&utm_campaign=a9b136d0-88c1-4625-8a01-f0d9c265cb45

For other cabbage recipes, go to:

<https://www.vegetariantimes.com/?s=cabbage>

For Middle Eastern Stuffed Cabbage Rolls, see:

<https://www.vegetariantimes.com/recipes/middle-eastern-stuffed-cabbage-rolls/>

For Armenian cabbage recipes, search at:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/?s=cabbage>

For Armenian Cabbage Soup, go to:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/armenian-cabbage-soup/>

For "Bitlis Tutoo from Breaking Bread with William Saroyan (Sour Cabbage Stew)," see:

<https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/06/18/recipe-corner-bitlis-tutoo-from-breaking-bread-with-william-saroyan/>

Vegetarian Times: Plant-based lifestyle experts since 1974.

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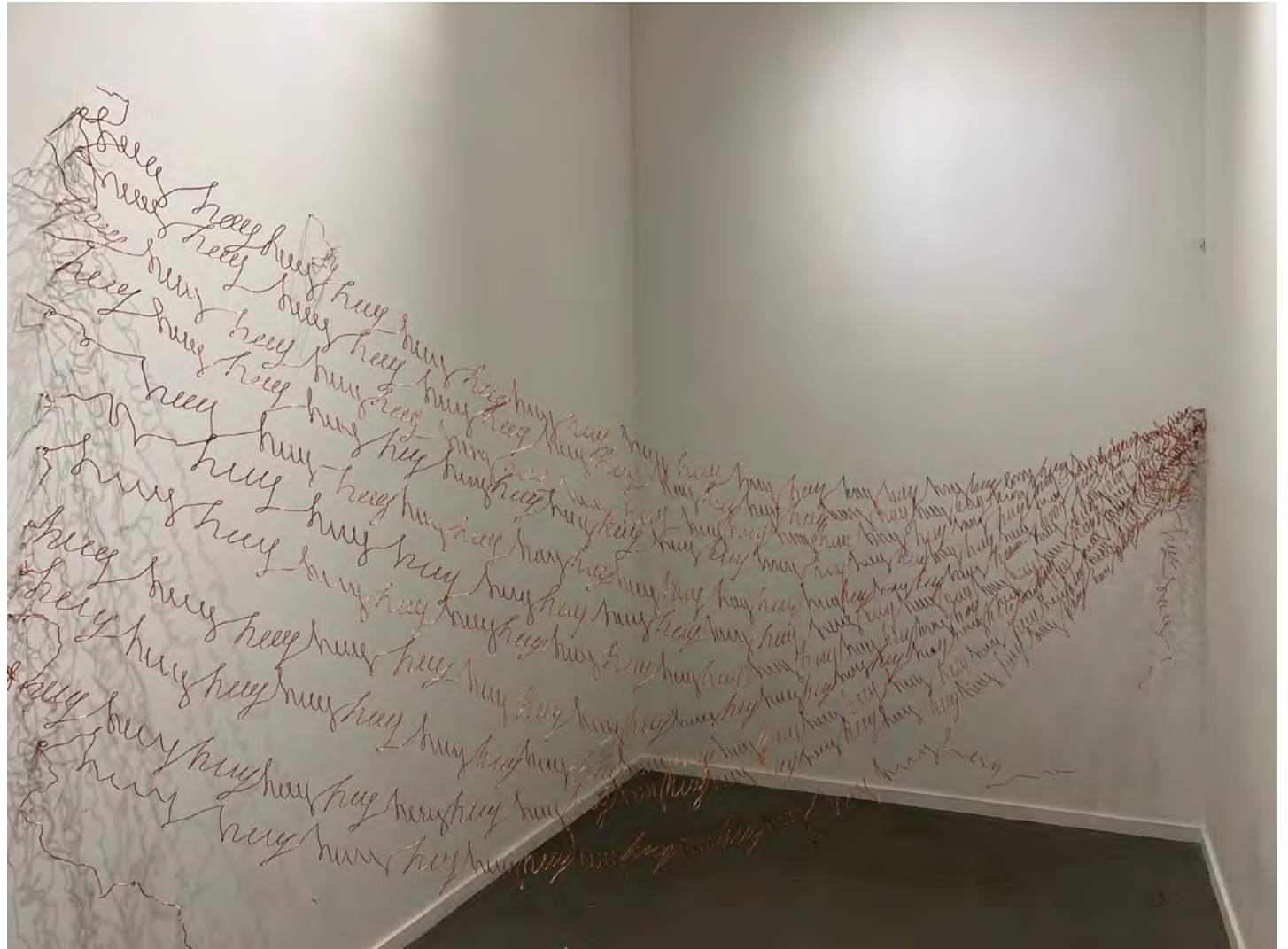
ARTS & CULTURE

