

Armenian Mirror-Spectator Celebrates 90th Anniversary with Twin Events in October

BOSTON — The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is proudly celebrating its 90th anniversary with two events this fall, a journalists' panel on October 27 and a gala dinner on October 28. The events will also serve to raise funds to help the newspaper with its expenses and enhanced increased coverage locally, as well as in Armenia and around the world.



This two-day celebration will pay tribute to the longstanding presence of the newspaper in the community and also focus attention on the dire difficult situation of fellow Armenians in Artsakh as they are struggling against an Azerbaijani stranglehold.

The first event will be a panel discussion titled "Media Coverage of Armenia and Artsakh Today," featuring some of the top journalists working today: David Ignatius of the *Washington Post*, Ken Dilanian of NBC News, Eric Hacopian of CivilNet and Amberin Zaman of Al-Monitor. The program is free and open to the public and will be held on Friday, October 27, at 7 p.m., at the Joyce Cummings Center, Room 270, on the campus of

Tufts University, in Medford. Complimentary parking will be provided, and a light reception will follow the panel.

David Ignatius writes a twice-a-week foreign affairs column for the *Washington Post*. He has written 11 spy novels, including *Body of Lies*, which director Ridley Scott adapted into a film. He is a former adjunct lecturer at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and Senior Fellow to the Future of Diplomacy Program. He joined the *Post* in 1986 as editor of its Sunday Outlook section. In 1990, he became foreign editor, and in 1993, assistant managing editor for business news. He began writing his column in 1998 and even continued during his three-year stint as editor of the *International Herald Tribune* in Paris.



Ken Dilanian is the justice and intelligence correspondent for NBC News, based in Washington. Dilanian worked for three years at *USA Today*, where he covered foreign policy and Congress. He was a reporter at the Washington, DC bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*. see 90TH, page 9



Armenia, International Leaders Urge End to Karabakh Blockade

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — A diplomatic representative in Armenia has stressed the need for international calls and decisions on restoring free and safe access to Nagorno-Karabakh to be acted upon amid a deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Armenian-populated region surrounded by Azerbaijan.

Problems with shortages of food-stuffs, medicines and other essential goods have remained acute in Nagorno-Karabakh for weeks as Azerbaijan continues to keep a convoy of Armenian trucks with humanitarian supplies stranded at the entrance to the Lachin corridor, the only road connecting Armenia with the region on which Azerbaijan set up a checkpoint in April and tightened the effective blockade several weeks later.

The United States, the European Union and Russia have repeatedly called for an immediate end to the blockade of the corridor that Yerevan and Stepanakert insist must remain only under the control of Russian peacekeepers in accordance with the terms of a Moscow-brokered trilateral ceasefire agreement that put an end to a deadly six-week Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020.

Baku has dismissed such appeals, saying that the Karabakh Armenians should only be supplied with food and other basic items from Azerbaijan.

A number of international organizations have also issued appeals urging the reopening of the Lachin Corridor. Among them was the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

In a tweet on Monday, a spokesperson for Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred to a PACE resolution adopted on June 22 that was based on the report of one of its members, Paul Gavan.

"Now clear steps are needed to implement all international calls and decisions," Ani Badalian wrote, without elaborating. She cited Gavan, an Irish politician, as saying that "what we are witnessing now is a deliberate attempt to ethnically cleanse the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh."

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Artsakh Leader Sees Risk of Renewed War with Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Azerbaijan seeks to renounce a 2020 Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement with Armenia and renew hostilities against Nagorno-Karabakh, the region's ethnic Armenian leader warned over the weekend.

In an August 6 interview with Karabakh's Public Television Arayik Harutyunyan also cautioned Armenia against taking any steps that would "question the self-determination" of Karabakh Armenians.

Speaking about the current blockade

"Azerbaijan continues to exert pressure to extract maximum [concessions]. Azerbaijan is seeking to hold Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians in some sense hostage, while simultaneously committing genocide and putting pressure on the Armenian authorities and international actors in terms

of having a more privileged version of the Zangezur road," the Karabakh leader said, referring to what Armenians perceive as Baku's plans to get an extraterritorial corridor to its western Nakhichevan exclave via the southern part of Armenia.

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Two Artsakh Citizens Still in Azerbaijan After Kidnapping by Authorities

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — The representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Sunday, August 6, visited Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) resident Vagif Khachatryan, 68, who was abducted by Azerbaijan. Khachatryan's daughter, Vera Khachatryan said.

"We are fighting as much as possible to be able bring my father back. They said he is taking medicine as if for treatment. But his illness is not a curable illness, but surgical. They transmitted a message from the Red Cross, which reads: 'I'm fine, I'm thinking about you, stay safe, I'll come,'" said Vera Khachatryan.

On July 29, the representatives of the border guard service of Azerbaijan abducted 68-year-old Artsakh resident Vagif

Khachatryan, who was being transferred from Artsakh to Armenia by way of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to undergo surgery, from the Azerbaijani "checkpoint" illegally located in the Berdzor (Lachin) corridor.

The General Prosecutor's Office of Azerbaijan had announced that Vagif Khachatryan was "indicted" back in 2013, a decision was made to arrest him, and that "an international search was announced" in the same year. Baku accuses the detained Artsakh citizen of "genocide, deportation of Azerbaijanis."

Demonstrations demanding the release of Vagif Khachatryan have been taking place in Armenia for several days now.

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Arayik Harutyunyan, leader of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert, Aug 6, 2023

of Karabakh by Azerbaijan Harutyunyan claimed that it was already a siege warfare employed by Baku.

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Armenia Wins 1 Gold, 4 Silvers at International Mathematics Competition



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Celebrating Six Generations of One Family's Traditions In Fresno



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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Ambassador Accuses Azerbaijan of Committing Crimes Against Humanity

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia's Ambassador-at-Large Edmon Marukyan on August 8 accused Azerbaijan of committing a crime against humanity in Nagorno-Karabakh after an Azeri presidential envoy admitted in an interview that they are in fact weaponizing hunger as a political tool by blockading Lachin Corridor.

"Representative of the President of Azerbaijan for Special Assignments Elchin Amrbyayov in an interview to the French newspaper *Le Monde*, frankly confessed that Azerbaijan closed the Lachin Corridor and uses weaponization of hunger as a political tool against people of Nagorno Karabakh. We reinstate our demand that Azerbaijan must stop weaponizing hunger as a political tool against people of Nagorno Karabakh to force them accept their "conditions," which is a crime against humanity. End blockade of Lachin Corridor," Marukyan posted on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

Estonia Ambassador Joins EU Civilian Monitors

YEREVAN (news.am) — The Ambassador of Estonia to Georgia and Armenia, Riina Kaljurand, on August 8 joined the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) for a patrol.

"Following the briefing on the current situation, the Ambassador joined the EUMA patrol in Jermuk [city] accompanied by Estonian monitor to get familiarized with the developments on the ground," added the EU civilian monitoring mission in Armenia.

ICRC Transports 11 Seriously Ill Patients

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) — The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Nagorno-Karabakh office has facilitated the transfer of 11 patients to Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh Ministry of Healthcare said in a statement on August 8, the first medical evacuation since July 29, when Azeri border guards kidnapped a 68-year-old evacuee.

Nine of the patients require life-saving hemodialysis while two others are seriously-ill cancer patients. Nine other patients, accompanied by their attendants, who have received treatment in Armenia are expected to return to Nagorno-Karabakh under ICRC mediation later on August 8.

The Azerbaijani side is continuously prohibiting the ICRC supply of essential medicine and medical items into Nagorno-Karabakh, while many patients await their turn for medical evacuation and return, the ministry said.

A total of 30 children are hospitalized in the Arevik clinic, 9 of whom are in neonatal and intensive care.

Another 80 patients are hospitalized in the Republican Medical Center. 8 patients are under intensive care, 4 of whom are in critical condition.

US Senate Staff Visits Site of Stranded Armenian Aid Convoy In Syunik

By Tigran Hovsepian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A delegation led by Sarah Arkin and Damian Murphy, representatives of the staff of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited the site in Armenia's southern Syunik province on August 8, where an Armenian truck convoy carrying humanitarian aid to Nagorno-Karabakh has been stranded for nearly two weeks.

A convoy of 19 Armenian trucks carrying emergency food aid to Nagorno-Karabakh was stopped on July 26 near Kornidzor at the approaches to an Azerbaijani checkpoint at the entrance to the Lachin corridor, the only road connecting Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh. It now awaits approval to access the region that has seen severe shortages of basic foodstuffs and other essentials due to Azerbaijan's effective blockade.

The United States, the European Union, Russia and other international actors have urged Azerbaijan to allow humanitarian supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh via the Lachin corridor. Azerbaijan says, however, that it can only allow supplies to Karabakh Armenians via a road from Agdam, an Azeri-controlled town in the east of the region. Ethnic Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh reject this offer, considering Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin corridor as a violation of the Moscow-brokered 2020 ceasefire agreement that placed the five-kilometer-wide strip of land connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia solely under the control of Russian peacekeepers.

Syunik Governor Robert Ghukasyan accompanied the visiting US officials, who did not wish to talk to the media.

It is not yet known how long the Armenian truck convoy carrying some 400 tons of humanitarian cargo will remain in Kornidzor.

Earlier, official Baku described the sending of an aid convoy to Nagorno-Karabakh by the Armenian government without its consent as a "provocation" and "encroachment" on its territorial integrity.

So far the stranded Armenian aid convoy

in Kornidzor has been visited by representatives of diplomatic corps and ambassadors accredited to Armenia, representatives of the United Nations office, as well as representatives of international NGOs.

A group of UN experts issued a statement on August 7, expressing alarm over

Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized the UN experts for what it described as their biased statement that it claimed had been influenced by "Armenia's manipulations."

Meanwhile, health authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh reported a spike in the



Representatives of the staff of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Kornidzor, Syunik, August 8, 2023.

the ongoing blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan, which they said had led to a dire humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh. They urged Azerbaijan to lift the blockade.

"By lifting the blockade, the authorities can alleviate the suffering of thousands of people in Nagorno-Karabakh and allow for the unimpeded flow of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population. It is essential to ensure the safety, dignity, and well-being of all individuals during this critical time," the experts said, also calling on Russian peacekeeping forces deployed in the region to protect the corridor under the terms of the ceasefire agreement.

death rate and disease incidence related to lack of medicines and malnutrition.

The region's de facto Health Ministry said that in conditions of shortages brought on by the blockade of the Lachin corridor during the last eight months in the period from January to July the number of deaths from diseases of the circulatory system has increased more than twice among the total deaths, while the number of deaths from malignant neoplasms has increased by nearly 16 percent in seven months compared to the same period in 2022. According to the report, the level of anemia among pregnant women under the supervision of doctors has reached about 90 percent.

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Armenia insists that a road via its Syunik province (also called Zangezur in both Armenia and Azerbaijan), which is part of the 2020 ceasefire agreement, should remain under Armenian sovereignty. In contrast, Yerevan stresses that the Lachin corridor must remain under the control of Russian peacekeepers in accordance with the terms of the trilateral statement that put an end to a 44-day Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Nagorno-Karabakh in which nearly 7,000 soldiers were killed, from both sides.

Yerevan and Stepanakert accused Baku of violating the terms of the agreement by installing a checkpoint at the Lachin corridor in April and then tightening the effective blockade of the Armenian-populated region in June.

The blockade, which has effectively been in place since last December when a group of pro-government Azerbaijani activists began a protest in the Lachin corridor, cutting off Nagorno-Karabakh's connection with Armenia, has resulted in severe shortages of foodstuffs, medicines and other essentials in the region populated

by some 120,000 Armenians.

Authorities in Stepanakert stress that Karabakh's population is increasingly suffering from malnutrition and facing the imminent threat of starvation. They have already reported cases of people fainting while standing in queues for rationed bread.

In his latest interview, Harutyunyan said that Azerbaijan's actions amounted to genocide. Baku routinely denies such claims.

The United States, the European Union and Russia have repeatedly called for an immediate end to the blockade. Baku has dismissed their appeals, saying that the Karabakh Armenians should only be supplied with food and other basic items from Azerbaijan.

The Karabakh leader, however, again rejected Baku's offer of an alternative route for humanitarian supplies passing through Azerbaijan-controlled Agdam. He said that Azerbaijan, whom Stepanakert views as the cause of the situation, cannot be the one to offer a remedy.

"First they turn it into a concentration camp, and then they start offering what

they want and as much as they want," Harutyunyan said. "Any proposal addressed to us must first of all respect our dignity, be within the framework of our dignity and comply with international humanitarian standards," he added.

The Karabakh leader confirmed the news that a meeting between representatives of Stepanakert and Baku, which was supposed to take place on August 1 in Bratislava with the mediation of the West, did not take place. He claimed it was Azerbaijan who refused to hold the meeting.

Armenia insists that a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be found through an internationally visible dialogue between representatives of Stepanakert and Baku that would discuss the rights and security of the region's ethnic Armenian population. Armenia views this as an essential prerequisite for a durable peace agreement with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan insists that no special treatment is required for Karabakh Armenians, while pledging that if reintegrated they will enjoy all the rights that other citizens of Azerbaijan, including ethnic minorities, have.



ARMENIA

Opposition Figure Elected Parliament Speaker in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An opposition figure representing a nationalist party with links across the far-flung Armenian diaspora has been elected parliament speaker in Nagorno-Karabakh, fueling speculation about a possible shift in local politics largely influenced by Azerbaijan's blockade of the region in recent weeks.

David Ishkhanyan, a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun), a minority group in the 32-member Karabakh parliament, was installed in the top legislative post by a secret ballot of 22 to 9 on Monday, August 7, nine days after former speaker Artur Tovmasyan announced his resignation.

The ruling Free Homeland United Civil Bloc faction, of which Tovmasyan was a member, denied any political motives behind his resignation, saying that it was his personal decision driven by “health matters.”

Tovmasyan himself acknowledged that it was his personal decision, but stressed that despite his resignation he remained committed to the cause of self-determination of the region that proclaimed its independence from Azerbaijan in 1991.

The change in Nagorno-Karabakh's main political body comes amid a continuing blockade of the region by Azerbaijan that has installed a checkpoint at the Lachin corridor connecting it with Armenia and effectively blocked all cargoes coming to Nagorno-Karabakh from there.

Azerbaijan's cutting off the transport link between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia and thus tightening its grip on the region that it considers to be part of its sovereign territory is the latest in a series of similar steps that Baku has taken since the Armenian defeat in a war three years ago.

Stepanakert and Yerevan insist that the Lachin corridor must remain under the control of Russian peacekeepers that were deployed in the region following a Moscow-brokered ceasefire agreement that put

an end to six weeks of fierce fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh in November 2020.

The current blockade has also revealed some growing differences between the leadership in Stepanakert and the government of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Armenia. In particular, Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian government has repeatedly cautioned Pashinyan against questioning the region's self-determina-

Karabakh parliament's opposition Justice faction who said she had voted for Ishkhanyan's candidacy, said the oppositionist's nomination for the post was a “cunning move” on the part of President Arayik Harutyunyan.

“In the hopeless situation in which he [Harutyunyan] has found himself in now and which he is no longer able to cope with, he also considers this as a lifeline,

comes his election because it hopes that a parliament speaker representing Dashnaksutyun “will be able to act more independently and turn the Nagorno-Karabakh parliament into a separate decision-making political entity.”

At the same time, Hakobyan claimed that an opposition candidate's election as parliament speaker could also be designed by Harutyunyan as a step to split the local opposition, something that she said the authorities would not be able to achieve.

Meanwhile, Marcel Petrosyan, who heads the second largest faction in Artsakh's parliament, United Homeland, which is linked with former secretary of the region's Security Council Samvel Babayan, said that they voted against the candidacy of Ishkhanyan because the ruling faction did not consult them before his nomination.

