



Members of the Security Council on August 16

UN Security Council Meeting Yields no Results

NEW YORK (Combined Sources) — The Armenian government downplayed on August 21 the United Nations Security Council’s failure to formally demand an end to Azerbaijan’s blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of an emergency meeting held last week.

Armenia had initiated the session on August 16 in a bid to drum up stronger international pressure on Baku. For-

eign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan attended the session and addressed it, saying that Yerevan expects the Security Council to condemn Baku, demand the immediate reopening of the Lachin corridor, send a fact-finding mission to Karabakh and provide humanitarian aid to the region’s struggling population.

Although most of its members, notably the United States and Russia, urged

the lifting of the Azerbaijani blockade, the Council stopped short of adopting a relevant resolution or statement. This fact led some in Armenia to question the wisdom of initiating the meeting and sending Mirzoyan to New York.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry countered that the format of the meeting did not “presuppose the adoption” of any such document.

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Ruben Vardanyan:

‘No Matter What, There Will Be Resistance in Artsakh’

STEPANAKERT (Caucasus Watch) — Caucasus Watch’s Ilya Roubanis met with Ruben Vardanyan on two separate occasions, in July and August 2023 to speak with the former State Minister of Nagorno Karabakh about the blockade that has disrupted the sole existing transport link to Armenia.

Authorities report shortages in food and medicine, disruptions in electricity and water. While the ICRC was previously able to facilitate the coming through of some emergency supplies, this has not been allowed since the middle of June. The prospect of a resolution is bleak. Baku offers to supply the local population, but Armenians see Azerbaijani trucks as poisoned chalice or the first step to recognizing submission.

Despite electricity disruptions and even time-zone misunderstandings, Vardanyan greeted the visitors with good humor. He, like all people in Nagorno-Karabakh, is experiencing all the difficulties of the blockade, and as he says he smokes his last cigars. He appears cheerful,

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US Envoy Emphasizes Support For Armenia’s Sovereignty, Security on Trip to Border Region

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — United States Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien has emphasized Washington’s support for the sovereignty and security of Armenia on a trip to the South Caucasus country’s region bordering on Azerbaijan.

The US embassy in Yerevan said in a Facebook post on Friday, August 18, that Kvien traveled to Vayots Dzor “to meet with local officials and observe the security situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.”

“The Ambassador met with the Governor of Vayots Dzor, the EU Monitoring Mission, and local military representatives, joined by Armenian Ambassador to the



US Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien (R) traveled to Armenia’s Vayots Dzor province “to observe the security situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.”

US Lilit Makunts. Ambassador Kvien emphasized US support for Armenia’s sovereignty and

security, as well as lasting peace in the South Caucasus,” it said.

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Azerbaijan Military Assistance Waiver Delayed As Review Drags on

By Eric Bazail-Eimil and Gabriel Gavin

WASHINGTON (Politico) — The Biden administration appears to be slow-walking the renewal of a long-standing military assistance program to Azerbaijan amid growing warnings of ethnic cleansing in the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Every year since 2002, the White House has issued a waiver to provide aid to Azerbaijan despite its campaign against Nagorno-Karabakh. That waiver has previously been completed before the summer, but this year it is still pending halfway through August.

Officials have offered no explanation for the delay. However, it coincides with increasing concern within the international community

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Azeri Forces Kill Soldier

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — An Armenian serviceman was killed in Azerbaijan's fire from across the border on Monday, August 21, the Defense Ministry reported.

Azerbaijan violated the ceasefire in the direction of the village of Akh-pradzor in Gegharkunik province.

In addition, on August 21 and 22 Azerbaijani forces shot at farmers but no one was injured.

US Envoy Visits Sanahin Monastery in Lori

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien visited the Sanahin Monastery in Lori Province to view ongoing preservation work in the complex, the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan reported on August 19.

"Ambassador Kvien visited Sanahin Monastery in beautiful Lori to view ongoing preservation work on several elements of the complex, funded by the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation," the embassy said in a [statement](#).

"While there she was also greeted by the Mayor of Alaverdi. The U.S. fund is supporting preservation of a group of Eastern monuments in the complex, including the St. Hakop Chapel, the memorial-khachkar of Grigor Tuteordi, and the St. Harutyun Church," it added.

298 Still Missing From 2020-2022, Says ICRC

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A total of 298 persons from Armenia are still missing following the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 and border escalations between 2020 and 2022, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) revealed.

The data is based on tracing requests from the missing soldiers' families, the ICRC said on August 18.

Tankian Asks Band to Skip Baku Concert

LOS ANGELES (Public Radio of Armenia) — System Of A Down front man Serj Tankian is urging the band Imagine Dragons to cancel their September 2 show in Baku.

"A few months ago, it came to my attention that Imagine Dragons had planned a show on Sept 2nd in Baku. I was sure they were unaware that Azerbaijan's petro-oligarchic dictatorial regime was starving 120k people in Nagorno-Karabagh which is now being called a Genocide by the former prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo. So through representatives, I sent them a kind letter urging them to reconsider playing their show in Azerbaijan," Tankian said in an Instagram post.

"There was no response. As the humanitarian crisis worsens in Nagorno-Karabagh with starvation already being recorded I am forced to publicize this letter and their disregard for this humanitarian catastrophe. ... My whole life I have been an advocate for genocide recognition and have always said there has to be a price to pay for Genocidal regimes or deniers," he wrote.

Ruben Vardanyan:

'No Matter What, There Will Be Resistance in Artsakh'

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although he admits he misses his family.

He shows no rage. He "disagrees" not only with the Armenian leadership in Yerevan but also in Stepanakert. He openly shared his electoral preferences without hesitation. While he views Azerbaijan's stance as "short-sighted," he refrains from expressing any bitterness. Identifying as a national leader, he remains resolute in Karabakh.

You have an audience beyond Karabakh. Before we talked, I browsed the BBC, Reuters, DW, even France 24. Karabakh does not feature prominently. Why do you feel Karabakh is not front-page news?

Honestly, there are numerous crises. The flow of information is dense, and you cannot engage daily with a specific storyline. When the blockade started in December, there was great interest. So, there is a limit to how much people can engage with a storyline.

When the Ottoman Empire orchestrated the Genocide and mass deportations of Armenians, numerous reports emerged in the USA, Europe, and Russia. This event was extensively documented, and major powers closely monitored the situation. Today, in Artsakh, we find ourselves in a state of complete informational isolation, with no international journalists permitted to visit and report on the situation on the ground. We exist in a phase of world history where indifference has become alarmingly prevalent. Despite having factual evidence of the blockade and the International Court's decision, Azerbaijan continues to display complete disregard for international law.

It is essential to recognize that the central issue in Artsakh is not solely the humanitarian catastrophe, but rather the deliberate pursuit by Azerbaijan of ethnic cleansing and the genocide of the Armenian population residing in the Republic of Artsakh after November 9, 2020. The humanitarian disaster forms just a part of Azerbaijan's strategy. Despite the immense challenges, the 120,000 people of Artsakh are steadfastly resisting with remarkable dignity. Through the creation of this humanitarian disaster, Azerbaijan aims to coerce those who have asserted their right to self-determination and proclaimed their independence even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, to acquiesce to a country with which they have never been associated.

Finally, our enemy also works quite well. They have channeled funds to companies and agencies that are quite effective in controlling public discourse and pushing their narrative worldwide.

What are we dealing with here with? Definitions are important. Azerbaijan calls us "terrorists" and "separatists," a domestic non-issue that they handle in accordance with Azerbaijani law. The West call the current crisis a humanitarian crisis. We call it a continuous resistance movement that started not in 1988, but much earlier in 1920s when the USSR was established, and the boundaries drawn by Stalin and likes of him. The Genocide Watch and lately, Luis Moreno Ocampo, the first Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court call the blockade of the Lachin corridor a Genocide under Article II, (c) of the Genocide Convention: "Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction." This terrifying word has been overused and at times abused after it was coined in 1934 by Lemkin. As a descended of 1915 Genocide survivors, I do not use it lightly. We are dealing with Genocidal acts to cleanse Artsakh of its 120,000 Armenians as an ultimate solution desired by Aliyev and his government.

Yes, but the reason I am introducing this question is the now tangible threat that Azerbaijan could step in militarily. Is that threat credible, you feel?

The situation is undoubtedly very challenging, but I do not sense that Azerbaijan is preparing to initiate another large-scale military operation after Autumn 2020. Having said that, we need to understand that Azerbaijan is shooting civilians who work in the fields on a daily basis. Furthermore, they tend to prefer small-scale local operations, which help maintain a sense of tension and fear among the people regarding potential military actions.

The blockade is exerting both humanitarian and economic impacts. The military threat appears intended to affect us psychologically. However, I am not convinced that they are inclined towards an aggressive scenario. They employ various tactics to subdue us, waging a hybrid war on multiple fronts—informational, psychological, moral, economic, and involving numerous other factors. They use the humanitarian crisis as a weapon to reach political goals. The food issue is weaponized and used against us.

The 2020 move was well timed. There were elections in the United States, there was the pandemic, and Turkey was fully behind them. Today, we are in a different context.

Azerbaijan believes it already possesses Artsakh and is now seeking further expansion. They are under the impression that Karabakh already belongs to them (in Aliyev's words the issue is resolved), and any incursion here given the fact that here live 30,000 children would escalate the situation. At the level of President Aliyev, territorial claims towards Armenia have been expressed. Those who believe that Azerbaijan only desires Nagorno-Karabakh are gravely mistaken; their recent aggressive actions towards Armenia proper have demonstrated the opposite. Aliyev is deeply convinced that he will always remain unpunished, leading him to resort to the use of force or threats of force. On a daily basis, their media prepares the groundwork for this. Their insatiable appetite for more will eventually turn against them, sooner or later.

We tend to forget that Azerbaijan is not the best run country in the world. The average Armenian lives better than the average Azerbaijani, despite the oil and gas wealth of that country. Nagorno-Karabakh provides Aliyev with a rallying point domestically that somehow solidifies his powerbase (similar to Crimean's consensus in Russia after 2014). However, that calculation only pays if you hold in check significant variables, such as Iran. In sum, is something goes wrong it can go very wrong and that is not in their hand. I do not think Aliyev will take that risk.

Of course, they will keep up the pressure to maximize benefits not only vis-à-vis Artsakh but also Armenia. Maybe I am wrong, but that is what I think.

Many international analysts, certainly in the West, seem to believe that lake Sevan and Syunik are "pressure points" and that the real prize for Azerbaijan is Karabakh. You seem to feel that the opposite is true: Karabakh is the "pressure point" for concessions in the South Armenia.

Probably, many analysts in the West believe that Baku's and Ankara's main focus is on Nagorno-Karabakh. Ankara and Baku mistakenly believe they have gained control over NK; their strategic focus is on the so-called Zangezur Corridor. However, they underestimate the determination of the people living in Artsakh. They find it difficult to believe that the people will resist and demonstrate their strong will to reject their terms. At the same time, the Diaspora's support for Artsakh should not be underestimated. We are not alone in this endeavor. Artsakh holds a special meaning for the Diaspora. The fact that the Diaspora has supported Artsakh through various means over the decades is proof of that.

So, is the question "where do you see Karabakh 20 years from now?" a stupid question to ask?

Not at all. We have established a movement that supports the "Artsakh 2035 Vision." Of course, nothing will come easily. We aim to live in our own homeland, and there are several potential scenarios to achieve this goal. It is an arduous journey, replete with obstacles, but we draw inspiration from world history and analogous cases that demonstrate such movements can persist for decades. We are prepared to undertake this path with ample determination and resilience.

Our vision is to defend our homeland. From our side, I see a great determination for people to stay and take a stand. A change in the Armenian government could bring a greater political alignment between Armenia and Artsakh. There may also be greater involvement by international actors. Therefore, the first scenario we are considering as quite possible for the next 30-to-50 years is status quo maintenance.

This would be maintained by both sides: on the one hand, I do not see how the local population can accept to live as an Azerbaijani ethnic minority; on the other hand, a subdued Artsakh — that would wish to unite with Armenia — is a useful trigger of "perpetual national emergency" that is convenient for the Aliyev regime. Nevertheless, the dream for unification continues to persist. If these assumptions hold, the new normal will be periods of conflict with intervals of relative stability. We will maintain the status quo, dynamically.

Different circles envision an alternative scenario that goes beyond maintaining the status quo — one involving the satellite-like integration of Artsakh into Russia. Russia is the West's adversary today and that would affect how the West sees Artsakh in this scenario. But we are talking about 20 years from now. Do we believe that Russia will remain an adversary to the West? Most likely not. And in one way or another with that shift between Russia and the West, the fate of Artsakh will change as well. A third scenario entails an "international mandate" or intervention by external powers, providing certain security guarantees. South Caucasus was always viewed by the West and the rest as Russia's domain. West delegated South Caucasus security to Russia. It could be changing now. Iran is highly likely to move in to balance Azerbaijani-Israeli alliance in the region. Reminding you, Iran has better relations today with Ankara (NATO member) than with Baku. If Iran becomes a security guarantor in the Caucasus... How would the West react to that?

However, it's crucial for people to recognize that the future rests in our hands. We cannot merely stand by and debate others' scenarios; we must formulate our own plan and narrative. I

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believe assuming responsibility and actively shaping our future is paramount. Important note. Armenia and Artsakh might be young democracies, but they are still democracies sandwiched between mighty Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia and Iran. I do not see Armenians being subjected to limitations of their human rights and freedoms willingly or submit to power without putting up dignified resistance.

But it is very important for people to realize that the future is in their hands. And with their own actions, they can have an impact on these scenarios; indeed, they can insist on and achieve the implementation of their own scenario.

To summarize, you see three scenarios: status quo maintenance with a view to eventual unification with Armenia, becoming a Russian satellite, or an international mandate, presumably like the status of Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel?

Yes.

There is another scenario you have not addressed. A blockade or siege is a form of violent resolution. Why not consider a forceful evacuation of Karabakh from the Armenian population?

We have deliberated on various scenarios, including genocide, forced deportation, and evacuation. Our duty is to exert every effort to avert these scenarios. Please understand that I am not an analyst, but rather a leader. Our aim is to rally people and resources around viable and achievable scenarios. We are readying ourselves for the worst while actively striving to prevent it. Instead, our focus is on implementing what is feasible for the people of Artsakh. Again, we are not alone, we have Diaspora's support including lobbying, civic movements and other actions.

Having said that, what you say includes the presumption that you are preparing for resistance, even in a violent scenario.

Absolutely. Yes. There will be resistance, no matter what happens.

And there is a point worth making here. When your message of resistance is clear and the nation stands behind it, there is opportunity to draw unexpected support. As soon as we are clear on our intention to fight for our rights, I feel, we will be able to seize opportunities for support. We should not look only to the West or to Russia. We should work with all sides, including the East, and make these cooperative relations and alliances serve our interests as much as possible.

