

US Warns Against ‘Use Of Force’ in Karabakh

WASHINGTON (RFE/RL) — The United States on Sunday, September 10, warned the parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) conflict to refrain from military action amid rising tensions along the Kara-

both the Lachin and Aghdam routes, and we repeat our call for the immediate and simultaneous opening of both corridors to allow passage of desperately needed humanitarian supplies to the men, women, and chil-

“WE REPEAT OUR CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE AND SIMULTANEOUS OPENING OF BOTH CORRIDORS TO ALLOW PASSAGE OF DESPERATELY NEEDED HUMANITARIAN SUPPLIES TO THE MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH.”

—ANTONY BLINKEN, US SECRETARY OF STATE



bakh “line of contact” and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

“The United States is deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh,” US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. “We note that humanitarian supplies are positioned near

dren in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

“We also urge leaders against taking any actions that raise tensions or distract from this goal. The use of force to resolve disputes is unacceptable,” added Blinken.

His statement followed Armenian claims that Azerbaijan see WARNING, page 6

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Holds Second Artsakh Emergency Meeting

WASHINGTON — The Congressional Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held an emergency hearing on the ongoing blockade of Na-

the commission, recommended holding Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev accountable for his genocidal intent, and stressed the need for new legislation, including the “Nagorno-Karabakh Human Rights Act.”

The hearing featured testimony from Luis Morena Ocampo, former prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, and David L. Phillips, Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University and Director of Columbia University’s Program on Human Rights and Peace-building and the Atrocities Artsakh Project. In addition, the Armenian Assembly of America also submitted testimony.

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Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)

gorno-Karabakh’s Lachin Corridor on Wednesday, September 6, emphasizing the deteriorating conditions on the ground in Artsakh, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ), co-chair of



An empty supermarket in Stepanakert.

Life Is a Struggle For Families Divided by Blockade In Karabakh

By Gaiane Yenokian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GORIS, Armenia — Since morning, Zhora Baghdasaryan has been trying to call his brother, by phone or messenger. Every time he tries, there is no signal.

This is a common scene over the past nine months after the two brothers were separated because of the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan on Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

Zhora’s brother, Sarvan, lives inside the blockaded area in Stepanakert, Artsakh’s capital, while Zhora and his family are outside, in Goris, Armenia. The distance between the two brothers is almost a two-hour drive. However, it is impossible to cross the border in either direction.

“As they have electricity only several hours during the day in Artsakh, it is hard to reach them via internet connection. Even when you manage to contact them, the conversation is constantly inter-



Zhora and Nelly Baghdasaryan with their six children (photo Gaiane Yenokian)

rupted because of the weak signal. Telephone connections also do not work well, so the phone number is mostly unavailable,” said Zhora.

Our correspondent tried to contact Sarvan Baghdasaryan in Artsakh, but was unable to get through.

As stated by the Human Rights Ombudsman Staff of the Republic of Artsakh, Azerbaijan deliberately jams mobile communication and the internet. However, the difficulties families face under the blockade extend far beyond the inability to connect with their relatives.

Zhora’s family was displaced from Artsakh’s Melikashen village after the war in 2020, when the inhabitants of the area had to leave their houses in a short period in accordance with the ceasefire statement signed between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia on November 9, 2020. Zhora was one of the nearly 93,300 civilians displaced from Karabakh because of the war, as stated in official Armenian data.

see STRUGGLE, page 4

Artsakh Rep. in US Wants Peace for Homeland, Action on ‘Second Genocide’

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WASHINGTON — The Republic of Artsakh is currently experiencing some of the most difficult times in its tumultuous history. Azerbaijan is maintaining its chokehold on Karabakh (Artsakh) by blockading the Lachin Corridor, unrepentant in the face of the world.

Artsakh’s representative in the US, Robert Avetisyan, this week participated in a remote interview, during which he addressed some of the challenges his homeland is facing and the advocacy work he is conducting in Washington.

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Unfulfilled Promises Keep Displaced Shurnukh Villagers In Limbo

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WASHINGTON DC

Armenians Protest in Front of White House To Prevent Second Genocide

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WATERTOWN

Artist Panel to Feature Harvard’s Christina Maranci and Hrag Vartanian

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

EU Monitoring Mission Opens Base in Ijevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) opened an operating base in Ijevan on September 12.

“Today marks the opening of EUMA operating base in Ijevan. HoM Markus Ritter together with Head of EU Delegation in Armenia, Ambassador Vassilis Maragos, Deputy Defence Minister Hrachya Sargsyan, & Governor of Tavush Province Hayk Ghalumyan cut the ribbon to the new EUMA offices in Tavush,” EUMA said in a post on X.

US Calls for Opening of Two Routes to Karabakh

WASHINGTON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The United States has called for the immediate and simultaneous opening of both Lachin and Aghdam routes to allow passage of humanitarian supplies to Karabakh (Artsakh).

“The United States is deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. We note that humanitarian supplies are positioned near both the Lachin and Aghdam routes, and we repeat our call for the immediate and simultaneous opening of both corridors to allow passage of desperately needed humanitarian supplies to the men, women, and children in Nagorno-Karabakh. We also urge leaders against taking any actions that raise tensions or distract from this goal. The use of force to resolve disputes is unacceptable,” the Department of State said in a statement on September 10.

“In light of the recent increase in tensions in the South Caucasus, the United States will continue to strongly support efforts by Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve outstanding issues through direct dialogue, with the aim of achieving a dignified and enduring peace.”

US Holds Joint Military Exercises in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The US on September 11 described its joint military exercise with Armenia as “a routine exercise that is in no way tied to any other events.”

“No, not at all. We routinely train and operate alongside our partners to maintain readiness, and we continually – continuously improve on the interoperability between our armed forces,” U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said at a press briefing when asked whether the exercise is designed forestall a potential Azerbaijani attack. “Armenia is a longstanding partner to the United States and has an enduring relationship since 2003 with the Kansas National Guard as part of the Department of Defense’s State Partnership Program. So no, this is a routine exercise that is in no way tied to any other events,” Miller added.

Miller also addressed Russia’s concerns over the exercises.

“I think that given Russia has invaded two of its neighbors in recent years, it should refrain from lecturing countries in the region about security arrangements,” he said.

Pro-Russian Blogger and Journalist Detained in Armenia

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An Armenian journalist working for the Russian news agency Sputnik and a pro-Russian blogger are among seven persons arrested

A lawyer representing Sputnik journalist Ashot Gevorgyan and blogger Mika Badalyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that the weapons were found in Gevorgyan’s car. Liana Grigoryan insisted, however, that the two men “have nothing to do” with

woman, Maria Zakharova, was also concerned, saying that the arrests may be a “provocation by those who go out of their way to ruin relations between the two countries.”

“The West has invested a lot of money in that,” Zakharova wrote on Telegram late on Thursday. “Forces seeking that have clearly become more active lately.”



Sputnik journalist Ashot Gevorgyan

in Armenia on suspicion of illegal arms possession and trafficking.

Law-enforcement authorities have so far given few details of criminal proceedings that led to the arrests made in southeastern Syunik province on Wednesday and Thursday, September 6 and 7. According to them, the National Security Service (NSS) launched the investigation on August 24.

Another law-enforcement agency, the Investigative Committee, said on September 8 that two of the suspects were detained while trafficking an assault rifle, multiple pistols, hand grenades and ammunition provided by an unnamed resident of a Syunik village close to the Azerbaijani border. A committee spokesman refused to elaborate.

them and that the arrests were the result of a “misunderstanding.”

The lawyer also said that Gevorgyan and Badalyan, who is an outspoken critic of the Armenian government, traveled to Syunik on assignment on Wednesday and were taken into custody hours later.

None of the seven suspects were formally charged as of Friday afternoon. Under Armenian law, the investigators must indict or release them within 72 hours after their detention.

The Russian Embassy in Yerevan expressed concern at the arrests of Gevorgyan and Badalyan. “We will take steps to clarify the circumstances of what happened,” it said in a statement.

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokes-

Freedom House: Democracies Must Act to Prevent Ethnic Cleansing in Karabakh

WASHINGTON—In response to increasing military tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan and worsening conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh, Freedom House president Michael J. Abramowitz issued the following statement on September 11:

“We are deeply concerned by reports that the Azerbaijani military is massing equipment along the Armenian border. We condemn any plans to attack the sovereign territory of Armenia and urge mediating parties to work toward preventing any further violation of Armenia’s borders.

“Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin corridor risks ethnic cleansing of the region’s Armenian population and is exacerbating the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh. We urge the Azerbaijani government to engage sincerely in peace talks, refrain from weaponizing the security of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, and unconditionally open the blockade to guarantee unimpeded two-way movement of people, vehicles, and cargo along the Lachin corridor. We also urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to appoint a special rapporteur to assess the human rights situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Armenia is rated Partly Free in Freedom in the World 2023 and Free in Freedom on the Net 2022. Azerbaijan is rated Not Free in Freedom in the World 2023 and Not Free in Freedom on the Net 2022.

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Miller also addressed Russia’s concerns over the exercises.

“I think that given Russia has invaded two of its neighbors in recent years, it should refrain from lecturing countries in the region about security arrangements,” he said.



TCA of US and Canada Congratulates New Artsakh Leader

September 9, 2023

Honorable Mr. Samvel Shahramanyan
Newly elected President
Artsakh Republic
Stepanakert

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, I warmly congratulate you on the occasion of your election as president of the Republic of Artsakh and wish you strength, ability and the will to overcome the critical challenges facing our beloved Artsakh.

On the same occasion, I also congratulate the Parliament of the Republic of Artsakh and all the Artsakh Armenians for their wisdom and state and national consciousness in handling the difficult tasks of self-governance, sovereignty and self-preservation.

Expressing solidarity with the government under your leadership and the heroic Artsakh Armenians, I assure you, Mr. President, that our organs of the Tekeyan press, with their wide circles and members from all over the world, will continue their journalistic work with continued momentum for the protection and well-being of the Artsakh state and people.

Wishing you success in your difficult mission, I ask that you accept my assurances of the utmost respect.

On behalf of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada,

Dr. Arshavir Gundjian



ARMENIA

Artsakh Representative in US Wants Peace for Homeland, Action on ‘Second Genocide’

AVETISYAN, from page 1

He discussed a variety of topics, including the need for international mediation in the face of Azerbaijan’s breaking of promises or violation of treaties. He also stressed that the actions taken by Azerbaijan are tantamount to genocide.

He said, “This situation is taking a human toll. Every third death in Artsakh is related to malnutrition. We are speaking in the 21st century, in a European zone. The blockade has affected every aspect of life in Artsakh, especially Stepanakert. There is no food, there are no basic products, no opportunity to get proper medical assistance, no opportunity to engage in educational processes. An entire set of civilian life has been severely affected by this blockade. Daily bread is a challenge. Kids faint in the line for daily bread because they have to stand for hours.”

“That’s the pattern of behavior we have seen from Azerbaijan throughout our entire course of interaction with that country. They assume an obligation, they put their signature on it, and violate it the next day, which makes the country and its leadership a non-trustworthy partner when it comes to negotiation. Trustworthiness is the essential component of successful negotiation. We don’t have it. That’s why we need international observation of the process,” he said.

Lantos Hearing

On September 9, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the US Congress held a session dedicated to the blockade, with the participation of Prof. David Phillips and former International Criminal Court Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo.

Avetisyan also participated in the session.

Avetisyan expressed his gratitude to the efforts of both Phillips and Ocampo, who have written and spoken continuously about the issue.

However the [report](#) by Ocampo has gained traction in the international press and has been cited frequently by leaders and journalists.

Avetisyan said his “recent expert opinion [demonstrated] that whatever is happening in Artsakh is a manifestation of Azerbaijan’s genocidal policy.”

He added, “It kind of reiterated our opinion and our words that we’ve been saying for months now. This is one of the steps of genocidal policy toward Artsakh and pretty much everything Armenian in the region.”

He said this hearing was the second in a row dedicated solely to Artsakh, “which is a very important achievement on its own.” He added it demonstrates that both the legislative and executive branches in the US “continue to keep an eye on the situation on the ground and discuss possible future steps in the immediate future.”

At the hearing, Avetisyan recalled, all the speakers “stressed the importance of [taking] urgent steps to prevent genocide.” They said as of now, there is “no time to discuss, instead we need to act now to prevent a genocide and then address the rest of the conflict issues.”

Avetisyan added that Chairman Christopher Smith (R-NJ), one of the co-chairs or the Lantos Committee, said “his office will consolidate the testimonies received from the testifiers. They will write a letter to the executive [branch] and the State Department with recommendations to take urgent steps.”

Avetisyan said that at the meeting Smith had expressed his disappointment that no one from the State Department had attended the session.

As for how Ocampo came to write the influential report, Avetisyan said it took place after then-Artsakh president, Arayik Harutyunyan, reached out to him and asked him to “provide his expert opinion.”

“We are grateful to Mr. Ocampo for responding to our appeal. It has been months that the Artsakh authorities, civil society organizations, angel sector and professional groups have been addressing all possible outlets and relevant structures to help raise awareness about the situation in Artsakh, to inform everyone that this is not exaggeration when Artsakhtsis say we are on the brink of genocide,” Avetisyan said.

Lachin Blockade

In December 2022, Azerbaijani government forces blockaded the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Artsakh and Armenia. The action was initiated under

false pretenses, with self-described Azerbaijani eco-warriors blocking the road to bring attention to the republic’s environmental policies. Within a matter of weeks, the eco-warriors were replaced by Azerbaijani soldiers, and later the government of Azerbaijan erected a border crossing station manned by its soldiers.