“That's not how things are done. In fact, it turns out that they have brought the opposition to power in a roundabout way,” he said.

Attempts by RFE/RL's Armenian Service to contact the leader of the Karabakh parliament's pro-government Free Homeland United Civil Bloc faction during the day were unsuccessful.

It emerged later that Harutyunyan and two former Karabakh presidents Arkady Ghukasyan and Bako Sahakyan had approached Dashnaksutyun with an offer to have Ishkhanyan elected parliament speaker in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Gegham Manukyan, a lawmaker representing Dashnaksutyun in the Armenian parliament, said that “after long discussions the party gave its consent, considering the crucial moment for Artsakh.”

Manukyan made it clear, however, that the representative would be free to resign in case of differences with Karabakh's government on key issues.

Meanwhile, Armenian Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan congratulated Ishkhanyan on the election in a telephone conversation.



David Ishkhanyan, newly elected speaker of the Karabakh parliament, Stepanakert, August 7, 2023

tion by recognizing it as part of Azerbaijan – a condition that Baku puts forward for a peace treaty to be signed with Armenia.

Incidentally, Dashnaksutyun is also in opposition to Pashinyan in Armenia and demands that the current Armenian government refuse to pursue a policy that would jeopardize Nagorno-Karabakh's self-determination.

Metakse Hakobian, a member of the

thinking that over time there will emerge a structure, a person who will be able to more confidently oppose the authorities in Armenia. This is a cunning move, because Arayik Harutyunyan has never done anything for the good of the state or based on the interests of the state,” the opposition lawmaker claimed.

Hakobyan said that the Justice faction voted for Ishkhanyan's candidacy and wel-

Armenia, International Leaders Urge End to Karabakh Blockade

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Edmon Marukyan, Armenia's ambassador-at-large, also recently wrote on Twitter that people in Nagorno-Karabakh faint on a daily basis due to malnutrition, publishing a photograph of one such reported incident.

“The leadership of Azerbaijan bears direct responsibility for this and the international community is sharing this responsibility by doing nothing to save people's lives,” Marukyan contended.

A group of UN experts on August 7 expressed alarm over the ongoing blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan, which has led to a dire humanitarian crisis in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

“The blockade of the Lachin Corridor is

a humanitarian emergency that has created severe shortages of essential food staples including sunflower oil, fish, chicken, dairy products, cereal, sugar and baby formula,” the experts said.

They warned that the region was rapidly depleting its medical reserves, and hospitals were struggling to provide care as the operation of ambulances has been hampered due to declining fuel supplies.

The experts urged authorities in Azerbaijan to immediately restore the free and secure movement of persons, vehicles, and cargo moving along the Lachin corridor in both directions, in accordance with the ceasefire agreement of November 2020.

They also called on Russian peacekeep-

ing forces deployed in the region, to protect the corridor under the terms of the ceasefire agreement.

“By lifting the blockade, the authorities can alleviate the suffering of thousands of people in Nagorno-Karabakh and allow for the unimpeded flow of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population,” the experts said. “It is essential to ensure the safety, dignity, and well-being of all individuals during this critical time,” they said.

“We urge the Government of Azerbaijan to uphold its international obligations to respect and protect human rights, including the right to food, health, education and life. We also emphasize the importance of cooperation and dialogue among all parties involved to find a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,” the experts said.

French Ambassador to Armenia Olivier Decottignies similarly has called for reopening of the Lachin corridor.

“France calls for the restoration of the free movement of goods, people and goods, along the Lachin corridor, in both directions, and of a continuous supply

of gas and electricity to the population,” Decottignies said in a post on X, as Twitter is now known.

In addition, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, according to his spokesperson, Farhan Haq, is deeply concerned by the reports of continued challenges related to the freedom of movement along the Lachin Corridor.

According to Haq, the UN chief recalls his previous statement on the need for the Parties to implement the Orders of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), including the Orders issued on February 22, 2023 and reaffirmed on July 6, 2023, related to measures to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions.

He added that Guterres is particularly concerned about reports of the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground and calls for urgent steps to facilitate access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need.

(Stories from news.am, Azatutyun and Public Radio of Armenia were used in compiling this report.)

Correction

Last week, because of a production error, the weekly column by Harut Sassounian, was printed incorrectly. While the headline of the column, “Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate's 98-Year Lease Details Revealed,” appeared correctly, the text below was the previous week's column.

The column appears correctly and in full on www.mirrorspectator.com.



Russian Peacekeepers Said to Refuse to Provide Security to Karabakh Protesters

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Russian peacekeeping force deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh has declined to provide security to participants in a local protest planning a trip to an Azerbaijani checkpoint at the Lachin corridor to try to break what authorities in Stepanakert view as an illegal blockade of the region.

In a written reply to participants of the planned protest on buses, a deputy commander of the peacekeeping force reportedly said on August 6, that the terms of the deployment of the Russian military under a trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in November 2020 to end a six-week war in Nagorno-Karabakh did not provide for the possibility of escorting protests on wheels and ensuring the security of various demonstrations and rallies.

“Peacekeepers are there to check for prohibited items, in particular, firearms and explosives, among participants of traffic at checkpoints,” Russian officer Sazonov, who introduced himself only by his surname, wrote, as quoted by Artur Osipyan, a Karabakh activist engaged in the local movement against the Azerbaijani blockade.

The Russian representative also reportedly dismissed claims being disseminated on social media in Azerbaijan that Russian troops intended to use force against Azer-

bajani officers at the checkpoint of the Hakari bridge on the pretext of providing security for a peaceful Karabakh Armenian protest. Sazonov, as presented by Osipyan, stressed that peaceful protests were not grounds for holding any military operation by the Russian peacekeeping force.

Having a written reply from Alexander Lentsov, the commander of the Russian peacekeeping forces, was the demand of members of the movement for unblocking the Lachin corridor that they presented to the command of the Russian contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh last Friday.

Participants of the movement say that the intended goal of their action is “to show to the world that [Azerbaijani President Ilham] Aliyev is lying when he says that the road is open.”

It is unclear yet whether members of the movement will attempt their announced protest on dozens of buses towards the Azerbaijani checkpoints in the coming days, but activist Osipyan said that they remained adamant despite the reply of the Russian peacekeeping force command that he described as preposterous.

“Now let the Russians explain how providing the security of a dozen or a hundred civilian vehicles is different from providing the security of one civilian vehicle,” Osipyan said in a Facebook video.

The activist claimed that with this latest development “the Kremlin has revealed its

true face, showing that the Russians are together with Azerbaijan.”

“We have great suspicions now that along with Azerbaijan it is the Russian peacekeepers, or should I say occupation troops, which they are, who subject us to a blockade... We do not lose heart, we will continue our struggle,” Osipyan said.

Amid severe shortages of food, medicines, fuel and other basic products brought on by the Azerbaijani blockade Nagorno-Karabakh’s ethnic Armenian authorities stressed last week that while they were not part of the civil initiative and did not provide it with logistics, they treated with understanding the demands of the movement.

Meanwhile, at least one opposition member of the region’s parliament, Metakse Hakobyan, claimed last week that the “theatrical” initiative was being guided by authorities in Stepanakert and Yerevan to discredit the Russian peacekeepers.

Russian peacekeepers deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh as part of the 2020 ceasefire agreement have increasingly been criticized in Stepanakert and Yerevan for their inability to act in accordance with their mission stated in the document, that is, to protect the security of the local population.

They are also blamed for effectively ceding control of the Lachin corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, to Azerbaijan earlier this year amid a perceived weakening of Russia’s political and military positions in the region due to its largely failing invasion of Ukraine.

Echoing this widely held belief, Nagorno-Karabakh’s ethnic Armenian leader Arayik Harutyunyan acknowledged on Sunday, August 6, that Russia’s inability to implement “the most important provision [of the ceasefire agreement] concerning the Lachin corridor” is “a consequence of the Russo-Ukrainian war.”

Reform Church Body Decries Lachin Blockade

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On August 8, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) expressed its support to the call by the World Council of Churches and Conference of European Churches to immediately lift the blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh and further urged the parties involved to seek a just peace for the region.

“Global politics, regional dynamics, and partisan alliances often keep certain crises in the dark and focus only on some. The current crisis of Artsakh needs immediate attention and resolution that moves beyond the opening of the blockaded lifeline into an establishment of justice and long-lasting peace,” said Paul Haidostian, acting president of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East.

“Diplomatic efforts to settle the conflict brought little progress, and the two sides fought another war in 2020 that lasted six weeks before a Russian-brokered cease-

fire, resulting in Armenia losing control over parts of the region and seven adjacent districts,” said Radio Free Europe’s report. “Under Armenian control, Nagorno-Karabakh’s only outlet to the outside world was the Lachin Corridor, which connected the territory to Armenia. As a result of the 2020 war, Azerbaijan retook the land surrounding the road, and the cease-fire agreement stipulated that Russian peacekeepers would control and protect the route.”

However, the Azerbaijani government has not held to the agreement and is instead using the closure of the route to increase pressure on the Armenian government and those in the territory to cede to its demands over control of Artsakh, WCRC added.

“The WCRC condemns these tactics—using the health and lives of innocent people as political leverage—and calls on its members to advocate for the lifting of the blockade and sincere negotiations to secure a just and lasting peace,” it said.



Members of the Armenian math team

Armenia Wins 1 Gold, 4 Silvers at International Mathematics Competition

YEREVAN (news.am) — Armenia’s participants have won one gold and four silver medals at the 30th International Mathematics Competition for University Students that was held in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia reported on August 8.

Ruben Hambarzumyan from Yerevan State University won the gold medal at this event.

Around 393 students from 70 university teams of the world participated in this competition.

Two Artsakh Citizens Still in Azerbaijan after Kidnapping by Authorities

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Sadly, he is not the only Artsakh resident kidnaped by Azerbaijan; Rashid Beglaryan, has been similarly taken.

Representatives of the ICRC haven’t yet been able to visit him, ICRC Armenia communications manager Zara Amatuni said.

Amatuni added that they are following the case and are taking relevant steps through dialogue within the framework of the ICRC powers to ensure certain progress in this issue.

The Nagorno-Karabakh authorities had initially announced that Rashid Beglaryan, a resident of Nagorno-Karabakh, accidentally crossed into Azerbaijani-held territory while intoxicated and was subsequently

arrested on August 1. However, the Nagorno-Karabakh prosecutor’s office later said that Beglaryan was actually kidnaped by Azerbaijani servicemembers while walking towards Armenia.

On August 2, prominent Armenian attorney Siranush Sahakyan ruled out due process in Azerbaijan regarding Vagif Khachatryan. She said that the kidnapping of Vagif Khachatryan by Azerbaijan constitutes extraordinary rendition in terms of international law.

The Nagorno-Karabakh resident’s kidnapping has been condemned by the Armenian foreign ministry as a war crime.

Vagif Khachatryan’s daughter revealed earlier this week that the Azeri border

guards threatened the ICRC staff with force at the illegal checkpoint in Lachin Corridor. She denied the charges against her father and asked for international support to achieve his release.

Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova at a press conference said the actions by Azerbaijan further complicate the process of finding solutions.

“What happened, of course, complicates the process of finding difficult but necessary conclusions, compromises and solutions. Of course, this exacerbates the situation. Secondly, we saw diametrically opposite assessments of the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides. Thirdly, regardless of this particular incident or other similar

incidents, we rely on the importance of reconciliation both in the context of the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and in the context of ensuring the rights and security of the people of Karabakh,” said Zakharova.

The spokesperson also emphasized the importance of the immediate opening of Lachin corridor.

“We are working with the parties and once again reaffirm the need to immediately unblock the Lachin corridor and ensure normal conditions for the life of the local population,” added Zakharova.

(Stories from Armenpress and news.am were used to compile this report.)



INTERNATIONAL

In First Foreign Policy Speech, Turkey's FM Asks NATO to Be 'Considerate,' Slams PKK

By Ezgi Akin

ANKARA (AI-Monitor) — Articulating his foreign policy vision for the first time since he took over the office, Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on August 7 unveiled a national security and economy-oriented foreign policy vision, pledging a stronger military and economy at home and deepening cooperation abroad. He also asked some NATO members to end all cooperation with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

"We expect NATO to be equally considerate about each of its members' security concerns and threats it faces," Fidan said in a speech addressing the annual conference of ambassadors in Ankara. The conference is convening for the 14th time this week under the theme "Century of Turkey."

"We reiterate our call on some NATO countries to immediately end their overt or covert cooperation with the PKK in Syria and Iraq," he added.

In neighboring Syria, Fidan did not leave any option off the table in securing Turkey's interests. "We will make every effort to remove Syria from being a haven for terrorist organizations and an arena for proxy wars," he said.

"We will give no respite to the terrorist organizations and the forces behind them in our country and in our region," Fidan said. "In this direction, we will continue our struggle by increasing our military, intelligence and technological capabilities at home, while ensuring effective cooperation with our friends abroad."

After keeping a low profile as the country's spymaster for more than a decade, Fidan stepped out of the shadows after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appointed him as the top diplomat in June after his reelection.

Departing from traditional practice, Fidan neither flaunted Ankara's foreign policy successes as his predecessor Mevlut Cavusoglu did nor resorted to historical discourse.

Fidan's 20-minute address on August 7 marked his first public and detailed articulation of his approach to his post.

"We are facing scores of simultaneous

political, military, economic, environmental, technological and social challenges in the international system. ... There is a need for transformation," Fidan said, describing his foreign policy vision as turning Turkey into one of the actors that would build a new world order.

Fidan said his country would seek four strategic goals to achieve what he described as the "Century of Turkey" vision, in reference to the Turkish Republic's centennial anniversary: "These are establishing peace and security in our region, expanding our foreign relations to an institutional basis, strengthening prosperity and advancing our global goals."

Terrorist organizations and proxy groups are the biggest threats, Fidan said.

On regional peace and security, Fidan also listed keeping stability in the Black Sea as a top foreign policy agenda, airing concern over the ongoing escalation in his country's north between Russia and Ukraine. Military tensions between the two warring countries have dramatically escalated in the region after Russia's withdrawal from a deal that allowed Ukrainian grain and other food products to reach world markets. Fidan discussed ways to revive the grain deal with his US counterpart, Antony Blinken, and Dmytro Kuleba over the weekend.

As for Turkey's ongoing regional fence-mending push, Fidan expressed readiness to advance his country's dialogue with the Syrian government, Greece and Armenia. "We will seek to solve problems, increase the number of our friends and strengthen our existing friendships," he said.

"We intend to advance our relations with all countries in the region through a positive agenda," he continued.

Fidan also echoed Erdogan's push to revive Turkey's European Union bid. Dropping his objections to ratifying Sweden's NATO membership, Erdogan asked NATO allies to support his country's stalled membership talks.

What's missing from the top diplomat's speech, however, are democratic values that Turkey needed to adopt to revamp the process. Stopping short of a signal effort to

restore his country's dismal human rights record, Fidan rather accused the EU of "strategic blindness" over the stalled talks.

The economy stood out as the second dominating theme in Fidan's speech, with the foreign minister pledging to strengthen Turkey's bilateral and regional economic ties on a more institutionalized basis.

After his reelection, both Erdogan and his economy team amped up their efforts to regain the confidence of international investors in a push to draw foreign funds to the country. Erdogan traveled to oil-rich Gulf monarchies in his first regional tour under his new term largely in a bid to ease his country's acute foreign policy crunch.

"A strong, self-sufficient economy with access to global opportunities is the pillar of our national strength," Fidan said, pledging to turn Turkey into one of the top 10 economies in the world. Yet acknowledging the challenges of his ambitious vision, he was also careful not to signal unpredictability.