Once we are unequivocal about our intention to fight for our rights, I believe we will be capable of seizing opportunities for support. When your message of resistance is lucid and embraced by the nation, opportunities to secure unexpected support can arise. By being resolute about our intention to fight for our rights, I believe we can harness these opportunities for support. In certain circumstances, rivals might even cooperate, and we can endeavor to become such a place.

The use of brute force (and that is what Azerbaijan is doing) is very 19th – 20th century way of resolving the disputes. Perhaps I am wrong, and it's a wishful thinking on my behalf, but the popular consensus in the West is solidifying (even more so in the light of war in Ukraine) and military force is archaic mean of conflict resolution. It's not just legally, morally unacceptable, it's also aesthetically obsolete. Just watch "All quiet on the western front" – is there a room for the trench war fare in the 21st century?

So, there are three elements that need to come together.

First, our desire to resist and fight for our rights needs to be more clearly articulated, both to consolidate our home front and to position ourselves more clearly in the world.

Secondly, we need to be preparing for the transformation of the current global status quo and ready to address new threats and seize new opportunities.

Thirdly, we need to start talking even if not negotiating with Azerbaijan. We need to communicate to Azerbaijan that they are overplaying their strong hand. {President} Aliyev is trying to maximize his short-term benefits, not thinking long term. Who knows what comes 20 years down the line? A country singularly dependent on oil and gas revenue may soon find itself dealing with a multifaceted crisis. Without dwelling too much on this topic, I think he is not using wisely his current power.

There are now three negotiating tables: in Washington, in Brussels, and in Moscow. Given the phrasing of the November 9, 2020, Trilateral Statement, do you see Karabakh has a place on the table in any of the existing formats?

There are two different elements in your question.

First, the question is whether Artsakh can become

a party to the negotiations. We need to be back to the negotiation table as it was after the ceasefire of 1994. When we were left out in 1998. But all the developments show that our fate cannot be decided without us.

The second element is geographic and has no substance. The agenda is of substance and Artsakh has no input. Azerbaijan in substance does not want to negotiate over the future of Artsakh. They want to consolidate the status quo and turn a page. They say 'this is our domestic agenda,' take it or leave it. So, it is irrelevant which 'big player' tables the discussion with Azerbaijan because for Baku there is no Artsakh issue.

In this context, Armenia does not stand in for Artsakh. When Yerevan says Artsakh is part of Azerbaijan, this makes my statement a non-controversial position. Armenia's position today is that 'we do not represent Artsakh,' and that is a weak position. This creates a vacuum begging the question 'who represents Artsakh'. The answer is that Artsakh should be able to present itself. This is the only way.

And, if I understand the substance of your argument, you also claim that this is a problem for Azerbaijan, because Baku claims they want to live with "their citizens." Do I understand that correctly?

Yes, ultimately, we need to come to an agreement with a guarantor, that will allow us — those of us living in Artsakh — to live with a certain amount of certainty that whatever is agreed will be respected. Without a guarantor this agreement would be irrelevant because the other side may not really care about what has been signed. But we should also realize the guarantors can do nothing, when you are not strong enough to stand up for your own rights.

Yes, but given the context of the war in Ukraine, what would see as a satisfactory guarantee? Ukraine was given a guarantee on the basis of which its nuclear arsenal was removed. Is there such a thing as a satisfactory international guarantee?

That is a good point. There was a Minsk agreement for Ukraine that all parties violated in one way or another. So, a guarantee is a tricky proposition, even when it comes. The guarantor could be a country, a conglomerate of countries, an international institution. The difficulty is finding that third party and getting mechanism in place. If that is not done in time, the genocide will perpetrate despite the state's that are the parties of the Genocide Convention assumed duty to prevent and push Genocide. Remind you, the International Court of Justice ruled that state parties should "not wait until the perpetration of Genocide commences" and "the whole point of the obligation is to prevent or attempt to prevent the occurrence of the act".

This brings me back to a domestic issue. After your departure from the leadership in Stepanakert, you embraced the man who formally fired you. Did he fire you? The sequence of events suggests a separate visit to Moscow by you, then by Arayik Harutyunyan, and then you are fired. The optics of this leave room for speculation.

From the very first day I came to Artsakh I told the people and him (Arayik Harutyunyan) that I am one of them and I will be like a soldier. I did not come to Artsakh to become a State Minister: I served my homeland during a dangerous period. I said that I would continue to do what I do in office as I did before coming to office and are doing after I leave office. I am not a political party leader. It was his decision. There was pressure from Baku, Ankara... everyone.

There are some people attributing the current crisis to me coming here {in Stepanakert}. I did not want to become the cause of a war. And as you can see, I left my post in February 2023, but the blockade was not lifted. If anything, things became even worse for the Armenians of Artsakh. I told him "You are the leader, you see what's better for the country, and I will do what's better for the nation." To be clear, I disagreed. I did not want to step down and did not think this was the right decision. That is not because of my personal ambition but because of its effect. In any event, I made clear that it was his decision to make and his responsibility to bare.

You run a business empire much bigger than Artsakh's economy and comparable perhaps to the Armenian economy. I imagine the business side of this has several difficulties. But how does it feel? Do you have something positive you would keep from this experience?

I miss my family, of course, very much. However, it is also one of the best periods of my life because I feel I serve my nation, my people. I live with people who are simple but not naïve; they are authentic: they say what they think, they act in accordance with their set of values and beliefs. They are free people, dignified and resilient. They will not

submit to injustice and brute force. I get a lot of love and appreciation. Embraces are common. People appreciate that I share with them the will to be there. We share hope, a sense of togetherness, a group feeling that is addictive and exhilarating. And there is a sense that one wants to give back more than you are getting. It's an honor for me to be serving them in every way I can.

Given the situation along the Lachin corridor and the developing situation in Karabakh, do you feel that peace is being kept? I understand the will to pay tribute to the role of peacekeepers. Perhaps, it is a matter of mandate — they are there to peace-keep not to peace-make – but do you feel they are doing what they should be doing?

My own angle into this is that the context of operating in the 2021 context is not the same as operating in 2023.

The threat of war and the issue of physical security are present. Our expectations from the peacekeeping mission are greater, but due to a limited mandate and other issues, we find ourselves in this situation. They are peacekeepers, not peacemakers, remind you.

From my perspective, the context of operating in 2021 is not the same as operating in 2023. The situation has evolved. The line of contact is extensive, and the situation is rather complex. While 2,000 soldiers may not be sufficient to alter the situation on the ground significantly, they do possess a substantial force that can have a tangible impact on the humanitarian situation. They might not be able to bring about peace, but their presence does create a difference. In addition, they are on the ground, and they see the situation first-hand. While there are no independent journalists here among us, their eye-witness accounts are invaluable. Quite similar to the memoirs of German officers in the Ottoman empire during the Genocide of 1915.

You keep saying you are not a politician and the very term "politics" is a "bad word," it seems. However, you do talk of leadership.

No, politics is not a bad word.

It's a matter of role. Politicians have power ambitions within the context of a specific political system. I see my role is that of a national leader.

In the 20th century there seems to be a perception of leadership that matches industrial conceptions of specialization. My worldview is somewhat more akin to a more "classical" approach to leadership. It follows that when you receive a lot you need to give back a lot. And people who have wealth and good education and readiness to be responsible for their own nation and make bold decisions.

The reason I am here is not to out of a sense of entitlement to lead the Armenian nation but out of a sense of urgency, as our nation is facing an existential threat.

I believe I am part of a new national leadership. I am not a 20th century leader, but I do commit to the nation.

So, you don't have political ambitions, but you do have national objectives.

Yes, I want to represent my nation. I want to represent my nation to the world. Public office will not change my attitude to leadership. I will assume my share of responsibility irrespectively of whether I hold public office or not. But I will take office if that is necessary as a mean to an end. It's not about status. The office does not determine the degree of my responsibility.

If you have read Nune Alekryan's and my book *At the Crossroads*, I think I have held my ideas before now. I have been caring and working with my partners and friends about Armenia, Artsakh and the Armenian World for more than two decades and we implemented hundreds of projects. I do not want a nation of victims or survivors; I want a nation that thrives, and I have dedicated myself to this objective.

There are forthcoming mayoral elections in Armenia. Around the world, these kinds of electoral encounters are treated as a sneak preview of a broader national sentiment or the political current. I am wondering whether these elections are or should be regarded as a message to the Armenian government and, if so, what should that message be.

That is the right question. There are two options. The first is the election of a mayor without a 'national agenda,' or Armenians may decide to take the first step towards something more nationally significant, which is often the case in many countries. I expect and I hope that the people will take the second option and the electorate will not simply support the best manager for their city – based on skills or values – but will look at the national significance of this electoral encounter. I am hoping that these elections will allow us to air a number of points of contention with national significance. And that process would make these elections more significant than picking a mayor.



ARMENIA

Peacekeepers Facilitate Transfer of 41 Russian and Artsakh Citizens

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — For the first time in over two months, Russian peacekeepers on August 21 facilitated the transfer of over 40 people, citizens of Russia and Nagorno-Karabakh, from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

The Center for Cooperation with the Russian Peacekeeping Contingent of the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) Government said that 41 citizens of Russia and Nagorno-Karabakh were transported from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia on August 21 - the first such transfer since June 14.

“The Russian citizens were waiting for their transportation for a long time, while the citizens of Artsakh are students who have enrolled in universities in Armenia and abroad. According to a preliminary agreement reached with the peacekeepers, the transport of students and Russian citizens will continue in the coming days. Nevertheless, the Azerbaijani side continues to obstruct the movement of many persons in two directions. At this moment, hundreds of citizens are waiting in Armenia for their return to Artsakh, 333

people with conditions requiring urgent and planned intervention are on an ICRC waiting list for their transfer to Armenia, in addition to the thousands of people who require two-way movement for humanitarian, working and other purposes,” the Center for Cooperation with the Russian Peacekeeping Contingent of the Nagorno-Karabakh Government said in a statement, warning that Azerbaijan continues to create humiliating conditions in the illegal checkpoint at Hakari Bridge, in addition to the unlawful control and obstacles against Nagorno-Karabakh residents. “In particular, against the persons’ will, the Azerbaijanis and their invited journalists have again filmed the persons’ faces and used it for propaganda. Besides, the Azerbaijani side did not allow the Russian peacekeeping contingent’s vehicles to pass across Hakari Bridge and forced the passengers to carry their baggage and walk across the bridge,” it added. The passengers then continued to their destination on vehicles that approached from Goris. A video of the transfer has been released as

evidence.

“The passage of the citizens through the illegal Azeri checkpoint doesn’t anyhow change the position of the government of the Republic of Artsakh regarding that checkpoint on Lachin Corridor and the remaining Azerbaijani obstructions. The government of the Republic of Artsakh continues to insist that unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and goods must be completely restored in both directions along Lachin Corridor without any Azeri interference, in accordance with the November 9, 2020 trilateral statement and the International Court of Justice 22 February 2023 and 6 July rulings,” the center added.

All humanitarian shipments into Nagorno-Karabakh have been banned by Azerbaijan since June 15.

Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to 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. The ICJ reaffirmed its order on 6 July 2023.

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.

An Armenian humanitarian convoy carrying 400 tons of emergency aid is blocked by Azerbaijan at the entrance of Lachin Corridor.

Flights to Armenian Border Town Go Ahead Despite ‘Azeri Gunfire’

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An Armenian airline began regular commercial flights to Kapan on Monday, August 21, after what Armenian officials described as cross-border gunfire from Azerbaijan targeting the border town’s airport.

The Kapan airport reportedly came under fire on Friday, less than 24 hours after a plane carrying Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan landed there. According to Armenia’s state border guard service, three gunshots were fired from Azerbaijani army positions overlooking the facility, damaging its roof and one of the windows.

Another shooting incident was reported on Saturday. Karen Balyan, an aide to the governor of Armenia’s Syunik province, of which Kapan is the capital, said on Monday that airport employees heard gunfire several minutes after a plane carrying other senior officials from Yerevan touched down on the runway.

Balian accused Azerbaijan of trying to disrupt the first post-Soviet flight service between Yerevan and Kapan launched by the NovAir airline. While acknowledging apparent security risks involved, he urged travelers to fly to and from Kapan.

“We must not succumb to these provocations and must carry out the regular flights which are very important for Syunik,” the official told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

The inaugural 50-minute flights went ahead as planned on Monday morning, with NovAir using small L-410 aircraft capable of carrying up to 17 passengers.

A spokeswoman for the Armenian government’s Civil Aviation Committee told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that there were only two passengers on each of those flights. They included Syunik Governor Robert Ghukasyan’s deputy and adviser, according to the provincial administration.

The private carrier plans to carry out such flights twice a week.



Armenian Team Wins Two Medals at Astronomy and Astrophysics Olympiad

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian school students have earned two medals at the 16th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA) held in Silesia, Poland, on August 10-20.

The event brought together 241 students from 50 countries.

The Armenian team included Areg Barseghyan, Vyacheslav Petrosyan, Artavazd Harutyunyan and Maria Arakelyan, all 12th graders from Yerevan’s PhysMath School, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports reported on August 21.

Vyacheslav Petrosyan won a silver medal, while Artavazd Harutyunyan bagged bronze. Areg Barseghyan and Maria Arakelyan were awarded commendations.

The team was led by PhysMath School teacher Vardges Mambreyan.

US Envoy Emphasizes Sovereignty, Security on Trip to Border Region

SUPPORT, from page 1

While in Vayots Dzor Ambassador Kvien also traveled to Jermuk “to learn about the challenges and opportunities facing the city.” The embassy said that in Jermuk the US ambassador met with the town’s mayor and hosted a roundtable with business owners “to discuss the local economy and tourism sector.”

“Ambassador Kvien was impressed with the beautiful natural landscape and outdoor

activities that make Jermuk a popular tourist destination,” the report said.

Jermuk, a resort town close to the border, was shelled by Azerbaijani troops during last September’s deadly fighting. The escalation during which Azerbaijani forces advanced their positions closer towards Jermuk also affected the town’s businesses largely dependent on local and international tourism.

Kvien, joined by the mayor of Jermuk,

also reportedly visited a major mining project — Lydian’s Amulsar — to view their operations.

“The Amulsar project represents one of the biggest US investments in Armenia and we are proud that it is deploying western mining standards. The United States supports Armenia’s economic development and opportunities for US companies and investors to do business in a range of sectors,” the US embassy’s said on Facebook.



INTERNATIONAL

UN Security Council Meeting Yields No Results

UN, from page 1

Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, said that according to the trilateral statement, the Lachin Corridor shall remain under the control of the Russian Federation peacemaking forces. Yet in 2022, Azerbaijan blocked the Corridor under a fake pretext of environmental concerns. As a result, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh no longer receive 400 tons of essential goods daily. Condemning the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and warning against the “ethnic cleansing of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh,” he called for the immediate restoration of freedom of movement of persons, vehicles and cargo through the Corridor.