While international condemnation has been loud — from the European Union, the US, Russia, France, Iran and the United Nations leadership — no action has been taken and Azerbaijan has maintained the blockade despite a decision handed down by the International Court of Justice, which ruled it needed to unblock the corridor.

In addition, Azerbaijan now is advocating the idea of opening up a corridor at Aghdam, through Azerbaijan, as a link to Artsakh. The governments of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as Armenians around the world, have expressed their opposition to the proposal.

Avetisyan explained the reason for the opposition: “The Aghdam corridor is, as another person put it, like someone stabbing a person and then offering a Band-Aid. It is a Trojan horse. It is an attempt to impose your political will through a seemingly humanitarian effort. This is not a sincere effort by Azerbaijan to ease the inhumane suffering of the people of Artsakh. If they were somewhat concerned, they should not have closed the border and blocked the Lachin corridor, which was done in violation of the statement cosigned by Azerbaijan in 2020 [at the end of the war]. It is also in violation of the ICC [International Criminal Court] ruling.

“If they are concerned with the security and property of the people of Artsakh, they should adhere to their own commitments, lift the blockade as it is demanded by the ICC and the international community, and remain true to their assumed obligations.” Anything else, he added, “is a manipulative step that will open up a very dangerous set of actions that will threaten every person in Artsakh, and the Artsakh statehood and Artsakh’s freedom overall.”

“During the normal pace of life, urbanization is a natural process but this medieval cruelty that Azerbaijan has applied to Artsakh, kind of reverted the station and now Stepanakert is the most vulnerable community of Artsakh. In more rural areas, if they can cultivate something or grow something not to starve or find daily minimal food, in Stepanakert it is impossible. It’s an urban infrastructure. You don’t have fuel to bring something from so. People walk for hours to get water, one egg or one tomato for their child to eat.”

“A very telling characterization of the life in Stepanakert is that it is a humanitarian catastrophe,” assessed a month ago. “Now it is even worse.”

Need for Dialogue

Some international leaders, keep repeating the need for dialogue, in the face of open aggression by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, both toward Armenia as well as what remains of Artsakh.

Avetisyan said to a certain extent, and under the right conditions, he agreed.

“We say we also want dialogue and we agree and appreciate every effort which is constructively directed toward establishing a positive connection between Artsakh and Azerbaijan because all wars end in peace and we need to negotiate a settlement and we need to prevent unnecessary human sufferings if we can,” he said. “At the same time, it is no secret that any dialogue should be aimed at a positive outcome, at a better outcome. They should be constructive.”

He expanded: “We have attempted to dialogue with Azerbaijan and all we heard in response was an ultimatum. That’s why we say, ‘yes there should be dialogue,’ but when we talk with Azerbaijan directly, without international presence around the table, that process does not really help. ... It serves Azerbaijan’s purpose to manipulate and spin it to its own advantage.”

“This is why we say of course we want dialogue but it has to be in an international format and we have to work out a mechanism that will guarantee that every assumed obligation will be delivered on and that everything negotiated will be implemented by everyone.”

To have direct dialogue with Azerbaijan just leads to ultimatums, he added.

“It serves the goals of those who want to delay the peace,” he noted.

Avetisyan was also happy to say that of the at least five Karabakh natives who had been kidnapped by Azerbaijani authorities at the Lachin corridor in the past month, three university students, Alen Sargsyan, Vahe Hovsepian and Levon Grigoryan, taken on August 28, were released this week.

“They are currently in Armenia, thank God,” he said.

He called the war crime charges against Vagif Khachatryan “trumped up”, suggesting that it showed the ability by Azerbaijani government “Everyone in Artsakh can be detained by Azerbaijani government under any pretext or fake allegation. This is another once again another manifestation and another proof of the position of Artsakh that any attempt to subjugate Artsakh to Azerbaijan is a direct way to de-Armenization of Artsakh, mass repression another manifestation of genocide.”

Azerbaijani Territorial Integrity

At the end of the disastrous war waged by Azerbaijan in 2020 against Armenia and Artsakh, the government of Armenia recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, including all of Artsakh.

“It is a very difficult period in the statehood of Artsakh, and Artsakh as an Armenian entity. Probably the most difficult period for us. We see aggressive Azerbaijani expansionism not only toward Artsakh but toward Armenia. At the same time we see the level of commitment by the international community collectively and country by country level does not suffice for holding Azerbaijan accountable,” Avetisyan said.

He expressed his frustration again and again with the current situation. “People who live in Artsakh want very simple things. They want freedom, they want security, they want predictability and they want to live under a government of their choosing and in a democratic society. Several times Azerbaijan had a chance to deal with this issue,” he said.

Avetisyan added, however, that the recognition by the Pashinyan administration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, including Artsakh, was dependent on the security of the population of the latter.

“Armenian recognition of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan ... is conditioned by the same factor of stable strong guarantees of rights for Nagorno Karabakh,” he noted, adding, that is certainly not the case.

He went back in history and the creation of the first ever Azerbaijani state. “In 1918, the first ever Azerbaijani state was created, and upon coming into existence in the greater Russian empire, it lay claims on many other lands in Georgia and Armenia, such as Syunik and Artsakh in Armenia, as well as Nakhichevan.

“Even throughout Soviet history, Artsakhtsis were fighting that injustice and demanding reunification with Armenia for the purpose of freedom and living in security, in our environment,” he said. “Only one power could suppress us under a single political umbrella and that was the Soviet Union and now that is gone. Any attempt to squeeze Artsakh into Azerbaijan is completely artificial and it is pregnant with continued suffering and continued regional destabilization both for Armenians and for Azerbaijanis.”

For long-term security in the region, Azerbaijan has to release Artsakh, he said. In addition, he added, history has not been kind to Armenians living anywhere in Azerbaijan.

“We already historically know that any attempt for Armenians in Artsakh and Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan to co-exist under a common administration ... leads to tragedy. They lead to regional instability.”

He added, “Realistically I know it’s very challenging to ask for recognition of the Artsakh state, but that is the only way for Artsakh to survive and remain Armenian.”

“We see that any Armenian historical territory that is under Azerbaijani control or occupation,” including those from 2020 war, “is completely de-Armenianized.” In fact, the [destruction](#) of Armenian monuments and churches dating back centuries has been well documented not only in Artsakh since 2020, but in [Nakhichevan](#), which now is entirely devoid of any Armenian past.

He added, “There is not a single Armenian living there. All Armenian monuments are destroyed or remodeled. The levels of anti-Armenian sentiment in Azerbaijan is see ACTION, page 4



ARMENIA

Life Is a Struggle for Families Divided by Blockade in Karabakh

STRUGGLE, from page 1

More than half of the displaced people were able to go back and establish themselves in the area of Artsakh supervised by Russian peacekeepers. Zhora's family was among them, but they were soon compelled to relocate again.

"We rented a house in Stepanakert with the hope that things would return to normal soon," he said. "But that was not the case. Conditions of life in Artsakh were worsening day by day."

Azerbaijan often cut off the gas and electricity supplies, impacting the family's daily life and the education of the children, who were unable to go to school during the winter cold without proper heating. Meanwhile, Zhora struggled to find work and the price of basic goods rose after the war.

Zhora left Stepanakert for the Armenian town of Goris, the nearest city to Artsakh's border, with his wife and five children after an incident on December 3, 2022, when the Lachin Corridor was blocked for several hours. His brother and father stayed behind. Zhora has not seen them since.

During this period, Zhora's wife gave birth to their sixth child, but the other family members have not been able to meet the newborn.

On the other side of the blockade zone, the rest of the family is waiting for a new baby: Zhora's brother's wife, Nune is six months pregnant. Pregnancy under blockade has become perilous as the lack of supplies and medical care have resulted in a higher risk of miscarriage.

Fuel shortages have made it difficult for Nune to reach the hospital for prenatal examinations, while the hospital operations are impacted by electricity cuts.

"I have been asking Nune to look after herself but she has been telling me that it is impossible to eat properly, as the stores

are empty and on some days, they do not even manage to get bread after standing in lines for several hours. We miss them and worry about them a lot," Zhora's wife, Nelly, said.

As stated by the executive director of Stepanakert's Mother and Child Health Care Center, in the last months, the rate of reproductive losses has increased almost three times.

Sergey Ghazaryan, the minister of foreign affairs of the Artsakh Republic, told reporters in a recent briefing that there are many separated families in the wake of the blockade living not only in Goris, but also in other towns of Armenia waiting for their opportunity to go back to Artsakh.

Zhora Baghdasaryan is also willing to move again to Artsakh in case things get back to normal.

"For the moment it is impossible to go back even with the Red Cross. After several incidents of Azerbaijani border guards capturing Artsakh's citizens when passing the illegal checkpoint, it is becoming extremely dangerous. Who knows? If I go to Azerbaijan's checkpoint, they might accuse me of the deeds I have not done and imprison me as it was in the case of Vagif Khachatryan," said Zhora.

On September 7, the Azerbaijani side returned three students of Artsakh kidnapped on August 28 and illegally deprived of their freedom while being transported from Artsakh to Armenia accompanied by the Russian peacekeeping contingent. Meanwhile, two other imprisoned civilians, the aforementioned Vagif Khachatryan and Rashid Beglaryan, continue to be held in Azerbaijan.

In this regard, the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Artsakh stated: "The abduction and arbitrary imprisonment of civilians, as well as Azerbaijan's request

for false and fabricated criminal cases indicate that the illegal Azerbaijani checkpoint located at the Hakari Bridge is a direct and irrefutable threat to the physical existence and protection of the fundamental rights of the civilian population of Artsakh."

On September 9, European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell once again stated that the Lachin corridor must be reopened. "Other roads, such as Aghdam, can be opened as part of the solution, but not an alternative."

Meanwhile, the humanitarian catastrophe in Artsakh is taking lives, and families like the Baghdasaryans are left in limbo.

"I just do not understand, does not the international community see all this? How can they not be able to punish Azerbaijan and find a solution?" Zhora said. "The negotiation phase takes time, but at least they should press for humanitarian aid to reach Artsakh as children there are suffering."



The blockade of Artsakh has led to the depletion of fuel reserves, so cars parked on the streets cannot be operated and people mostly move on foot (photo Alyona Hayrapetyan)

Artsakh Rep. in US Wants Peace for Homeland, Action on 'Second Genocide'

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skyrocketing. The entire society has been poisoned by the state to hate Armenians."

"Only if our statehood is recognized" can the people there really be safe.

"The entire world, especially after nine months of blockade and the attitude we continue to see from Azerbaijan, I don't think realistically anyone thinks 120,000 Armenians will feel safe and have the ability to develop in a safe, dignified democratic manner under any sort of administration by Azerbaijan."

Recognition of Artsakh by Armenia

Since the forces of Armenia and Artsakh wrested Karabakh back in 1994, no country has recognized the Republic of Karabakh, and that includes Armenia.

When asked why, Avetisyan said, the explanation successive governments of Artsakh have gotten is that during the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group negotiation process for the past three decades, co-chaired by ambassadors from Russia, France and the US, between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenia wanted to show good faith.

"It was Armenia's position to refrain from any step that would predetermine the outcome of the talks, as a goodwill gesture, but at the same time Armenia has always been the guarantor of the security of Nagorno Karabakh and [President] Aliyev himself, in 2017, acknowledged that the international community and the mediators are pushing to recognize Nagorno Karabakh's sovereignty. The process was absolutely moving in the right direction," he said. "At the same time, Armenia was the physical guarantor of Artsakh."

Still, the years and years of negotiations did not pay off and Azerbaijan simply attacked and took what it wanted.

He stressed that the 2020 war was disastrous for one major reason, and that was that Armenia was not just fighting Azerbaijan, but several other countries that were helping

the latter in its aggression.

"Seven countries ganged up against Armenia," he said.

Everything should have been done to prevent this war, Avetisyan noted.

"When we live in such a vulnerable region, with such an aggressive neighbor and tough geopolitics, we have to be very cautious in our every step, every statement and every initiative.

Russian Allies

Artsakh has few reliable partners, he suggested.

He said, "Churchill's words are chilling yet sobering: 'When it comes to international relations, there are no friends or foes, just interests.'"

Among those erstwhile friends are the Russians, who have had a peacekeeping force in Artsakh, which was supposed to prevent just the types of incidents that have gone on since 2020: Azerbaijani shootings into Artsakh and Armenia, kidnapping of citizens and of course, the blocking of the Lachin Corridor.

Avetisyan explained, "We see problems in the peacekeeping issue. We cannot say for sure what is happening. The expectations were different," he said. "The expectation was that the peacekeeping presence was enough to keep the peace."

He said he was pleased that the issue was discussed at the UN Security Council.

"We need a wider International attention and political commitment which will be sufficient to prevent a second Armenian genocide," he added.

He expressed his bitterness that some people in Artsakh have lived through war so often.

"This [current situation] is a repetition but in many respects on a tougher basis. We have seen this tragedy already and I think it's too much for any person to live through the same criminal policy and aggression by a repressive state like Azerbaijan twice. People have seen three wars."