"[We] will proceed with modest but steady steps," he added.

Security Council Secretary Meets With New Iranian Ambassador

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Secretary of the Security Council Armen Grigoryan held a meeting with the new Iranian ambassador Mehdi Sobhani on August 8.

During the meeting Grigoryan congratulated Sobhani on assuming the mission and expressed his hope that during his tenure the latter will contribute to the further development and strengthening of the relations between the two friendly countries.

Grigoryan and Sobhani discussed a number of items on the Armenian-Iranian bilateral agenda, as well as the regional security situation. Grigoryan presented the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh resulting from the Azerbaijani blockade of Lachin Corridor and Armenia's stance on the matter.

Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia and the rest of the world, has been blocked by Azerbaijan since late 2022. The Azerbaijani blockade constitutes a gross violation of the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh ceasefire agreement, which established that the 5km-wide Lachin Corridor shall be under the control of Russian peacekeepers. Furthermore, on February 22, 2023 the United Nations' highest court – the International Court of Justice (ICJ) - ordered Azerbaijan to "take all steps at its disposal" to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions. Azerbaijan has been ignoring the order ever since. Moreover, Azerbaijan then illegally installed a checkpoint on Lachin Corridor. The blockade has led to shortages of essential products such as food and medication. Azerbaijan has also cut off gas and power supply into Nagorno Karabakh, with officials warning that Baku seeks to commit ethnic cleansing against Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh. Hospitals have suspended normal operations.

On July 26, Armenia sent a humanitarian convoy carrying emergency food and medication for Nagorno-Karabakh, but Azerbaijan blocked the trucks at the entrance of Lachin Corridor.

INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Offers Support to Georgia after Landslides

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia has offered its support to Georgian authorities as they fight against the consequences of a deadly landslide that hit a resort area in the mountains of the country and left at least 18 dead.

The matter was on the table when Armenian and Georgian Foreign Ministers spoke over the phone on August 4, with the former expressing condolences to his colleague.

Minister, Ambassador Discuss High-Tech Projects

YEREVAN (news.am) — Minister of High-Tech Industry Robert Khachatryan on August 7 received Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin, the head of the European Union (EU) Delegation to Armenia, who is completing her diplomatic mission in the country, the Ministry of High-Tech Industry of Armenia announced.

The importance of long-term track record of EU-Armenia cooperation and formed partnership relationships were emphasized and the course of the projects being implemented in Armenia with EU assistance in the high-tech sector was discussed.

Turkish Army Intelligence Head Visits Azerbaijan

ANKARA (News.am) — The head of Intelligence of the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces, Ismail Gunaydin, visited Azerbaijan on August 8.

During the visit he met with the Chief of General Staff of Azerbaijan, First Deputy Minister of Defense, Karim Valiyev, according to the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan.

At the meeting, the parties discussed the development of cooperation between the armies of the two countries, their collaboration in military intelligence, and several other matters of mutual interest.

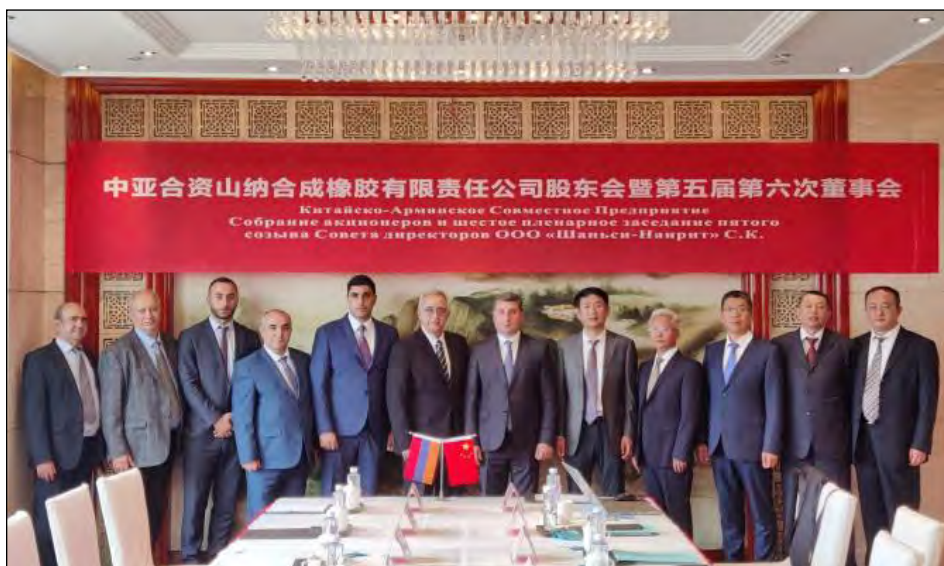
US Official Says Turkey Can Play Positive Role for Armenia, Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON (news.am) — On August 7, Matthew Miller, spokesperson of US Department of State, addressed Armenian-Azerbaijan peace during his regular press conference, saying Turkey can play a positive role.

He said, "I don't want to speak to it in detail — it's a private diplomatic conversation — other than to say that we do believe that Turkiye has a productive role it can play in this," he said.

He added that he does not "want to speak with respect to Russia when it comes to Armenia and Azerbaijan."

"I want to speak with respect to those two countries who are directly related—who are direct parties in this dispute. We have been engaged directly with those countries; Special Envoy [Louis] Bono [i.e. Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations of the US Department of State] traveled to the region last week and engaged directly with them. And we believe, despite any comments from other countries who are not a party to this matter, that an agreement remains within reach, and we will continue to work with them to pursue it," Miller added.



Armenia Official Visits China to Attend Joint Enterprise Meeting

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia's Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan on August 8 visited the Chinese city of Datong to participate in the 6th plenary session of the Board of Directors and general shareholder assembly of the Shanxi-Nairit Armenian-Chinese joint enterprise.

The officials discussed the current state, issues and prospects of development of the joint enterprise's activities, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures said in a press release.

The project on amending the enterprise's charter was discussed.

Above, he and his delegation and their Chinese counterparts can be seen at the meeting.

Community News

Rep. Schiff Calls For Aid and Action in Artsakh Amid Ongoing Humanitarian Crisis

BURBANK, Calif. — On August 7, Congressman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) released the following statement on the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Artsakh:

“From the day the blockade of the Lachin Corridor began, I, alongside my colleagues in Congress and Armenians around the country, have urged the White House, the State Department, and USAID, to take action to protect the people of Artsakh and their right to self-determination. With Azerbaijan’s refusal to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to deliver lifesaving humanitarian aid in, and transport patients requiring urgent medical attention out of Artsakh, the need for the international community to take action and find a lasting solution to the conflict grows with each passing day.

I’ve persistently called for Azerbaijan to lift the blockade and allow



Adam Schiff (D-Calif.)

humanitarian aid to move freely via the Lachin Corridor, and I have urged President Biden to take immediate action to address the dire situation in Artsakh.

From condemning ceasefire violations, advocating for the release of Armenian prisoners of war, to calling for sanctions and accountability for Azerbaijan, I’ve always been steadfast in my commitment to ensuring the protection of fundamental rights for the people of Artsakh.

As a Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, I’ve also advocated for international action to end this crisis peacefully. If we truly stand for democracy and human rights, we must recognize the independence of the Republic of Artsakh and oppose the ethnic cleansing and threats of genocide faced by the Armenian community in their ancestral homeland.

By using all tools at our disposal, including pushing for U.S. humanitarian aid to Artsakh, cutting off military and other assistance to Azerbaijan, and imposing sanctions on those responsible for this crisis, we can ensure Artsakh’s safety now and in the future. I will be with you every step of the way and will always stand with the people of Armenia and Artsakh.”



Campers participate in the Armenian holiday Vardavar, celebrated by splashing others with water

An Old Friend Is Back as St. Vartan Camp Director

By Taylor Manookian Gregory
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Mid-June through early August is the favorite time of year for many Armenian children who attend any of the Diocese of the Armenian

Church of America summer camps. One of these popular sleepaway camps is St. Vartan Camp, at the Diocese Ararat Center, in Greenville, NY, and the 2023 summer session just finished on August 5.

This year marks the second time that the camp is back in person after the COVID lockdown of 2020. St. Vartan Camp has welcomed a new director: Arpi Kouzouian, known as *Yeretzgin* by all the campers since she is the wife of Rev. Vasken Kouzouian. However, Kouzouian technically isn’t a new director since she is only returning to the role after an 18-year absence.

“My first year at St. Vartan Camp in 1995 was the camp’s last year at the Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor, Conn.,” Kouzouian said. “I started off as a counselor that first year, and then quickly expanded my role to eventually become Director of Programming by our second year at the Marvelwood School in Kent, Conn.”

By 1999, she and Rev. Vasken were working for the Diocese as Directors of the Department of Youth Ministry and ran St. Vartan in the summers. In 2000, they were able to get the camp program expanded in order to accommodate double the number of campers by offering a second session. Finally, in 2004, they were able to move St. Vartan to its permanent base in Greenville and expand the camp to three sessions by 2005. This three-session structure is still in place to this day.

“This summer we have grown our program from last year, welcoming over 220 campers and Counselors in Training (CITs) and more than four dozen staff and volunteers,” Kouzouian detailed. These campers range from ages eight to 15, and CITs are 16 and 17. At camp, kids are offered the opportunity to learn about themselves and about their Armenian heritage through daily lessons, messages, activities, music, Armenian language, and other experiences such as sports and weekly dances. Kouzouian cites these camp activities as experiences that “are all designed to help foster each participant to develop a deeper understanding and pride in who we are as Armenian Christians.”

“Honestly, I was nervous about returning as director after an 18-year absence, but I have found that it’s somewhat like riding a bike,” Kouzouian said. As all St. Vartan campers know, this camp is very rich in tradition, and Kouzouian says these traditions permeate the entire camp spirit. She intends to continue their legacies. “My goal this summer is not to change anything but to enhance the program by preserving our favorite traditions, but also creating new ones.” However, that does

see CAMP, page 8



The Primate visits St. Vartan Camp, July 15-16, 2023

An Afternoon Visit with Dr. Ernest Barsamian

By Ruby Gulian

BOSTON (Armenian Interests) — When Armenians travel to Boston, it is customary to visit our national treasures, including The Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) in Belmont. When I recently traveled to Boston, I had the added pleasure of visiting a living treasure, Dr. Ernest Barsamian, in West Roxbury. We shared a beer and talked about his parents, siblings, studies and his medical career. Dr. Barsamian, a hardworking, modest, warm and pleasant man, does not brag or boast about his accomplishments. He acknowledges life’s twists and turns, and the opportunities that came along the way. “America is the only country where if you prove yourself, you will be accepted so readily,” he said.

Dr. Barsamian retired in 2000 after a long career. From Aleppo, to Beirut to Boston, his accomplishments are numerous. The walls of his study are full of diplomas, awards, plaques and recognitions from his long impressive medical achievements. We talked about a few of them, and what he is most proud of.

He was the first Armenian foreign graduate to get accepted to the Harvard Surgical Residency Program at Boston City Hospital in 1956. He was Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School and the only Armenian Faculty Dean at Harvard Medical School. During his time at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in the Cryogenic Engineering Laboratory, under professor Samuel C. Collins, Dr. Barsamian was allowed to use Ground Building 41 to build one of the early heart-lung machines.

When offered a job as a Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the Veterans Affairs in 1963, he felt a sense of obligation to those who served their country, and took the position, eventually becoming the senior consultant to the New England VA regional director and consultant in cardiac surgery to the Department of Veterans Affairs. “If it was not for the American servicemen, the whole world would be under Nazi Germany,” said Dr. Barsamian, who as a teenager helped translate the French of Charles de Gaulle to English for British officials, at the famous Armenian Hotel Baron, owned by the Mazloumian brothers in Aleppo, Syria.

In 1993, for his long years of service to the Department of Veteran Affairs, at the VA Medical Center, West Roxbury/Brockton, MA, he received the Congressional Medal of Honor Society award. An award earned, and not given, the award was “In recognition of his personal commitment, leadership, wisdom, and over three decades of his faithful and dedicated service to the health of America’s

see BARSAMIAN, page 10



COMMUNITY NEWS

Palandjians Donate \$7.5 Million to Brigham and Women's For Innovative Leadership and Addiction Care

BOSTON — For Peter Palandjian and Eliza Dushku Palandjian, giving to the Brigham connects them with philanthropists and friends who have come before them and pushes forward causes they care about deeply. Now, they have committed \$7.5 million to expand their investment in people and programs they hold dear.

Of this extraordinary contribution, \$5 million will strengthen the Palandjian's support of state-of-the-art treatment for substance use disorders and The Brigham Fund, which aids wide-ranging needs across the hospital. To recognize their generosity to these efforts since 2018, the hospital will name the Eliza Dushku Palandjian and Peter Palandjian Bridge Clinic in their honor.

Peter and Eliza hope having their names associated with the clinic will lessen the stigma around substance use disorders. For many years, Eliza has maintained sobriety, and she is now completing graduate studies in counseling and clinical mental health with a concentration in psychedelic-assisted therapies for addiction and mental health disorders.

"Our gift is about honoring, supporting, and inviting in everyone who might come to the clinic," said Dushku Palandjian. "We're thrilled to support the committed professionals who treat addiction with a multidisciplinary approach using evidence-based sciences together with holistic integration. These principles have benefited me in my own recovery."

With this funding, Joji Suzuki, MD, director of the Division of Addiction Psychiatry, is advancing the clinic's mission and aims to develop safe and effective approaches for psychedelics based on emerging evidence these therapies can benefit addiction treatment.

"The Bridge Clinic and Joji, through his leadership, are highly skilled and deeply committed to recovery therapies," Eliza says. "Clinical studies are showing that psychedelic-assisted therapy can significantly reduce suffering

in measurable ways. Trauma, treatment-resistant depression, addiction, end-of-life palliative care—mental health in general—this scientific field holds incredible promise."

The Palandjians first began supporting the Bridge Clinic in its early days, following conversations with Charles A. Morris, MD, MPH, the family's longtime physician. During his Brigham career, Morris has taken on increasing leadership roles, now serving as interim chief medical officer and senior vice president of medical affairs. To

Distinguished Chair in Medicine, with Morris as the inaugural incumbent.

"It is humbling to be able to support, thank, honor, and encourage the countless doctors, nurses, administrators, and all Brigham hospital workers who collectively live in service of keeping us healthy," Peter expresses.

With more than two decades at the hospital, Morris says, "I strongly believe in the Brigham's academic and clinical missions; my belief in this institution is unwavering. To



Peter Palandjian and Eliza Dushku Palandjian

honor him and create a legacy of support for future chief medical officers at the Brigham, the Palandjians dedicated \$2.5 million of their gift to establish the Palandjian Family

know that the Palandjian family values those missions as I do is deeply rewarding. They are helping to sustain this environment for all who come through our doors."

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COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

An Old Friend Is Back as St. Vartan Camp Director

CAMP, from page 6

not mean there have been no differences made to camp under the new director. “One big change we made this year was using online staff training modules to enhance staff development,” Kouzouian described.

“St. Vartan Camp has always had a special place in the heart of our family,” Kouzouian said. “Our daughter started coming to camp when she was only a few months old and grew up at the camp, returning this year as program director.”

When she heard the news that the Diocese was struggling to find someone to lead this summer’s program, she “felt that God was calling me back home to help raise another generation of children at St. Vartan Camp.” And that she did — from her experience directing the camp almost 20 years ago, Kouzouian has met many different campers, CITs, and staff that still remain close to her camp family. Now she is meeting many of their children years later at this summer’s session.

Ararat Center Beckons

The Ararat Center Board, directed by Chairman of the Ararat Center Board Aram Hintlian, is responsible for the upkeep and financial stability of the facility of the Ararat Center in Greenville, where the camp is located.