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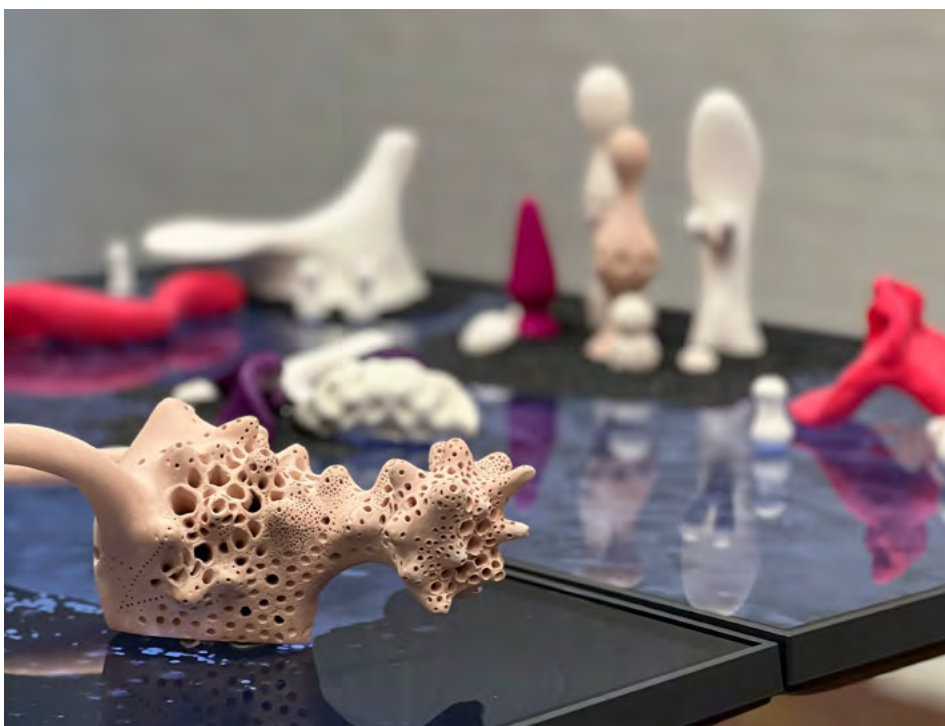
GALLERY, from page 13

In another large gallery room visitors can discover New York City-based artist James Gortner's "reclaimed paintings," which take abstraction to a new level. While he has in the past made figurative paintings, here he reclaims layers of paint from surfaces once touched by other artists and stories, onto his canvas becoming a translator and a storyteller that redefines transference, communication and connectivity. The show's title, Terra Incognita, refers to the incredible colored maps formed by these reclaimed materials, which transform them into something wholly new. Each viewer sees different outlines, formations, and shapes—newly created topographies. This innovative work belongs at the forefront of the Enviro-Futurism movement which tries to point the way to a world where technology respects nature and improves the world for all involved.

Meri Karapetyan, the ACHP Armenian Artist in Residence rounds out the artists currently on view. In three separate rooms, she plays with the title of her series "Hay-Hay" or "ArmenianArmenian" in Armenian. In one, the words are stenciled in blood red on gauze imported from Armenia — symbolizing Armenian suffering, most recently during the 44-Day War of 2020 in Artsakh. In another room the words, now made of copper wiring, span the space at a 45-degree angle in the air: visitors are encouraged to flash their iPhone lights on it, creating an eerie reflection on the walls



"HayHay" Installation, Copper Wire, 2023



(above, below) Arpi Adamyan, "The City of Dove Women" 2019 installation



when the lights are turned off. In a third room, the words are spelled out on the floor in stone and dirt that remind one of a cemetery or abandoned lot. In each installation, one can walk over or around the work at will, thus deconstructing the notion of borders and separation.

Hovsepien underscores the importance of showing Adamyan and Karapetyan in the gallery's first exhibitions: "We are proud to be discovering and exhibiting some of the best contemporary Armenian artists."

Hoping to have a direct impact on the future of Armenian art, they success-



(Above) James Gortner, Tidal Wall (2023) Reclaimed paint on linen(excerpt pool murals), 84 in x 68 in

fully established an artist residency that introduces Armenian artists to the New York art world, exposing them to new ideas, as well as to collectors and institutions who may acquire their work.

The gallery plans to also program readings, talks, film screenings and other events to complement the artwork on exhibit and cultivate new collectors.

Atamian Hovsepien Curatorial Practice and Gallery is located at 227 East 24th Street. Their website is: www.atamianhovsepien.art



ARTS & CULTURE

Veronica Guzalian

Designing Nairi Bikini on Bali

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / PORTO CERVO, Italy — Veronica Guzalian is an Italian-Armenian fashion designer and dancer, living between Italy and Indonesia. Born in Bergamo, Italy, to Armenian father and Italian mother, Veronica graduated from Enrico Fermi scientific lycée and studied scenography and costume design for the performing arts at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan. She has worked with leading Italian fashion designers and for some time performed in a gesture theater group in Italy as a dancer and actress. Veronica lived for a while in India, studied Indian dances. Since spending more time in Bali, she has started studying Indonesian costumes.

Dear Veronica, you live between Italy and Indonesia. What took you to that exotic corner of our planet?

I went to Bali because I like the sensibility of the people and the art that they have in their single movement; they are very talented in manual work. I design bikinis, clothes and accessories and live between two wonderful islands: Sardinia and Indonesia. In Bali, a small world of good, simple, happy and serene people, I create my fashion, while on the beaches of the Costa Smeralda, a window on the world, with an open-air shop I sell. I personally take care of every aspect of my works: stylistic design, research, production, sales and marketing



They say the Indonesian language is easy to learn – is this true?

Yes, it is very easy for Italians; the pronunciation in reading is exactly the same!

At one time, Indonesia had an Armenian community. Have you ever met any Armenians there?

I have met Rafi Papazian, an Armenian from France, who opened several shops of bread and croissant. With his cousin Gregory Guerguerian he founded Bali's favorite bakery Monsieur Spoon. Also, my cousin Haiganouch Lucin Ganatchian Pilli, who is coming on holidays with her family from Brazil. We love going to dance salsa together!