During the war, Azerbaijani soldiers routinely released videos of beheadings of Armenian soldiers. In one of the most horrific cases was that of Anush Apetyan, who was taken prisoner in Jermuk with 10 other Armenian soldiers, in 2022. The video of her body, with her legs and fingers cut off, and an eye poked out and replaced by a stone, surrounded by celebrating soldiers, made the rounds on the Internet. According to Avetisyan, someone in Azerbaijan, perhaps among the soldiers desecrating her body, sent the video to one of her children.

"It demonstrates once again the level of hatred toward everything and anything Armenian by Azerbaijanis," he said.

For now, Avetisyan can only advocate for his homeland. "We are grateful to all our compatriots who continue to keep Artsakh situation in their focus, who continue to treat as their own, as a piece of their homeland, because it is," he said.

He added that those who want to help can do so in three ways: working with their governments to raise awareness and put pressure on Azerbaijan, continue reporting in Armenian publications about the issue and support humanitarian efforts for people besieged in Artsakh as well as Artsakh residents now stranded in Armenia.

"We have [supplies] in the warehouses ready to ship. We have tens of thousands of Artsakh natives who live in Armenia and we try to help them. Really the Artsakh government needs financial support because our entire economy has been killed," he said.

As a result of the blockade, he added, "We are back at the stage where Artsakh needs help in every step of functioning as a state and society."

(Robert Avetisyan will be the keynote speaker at the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* 90th anniversary celebration gala on Saturday, October 28. During his talk, he will discuss the situation in Artsakh. For more information about the event, visit www.mirrrospectator.com.)



ARMENIA

Government's Unfulfilled Promises Keep Displaced Shurnukh Villagers in Limbo

By Sona Hovsepyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

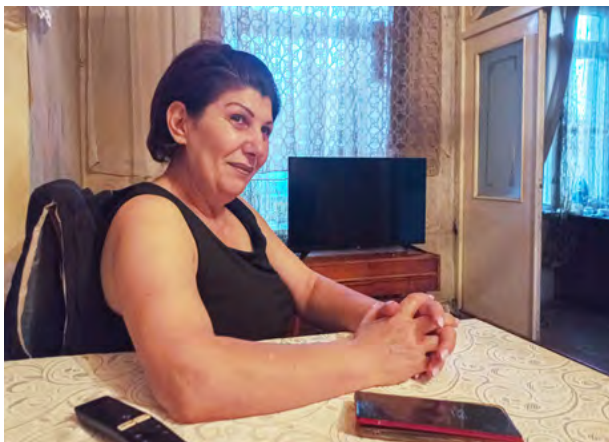
GORIS, Armenia — Armen Harutyunyan, a 58-year-old farmer, wishes he could visit his former home in Shurnukh in the Syunik Province of southern Armenia, but that's not possible. His house, its 1,200-square-meter garden and a cowshed lie on the other side of his village. Today, that area is under Azerbaijani control.

"The Azerbaijanis allowed us to stay in our home until January 5 [2021], after which we had to leave. My son suggested setting fire to the house, but I refused as I had built it with my own hands. Today, an Azeri family lives in our home," said Harutyunyan.

After the 44-day war in 2020, Azerbaijan took control of some parts of Shurnukh as well as some other areas along the Goris-Kapan route. Azerbaijani troops were deployed throughout the contested border.

Thirteen Armenian families were forced to flee their homes, as reported by the government of Armenia. Some Shurnukh residents relocated to the city of Goris, while the others remained to live in trailer homes, empty houses of neighbors, and even the municipality building in Shurnukh.

They are among the [8,400](#) people who, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, were inter-



Tatevik Javahiryanyan

nally displaced as of the end of 2022, from the Syunik, Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor provinces due to hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

After they were evicted, Harutyunyan and his wife, Tatevik Javahiryanyan, moved with their two sons to a trailer home until they rented a house in Goris. They thought it would be a temporary solution until they could return to Shurnukh.

But it's taking longer than expected.

The Armenian government allocated [741 million dram](#) for the construction of a new district at the entrance of Shurnukh, which was supposed to be finished by [the end of 2021](#). Construction schedules, however, have been delayed for the fourth time.

In the meantime, Tatevik works as a baker in Goris to make ends meet. Armen is jobless, so he grows fruit trees



Armen Harutyunyan: he first lived in a trailer home before moving to Goris with his wife, Tatevik Javahiryanyan, and two sons

and vegetables in the garden outside their temporary house.

"I'm worried about the district's construction terms. There is a water shortage in the village and I'm afraid there'll be no water in our new home," said Tatevik.

"The local headwaters have dried up. The existing water supply will not suffice for the newly constructed district," Hakob Arshakyan, Shurnukh mayor, told the *Mirror-Spectator* over the phone. He blamed the slow construction progress on "a labor shortage."

"The relocation of construction workers is difficult. On chilly days, it is difficult to drive this distance. Nobody wants to work in Shurnukh. It's exhausting to travel a long distance," he added.

Arshakyan also lost his house, his garden and his cowshed. He currently lives in the village municipality's building. Although he isn't sure when the district's displaced residents will be resettled, he thinks villagers will be able to move into new



Armen Harutyunyan and his wife Tatevik Javahiryanyan in their temporary home in the city of Goris

homes in October 2023.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan [visited](#) Shurnukh on August 18 and was shown the construction site of 13 houses. He emphasized the high-quality implementation of the work and its completion "as soon as possible." Officially, 80 percent of the work has been completed.

The Armenian Urban Development Committee indicated that the reasons for the uncompleted construction activities were border events in 2022, a cement shortage and logistical issues caused by the collapse of the Khot-Vorotan road.

Harutyunyan and Javahiryanyan said they are more worried about their sons than themselves.

"We are both elderly and the government will provide us with a pension. We can plant a garden and keep hens but what will my sons do? They have no way of living in Shurnukh," Harutyunyan said.

He also believes they will be unable to coexist with Azerbaijanis. He declared: "Even if I become neighbors with them, how should a woman who has lost her husband or child live? It is impossible. Even my sons will be unable to. It may be forgotten centuries later, but not now."

For the time being, going back to Shurnukh is seemingly the goal for the Harutyunyan family. "Our life is there and we dream of going back home every day," said the farmer.



The construction of a new district in Shurnukh village, March 14, 2022. (Photo Armenian Urban Development Committee)



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

EU, Turkey Discuss
Armenia- Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN. Net) — President of the European Union Charles Michel and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have discussed the situation on the Armenian and Azerbaijani border on the margins of G20 India.

“Discussed the full spectrum of EU-Turkey relations, the Black Sea Grain Initiative and regional situation, notably Armenia-Azerbaijan,” Michel said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Over the past few days, footage has circulated across Azerbaijani social media appearing to show increased movement of Azerbaijani troops around Karabakh and along the Armenian border.

Baku Threatens to Close
Down BBC Azerbaijan over
Interview

YEREVAN (news.am) — Baku threatened to close down BBC Azerbaijan if the BBC World fails to apologize for the interview with Serj Tankian and Artsak beglatyan on September 5.

On BBC World News, lead singer of the System of A Down Serj Tankian and former Adviser to the State Minister of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan talked about the devastating Azerbaijani blockade of Artsakh, the need for the international community to act by sanctioning Azerbaijan and help bring in UN peacekeepers to avoid another Armenian Genocide. Tankian also spoke about the need for the UK government to pivot from complicity in Genocide to responsibility to avoid it.

The Press Council of Azerbaijan issued a statement after the interview, accusing the BBC of “propaganda.”

“This is how dictatorships without free press work. Azerbaijan is threatening to close down BBC Azerbaijan if the BBC World doesn’t apologize for the interview that I did with Artak Beglaryan. They’re really angry that after paying them all that money for tourist ads about Azerbaijan that they would dare talk about their Genocidal campaign in Artsakh,” Tankian commented. “When Genocidal dictatorships are mad at something you’ve done, you know you’re doing the right thing.”

Russian Aid Arrives in
Artsakh through Askeran

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Humanitarian aid sent to Karabakh by the Russian Red Cross contains essential goods of Russian production, the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities said on September 12.

“The Russian government initiated the provision of humanitarian aid to the Republic of Artsakh. Today, on September 12, the humanitarian cargo entered the Republic of Artsakh through Askeran, with the permission of the republic’s authorities, through the Russian Red Cross and on board the vehicles of that organization. The aid contains Russian-made essential products,” the official InfoCenter of Nagorno-Karabakh said in a statement.

European Rabbis Face Criticism over Statement
Seeking to Downplay Ongoing Crisis in Karabakh

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — European rabbis have faced strong criticism over their latest statement seeking to downplay the scale of the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Nagorno Karabakh.

A group of 50 senior leading European Rabbis have expressed their concerns regarding the usage of terms such as “genocide” in reference to the situation the native Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh is facing.

“Expressions such as ‘ghetto’, ‘genocide’, ‘holocaust’ and others are inappropriate to be part of the jargon used in any kind of political disagreement. Usage of these terms belittles the terrible suffering experienced by the victims of the horrific holocaust and the Jewish people at large, which still bears the indescribable pain of the largest tragedy ever experienced by a single group,” wrote the rabbis in the letter addressed to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Vahagn Khachaturyan. The rabbis are also expressing their concern over Armenia’s close ties with Iran, a country, they say, “incessantly openly and publicly calls for its destruction of the only Jewish country in the world.”

In their letter, the rabbis call upon the Armenian leadership to “explicitly and unequivocally clarify that the Armenian people recognizes and honors the terrible human suffering undergone by the Jewish people” and to stop “belittling the extent of the Jewish people’s suffering to further any political interest through incessantly using phrases associated with the Holocaust suffered by the Jewish people.”

Not only the Armenian authorities, but also representatives of the international community, several reports and statements from independent international organizations and human rights groups have been alerting about Azerbaijan’s ongoing policy in Nagorno Karabakh, which is genocidal in its essence. In a recent report the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo argued that there is “a reasonable basis to believe Azerbaijan is currently committing a genocide against the indigenous Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh.”

“As a grandson of Holocaust survivors, a remnant of a family that was almost completely exterminated, I condemn the cynical self-appropriation of the memory of the Holocaust victims by that group of rabbis. The tragedy of our people should have been

instructing this group of rabbis about the duty of supporting other nations who are in danger. The government of Azerbaijan violates the agreements it signed and decrees starvation on a population of 120,000 Armenians (Including 30000 children), with the intention of wipe out the Armenian population of Artsakh,” Israeli activist and analyst on South Caucasus affairs Yaron Weiss said in response to the statement.

“It is no less unfortunate that a group of rabbis chose to hold a conference next November in Azerbaijan, a country that is known to be a serial human rights violator, ranks 168 out of 180 on the press freedom index, persecutes LGBT, harms freedom of worship, is involved in war crimes and is now carrying out a policy of closure and starvation against the Armenian population of Artsakh,” Weiss told Public Radio of Armenia.

The European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) has also

expresses its profound regret and strong condemnation of the statement.

“As a European-Armenian organization the EAFJD acknowledges the sensitivity of the term, particularly in light of the immense suffering endured by the Jewish people during the Holocaust, and fully supports the importance of paying homage as well as preserving the memory of those tragic events. The term is not used as a historical comparison; rather, it is being utilized in accordance with the definition outlined in the United Nations’ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” EAFJD said in a statement.

The EAFJD calls on the rabbis of the RCE to recognize the severity of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and stay true to the principles of justice and human rights as representatives of a nation that once urgently needed the support and empathy of the international community in its quest for justice.

Russia Again Blames Pashinyan
For Karabakh Crisis

MOSCOW (Azatutyun) — The humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh is a result of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s decision to recognize the region as part of Azerbaijan, Russian President Vladimir Putin insisted on Tuesday, September 12.

Echoing statements by the Russian Foreign Ministry, Putin said Yerevan is therefore wrong to criticize Moscow for not unblocking the Lachin corridor effectively shut down by Baku in December.

“The president of Azerbaijan is now telling me, ‘Well, you know that Armenia has admitted that Karabakh is ours, that the issue of Karabakh’s status is closed’... What should we say? There is nothing we can say,” he told an annual economic forum in the Russian city of Vladivostok.

“If Armenia recognizes that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan... then what are we talking about? This is the key component of the whole problem. The status of Karabakh was decided by Armenia itself,” added Putin.

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, made the same

point on August 30 in response to the Armenian criticism. She cited Pashinyan’s and Aliyev’s joint statements on mutual recognition of each other’s territorial integrity that were issued after their talks organized by the European Union in October 2022 and May 2023. The Armenian Foreign Ministry hit back at Zakharova in an extensive written response.

Tensions between the two longtime allies deepened further in the following days, with Pashinyan declaring that Armenia’s reliance on Russia for defense and security has proven a “strategic mistake.” Moscow condemned Pashinyan’s remarks. The Russian Foreign Ministry listed them among “a series of unfriendly steps” taken by Yerevan, in a note of protest handed to the Armenian ambassador on September 8.

Putin on Tuesday also said that there are “humanitarian issues” in Karabakh that require urgent solutions. He expressed hope in that regard that Baku is not planning any “ethnic cleansing” in the Armenian-populated territory where Russia deployed about 2,000 peacekeeping troops following the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

US Warns Against ‘Use of Force’ in Karabakh

WARNING, from page 1
is planning another military offensive in the conflict zone. The Armenian government reported an Azerbaijani military buildup there earlier this week. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan urged the international community to take “very serious measures” to thwart Baku’s alleged plans.