He said of the camp: “It’s a great experience for the kids; they meet lifelong friends from all over, not just from their own parish, but kids from all over the Diocese.”

Hintlian has been the board director for the last four years, and has been on the board since around 2012. The Ararat Center Board also helps the facility’s revenue during the year while camp is not in session, such as renting it out to tenants like Armenian hiking groups, locals, or people who want to use the facility for events such as clergy retreats. They work closely with St. Vartan Camp to provide what the camp needs, such as installing air conditioners in the Rec Hall, implementing new basketball courts, and repaving the driveways and



The Primate meets with the campers and the new director, Arpi Kouzouian, left



The Pavilion at the Ararat Center in Greenville, NY, where St. Vartan Camp takes place

walkways when needed. They also provide general maintenance upkeep such as mowing and building repairs.

To help the revenue of the camp, the Ararat Center Board has been looking to find more renters during the “shoulder seasons” of camp, April through early June and late August through October. Currently, the Ararat Center is closed during the winter, its last day being October 31.

Their next project after this current camp session is to winterize the rest of the buildings. Only the main house is winterized at the moment. Having the whole facility winterized would be a good idea, as Hintlian describes, “There’s a lot of skiing that’s relatively close enough and there’s people that go up there and rent places for the winters.”

“One of my favorite things about camp is

that it allows kids to be kids,” Kouzouian says. “Our campers’ days are full of opportunities to learn, play, grow, make friends, and interact with others in a Christian manner.” St. Vartan Camp allows kids to grow and be a part of the Armenian Christian family, follow the role modeling examples of the CITs and counselors, and “to exhibit God’s love towards one another at all times.”

“Camp is a great experience for the kids,” Hintlian concurred. “It would make a great gift for grandparents to give their kids for Christmas!” We hope the camp program continues to grow and expand in the coming summers, providing more memories and lifelong friendships to Armenian youths all across the country.

To learn more about the camp, visit <https://diocesansummercamps.org/stvartancamp/>.

OBITUARY

Sarkis Paboojian

Centenarian Dedicated to St. James Church

WATERTOWN — Sarkis Paboojian, a longtime resident of Watertown, passed away peacefully at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center on July 1, 2023. He was 101 years old.

Sarkis was born on January 3, 1922 in Lawrence, Mass., to the late Hagop and Arousiag (Boyajian) Paboojian.

He grew up in Boston and was a graduate of the Mechanic Arts high school in Boston. After high school, he worked as a machinist/toolmaker for Boston Gear in Quincy for more than 40 years. He continued and finished his work part-time at United Electric Controls in Watertown.

Sarkis and his late wife Ardemis together with their son Armand were active members of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. Sarkis was a regular attendee of the monthly Men’s Club. He also found time to volunteer weekly at St. James Bingo.

Sarkis was the husband of the late Ardemis (Amirhanyan) Paboojian who passed away in 2006. He is survived by his son, Armand Paboojian of Watertown. He was the brother of Lucy Aroian of Florida and her late husband Everett and the late Nicholas Paboojian and his late wife Helen. Additionally, he leaves behind his nephew



Richard Aroian and his wife Laurie and their children Kelsey and Phillip, his niece, Karen Aroian and her husband Andy as well as many cousins and friends. He was also predeceased by his brother-in-law Yervant Amirhanyan and his wife Varteni.

Funeral Services were held at St. James Armenian Church, Watertown, on July 11. Interment followed at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home, Watertown.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Mirror-Spectator Celebrates 90th Anniversary with Twin Events in October

90TH, from page 1

Angeleno Bureau from 2010 to 2014. He was also a Rome-based foreign correspondent. He is a 1991 graduate of Williams College.

Eric Hacopian is a political analyst and consultant with 35 years of experience in American politics. He is the owner of EDH and Associates, a Southern California-based Democratic consulting firm. Eric has consulted and worked on campaigns in the United States from the presidential to the local level.



Eric Hacopian

Since 2017 he has been living in Armenia with his family and is currently the host of the "Insight Show" on CivilNet television, weekly analyses and commentary on Armenian and regional politics. Eric's work has also been published in Open Democracy, New Left Review, Truthdig, and the San Francisco Chronicle.

Amberin Zaman is a Turkish journalist and a senior correspondent for Al-Monitor. Having started as a journalist in Turkey, Zaman contributes to various newspapers throughout the world. Her writing is centered on minority rights issues in Turkey. She is a former Turkey correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, the Economist, the Daily Telegraph and the Washington Post. She



Amberin Zaman

has been at Al-Monitor since 2018.

Zaman was one of the panelists at the 85th anniversary celebration of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. She is an outspoken proponent of Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide, as well as the rights of the Kurdish minority in Turkey.

In 2014, Turkish Premier Recep Erdogan singled out Zaman as a "militant in the guise of a journalist, a shameless woman... Know your place!" after her stories on Kurdish oppression in that country.

A gala will take place the following night, on Saturday, October 28, at the Boston Burlington Marriot Hotel, with a cocktail reception at 6:30 p.m. and dinner and program to follow at 7:30 p.m. Seats are \$300 per person.

Serving as master of ceremonies will be Sona Movsesian, the irrepressible author and media personality who has been the personal assistant of late-night talk show host Conan O'Brien since 2009 as well as co-host of the podcast "Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend" since 2018. She is the author of the humorous how-to book titled *The World's Worst Assistant*, which became a *New York Times* Best Seller.



Sona Movsesian

The keynote speaker at the event will be Robert Avetisyan, the permanent representative of the Artsakh in the US since 2009. Prior to the appointment, Avetisyan worked as counselor at the NKR Perma-

nent Representation in the United States. From August 1999 till February 2008, he served on different positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

Performing at the event will be the outstanding a cappella trio Zula, whose members are Teni Apelian, Anais Alexandra Tekerian and Yeraz Markarian. Zula, whose name means "clear water," transforms Armenia's village folk melodies into



Robert Avetisyan



Zula

arrangements that pay tribute to the music's ancient roots while allowing it new possibilities. The trio has performed in such esteemed venues as the Getty Museum, the MET, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the Berklee College of Music, and the Kennedy Center. Zula, and has four critically acclaimed albums to its credit. Its members are Teni Apelian, Anais Alexandra Tekerian and Yeraz Markarian.

an and Yeraz Markarian.

A committee of dedicated volunteers, headed by Chairperson Nicole Babikian Hajjar, is spearheading the efforts for the two-day celebration.

"I am fortunate to collaborate with a great team of enthusiastic and seasoned volunteers, along with the *Mirror's* management. Together, we are committed to organizing an engaging and meaningful celebration and raising well-deserved funds in honor of the *Mirror's* 90th," Babikian Hajjar said.

Added *Mirror-Spectator* editor Alin K. Gregorian, "I am so looking forward to the programs, both of which promise to be exceptionally interesting. The panelists will share their processes and also shed more light on this very difficult chapter in Armenian history. I hope the members of the community take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to hear from journalists at the top of their fields."

Mirror-Spectator Managing Editor Aram Arkun declared, "The *Mirror-Spectator* only holds such events every five years, so we do our best to make them topnotch. We are bringing together prominent journalists for what promises to be an intriguing discussion at Tufts University, followed the next evening by an entertaining banquet program. We hope the community will come out and strongly support us just as it has done many times in the past."

To learn more about this two-day celebration, reserve your seat or donate: please visit www.mirrorspectator.com or contact Hasmik at mirrorads75@gmail.com or (617) 924-4420 x103.

Sponsorship Opportunities are available at <https://givebutter.com/UMfFcB>

St. Mark's Annual Armenian Fest to Take Place September 3, Features Traditional Food and Music

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — St. Mark Armenian Church's Annual Armenian Festival will be held on the church grounds on Sunday, September 3, from 12 noon to 6 p.m., 2427 Wilbraham Road in Springfield.

The Fest, which has become a favorite in the Greater Springfield area, is the parish's biggest event for nearly 30 years and will feature delicious hot meals, a live Armenian band, dancing, authentic Armenian baked goods and pastries, Armenian coffee, a raffle, and more.

The St. Mark Armenian Festival draws more than 1,000 people from Springfield, surrounding suburbs and throughout New

England that enjoy great food, entertainment and a wonderful social atmosphere. Everyone is welcome to be a part of the culture and enjoy all that is offered.

The Fest involves dozens of parishioners lending their time and talents to put on this annual one-day event, which is the parish's largest annual fundraiser. Baking workshops have taken place over the summer, including the preparation of Choreg (Armenian sweet rolls), Cheese Boreg (phyllo dough triangles filled with cheese); and Spinach Pie (phyllo dough squares filled with spinach and cheese). Workshops will continue up to the time of the Festival.



Hot dinners feature St. Mark's signature Armenian kebabs as well as vegetarian options.

Attendees can enjoy an array of baked goods and sweets, and Soorj, Armenian coffee, will also be available. There will also be a cultural booth with handmade Armenian jewelry and other items made in Armenia, and a raffle. St. Mark's very own instructional cooking DVD, featuring parishioners demonstrating how to make traditional Armenian delicacies, will also be available for purchase.

St. Mark's parish priest, Father Nigoghos (Nicholas) Aznavourian, will be giving tours of the church throughout the event, and will explain the Armenian Apostolic

faith and its history for those interested in learning more.

All proceeds from the Fest benefit the ministries of St. Mark Armenian Church. Sponsorship opportunities are also available, and donations can be made through the donate button on the church website, stmarkarmenianchurch.org (select "Festival Sponsorship" from the dropdown). More information about the Fest can be found on the Facebook event page, on the church website, stmarkarmenianchurch.org.

Admission to the festival and parking are free. The event will be held rain or shine (there will be plenty of seating under tents). St. Mark is located at 2427 Wilbraham Road, Springfield.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Storica's Armenian Wine Renaissance

Discover the captivating tale of Armenian wine anew as a renaissance takes place in Armenia, with visionary winemakers reviving ancient grapes and traditions to produce vibrant wines with modern expertise.

Armenia's rich history in winemaking dates back over 6,100 years and remains greatly untold. The legendary Areni-1 cave, the oldest known winemaking facility in the Vayots Dzor region, serves as a testament to the country's storied viticulture.

At the forefront of this resurgence is Storica Wines, a trailblazing import company offering top Armenian brands that passionately create wines from long-lost grape varieties. Among these are the acclaimed Areni red grape, often referred to as the "Pinot Noir of Armenia," and the elegant Voskehat, known as Armenia's most popular white varietal. These wines beautifully reflect Armenia's fine terroir, characterized by extreme climate and elevation, volcanic soils, and over 300 days of sunlight per year.

Storica Wines holds the position of the leading purveyor of Armenian wines in the U.S., boasting a portfolio of 19 exquisite wines, 13 of which have received 90+ ratings from renowned global wine publi-



cations like Wine & Spirits and Wine Enthusiast. Furthermore, these wines have earned top honors in premier wine competitions, surpassing thousands of entries from around the world. Today, Storica's offerings

grace the menus of Michelin-star restaurants and proudly adorn independent wine & spirit shops across 26 states in the U.S. Wine enthusiasts can also have their impressive collection shipped directly to their

homes through the company's online shop.

Embark on your journey today and explore the allure of Storica's outstanding Armenian wines by visiting www.storicawines.com/shop.

Storica Fine Wines of Armenia Summer Six-Pack

Order online today:
\$140 + Free Shipping



SHOP NOW



GENATS! MAY YOU DELIGHT IN OUR WINES

An Afternoon With Dr. Ernest Barsamian

BARSAMIAN, from page 6 veterans." Another of his proudest moments was having the auditorium at West Roxbury VA Medical Center named after him: Ernest Barsamian Auditorium. In addition, every December, the Ernest Barsamian Award is given to the best surgeon of the year in the Department of Veteran Affairs.

In 2007, he received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in New York from the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations. The ceremony, which took place on Ellis Island, honored

nearly 100 Americans who have made outstanding contributions to their own ethnic groups and to American society. Dr. Ernest talked about his childhood in Aleppo, finishing high school at age 15 and attending Aleppo College, and was honored as an outstanding graduate, before going to study at American University of Beirut, through a scholarship by Peter Dorman.

I was present at a gala reception on September 21, 2013, at Boston University, organized by the New England chapter of the Worldwide Alumni of the American University of Beirut (AUB), when Dr. Ernest was honored for the second time as a distinguished alumnus of AUB. Throughout his life, he has taught and mentored many young students, AUB alumni and others, and helped them in their careers. Jeffrey Karam, vice president of the New England alumni chapter, said it best that Barsamian is someone "who improved the lives of everyone that he came into contact with." A few days later, during a private reception at the Harvard Office of the University Marshal Jackie O'Neill, in Harvard Square, with the presence of the Ambassador to the US Tatul Markarian, Armenia's Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian, awarded Dr. Barsamian the Mkhitar Heratsi medal — the Armenian government's highest medal in medicine — on behalf of President Serge Sargisian, an award that he is humbled to receive.

I spent a delightful afternoon with a wonderful human being, who "sousik poumik" as Armenians say, made an impact on so many and is one of our treasured giants.



COMMUNITY NEWS



THE ARMENIAN
MIRROR
SPECTATOR

Reflecting ~ Connecting ~ Inspiring

**MEDIA COVERAGE OF ARMENIA AND
KARABAKH TODAY** Journalists' Panel and Q&A

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023

7:00 – 8:30 PM (Free and open to the public)

With the participation of:
David Ignatius
(Washington Post)
Ken Dilanian
(NBC News)
Eric Hacopian
(CivilNet)



Joyce Cummings Center, Room 270

Tufts University, Medford, MA

Complimentary parking. Light Reception to Follow.

90TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2023

Boston Burlington Marriott, Burlington, MA



**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

**Robert
Avetisyan**

*Representative of the
Nagorno Karabakh
Republic in the US*



EMCEE

**Sona
Movsesian**

*Author, podcast co-host
and personal assistant to
Conan O'Brien*

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE



a cappella trio



From left Teni Apelian, Anais Tekerian, Yeraz Markarian

Cocktail Reception | 6:30 pm
Dinner and Program | 7:30 pm
Donations are \$300 per person



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Tekeyan Cultural Association Delegation Participates in Reception Honoring Primate of Eastern and Canadian Dioceses



Representatives of the Tekeyan Cultural Association with the three Primates of North America



Shahnour Hovsepien presenting a historic photo of gold medal boxer Vladimir Yengibaryan with Catholicos Vasken I at Echmiadzin to Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate



Sevan Deirbadrossian presenting a photo to Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, Primate, Diocese of Canada, of his episcopal ordination by Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II in 2014



Talene Hachikian presenting a photo of the sunset over St. Vartan Cathedral to Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate, Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern)

BURBANK, Calif. — On Sunday, August 6, a delegation representing the Tekeyan Cultural Association attended the Divine Liturgy at St. Leon Armenian Cathedral in Burbank. Immediately afterwards, the delegation participated in the reception in the Armen Hampar Room hosted by the Western Diocese honoring the Primates of the Eastern Diocese and Canadian Diocese of North America. Both Primates expressed their appreciation to Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate, Western Diocese of the Armenian Church and the Diocesan Council.

On behalf of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Sevan Deirbadrossian invited Shahnour Hovsepien to present a historic photo of Vladimir Yengibaryan with Catholicos Vasken I at Echmiadzin to Archbishop Derderian. Yengibaryan, a gold medalist in boxing at the Olympics in 1956, would often visit Catholicos Vasken I prior to his boxing matches in order to receive a blessing from the Catholicos.

Deirbadrossian presented a photo to Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, Primate, Diocese of Canada, of his episcopal ordination by Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II in 2014.

She then invited Talene Hachikian to present a photo of the sunset over St. Vartan Cathedral to Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate, Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern).