Rejecting such “groundless” allegations, Azerbaijan’s representative said Armenia is presenting as a humanitarian matter a provocative political campaign to undermine his country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Moreover, the recent decision by the International Court of Justice to reject Armenia’s request for an interim measure of the checkpoint’s removal dismissed that country’s allegations that the Lachin checkpoint is illegal. Immediately after the end of the war in 2020, Azerbaijan offered logistics and infrastructure to ICRC

for the delivery of goods to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. However, the Armenian side rejected and prevented the ICRC from delivering humanitarian assistance, he recalled.

“Besides, only the 15 (permanent and non-permanent) members of the UN Security Council have the right to draft UN Security Council resolutions and initiate voting. Armenia, not being a member of the UN Security Council, does not have such authority,” the ministry spokeswoman, Ani Badalyan, said in written comments to the press.

Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said in a statement she has been unable to transport humanitarian assistance through the Lachin Corridor or other routes to the civilian population in the area where Russian peacekeepers were deployed for several weeks. Citing international humanitarian law that States parties must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of such aid for all civilians in need, she stressed it was critical that ICRC’s delivery of humanitarian relief be allowed to resume through any available routes.

She also underlined that it is incumbent on the parties not to impede or politicize any principled humanitarian effort, noting that the Office will continue to engage with the parties on humanitarian access to meet the essential needs of civilians. The United Nations country teams in both Armenia and Azerbaijan are also maintaining open channels with the authorities in those countries to ensure a response to humanitarian needs, she reported.

In the ensuing debate, many speakers en-

couraged both parties to respect the commitments made under the 2020 trilateral agreement between Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation, normalize relations to lay the foundation for a future peace treaty and ensure that humanitarian aid and food be allowed to reach the population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the representative of the United States, Council President for August, voiced concern over the closure of the Lachin Corridor, adding that access to food, medicine and baby formula should never be held hostage. Accordingly, she called on Azerbaijan to restore free movement through the Corridor so commercial and humanitarian vehicles can reach the population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Vasily Nebenzya, the representative of the Russian Federation, while highlighting the key elements of the trilateral agreements — including the delimiting and demarcating the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, with Moscow’s assistance — stressed that Armenian-Azerbaijani reconciliation is unthinkable without reliable security guarantees and the observance of the rights of the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh. He pointed to his Government’s compromise-based proposal to de-escalate tensions, entailing the parallel opening of corridors through Aghdam and Lachin.

Nevertheless, said Silvio Gonzato, Deputy Head of Delegation of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, Baku’s readiness to supply goods via the city of Aghdam should not be seen as an alternative to reopening the Corridor. Warning against politization of humanitarian access, he underscored that movement through the Lachin Corridor must be reopened immediately.

Turkish Intellectuals Call for Opening of Lachin Corridor

ANKARA — A group of about 200 Turkish intellectuals disseminated a letter they had signed asking for the opening of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan.

The eight-month-long blockade has led to a humanitarian crisis.

The letter reads in part, “The Baku regime, with the support of the Ankara regime, has been implementing a blockade against the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian people for months, which puts the possibility of genocide on the agenda. The Stepanakert-Goris road, which provides the passage and should be open for humanitarian aid, emergency services and peacekeepers, has been under siege and closed since 12 December 2022.

“Although the United Nations, European Union institutions and Council of Europe institutions have been calling for Azerbaijan to end the blockade of 120,000 people in Karabakh for months, the Baku regime ignores all calls, refuses or denies the blockade. However, everyone knows that no basic needs can enter Karabakh, no Karabakh can leave the region even to meet their urgent health needs.

“In the face of the deepening crisis and confirming the concerns of the international community, Baku dictator Ilham Aliyev continues to threaten Karabakh people openly and constantly. So much so that the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, published an important article describing Aliyev’s actions in Karabakh as genocide.

“We, the undersigned, Turkish people, see that the international community does not act with sufficient sensitivity towards the developments and we are watching the situation with concern. Preventing genocides does not mean waiting for them to happen and then intervening. It is to take active action now to prevent such a danger.

“We call on all states to take an active stance on international organizations and international public opinion, especially the United Nations and the International Organization of the Red Cross.

French Local Authorities Bring Supplies to Besieged Artsakh

By Jean Eckian

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

PARIS — At the initiative of Anne Hidalgo, mayor of Paris, several local authorities have joined forces to provide emergency humanitarian aid to Artsakh, which has been under siege since December 12, 2022.

A first convoy chartered by the coalition is due to leave Yerevan in Armenia shortly and head for the border village of Kornidzor, where it will join a group of twenty other trucks sent by the Armenian government and loaded with essential foodstuffs destined for the Artsakh Armenians. Since June 15, Azerbaijan’s armed forces have not allowed any food aid, medicines or medical convoys through.

“The French local authorities are calling on the Azerbaijani authorities to comply with their international obligations, and in particular with the decision of the International Court of Justice to allow free passage through the Lachin [Berdzor] corridor,” said a spokesperson for the local authorities.

The chartered trucks are the vanguard of a larger flotilla of trucks financed by the coalition of French local authorities and due to reach Kornidzor at the end of August. A delegation of French elected representatives supporting the humanitarian initiative in favor of the Artsakh Armenians is expected to join this forthcoming convoy.

Hidalgo has been supporting the Armenian cause since her investiture as mayor of Paris in 2014.

(PHOTO JEAN ECKIAN)



Anne Hidalgo at the Armenian Genocide commemoration of April 24, 2021

INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Presents Statement to ICJ

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On August 21, the Representative of the Republic of Armenia on International Legal Matters Yeghishe Kirakosyan submitted to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) the Written Statement of Observations and Submissions on Preliminary Objections of Azerbaijan with respect to the Memorial of Armenia in the case concerning Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan).

Azerbaijan also submitted its statement.

Canada Foreign Minister To Visit Armenia for Opening Of Embassy

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly has said that she will visit Armenia in September to attend the opening of the Canadian embassy in Yerevan, during a meeting with members of the Armenian National Committee of Canada in Montreal.

The humanitarian situation in blockaded Artsakh was discussed during the meeting.

In turn, ANC Canada said in a statement, “the situation in Artsakh is dire and therefore, decisive action must be taken to ensure the safety, security and self-determination of the population. These were the topics we discussed with Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Mélanie Joly yesterday in Montreal, where we presented several policy recommendations that Canada can put into action and help break the disastrous Artsakh Blockade.”

Parliament Speaker Awards Outgoing EU Ambassador with Medal

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan awarded outgoing EU Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin with the Medal of Honor of the National Assembly during a farewell meeting August 15.

Simonyan thanked Wiktorin for her contribution to the strengthening and deepening of relations between Armenia and the EU and Armenia’s sustainable development.

“Knowing you and seeing your caring work for the development of democratic institutions, I reiterate our commitment to democratic values and readiness to not spare any effort,” Simonyan said during the meeting.

He highlighted the ambassador’s direct participation in the projects that are aimed at supporting the development and strengthening of resilience of Armenia’s southern regions.

Wiktorin said that the EU continues to be the primary partner supporting the Armenian government’s reforms agenda.

During the meeting the parties also discussed the deployment of the EU monitoring mission in Armenia and the upcoming UN Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.



INTERNATIONAL

Belgian FM Urges Azerbaijan to Recognize Armenia's Borders

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib urged Azerbaijan to publicly recognize Armenia's borders when she visited Yerevan on August 22.

"We have welcomed the courage of [Armenian Prime Minister] Nikol Pashinyan who publicly recognized Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, and we call on Azerbaijan's leadership to do the same," she said after talks with her Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan.

Mirzoyan reiterated Yerevan's claims that Baku could lay claim to Armenian territory even after Pashinyan recognized Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh earlier this year.

"So far we have not heard public statements by Azerbaijan's leadership recognizing the territorial integrity of Armenia," he told a joint news conference with Lahbib. "We heard such words only during meetings held behind closed doors, and we are very concerned about this. This may mean that Azerbaijan has territorial claims to Armenia."

Mirzoyan said that international mediators should make sure that Baku honors Armenian-Azerbaijani understandings brokered by them. "Not only are understandings not being respected but we are seeing opposite processes," he said, pointing to the ongoing Azerbaijani blockade of the Lachin corridor.

Lahbib declared that the situation around the Lachin corridor is leading to the threat of starvation and an increase in the incidence among the population of Artsakh,

Sputnik Armenia reports.

Lahbib made the remarks after meeting with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan in Yerevan on Tuesday, August 22.

On August 15, Karabakh Human Rights Defender's office reported the first case of death from starvation.

According to Lahbib, after meeting



Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan meets his Belgian counterpart Hadja Lahbib in Yerevan, August 22, 2023.

with representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, she was convinced that the life of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh was in danger, adding that the situation is unacceptable.

"Azerbaijan is obliged to ensure the se-

curity of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and the uninterrupted traffic along the Lachin corridor," the Belgian Foreign Minister said.

Lahbib, the first Belgian foreign minister to visit Armenia in the past eight years, said at a joint press conference with her Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan that the two countries have rich diplomatic re-

lationships and are willing to further expand relations in all areas."

Lahbib said she was moved during her visit to the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial to commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide. She said that mankind must never forget the Armenian Genocide and do everything to avoid its repetition.

Lahbib added that Belgian and Armenian businesses are willing to cooperate. A delegation of the Wallonia trade agency will visit Armenia in October, followed by other delegations. The Belgian FM noted that the Armenia-EU CEPA is already showing results in human rights protection and good governance.

"Armenia is committed to continue reforms, eliminate all kinds of discriminations and more effectively combat corruption. Belgium and the EU will stand by Armenia on the path of implementing ambitious programs. The EU is already contributing to the development of the sustainable, innovative economy, supporting various startups and SMEs. We are also participating in the construction of the North-South road and the launch of a modern transport network in Yerevan. Belgium will assume EU presidency on January 1, 2024. Armenia is an important partner for Europeans, therefore, in this difficult and unstable global situation, Belgium wants to strengthen partnership with Armenia," Lahbib said.

(Stories from Armenpress, PanArmenian.net and Azatutyun were used to compile this report.)

First Armenian Cross-Stone Consecrated and Unveiled in Finland

ESPOO, Finland (Public Radio of Armenia) — On August 19, the consecration and opening ceremony of the first Armenian cross-stone (khachkar) in Finland took place at St. Herman Church of Alaska in Espoo, the second most populous city of Finland. The erection of cross-stone was initiated by the Armenia-Finland union. The khachkar was created by Armenia-based sculptor Hovhannes Stepanyan.

Hayarpi Drmeyan, representative of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia, delivered remarks at the event. She stressed the importance of unveiling the khachkar dedicated to the Armenian-Finnish friendship and noted that henceforth it will become a unique symbol of the presence of the Armenian community in Finland. Underlining that this cross-stone is a replica of one of the khachkars destroyed by Azer-



baijan in Old Jugha (Nakhichevan), she spoke of the risk of destruction of the Armenian heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh, if

the international community does not react decisively to relieve the plight of the Armenian people living in continued blockade there.

Daniel Davtyan, the president of the Ar-

menia-Finland Union, Finland's Ambassador Kirsti Narinen, Leo Makkonen, Archbishop of Helsinki and all Finland, Father Petri Korhonen of St. Herman Church, also delivered remarks at the event.

Speaking about the decision to open an embassy in Yerevan, the Belgian FM said, "This powerful gesture shows how much we value our political relations. We are

menia-Finland Union, Finland's Ambassador Kirsti Narinen, Leo Makkonen, Archbishop of Helsinki and all Finland, Father Petri Korhonen of St. Herman Church, also delivered remarks at the event.

Bishop Tiran Petrosyan, Pontifical Leg-

ate of Central Europe and Sweden of the Armenian Apostolic Church, consecrated the khachkar.

After the ceremony, the Armenian-Finnish Luys (Valo) choir performed national Armenian songs.

Community News

Center for Truth And Justice Highlights Achievements and Features Garo Paylan at Gala

By Vic Gerami

LOS ANGELES — On October 13, the Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ) will hold its third annual gala, titled “Raise Their Voices: Break the Blockade” in Los Angeles, with guest of honor Garo Paylan.

CFTJ was established in November 2020 in response to the invasion of Artsakh (formerly Nagorno-Karabakh). They are a group of lawyers overseeing the collection of firsthand testimonial evidence from war survivors via in-depth, recorded interviews. The attorneys run two law clinics, one in Armenia and one in Artsakh, which are the first of their kind. Through their clinics, they train Armenian law students and young lawyers to interview survivors of the war and record their testimonies. They have conducted hundreds of in-



Garo Paylan

terviews and trained nearly one-hundred current or future lawyers. By being a permanent home for the testimonials, CFTJ is a resource for academic and legal practitioners who seek to use the evidence for education and/or legal action.

The recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 was possible due to the overwhelming evidence collected by experts, including testimonies, photographs, interviews, and other sources. Given Azerbaijan’s track record of practicing revisionist history, disinformation, and propaganda, the evidence that the CFTJ collects is invaluable.

The mission of the CFTJ is to be a living memorial to crimes against humanity. By being a permanent home for testimonials, the Center makes eyewitness accounts available for study, education, and legal action to foster education, empathy, justice, and change. They preserve evidence

see TRUTH, page 12



Armenians Protest Outside UN Headquarters

By Ken Martin
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — About 200 protesters from around the United States and Canada filled Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza at the United Nations in

New York, for a rally titled “Open the Road Lachin Corridor for Artsakh,” on Sunday, August 20.

The demonstration took place four days after a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Artsakh, called for by the Republic of Armenia

The Lachin Corridor has been blocked by Azerbaijan since December 2022, leading to severe shortages of every vital need, including food and medicines.

Demonstrators, young and old, carried homemade signs expressing their emotions about the situation, and carried American, Armenian and Artsakh Republic flags, as they met and talked together and listened to speakers who reported on the situation and let their demands to the UN be known, especially to force the Azerbaijan regime to open the road for relief supplies to pass through and save the 120,000 residents some of whom have expired from malnutrition. Speakers demanded airlifts of food and medical supplies and other necessities begin immediately.

Donald Wilson Bush fired up the crowd and led chants to open the road and lift the blockade and hold an airlift, to the people of Artsakh. Wilson Bush leads the Armenian National Association and is a descendent of Woodrow Wilson. Other speakers included Gayane Hovhannissyan from Canada, a physician and Associate Medical Officer of Health at the Region of Peel Public Health in Toronto and Karine Kocharyan, producer at Voice of Armenians TV of NY. Saboo Aghababyan from Massachusetts spoke about the importance of solidarity with regards to the grim situation in Artsakh and the need to keep up the pressure on the international community and the United Nations.