Pashinyan on Saturday offered to hold “urgent” talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during phone calls with Blinken and the leaders of France, Germany and Iran. Yuri Kim, the acting US assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia, spoke with

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov by phone on September 9 for the second time in two days. Bayramov was reported to repeat Azerbaijani allegations about Armenian “provocations” against his country’s territorial integrity.

A senior US State Department official called on Friday for the simultaneous opening of the Lachin corridor and “other routes” for humanitarian supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh in phone calls with the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers.

Kim reiterated Washington’s “serious concerns over the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh” when she spoke to Armenia’s Ararat Mirzoyan early in the morning.

“We urge all sides to work together now to immediately and simultaneously open Lachin and other routes to get desperately needed humanitarian supplies into Nagorno-Karabakh,” she wrote in a post on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

Kim made the same point during her separate phone call with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov. She described

their conversation as “constructive.”

Blinken and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev again discussed the situation in Karabakh in a September 1 call revealed by the US State Department five days later. The department said Blinken insisted on the need for renewed traffic through the Lachin corridor “while recognizing the importance of additional routes from Azerbaijan.”

Despite struggling with severe shortages of food, medicine and other basic necessities, most residents of Karabakh remain strongly opposed to the alternative supply line sought by Baku. They believe that it is aimed at legitimizing the blockade and helping Azerbaijan regain full control over Karabakh.

Armenia’s position on the compromise solution favored by the United States as well as the European Union is not clear.



Community News

Author Dr. Elyse Semerdjian Will Discuss 'Voices of Women Survivors' of Genocide in Toronto Talk

TORONTO — The Zoryan Institute has announced a book talk with Dr. Elyse Semerdjian, titled, "Sifting through Remnants: Locating the Voices of Women Survivors." This free event is taking place on Saturday, September 16, 2023, at 2 p.m. at the Armenian Community Centre of Toronto, Hamazkayin H Manougian Library.

Using select testimonies from the Zoryan Institute's Armenian Genocide Oral History Archive for her own research, Semerdjian's latest publication, *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide*, explores how the Ottoman Armenian communal body was dis-membered, disfigured, and later re-membered by the survivor community, using a feminist lens. By gathering individual testimonies and archives, Dr. Semerdjian highlights the stories of women and children who were rescued during the war, and explores the traces left in the memories and bodies of women survivors.

In addition to hearing from the author herself, this talk will also high-



Dr. Elyse Semerdjian

light the Zoryan Institute's oral history collection that informed some of Dr. Semerdjian's research, including excerpts from the Institute's interview with a tattooed Armenian Genocide survivor, Aghavni Kabakian.

Semerdjian is the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. She is a specialist in gender and the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, and the author of "*Off the Straight Path*": *Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (2008) and *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide* (2023).



Service Armenia 2023 in front of Mount Ararat

Paros Volunteers Participate in Service Armenia

SAN FRANCISCO — From June 26 to July 15, a group of Armenian diasporans participated in Paros' Service Armenia program, engaging in Armenia through volunteer work and service projects. Nineteen participants and two coordinators traveled there from various regions throughout the United States, including Northern and Southern California, Texas and Tennessee.

During their time in Armenia, their volunteer efforts included taking orphans and disabled youth from Yerevan Children's Home and Kharper Home for Special Children to amusement park excursions, working on renovations to the Talin School of Music, teaching kids at the Debi Arach Children's Center how to play lacrosse, packing and distributing groceries through the Groceries for Gyumri initiative, and helping clean out one of the Paros Foundation's new projects — Paros Housing, After-School and Vocational Center.

Participant Nicole Timour is a high school senior from Southern California and 2023 was her first year as a Service Armenia participant. Coordinator Renée Deramerian is a sophomore in college from Southern California and 2023 is her fifth year involved with Service Armenia.

Timour said, "Service Armenia gave me the opportunity to return to Armenia on their three week long volunteering trip. Although I had previously visited, this trip allowed me to return with the intention of giving back. The first week we arrived our program coordinator Marina took us to the Erebuni Fortress, Ambert Fortress, and multiple museums that educated us on our ancestors and culture. Looking back, these early trips allowed us volunteers to connect and form close bonds no matter our age differences," she wrote.

She added how in Gyumri, with the dire poverty, residents were extremely grateful to receive bags of groceries.

"Although a small act of service, every member of the trip felt like their eyes were opened to the true extent of the Gyumri housing crisis. What was the most touching was how selfless each family truly was, handing us volunteers chocolates and fruits as a token of their appreciation," she wrote.

"Finally, traveling with Service Armenia allowed me to not only connect with Armenians from all over the world, but also create a second family I will never forget," she concluded.

Deramerian was similarly fulfilled by the trip. In 2018 she participated for the first time in a Paros trip.

"In those two final days [in 2018] we helped renovate the Talin Music School and packed groceries for locals in Gyumri living in less-than-ideal housing situations as part of the Groceries for Gyumri project. If you ask my brother and I today what we remembered from that first trip in 2018, we could only tell you stories of the last two days we were there in vivid detail and with smiles on our faces and fondness in our hearts," she wrote.

"Since then, we have gone back to Armenia every year and every year we have gone back with the Paros Foundation in some capacity. In 2019 and 2022, we went as 'honorary participants,' meaning we did everything but stay with the program in the Service house.

Her father, in 2020, she wrote, "took charge of a Paros' medical mission called MedAid Armenia in which he provides checkups to kids in different parts of the

see SERVICE, page 8

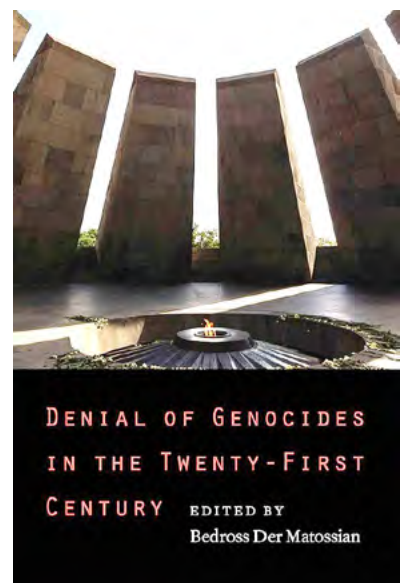
NAASR to Host Webinar with Prof. Der Matossian on Denial of Genocides In 21st Century

BELMONT, Mass. — The NAASR / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues will host an online presentation by Dr. Bedross Der Matossian on Wednesday, September 20, at 7:30 p.m. Eastern / 4:30 p.m. Pacific, discussing the new publication *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century*, in conversation with Marc A. Mmigonian. This program is co-sponsored by the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS).

The webinar will be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and on NAASR's YouTube Channel.

Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2023), edited by Der Matossian, brings together leading scholars from across disciplines to add to the body of genocide scholarship that is challenged by denialist literature and provides insights into how genocide denial is becoming a fact of daily life in the twenty-first century.

Throughout the 21st century, genocide denial has evolved and adapted with new strategies to augment and complement established modes of



denial. In addition to outright negation, denial of genocide encompasses a range of techniques, including disputes over numbers, contestation of legal definitions, blaming the victim, and various modes of intimidation, such as threats of legal action. Arguably the most effective strategy has been denial through the purposeful creation of misinformation.

In this program, there will be an overview of the volume, which encompasses cases ranging from the genocide of Indigenous People in the United States to the genocidal violence in Syria in the past decade, including three chapters on denial of the Armenian Genocide; and the conversation will also consider the key role of denial in the current crisis in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh), which is increasingly being recognized as a genocide in progress.

Der Matossian is Professor of Modern Middle East History and the Hyman Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at Clark University. For more information, see WEBINAR, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

IALA and AGBU Host 'Break the Silence: A Reading For Artsakh'

LOS ANGELES — The International Armenian Literary Alliance, in partnership with AGBU, presents Break the Silence, a reading hosted by Pulitzer Prize winner Peter Balakian, featuring besieged journalists from the unrecognized Republic of Artsakh and award-winning writers in solidarity around the globe, including poet Ilya Kaminsky, named by the BBC as one of the 12 artists who changed the world.

Join the virtual event on September 17, at 9 a.m. Pacific | 12 p.m. Eastern | 8 p.m. Armenia/Artsakh time to hear about what life is like for the 120,000 Armenians of Artsakh who have been cut off from food, medicine, gas and electricity since Azerbaijan blockaded the only road out of the country in December 2022, and learn how you can help.

Registration for the event is required and can be done at <https://armenianliterary.org/break-the-silence-a-reading-for-artsakh/>

Paros Volunteers Participate in Service Armenia

SERVICE, from page 7

country and we all tagged along, adding yet again another layer of depth to the experience and making it all the more fulfilling.”

This year was even better, she said. “My brother and I had urged our friends to join the program and join they did. There were 21 kids which was more than I had ever seen participate in the program. I was intimidated by the number initially, but as time went on... I was pleasantly surprised. There was not a day on the trip that didn't go by with laughter and positive energy. And the days we worked the hardest, we had the most fun. We celebrated birthdays, went to soccer games, went to amusement parks, laughed, cried... words cannot describe how much fun we had together. I plan on going back again next year with the program.”

The Paros Foundation was launched in 2006 and has implemented more than \$13 million worth of projects in Armenia through its unique model of philanthropy and community partnership.

NAASR to Host Webinar With Prof. Der Matossian On Denial of Genocides In 21st Century

WEBINAR, from page 7

Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is the author of *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth Century* and *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*.

Mamigonian is the director of Academic Affairs at NAASR and the author of “Weaponizing the First Amendment: Denial of the Armenian Genocide and the U.S. Courts” in Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century.

For more information contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



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COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Peter Onanian

Dedicated to Golf, Charitable Giving

Peter Onanian died on August 21, surrounded by his loved ones. Born February 1, 1930, in Lowell to Onan and Almas (Garebedian) Onanian, the youngest of seven siblings.

Peter joined the Naval Construction Force, better known as the Seabees, where he learned the craft of bricklaying. He formed Lusalon Mason Contracting in the early 1960s, and it became the largest mason contractor in New England. In the 1970s, he branched into general contract-



ing specializing in commercial and industrial building projects. Among his peers, his name was synonymous with honorable. Peter's reputation for being honest, fair and trustworthy caused him to be called upon to negotiate collective bargaining agreements for the Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen Union. He became an arbitrator with the

American Arbitration Association.

Peter invested in a multitude of real estate ventures, including golf course ownerships.

He was part owner of Indian Ridge Country Club and the Merrimack Valley Golf Club. His love of golf was legendary, although he started the game at a relatively late age. A member of Nashawtuc Country Club in Concord, MA for 44 years, where he shot a hole-in-one. His great friend and golfing partner, Jack Cadagan, was always by his side until Peter passed.

Peter served on many charitable boards including a Life Member of the Armenian Assembly of America. In honor of his parents, he built an Armenian Church in Chelmsford, Mass., called "Little Ani" by some.

Peter was a compulsive reader of history and current events. Friends would sometimes comment that spending time with Peter was like receiving a history lesson.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Charleen Mosesian Onanian; daughter, Charleen and her husband, Mark Janian and grandchildren Sabrina, Sebastian and Simone Janian. From a previous marriage, he is survived by son David Onanian and his wife, Myrna S. Onanian, MD from Texas; grandchildren, Marisa and Arden Onanian; Nancy and Pat Garrett, Christine and Tom Tetrault, Mark and Ann Onanian; and five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Private Funeral Services were held. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in honor of Peter to St. James Church, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472. A Celebration of his Life will be planned at a future date.

Adrienne Tashjian

Former Arlington, MA Executive Secretary

WINCHESTER, Mass. — Adrienne Tashjian, 98, of Winchester passed away on September 4.

She was employed as an executive secretary for the town of Arlington for many years. She enjoyed going shopping, enjoying cruise vacations with family and friends, and dining out with Patricia. In her later years she spent holidays and special occasions visiting with her second cousins in RI, MA, and NH, accompanied by her caregiver. She loved animals and was devoted to her church.

She was the daughter of the late Richard and Victoria (Haroutunian) Tashjian and sister of the late Richard and Mabel Tashjian. Her late first cousins include Harry Tarlaian, Anna Borges, Peter Tarlaian, Irene Charkjian, Eugenia Pjojian, Marjorie Guzelian, and Mitchell Guzelian. She is survived by many second cousins, her friend, Patricia, and her longtime caregiver, Annet.

Her funeral was held on Friday, September 8, preceded by visitation. Internment took place at Mount Pleasant Cemetery of Arlington.

Adrienne Tashjian was a constant supporter of both the Armenian-language *Baikar* daily newspaper and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* for more than 70 years.



Schoolteacher's Estate Benefits Fresno State Engineering, Armenian Studies Programs

FRESNO — Florence Elaine Hamparson was known to have a big heart. As a third- and fourth-grade teacher at Turner Elementary School in east-central Fresno, she was regarded as an impactful educator who loved her students. She had a lot of love for furry friends and was an avid square dancer. Strong in her Christian beliefs, Hamparson was a member of several churches around Fresno throughout her life.

"She loved her square dancing, she loved her Lord, and she loved people," said Patricia Towne, a family friend and CPA. "If you had a dog or a cat, she loved them too."

Hamparson, a Fresno State alumna, had a long career as a teacher in Fresno Unified School District. She retired in 1995 and passed away in July 2021 at age 85.

In late 2022, the Elaine Hamparson Trust gave \$900,000 to benefit students in two areas at Fresno State, the Lyles College of Engineering and the Armenian Studies Program.