Finally, Deirbadrossian invited Deacon Carl Bardakian to present a historic photo to Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan of the Diocesan Assembly at St. Vartan Cathedral in New York in 1968 with Catholicos Vasken I presiding. She also congratulated the latter on his upcoming episcopal ordination in October in Echmiadzin.

Record-Breaking Attendance at Milwaukee Armenian Fest

By David Lührssen

MILWAUKEE — The number of people gathered at this year's Milwaukee Armenian Fest on July 16 had already grown large at the advertised opening time. By 11 a.m., festivalgoers were already lined up from inside the church hall and out the door, waiting deep into the parking lot. By mid-afternoon it was clear that attendance for this year's festival was record-breaking.

The annual summer gathering at St. John the Baptist Armenian Church, Greenfield, began decades ago as a picnic for Southeast Wisconsin's Armenian community. In the 1990s, parish leaders rebranded the picnic as Milwaukee Armenian Fest, an event for everyone in Milwaukee — an opportunity to showcase Armenian food, culture and faith in a city that had already known successful Greek, Irish, German and Italian festivals.

Attendance and attention have grown steadily over the years with many returning customers, some wanting to reconnect with their Armenian roots and always new faces as Milwaukee Armenian Fest found new marketing tools through social media as well as legacy media. Food was always and remains central to the festival, with an affordable menu of traditional Arme-



Throng of locals gathered for Milwaukee's Armenian Fest at St. John the Baptist Armenian Church

nian foods. But in the '90s the role of the festival as a one-day embassy of all things Armenian became important.

This year, the culture booth did brisk business in books, CDs, clothing, Armenian wine and preserves. An arts and crafts table kept children engaged as

adults viewed a display of ancient Armenian coins. Many church tours were conducted, giving visitors insights into Armenian history and the Armenian Church. For the first time, Milwaukee Armenian Fest held a silent auction featuring goods and services donated

by Armenian-owned businesses. Despite the last-minute cancellation by a Chicago dance company, the large outdoor audience was entertained by the traditional Armenian music of the Hye Vibes, a Chicago band, and STEPAN, a one-man band from Racine.



Arts & Culture

20 Years After 'The Room': The Actor Who Survived the Best Worst Movie Ever Made

AUSTIN (*Daily Beast*) — Dan Janjigian had made it all the way to the Olympic Games to compete under a flag that was upside down.

He squinted up at the three stripes of the Armenian flag — apricot on top, followed by bands of blue and red — flying high over the “Salt Lake 2002” banner. Then he went to quietly alert a staffer that the apricot, in actual fact, was supposed to be on the bottom.

The flag was flipped within minutes. Potential diplomatic incident successfully averted, Janjigian went to go find his brakeman. The pair of them would soon be hurtling down an icy chute at literal breakneck speeds in a contraption best described as the Hyundai to other teams’ Ferraris, and they needed to get ready.

Janjigian was bobsledding for Armenia. When the event came to a close several days later, he’d placed 33rd. But he and his teammate — a Greek-American buddy he’d recruited — were delighted as they headed home to California, having achieved a new personal best racing time.

A month later, Janjigian packed up his life in San Jose and moved to Los Angeles, now determined to pursue a career as an actor. “Almost immediately,” according to him, he landed a role in a new feature film. It was called “The Room”.

No one who cringed their way through “The Room”’s awkward premiere in the summer of 2003 expected it to make much of a dent in the cultural consciousness, let alone stick around long enough to be crowned the Worst Movie Ever Made. But 20 years later, that’s where we are, and “The Room” has the cult status symbols — notably, the rabid fanbase and the tsunami of memes — to prove it.

The film hardly needs an introduction, but Dan Janjigian is another story.

He played Chris-R (yes, there’s a hyphen, and no, you can’t just call him “Chris”), a nefarious drug dealer who barges onto a rooftop and threatens another character with a gun. After demanding to know where his “fucking money” is, Chris-R is promptly tackled by two other characters, who perform a citizen’s arrest and escort him offscreen. (“Don’t worry, he’s going to jail!” another character wails.)

All of this happens in less time than it takes to pop a bag of popcorn. But in just over 80 seconds, Janjigian managed to turn in “what is commonly regarded as the single best performance in ‘The Room,’” according to castmate Greg Sestero, who wrote the definitive behind-the-scenes book, *The Disaster Artist*, capturing the madness.

The fans seem to agree. “While the other actors come across as children see JANJIGIAN, page 14



Arman Hambardzumyan with the heroes of Troy (Martina Sedda photo)

Arman Hambardzumyan Opens Unique Atelier

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — About 10 kilometers from the center of Yerevan in a village called Zovuni a new cultural initiative has come into being, which merits the attention of artists and art lovers. It is the home and studio of Arman Hambardzumyan and his wife, Lusine Sargsian, designed and built by the artist himself. Not only is it a residence and atelier, but also an active cultural center which will host exhibitions, discussions about art, and other activities. Since March, when the young couple moved in, they have received numerous guests, artists, art lovers, film figures, musicians, photographers, friends, and guests from abroad.

The multifunctional dwelling represents the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. Born in Yerevan in 1988, Hambardzumyan did not have a life of luxury. His father had always wanted to become an artist, but difficult conditions prevented him from realizing his ambitions. This had a decisive impact on his son, who “wanted at all costs to be an artist.” As he described it, this was something he “made clear even in elementary school.”

He recalls that, as a child, since he “had no toys to play with,” he simply made his own. This childhood creativity developed as he studied art, and is especially evident in his sculptures.



Arman Hambardzumyan at his gallery (Martina Sedda photo)

He did his undergraduate work at the Henry Igityan National Art Center from 2000 to 2005, then earned his bachelor’s and master’s degree at the Yerevan State Pedagogical University in 2009 and 2011, respectively. Since 2011, he has been a member of the Artists’ Union in Armenia and in the following year, he received the Laureate of the President Prize of the Republic of Armenia.

Soon he began exhibiting his works in many European countries: in addition to homeland Armenia, his art appeared in Russia, Serbia, Moldova, Finland, France, see ATELIER, page 20

Viktor Yuzefovich:

“Aram Khachaturian said...
‘I Want You to Write a Book
about Me.’”

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

WASHINGTON — A year and a half before he passed away, Aram Khachaturian decided that he wanted musicologist and researcher Victor Yuzefovich to write a book about him. Dr. Yuzefovich, now a resident of Virginia, told me about his encounter with the greatest of all Armenian composers in 1977.

“Aram Ilyich returned from West Germany, where he saw my book published there about our great violinist David Oistrakh. Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978) and Oistrach (1908-1974) were workmates and friends. The Armenian composer dedicated to Oistrach his violin concerto.

I was working at the musical journal *Sovetskaya Muzika* [Soviet Music] in those days. He came to our office and said: ‘I saw your wonderful book. Need one like that about me,’ recalled Yuzefovich.

The musicologist remembers their talk nearly by heart: “Aram Ilyich,” answered Dr. Yuzefovich, “today you are in Paris, tomorrow in London, the following day in Yerevan. How can we work on this book, assuming that it requires many hours of meetings with you?”

“I will make those meetings happen,” replied the Armenian composer. “Later I understood that not only did he like the Oistrakh book, but he also wanted to share his experience and thoughts. He knew that his health conditions were worsening, and he wanted to make this happen.” said Yuzefovich.

They held a series of meetings at Khachaturian’s Moscow house during which the composer was patiently answering the numerous questions Yuzefovich had prepared for him. Most recently, the great composer lost his wife Nina Makarova, also a composer, and deeply felt this loss. Because of worsening health conditions and migraines, sometimes he would wear a hat and turn up the collars of his jacket in the street so that people wouldn’t recognize him. “Khachaturian, usually a cheerful person, was pursuing an isolating life,” recalls Yuzefovich.

Khachaturian passed away on May 1, 1978, leaving many stories of his life untold and many questions unanswered. “I had to catch up, working in the archives of Moscow and Yerevan and talking to his friends and fellow musicians, [and] to his numerous students. In Echmiadzin I met the Catholicos Vazken I (1955-1994) to talk about Khachaturian. All the time I kept in my mind the words Aram Ilyich said more than once: ‘You must know everything about me,’” said Yuzefovich.

His book was first published in the United States because an see YUZEFOVICH, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

The Actor Who Survived the Best Worst Movie Ever Made

JANJIGIAN, from page 13

in a school play, he acts like he's on 'The Wire,'" one awed Redditor remarked a few years ago.

Janjigian, now 51, exudes the easygoing charm of a neighborhood dad whose biggest concern is teaching his 10-year-old daughter not to cheat at card games. (It's a work in progress.) Even over Zoom, speaking to the *Daily Beast's* Obsessed on the occasion of the film's 20th anniversary, his vibe is tangibly that of the nicest jock you knew in high school, mixed with a dash of Tony Robbins' corporate optimism and a propensity for being in the right place at the right time.

All of that belies a certain burning intensity that "The Room" captured in glorious 35mm (and also, infamously, simultaneously on digital video). It still stabs through occasionally, like when Janjigian casually drops that he's currently fasting as a "will-power feat," or when he reflects on his 2020 bid for Congress (we'll get there).

It also comes through when he's trying to explain why a series of seemingly unconnected events — an Olympic bid, a part in shaping cinema infamy, a political campaign — have disrupted an otherwise steady life line, spiking occasionally into what looks like stochastic madness.

"My attitude has always been," he said, mulling the words, "whatever opportunity I have put in front of me, if I have the chance to do it, and the means to do it, I'm gonna do it."

And, to hear him tell it, it all goes back to a woman who escaped a genocide more than a century ago.

The Bobsledder

Janjigian's grandmother, Nevart Karagozian, came to America when she was 12. Escaping the Armenian Genocide of 1915, she had posed as a Turkish refugee and "found a way to go through orphanages" to get there, according to a story in *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

She settled down in California around 1920. Decades later, in the late 1970s, she moved in with Janjigian and his family. Then 4 or 5 years old, he was entranced by the woman who walked with a stoop and laughed uproariously at her own farts. She was the coolest person he'd ever met.

That his grandmother had survived — and, by extension, that he had been born at all — seemed to Janjigian to be the result of some cosmic lottery that she had won somewhere along the line. Given that chance was all that separated him from the yawning void of nonexistence, he figured he'd better make the most of life.

In high school, he lettered in baseball, water polo, and wrestling. He ran for student government and, fueled by pride in his grandmother and local community, papered the hallways with his campaign slogan: "Vote for Dan: He's Armenian." (He lost.)

His dad wanted him to be an engineer, so, in 1991, Janjigian went to California Polytechnic State University to learn how. But the kid who'd grown up smooth-talking his neighbors into buying newspaper subscriptions and stationery was being tugged in another direction. He switched his major to business administration and started working in Silicon Valley soon after graduation.

His life seemed to be shaping up nicely — pleasantly conventional, at least — when he went to a cousin's wedding in Chicago. There, Janjigian met a guy called John-Andrew Kambanis, a financial analyst who was getting ready to compete for Greece in the 1998 Winter Olympic Games' two-man bobsledding event.

The pair got to talking, Kambanis craning his neck up at Janjigian, who stood more than six inches taller than him. When

Janjigian mentioned that he liked to race motorcycles for fun, Kambanis perked up. He asked if Janjigian had ever considered learning how to bobsled. "You'd love it," he told him.

Janjigian didn't have to think too hard about it. He jumped on a plane and flew up to Canada, where in Calgary he found a bobsled track and a handful of world-class coaches willing to train any novice able to pony up. Every day for a week, he'd strap on crampons and walk the 1,475-meter ice track, breaking it down in his head, committing every bump and curve to memory. "I still have dreams about those frickin' turns," Janjigian told Obsessed.

The adrenaline fix was unbeatable. After leaving Calgary, Janjigian started entering competitions. By the time the 2002 Olympics crested the horizon, he was intent on being a part of it. That he'd pilot a sled for Armenia was a no-brainer. Finding a brakeman proved to be more of a challenge.

After two false starts involving teammates who were felled by a back injury and 9/11-related visa issues, respectively, he recruited Yorgo Alexandrou. Alexandrou was a friend from San Jose with Greek roots and no bobsledding experience. Close enough. The Armenian government scrambled to arrange temporary residence for Alexandrou, and the newly formed team began competing in the hopes of qualifying for the Games.

They came dead last in their first competition. Hoping to improve their long-shot odds, Janjigian decided they would train their guts out, and they'd do it in San Jose. The one-time engineering student modified his sled for road conditions, putting in-line skate wheels on a frame to replace its runners.

Day after day, Janjigian and Alexandrou would sweep the leaves off the street, set up their timing lights, and practice their push start. Passersby would stop and residents would come out of their homes to gawk at the 9-foot, 400-pound bobsled whizzing down Welch Avenue.

In December 2001, on the last run of their last race at the last qualifying event, they made it.

Spot at the Games assured, the Armenian team went back to San Jose. This time, their training sessions were observed not only by curious locals, but also reporters looking for an underdog story. The affably fratty pair, sporting muscle tees and huge grins, were interviewed by the Associated Press, ESPN, ABC, NBC, and CBS, all of which delighted in the "unlikely Olympians waging an uphill battle in a downhill sport," as CNN called them.

In February, they went to Salt Lake City and got thrashed. That year's Jamaican bobsledding team finished several rungs higher than Janjigian and Alexandrou. But "our best four runs ever were on that track," Janjigian said. "We kept getting better and better, all the way through. I couldn't have been more pleased."

But his proudest moment had come a few days earlier. After the opening ceremony, his mother had called to tell him that, when Armenia's athletes had appeared on the family's television, his 92-year-old grandmother had stood up to her full height of four foot seven inches, rising in salute.

The Actor

That same year, Janjigian landed on the set of "The Room" like "a Hellfire missile," Sestero later wrote in 2013's *The Disaster Artist*.

He'd booked the gig after his roommate, a buddy from college who'd been cast in the movie, came home and suggested he audition. They're looking for a thug, the roommate said. Dude, you'd be perfect.

So Janjigian walked into his first audition ever and met Tommy Wiseau, a man who looks, sounds, and thinks like no human being ever has. Janjigian was unruffled — Hollywood types were supposed to be a little eccentric, right? — and Wiseau seemed to think he was the right man to play Chris-R.

That Wiseau was no ordinary Hollywood type, and "The Room" no ordinary movie, wouldn't dawn on Janjigian until much later.

For the uninitiated, "The Room" is "the movie that an alien who has never seen a



Dan Janjigian in "The Room"

movie might make after having movies thoroughly explained to him," according to a 2010 article in *Harper's*. An absurd tale of betrayal played deadly straight, it concerns a love triangle between Johnny, a man who would do anything for his girl; Mark, his best friend who's very busy all the time; and Lisa, a woman written as a scheming succubus in a red dress.

It is crammed to bursting with deliciously awkward dialogue, continuity errors, characters who enter and vanish without explanation, and nonsensical and painfully drawn-out sex scenes. It is rife with scuzzy slow-jams, people tossing around the ol' pigskin, and framed pictures of spoons. It is equal parts nightmarish community theater and inadvertent Dadaist masterpiece.

It is also burdened with what one early observer called "peculiar plot cul-de-sacs" that go nowhere. The undisputed king of those cul-de-sacs is Chris-R, who, again, bursts onscreen, waves a gun around and demands his money, and is hustled offscreen — never to be mentioned again — in the span of about 83 seconds.

So why is Chris-R in "The Room"? Though he's never confirmed it, Wiseau seems to harbor a special fondness for the character. During production, he remarked that Chris-R was "such good character... like Al Capone," according to Sestero's book. A few years ago, he took to Reddit to promise the eventual return of Chris-R. (Janjigian hasn't heard anything about a sequel or spinoff.)