Please tell us about your activities as a dancer and actress.

I practice Latino and Indian dances and I am always eager to learn new dances. Acting in theater was a great experience that create strong connections between actors and stage.

One of your designed bikinis name is Nairi. Does it have something special Armenian?

It is the name of my lovely niece, Nairi Sahagian! I gave her name to a Bikini that exactly fits her!

You said your father is from Musa Dagh. Are your ancestors among the survivors of the forty days of Musa Dagh?

Yes, my family had been deported; they were left without food and water. My father, Artin Guzalian, was a child at that time, but he also had to fight to survive as an adult. Being very talented, after growing up, he started to help the family. He became an engineer and later a doctor, a cardiologist. My father tried to teach me Armenian, but in the family, he was the only one speaking Armenian, so we all were speaking Italian. He was telling me a lot of stories how he used to make sughukh, lavash and yogurt with my grandmother. He was fond of poetry and music, so he presented me many times Armenian musicians and poets.

In the fall of 2009, I met you and your sister Anouch in Yerevan at the Armenian traditional round dance evening. What memories you cherish from that trip? Do you still remember how to dance Armenian dances?

My sister Anouch loves to dance and we still have strong memories of that night in Yerevan! I love Armenian circle dances very, very much: I wish I could dance more. I remember that event as one of the best nights of my life – I am telling the truth; it was something unique!

Do you have any projects regarding Armenians?

I wish I could learn Armenian and travel to Armenia again, to experience our roots, breathe the scents, feel the sounds and the flavors of the sweet beloved Armenia and its people. I am very proud to be part of it and that's why my brand takes an Armenian name, to make us know more and more and talk about our cause.

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2023






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ARTS & CULTURE

Rare Armenian Manuscripts to be Restored through Bank of America Art Conservation Project Grant

EXHIBIT, from page 13

of the Armenian people. The conservation of these artifacts enriches the community and allows people of all backgrounds to appreciate how the inspirational story of the Armenian people fits into the history of America,” said Miceal Chamberlain, president of Bank of America Massachusetts.

The conservation of these rare books will be completed by experts from the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan, which is the largest and most significant Armenian library and archive in the world. The manuscripts require restoration and preservation due to worn edges, light damage, and dust.

The Art Conservation Project is one demonstration of BofA’s commitment to promoting cultural sustainability and making the arts more accessible and inclusive in communities.



From left, Kerry Miles, Art and Heritage Project Manager at Bank of America; Maryann Ekberg, Managing Director, Bank of America Private Bank; Jason Sohigian, Executive Director, Armenian Museum of America; and Michele M. Kolligian, President, Armenian Museum of America.

Winter Time is Latest Book by Sevan Minaskanian

BURBANK — Sevan Minaskanian in March smashed all previous sales records for a book signing at Barnes & Noble in Burbank. The record-breaking signing was the young adult romance author’s first ever, and it lasted five hours as fans poured into the store while snow was coming down in Los Angeles.

Her tour of Los Angeles and area book stores is rapidly adding dates including Barnes & Noble Americana, Calabasas, The Grove, and a side appearance in San Diego. In Santa Clarita, she sold out and exceeded their projected expectations.

Minaskanian is the author of one self-published book titled *Winter Time*, a play on words, as the male love interest has the last name of Winter. The story is a romantic and tumultuous tale of 16-year-old Victoria, and William, a recent British immigrant.

A proud Armenian-American, Sevan got her gift of writing from her father, a first-generation immigrant who wrote all his life but was never formally published. Family and God are an important part of Sevan’s life.

Sevan lives in Los Angeles with her hus-



band and two children. Follow her on Instagram @sevantime.

For interviews and more information please contact:

Vick at vixmarketingllc@gmail.com

Mirror-Spectator Seeks 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.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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 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 Couyoumjan 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.

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/9tZyrd...> 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>

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.

COMMENTARY

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SINCE 1932



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Pashinyan and His Administration Are Traveling on A Path of Self-Deceit and Destruction, Unless...

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, C.M.

Special to the Mirror-Spectator/Abaka

It has been by now almost a year since the Pashinyan administration, singlehandedly, set off on an unprecedented path of multipronged – “multivector,” as it likes to qualify it – international campaign of shuttle diplomacy and meetings.

Though such a sudden shift of behavior for a badly battlefield-defeated regime would inevitably attract some criticism, nevertheless, the vast majority of alert Armenians throughout the world, be it in Armenia, Artsakh or in the diaspora, were initially intrigued by its novelty. They initially welcomed the apparent break from the previous unimaginative, passive, and practically one-sided, Eastern-bloc-oriented format of traditional Armenian foreign diplomacy.

This metamorphosis has been happening while, on the one hand, our traditionally uncontested Russian ally has been showing openly its pro-Turk and pro-Azeri, profoundly disappointing political orientation, and on the other hand, the unprecedented visit of US Congress Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Armenia was taking place. The latter appeared suddenly to be opening the way to an often wished for, yet never seemingly available, path towards a promising Western world.

Well, friends, that was then. Now, almost a year later, after observing closely what has been happening in-between, starting with Nikol Pashinyan and his administration, all Armenians are due for a reality check. We all should learn a lesson that we ought to have had learned anyway a very long time ago.

Such a lesson, which applies to any responsible and self-respecting nation, consists in valuing friends and allies in politics, yet valuing the country's own military ability and readiness for self-defense much more. Armenia had been criminally negligent in this respect. Therefore, remedial efforts should now be given top priority.