In addition, Hamparson's estate donated \$1 million to the Charlie Keyan Armenian School in Clovis last year.

Fresno State Programs to Split Donation

Of the \$900,000 donation to Fresno State, \$450,000 went to the Lyles College to establish the Florence Elaine Hamparson Lyles College Quasi Endowed Fund to be used at the discretion of the dean to best benefit the college. Dr. Ram Nunna, dean of the Lyles College, has chosen to use a portion of the funds to support a scholarship honoring the legacy and life of Hamparson. Scholarship recipients will be part of the Lyles College of Engineering Honors Program.

The dean has allocated the remaining funds to support the construction of the Lyles College of Engineering Student Center at the Engineering East building. The center will serve as a space for collaboration and technology-facilitated teamwork that will bring together students from all Lyles College disciplines.

"This timely gift will impact thou-

sands of students each year," Nunna said. "Our honors program attracts highly talented students from across our region to our college, and this gift will allow us to grow the program. The new student center will be a place for student engagement and collaboration."

The other \$450,000 went to the Armenian Studies Program. Those funds established the Florence Elaine Hamparson Armenian Memorial Quasi Endowed Fund to support the program's rich tradition of research, publications, program outreach, and conferences.

"The Armenian Studies Program represents the students and the community. I believe that gifts such as the Hamparson Endowment will encourage others to also participate in the success of the program," said Barlow Der Mugrdchian, director of the program. "The Armenian Studies Program is appreciative of this gift, and to the donor Florence Elaine Hamparson."

Publishing Schedule Supported

The fund will bolster the program's already active publishing schedule, which includes 20 books in "The Armenian Series" published through The Press at California State University, Fresno and four editions of the "Hye Sharzhoom" newspaper each year.

"It is so heartening to see such generosity displayed toward two colleges on campus that will have such a profound impact. The Elaine Hamparson Trust gift for Armenian Studies will bolster the students' excellence in research, outreach, and conference participation," said Dr. Honora Chapman, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at Fresno State. "We are excited to see their new projects come to fruition that are made possible with these new funds, and we are truly grateful for this support."

Hamparson was born in Everett, Mass., in 1935. Her father, George Hamparson, was a business owner in Boston, but due to challenging circumstances, he moved his family to Fresno to start a new life. Once in Fresno, he founded the Palmolive Dry Cleaners at the corner of Palm and Olive Avenues.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Protest in Front of White House to Prevent Second Genocide

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Armenians walked in the streets of Washington, D.C. from the Chinatown area to the White House on September 2, calling for public and political attention to the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Artsakh and at Armenia’s state borders. Carrying signs with statements such as “Artsakh is Armenia,” “Aliyev is Guilty of War Crimes,” and “Stop the Artsakh Genocide,” the rally’s destination was Lafayette Plaza, across from the White House.

Organized by the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF), the rally was attended by many other community groups and organization. Armenian clergies including St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church’s Father Hovsep Karapetyan and Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Ecumenical Director and the Diocesan Legate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America were also present.

“Mr. President, we are grateful for your recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Please do not foresee the second Genocide of the Armenian people,” said Aykazian in his remarks.

“Our brother and sisters in Artsakh are dying a slow death. The children cannot go to school,” added community activist Aline Baghdassarian.

AYF’s local representative criticized the United Nations and international govern-



ments, including Armenia’s government for inability to take any functional measures to enforce the end of the illegal and inhuman and illegal blockade against the indigenous people of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).

Protests are happening in different parts of the world, from California to New York, and from Lebanon to France and Australia, in support of Armenian Artsakh on the 32nd anniversary of its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on September 2, 1991.

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**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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COMMUNITY NEWS

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Holds Second Artsakh Emergency Meeting

HEARING, from page 1

In his remarks, Smith noted that “120,000 ethnic Armenians have been sealed off from food and medicine and are being starved to death by the government of Azerbaijan...the starvation process has been advancing at a terrifying rate.”

He underscored that Azerbaijan’s illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor is a “crime of genocide that was planned, tested and imposed by... President Aliyev, who rules Azerbaijan with an iron fist as a dictator.”

Smith announced that a Nagorno-Karabakh Human Rights Act will soon be introduced in order for the Legislative and Executive branches to speak out “boldly and accurately” about the intent of genocide occurring in Artsakh.

Tracing the history of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh back 2,000 years, he stated that Armenians have “defended and governed themselves” since their independence in 1994, with an ability to be “connected to the outside world by the Lachin Corridor, as per international agreements.”

In light of its illegal and unjustified blockade of the Lachin Corridor, Rep. Smith expressed that “the government of Azerbaijan ... seeks to fully integrate Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan...[which is] totally and absolutely unacceptable to achieve that through genocide.”

“I respectfully urge the Administration to please wake up, recognize the absolute grave responsibility it has here and focus on finding and implementing a humane situation now and this must mean that the blockade is lifted and the people continue to live in their ancient homeland,” he concluded.

During his testimony, Ocampo followed up on his expert opinion released on August 7, 2023, where he stated that “there is a reasonable basis to believe that a Genocide is being committed against Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023” and emphasizing that under the Genocide Conventions all states have a “duty to prevent” genocide.

Ocampo once again emphasized that a genocide is “happening now” and clarified the misconception that genocide requires mass killings to be defined as such.

“There are different forms to committing genocide,” said Ocampo. “The crime can be to create the conditions of genocide.” He noted that blocking the Lachin Corridor and not allowing essential goods to reach the Armenian



Luis Moreno Ocampo

people is “creating the conditions of genocide under Article 2(c) [of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide].”

Ocampo said it was “easy” to come to a conclusion regarding genocide due to the ICC’s ruling in February 2023 that Azerbaijan must open the Lachin Corridor.

“Fifteen judges on the ICC in The Hague reviewed the issue after listening to Armenia and Azerbaijan representatives and they concluded that blocking the Lachin Corridor was creating an imminent risk for the life of Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh,” said Ocampo. “The material element of genocide was obviously there.”

Ocampo emphasized that the “urgency is to prevent the

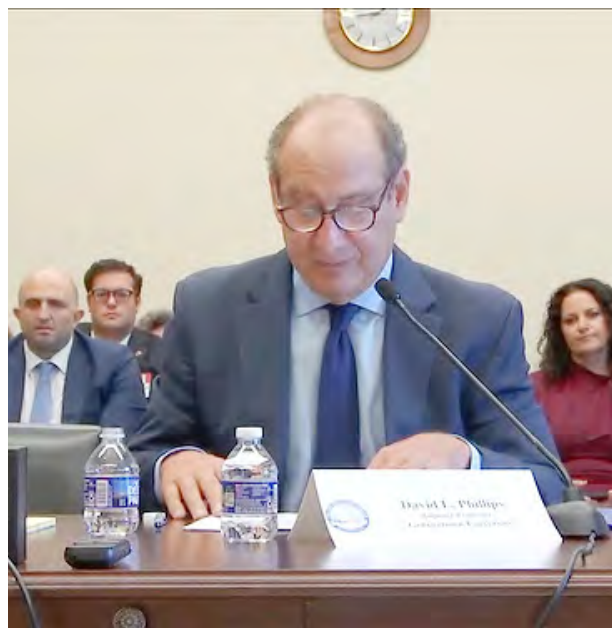
harm” and stop genocide. He expressed the importance of the special hearing because the “first step is to remove the denial.”

“This [hearing] could be a turning point on denial,” said Ocampo, who recommended to the Commission that information is sent to the Executive Branch to indicate the urgency of the matter.

He opined that the U.S. shouldn’t be involved in negotiations when “Aliyev uses genocide as a method of the negotiation,” because then the U.S. can be “considered complicit.”

“Stop the denial, recognize the [genocidal intent], and protect the lives of the 120,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh,” he concluded.

David L. Phillips, Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University, and Director of Columbia University’s Pro-



David L. Phillips

gram on Human Rights and Peace-building and the Atrocities Artsakh Project

In his testimony, Phillips outlined the Aliyev regime’s “genocidal intent to

erase the Armenian physical, religious and cultural presence in Artsakh and eventually the current Republic of Armenia.”

He highlighted Aliyev’s anti-Armenian rhetoric that has focused on education, public campaigns, censorship and “other methods aimed at dehumanizing Armenian Christians” has only intensified as the government has violated cease-fires and orchestrated attacks, including on Sev Lake [Black Lake] on September 13, 2022, wherein a video released in early October 2022, and verified by independent media, “showed extrajudicial killing of at least 7 Armenian military personnel who were captured as prisoners of war,” said Phillips. “This extrajudicial killing was conducted when the Armenian military personnel were already bound and disarmed, and in custody of Azerbaijan.”

Phillips stated that both Artsakh and Armenia are “functioning, established democracies” with permanent ties to the U.S. and that the U.S. should enforce the sanctions of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, the Humanitarian Aid Corridors Act, and the Global Magnitsky Act.”

He also warned that if the situation is not “dramatically reversed soon, the U.S. and its allies should give the Armenians the means to defend themselves in exercise of the duty to prevent genocide, lest history repeat itself.”

He noted that the ICC decision requires the enforcement of the opening of the Lachin Corridor, which was part of the November 2020 trilateral ceasefire agreement and called the Commission’s attention to perpetrators who have “evaded sanction or any consequence to their actions, which has only enabled further atrocities and genocidal acts to continue and ask that Congress exercise its power to stop this genocide.”

In his concluding thoughts, Phillips emphasized that the failure of the international community to “sanction individuals who committed crimes after the war in 2016 and 2020...allowed the Government of Azerbaijan to act with impunity and escape repercussions for its crimes against

humanity, ethnic cleansing and acts of genocide.”

During a brief question and answer session, Ocampo said he did not know how much longer the Armenian people in Nagorno-Karabakh can survive the blockade.

“This is a clear cut case where the responsible person is obviously, without a doubt, President Aliyev,” said Ocampo. “He was personally put on notice by Secretary Blinken, by the ICC, by the UN Secretary General Guterres, and [other] global leaders he ignored while committing genocidal acts.”

In his testimony to the Commission Hearing, the Assembly’s Executive Director Bryan Ardouny stated that the Armenian people are yet again “confronted with the specter of genocide” and that the Armenian American community “sees this as a continuation of the 1915 Armenian Genocide.”

“After all, it was Turkey’s [President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, who fully supported Azerbaijan’s reckless war in the Fall of 2020 against Nagorno-Karabakh and who stated that ‘we do not allow terrorist leftovers of the sword in our country.’”

Despite its “signed commitment” of the 2020 ceasefire terms, Ardouny emphasized that “Azerbaijan seeks to starve the Armenian people and has not only denied the International Committee of the Red Cross, Armenia and France the ability to deliver humanitarian supplies along the Lachin Corridor to the people of Artsakh, but has also disrupted the electricity and gas supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh further exacerbating the crisis resulting in the death of a 40-year old individual due to starvation with many more suffering from malnutrition.”

In terms of recommendations to the Administration, Ardouny highlighted the importance of enforcing Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, which Congress adopted in 1992 “in a principled stand against Azerbaijani aggression” and states that U.S. funds “may not be provided to the Government of Azerbaijan until the President determines and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Ardouny emphasized that the Assembly’s position is clear in that it will “stand up for democracy and human rights and oppose genocide; end the blockade of Artsakh by imposing sanctions starting with the enforcement of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, along with the principles of the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act and application of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act.”

In his testimony Ardouny referenced Secretary Antony Blinken, who noted President Biden’s quote at the United Nations Security Council discussion on Famine and Conflict-Induced Global Food Insecurity, which highlighted the importance of providing food for families and children: “In every country in the world...if parents cannot feed their children, nothing else matters.”

Ardouny continued: “We say, President Biden tear down this blockade. Having recognized the Armenian Genocide, it is incumbent that the Administration utilize all tools at its disposal to safeguard the Armenian people and not allow another genocide on its watch.”

In addition, the principles of the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act can also be applied, according to Ardouny, who applauded Co-Chair Smith for his leadership in introducing H.R. 942, the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act in 1995, as well as Rep. McGovern and his efforts to strengthen the Global Magnitsky Act, introduced in the House by Co-Chair Smith in 2015. He also referred to well-documented atrocities committed by Azerbaijan via the Atrocities Artsakh Project under the leadership of Phillips, and the targeting of Armenian, cultural, and religious heritage sites by Azerbaijan that has been documented by the Caucasus Heritage Watch and condemned by the European Parliament.

In conclusion, Ardouny said he welcomed the “introduction of new mechanisms and legislation to hold human rights violators and corrupt leaders accountable, to safeguard and protect vulnerable populations, to assert America’s leadership for the betterment of humanity, and uphold the fundamental principles of democracy, the right to self-determination, and the universal human rights of the people of Artsakh.”



Arts & Culture

Arthur Haroyan

With Grandma's Socks from Vanadzor to Brazil

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Actor and director Artur Haroyan was born in Vanadzor, Armenia and studied at the Russian Language and Literature Department of the Pedagogical Institute. From 1999 to 2008, he worked at the Hovhannes Abelyan State Drama Theater of Vanadzor, acted in the plays “Autumn Sun,” “Bolero,” “Don’t Keep, Don’t Throw Away,” “Forty Days of Ascension” and “Metastasis,” among others. He has been living in Brazil since 2008. In 2011, he studied at the Theater and Television School of São Paulo. In the same year, he founded the “Arka” theater group, which he is managing to date. He has acted in Brazilian commercials, TV series and movies.