All photos by Ken Martin



Senators Padilla, Menendez Urge UN Security Council Resolution to End Blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh

WASHINGTON — On August 16, US Senators Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) and Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, sent a letter to United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield, urging her to introduce a UN resolution calling for an immediate end to Azerbaijan’s eight-month blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh, including allowing unfettered humanitarian access to Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

As the government of Azerbaijan



Sen. Alex Padilla (D-Ca), Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ)

threatens to ethnically cleanse the people of Nagorno-Karabakh through starvation and actively deprive them of fuel necessary for emergency response efforts and other essential goods, the Senators are calling on the United Nations to act immediately according to the mandate in its Charter.

“For eight months Azerbaijan has gradually tightened a blockade meant to deprive Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh access to essential goods, including food and medicine. On June 15, Azerbaijan effectively shut down the delivery of all critical humanitarian assistance, leading to severe consequences for the tens of thousands of people living there including children, the elderly, and other residents with illnesses and disabilities,” wrote the Senators.

“In your capacity as the President of the UN Security Council for August 2023, we ask that you work with all UNSC members to pressure the Azerbaijani government to lift the blockade and prevent what the evidence suggests is a coordinated effort to ethnically cleanse the people of Nagorno-Karabakh,” continued the Senators.

Padilla has previously denounced Azerbaijan’s inhumane blockade of the Lachin Corridor, a vital lifeline that connects the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) with Armenia. Padilla recently introduced a bipartisan Senate resolution alongside Senators Menendez and Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), condemning the government of Azerbaijan for its blockade of the Lachin Corridor and urging the United States to take immediate steps to end the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Bone Marrow Donor Registry Holds Drive to Help Save Life of Rev. Harut Khachatryan

LOS ANGELES — On August 13, 2023, the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) conducted a donor recruitment drive in Los Angeles to help save the life of Rev. Harut Khachatryan, senior pastor at United Armenian Congregational Church (UACC).

Khachatryan, 39, is suffering from leukemia, a life-threatening illness. He may urgently need a bone marrow stem cell transplant, which requires a matched donor.

The recruitment drive, which was organized jointly by UACC, ABMDR and Rev. Khachatryan's family, took place at the hall of the church.

Prior to the recruitment drive, during church service, ABMDR president Dr. Frieda Jordan addressed the congregants. She familiarized them with the mission of ABMDR as well as the simple, painless



The donor-recruitment drive.



ABMDR president Dr. Frieda Jordan addressing congregants at United Armenian Congregational Church, prior to the donor-recruitment drive.

process of becoming a donor, and urged every healthy person between the ages of 18 and 50 to register with ABMDR as a potential bone marrow stem cell donor.

"Being a donor is a wonderful opportunity to bring hope to someone," Dr. Jordan said. "Imagine, you could be the one who

saves Rev. Harut's life, or the life of any of the numerous Armenian patients who are currently waiting for their hero: a matched donor who will enable them to have a life-saving transplant."

The congregation responded enthusiastically to Jordan's appeal, as a total of 80

individuals registered as potential bone marrow stem cell donors.

"I'd like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the United Armenian Congregational Church administration, and especially Aleen Khanjian, for organizing this great event," Jordan said.

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OBITUARY

Hrayr Toukhanian

Director of 'Assignment Berlin' Film Based on Life of Soghomon Tehlirian

DETROIT — Film director and editor Hrayr Toukhanian died on August 15, 2023. He was 91.

He was born in 1933 in Beirut, to the late Bedros and Eugenie Toukhanian and the husband of the late Sona (Dabanian).

He leaves children Peter (Nicole) Toukhanian and Maral (Mark) Mamassian; grandchildren Hripsime (Eric), Maral, Arevik (Nicholas) and Maxine Sona and great-grandchildren Vahe and Rose. In addition, he was the brother of Sebouh (Maureen) Toukhanian, Seta (Dr. Ohan) Tabakian and the late Hourig (Robert) Jacobs.

He was best known as the producer, director and editor of the 1982 film "Assignment Berlin," starring Eddy Mekka. The film was based on the story of Soghomon Tehlirian, who assassinated Talaat Pasha in Berlin in 1923, to avenge the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman government.

The film was one of 20 showcased at the Florence film Festival.

In addition, he won many awards, including the coveted Gold Medal award of New York International Film Festival for his documentary, "Heart of a Nation."

The Tekeyan Cultural Association hon-

ored Toukhanian about eight years ago for having directed and produced "Assignment Berlin."

In recognizing Toukhanian for his dedicated services to the Armenian cause for justice, Edmond Azadian, the newly elect-



ed president of the national Tekeyan association, said "tonight we honor a talented man for his professional talent and dedication we emphasize for the pioneering venture in perpetuating Soghomon Tehlirian's immortal deed and serving the entire Armenian community without any distinction."

A private funeral has taken place.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations are to St. John Armenian Church or World Medical Relief.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Wyss Institute's Erik Aznauryan Discusses Lifelong Treatment of Genetic Diseases

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Humans of the Wyss (HOW) series features interviews with members of the Wyss Institute at Harvard University, a research and development engine for disruptive innovation powered by bioinspired technologies.

The latest subject is Erik Aznauryan. He received his BS in biomedical sciences from Newcastle University, MA in biotechnology from Columbia University, and PhD in Bioengineering from ETH Zürich. In his Ph.D. work Erik identified novel genomic safe harbors — sites suitable for safe and long-term therapeutic gene insertion and expression. As a Technology Development Fellow, he is exploring and validating new genome editing tools for efficient insertion of large genes into genomic safe harbors, with applications in gene and cell therapies as well as mammalian synthetic biology.

Growing up with an ophthalmologist as a father, Erik Aznauryan's interest in medicine began at a young age. Eventually, he realized that the scientific aspects of medicine interested him far more than the clinical aspects. Now, instead of prescribing treatments, he's creating them. At the Wyss, he's developing a next-generation genome editing platform to more safely and effectively treat genetic diseases, like beta-thalassemia or cystic fibrosis. Learn more about

Erik and his work in this summer Humans of the Wyss.

What are you working on?

I'm working on a next-generation genome editing platform called HarborSite. This multi-component technology allows us to make large, efficient, durable and safe changes in the human genome for therapeutic purposes. Specifically, we can use it to introduce functional copies of mutated genes into desired spots in the genome of the affected cells to alleviate the effects of those mutations.

What real-world problem does this solve?

Genetic diseases, like cystic fibrosis, are conditions that result from detrimental mutations in human genes. Often, these are large genes that are altered in multiple spots. To treat them, you would need to fix each mutation in the gene. Current gene-editing methods are focused on fixing one mutation at a time, which is not scalable, or if they address all of them by introducing



Erik Aznauryan (Humans of the Wyss photo)

an entire functional copy of the gene, the process is either very inefficient or unsafe, or the effects are not durable.

Our tool attempts to treat genetic diseases by inserting full copies of therapeutic genes into safe locations in the human genome in a more efficient way than the options available now.

What inspired you to get into this field?

My dad is a pediatric ophthalmologist, so he instilled in me an interest in medicine at a very young age. At first, I thought I'd become a doctor, but I soon realized the scientific aspects of medicine, like developing new therapies, excited me more than

the clinical aspects, so I switched my focus. Being exposed to a wide range of scientific projects during undergraduate and master's studies — from mitochondrial diseases to metabolic engineering to non-coding RNAs — helped me decide what to focus on in graduate school.

What continues to motivate you?

It's an incredible opportunity to build a new, exciting technology from the ground up and ultimately be able to impact a lot of people. Plus, I'm not doing this alone. My primary partner is Tina Lebar, and the energy that she puts into this work radiates onto me. We also partnered with Business Development Manager Bill Bedell who helps us think of our technology in commercially relevant terms.

What excites you most about your work?

The environment you are in dictates your state of mind to a large extent, and the environment at the Wyss is so supportive of translational research. Being surrounded by people who are not only scientifically rigorous, but also looking to apply their knowledge and skills to create therapeutic products, is incredibly motivating — you realize that your mindset is shared by many of your peers.

The environment you are in dictates your state of mind to a large extent, and the environment at the Wyss is so supportive of translational research.

What are some of the challenges that you face?

You can spend a year without any desired or meaningful data that you need to move on to the next step. Of course, when you finally get it there's a big celebration. But maintaining that motivation and direction towards your goal can be challenging when there are a lot of setbacks. For me, the potential to create something that will one day be a solution for many people keeps me going during those times.

How did you begin your journey with the Wyss? Why did you want to work here?

It's very hard not to hear about the Wyss if you're in the biotech world! It's one of the best institutes for biology research and beyond. George Church is a pioneer of genome editing, so I also wanted to work with him. During my Ph.D. I reached out to him, shared my previous research and future project ideas. Luckily, he was interested in having me come over and connected me with former Wyss postdoc, Denitsa Milanova. We got along immediately. I appreciate both of them so much for their part in my scientific journey. I worked with them as a visiting graduate student from October 2019 to May 2020, which was a very fruitful time. Once I finished my Ph.D., I returned to the Wyss as a postdoc — and now as a Technology Development Fellow — to focus on my current work.

What is unique about the Wyss and how has that impacted your work?

One thing I really like about the Wyss is the diversity of expertise, which I think is most important for science. You have people who are world leaders in different scientific areas under one roof. I can tap into their knowledge, and they can tap into mine. This dramatically facilitates the progress of my research. Additionally, the internal project funding structure developed in the Institute is incredibly valuable for early-stage technologies seeking further de-risking.



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.



Dr. Nubar Berberian 2023 Annual Awards

Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **September 30, 2023**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2023** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winners will receive their awards in **November, 2023**
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, August 10, 2023

COMMUNITY NEWS

Aznauryan Discusses Lifelong Treatment Of Genetic Diseases

GENETICS, from page 9

How do you collaborate with other teams across the Wyss?

Because there are people with all different expertise, it's easy when there's a central point of contact. Jenny Tam is a member of the Advanced Technology Team and oversees many projects. Whenever I'm looking for something, she can connect me with the right person. For example, when we initially applied to become a Validation Project, we were going to use a type of stem cells that we had never tried before. It turned out there was a group in Don Ingber's lab that had been working on them for a long time, and another group in the Church lab that was starting to use them as well. All three teams connected over that, sharing protocols, knowledge, experiments, and relevant results.

How have your previous work and personal experiences shaped your approach to your work today?

The key to working in a field where you have very delayed gratification or results, like science, is to maintain your focus and motivation. Doing a Ph.D. is such a lengthy and complicated journey, and you're so entrenched in your topic 24/7, that it is very easy to be overwhelmed. Going through that helped me build the mental resilience to handle unexpected or unfortunate outcomes. That's something I'll apply throughout my career. Additionally, being an immigrant makes you accustomed to leaving your comfort zone, which is a very useful skill when navigating the scientific unknowns.

The key to working in a field where you have very delayed gratification or results, like science, is to maintain your focus and motivation.

When you're not in the lab, how do you like to spend your time?

I have two kids, and they take up most of my non-work time. Mornings, evenings and weekends are dedicated to them. Our broader family is very closely connected, so we try to share our free time together. I also volunteer for science education initiatives in Armenia where I come from.

What's something unique about you that someone wouldn't know from your resume?

I really enjoy playing piano and saxophone. I don't think I'm particularly good at either, but I enjoy it as something for myself. The saxophone is hard on the neighbors, but we have an electric piano, so I can adjust the volume, making it easier to practice.

If you had to choose an entirely different career path, what would it be?

It would be something related to foreign relations in a government organization, like some kind of diplomatic work. It's exciting building ties with people from different places and cultures and aligning diverging interests into mutually beneficial solutions. Plus, I speak four languages – English, Armenian, Russian, and Spanish – so that would help.

What does it feel like to be working on cutting-edge technology that has the potential to have a real and significant impact on people's lives and society?

I know I'm in a great place, given this amazing chance, surrounded by smart people, so it's my duty to take advantage and develop something that will be valuable for others.

It's very inspiring. Knowing what I do will ultimately be beneficial to others is what motivates me during those times of delayed gratification. It also brings a lot of responsibility – I know I'm in a great place, given this amazing chance, surrounded by smart people, so it's my duty to take advantage and develop something that will be valuable for others.

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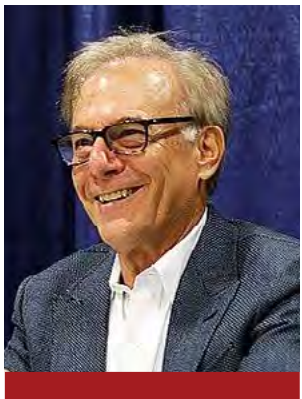


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MEDIA COVERAGE OF ARMENIA AND KARABAKH TODAY Journalists' Panel and Q&A

With the participation of:



David Ignatius
(Washington Post)



Ken Dilanian
(NBC News)



Eric Hacopian
(CivilNet)



Amberin Zaman
(Al-Monitor)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023

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

Tufts University, Medford, MA
Joyce Cummings Center, Room 270

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
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From left: Teni Apelian, Anais Tekerian, Yeraz Markarian

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



COMMUNITY NEWS

Tekeyan Cultural Association Delegation Meets with Newly Appointed Consul General

GLENDAL — On Tuesday, August 15 a delegation representing the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) visited the Consulate General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles and met with Karen Israyelyan, the newly appointed consul general. A career diplomat, Consul General Israyelyan warmly welcomed the TCA representatives. On behalf of the delegation, Mihran Toumajan, assistant secretary of the Central

Board of the TCA in the United States and Canada, congratulated Israyelyan on his recent appointment.

The TCA delegates provided background information about the organization and the three Los Angeles-based TCA chapters. A number of topics were discussed relative to the motherland and diaspora-homeland relations. Consul General Israyelyan noted present-day prospects and challenges facing diaspo-

ran communities, and emphasized the importance of homeland repatriation for diasporan Armenians.

Also participating in the meeting were Sevan Deirbadrossian, vice-chairperson of the TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter, Mayda Kuredjian, TCA West Coast executive secretary, and Carl Bardakian, chairman of the TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter and a member of the Central Board.



From left, Sevan Deirbadrossian, Mayda Kuredjian, Consul General Karen Israyelyan, Mihran Toumajan and Carl Bardakian



The Armenian Alphabet at the Melkonian Educational Institute in Nicosia, Cyprus (photo Alexander-Michael Hadjilyra via Wikimedia Commons)

Questions for Armenians Born Between 1930 and 1959

Were you born into an Armenian family in the 1930s, 1940s or 1950s? Were different languages used in your home? If you are an Armenian speaker, do you speak Armenian differently today than your parents or grandparents did? If you attended Armenian school or took Western Armenian classes, did the kind of Armenian you heard at home differ from the kind of Armenian you heard in the class-

room? Jennifer Manoukian—a postdoctoral researcher in Armenian studies at the University of California, Irvine — is researching language use in the post-genocide Armenian diaspora and needs your help. If you answered yes to any of the questions above and would like to share your childhood memories about language, please contact her at jmanouk@uci.edu.