A rapid review of the past several months' Armenian diplomatic efforts shows that Pelosi's euphoria-generating visit to Armenia, was followed by countless breathtaking, successive, inconclusive shuttles which continue to this very day. Most of the time, top-level heads of states take turns participating in those meetings, which take place in high profile venues such as Washington, Brussels, Paris, Prague, Turkey, Sochi, Moscow and a few others which I fail to remember. At those roundtable gatherings, the assemblage of participants previously unlikely to be seen together, including Pashinyan, Vladimir Putin, Ilham Aliyev, Emmanuel Macron, Charles Michel and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, alternating with their foreign ministers, have become by now almost casual occurrences that are hardly any more newsworthy events.

Naturally, neither the public nor especially Armenians, around the world, are privy to the details of the deliberations taking place at those meetings. However, it is only fair to expect that under the current national crisis circumstances, Armenians, in particular, do have the right to start enquiring seriously about the results. We certainly do expect to start to see that Pashinyan and his team will by now have achieved at the very least some progress in favor of Armenia's and Artsakh's historic and humanitarian rights.

Yet, most unfortunately, when we attempt to draw a balance sheet of this ongoing worldwide diplomatic activity, there is no choice but to recognize that so far, Artsakh and Armenia are in a far worst situation than they were even at the end of the catastrophic 44-days Artsakh war in November 2020.

Indeed, when the war stopped on November 9, 2020, the small remaining part of Artsakh and its capital Stepanakert were left with the free Lachin passage to mother Armenia. Today it has been taken away. Furthermore, since then, several territories of Armenia itself have been arrogantly and aggressively occupied by Azerbaijan. Even worse, today, Aliyev is more arrogant than ever in calling all Armenian territories, including Yerevan and Sevan, Western Azerbaijani lands.

Against such a dreadful record, maybe some will find hope and consolation seeing the big smiles and hearing the sweet-sounding statements addressed to Pashinyan and Armenian representatives by such prominent Western personalities as Antony Blinken, Charles Michel and most of all, from our big friend Emmanuel Macron. Unfortunately, even the soothing effect of those ephemeral warm gestures has suddenly been quenched in glacial waters when in the last few weeks, it suddenly became painfully evident that for the West, just as much as for the East, in realpolitik, nothing has changed over the years. Presently they all are really interested in the Azerbaijani oil supply as the key card in the intricate international energy transfer games. Paradoxically the Azeri oil allows the West as much as Russia to work out tricks that they each consider to be in their own favor within the context of the “sanctions acrobatics” of the vicious Ukraine war.

Armenians all over the world were stunned to observe that all our “Western friends,” profoundly concerned with the Azeri oil,

cheerfully praised the handing over of Artsakh to the despotic and genocidal country of Azerbaijan. Any real concern over the need for historic and humanitarian justice towards Armenians was put completely aside! It was thus confirmed once more that international politics is devoid of such naive and mostly “annoying” concepts.

Yet even after such dramatic failure, Pashinyan is still pathetically chasing his beloved objective of signing his “All saving peace treaty” with Azerbaijan. Actually, he seems to have now discovered an even more pathetically naive concept for the protection of Armenia's borders. He expects to work out a cadastral map with Azerbaijan, presumably just like the one he has for his private house with the Yerevan city authorities, to secure the definitive borders of Armenia, with its mafia-ruled Azeri neighbors.

Pashinyan and his followers better realize that such piles of documents are totally worthless for a nation's protection without the backing of a strong military defense structure which thus far, they apparently have completely neglected.

When Aliyev, openly and consistently supported by its big brother Turkey, decides at his own pleasure, to wipe out the 120,000 Armenians of Artsakh from their ancestral territory, and then also decides to grab another small or large chunk of Armenian territory, does Pashinyan expect to succeed stopping the aggressors by waving those peace treaty and cadastral map documents at the face of the invading Azeri butchers' tanks and drones? Furthermore, if Pashinyan or anyone else perhaps expects that some of the abovementioned Azeri oil bribed countries will send their armies to Armenia's rescue, they better be ready for a big disappointment.

Fellow Armenians, we are living currently in unprecedentedly fateful times of our nation's contemporary history. We bear the collective responsibility for the future of our nation. Future generations will either praise or curse us, all depending on the actions we shall take now to prevent the potentially complete elimination of Armenian statehood on our historic lands.

Pashinyan and his administration are currently traveling on a catastrophic path of self-deceit and capitulation, unless the entire nation succeeds in standing up and preventing that catastrophe from happening.

Multipronged diplomatic efforts must certainly continue to be pursued, except that they must be honorable and based on self-respect. However, such efforts can be only one component of a well worked out multilayered national strategy.

Certainly, honorable and self-respecting does not qualify the defeatist and mafia-appeasing approach that Pashinyan has shown so far towards Erdogan and Aliyev. Quite to the contrary, his current behavior will assuredly embolden such despots to push for even more humiliating concessions, in return for nothing given to Armenians.