I had seen Arthur in an episodic role in the short film “Dehatsi: I was Another Place” by Brazilian-Armenian director Tatiana Boudakian. Last July, knowing that he was in Yerevan, I did not miss the opportunity to meet him.



Arthur, they say, it is hard for actors everywhere. And if you work outside your own country, it is even more difficult.

That is right. Especially the pandemic showed that, unfortunately, the actor’s profession is not so necessary. It was difficult for everyone, but the pandemic period was especially difficult for actors. There were no shoots, no performances, and naturally, there was no money. That’s why I started presenting meals from my grandmother on the Mexican “Like at home” cuisine TV channel, before that already gained such experience on the Brazilian TV. Now I have started working again, filming, and my theater troupe, “Arka,” which has been operating for 12 years. I deliberately wanted to have a name related to Armenia, because in Brazil they do not know anything about Armenia, but they know about Noah’s Ark. We have a metro station in São Paulo named Armenia, but people don’t care why it has that name. After knowing where I am from, people sometimes ask: “Are you from Armenia station?” And I say: “Yes, I was born in a wagon, I grew up in the subway” (*laughs*).

And how did a boy from Vanadzor end up in distant and exotic Brazil?

I wanted to study at the Yerevan Theater and Cinema Institute, but see HAROYAN, page 14



The Armenian Museum of America is offering a series of events on September 23-24 including a panel discussion on “The Image as Disruption and Identity” with artist Ara Oshagan, curator Ryann Casey, art critic Hrag Vartanian, and Prof. Christina Maranci of Harvard University.

Panel at Armenian Museum On Oshagan Exhibit to Feature Harvard’s Maranci and Vartanian of *Hyperallergic*

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America will host a series of programs the weekend of September 23-24, highlighted by an artist panel discussing Ara Oshagan’s “Disrupted, Borders” exhibition currently showing in the museum’s contemporary galleries.

The event will bring Oshagan together with curator Ryann Casey, art critic Hrag Vartanian and Prof. Christina Maranci, all of whom touch upon contemporary art and politics in their respective work.

The panel, titled “The Image as Disruption and Identity,” is free and open to the public, and will take place in the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries on Saturday, September 23 at 2 p.m., followed by a light reception. The museum is also offering free admission for all visitors that weekend, along with free guided tours of “Ara Oshagan: Disrupted, Borders” to its members.

“This show connects many of the diasporic and homeland entanglements that have occupied me over the past decade or more, from Los Angeles to Beirut to Artsakh,” states Oshagan. With more than 55 works on display, “Ara Oshagan: Disrupted, Borders” combines photography, collage, installation, and film.

“The panel will concentrate on the role that image-making plays in our understanding of diasporic identity, displacement, and our collective history,” Oshagan explains. “Of particular interest is the use of historical objects and family archives in the conversation around dislocation, borders, and (un)imagined futures.”

Oshagan is a multi-disciplinary artist, curator, and cultural worker whose practice explores collective and personal histories of dispossession, legacies of violence, and identity. He works in photography, film, collage, installation, and public art. Oshagan is an artist-in-residence at 18th Street Art Center in Santa Monica and curator at ReflectSpace Gallery in Glendale.

Casey curated “Disrupted, Borders” and is a New Jersey based artist and educator. She is an adjunct Professor of Photography, Art History and Critical Theory at Stockton University, and her current photographic and curatorial projects focus on themes of loss, trauma, and memory. Casey has curated a number of exhibitions surrounding Armenian artists and history.

Maranci is one of the world’s foremost experts on Armenian architecture. The first woman and first person of Armenian descent to serve as Harvard University’s Mashots Chair of Armenian Studies, Dr. Maranci’s research focuses on at-risk Armenian churches and monasteries. She is also one of the Armenian Museum’s esteemed academic advisors.

An artist, curator, and critic, Vartanian has written widely on Armenian artists and cultural production for over two decades. After co-founding *Hyperallergic* in 2009, Vartanian has served as the arts magazine’s editor-in-chief ever since. His writings have appeared in the Brooklyn Rail, Huffington Post, Al Jazeera, and NPR.

see PANEL, page 15

Books

Tadem Press Publishes New Volume on Armenian Genocide

FRESNO — Tadem Press, a new imprint dedicated to publishing primary sources on the Armenian Genocide, has published its second volume: Guleeg Haroian, *At Four O’clock in the Afternoon*, and Eva Hightaian (née Haroian), *Bones and Bodies, We Had To Walk Over Them*

At Four O’Clock in the Afternoon is the only first-hand account in existence of an adult female who survived both the 1895 Massacres of Armenians by Sultan Abdul Hamid and the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Guleeg Haroian survived the 1915 Genocide through forced marriage to a Muslim. *Bones and Bodies, We Had To Walk Over Them* is the first-hand account of her daughter, Eva, who was deported in 1915 and survived the Death March through forced transfer as an orphan into a Muslim home.

After W.W. I ended, mother and daughter were reunited, and Guleeg Haroian began the hard work of reclaiming orphans and young brides who had undergone forced transfer into Muslim homes.

At Four O’clock in the Afternoon is the oral history of Haroian, a woman who went on to work for the *vorperhavak* (“collection of orphans”). This is the only oral history available in the English language of a woman who went through both the 1895 Great Massacres and the 1915 Genocide.

Bones and Bodies, We Had To Walk Over Them is the oral history of Hightaian (née Haroian), the nine-year-old daughter of Haroian who was separated from her mother and deported in 1915 along with two sisters and an Aunt. She survived through forced transfer into a Muslim household.

Afterword: Rebecca Jinks, Comparative Genocide Scholar, Holocaust Research Institute and Department of History: Conflict, Violence, and Terrorism Research Center, Royal Holloway – University of London. Jinks compares the experiences of captured and reclaimed Armenian women and children to that of three others: indigenous children in Australia and North America who were removed from their families and placed in boarding schools to teach them the “white man’s ways”; women from Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities who were abducted, and raped, and forcibly married into different religious communities during the Partition in India in 1947; and to Yezidi women and children were kidnapped by Islamic State (IS) forces, distributed or sold to IS fighters and supporters, and kept as slaves in 2014.

For more information, visit www.tadempress.com



ARTS & CULTURE

Second Arev Short Film Festival to Take Place in Arlington

ARLINGTON, Mass. — After the success of the inaugural Arev Short Film Festival last year, festival director Sharisse Zeroonian will host the second annual iteration of the festival on October 13, this time, at the Capitol Theater, from 6 to 8 p.m.

“Last year, we showed a diverse assortment of films, comedic videos, music videos, and trailers,” said Zeroonian. “The turnout was pretty good, and people really seemed to enjoy it. I hope that this year’s festival is just as much — if not more — of a hit.”

Just like last year, proceeds from the festival will benefit the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies in Armenia. According to their website, TUMO is “a free-of-charge educational program that puts teens in charge of their own learning”. The center, which operates sites in Armenia and across the Armenian diaspora, offers classes in filmmaking, robotics, computer programming, music production, creative writing, and more.

The film festival, which is sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance, will showcase short films by filmmakers from all over the Armenian diaspora, including “Kef Time” by Avo Kambourian, a documentary about the Armenian band by the same name. Also scheduled to be shown is the third episode of the Amazon Prime series “One Plus One Is Two,” written and directed by Zeroonian herself, and various short films made by students at the TUMO Center, including a short called “Your Life As A Film,” in which students describe — and cinematically replicate — their own dreams.



A still from “Kef Time” by Avo Kambourian

Arthur Haroyan: With Grandma’s Socks from Vanadzor to Brazil

HAROYAN, from page 13

according to the stereotypes of our traditional family, a boy should not be an actor; actors do not have a good reputation, they do not marry, they are alcoholics. Therefore, my parents forced me into the highway department of the rural technical school, where I was supposed to become a traffic cop! But I was already working secretly in the Abelyan theater. In the mornings my parents used to watch me from the window, I would take the road to the technical school, but then I would deviate and go to the theater. I did not go to class for six months, and when my parents learned about it, my father forbade me to go to the theater, so I ran away from home, lived in the theater for a while. After serving in the army, I was admitted to the Russian language and literature department of Vanadzor Pedagogical Institute, which was closer to me. But I dreamed of becoming an actor and being obsessed with Brazilian soap operas, it had to be only in Brazil. And it happened. I received acting education already in São Paulo. When I first went to Brazil, I only knew a few words in Portuguese, learned from TV shows and dictionaries - I do not even understand how I graduated.

They say if you pursue your dream very consistently, you will definitely achieve it. Your life shows that this seems to be true.

It is really true. Paolo Coelho in the book *The Alchemist* constantly emphasizes the idea that if one wants something very much, the whole universe contributes to its realization. I was 24 years old when I went to Brazil as a tourist with one suitcase and very little money in my underwear pocket. The Brazilian embassy gave me a visa with difficulty, as if they understood that I would leave for permanent residence. However, consul Hovsep Seferian unexpectedly returned my passport with a Brazilian visa and said: “I only ask for one thing: be careful.” I told my family that I was going to study for six months. It was good they did not see the word “touristic” on the visa, otherwise it would have been a big scandal, which happened anyway when I said I am not going to come back. Now my father has come to terms with reality, he says: “Well, son, come back, work in our theater,” but it is already late.

How was your first day in Brazil?

A few days before I left, my grandmother made me socks to take with me to tropical Brazil. I did not want to take them, but we know what Armenian grandmothers are like. She said: either it will be as I said, or you should not go to Brazil! What would I do with those warm socks by the ocean? But when I got off the plane, I started to catch a cold: it was rainy and windy. It was June, which is a winter month in Brazil, ten degrees, which is not warm. The first thing I did was put on my grandmother’s socks. And I went straight to one of the Armenian churches in São Paulo, which has a school next to it. I met the director of the school, who was also the priest of the church, introduced myself, said that I have various diplomas, now I need a job and added: “You have only one option - accept me.” “Come in,” said the director and hired me. I had previously studied Western Armenian, and my first job in Brazil was teaching the Armenian language. They did not give me a place to stay. I lived in a big apartment first, with students from different parts of Brazil, and my Portuguese improved by learning their dialects. In the beginning, it was very difficult, I did not have permission to stay, but I was lucky. When I came to Brazil in 2008, the president granted amnesty to all those staying illegally in the country. There were people who waited for 10-15 years to be given legal permission to stay in the country. If I had entered Brazil a week later, the amnesty would not have applied to me. So, dreams come true... I worked in an Armenian school for five years, I also worked as a delivery man on the streets, a salesman, I gave private lessons of Armenian and Russian, I never shied away from work, but I did not tell my family they do not to worry. I also worked as a photo model: seeing my beach photos on Instagram, I was offered to take photos in an erotic photo shoot. It was difficult, I thought what my grandmother would say, what my father would say, but then I thought that I am not doing anything wrong, it is a kind of art, it is beautiful... Well, later I got many offers to shoot in adult films, but that is related to morality, I refused, it is not for me...

What was your first success in Brazil?

With the performance “1915” staged with “Arka.” It became the founding performance of our theater troupe and also the

first performance in Latin America, when the Armenian Genocide was spoken about on stage for the first time. I wrote the play myself in Portuguese, although my knowledge of the language was not that good at the time. I must say that I have always had writing skills, my poems were published in the press and in books, I even worked as a journalist in Vanadzor press. I continue to write, but in Portuguese. My last play, “Benjamin,” is about the protection of animal rights. At the end of each performance, we brought a stray dog on stage that the audience could adopt. More than 15 dogs were adopted by the audience during three seasons.

However, playing in the theater will not make you famous. A theater lover goes to the theater, a TV series watcher does not go to the theater. Maybe it is a global trend. In Brazil, they started to recognize me when I was a guest on the talk show “Joe’s program” of the “Globo” TV station, which is hosted by a famous actor and showman in Brazil, Jô Soares (who died last year) and which is watched by everyone. We sent the press release of the performance “1915” to Globo TV station, and I received an invitation for an interview. I was told that Soares wanted to conduct an interview about my life. I was very worried, I had to take a very responsible step, Soares does not invite everyone. But everything went well, and two years later he invited me again to his program. That is how they started inviting me to act in films and TV. Basically, my income is from advertisements, there is no money from theater and cinema. Serials pay relatively well, but I will not get as much as, say, Aracy Balabanian..

By the way, did you meet that famous Brazilian-Armenian actress?

In the 1990s, our family lived in the city of Omsk, Siberia, for some time. There we watched the Brazilian soap opera “The Next Victim” on TV. I was surprised to see Aracy Balabanian as Filomena Ferretto in that series: I did not know there are Armenians in Brazil. And I decided that one day I would definitely get to know her, which became a reality after 18 years. During the first interview with Jô Soares, I mentioned Aracy’s name, and later it turned out that she watched the show and wanted to meet me. A girl working with her wrote to me about this: at first, I did not believe

it, but soon I was invited as an audience member to attend a TV show where Aracy performed. I was told that Aracy would be waiting for me in her room at the end of the performance. Globo and other TV channels came and made a report about this under the title “Arthur is looking for Aracy.” When I entered Aracy’s makeup room, she greeted me in Armenian: “*Arthur jan, parev, lav es?*” (Dear Arthur, hello, how are you?), then we switched to Portuguese. She told me once: when we go to Armenia, you will be my guide! However, due to health problems, she never visited Armenia.*

Arthur, you have mastered Portuguese so well that you have already published your biography!