Center for Truth And Justice Features Garo Paylan at Gala

TRUTH, from page 7 and make it accessible for current or future proceedings in Armenia or abroad.

Garo Paylan, an Armenian born in Turkey, was among the few Armenians elected to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and served for two consecutive terms in 2015-2018 and 2018-2023, representing Istanbul and Diyarbakir. Though a politician, Paylan is also a leading democracy activist in Turkey. He is a founding member of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and, since 2016, was the first Armenian in the history of the Republic of Turkey to publicly discuss the Armenian genocide of 1915 from the podium of the Turkish parliament. Paylan is recognized for his activism on human rights and minority rights in Turkey. He has received several awards, including the Grand Vermeil Medal, and has twice been nominated for the Nobel peace prize.

Artsakh is finally getting some attention after nearly three years of deafening silence from the international community and the media, following the report by the founding prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo,

who classified the situation in Artsakh as Genocide. Meanwhile, Armenia requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council to address the 'deterioration of the humanitarian situation' in Artsakh due to Azerbaijan's illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting the Republic of Artsakh to Armenia and the rest of the world.

The attendance of Paylan at the CFTJ's event is significant and a rare occurrence for a public servant who isn't about self-promotion and rarely travels to the United States. In addition to Paylan's speech and the Center presenting their last year's achievements, their new initiatives will be announced at the gala. The event aims to collect funds for the CFTJ's initiatives of collecting evidence of war crimes, preparing public reports and confidential filings, and offering the facts that international law experts need to hold Azerbaijan accountable.

The event will take place at the Taglyan Cultural Center, 1201 Vine St., Los Angeles. To purchase tickets or to learn more about the event, visit cftjustice.org

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**Tekeyan Cultural Association
Metro Los Angeles Chapter**

FAMILY FUN DAY

Saturday, September 16, 2023, 6 PM
Angel Stadium of Anaheim
Fireworks after the game

\$33 per ticket
Purchasing deadline: Sunday, September 3, 2023

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IN CELEBRATION OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF MHER MEGERDCHIAN THEATRICAL GROUP



Arts & Culture

'Aurora's Sunrise' to Screen at Fresno State

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program and CineCulture will present the Fresno premiere of "Aurora's Sunrise" on Friday, September 1, at 5.30 p.m., in the Leon S. and Pete Peters Educational Center Auditorium (5010 N. Woodrow Ave.), on the Fresno State campus. Following the screening, which is part of the Armenian Studies Program Fall 2023 Lecture Series, the audience will have the opportunity to discuss the film with director Inna Sahakyan.

"Aurora's Sunrise" is Armenia's official entry to the 95th Academy Awards and is a "Critic's Pick" of the *New York Times*. The film was made possible with the academic contribution of the Zoryan Institute and is based on its Oral History Archive.

At only 14 years old, Mardigianian lost everything during the Armenian Genocide. Two years later, through



luck and extraordinary courage, she escaped to New York, where her story became a media sensation. Starring as herself in "Auction of Souls," an early Hollywood blockbuster, Mardigianian became the face of one of the largest charity campaigns in American history. With a blend of vivid animation, interviews with Mardigianian herself, and 18 minutes of surviving footage from her lost silent epic, "Aurora's Sunrise" revives a forgotten story of survival.

For over 15 years, Sahakyan has directed and produced feature-length documentaries, doc series, and shorts that have been broadcast internationally. She focuses on uncovering untold and forgotten stories while exploring the nature of humanity through intimate and innovative filmmaking.

In 2022, "Aurora's Sunrise" became a festival favorite and screened at over 40 festivals, winning several awards. Sahakyan has also worked as a producer on documentaries such as "One, Two, Three" and "Donkey-mentary."

Admission for the film screening and discussion is free and free parking is available near the west entrance of the SaveMart center. A parking pass is not required for the Friday evening presentation.

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, please follow us on our Facebook page, @Armenian-StudiesFresnoState or at the Program website, <https://fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies>.



Maurizio Redegoso Kharitian

'Discovering Armenia Was a Turning Point in My Life!'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN-TURIN — Italian musician Maurizio Redegoso Kharitian (born in 1970 in Turin (Torino) to a Genoese singer/guitarist father and a French-Armenian dancer mother) has played various instruments since his childhood (piano, flute, violin). At Torino, Novara and Paris conservatory he studied viola and quartet. He founded a string quartet named after the Swiss composer Arthur Honegger, which win one first prize and three international second prizes. He performed with Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della Rai, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, European Union Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra of the Bach Akademie Stuttgart, European Music Project, etc. and soloist with Offerta Musicale Chamber Orchestra of Venice, Ensemble of Orchestra Rai, Orchestra "Stefano Tempia" di Torino. He also has made audio and video recordings for Rai Trade, Decca, Arion, Stradivarius, Real Sound, Nuova Era, Rai, Mediaset, Delta Video.

Maurizio, in your long professional activities, you have played different genres of music: classical, pop, jazz, ethnic, theatrical. Do they complement or clash with each other?

Although I only started studying my first instrument at the age of 10, I was lucky enough to listen a lot of music from different genres as a child because my father had a recording studio at home. I grew up with a variety of sounds and styles with me and that I found again later. Despite having classical training which was very important and which prevailed for a long time, I felt the need to step outside the rigid schemes of the academic world. To enter into the merits of the question, nothing can be totally improvised and research is required for any kind of musical expression that one wishes to address. Personally I am attracted by mixing genres, as long as you have awareness and respect for the origins of each tradition and then undertake the artistic path more in line with your talent.

You have performed the music of Ennio Morricone under the direction of the maestro himself. How was this cooperation?

It happened in 2013, on the occasion of many concerts dedicated to him as a tribute to his enormous career as a film scorer. I was part of the Rai National Symphony Orchestra. It was obviously a very emotional experience to play his fantastic music under his direction and despite his advanced age — he was 86 at the time. He conveyed great attention to every musical detail. I've played that repertoire dozens of other times but that circumstance represented a privilege to have received the deep humanity directly from whoever wrote them. Twenty years earlier with another orchestra I had played his "contemporary classical" compositions, very difficult and particular which did not reveal anything of his film style; instead recently I played some chamber music that was then used for some film work.

You also have participated in several editions of Pavarotti & Friends, accompanying the likes of Dionne Warwick, Elton John, Eric Clapton, Caetano Veloso, B. B. King, Lionel Richie and Deep Purple. Any special memories connected to those celebrities?

First of all I remember the great excitement those events because there was a big media movement around. I remember the great professionalism of all these great artists who made themselves available to duet with the great Luciano Pavarotti. As I said before about the cross pollination of musical genres, when there are great artists, everything is possible and right from the rehearsals one had the impression of speaking the same language. In general, I can say that every single artist of every edition of Pavarotti & Friends reminds me that behind every artistic expression there is, in addition to talent, a lot of sacrifice and hard work.

When did you first get acquainted with Armenian music?

My very first experience with Armenian music was listening to my mother's voice singing me some traditional song. I was fascinated by the beauty of the very musical language. In the house there were also some audio cassettes that occasionally played.

see KHARITIAN, page 14

New CD, Book For Composer Hayg Boyadjian

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Grammy nominee composer Hayg Boyadjian's composition, *Variations on a theme by Bach* for piano solo was recorded as part of the recently-released CD on the Navona label, "Sustain Vol. 3," in Germany by virtuoso Armenian pianist Armen-Levon Manaseryan.

Born in Yerevan, Manaseryan lives in Bonn, Germany and studied for many years there.

The CD is now available on Amazon and other internet sites. The press has called the composition by Boyadjian, very delicate, unusual.

A critic and musicologist from the Colorado University wrote, "Keep in mind that this is a 21st century piece relying on the use of a Baroque period counterpoint. Boyadjian makes use of retrograde, inversion, variations of rhythmic figures, ornamentation, and canon. As the piece progresses, it begins to sound more and more familiar in spite of the avant-garde harmonies and enharmonic writing. It is truly an epiphany."

Manaseryan earlier had performed the European premiere of the variations at the Steinway Hall in Frankfurt, Germany (place of the Steinway piano factory). The concert was sponsored by the Harvard Club of Germany.

Manaseryan performed the famous Beethoven *32 Variations on an original Theme* for comparison with Boyadjian's variations. He repeated the program in Brussels, Belgium. Manaseryan often performs Boyadjian's piano music including pieces that Boyadjian has written and dedicated to him.

Coincidentally, Boyadjian recently became part of another project. The book *The Power of Oral History Narratives* was recently published by Information Age Publishing, Inc. and includes a chapter on Boyadjian's life history.

The subtitle of the book reads "Lived Experiences of International Global Scholars and Artists in Their Native Country and After Immigrating to the United States," edited by Toni Fuss Kirkwood-Tucker, Florida State University and Frans H. Doppen, Ohio University.

The book includes also writers from Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Eurasia, Middle East, and South America.

Boyadjian's narrative story begins with his parents, survivors of the Armenian genocide of 1915 perpetrated by the Turks on the Armenian population. According to most scholars half of the Armenian population (one and a half million people) were exterminated in horrendous, indescribable ways. There are many books of eyewitnesses describing these atrocities. One of these is the autobiography of Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to Turkey.





ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

OCTOBER 14 — The Orange County Trex Fraternity presents Kef Time Social 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 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).

Armenian Heritage Park Weekly through October 24 at 12:15pm MIDDAY LABYRINTH WALKS AT THE PARK. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Tuesdays for all who work and live in the city and beyond, an opportunity for connection and wellbeing. Offered in collaboration with Boston Public Health Commission and The Greenway Conservancy.

Weekly through October 25 at 4pm

TEA & TRANQUILITY. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Wednesdays to Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Marvel at Abstract Sculpture. Write a Wish on a Ribbon for The Wishing Tree. Refreshments.

SEPTEMBER 9 — Armenian Heritage Park at 11am. LET'S MEET AT THE PARK! COLLEGE STUDENTS IN BOSTON & BEYOND RSVP appreciated, please email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org with name of your college

SEPTEMBER 21 — Thursday WELCOME RECEPTION FOR NEW CITIZENS following their Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall Supported by the Noubar and Anna Afeyan Endowed Fund for Public Program. For details, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 23 — JEAN APPOLON EXPRESSIONS: DANCE PERFORMANCE AT THE PARK, Momentum Greenway Dance Program, presented by Amazon, 11:00am and 3:00pm. Rain date: September 24 Inspired by the Park's design and key features, Artistic Director Jean Appolon selected the Park to create this original piece.

OCTOBER 7 — MOMENTUM GREENWAY DANCE PROGRAM presented by Amazon, Four dance companies perform on The Greenway including at Armenian Heritage Park. 11:00am ConWnuum Dance Project at Auntie Kay & Uncle Frank Chin Park. 12:30pm Vimoksha Dance Company at Rowes Wharf Plaza, 1:30pm Jean Appolon Expressions at Armenian Heritage Park, 2:30pm Public Displays of MoWon at Carolyn Lynch Garden

NOVEMBER 12 — Sunday at 2pm GIVING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing

Tree. Share the Warmth: ABCD Winter Drive

Sunday, December 10 at 4:30pm

DECEMBER 10 — CANDLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY "Boston's Newest Holiday TradiWon" Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Meet & Greet. Hot Chocolate & Luscious Cookies. Share the Warmth: ABCD Winter Drive

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 largest 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

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.

Maurizio Redegoso Kharitian: 'Discovering Armenia Was a Turning Point in My Life!'

KHARITIAN, from page 13

My direct experiences have been listening to the choirs of the Armenian Monks of the Mkhitarist Monastery of San Lazzaro in Venice which shocked me by their depth: the musical style was completely original and fascinating. And then, during my first trip to Armenia, after my mother's death in 2007, I listened to all forms of musical expression: traditional, sacred, classical, ballet music as well the legendary sound of the duduk!

From where your maternal grandparents were?

My grandmother Alice Hanna was born in Alexandret, now in Turkey, and my grandfather, Arshavir, in Constantinople in

1912, but three years later, he lost his parents. He was soon drafted into the French army and was stationed in the Middle East and with his large family (ten children) toured a lot until arriving in Marseille at the 1960s. He left me four handwritten books in Armenian and one typed book in Turkish. I'd like to know what they contain and possibly publish them. The four manuscripts in Armenian are divided as follows. Title translated into a novel in French called *Dea*, based on a real life written by Arshavir Kharitian." It consists of 387 pages and was finished in 1968. The story is about a French-Armenian family in Istanbul and begins with an economic disaster caused by the bad governance of the head of the family which forces a young woman

to marry a merchant's son. Through many adventures we also arrive at the publication of a book titled *The Lonely Souls* which will make a fortune and will also win an important prize.

Apparently, the sequel to the first, also entitled in French *Le chemin en Lumiere*, was written in 1969-70. My grandfather has also another book finished in 1970, with a title, and yet a fourth one, also untitled. The total of these books is 1527 pages.

And your mother was a ballet dancer.

My mother Sonia was born in Aleppo in 1945. She studied in Marseille and soon began working in a classical ballet company, then also modern dance and toured Greece, Egypt, Lebanon and Italy where

in 1968 she met my father in Milan. The following year they got married and after I was born, she stopped dancing but continued to do some choreography.

In 2007 you discovered Armenia. Was it a turning point in your life or/and career?

This answer is likely to be very long! It could not have been otherwise. I really wanted to make that journey to research my origins as a way of honoring my mother. Everything I experienced in those few days immediately merged with what my mother represented for me, starting with an oriental way of taking life that has always put me in touch with ancient times. Hard to explain. I tried it with music which certainly



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

(DAN PEREZ PHOTO)



Reem Kassis's Shiitake Mushroom Fattah

With Walnut, Dill and Pomegranate Molasses

"Fattah, derived from an old Arabic verb meaning 'to break bread and steep in liquid,' is a common dish across the Middle East," says Reem Kassis, the award-winning Palestinian author, food writer, and advocate for the cuisine and cultural heritage of Palestine and the Arab world. "The base is bread, but the toppings vary from eggplants (aubergines) and chickpeas, to rice and a variety of meats. The sauces are just as varied with some yogurt-based, others tahini-based, and others broth- or lemon-based. Moona, a restaurant in Boston serving up creative Middle Eastern dishes based on pantry ingredients (moona means 'pantry' in Arabic), has a version made with mushrooms. Mushrooms have an earthy, meaty taste that is superbly complemented by the sweet tartness of pomegranate molasses, the crunchiness of the toasted bread and nuts, and the brightness of the yogurt-tahini dressing. Just another example of how pushing boundaries can lead to delicious surprises."