When Turkey closed its air space to Armenian flights by demanding that the Nemesis monument dedicated to Armenian heroes be dismantled in Yerevan, Pashinyan acquiesced by calling the erection of that monument a “mistake.” Even worse, quite incredibly, his High Commissioner of the Diaspora, Zareh Sinanyan, arrogantly declared last week in the National Assembly that Armenian efforts for genocide recognition by Turkey are now “outdated” and “must be abandoned.” Arrogant Sinanyan obviously understands nothing about Armenian national sanctities and even less about the diaspora. To top it all, Pashinyan just rushed to Ankara to pay his respects to the newly elected despot Erdogan. To justify his haste, he claimed that in the middle of that multinational crowded gathering he will be begging for a few minutes of so-called “consultations,” which surely never took place. Such behavior is far from being honorable. It is actually embarrassing and counterproductive for Armenians.

To be able to successfully conduct a strategy of honorable diplomatic negotiations, Armenian authorities, whether they are headed by Pashinyan or when the latter is democratically replaced by a more capable new leader, must develop without delay, two presently missing essential components to their otherwise seriously defective current strategy.

First, Armenia must develop without delay an effective international news media agency, capable of constantly influencing and shaping international public opinion by voicing consistently Armenian viewpoints and arguments concerning history and the daily events.

The major victim of this deficiency today is Artsakh. The legitimate right of Artsakh to exist as an independent Armenian republic was acquired as early as in 1990, when it successfully held on December 10 the legally required referendum to separate from the Soviet Union. In the absence of effective Armenian media support, that undisputable fact is now completely forgotten. In addition, the argument that given the obvious Azeri genocidal behavior towards Armenians, Artsakh has the full right to request

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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Refuses to Resign, Despite Precipitous Decline in His Popularity

Two polls were conducted in Armenia recently, giving the people a chance to express their views on various issues, including the sharp decline in Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's popularity.

The first survey was conducted January 23-March 4, 2023 by the Center for Insights in Survey Research, a project of the Washington, D.C.-based International Republican Institute. This scientific survey, based on a random sample of Armenia's population, was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Question: "Do you think Armenia is heading in the right direction or wrong direction?" 52 percent: wrong direction (up from 11 percent-14 percent in 2018 when Pashinyan first came to power); 36 percent: right direction (down from 72 percent-73 percent in 2018).

Question: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the pace of democracy in our country?" 17 percent: satisfied; 46 percent: dissatisfied; 35 percent: no change.

Question: "How much interest do you have in politics?" 43 percent: very much or somewhat interested; 57 percent: not at all or somewhat not interested.

Question: "How would you evaluate the prevailing mood of the Armenian population?" 44 percent: future will be better or somewhat better; 55 percent: insecurity, worry, fear for the future, total disappointment, and disbelief in any improvement.

Question: "Which politician or public person do you trust the most?" 64 percent: none; 14 percent: Nikol Pashinyan; 3 percent: Ararat Mirzoyan; 2 percent: Robert Kocharyan; others 2 percent each.

Question: "Which political party or alliance, if any, you would vote for if national parliamentary elections were held next Sunday?" 47 percent: would not vote or refused to answer or don't know; 17 percent: Civil Contract; 5 percent: Armenia Alliance; 4 percent: Public Voice party; 2 percent: Prosperous Armenia party; 2 percent: ARF Dashnaksutyun; others 1 percent each.

Question: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following institutions?" Armenian Apostolic Church, 54 percent: very or somewhat satisfied; 40 percent: very or somewhat dissatisfied; Prime Minister's office, 38 percent: satisfied (down from 82 percent-85 percent in 2018); 61 percent: dissatisfied (up from 13-17 percent in 2018).

Question: "How do you feel about the direction of each of the following spheres during the past six months?" Freedom of speech, 56 percent: improved a lot or somewhat improved (down from 73 percent-83 percent in 2018); 18 percent: regressed a lot or somewhat regressed (up from 3 percent-6 percent in 2018); 26 percent: no change (up from 19 percent in 2018). Foreign policy, 37 percent: improved a lot or somewhat improved (same as 2019); 33 percent: somewhat regressed or regressed a lot (up from 17 percent in 2019); 26 percent: no change (down from 39 percent in 2019). Armenia's policy on Artsakh, 10 percent: improved a lot or somewhat improved (down from 32 percent in 2019); 69 percent: regressed a lot or somewhat regressed (up from 18 percent in 2019); 18 percent: no change (down from 45 percent in 2019). Direction of fight against corruption, 43 percent: improved (down from 82 percent in 2018); 22 percent: regressed (up from 2 percent in 2018); 32 percent: no change (up from 14 percent in 2018).

Question: "What do you think is the biggest success of the government in the last 6 months?" 43 percent: none; 21 percent: don't know or refused to answer; 6 percent: development of diplomatic relation; other minor issues.

Question: "What do you think is the biggest failure of the government in the last 6 months?" 21 percent: don't know or refused to answer; 15 percent: closure of Lachin Corridor; 9 percent: overturning the Artsakh issue; 8 percent: national security of Armenia and border issues; 7 percent: loss of territories; other minor issues.

Question: "What are the things Pashinyan's government must achieve in the next 6 months?" 23 percent: improvement of army conditions; 22 percent: protection of Armenia's national security and borders; 16 percent: creation of jobs; 15 percent: establish peace; 13 percent: opening of Lachin Corridor; 13 percent: Pro-Armenian settlement of the Artsakh issue.

Question: "To what extent is corruption a problem?" 73 percent: very large or somewhat large problem; 25 percent: somewhat small, very small or no problem.