I wrote it on my friends’ advice. The title is *O Armênico* (“The Armenico”), the subtitle is “I learned Portuguese to write this book.” The book presents my life in Armenia from birth to the year 2020. One of my followers, the artist Marlon Thor, offered to illustrate the book and he suffered a lot at my hands, because I am very meticulous. The drawings are black and white, only my socks are in color. The book became a best-seller, the first printing was sold out in three months, and then it had two more printings. They have asked me to translate it into Armenian; I will have to find the time for it.

I should also say that in Portuguese, “Armenian” is “armênio,” but I invented a new word for myself, “armênico,” which became a kind of nickname for me. By the way, when one of the themes of the 2019 São Paulo carnival was Armenia, I participated in it on the culture car as “armênico,” sitting under the Aracy Balabanian’s portrait. I felt great pride in representing Armenia in front of my biggest audience, 20,000 people, especially when we took third place and Globo (TV station) talked about it for an hour. So, in Brazil, I always promote Armenia (and here - Brazil): in any show, regardless of the topic, I introduce something Armenian, I do not give up my light foreign accent, and I always speak on Armenia in interviews. I also have ideas for professional cooperation with Armenia, which, I hope, will also become a reality one day...

* Two weeks after the interview, on August 7, Aracy Balabanian passed away in Rio de Janeiro at age 83.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



California Grape Commission: Harissa-Spiced Steak with Grape And Preserved Lemon Salad

FRESNO — The California Table Grape Commission was established by an act of the state legislature in 1967. Approved by a grower referendum in 1968, the commission has been affirmed through grower referenda every five years since its inception. The purpose of the commission is to maintain and expand markets for fresh California grapes and to create new and larger intrastate, interstate, and foreign markets. The cultivation of grapes began perhaps 8,000 years ago, and the fruit has been used as human food over history.

Californians have been cultivating grapes for more than two centuries. Today, 99 percent of U.S. table grapes are produced in California's warm, dry climate that is ideal for grape growing. With 81 grape varieties grown, California grapes come in three colors—green, red, and black—and are in season from May through January.

California's table grape growers are dedicated to giving consumers the highest quality grapes in the world, so the highest standards of production are applied to every vine grown. Grapes from California are cultivated, picked, packed, and transported with the greatest care to ensure the berries you enjoy arrive in just-picked condition: plump, juicy, and perfect. At a crop value of \$2.14 billion in 2021, California table grape growers harvested 97 million boxes of grapes, sending them to consumers worldwide. Per capita consumption of table grapes in 2021 in the U.S. was 9.4 pounds per person with 37 percent of the crop exported to 56 export markets. There are over 330 table grape farming operations in California.

A 3/4 cup of grapes contains just 90 calories with no fat, no cholesterol, and virtually no sodium. Grapes are also a good source of vitamin K. Grapes of all colors are a natural source of antioxidants and other polyphenols. Grapes contain compounds with anti-inflammatory effects, which may in turn protect against chronic diseases. Keep grapes on your weekly shopping list so that they're handy for weeknight meals, a quick and refreshing dessert, or snack any time of day.

This Harissa-Spiced Steak with Grape and Preserved Lemon Salad delivers big flavor in an easy, quick way. Two North African ingredients, spicy harissa paste, a staple in Moroccan cuisine, and preserved lemon, a flavorful condiment with a mildly tart, but intensely lemony flavor, offer a zesty contrast to the refreshing, lightly dressed grape salad. Marinate the steak ahead of time in the refrigerator during the day, overnight for more intense flavor, or even shortly before grilling.

INGREDIENTS:

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
2 garlic cloves, grated or minced
2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon honey, divided
1 tablespoon harissa paste*
1 1/2 pounds top sirloin, cut 1 1/2-2 inches thick
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon minced preserved lemon**
1 tablespoon chopped thyme
1/8 teaspoon coarse salt and 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 cups halved green or red California grapes
Serves 4.

PREPARATION:

Combine 1 tablespoon oil, garlic, soy, 1 tablespoon of honey, and harissa in a glass pie plate. Add the meat and toss to cover. Marinate 30 minutes at room temperature or cover and refrigerate, then marinate 2 hours or overnight.

Heat grill to high. Pat steak dry and grill 7-9 minutes on each side for medium rare. Transfer to cutting board and let stand while making the salad.

Combine the remaining olive oil and honey with lemon juice, preserved lemon, thyme, salt, pepper, and grapes. Slice steak into 1/2-inch pieces and divide between serving plates. Top with the grape salad and serve.

Nutritional analysis per serving: 330 Calories; Protein 32 g; Carbohydrate 19 g; Fat 14 g (38% Calories from Fat); Saturated Fat 3.5 g (10% Calories from Saturated Fat); Cholesterol 85 mg; Sodium 440 mg; Fiber 1 g.

California Table Grape Commission
392 W. Fallbrook Avenue, Suite 101
Fresno, CA 93711
(559) 447-8350
(559) 447-9184 FAX
info@grapesfromcalifornia.com

For this recipe, go to:

<https://www.grapesfromcalifornia.com/recipes/harissa-spiced-steak-with-grape-and-preserved-lemon-salad/>

For more delicious grape recipes, go to:

<https://www.grapesfromcalifornia.com/recipe/>

Grape videos: <https://www.grapesfromcalifornia.com/grape-videos/>

Have questions? Send an email to info@grapesfromcalifornia.com or call (559) 447-8350.

*Harissa is a hot chili paste that is commonly found in North African cooking, mainly Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian cuisine. Recipes vary among different countries, but most versions of this spicy paste include a blend of hot chili peppers, garlic, olive oil, and spices, including caraway, cumin, coriander, and mint. Other common ingredients include tomatoes and rose petals. See: <https://www.thespruceeats.com/what-is-harissa-2355473>

**Lemons preserved in salt and lemon juice are readily available from a number of retail sources. They are easy to make at home. To do so, cut 5 or 6 lemons into wedges, put them in a bowl and toss with 4 tablespoons of kosher salt. Sprinkle another tablespoon of salt over the bottom of a 1-quart Mason jar and add the lemons, pressing them down so that they all fit. Sprinkle another tablespoon of salt on top and fill the jar with freshly squeezed lemon juice. Top the jar with a piece of parchment, add the lid and ring and let cure for at least 7 days before using. It can take up to 30 days for the lemons to fully soften. Shake the jar daily to redistribute the salt and juice. Preserved lemons will keep for up to a year. See:

<https://www.winemag.com/2011/11/15/the-tantalizing-taste-of-morocco/>

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(c) 2000-2023 CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPE COMMISSION



Artist Panel on Oshagan Exhibit to Feature Christina Maranci and Hrag Vartanian

PANEL, from page 13

More Weekend Offerings

Museum admission will be free for all visitors on September 23-24, sponsored by the Alan K. and Isabelle DerKazarian Foundation.

"We've participated in Smithsonian's free Museum Day program the past few years," said Executive Director Jason So-

hagian. "So when it was cancelled this year, we decided in partnership with the Alan K. and Isabelle DerKazarian Foundation to offer free admission on the same weekend as Watertown's Faire on the Square celebration, and show the museum's connection to the community."

"In addition to the panel discussion and free admission, we are offering a special benefit to Members of the Armenian Mu-

seum. The artist Ara Oshagan and curator Ryann Casey will offer free tours of the exhibition exclusively for members on September 23 at 11:00 am and on September 24 at 12:00 noon," added Sohagian. "We hope everyone will take advantage of these offerings as we kick off our fall programming."

To RSVP for the artist panel and artist tours for members, visit the Events tab of

the museum's website via www.Armenian-Museum.org.

This artist panel and "Disrupted, Borders" have been sponsored by Michele M. Kolligian in memory of Haig Der Manuelian for his dedication and foresight in sharing Armenia's rich history and culture with the world, including an impressive collection of manuscripts that he gifted to the Armenian Museum.

ARTS & CULTURE

Commemoration of the Musa Dagh Resistance and the Franz Werfel Novel

By Vahram L. Shemmassian, Ph.D.

The first anniversary of the Musa Dagh resistance to the Genocide was marked in 1916 at the Armenian refugee camp of Port Said, Egypt, which was established the year before to shelter the Armenian highlanders from Musa Dagh after their rescue by the French navy. When the refugees returned home by fall 1919, regional insecurity prevented them from marking the saga with public grandeur till 1924. Each year thereafter, through 1938, commemorative events took place at Damlajik, where a pile of rocks had served as a makeshift altar during the actual fights. For about eight years Holy Mass was celebrated at this site, and requiem for the repose of those who had fallen on the battlefield was conducted in a nearby plot, where wooden crosses were stuck into the ground. But in 1932, this temporary arrangement was replaced with a more fitting, fenced graveyard that included 18 tombstones, each inscribed with the name of a fallen fighter.

The celebrants, including natives and visitors from Aleppo, Beirut, Egypt and elsewhere alike, congregated at Damlajik from Saturday till Sunday afternoon, making their way on foot from the villages below in several hours through difficult terrain. Upon arrival, they pitched tents or stayed in the open, hoisted the Armenian and French tricolors, and indulged themselves in feasting, launching fireworks, singing, dancing, reciting poetry, and reminiscing myriad details pertaining to the resistance. Sunday morning was reserved for the official program consisting of liturgy, requiem, and speeches by Armenian and French dignitaries. The organizers similarly sent telegrams to the French Minister of the Marine and the High Commissioner of Syria and Lebanon to express their appreciation and gratitude for the French goodwill vis-à-vis the Armenians of Musa Dagh.

In 1924, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) of Musa Dagh decided to erect a memorial monument and accordingly formed a committee chaired by Sarkis Tosunian, a party member, resistance fighter, and veteran of the Légion d'Orient. However, the project remained unrealized for the next eight years for lack of funds.

In September 1930, on the 15th anniversary of the resistance, Paul Baurain, a French teacher in Aleppo, delivered an impassioned speech at Damlajik. Afterwards, his wife recited a seven-verse poem written by him while in Bitias, one of the six Armenian villages of Musa Dagh. Titled "The Mountain and the Sea," it said, in order "to win the battle" the Armenians had two allies: the mountain and the Mediterranean Sea, aided by French battleships and the Tricolor. The poem then proclaimed: "Djébel Moussa! Your name has entered history." Madame Baurain hoped that with her husband's address emanating "from the heart" as well as the poem she delivered, people would now contribute to the monument fund.

This appeal must have been in sync with a fund-raising drive launched in France. On July 1, 1931, Charles-Diran Tekeian – who in 1915 was a 28-year-old 2nd Class Auxiliary Officer-Interpreter on the French warship *Desaix* and had participated in the Musa Dagh rescue operations – announced in the French-Armenian monthly *Le Foyer* that the people of Musa Dagh had asked him "to one more time become their spokesperson and their advocate" in opening a "subscription," which would make Musa Dagh "the first page of a new history of the regenerated Armenian Rupenids and Latin Lusignans [royal dynasties of Cilicia]." The highlanders would thus "be able to think about the sacrifices of their elders and the peasant priests will thank God in his house [i.e., church], their saviors [the French] and our subscribers [i.e., donors] forever and ever."

A month later, on August 1, Tekeian published another

article informing the public of the formation of a "committee of honor and of patronage" composed of prominent personalities such as General Edouard Brémont; Viscount Benoit-d'Azy, ex-commander of the French battleship *Jauréguiberry*; Captain Edouard-Alphonse Vergos of the *Desaix*; writer, journalist and political activist Arshag Chobanian; Dikran Gamsaragan of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU); and Tekeian as treasurer. Their "work had nothing to do with politics; it had but one goal: to perpetuate the memory of the rescue of Musa Dagh Armenians by the French squadron [of the 3rd Mediterranean Fleet] and pay a debt of acknowledgement to the memory of those brave peasants." The lists of persons opening their pockets "will be sealed under the rock of Mount Moussa itself, and souvenirs of the local industry will be distributed to those of our friends who will assist us most actively." Tekeian also indicated that, even before the official launching of the fund-raising campaign, he had received a total of 2,930 French francs from nineteen individuals, including the sum of 1,000 francs from an anonymous sponsor living in Lausanne, Switzerland. The first list of subsequent donors would be published in the press on August 30, 1931, and the solicitation would end in October. But on October 1, another appeal was made to have a larger pool of participants. Chobanian, in turn, published articles in the *Abaka* (Future) paper with the same goal. Musa Dagh immigrants in the United States also joined the effort.

Although a final count of the money collected is not readily known, the project, based on a design drafted by architect Mardiros Altunian and under the supervision of builder Haig Kelenderian, finally materialized after a year. The 17th anniversary celebrations took place on Sunday, September 18, 1932 with pomp and circumstance as the new monument was consecrated. From one perspective, it resembled one of the French frigates that had participated in the 1915 rescue operations. From a different angle, it represented and served as a church altar. There was an inscribed marble plaque under each of the two small domes. Both expressed gratitude to the French for delivering the Armenians from certain death.

The inauguration began with the *Marseillaise*, after which Movses Der Kalusdian, a local and regional ARF leader, thanked and praised "magnificent France" for using its military might not to destroy, but rather to safeguard peace. In turn, Sarkis Tosunian delivered "a beautiful address" in French. It must be noted that the Armenians remained circumspect in their statements as instructed by the French authorities, because the latter were careful not to antagonize the Turkish government.