Reem Kassis

"Bread, the common thread in tharid dishes, encapsulates the essence of Arab hospitality and culinary culture. The idea of using it to bulk up a meal — a practice in many cultures that is probably rooted in scarcity — allows people to stretch valuable ingredients such as meat to feed large families and crowds, reflecting the spirit of sharing and communal dining prevalent across the Arab world."

ing and communal dining prevalent across the Arab world."

Kassis is a Palestinian writer whose work focuses on the intersection of food with culture, history, and politics. You can find some of her writings in the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the New York Times. Her debut cookbook, *The Palestinian Table* (2017), won the Guild of Food Writers Award and Gourmand World Cookbook award, was nominated for a James Beard Award, was short-listed for the Andre Simon Award and the Edward Stanford Award, and was picked as one of NPR's best books of 2017. Her second cookbook is *The Arabesque Table* (2021).

"Ideally, this dish is made with pure pomegranate molasses that does not have any added sugar. But if you are making this with a brand that happens to have sugar, leave out the honey," she adds.

INGREDIENTS:

2 large or 4 small thin pita breads in 3/4-inch/2 cm squares (6 oz./165 g or 2 1/2 generous cups)

For the yogurt sauce:

1 1/3 cups yogurt
3 tablespoons tahini
2-3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 small clove garlic, crushed
1/2 teaspoon salt

For the mushrooms:

1/4 cup olive oil
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 large shallot, finely diced
4 garlic cloves, crushed
1 1/2 cups shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, caps chopped into bite-size pieces (a combination of portobello, chestnut or other varieties)
1 1/2 tablespoons pure pomegranate molasses
2 teaspoons honey
1 14 oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

To serve:

1/2 cup toasted walnut pieces, coarsely chopped
Small bunch of dill fronds

Crushed chili flakes or pomegranate seeds (optional)

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Arrange the pita bread pieces on a baking sheet. Bake, moving the bread around from time to time, until the squares are completely dry and crisp and starting to darken in color, about 20–30 minutes. Remove and set aside. (This step can be done a couple of days in advance and the bread stored in an airtight container or a zip seal plastic food bag.)

Make the yogurt sauce:

In a bowl, stir together the yogurt, tahini, lemon juice, garlic, and salt. Set aside. Prepare the mushrooms:

In a large frying pan, heat the olive oil and butter over medium-high heat. Add the shallot and fry, stirring, until translucent and starting to brown, 3–5 minutes. Add the garlic and 1 teaspoon of the salt and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the shiitake mushrooms and cook for 1 minute.

Add the remaining mushrooms and remaining 1 teaspoon salt and cook until tender but retaining some bite, about 5 minutes. If the mushrooms release some liquid that is perfectly fine, you do not need to cook until it evaporates, only until the mushrooms are tender. Pour in the pomegranate molasses and honey, give one final good stir, then add the chickpeas and cook for 1 minute to heat through. Remove from the heat.

Assemble the dish:

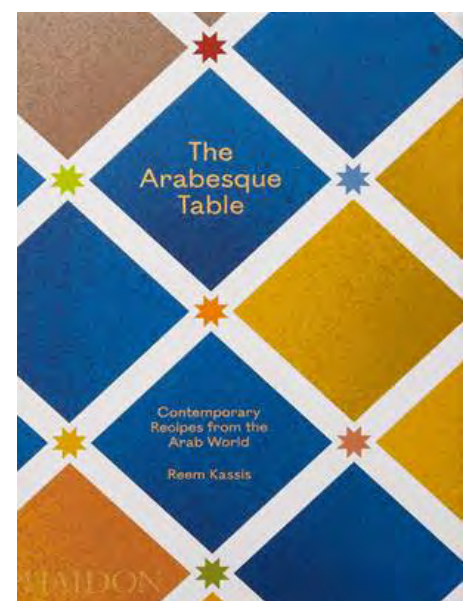
This dish can be served on one large platter or on individual plates. Place the bread at the bottom of the serving platter/plates. Top with the mushroom mixture. Pour the yogurt sauce on top and sprinkle with the toasted walnuts and dill. If desired, sprinkle with chili flakes or pomegranate seeds. Serve immediately to retain the crunchiness of the bread.

Serves 4

The Arabesque Table by Reem Kassis

Much-loved author and James Beard nominee Reem Kassis presents an acclaimed and unique collection of original contemporary recipes tracing the rich history of Arab cuisine. *The Arabesque Table* tells of Kassis's Palestinian family, while giving a modern twist to such dishes as fattah, lentil soup and pistachio cake.

With a personal, engaging voice, *The Arabesque Table* bridges past and present to open up the world of Arabic cooking today, showcasing a mosaic of 130 delicious, accessible home recipes. Organized by primary ingredient, the recipes and vivid photographs bring the dishes to life while the narrative offers not only a sense of taste, but a sense of time and place as well. More than just a compilation of modern Arabic recipes, *The Arabesque Table* celebrates the evolution of Arab cuisine and the stories of cross-cultural connection it recounts. Paying tribute to the history leading to this point, the book shows how cuisine, just like the arabesque patterns that inspired the title, is inherently intertwined and cross cultural, even as it remains crucial in defining the relationship between people, place and identity. To order Reem's books, *We Are Palestinian*, *The Arabesque Table* and *The Palestinian Table*, go to: <https://www.reemkassis.com/books>



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COMMENTARY

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**MIRROR
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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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Why We Need Consequential Political Public Discourse Now

By Vahan Zanooyan

Three years after the 44-day war, while both the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh remain in a de facto state of war, while an existential threat hangs over both republics, and while the global Armenian community is disoriented, divided, and endangered, we are not any closer to formulating a coherent national discourse around the nation's challenges. Aside from the main opposing political factions, even seemingly non-partisan analysts, commentators and observers seem to have fallen into one hardened and intolerant position or the other.

The situation is so divisive that some family members either avoid discussing politics during family gatherings, or no longer talk to each other at all due to differing political views. The syndrome has affected long-standing friendships as well. I recently witnessed an acquaintance of mine being subjected to a brutal tongue lashing by his friend of over 30 years, because of his views on Armenia's current national security strategy.

The diaspora is not immune to the syndrome — quite the contrary, some of the most extreme and intolerant positions hail from the diaspora. These, like their counterpart in Armenia, tend to be divided between either a categorical rejection of the current government, or an almost unconditional support for it; the space in between these two positions, aside from a number of nuanced variations of the two extremes, is generally filled by apathy.

This “civilized” way of managing the situation, i.e., avoiding any substantive discussion of politics, does not bode well for a healthy democratic society. In a post-Soviet culture where it is not customary to have literate debates on government policy in the first place, many issues of critical importance become too cumbersome to enter public discourse, and thus remain “unresolved,” in the sense that it is not clear where the majority of the population stands.

The call for a consequential public discourse does not aim to put the current or any other Administration in the spotlight. Its aim is to build a democratic culture which can generate a majority consensus via literate discourse. Today, we do not have a majority consensus neither in Armenia nor in the Diaspora, unless one considers a crisis in political confidence, apathy, and disillusionment a “consensus.” (N.B.: At the last parliamentary elections in 2021, the voter turnout was 49.37 percent; less than two years later, the latest polls conducted in March 2023 show that 64 percent of respondents did not trust *any* politician, even when 60 percent considered national security and border issues as the main problems of Armenia.)

One alternative to a majority consensus is the emergence of a visionary, daring, courageous, odd-defying, larger-than-life leader, who can inspire a common national purpose to the nation. The phenomenon, although known to happen in both our and other nations' history, does not seem very likely at the present time in Armenia.

The Syndrome

What complicates and, at the same time, enables and sustains the roadblocks to informed discourse is the lack of efficient communication and transparency. The public does not have enough *reliable* information about what really went wrong in the 44-day war, the ongoing peace negotiations, the ultimate objectives of either the government or the opposition, the future fate of the former enclaves, the situation at our borders, the status of our prisoners of war, the state of our defense capabilities, or where would the Armenian government draw the red line when it comes to the fate of the Armenians of Artsakh. The vast information gap is filled with rumors, gossip, and sometimes deliberate misinformation. And while there will always be an important body of confidential information in matters of national security and sensitive peace negotiations, which should never be made public, a literate public discourse requires a minimal understanding of the broad strategic objectives of opposing political positions, and the rationale behind them.

Another part of the problem is that the Armenian public bases opinions on either individual political actors or political factions, not on issues or policy initiatives. Yet, very often, an informed public discourse requires distinguishing the message from the messenger. The public should be able to debate and judge a specific policy or a political message on its own merits, objectively and rationally, and not *automatically* accept or reject it based on who is advocating it. A recent example is the

Can We Have Democracy, Let Alone Freedom, Without It?

public reaction to a couple of announcements made by former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian regarding Armenia's negotiations with Azerbaijan. By far the vast majority of social media reactions, both positive and negative, were directed at him personally, and not at the substance of what he was saying.

The syndrome partly stems from political immaturity and partly from the absence of critical thinking; but largely, it is simply a widely accepted social habit. The public

can be trained to change the habit by repeated demonstrations of open debate of specific policies and issues, without referring to the individual proponents or detractors of the policy, and without mentioning any of the names of past or present Presidents, the Prime minister, or any political parties, focusing instead strictly on the question at hand based on the relevant current and historical realities.

This piece is not so much about the opposing views (or their relative merits) as about the discourse (or lack thereof) among them. Nonetheless, it is worth to briefly cover the disparity between the prevailing views, to get an idea of the nature of the beast. This will be a deliberately oversimplified version of what's out there:

The Views

At one end of the spectrum is the view that a democratically elected government should be supported, period. If it has shortcomings — such as lack of experience and incompetence, which even some members of the government admit, at least in private — we should try to help it overcome them, rather than criticize and oppose its policies. This is particularly important, the logic goes, since the country is in a crisis, and all resources should be devoted to support the government which is trying to manage the crisis. This view exists both in certain circles in the diaspora and in Armenia.

At the other end of the spectrum is the view that the incompetence and misguided policies of this government are treacherous and are causing such irreversible damage to the Armenian nation and statehood, that supporting it solely on the basis that it is an elected government is self-defeating at best. The argument that the country is in crisis and therefore the government should be supported rings hollow to this group, because they view the government as the main cause of the crisis the country is in.

At the extreme level, with relatively few followers, some are even reluctant to take actions that could strengthen Armenia, fearing that they'd be further enabling and giving undeserved political credit to the incompetent and treacherous regime in power.

Regarding Artsakh, by far the most controversial issue remains that of being “realistic.” In a nutshell, for some, being realistic means admitting that we lost the war, that the world recognizes Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, that we have no international allies that support us on Artsakh, and therefore we should just let it go and stop fighting a futile war. For others, other facts have weight, such as: there is no legal basis for Artsakh to be part of Azerbaijan, Artsakh was always an *autonomous* region, even when part of Soviet Azerbaijan, it was never part of independent Azerbaijan, it has been part of the Armenian motherland for millennia and accepting it as part of Azerbaijan is sure to lead to ethnic cleansing. For this group, the struggle to keep Artsakh free and Armenian is a patriotic duty and admitting that Artsakh is part of Azerbaijan is not realism, it is defeatism.

The prime minister's statement that Armenia can do nothing for Artsakh and that Stepanakert should negotiate directly with Baku appeals to certain citizens in Armenia, who are tired of 30 years of fighting for Artsakh and for what they view as empty nationalistic rhetoric and unfulfilled promises. And yet the same statement sounds like the ultimate sellout to others, who see in it a violation of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia, the Constitution, and the prime minister's own declarations earlier in his term in office, and for whom the distinction between Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia is at best artificial.

The articulation of neither of these positions has been complete and intellectually honest. Is the “realist” group really ready to just hand over Artsakh and witness another part of the ancient Armenian homeland ethnically cleansed, and just go on with a “normal” life in Armenia? The question has been

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COMMENTARY

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avoided. A recent Gallup poll shows that 94 percent of Armenian citizens find it unacceptable for Artsakh to be part of Azerbaijan. Similarly, is the “idealist” group willing to fight another unequal war? It has not yet articulated a practical solution that goes beyond its principled stand, even though the emergence of a determined, odd-defying, readiness to resist integration in Azerbaijan within a segment of Artsakh’s population comes close.

The Discourse—Issues that Deserve and Require Public Debate

Reasoned political discourse is central to any democratic process, and especially so for developing democracies. We often hear that democracy in Armenia is “still evolving” or it is understandably “not perfect,” as if that is an excuse for its shortcomings. But an honest political discourse is even more important in developing democracies because it is a critical catalyst to move the democracy forward.

While even an imperfect democracy is infinitely preferable to a brutal dictatorship, it does not guarantee sound government policies; history does not lack examples of democratically elected governments who have been disastrous for their countries. Any citizen of the Republic of Armenia, who cares about the future of his or her country, and is a stakeholder in that future, has every right to question and criticize the policies of any government without being turned into an outcast and declared an enemy of the state. Blindly accepting the government’s policies without questioning their logic and consequences *negates the very premise of democracy*. My only caveat here would be that the critics should not use the levers of democracy to undermine the very democracy that has given them the freedom to criticize.

The record of a government in delivering on its promises is the most common and legitimate subject of public discourse. In the Spring of 2018, I saw the euphoria in the streets firsthand, and nothing can convince me that it was not genuine. The nation was ready for change. It was ready for a *true revolution*. It was ready to get rid of the corruption and favoritism that had afflicted the country in the preceding 28 years. It was ready for social justice. There was genuine hope in the air. Hope that the hitherto seemingly unshakable old regime could finally be replaced with something better. Something more fair, more clean, even more patriotic. The “My Step” movement was at the right place at the right time. It ignited the flame and then rode on this wave of the public’s readiness for change.

But it is an undeniable fact that the “revolution” did not justify the hopes attached to it: Neither on ridding the country of the inherent systemic corruption, nor on the various statements and promises made regarding involving the people in key decisions affecting the nation, including Artsakh. Granted, noticeable progress was made in reducing corruption in the government bureaucracy, in public spending, especially on infrastructure and the network of roads, and in tax collection. That was significant enough to sustain its popularity and help it win the election in 2021. But the old post-Soviet monopolists are still alive and well, largely enjoying their privileged hold on certain sectors of the economy, albeit a bit more tamed than before. As for the promise of involving the people in key decisions affecting the nation and the future of Artsakh, many such statements have been proven to be lies. In an open, democratic society, this should have been the subject of public debate, without the use of a single derogatory or offensive adjective, and by the active participation of the government to explain the reasons for having to break those promises.

The intellectual class should have pointed out publicly that a golden opportunity to realize a true revolution in Armenia was seized by the My Step movement, and ultimately wasted, leaving behind a disillusioned, tired, and depoliticized public. An absolute majority in the parliament and an unpopular and ineffective parliamentary opposition, which was vocal in its criticism of the government but failed to offer a credible alternative or solutions, contributed to this failure.