On day one, Janjigian rolled up to set already — and alarmingly — in character, according to Sestero. "He was at times so frighteningly locked into Chris-R that no one dared talk to him," he wrote. "Between rehearsals, Dan would stalk back and forth along the set's edge, muttering and swearing, keeping himself angry."

That he had gone full Method on the sidelines is something Janjigian acknowledges today with a mild shrug. "I have a really long fuse," he said. "That's a good thing in life. It's a bad thing if you're playing a

tough [guy] in a movie. So, yeah, I needed to pump myself up."

It was hard to sustain that level of pissed-off energy for the two weeks it took to film the short alley scene. "We literally filmed it like 40 times," Janjigian said. "[Wiseau] loved it. Like, he filmed it again and again and again. Every day. With very little difference."

Inevitably, Wiseau burned his way to the end of Janjigian's fuse. Playing the movie's hero, Wiseau had to tackle Janjigian in the scene, wrenching him off another actor. "He was, like, petting me. He wasn't grabbing me," Janjigian recalled. "I was livid. So I just grabbed him by the collar and put him up against the wall. Like: 'If you're not gonna fucking pull me, then stay out of the scene!' Next [take], he pulled me."

Sestero witnessed the outburst. In his telling, relayed in *The Disaster Artist*, Janjigian snarls at Wiseau, "If you're going to grab my arm, really fucking grab it! You're jumping on me like a pussy!" and stalks off.

His director watches him go, cowed. "My God," Wiseau says, awe in his voice. "He's like monster."

The next year, "The Room" dropped like a stone into its first theater. The premiere was deeply uncomfortable; several members of the cast had the sick feeling they'd been duped into participating in soft-core porn. Janjigian slunk out after the screening, vowing to keep "The Room" off his resume.

A few weeks later, he got a call from the actor who'd played Mike (a character fans would later dub "random blowjob guy"). "He goes, 'Hey, you gotta come with me to the showing tonight,'" Janjigian recalled. "'You won't believe it.'"

"The Room" was still showing? Confused, Janjigian agreed to come check it out. Hiding in the back of the theater, he watched as the movie began to play and its packed-out audience promptly went feral. Many of the hallmarks of a modern-day screening — the sex-scene singalongs, the cancer jokes, the spoon-chucking — were already cemented.

Propelled by a handful of weirdos who knew a legend in the making when they saw it, word of the movie had ripped around the local community of midnight movie mavens, schlock connoisseurs, and out-of-work actors. "We saw it four times in three days, and on the last day I had over 100 people there," Michael Rousselet, an early fan who would go on to form the comedy troupe 5-Second Films, told *Entertainment Weekly* in 2008.

"It was crazy," Janjigian said. "There were all these people that were dressed up as our characters. I saw a dozen Chris-Rs. A lot more Tommies. Tons of guys dressed up as Lisa."

In the ensuing two decades, "The Room"'s fandom bloomed like a contagion, bolstered by regular midnight screenings, often attended by Wiseau or other members of the cast. It became a point-and-click computer game, a stage play, and the subject of endless academic analysis. A fan named James Franco reviewed Sestero's memoir for *Vice*, then turned the book into a Golden Globe-winning movie, which he directed and starred in.

While the gospel of "The Room" spread, growing from underground to mainstream obsession, Janjigian was getting on with his life. He moved to Austin, settled down, and started a family. He worked in insurance before moving on to mergers and acquisitions, doing a little motivational speaking and professional coaching on the side. He went on *Wheel of Fortune* in 2013; he came in third.

He also stopped bobsledding in 2007,

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Jenan Zammar's Lebanese Spiced Rice

"If you thought rice was boring, you haven't tried this Lebanese spiced rice. It's easy enough to make on a weeknight but fancy enough to serve at special celebrations and dinner parties. I grew up with this rice and I have to admit, my favorite part is the crunchy toasted nuts on top. It's the perfect match for the soft rice underneath," says talented content creator and blogger Jenan Zammar. "I grew up with my mom making this rice for Thanksgiving dinner or Eids. It's super easy to make but full of flavor."

"I'm a Lebanese mother of 3 and love to share all of my recipes," says Jenan. "Years ago I had no idea what I was doing in the kitchen but with lots of trial and errors, I can now whip up a meal with little effort. I'm all about simplifying meals but still enjoying the delicious flavors food has to offer. From my kitchen to yours with love. This rice is a one pot meal. Rice is mixed with ground beef (or lamb), Lebanese 7 spices and cinnamon. It's a popular dish in many Middle Eastern countries."

"You'll want to start by washing the rice really well until the water runs clear.

Some people like to soak the rice depending on the rice but there's no need to soak the rice for this recipe. In a pot cook the ground beef and spices first and then add butter until everything is combined. Then the rice goes in. It's important to mix the rice for a minute or two with the ground beef to ensure every grain of rice has some of the butter coating it. This will result in perfectly fluffy rice that doesn't stick together."

Serves 5.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound ground beef (or lamb)
- 2 cups basmati rice
- 3 1/2 cups chicken broth or water
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon 7 spice (or allspice)
- 1 teaspoon salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, more to taste
- 1 tablespoon butter (for the rice)
- 2 tablespoons butter (for the almonds)
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds or any nut of your choice
- Fresh chopped parsley

PREPARATION:

Heat the olive oil in a large pot. Add the ground beef, mix, and cook until the ground beef is just about cooked. Add the butter, rice and spices, and mix again.

Stir the rice to ensure each grain has some oil/butter coating it. Add the broth or water and bring to a boil. Cover and lower heat to low. Cook for roughly 10 minutes (if using basmati rice).

Set aside keeping the lid in place. In a small skillet melt 2 tablespoons of butter with 1/2 cup slivered almonds. Stir often to brown on all sides.

Transfer the rice to a Bundt pan pressing down to compact it together. Place a platter over top and flip the Bundt pan onto the platter. Garnish with slivered almonds and chopped parsley (optional).

For this recipe and more, go to: <https://jenanzammar.com/spiced-rice/>
@JenanZammar, Foodie & Baker | Content Creator | Wife & Mom of 3 | Lebanese-Canadian

Connect at:

https://www.facebook.com/people/jenan_zammar/100063710430318/

https://www.instagram.com/jenan_zammar/

https://www.pinterest.ca/Jenan_Zammar/_created/

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

<https://www.youtube.com/c/JenanZammar/shorts>

Also see:

Jenan's Unstuffed Cabbage Rolls <https://jenanzammar.com/unstuffed-cabbage-rolls/>

Jenan's Mujadara (Lebanese Lentils with Rice) at: <https://jenanzammar.com/mujadara-lebanese-lentils-with-rice/>

Jenan's Potato Kibbeh at: <https://jenanzammar.com/potato-kibbeh-kibbet-batata/>

Jenan is happy to work with your brand, too. She's collaborated with many brands and has created great longstanding relationships. She can showcase your products in many ways such as recipe videos, recipe creations, Instagram story ads, and more. For more information, please contact her at jenan.zammar@hotmail.com for sponsored rates. Or at <https://jenanzammar.com/work-with-me/>



Jenan Zammar, winner of the 2022 Ottawa Foodie Influencer Award (Photo courtesy <https://jenanzammar.com/>)

from previous page

after dislocating his shoulder and suffering a nasty crash in a race. A year later, his grandmother died. She was 100 years old. She never watched "The Room", according to Janjigian, who wrote in a later email to Obsessed, "That was probably for the best!"

The Politician

Even as he hit all the expected benchmarks, Janjigian's life kept being punctuated by reminders that he'd been in one of the best-worst movies ever made. It was announced in 2015 that Zac Efron had been cast as him in the film adaptation of *The Disaster Artist* — and Janjigian's eldest daughter was forced to concede that her dad was kind of cool. He took her to the Los Angeles premiere two years later, where they met Franco and a host of other A-listers.

Wiseau was also there, and (pointedly, to Janjigian's mind) ignored him. Aside from Sestero, with whom he remains close, Wiseau has carefully kept his distance from the rest of his former castmates, several of whom told The Huffington Post in 2016 that

he is anxious they might "alter his narrative."

It was easy to feel boxed out of the action. With Wiseau sucking up all the oxygen in (ahem) "The Room", the others either found creative workarounds — a memoir in comic book form, a YouTube mockumentary series — or moved on with their lives. Janjigian sort of did both.

Specifically, he ran for congressional office in 2020, and put his Hollywood credentials on the cover of the flyers he mailed out to Texans. "Dan Janjigian: Not Your Typical Politician," a box next to a picture of a Chris-R bobblehead read. "Dan starred in the cult-classic film "The Room"."

He'd successfully sold himself as an athlete and an actor. Why not politics? In his years doing sales, he estimated, he'd sat with more families around their kitchen tables than any politician. "I'd sit down with you and your husband or your wife, and I'd show you a product," he said. "And while you're doing that, you're building rapport. You're learning about them. They talk about

what's important to them."

Eventually, he said, he just got tired "of being an armchair quarterback."

Registering to run as a Democrat, he styled himself as a commonsense politician who could bring both sides of the aisle together on issues of health care, immigration, and the environment. His campaign materials heavily referenced his relationship to his grandmother — "I get my strength from her" — and his days at the Olympics.

He got destroyed. One candidate, a local lawyer who'd entered the race late, dropped out a few days before the primary election and still got more votes than him. Coming last stung.

"I'm a pretty big optimist," Janjigian said. On the day of the primary, he'd stood outside a polling station and gotten what had seemed like a promising response from the voters emerging. "I thought, we're definitely gonna take this. I just felt like we had a good shot. And then to have the numbers come out... [It] was really shocking."

He retreated as the election moved on

without him (with the winning candidate going on to lose to the Republican incumbent). He scrutinized his game. He shouldn't have mailed out so many flyers; he should've spent more time knocking on doors and meeting people. He was a salesman at heart, after all, so why hadn't that been the game-plan in the first place?

But Janjigian will insist to you he loves failing with a certain gleam of Chris-R-like fervor. It's a learning opportunity, and it's what will take him on to his next thing, whatever that may be. The sky's the limit, and even if he crashes back down to earth on one rocket, it's just another chance to find another, even cooler ride.

Fail long and loudly enough, and it also becomes the glue that seals your legacy. That's not a bad thing, according to Janjigian. "I don't devalue any of it," he said. He was musing about "The Room", but he could have been speaking about anything — everything — that had happened to him so far. "I just feel very fortunate to have something I can look back fondly on."

ARTS & CULTURE

Celebrating Six Generations of One Family's Traditions in Fresno

(In a story originally written by Harout Arakelian for their Sound Archive series, The Armenian Museum of America celebrates these talented musicians and their contributions to recorded music history. Much of the text presented in this article is sourced from Arakelian's piece at <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/sound-archive>)

By Christine Vartanian Datian

FRESNO – On August 17, 1940 in the Central Valley of California, the Bedrosian family of musicians, led by Hovsep Joseph Bedrosian recorded four unique songs on the privately owned record label GME Records that were collected by famed ethnographer, Sidney Robertson Cowell. The Armenian Museum of America's Sound Archive celebrates these musicians and their contributions to recorded music.

That weekend, the Bedrosian family gathered to enjoy music, singing, dancing, and traditional Armenian food. Hovsep was joined in the self-recording session by his son Avedis (Harry) and his cousin Bagdasar Bedrosian. Much of the information related to these self-recordings is captured in the grooves of these discs as each song begins with a brief introduction by Avedis in Armenian and English. While Avedis is given the title of "director," these recordings highlight the musical mastery found within Hovsep and his prized zourna (or zurna, zerna).

The zourna, a double reed wind instrument, was not frequently recorded commercially in North America. Its significance is intertwined in the early Armenian-American experience with the most noteworthy performer being virtuoso Hovsep Bedrosian. Born in 1857 in Verin Khokh (Upper Khokh, a part of the village Khokh in the Southwest region of Kharpert, known for its fine wines and davoul [base drum] players), it is likely that Hovsep learned how to play the instrument in his youth before emigrating to the United States in 1893.

Both Avedis and Bagdasar were born in Verin Khokh in 1893. Hovsep's wife, Youghaper, and son Avedis joined him in America in 1907. On these recordings, the local accents from that specific region can be heard, making the recordings fascinating not only to music aficionados but also to linguists. While these recordings are the only known commercial recordings by Hovsep and his family, it is possible that his performance career began much



Hovsep Joseph Bedrosian:

earlier. According to one of Hovsep's granddaughters, Jane Gamoian, an accomplished performer of Armenian and Middle Eastern dance and currently the director of the Temple Dancers for Daughters of the Nile in Fresno, Joseph was hard-working and industrious, and initially worked at the "Krikorian Circus" in Massachusetts, and then as a musician for the P. T. Barnum Circus.

This information is substantiated by the field notes of Sidney Robertson Cowell. As part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the New Deal, Sidney Robertson Cowell was responsible for the California Folk Music Project. (The WPA was an ambitious employment and infrastructure program created by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1935, during the bleakest days of the Great Depression.) This New Deal project was organized and directed by folk music collector Sidney Robertson Cowell for the Northern California Work Projects Administration. Sponsored by the University of California, Berkeley, and cosponsored by the Archive of American Folk Song (now the American Folklife Center archive), this under-

taking was one of the earliest ethnographic field projects to document European, Slavic, Middle Eastern, and English- and Spanish-language folk music in one region of the United States.

Sidney Robertson Cowell recorded Hovsep and other Armenians in the Fresno area. The United States Library of Congress has the field recordings available and among her field notes is a quote by a Mr. Martin who says that the zourna is played in "all the best circuses!"

Listen to these recordings at: <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/hovsep-joseph-bedrosian>



Hovsep Joseph Bedrosian playing his prized zourna (W.P.A. California Folk Music Project collection, AFC 1940/001, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress)

Also see:

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/sidney-robertson-cowell-northern-california-folk-music/about-this-collection/>

During the four tunes, Avedis is constantly heard referencing people in attendance, interacting with the musicians and adding to the festive atmosphere. With disc GME #1 titled "Highleh" (or Haleh/Halay - a dance), he informs us of the location, the date and the musicians. When we put the needle to the record and the scratchy sounds dance through the speakers, a voice is heard. Avedis, the director of the session says: "Aysor Okosdos dasne yote hazar ine hariur karasun, chalognere Hovsep yev Bagdasar Bedrosian..."

According to the information on disc GME #2 titled "Eachayak," (that means three feet while the tune is a four step dance), a home recording device was provided by Dr. George Elgin, a resident of Chicago who visited the Kandarian family in Fresno. As a matter of fact, for GME #3, the tune "Lavook" was recorded as a request by Markar Kandarian. Avedis, endearingly in his half-English half-Armenian says they couldn't turn Markar down. The short introductions that open each song are charming and unique ways to document the Armenian language. The variety of the tunes that are all dance numbers and the remarkable zourna playing of Hovsep represent a dynamic musical culture and how the music from a small village named Verin Khokh was transferred to the fertile farmlands of Fresno.

"In the 1940s in Fresno, Saturday nights were Keyma and Lamb Chop Nights, with music, dancing, and singing at the family home. My late mother, Mary Perch, said Sunday afternoons were reserved for gatherings of the neighbors and family members who enjoyed Grandpa Hovsep playing his zourna, with the family joining in with music and dancing," says Melene Ouzounian, one of Hovsep's six great granddaughters who lives in Fresno. "During his lifetime, Grandpa Hovsep (who passed away in 1949) was insistent (and particular) about the kinds of foods he would eat or drink. He loved Armenian food that was prepared specifically by my grandmother Beatrice. What's amazing is that my gifted and talented grandmother cooked and baked for eleven people, three meals per day, plus snacks and beverages for five young growing children, mother and fathers-in-law, and two sisters-in-laws."