Question: "How do you evaluate the relationship between Armenia and...?" 96 percent: France (very good or somewhat good); 91 percent: Iran; 88 percent: United States; 86 percent: European Union; 84 percent: China; 80 percent: Georgia; 50 percent: Russia; 44 percent: Ukraine; 23 percent: Turkey; 4 percent: Azerbaijan. The relationship between Armenia and Russia has gone down from 87 percent-92 percent in 2018 to 50 percent good in 2023. The relationship between Armenia and Turkey has gone up from 1 percent-11 percent in 2018 to 23 percent good in 2023, while 75 percent of Armenia's citizens (down from 85 percent in 2018) consider the relationship bad.

A second poll was carried out in May 2023 by the Marketing Professional Group, affiliated with Gallup International. This is a scientific survey based on a random sample of Armenia's population.

Question: How do you evaluate Nikol Pashinyan's recognition of Artsakh as a part of Azerbaijan? 3.8 percent: definitely positive; 5.4 percent: rather positive; 63.4 percent: not positive; 18.5 percent: rather not positive; 8.9 percent: no answer.

Question: Do you think it is possible for Artsakh Armenians to exist as an ethnic minority in Azerbaijan? 2.8 percent: yes; 5.6 percent: rather yes; 77.7 percent: no; 8.7 percent: rather no; 5.1 percent: no answer.

Question: "Which of these judgments do you agree with?" 32.8 percent: Pashinyan is trying to conduct a balanced policy with the West and Russia; 20.5 percent: Pashinyan is trying to integrate Armenia with Europe, the West and NATO circles; 14.7 percent: Pashinyan is aiming to bring Armenia closer to Azerbaijan and Turkey; 12.9 percent: Pashinyan's actions are directed to push Russia out of Armenia; 19 percent: no answer.

Question: "Given Armenia's internal and external challenges, is it necessary to hold extraordinary parliamentary elections and form a new government?" 41 percent: definitely necessary; 18.9 percent: rather necessary; 12.2 percent: rather not necessary; 19.5 percent: not necessary; 8.5 percent: no answer.

Question: "Turkey expressed its displeasure at the placement of the Nemesis statue in Yerevan and as a first step closed its airspace to Armenian flights. Do you think the Armenian government or city officials should give in to Turkish pressures and dismantle the memorial dedicated to the Nemesis heroes?" 82.5 percent: definitely no; 7.7 percent: rather no; 2.6 percent: definitely yes; 3.5 percent: rather yes; 3.5 percent: no answer.

Question: "Did you participate in the 2018 revolution?" In the 2023 survey, 62.6 percent: no; 37.4 percent: yes. In the 2018 survey, 91 percent: yes; 9 percent: no.

Question: "Is it right for protesters to block streets and movement of cars?" In the 2023 survey, 44.5 percent: yes; 50.8 percent: no. In the 2018 survey, 87.1 percent: yes; 8.7 percent: no.

Question: "Five years have passed since the revolution: In the meantime, how well were your expectations realized?" In the 2023 survey, 3.8 percent: fully realized; 21.5 percent: partially realized; 18 percent: partially not realized; 52.1 percent: not realized. In the 2018 survey, 14.4 percent: fully realized; 64.2 percent: partially realized; 7.6 percent: partially not realized; 10.9 percent: not realized.

Question: "Evaluate Prime Minister Pashinyan's performance." In the 2023 survey, 5.4 percent: fully positive; 13.4 percent: rather positive; 24.2 percent: rather negative; 47.1 percent: negative; 10 percent: no answer. In the 2018 survey, 45.4 percent: positive; 46.2 percent: rather positive; 3.9 percent: rather negative; 2.4 percent: negative.

We all have our personal opinions, but it is important to know what the citizens of Armenia think about these issues. There are major changes in their perceptions from 2018 to 2023.

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the Kosovo model precedent, for separation from Azerbaijan, has never been forcefully advanced nor promoted in international forums.

The second and actually the most serious deficiency of Armenian diplomacy, is the lack of a relentless effort to build Armenia's own military readiness to counter with punitive intensity any incursion on its borders. This effort needs to be today's overwhelming priority for Armenia. The current regime as much as all the previous ones are seriously accountable and guilty for their neglect to maintain Armenia's defense system at a state of highest sophistication and 24-hour readiness on every day of their administration.

All excuses or arguments about having been hindered by some mysterious political obstacle is simply void and unacceptable. Armenia was, and now is, capable of both creating its own inhouse military industry, as well as creating channels of supply from the outside world. When there is a will there is a way. Without being privy to any particularly privileged information I happen to be able to confirm the validity of those statements.

The question that now begs to be answered is, what

is it that prevents Armenia's present administration from implementing immediately a serious emergency program to correct the above deficiencies?

There are conceivably some difficulties. However, the one evident and most important reason is the failure of today's administration to establish as much of a moral as a structural real and practical collaboration and coordination between the three inseparable components of the Armenian nation, Armenia, Artsakh and diaspora.

Going back to where we started in the celebratory years of Armenia's independence, followed by Artsakh's own independence and victorious war of the 1990s, Artsakh was inseparable from Armenia, and the diaspora was wholeheartedly and enthusiastically engaged in support of its newly found dual homelands. That relationship is now broken. It has unfortunately now fallen to a level of quasi-desperation and emotional isolation among the three core components of our nation.

The Yerevan-based Armenian government is the only entity that is equipped and has the moral authority and obligation to bring those three components back together. It needs, however, to act immediately by declaring that effort an act of national emergency. This needs to be car-

ried out with participants working in a quiet and serious environment. Discrete planning and the identification of well-targeted concrete objectives must take complete precedence over speeches and show chasing antiquated manifestations.