Obviously, the 44-day war was a key development that brought all this to the surface. But it is debatable whether it was the cause of the stillborn revolution, or just the factor that simply exposed its true nature. This too should have been part of a literate political discourse.

A consensus on the “fair share” of responsibility for the crisis that Armenia is in is another casualty of the lack of literate political discourse. In a democratic society, it is natural for the government to be criticized more than the opposition. After all, it has the legal levers to govern and is ultimately accountable. Five years after being in power, it is not “normal” for a democratic society to still blame the preceding governments for almost all of the nation’s current ills. At the same time, there is no doubt that serious and fate-

ful mistakes were made in the past. Yet too many in Armenia are still inclined to assign all the fault to one of the sides and acquit the other. The outcome of the 2020 war was at least in part the result of past mistakes. By the same token, the government who was in charge during the war cannot exonerate itself that lightly, nor can it pass its strategic mistakes and omissions *since* the end of the war onto others. The only way we could have had a more balanced public view on this was to have an informed, dispassionate, fact-based public discourse.

I have heard the argument that if professional national security analysts and political scientists, driven by their patriotic sense of duty, hope to help improve government policy, they should refrain from criticizing the government, otherwise they’ll be treated as outcasts and won’t have access to, let alone influence over, the decision makers. This is as exclusionary a policy as it gets, especially when the existential challenges facing our nation cannot be addressed by appeasement and tiptoeing around the issues. This too is the result of the “dominant party” syndrome — absolute majority of the governing party combined with an ineffective opposition. It forces competent, professional, and dedicated human resources, who want to be helpful, to either tiptoe around the issues, or give up the cause. It is a challenge to help the government in spite of itself, especially when the supremacy of State interests is not recognized. This too is a direct symptom of the lack of public political discourse.

After the 44-day war, under the imminent threat of new wars, “selling peace” was added to the political arsenal of the government. In light of the statements of Ilham Aliyev claiming entire Armenia as Western Azerbaijan and the behavior of the Azerbaijani army at our borders (and inside Armenia-proper), the public should have in the very least questioned the attainability of peace, and, in turn, it should have listened to and debated a well-articulated, rational, and credible explanation from the government that justified the peace agenda. Neither took place.

Winning elections by pleasing a segment of the population by promises of “peace” and “living comfortably” is not sound democracy, especially when there is less than 50 percent voter turnout, unless that policy is widely and credibly debated and accepted through a consensus, providing assurances that national security (which 60 percent believe is the main problem facing Armenia) and the long-term viability of the state are not being sacrificed for the sake of short-term, tentative security solutions. This cannot be done unless the psychological barriers to public discourse are mitigated, and the population has the necessary information to discuss, and follow debates on, what’s at stake.

The inefficient way in which this Administration has tried to bolster the defenses of the country after November 2020 is yet another crucial topic for public discourse. Part of Armenia is currently occupied by the enemy, and there has not been wide public questioning nor any official explanation of what the government intends to do about it. Concrete and welcome progress in our defenses was recorded in September of 2022, in part due to progress made by private initiatives in military technology. But it should not take more than one glance at the map and one glance at Azerbaijan’s behavior to conclude that Armenia remains in a state of war. In a state of war, in any country, national resources would mostly be devoted to defense, which hasn’t been the case in Armenia. A truly democratic government would have invited a national discussion on this subject, with the hope of achieving support for its policies. Instead, the issue has become taboo.

Many other situations could and should have been subjects of public discourse. But let me conclude with the most critical consequence of the issues raised in this article. It is often asked why Armenians have failed to join forces, why isn’t the diaspora more engaged in Armenia, why do we remain so divided and fragmented even when we’re so close to an existential threat? My answer is simple: Because we do not have an *overarching common national strategic purpose* around which we can join forces. Unity and cooperation cannot happen in the abstract. Diverse forces and capabilities *coalesce around a shared vision*. A common national strategic purpose is not a single objective which everyone adopts — that may be impossible to achieve. Rather, it is a multi-tiered and multi-vector strategy, with an overarching vision, which can accommodate multiple national priorities, and to which an important majority of the nation subscribes. And I would argue that we have failed to formulate that common purpose because we have failed to forge a national majority consensus, which, in turn, is caused by the absence of literate and consequential public political discourse.

What’s at stake is our ability to consolidate the vast global resources and capabilities of the Armenian people. And that is the ultimate game-changer for our nation and statehood, waiting to happen.

Some Popes Are More Christian Than Others

By Aro Hovsepyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

I want to emphasize that, although I was born and raised Catholic, I am no longer one.

It is often heard that Pope Pius XII, colloquially known as Pope Pacelli, did not do enough to save Jews and Gypsies during World War II from Nazi persecution.

In my humble opinion, Pope Francis, or Pope Bergoglio, is even more complicated in the ongoing genocide of the Armenian people in Nagorno-Karabakh, historically known as Artsakh by the Armenians.

First and foremost, the Vatican’s silence regarding the ongoing genocide siege is deafening. Pope Bergoglio, who never misses an opportunity to denounce all forms of racism and discrimination against Muslims, has never raised his voice against the Azerbaijani dictator Aliyev or the crimes committed by his regime against Armenian Christians.

Pope Bergoglio doesn’t have the excuses Pope Pacelli had. Pacelli grew up in an era when being Jewish amounted, according to ecclesiastical doctrine, to complicity in deicide. Moreover, he feared Communism and, having served as a nuncio in Germany, overestimated the ethics of German “Kultur.”

Does Bergoglio have similar excuses? Absolutely not! Born and raised in Argentina, he knows very well that Armenians are not an exotic mountain people as many Westerners wrongly believe. He knows that Armenians are hardworking, honest individuals with a deep Christian faith.

So, what explains his silence? Does he fear jeopardizing the Vatican’s access to generous donations by Aliyev and the Azerbaijani First Lady? Does he fear jeopardizing his friendship to Islamic despots? Or perhaps, more trivially, does he not feel like raising his voice to denounce a humanitarian catastrophe that doesn’t earn the same kudos as his crusade in support of immigrant-boat landings in Southern Europe?

Whatever the reason, the lack of good faith in the Curia of Bergoglio is undeniable. Please read this Catholic news [report](#), which tries to present the mission of the Vatican Foreign Minister, Cardinal Parolin, to Baku and Yerevan as a paragon of discreet humanitarian diplomacy.

The hypocrisy is evident. Just take a look at the itinerary of His Eminence’s trip to understand that his efforts are primarily aimed at appeasing Aliyev and his associates. There is no other explanation for Cardinal Parolin choosing to visit Baku before Yerevan.

A true friend of the Armenians and a Christian worthy of the name would have visited Armenia first, and after witnessing the suffering of his Christian brethren, he would have expressed indignation and outrage at the crimes of the autocrat and Vatican ally, Ilham Aliyev. By choosing to visit Baku first, Cardinal Parolin reveals that rather than an honest mediator, he is the courier of worthless Azerbaijani reassurances to the Armenian people.

Shame on Pope Francis! As the great Martin Luther King once said: “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

(Aro Hovsepyan is a graduate of McGill University and the London School of Economics, and now lives in Colorado.)

EU Hypocrisy on Azerbaijan Is Deafening

By Varouj Vartanian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan invaded the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), which is an enclave inside Azerbaijan that is inhabited by 120,000 Armenians. In 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast held a referendum, with 99.98 percent of voters approving the decision to become independent, after Azerbaijan had started pogroms and used genocidal rhetoric against the Armenian minority population. The Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh was able to defend itself against Azerbaijani aggression in the 1st Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988-1994), and there was a frozen conflict until 2020.

The invasion initiated by Azerbaijan in September 2020 lasted until November 9, 2020, and the war was halted due to a ceasefire agreement. Over the past three years, Azerbaijan has been dismantling Armenian churches and bulldozing any Christian religious sites or monuments that the Armenians have built, some of which are hundreds of years old. It was known that this would happen because Azerbaijan is said to have committed “the worst cultural genocide in the 21st century,” when the *Guardian* investigated that Azerbaijan systematically erased any trace of Armenian or Christian history in Nakhichevan to use as evidence that Armenians never lived in that region. Currently, the remaining territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is connected to Armenia by a single road known as the Lachin Corridor.

On December 12, 2022, Azerbaijani citizens claiming to be “eco-activists” started a blockade to prevent the movement of people from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia via the Lachin Corridor. As this was ongoing, the Azerbaijani government cut off gas to the 120,000 Armenian civilians inside Nagorno-Karabakh in the middle of winter in an attempt to cause a humanitarian crisis. After this event, the UN Chief urged the reopening of the Lachin Corridor, while Greece, France, the Netherlands, Canada, and the United States made statements urging Azerbaijan to unblock the corridor.

While Nagorno-Karabakh is isolated from the rest of the world, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are facing starvation. Hospitals and medical clinics have urged that they are running out of medicine and medical supplies, and that this blockade has caused an increase in miscarriages and deaths. Many Armenians who need to use the Lachin Corridor to reach hospitals in Armenia are being prevented from being transported due to the closure of the Lachin Corridor. The International Committee of the Red Cross arrived and attempted to help, but also stated that Azerbaijan has not given permission to bring any form of aid or supplies into Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Armenian government has asked the UN Security Council for help to prevent a genocide, but there have only been words and no actions.

Luis Moreno Ocampo, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, warned that Azerbaijan is preparing genocide against Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh via starvation. For the past several weeks in Kornidzor, Armenia near the Lachin Corridor, 20 trucks carrying nearly 400 tons of food, medicine, and medical supplies have been prevented from entering the Lachin Corridor and are currently hoping for help from the international community to impact Azerbaijan’s decision of blocking Nagorno-Karabakh.

While Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry has made statements trying to defend why food, medical supplies, medicine, and essential needs aren’t allowed to be transported to Nagorno-Karabakh, it is evident that Azerbaijan is planning to conduct a genocide of Armenians based on the actions and rhetoric of the Azerbaijani government. Azerbaijan first became an independent state in 1918, and it wasn’t until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 that it once again became an independent country. The Azerbaijani government has been commanded by the Aliyev family since 1993, and its government is said to be one of the most autocratic and totalitarian nations in global rankings. In 1999, President Heydar Aliyev stated that “the people of Azerbaijan saw the help of Turkey and we are grateful for that. Particularly in 1918-1919, when Ataturk cleansed his land of Armenians.” This is in reference to the Armenian Genocide in which Turkey killed 1.5 million Armenians.

In 2004, Vladimir Kazimirov as co-Chairman of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

(OSCE) Minsk Group stated that “Azerbaijan has actually started pursuing a policy of a total ‘cold war’ against Armenians. Any contacts with Armenians, even those on a societal level, are rejected and those who maintain contact are prosecuted.”

In the same year, Ramil Safarov, a lieutenant in the Azerbaijani military, beheaded an Armenian in his sleep in Hungary, and was transferred to Azerbaijan with the promise of serving his sentence there, but was instead met with open arms by President Ilham Aliyev, given state awards, financial assistance, and a home as a reward for the beheading.

Azerbaijan’s former prime minister, Novruz Mammadov, commented on this matter, saying “this is great news for all of us. It is very touching to see this son of the homeland, who was thrown in jail after defending his country’s honor and dignity.” Azerbaijan’s Chief of Political Analysis, Elnur Aslanov, commented “heroes like Ramil Safarov with his bravery brought the second breath to the Azerbaijani society and people.” Azerbaijani MP Zeynab Khanlarova commented “Safarov is not just a hero of Azerbaijan, but an international hero. A monument should be made of him. He did the right thing to take the life of an Armenian.” In 2004, Colonel Ramiz Melikov of the Defense Ministry of Azerbaijan stated that “in 25 years, there will be no state of Armenia. These people have no right to live in this region.” In 2005, when a delegation of German officials from Bavaria visited Azerbaijan, the mayor of Baku, Hajibala Abutalybov exclaimed “Azerbaijan’s objective is the total annihilation of Armenians. You as Nazis exterminated Jewish people in the 1930s and 1940s, correct? Then you should understand us.”

Since December, EU officials and MPs have voiced “concerns” and issued verbal statements in solidarity with the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, but no EU country or heads of state of EU countries have made an effort to call for intervention in Azerbaijan to protect the Nagorno-Karabakh population. French MEP

François-Xavier Bellamy stated that the EU’s decision on Nagorno-Karabakh is becoming a case of Parliament vs. the Commission, and that the Parliament has voted to support introducing sanctions on Azerbaijan but the European Commission has made the decision to not listen.

In July 2022, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visited the capital of Azerbaijan to announce the agreement to double Azerbaijani gas imports to the EU. She also stated that the European Union decided to diversify away from Russia and to turn towards more reliable, trustworthy partners, such as Azerbaijan. In the same speech she added that “the European Union is committed to a secure, stable and prosperous South Caucasus.” Azerbaijan is the main destabilizer in the South Caucasus, has a historical record of human rights abuses, war crimes, and is considered to be on par with Afghanistan, Iraq, Cuba, Syria, and North Korea on freedom indexes.

The European Union is well aware of the ethnic cleansing that Azerbaijan wishes to impose on Nagorno-Karabakh, so the hypocrisy of the EU is deafening. If the EU wishes to maintain its image as a protector of human rights, democracy, and liberty, its leaders need to reverse their decision to maintain idle and apathetic to a potential genocide that could be prevented. The EU choosing to bolster totalitarian regimes hellbent on exterminating Armenians over promoting democracy, self-determination, and peace gives the impression that the European Union is in decay due to its indifference to Western values and morals.

(Varouj Vartanian is a political scientist with a focus on Eastern European politics and genocide prevention. With bachelor’s and master’s degrees respectively from the University of Pittsburgh and Harvard University, his academic background is in political science and anthropology, and his articles have been published by the *Times of Israel*, EVN Report, and Hetq. He is currently a reviewer for the *Harvard Public Health Review* and a 4th year medical student with an interest in public health.)

The Aghdam-Stepanakert Alternative?

By Rouben Galichian

During the UN Security Council’s presentation, Armenia’s representatives were well aware that Azerbaijan was going to present the Aghdam-Stepanakert road as an alternative to the Lachin or Kornidzor corridor, yet did not offer a detailed explanation to preempt this offered “alternative” and expose its fallacy.

As the public at large could fall into the trap of accepting this alternative, allow me to expose its fallacy.

1 - The corridor agreed upon in the November 9, 2020 Agreement is an actual corridor, which was going to be five kilometres wide and under the control of the Russian peacekeepers. Only part of it was going to pass through Azerbaijani territory, after going out of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh to reach Kornidzor. This is about 10 kilometers.

Thus, the road from Kornidzor to Stepanakert would be about 80 km long, connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.