"Every week, one hundred pounds of flour was used by the Bedrosian family to make their own lavash bread (cracker bread). Mixed by hand, left to rise, rolled out very

thin, cooked on an ogagh (grill), and dried. Lavash was eaten dry with their soups and stews, but lightly moistened with some water to eat along with fresh cheese or as a sandwich. Today our daughters in Fresno work with yeast, and they can make anything. They make homemade dough for pizza and include their children (ten in total!) in that process. I am so proud of all of them," adds Melene.

<https://www.armenianmuseum.org/>

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

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

ica/

The Armenian Museum of America Sound Archive features selections from the museum's roughly 3000 disc collection of early Armenian recordings and musical ephemera. Explore the links below to listen to songs, learn about pivotal musicians and see images of original records. Special thanks to Jesse Kenas Collins, Harry Kezelian, and Harout Arakelian whose ongoing contributions of research and consultation have been critical to assembling the writings presented here. Go to:

<https://www.armenianmuseum.org/sound-archive>

<https://www.armenianmuseum.org/hovsep-joseph-bedrosian>

Materials relating to Hovsep Bedrosian from Sidney Robertson Cowell's California Folk Music Project can be found on the Library of Congress website: Library of Congress Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, 101 Independence Ave. S.E., Washington, DC USA 20540-4610 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.home>

<https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=Joe+Bedrosian&new=true&st=https://www.loc.gov/item/2017701179/>

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/sidney-robertson-cowell-northern-california-folk-music/articles-and-essays/the-ethnographic-experience-sidney-robertson-cowell-in-northern-california/><https://www.loc.gov/collections/sidney-robertson-cowell-northern-california-folk-music/?fa=original-format:photo,+print,+drawing&q=armenian>

https://www.americaslibrary.gov/sh/oddball/sh_oddball_wind_2_e.html

<https://www.armenianmuseum.org/on-the-edge>

Bedrosian Family Traditions and Recipes Cookbook

Melene Ouzounian is the author of a commemorative cookbook featuring 800 family recipes in memory of her beloved mother, Mary Perch, Hovsep's granddaughter, and her family. It is available for purchase at \$25.00 each, plus \$5.00 postage. To order, e-mail Melene at: mele-neouz@aol.com.

Special thanks to Fresno's Melene Ouzounian and Jane Gamoian for their family recipes, photos, memories, and information for this story. Some recipes from Hovsep Bedrosian's granddaughter, the late Mary Perch, were featured in The Armenian Mirror-Spectator Newspaper in September 2021. See: <https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/09/09/fresnos-mary-perch-beloved-matriarch-and-dedicated-community-volunteer/>



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

OCTOBER 14 — The Orange County Trex Fraternity presents Kef Time So-Cal at Bagramian Hall Mezza 900 W. Lincoln Avenue, Montebello. Featuring Hagopian Kef Time Legacy Band. Saturday, 6 p.m. to 1a.m. **ORDER TICKETS ONLINE:** orange-county-trex-fraternity.ticketleap.com Adults \$85. Students, College Age & Younger \$65. Table Sponsor \$800. For More Information Contact: Ralph Dergazarian 714.681.3013 • Brian Melkesian 626.827.8434 Chuck Simonian 559.799.3949 • Ari Gulugian 949.701.8006

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

AUGUST 27 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic, 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill, 12 noon to 5 p.m. Live music with the fabulous Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes Lamb Shish, Losh & Chicken Kebab, Kheyma, Vegetarian Plate Available. Beverages including Cash Bar. Cash Raffles. Air Conditioned Hall. Bring your lawn chairs for sitting outside. Tours of the new church will be given. For more info please visit www.hyepointearmenianchurch.org or call (978) 3729227. Take Rte. 495 N to exit 106, bear right at the end of the ramp and follow the signs.

SEPTEMBER 3 — St. Mark Armenian Church's Annual Armenian Festival will be held on the church grounds on Sunday, from 12pm to 6pm, 2427 Wilbraham Road, Springfield. Hot dinners feature St. Mark's signature Losh Kebab (made of ground beef, lamb and a variety of herbs) and Chicken Kebab, along with Porov Kufteh, which was added to the menu last year and is an Armenian-style meatball made of ground lamb and beef. Attendees can enjoy an array of ethnic baked goods and sweets, and Soorj, Armenian coffee, will also be available. There will also be a cultural booth with handmade Armenian jewelry and other items made in Armenia, and a raffle. All proceeds from the Fest benefit the ministries of St. Mark Armenian Church. stmarkarmenianchurch.org, or call (413) 783-5793. Admission to the festival and parking are free. The event will be held rain or shine (there will be plenty of seating under tents).

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

SEPTEMBER 11 — Saint James Men's Club and Holy Trinity Men's Union will have a joint meeting on Monday, at the Holy Trinity Center, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Guest Speaker will be Matt Slater of the New England Patriots. Mezza at 5:45, dinner at 6:45, Kheyma or losh dinner \$20.00. Will appreciate R.S.V.P. to the church office 617-354-0632.

SEPTEMBER 29 — Save the date! City of Smile-USA will host "A Tribute to Coco Chanel Who Loved Pearls." Friday, 11.30 a.m., Oakley Country Club, Watertown. Pearl jewelry raffle fundraiser and shopping the world's larg-

est collection of pearl jewelry designs at incredible direct-from-producer savings. City of Smile-USA is dedicated to treating the children of Armenia who have cancer.

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

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

NEW YORK

AUGUST 14 — Public forum with Suzan Meryem Rosita Kalayci, PhD on "The Armenian Genocide: Unheard voices of Armenian and Turkish Women." Dr. Kalayci is an author, researcher, Chaplain of St. Hilda's College, and founder in 2019 of the University of Oxford's new Oxford Network for Armenian Genocide Research (ONAGR). This is the first of its kind in the UK and benefits from links and partnerships with a wide range of institutions in Oxford and beyond. ONAGR's first international partnership was with the Oral History Archives at Columbia University (OHAC). Together with OHAC, we have digitized and are now in the process of transcribing the Columbia Armenian Oral History Collection—an important, widely unknown, collection of 147 testimonies of child survivors of the Armenian genocide. Monday at 6-7:30 p.m. Fordham University, 113 W. 60 St. (+ 9th Ave), NYC, room 604. Welcome by Harold Takooshian, PhD, Fordham, Discussants Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Columbia & ATOP Souren A. Israelyan, JD, ArmenBar. All are welcome.

SEPTEMBER 24 — St. Gregory the Enlightener Church Picnic Annual Picnic & "Fall Family Fair" at St. Gregory Armenian Church in White Plains, from noon until 5:00 p.m. Featuring Armenian music, Raffles and Fun Activities for the children. Traditional Armenian Food and Wine. Admission and parking are free. "North Street" Exit 25 on Hutchinson River Parkway, 1131 North St, White Plains, N.Y. Phone: 914-428-2595 or saintgregorychurch-wp@gmail.com

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

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

"Aram Khachaturian said... 'I Want You to Write a Book about Me.'"

YUZEFOVICH, from page 13
Armenian-American publisher from New York outsmarted the Soviet publishers, printing it in English in 1985, five years before the Soviet Union finalized the publication in Moscow. Later, the volume was printed also in Japan and Iran. Yuzefovich still needs a copy of his book in Iranian language and more information about this publication that happened without prior communication with the author.

Khachaturian saw his life as a juxtaposition of success, triumph, happiness and tragedy, said Yuzefovich. The musicologist believes the politically orchestrated unjustified attack against such great Soviet composers as Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich and Khachaturian that had happened in 1948 was among the key reasons for this. Under Joseph Stalin's dictates, the top Soviet composers were accused of being so-called "anti-people formalists." Khachaturian was fired from all the positions he had previously occupied; his music was

no longer published and performed. This notorious decision was soon reversed: the government understood how poor Soviet concerts were without Khachaturian's and other top composers' tunes. In those difficult days, Khachaturian found salvation in resettling in Armenia. The repatriation helped him to recuperate from the political attacks.

Khachaturian returned from Soviet Armenia empowered, says Dr. Yuzefovich. In Moscow, Khachaturian took the podium at a Composers Union's meeting and declared the weird notion of "anti-people formalism" does not exist in music at all.

Yuzefovich suggests that today, even though the *Sabre Dance* from the "Gayaneh" ballet or the famous waltz from "Masquerade" are quite known to the public, some other of his masterpieces seem to be largely forgotten: the *Second Symphony*, known also as the "Symphony with a Bell" is barely performed.

This is not uncommon for classical com-

posers, whose many musical works were also forgotten, he added.

During his research, diving into Armenian culture and traditions, the author concluded that the juxtaposition of sadness and optimism is not uncommon in Armenian culture, recalling the works of the poet Paruyr Sevak and the painters Minas Avetisyan and Martiros Saryan in this context and amazing me with his in-depth understanding and knowledge of Armenia. During our talk, Yuzefovich mentioned Garni and Geghard and cited the Russian intellectuals who traditionally visited Soviet Armenia. He had souvenirs from Yerevan in his room.

"A nation that lives on 10 percent of its historic lands, a nation that lost 1/3 of its people during the Genocide of 1915 is a creator of a culture that is saturated with both tragedy of their past, as well as resilience and hope," added Yuzefovich at the end of our conversation.

When he learned that I was about to fly to



Aram Khachaturian, his wife Nina Makarova and Belgian Queen Elizabeth

Armenia, Dr. Yuzefovich expressed "envy" and warm feelings about our motherland.

See the accompanying video at mirrorspectator.com.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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SINCE 1932



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Armenian Church Can Improve by Changing Marriage Rules for Priests

By Taleen Postian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

When becoming an Armenian priest, two paths are open to men who graduate from the seminary. One is to become a *Der Hayr*, a priest of a parish who must get married before he is ordained. The second is to work towards becoming a *Hayr Soorp* and remain celibate. This separation of clergy roles is currently absolute and unyielding, but is not based on any biblical canon or historical authority. It is a bureaucratic invention, one that has hurt more than it helped, and should ultimately be overturned.

Much potential is lost in the current order of clerical advancement. *Der Hayrs*, or ordained theologians who wish to be parish priests, must wait to follow their religious calling until they have found a spouse and can never remarry. *Hayr Soorps*, including Bishops, Patriarchs and Catholicoses, on the other hand, are never allowed to marry nor have children. This is stated in former Patriarch of Constantinople Malachia Ormanian's *The Church of Armenia*, delineating "the regular clergy, who are celibate, and the married secular clergy... it is absolutely necessary that marriage should precede their ordination to the diaconate" (Ormanian 142). These regulations make it more difficult for those who wish to serve the community. For the person who feels a call to faith but is already married, there is only one path for them to take, no matter if their talents would be better suited for the position of *Hayr Soorp*. Alternatively, if a priest wishes to have a family and a spouse, their future in the church is set, with no chance for advancement nor change in their role.

I propose a change to the current Armenian church's clergy hierarchy. *Der Hayrs*, married or not, should be eligible for ordination as *Hayr Soorps*, with their change in station decided by their work and skills, not their level of celibacy. And vice versa, unmarried priests should be allowed to be *Der Hayrs*, with the opportunity to work for a single parish.

An example of the failings of this system is shown through the career of Khrimyan *Hayrig*, Catholicos from 1890 to 1910 and considered one of the most well respected and effective Catholicoses, evidenced by the fact that he was given the name *Hayrig* or father. He originally was a *Der Hayr* with a wife and child. Sadly, his family died and he became eligible to become a *Hayr Soorp*. Once he did, he was allowed to fully realize his talent for helping the Armenian people, representing them on a global scale. His work was immortalized in his famous "Iron Ladle." The life of Khrimyan *Hayrig* is demonstrative of the potential waste of talent that exists within the current clergy hierarchical framework. Do we as a people have to, god forbid, wait for someone's family to pass away to feel the full effects of their leadership?

This solution also addresses the common complaint of the American-Armenian parishioner that the Catholicos is out of touch with the problems of the average churchgoer. This is seen as a symptom of his duties, which require the Catholicos to travel frequently to different parishes and spend minimal time with individual parishioners. By allowing parish priests to become bishops, archbishops and Catholicoses, we are more likely to have a *Hayr Soorp* who has the background necessary to be a man of the people and work on their behalf.

There are in fact no historical or religious regulations that support our current delineations of priesthood. As Ormanian states, "The married priest may conduct the duties of a vicariate in the event of a vacancy, but he is not allowed to be a candidate for the doctorate, nor for the dignity of the episcopate unless he enters the ranks of the celibate clergy after widowerhood. Though this restriction has in our time acquired the force of law, it is altogether unsupported by canonical weight or old-established authority" (Ormanian 142). He gives examples of how historically, this strict division did not exist, "formerly the bishops were recruited from among the archpriests" (Ormanian 142). This provides a historical precedent for my proposed alteration to clergy mobility. Ormanian bluntly continues, "There is nothing, therefore, to prevent the present custom, prevalent though it be, from being superseded by the usages of the primitive Church, and access to the high ecclesiastical dignities being thrown open to the married clergy," even going so far to provide benefits of this switch, opining, "such a course would be highly beneficial to the nation for the married clergy would escape from a position of inferiority which is in no way justified... By enlarging the field for promotion, the cultured portion of the nation would no longer hesitate to enter the ranks of the married clergy."

Another example of a bishop, and later Catholicos, who did not follow our current expectations of high-ranking clergy and whose historical and positive impact on the church was replicated by his offspring is St. Gregory the Enlightener. One of the main reasons people don't want priests with wives or children rising to *Hayr Soorp* roles is because it is perceived that they will be unable to give their full attention to either their family or the church. This was not the case with St. Gregory. He was able to raise two sons while also raising Armenia to be the first Christian nation as its first Catholicos. The Catholicos' first son, Aristakes, later became the head of the Armenian Church and represented it at the council of Nicea, according to the histories of the historian Agathangelos. After Aristakes died, he was succeeded as Catholicos by his brother, Vrtanes. Vrtanes was also married and had children after becoming Catholicos, another example of effective leadership without celibacy. Vrtanes' sons went on to serve the church, with his younger son, Yusik, becoming Catholicos (Vemkar).

The church is not an unchanging institution, as Ormanian states, "In the essentially democratic constitution of the Armenian Church... her clergy do not form a separate class. The nation and the Church are one and the same thing."

The clergy members of the Armenian church are pillars of our communities. It is essential that they remain connected to the individual parishes they serve. Instituting clerical mobility within the church's leadership is one way to ensure this continued connection. The historical precedent for this type of system was successful and there are no biblical or religious laws forbidding such a change. The time is now for us to build better relationships across our Armenian church community.

(Taleen Postian is a writer and student at Villanova University studying political science and art history. She writes about the Armenian art world. She is a former intern at the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. You can reach her at taleen.postian@gmail.com.)

Yazidi Genocide Survivors Regularly Targeted by Turkish Airstrikes

By Matt Broomfield

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) this week received a formal complaint over a Turkish airstrike which struck a civilian hospital in the Yazidi homeland of Sinjar (Shengal) on 17 August 2021, killing eight and injuring 20. The complaint, issued by four survivors and eyewitnesses in the run-up to the ninth anniversary of the Yazidi Genocide conducted by ISIS militants, puts the spotlight on Turkey's years-long campaign of airstrikes that regularly target both civilian and military infrastructure in Sinjar. The occasion should provoke a reckoning for Turkey's deadly campaign, which is keeping the Yazidis from pursuing a more just, democratic and autonomous political settlement as they struggle to rebuild their community.

As far as Turkey is concerned, the 2021

strike was a legitimate military action aimed at the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). But no-one denies the fact that the PKK were involved in the establishment of the Şingal Resistance Units (YBŞ), the Yazidi force created to defend Sinjar in the aftermath of the 2014 genocide. On the contrary, the PKK worked openly in tandem with US airstrikes and the Syrian Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG) to open a humanitarian corridor and save the Yazidi people from a fate yet worse than that which they suffered nine years ago, when around 5,000 people, predominantly men, were killed and thousands of women and children abducted into sex slavery, many of them still missing.