To succeed, this needs to be a serious long range and permanent effort.

When Armenia's authorities show themselves capable to confront such a national challenge, there are good reasons to expect that much needed human and financial resources will become available, and the Armenian nation will then be capable of conducting truly honorable diplomatic international negotiations. Such negotiations will then be successful as they will be continuously supported by an effective international opinion-shaping news media, and they will be strongly backed by a sophisticated and impenetrable military defense structure that will defy any incursions in Armenian territories.

We need to show the strength of our national will.

Aliyev will then rapidly go back to his private business and will forget all about Artsakh and unfulfilled dreams of territories further to the west.



‘The Difficult Ally:’ What Does the US Expect from Re-elected Erdogan?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

As a result of the presidential elections that were held in Turkey in May, Recep Tayyip Erdogan got re-elected as president of Turkey. This presidential election took place in two rounds, as none of the candidates received more than 50% of the votes during the first round. The main battle was between two candidates: President Erdoğan and Kemal Kilicdaroglu [Kılıçdaroğlu], the candidate of the “Nation Alliance” representing six opposition parties.

The Turkish presidential election was in the center of the US’s attention because of the significant tensions in US-Turkish relations in various fields under Erdogan’s rule. Erdogan seeks to minimize Western influence on Turkey and its economy, pursuing freedom of action in the Middle East, South Caucasus, Central Asia and a deepening of relations with Russia. That is why a different pro-Western figure in Turkey is preferable for the West.

Kilicdaroglu had all the chances to become such a pro-Western figure with whom the West hoped to develop less problematic relations. However, the United States did not openly endorse Kilicdaroglu in the elections. Instead, the US took a more cautious approach, realizing the high probability of Erdogan’s re-election. After all, Erdogan has been at the helm of the country since 2003, firstly as prime minister, and then as president of the country. With vast state resources and a large army of supporters at his disposal, Erdogan managed to defeat his main rival Kilicdaroglu, securing his rule until 2028.

At this stage, it is extremely important to look at Washington’s reaction to the Turkish elections in order to understand the messages behind the official statements and US mass media coverage of the election. It will be presented below, in the state, think-tank and mass media spheres.

United States-Turkey relations have appeared strained in recent years, which is largely related to Erdogan’s personality and the latter’s deepening relations with Russia. Erdogan’s re-election as president is also seen by him and his supporters as a blow to the West, particularly the United States, which, according to Erdogan, tried to interfere in Turkey’s elections and promote his main opponent. Erdogan particularly resented the fact that the US ambassador in Ankara had a meeting with his political rival Kilicdaroglu. This was considered an intervention in Turkey’s elections by endorsing Kilicdaroglu. Thus, even during the election campaign, Erdogan and his supporters targeted the US and talked about the need to “teach them a lesson.”

Nevertheless, when the elections in Turkey were still ongoing, US officials avoided further commenting on the issue and even voicing their preferences, being wary of possible aggravation of the relations with Erdogan. During the press conferences of the US State Department, questions related to the elections in Turkey were regularly raised. However, the spokesman consistently reiterated the US official position that the United States “will continue to work together with the government chosen by the Turkish people to deepen our cooperation on a number of shared priorities.”

After the release of the final results of the elections, the United States congratulated Erdogan at the presidential level, with US President Joe Biden telephoning Erdogan. According to an official statement, the two presidents “expressed their shared commitment to continue working together as close partners to deepen cooperation between our countries and people.” US Secretary of State

Antony Blinken also congratulated Erdogan, noting that “Türkiye is a valued NATO ally and partner” for the United States.

US think-tanks have come up with their predictions as to how Erdogan’s re-election will affect Turkey’s foreign policy and more specifically relationships with the USA. Overall, the re-election of an incumbent president suggests “continuity rather than change in foreign policy.” Three main pillars of Erdogan’s policy will continue to be implemented. These pillars include “strategic semi-independence (anchored by NATO with expansive caveats), balancing and hedging among great powers, and a carrot-and-stick mixture of hard power and adaptive diplomacy in Turkey’s immediate neighborhood.”

Hence, the dominant position is that Erdogan’s foreign policy will be more of the same. Turkey will try to get the most out of relations with different and often conflicting countries: it will maneuver between Russia and Ukraine, foster relations with Gulf states in an attempt to get investments, take advantage of the warming relations with Israel to improve relations with the USA, and will attempt to isolate Greece through improving ties with Egypt.

In its foreign policy, Turkey is expected to be driven by a traditional “transactional” approach when it comes to major issues with its neighbors and beyond. For instance, the Swedish accession to NATO, which is a serious challenge in US-Turkish relations, might be tied to the pending sale of F-16s to Turkey in Congress. Also, Erdogan will continue asserting himself as the “preeminent peace broker in the Ukrainian conflict.”

Hence, the United States would also continue the transactional relationship with the “difficult ally,” as Blinken characterized Turkey during Senate Foreign Relations testimony. There will be lots of difficulties and challenges ahead, many of which stem from the previous decade.

One important factor that will also affect Turkey’s foreign policy is the economy. Turkey needs new financial flows from abroad. The absence of the latter might even lead to Turkey’s first-ever default on its debt. Under such circumstances, Turkey will first of all seek funds from Russia, Qatar, and the Gulf states. However, it is predicted that Turkey will likely refrain from “deliberately confronting the West or acting like a disruptive power” hoping to get investments and new lines of credit.