2 - The offered alternative Stepanakert-Aghdam road connects Nagorno-Karabakh ONLY to Azerbaijan, thus removing the Armenian connection from Nagorno-Karabakh leaving them to the mercy of Azerbaijan, which all are aware of its in-depth meaning.

3 - If the suggested, so-called “alternative” is the Aghdam-Stepanakert road, then in order to reach Kornidzor in Armenia, travellers or goods will have to travel from Aghdam to the Kornidzor border passing from Aghdam to Martuni, then to Fuzuli, Jubrayil, Birinji Aghali and then Kornidzor – a distance of over 220 km inside Azerbaijan. What will the fate of these goods or travelers be, is the will and whim of the Azerbaijani forces, who have so far proven themselves to be completely unreliable!

Goods and travelers from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh, instead of the 80 km via the Lachin corridor, now have to travel the same road in reverse, once again passing over 220 km through Azerbaijan, thus negating the November 2020 Agreement.

The aim of Azerbaijan by offering the Aghdam-Stepanakert road first of all is to negate its own undertaking to provide access through the Lachin corridor, and cut Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia; thus, making Nagorno-Karabakh rely on the mercy of Azerbaijan regarding the provision of all food, medicine and other goods.





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Armenia's Incompetent Actions at the UN Did More Damage Than Good

The United Nations Security Council is composed of 15 member states: Five are permanent members with veto power (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), and the other 10, have a term of two years, on a rotational basis.

The Security Council's powers include establishing peacekeeping operations, enacting international sanctions, and authorizing military action. It is the only UN organ with the authority to issue binding resolutions on member states.

With such extensive responsibilities, the Security Council is the right UN body to deal with Azerbaijan's blockade of 120,000 Artsakh Armenians which risks their starvation resulting in genocide, according to the UN definition of that term.

Regrettably, the Armenian government, due to the mismanagement of its approach to the Security Council, mishandled this unique opportunity to get the UN body to adopt a resolution urging Azerbaijan to immediately unblock the Lachin Corridor. Otherwise, it would impose severe sanctions.

The proper way to have handled the petition to the Security Council would have been for Armenia to prepare the text of a draft resolution, meet with all 15 members, and try to get them to agree to the proposed resolution. Since the blockade has been going on for eight months, the Armenian government had plenty of time to do this work.

Without any preparations, petitioning the Security Council and expecting a positive outcome is unrealistic and self-defeating. The ambassadors of the 15 member countries always receive advance instructions from their foreign ministries on what to say during the UN meetings and if there is the pre-prepared text of a proposed resolution, they are told how to vote. Nothing is decided on the spot during the meeting and no action can be taken that has not been agreed upon in advance.

The Armenian government should have known these basic facts and have taken the proper steps before requesting a Security Council meeting in order to ensure a successful outcome. In this absence of such a preparatory work, it is not surprising that the Security Council did not adopt a resolution to warn Azerbaijan that unless it unblocks the Lachin Corridor immediately, severe sanctions will be imposed.

During the meeting, all 15 member states delivered speeches, many of them urging Azerbaijan to unblock the Lachin Corridor and resolve the issue through peaceful negotiations. The French Ambassador delivered the most favorable speech for Armenia, while the Russian Ambassador's remarks were disappointing. When the meeting was over, everyone got up and went home without adopting a resolution and resolving the blockade. Azerbaijan and Turkey, which are non-members of the Security Council, repeated their myriad of

lies about the Lachin Corridor, denying the obvious facts known to the whole world. To counter Turkey's remarks, why didn't Armenia arrange to have Cyprus or Greece attend the meeting to support its position?

Regrettably, the UN Security Council member states preferred to pursue their own narrow national interests rather than trying to save the lives of 120,000 starving Artsakh Armenians, thus abdicating their humanitarian responsibility and undermining the integrity of the United Nations Organization. Shamefully, the Security Council did not even bother to back up the two decisions of the International Court of Justice on unblocking the Lachin Corridor.

Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, who flew to New York on this occasion, gave a proper speech, urging the Security Council "to act as genocide prevention body and not as genocide commemoration, when it might be too late." Mirzoyan asked that the UN dispatch an interagency needs assessment mission to Artsakh, which was ignored. Nevertheless, he failed to request that the UN Security Council order Azerbaijan to open the Lachin Corridor and impose sanctions, if it did not comply. On the other hand, the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, did not bother to fly from Baku to New York, knowing full well that nothing will happen at the UN meeting.

Azerbaijan's Ambassador falsely stated that since Artsakh is a part of his country's territory, it can do as it pleases and no one has the right to interfere. The whole world knows that he is completely wrong. Human rights violations are of universal interest. They are of serious concern to the whole world and are not the internal issue of any one country.

While it is true that several ambassadors urged Azerbaijan to unblock the Lachin Corridor, regrettably, these requests were mere words which fell on deaf ears. Azerbaijan ignored all such requests, as it has rejected similar pleas from several heads of states, foreign ministers, the European Union, European Council, European Court of Human Rights, World Court, and Secretary-General of the United Nations. Words without action are meaningless.

To save face, Prime Minister Pashinyan told Armenians after the UN meeting that now the whole world knows that Azerbaijan, contrary to its denials, was blocking the Lachin Corridor. This is a meaningless statement as everyone already knew that the Corridor was blocked. That was not the purpose of the UN Security Council meeting. The purpose was to adopt a resolution and impose sanctions on Azerbaijan. Armenia failed to accomplish that important objective.

The UN Security Council meeting was much more than a missed opportunity for Armenia and Artsakh. Having raised and then shattered the expectations of Armenians that the Security Council will lift the blockade further demoralized Armenians worldwide. It would have been far more preferable for Armenia to take no action rather than make a half-baked attempt which caused more damage.

Since last week's failed meeting, Azeri officials have boasted that no one at the UN believed Armenia's 'baseless accusations,' as a result of which no decision was taken. Regrettably, Azerbaijan is now emboldened more than ever to take further aggressive steps against Artsakh and Armenia, knowing full well that no one in the world will take any action against Azerbaijan.

Armenians should support their friends and criticize their opponents regardless of their nationality.

US Can Help Ease The Humanitarian Crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Ardem Patapoutian and Vicken Cheterian

We are both Armenians born in Beirut who met some 50 years ago in kindergarten. We grew up in war-torn Lebanon, embedded in a bubble of Armenian language, school, and culture. We immigrated to the West (the United States and Switzerland), built careers as a scientist and a lecturer/columnist, and managed to stay in touch. The last time we saw each other was last summer in Armenia. We fondly remember sitting together in a loud jazz club in Yerevan, Armenia's capital, entertained by the proprietor who presented us with a 15-year-old Armenian brandy from Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed enclave to the east of Armenia mainly populated by Armenians. We were there because the government of Armenia was celebrating one of us winning the Nobel Prize in Medicine, a first for an Armenian. A few months later, on Dec. 12, 2022, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade on Nagorno-Karabakh. The painful disconnect between the Europe-like scenes in the capital, the celebration of scientific discovery, and the struggles of the persecuted population in Nagorno-Karabakh have become urgent anguishes we share today.

Azerbaijani military personnel regularly open fire on agricultural workers, effectively prohibiting them from

cultivating their own food; the intent seems clear: to slowly starve them into submission. We, the diaspora Armenians, are anxiously watching the unfolding of this humanitarian crisis that seeks to force Armenians from their ancestral lands. Armenians experienced genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in the early 20th century, a horror that feels all too familiar to us now.

The Armenian presence in the Caucasus is challenged by Azerbaijan, a state with a population several times larger than Armenia. Caspian oil has permitted Azerbaijani rulers to invest heavily in military equipment.

Moreover, Azerbaijan has the unconditional support of Turkey, which provides political and military aid to Azerbaijan.

During the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, it

RUSSIA, WHICH ON PAPER HAS A SECURITY ALLIANCE WITH ARMENIA, HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH ITS WAR IN UKRAINE OR UNWILLING TO INTERVENE.

was Turkish aviation — including US-made F-16s and Bayraktar TB2 attack drones — that pulverized Armenian defenses, while Turkish generals overlooked Azerbaijani military operations. Armenia is left alone against this powerful alliance.

Russia, which on paper has a security alliance with Armenia, has been preoccupied with its war in Ukraine or unwilling to intervene.

Armenia, a democratic nation with a thriving technology sector, finds itself in a region largely dominated by autocratic regimes. We have been heartened to see the international support for Ukraine, another democratic nation that has also endured a neighbor's aggression. How-

ever, we also feel a sense of abandonment as our Western friends have given scant attention to the plight of our compatriots. Our concerns extend beyond Nagorno-Karabakh and its population; even the existence of the fragile state of Armenia seems to be threatened by its hostile neighbors.

Nevertheless, our states, particularly the United States, have the power to alleviate this suffering. In the early 1990s, during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, when Azerbaijan imposed a crippling blockade against Armenia, the United States adopted Section 907 of Freedom Support Act that banned any US government aid to Azerbaijan. A clear message is necessary to stop Azerbaijan and put Aliyev on notice that the country's oil exports and bank accounts could be sanctioned if he persists in his crimes against humanity. We urge the US and European governments to respond effectively and efficiently. The United States should lead the democratic world by threatening severe sanctions against Azerbaijan's hydrocarbon exports, and by freezing its bank accounts if it continues its blockade. An emergency airlift like in the times of the Berlin Wall is another step to be considered. The UN Security Council is one arena where multilateralism and international law can be put into a new test.

At this stage of global geopolitical upheaval and reshuffling of alliances, the survival of a small democracy in the Caucasus very much depends on whether Western states decide to act instead of expressing their "concern" while watching this humanitarian crisis unfold in slow motion from afar.

(Ardem Patapoutian is professor of neuroscience at Scripps Research and a 2021 Nobel Prize laureate in medicine. Vicken Cheterian, a lecturer in history and international relations at the University of Geneva, is author of *Open Wounds: Armenians, Turks and a Century of Genocide*. This commentary originally appeared in the *Boston Globe* on August 16.)



Azerbaijan Military Assistance Waiver Delayed as Review Drags on

WAIVER, from page 1

that Azerbaijan is responsible for a worsening humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan has hardened its stance against the ethnic Armenian population there in recent months, blocking the entry of commercial and humanitarian vehicles and shutting off the region's access to gas and electricity. The U.N. Security Council will consider an appeal from Armenia to respond to the worsening situation Wednesday.

The delay in issuing the authorization — called the Section 907 waiver — also comes as the Biden administration pursues a long-elusive peace agreement between the two countries, one that experts say could be close. Ending assistance to Azerbaijan could rule out Baku's participation in future negotiations.

These competing political pressures are creating a delicate landscape in the South Caucasus for the Biden administration, which is caught in a struggle between its values and the pragmatic realities of geopolitics.

"Going ahead with the 907 waiver at this particular moment would create a political firestorm for Biden," said Matthew Bryza, a former U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan and Bush administration official. "But killing the 907 waiver at this delicate diplomatic juncture would seriously risk derailing a peace treaty that is closer than it has ever been."

Spokespeople for the State Department and the National Security Council confirmed that the military assistance waiver remains under review but denied that the current state of peace talks or recent events in Nagorno-Karabakh were affecting the timeline for renewing it.

"U.S. policy on Azerbaijan has not

changed," a State Department spokesperson said, adding "The United States values its strategic partnership with Azerbaijan." The spokesperson was granted anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomatic issue.

Nagorno-Karabakh has been controlled by its ethnic Armenian population since a war that followed the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. In 2020, Azerbaijan launched an offensive to retake swathes of territory. A Moscow-brokered ceasefire paused the fighting, yet Russian peacekeepers deployed to the region have failed to maintain the status quo.

In December, Azerbaijan took control of the Lachin Corridor — the only road linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia and the outside world — and prevented humanitarian supplies including food and fuel from getting through.

The Armenian government has called it an effort to carry out "ethnic cleansing" in the region, while the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, last week issued a report arguing that ethnic cleansing is already underway in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In an interview, Moreno Ocampo argued that if the international community fails to act, it will be "complicit in genocide."

The U.S. and EU-brokered peace talks, meanwhile, have stalled in recent months as Azerbaijan has refused to hold mediated dialogues with leaders from Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian community.

Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act of 1992 bars the United States from offering assistance to Azerbaijan unless Baku takes "demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh."

The White House first issued the assistance waiver in 2002 when Azerbaijan allowed the Bush administration to use the country's territory as a land bridge to get troops into Afghanistan. That opened the door for wide-ranging military and security partnerships between the two countries.

Azerbaijan, a major producer of natural gas that shares a maritime and land border with Iran, has also proved to be a useful partner for the U.S. in the Middle East as a counterweight to Tehran.

Azerbaijan receives significant military and financial support from Washington. Amid growing tensions with neighboring Iran in 2018, the Trump administration stepped up funding for the country's border guards, providing \$100 million worth of equipment and other assistance, making the South Caucasus nation one of the main beneficiaries of American tax dollars in the region. During the 2020 war, more than a dozen Democrats including then-Senate Foreign Relations Committee ranking member Bob Menendez of New Jersey, wrote to the State Department urging that support be suspended.

Hikmet Hajiyev, foreign policy adviser to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, said that efforts to restrict military support for Azerbaijan were being orchestrated by "representatives of Congress who actually represent the Armenian lobby and aren't thinking about their own national interest." Such actions, he added, could be "detrimental" to the efforts of the U.S. and its allies in trying to secure a lasting peace.

The Armenian embassy in Washington did not respond to requests for comment.

Armenian diaspora groups want the U.S. to halt military assistance to Azerbaijan.

They argue U.S. attempts to influence Azerbaijan via Section 907 have fallen short.

Gev Iskajyan, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of Artsakh, which lobbies for Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh, explained that the U.S. has previously used the waiver in order to get concessions from Azerbaijan, only to relent and grant the waiver before Baku makes any changes.

"They dangle the waiver in front of [Azerbaijan], but at the last minute it's always given," Iskajyan said. "That strategy hasn't been working."

"There is a growing awareness on Capitol Hill that U.S. military support for Azerbaijan is enabling Aliyev to commit war crimes and human rights abuses against Armenians," said Tim Jemal, president of the Global ARM advocacy group, which has been meeting with D.C. politicians as part of a push for sanctions. "There must be consequences for Azerbaijan's bad behavior."

A number of lawmakers on Capitol Hill want to see the waiver eliminated. "There is no justifiable reason to continue this waiver," Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.), the Republican co-chair of the Congressional Armenian Caucus said in a statement, noting that Azerbaijan has used military equipment obtained from the U.S. against the residents of Nagorno-Karabakh.

"We have to be tougher with Aliyev if we want a peace deal," said Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.). "What we've done so far hasn't done anything to help a peace agreement, so getting tougher is more likely to achieve a good end."

(Eric Bazail-Eimil reported from Washington. Gabriel Gavin reported from Yerevan, Armenia.)

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