Those Yazidis who survived the genocide suffer regular airstrikes by Turkey, as well as power-grabs by other regional forces

The PKK's intervention at that time was

no secret, nor was their continued presence in the region throughout the war to drive out ISIS. Since then, the YBŞ say, the PKK – and particularly Turkish PKK members – have withdrawn from the region, handing it over to local Yazidis. And sure enough, almost all of the recent victims of Turkish strikes have been local Yazidis. A 2021 analysis found that 60% of Turkish airstrikes against Yazidis resulted in civilian casualties, while educational facilities and members of the region's Sinjar Autonomous Administration (SAA) have also been targeted. According to the claimants at the UN, there have been about 80 Yazidi victims of 'collateral damage' from Turkish airstrikes since 2017.

With the strike on the hospital, Turkey showed its hand, striking what the claimants say was a makeshift civilian hospital see AIRSTRIKES, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Disney's Controversial Ataturk Movie Angered both Armenians and Turks

It takes an especially incompetent Walt Disney Company executive to come up with a movie project that enraged both Armenians and Turks alike. That employee should be fired for damaging the coffers as well as reputation of the company.

The Disney+ streaming service had planned to make a six-part series that dramatizes the life of Kemal Ataturk who is the Founding Father of the Republic of Turkey, worshipped by almost all Turks. Insulting Ataturk is punishable by up to three years in prison. The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) started a campaign in June to protest against Disney's movie project.

The ANCA called on Disney+ "to cancel its series glorifying Mustafa Kemal Ataturk — a Turkish dictator and genocidal killer with the blood of millions of Greek, Armenian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac, Aramean, Maronite and other Christian martyrs on his hands."

Ironically, despite his own share of crimes and anti-Armenian actions, Ataturk was honest enough to admit during an interview with the Los Angeles Examiner on August 1, 1926: "These leftovers of the former Young Turk Party, who should have been made to account for the lives of millions of our Christian subjects, who were ruthlessly driven en masse from their homes and massacred, have been restive under the Republican rule. They have hitherto lived on plunder, robbery and bribery, and become inimical to any idea or suggestion to enlist in useful labor and earn their living by the honest sweat of their brow." Regrettably, on several other occasions, Ataturk contradicted himself justifying the Armenian Genocide.

The news of Armenian objection to the Disney movie, the company's subsequent change of plans, and the irate Turkish reaction became the topic of countless articles around the world, publicizing the issue of the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish media blamed the ANCA, "the powerful Armenian lobby" in the United States, for successfully pressuring the Disney Company.

Disney had originally announced that the series glorifying Ataturk will be shown on the Disney+ network starting on October 29, 2023, to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Republic. Changing its plans, Disney+ now plans to release the movie in two parts: The first part will air on the Disney-owned Fox TV in Turkey on October 29 and the second in Turkish theaters on December 22. Both films will be shown again next summer. It cost Disney \$8 million to produce 'Ataturk.'

Ebubekir Shahin, chairman of Turkey's Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK), said that it will launch an official investigation into Disney's decision. Huseyin Yayman, chairman of the Turkish parliament's Digital Me-

dia Commission, threatened severe sanctions against Disney: "We will impose harsh fines, including license cancellation for Disney+, bandwidth reduction, and advertising bans." Prominent Turkish figures, including politicians, artists and journalists, angrily denounced Disney and cancelled their subscriptions to Disney+, which has 50,000 subscribers in Turkey. Omer Celik, spokesman of Turkey's ruling AK Party, called Disney's change of plans 'shameful' and alleged the company had caved in to 'the Armenian lobby.' He also stated that ANCA's intent was to prevent the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations. Serdar Kilic, the Turkish ambassador in charge of his country's normalization process with Armenia, also cancelled his subscription to Disney+. The Turkish government's news agency, Anadolu Agency, published a commentary by Burak Caliskan of York University titled: "Did the Armenian lobby take over Disney+?"

Turkey even pressured its Armenian community to oppose Disney's decision. Bedros Shirinoglu, Chairman of Armenian Foundations Association of Turkey, a hostage of the Turkish regime, issued a shameful statement touting the non-existent freedom of expression in Turkey and calling on "American-Armenian organizations to act more responsibly." Likewise, Parliament member Sevan Sivacioglu, representing Pres. Erdogan's political party, expressed concern that Disney's decision hampers the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations and undermines the potential for fostering friendly ties between the two countries.

According to the Middle East Eye, "In June, Disney removed numerous shows and movies from Disney+ to reduce ongoing residuals and its tax bill. This strategy also resulted in the removal of eight Turkish TV shows and movies produced exclusively for Disney's Turkish streaming platform, with the suspension of new Turkish content launches." Disney+ (Turkey) confirmed that it had made such a decision.

This whole controversy could have been avoided if Disney had done a little bit of research before embarking on such an unwise adventure. Disney has no business preparing a documentary on Ataturk or any other political figure. Disney blindly undertook this project, angering many Armenians around the world. And then, realizing its mistake, Disney washed its hands and cleverly dumped the documentary on Fox-TV in Turkey.

Nevertheless, the battle is partly won. Even though the giant Disney Company changed its plans, Armenians worldwide now need to pursue this issue with the top executives Disney for three reasons:

- 1) To completely cancel the Ataturk documentary and not hand it over to Fox-TV in Turkey;
- 2) To make sure that the Disney Company will never again consider making a Turkish propaganda film;
- 3) Urge Disney to make a documentary on an Armenian topic, such as the Armenian Genocide and Republics of Armenia and Artsakh.

Regrettably, once again, the Armenian-American community is left alone in battling the all-powerful Turkish government, without any assistance from the leaders of Armenia who are acting as if Armenian issues are of no interest to them.

The Kleptocracy Strikes Back. An Azerbaijani Economist Should Be Freed

As an economist, Gubad Ibadoghlu has often turned a critical eye on his native Azerbaijan and its oil riches. He has asked, correctly, why the oil wealth has not led to a more prosperous or democratic country, and called out corruption and kleptocracy under President Ilham Aliyev. Now Mr. Aliyev is striking back.

On July 23, Mr. Ibadoghlu and his wife, Irada Bayramli, were stopped in their car outside of Baku by a group of 20 people in civilian clothes who beat them and took them in to police custody. Ms. Bayramli was released later that day, but Mr. Ibadoghlu was remanded by a court to three months and 26 days of pretrial detention on spurious charges of corruption.

Mr. Ibadoghlu, who has taught over the years in the United States and Europe, was until recently a senior visiting scholar at the London School of Economics. He has led the Economic Research Center in Azerbaijan, a nongovernmental organization that focuses on economic development and good governance. In 2014, Mr. Aliyev's regime ordered a freeze on the group's bank accounts in a wider crackdown on civil society. Mr. Ibadoghlu, who was a 2015 Reagan-Fascell fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy, is also chairman of the Democracy and Prosperity Movement, founded in 2014, which the Azerbaijani government has refused to grant official status as a political party.

After his arrest, the authorities charged Mr. Ibadoghlu with counterfeiting, saying they found \$40,000 in cash in the offices of his organization, and association with the exiled Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen, whom Turkey blames

for an attempted coup in 2016. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed that Mr. Ibadoghlu was detained based on information from Turkey, a close ally of Azerbaijan. The charges are absurd.

The D.C. Council voted on Tuesday to stop pulling police officers out of schools, a big win for student safety. Parents and principals overwhelmingly support keeping school resource officers around because they help de-escalate violent situations. D.C. joins a growing number of jurisdictions, from Montgomery County, Md., to Denver, in reversing course after withdrawing officers from school grounds following George Floyd's murder. Read our recent editorial on why D.C. needs SROs.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) just withdrew Virginia from a data-sharing consortium, ERIC, that made the commonwealth's elections more secure, following Republicans in seven other states in falling prey to disinformation peddled by election deniers. Former GOP governor Robert F. McDonnell made Virginia a founding member of ERIC in 2012, and until recently conservatives touted the group as a tool to combat voter fraud. D.C. and Maryland plan to remain. Read our recent editorial on ERIC.

In Vietnam, a one-party state, democracy activist Tran Van Bang was sentenced on Friday to eight years in prison and three years' probation for writing 39 Facebook posts. The court claimed he had defamed the state in his writings, according to Radio Free Asia. In the past six years, at least 60 bloggers and activists have been sentenced to between 4 and 15 years in prison under the law, Human Rights Watch found. Read more of the Editorial Board's coverage on autocracy and Vietnam.

The Department of Homeland Security has provided details of a plan to prevent a migrant surge along the southern border. The administration would presumptively deny asylum to migrants who failed to seek it in a third country en route — unless they face "an extreme and imminent threat" of rape, kidnapping, torture or murder. Critics allege that this is akin to an illegal Trump-era policy. In fact, President Biden is acting lawfully in response to what was fast becoming an unmanageable flow at the border. Read

our most recent editorial on the U.S. asylum system.

The true reason for his detention is more likely related to events in June, when he helped found the Azerbaijani Youth Educational Foundation in Britain, aimed at preparing a new generation of Azerbaijani professionals. Mr. Ibadoghlu said it would be funded by donations, but also seeks to get funds that corrupt Azerbaijani politicians siphoned from the state and stashed in Britain. From 2012 to 2014, members of the ruling elite used a secret slush fund to pay off European politicians, buy luxury goods, launder money and otherwise benefit in what was called the Azerbaijani Laundromat, exposed by a consortium of journalists working under the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. The British government has recovered some of the illicit funds. Mr. Ibadoghlu clearly perturbed Mr. Aliyev with his plan to tap the spoils of the kleptocracy for his youth training project.

Mr. Aliyev also seeks to crush political opposition at home. In January, he signed a law that sharply restricts the ability of opposition political parties to function. As a result, Azerbaijan's three most prominent opposition parties were recently denied registration — and face the possibility of being disbanded. Mr. Ibadoghlu had attempted six times without success to get his group registered, most recently in July.

Mr. Ibadoghlu is diabetic and has hypertension. His family says he has been denied access to medicine, and they fear for his health.

Meanwhile, the United States has been pressing Mr. Aliyev to ease the blockade that Azerbaijan has imposed around Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave, leading to a humanitarian crisis there. Azerbaijan is seeking to regain full control of Nagorno-Karabakh, which ethnic Armenian forces have controlled for three decades. Armenia and Azerbaijan have engaged in peace talks. Any contacts with Azerbaijan about the crisis should also include a plea for the immediate release of Mr. Ibadoghlu.

(This column originally appeared as an editorial by the Editorial Board of the *Washington Post* on August 6.)



Arman Hambardzumyan Opens Unique Atelier

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Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Malta, Greece and also in Lebanon. In 2017 he participated in the Art Expo in New York. Many of his sculptures and paintings are now on display in private homes and museums. It is through the sales of his works that he has been able to finance his building project.

I asked him to explain the concept of his architectural project and how it came into being. “In 2019,” he wrote, “I bought 500 square meters of land for the realization of my dream: to have a working space and to live together with my beloved wife. First, I drew the plan of the house-studio and designed it in 3D by myself. The procedure of the construction took several years.”

Due to the Covid pandemic and conditions created by the war in Artsakh (Karakahk), he finished the project this year. “My main support in building a house in those difficult conditions,” he said, “was my sculptures.”

The completed house consists of three parts: a gallery with natural light from large windows, a studio with a high ceiling, and a residential area for the young couple. These three components united in one space, he explained, “represent my

Stonehenge), petroglyphs and then continue to the battle between Hayk, the legendary patriarch and found of Armenia, and the tyrant of Mesopotamia and Elam, Bel (2492 BC), ancient deities, griffins, triumphal campaigns of the Urartian kings, up to the glorious history of Tigran the Great, of the Artashesian dynasty, who ruled as King of Armenia from 95-55 BC.

Why the focus of ancient history? As he explains on his website (www.arman-art.com), study of the distant past is what inspired his work. He has devoted particular attention to ancient Greece, and read the works of Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890). The famed German archaeologist, who began as a businessman, had mastered numerous languages including ancient Greek. Steeped in the study of the Homeric epics, and following the poet’s depictions of the Trojan wars, Schliemann initiated excavations in the 1870s which led to fundamental discoveries at Troy.

The artefacts of the era included works in glass, ceramics, and bronze, materials that Hambardzumyan would then work with, and not only in sculpture, but also in drawing, which he sees as a fundamental feature of his sculpted works as well. In his works, he depicts subjects from the ancient



The gallery is replete with sculptures

lifestyle: creativity, love and exhibitions for visitors.”

Most unique are the stairs leading to the gallery, which are decorated with a ceramic design that he created himself. It represents the history of Armenia, from the beginning up to the Artashesian (Artaxiad) dynasty (189 BC–12 AD). The scenes depicted start with *vishapakars* (so called dragon-stones), followed by Karahunj stones (from a prehistoric archaeological site of the same name known as the Armenian

era, for example Greece; his sculptures of Hector and other Homeric figures display not only historical accuracy and insight into the philosophical tradition, but also humor and irony.

The young artist considers himself extremely fortunate to be able to work and live in his studio-home, the culmination of many years of study and hard work. And he is eager to welcome visitors. “The doors of my house-studio are always open for all of those who wish to be there.”



Arman Hambardzumyan and his wife, Lusine Sargsian (Martina Sedda photo)



Urartuan warriors, a detail of the stairs

Yazidi Genocide Survivors Regularly Targeted by Turkish Airstrikes

AIRSTRIKES, from page ?

with no military protection and where no PKK members were present. While this legal distinction is vital in holding Turkey to account, it’s only half the story. Yazidis welcomed the PKK as their saviors as ISIS attempted to eradicate the embattled religious minority, and thereafter the Yazidi-led SAA welcomed the PKK’s call for regional devolution and autonomy as offering hope for a more secure, democratic and vibrant future for Sinjar.

The PKK formally withdrew from Sinjar in a bid to reduce tensions in a region where the federal Iraqi authorities and Kurdistan Regional Government both seek dominance,

alongside Iranian-backed militias, despite the fact that both Iraqi and KRG forces abandoned the Yazidis in the face of genocide in 2014. Nonetheless, their secular, democratic ideology is directly opposed to ISIS’ vision, and can and should contribute to any future political settlement in the region through its promotion of community self-determination and inter-ethnic tolerance.

Not only strikes on civilian hospitals, but all of Turkey’s attacks on Sinjar and the YBŞ, are destructive, callous, and cause for moral outrage. Hundreds of thousands of Yazidis still live in exile, unable to return home, partly due to fear of continued waves of deadly violence, as well as the

lack of basic infrastructure or funding for reconstruction following the war against ISIS. Nor should it be forgotten that Sinjar is about 100 kilometres from the Turkish border, making it even harder to see how Turkey’s claims to be protecting its national security through striking the Yazidi homeland can be justified.

The landmark case at the UN demonstrates the inhumanity of Turkey’s aerial campaign against the Yazidis. Nine years on from the genocide, Turkey must be forced to desist from targeting those genocide survivors who have bravely remained to continue defending their region. Those principles which drove the PKK to save the

Yazidis from genocide are the same principles which must underpin the reconstruction of Sinjar, to prevent such an atrocity from ever recurring.

(Matt Broomfield is a freelance journalist, poet and activist. He writes for VICE, Medya News, the New Statesman and the New Arab; his prose has been published by The Mays, Anti-Heroine Chic and Plenitude; and his poetry by the National Poetry Society, the Independent, and Bare Fiction. His work was displayed across London by Poetry on the Underground, and he is a Foyle Young Poet of the Year. This commentary first appeared on www.medyanews.net on August 6.)