Thus, the thinktanks mostly believe in a continuation of traditional “transactional” relations with Turkey, which in its turn might refrain from further serious deterioration of relations with Western allies in the hope of getting the desired finances to save the Turkish economy. At the same time, Turkey will continue developing relations with major powers, including the USA’s rivals, such as Russia and China, to its own benefit, which will inevitably create problems in US-Turkish relations.

As for the reaction of the US media to Erdogan’s reelection, a few arguments are to be highlighted.

The first argument is that Erdogan’s re-election will consolidate autocracy in Turkey. According to the US mass media, Erdogan had utilized all of the state’s resources, making use of its control over the media and the favorable electoral laws. Erdogan’s re-election is deemed as victory of “the global club of autocracies.” Moreover, another five years of Erdogan’s rule will “further hollow out institutions and entrench authoritarian political habits in the country’s psyche.”

Other sources point out that with his victory Erdogan extended “his increasingly authoritarian rule.” Erdogan is expected to introduce a new constitution to include and

secure all the changes overseen by his conservative and religious Justice and Development Party. Second, Turkey will continue to deepen its ties with Russia moving away from the orbit of the West.

The US media is also worried about the anti-western stance of Turkey. Erdogan has repeatedly claimed that the United States endorsed his political rival during these elections, while his political opponent Kilicdaroglu in his turn blamed Russia for interfering into the elections. Moreover, in his Twitter blog he made a post in Russian urging Russia not to interfere in Turkish elections. Erdogan is continuously moving away from the transatlantic orb, building closer ties with Russia. To relieve Turkish economic problems Erdogan managed to receive financial support from Russia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar in the form of central bank loans, which allowed Erdogan to raise salaries ahead of the elections.

The US media specifically highlighted the fact that Erdogan’s reelection was followed by a wave of congratulations from a number of autocracies, which were among the first to congratulate him. Those countries included Russia, Qatar, Libya, Algeria, Hungary, Iran and the Palestinian Authority. However, Russia was central and specific attention was given to Vladimir Putin’s congratulatory statement, which said that the elections were “clear evidence of the Turkish people’s support” for Erdogan’s efforts “to strengthen state sovereignty and pursue an independent foreign policy.” According to the US news agencies, even though Turkey is a NATO ally, the country established closer ties with Russia and deepened authoritarian rule. Hence this policy will have consequences outside Turkey, which in its turn has a strategically important position between the crossroads of Europe and Asia.

Last but not least, US media stressed that with Erdogan’s reelection Turkey will continue expanding its geopolitical role taking advantage of West-Russia confrontation.

According to various US media, despite all the challenges, Erdogan had one advantage during this presidential elections – “his deft geopolitical maneuvering in which he has expanded Turkey’s influence in the region, especially the broader power conflict between Russia and the West.” Moreover, Erdogan is said to have improved Turkey’s positions, becoming an important world leader by facilitating peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. Erdogan managed to sell weapons to Kyiv while expanding economic ties with Moscow. As for the relations with Western allies, Erdogan is using its leverage over them, such as in holding up Sweden’s accession to NATO.

The US is well-aware that Erdogan manages to establish close ties with adversaries of the United States, particularly with Russia and China, despite being a NATO ally. Turkey serves its interests by interfering in the balance between the two poles. Erdogan manages to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, while at the same time refusing to impose sanctions on Russia. Instead, Turkish trade relations with Moscow are expanding. He calls Vladimir Putin “my friend” and prevents NATO expansion efforts by not allowing Sweden to join NATO.

By and large, judging from the reactions of the state officials, press and thinktanks, clear conclusions can be drawn about the US approach to the elections held in Turkey and the re-election of Erdogan. It is obvious that the United States is not particularly excited about Erdogan’s victory but will have to continue to cooperate with Erdogan and his political team, having both common interests and deep controversies.

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

Leading Astronomers, Astrophysicists Gather In Yerevan for Zeldovich Conference

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The 5th International Zeldovich Conference in Yerevan has brought together astronomers and astrophysicists from all over the world.

The conference, named after physicist Yakov Zeldovich is dedicated to the modern achievements of astrophysics and related fields and the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia.

The Zeldovich meeting, organized by the International Center for Relativistic Astrophysics Network (ICRANet), started on June 12 and will continue through June 17.

Narek Sahakyan, director of the ICRANet Center of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, said: “This year’s meeting is of particular importance. The conference features eminent scientists who will present the latest results obtained by leading observatories and satellites. We are especially happy to organize the conference this year, as it coincides with the 80th anniversary of the founding of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. During the past 80 years, our academy has promoted and carried out basic and applied research in various scientific directions.”

National Assembly’s Vice-Speaker Hakob Arshakyan noted that Armenia is historically rich in scientific achievements and discoveries, especially in the fields of astrophysics, mathematics and physics. He emphasized the participation of Armenian scientific institutions in similar programs, emphasized the role of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences in the field.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vahe Gevorgyan highlighted the role of ICRANet as an important platform for international cooperation. He noted that the organization of this prestigious international conference is an important step for the development of the field of astrophysics not only in Armenia, but also in all participating countries.

Russian scientist Marat Glifanov accepted the Marcel Grossmann Award on behalf of the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Space Research. The award was presented by ICRANet Director Remo Ruffini for the Spektr-RG/eROSITA satellite.

During the conference, scientists will present reports on the most up-to-date trends in modern astrophysics.