Speaking on behalf of the High Commissioner, Colonel Huguenet surveyed amicable Franco-Armenian bonds throughout history, considering the French assistance in 1915 a natural continuation of that close relationship. In a clearly political message, he also reminded the large crowd that only under French protection could such a monument symbolize freedom and friendship among peoples. Paul Baurain then read an unpublished poem dedicated to Musa Dagh (it is not clear if it was the same one recited two years earlier). Vice-Admiral Henri Joubert, commander of the Eastern Mediterranean Fleet, followed suit by paying homage to the Armenian martyrs. The celebrations continued with an official banquet held near the centuries-old plane (sosi) tree of Kheder Beg village. On the following day, Tosunian, as the president of the Deliverance Monument Committee, sent a message to Admiral Dartige du Fournet, then living in Périgueux en Dordognes, France, expressing his deep gratitude. Du Fournet was the commander of the 3rd French Squadron that had given the green light for the rescue of Musa Daghians in September 1915.

The last commemorative celebration took place in 1938. A year later, before July 23, the vast majority of the Musa Dagh people left their ancestral mountain refusing to live under Turkish rule as the Sanjak of Iskenderun, including Musa Dagh, was ceded by France to Turkey. Today, the Musa Dagh resistance is celebrated annually in Lebanon, Armenia, France, Canada, the United States and elsewhere. In the same vein, there exist four monuments honoring this unique episode in Armenian history: in Anjar, Lebanon; Musa Ler Town, Armenia; Cambridge, Ontario, Canada; and Fresno, California (near completion).

This year marks the 90th anniversary of Franz Werfel's historical novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, originally published in German in 1933 and subsequently translated to numerous languages including Turkish. It is only fitting that special events and programs are organized around the world to publicize the importance of this milestone.

TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
MHER MEGERDCHIAN THEATRICAL GROUP

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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
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ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

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

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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, ArWsWc 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 AunWe Kay & Uncle Frank Chin Park. 12:30pm Vimoksha Dance Company at Rows 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 17 — Sunday, at 10:30 a.m., join us at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, as we celebrate the Feast of Exaltation of the Holy Cross and blessing of Basil, followed by a delicious luncheon & entertainment, under the Patronage of His Excellency the Most Reverend Mikael Mouradian, Bishop of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg in the USA and Canada. Donation \$40 (12 & under \$20). Reserve ahead by calling Stella @ 617.645.1950 or Sona @ 617.875.1107. Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont.

SEPTEMBER 23 — Panel discussion for contemporary art exhibit "Ara Oshagan: Disrupted, Borders." 2 p.m. Artist Ara Oshagan will be joined by curator Ryann Casey, Harvard's Chair of Armenian Studies Dr. Christina Maranci, and editor-in-chief of "Hyperallergic" Hrag Vartanian. Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472. Register for free at <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/events>

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 2 — Ian Nagoski Presents "The Voice of Zabelle Panosian." 7 p.m. Listening event about soprano Zabelle Panosian with author, musician, and musicologist Ian Nagoski. Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472. Register at <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/events>.

OCTOBER 13 — Arev Short Film Festival, Capitol Theater in Arlington, 6-8 p.m. Sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance, the festival will showcase short films by filmmakers from all over the Armenian Diaspora, including "Kef Time" by Avo Kambourian – a documentary about the Armenian band by the same name. Also scheduled to be shown is the third episode of the Amazon Prime series "One Plus One Is Two", written and directed by festival director Sharisse Zeroonian, and various short films made by students at the TUMO Center – including a short called "Your Life As A Film." Tickets are being sold in advance only, and can be purchased at AmarasOnline.com or by calling 617-331-0426. Those who wish to submit short films for consideration should contact Sharisse Zeroonian at szeroonian@gmail.com.

OCTOBER 13-14 — Friday and Saturday, St. James Armenian Church will hold its 76th Annual Bazaar – Friday 12-8 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Delicious Armenian Food, Mezze, Pastries, and Baked Goods. Silent Auction, Raffle, Children's Activities, Booths and Vendors. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or info@stthagop.com or visit www.stjameswatertown.org/bazaar.

OCTOBER 14 — The Armenian Friends of America, Inc., presents Hye Kef 5, a five-hour dance featuring Harry Bedrossian, John Berberian, Leon Janikian,



Journalist David Ignatius of the Washington Post will participate in a Friday, October 27 panel, titled "Media Coverage of Armenia and Karabakh Today." The event celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, will take place at 7 p.m., at Tufts University's Joyce Cummings Center, Room 270. The event is free and open to the public.

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 1 – At 1 p.m., Meghri Dervartanian, children's author and book illustrator will speak about her recently published book in Armenian, Depi Ararat Ler (Toward Mt. Ararat). Sunday. Refreshments hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers. For all ages.

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 Hacobian 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.

NOVEMBER 9 — Couple's Night Out, "Marriage Stress or Blessing" organized by the New England Armenian Clergy for Parish Families. Guest Speaker Rev. Dr. Vahan and Yn. Maggie Tekeyan Kouyoumdjian, lecturers on Christian, spiritual and psychological issues. \$100 per couple, including catered buffet. RSVP by October 31. St. Stephen's Armenian Church Hall, 38 Elton Ave., Watertown. Call or text Arpi Boynerian, 617-229-9254 or email avedisb1@gmail.com.

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 20 — The Bergen Community College's Center for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation honors Lynn Needle, dancer/choreographer (and BCC faculty member), and composer/writer Dr. Michelle Ekizian for their collaboration on the composer's "Gorky's Dream Garden," a musical theater opera of love, courage and modern art with the 2023 Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Award. In tandem is scheduled "The Dream Garden Concert + Soiree: Off the Grid, Passionate Abstractions." Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. at the campus' Ciccone Theatre, 400 Paramus Road, Paramus. The Concert-Event will introduce Ekizian's hybrid praised by The New York Times for its "forceful and intricate...inspired touch" and hailed in Broadway World as a "genre bending opera." TICKETS: \$10., students \$5. Box Office: (201) 447-7428 or cicconetheatre.ludus.com/index.php

NOVEMBER 4 — 12 Vocations: The Ongoing Promise of St. Nersess seminary. Help us celebrate the vocations of the next 12 alumni clergy and lay ministers at a gala banquet to be held at Macaluso's, Hawthorne, NJ. Starts at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$175 per person. Details, invitations, and booklet donations can be found on www.stnersess.edu.

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 20 — Special concert at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, 630 2nd Ave., 8 p.m., in honor of Armenian Independence Day with pianist Karine Poghosyan and Maestro Jason Tramm conducting MidAtlantic Philharmonic Orchestra with music of Khachaturian and Rachmaninoff.

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

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

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**

SINCE 1932



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A Realistic Way to Mitigate Nagorno Karabakh's Humanitarian Catastrophe

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

As the humanitarian crisis deepens in Nagorno Karabakh with no light at the end of the tunnel, discussions are underway on how to solve this emergency. Russia, the US, and the EU are all making diplomatic efforts to find a solution.

Russia offered to start supplies via the Aghdam–Stepanakert road and then, within 24 hours, to restore supplies via the Lachin corridor. The US pushes forward the idea of simultaneously opening both roads while the EU explores all options and is ready to support any solution the sides can accept. Azerbaijan agreed to the Russian and the US offers, but with a caveat that the Lachin corridor can be used only through the full implementation of Azerbaijani legislation, including customs and other requirements. If this happens, it will permanently cancel the corridor status of the Lachin road, making it just another internal highway inside Azerbaijan.

Armenia insists on restoring the Lachin corridor in accordance with the November 10, 2020, statement, which automatically rejects the Azerbaijani vision. Meanwhile, at least publicly, the Armenian government refuses to discuss any issues about the launch of supplies from Aghdam. The authorities of the unrecognized Nagorno Karabakh Republic reject any possibility of receiving supplies via Aghdam, pointing out that it will become the first step towards the integration of Nagorno Karabakh into Azerbaijan, a prospect which the absolute majority of Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh rejects vehemently. They argue that if Nagorno Karabakh is put under Azerbaijani jurisdiction, it will result in quick de-armenization of the region, as Armenians cannot live in Azerbaijan as Azerbaijani citizens given the anti-Armenian policy of Azerbaijan in the last 35 years, the anti-Armenian propaganda, and the level of hatred towards Armenians in Azerbaijan.

The political changes in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and the election of Samvel Shahramanyan as the president of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic on September 9, 2023, will most probably further strengthen this vision among Karabakh leadership, according to which currently there are zero possibilities even to discuss the integration of Nagorno Karabakh into Azerbaijan.

In its turn, in the last days, Azerbaijan concentrated significant troops along Armenia – Azerbaijan borders and the Azerbaijan - Nagorno Karabakh line of contact. The Armenian government delivered its concerns about possible large-scale attacks against Armenia and/or Nagorno Karabakh by Azerbaijan, while expressing its readiness to start discussions with Azerbaijan to diffuse tensions. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan discussed these issues in his September 9 phone conversations with French and German leaders.

The unprecedented tensions in Armenia–Russia relations made the situation more complicated. In his September 8, 2023, statement, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that the leadership of Armenia had taken a series of unfriendly steps in recent days, including the launch of the process of ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the trip of the Armenian prime minister's wife to Kyiv with the transfer of humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and the holding of military exer-

cises on Armenian territory with the participation of the United States. On September 8, the ambassador of Armenia to Russia was summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry, and a note of protest was delivered to the ambassador.

The overt preparations of Azerbaijan to launch a new large-scale attack against Armenia or/and Nagorno Karabakh, the rising tensions in Armenia–Russia relations, indirect signals from Iran that it will not tolerate an Azerbaijani attack against Armenia which may jeopardize Armenia – Iran land connections, the US efforts to decrease Russian influence in the South Caucasus, and the change of leadership in Nagorno Karabakh Republic have created a very complex and complicated geopolitical equilibrium in the region, making any short term solution to the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Nagorno Karabakh even less likely.

In the current situation, many argue that the only way to prevent starvation and mass deaths in Nagorno Karabakh is to provide minimal food and other necessary products through an airlift or airdrop. Different options are being discussed, such as using the Stepanakert airport and sending humanitarian cargo by plane, even if Azerbaijan does not provide air passage through its territory, or using cargo drones that may fly from the Syunik region of Armenia and land in Stepanakert.

All options should be discussed, but while speaking about delivering humanitarian aid via air, one should not forget that there is a functioning air bridge between Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, and that air bridge is organized by the Russian peacekeepers. Russian military helicopters are flying from Armenia and landing in Stepanakert almost daily. Azerbaijan has a right to check the cargo of these helicopters. However, it cannot cancel these flights and is not in a position to shoot down Russian military helicopters and kill Russian soldiers.

The population in Nagorno Karabakh is starving, and soon tens, if not a hundred, people may die from hunger daily. The region's complex geopolitics does not allow for an easy solution to restore supplies of goods to Nagorno Karabakh by land routes. In the current situation, perhaps the only realistic solution is to increase the number of Russian helicopter flights from Armenia to Stepanakert to prevent deaths by hunger. The international community, individual countries, heads of regions, and mayors who are concerned by the growing humanitarian catastrophe in Nagorno Karabakh should apply to Russia, asking Russians to transport their humanitarian assistance to Stepanakert by Russian helicopters, offering any assistance Russians need to do that. The same applies to the authorities of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

It is impossible to bring life back to normalcy by delivering a few tons of goods to Stepanakert by helicopter, as before December 2022, 400 tons of goods entered Nagorno Karabakh daily. Nevertheless, by increasing the number of Russian helicopter flights to Stepanakert, one may prevent mass deaths while politicians are trying to find a long-term solution to the current crisis and the more significant issue of the future of Nagorno Karabakh.

(Benjamin Poghosyan is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, and Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Policy Research Institute [APRI] of Armenia.)

Anatomy of Genocide: How the State Department Inadvertently Green-Lighted War on Armenians

By Michael Rubin

Azerbaijan is on a war footing. On September 9, Artsakh, the Kosovo of the Caucasus, an ethnic Armenian republic set on land Soviet leader Joseph Stalin transferred to Azerbaijan, held presidential elections. It was the unrecognized republic's seventh presidential election since the 1990s. But this year Azerbaijan, sensing weakness in Washington, delivered an ultimatum: elections would equal war. The oil-rich dictatorship broadcast mobilization footage to underscore its demands. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken dutifully called Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, but his words were weak, and by omission,

Blinken signaled that Aliyev faced no consequences should he ignore them.

Blinken should know better. The Artsakh elections are not the first time he has faced this scenario. In November 2020, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched a war of attrition to punish the Tigray region for holding its own local elections. When Blinken took office two months later, he did little other than wag his finger at Abiy. The Ethiopian leader dismissed Blinken and privately mocked him and his envoys. Hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans starved. That US President Joe Biden subsequently rehabilitated Abiy signals to Aliyev and other would-be mass murderers that America's words are empty.

Why is Aliyev so upset at the prospect of Artsakh elections? There are two reasons. Certainly, free elections in any region Azerbaijan claims are embarrassing. Freedom House ranks Azerbaijan as “not free” and labels it a “consolidated authoritarian regime.”

Put another way, the dictatorship for which some in Washington and London now shill ranks alongside China and Myanmar, and below even Russia and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, in freedom rankings. Artsakh itself is far from perfect, but it ranks “partially free,” with better scores than Turkey, sitting more than 50 places above Azerbaijan. The notion, then, see WAR, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Revisionist European Rabbis Deny the Armenian Genocide

The Rabbinical Center of Europe sent a letter on Sept. 6 signed by 50 conservative Rabbis to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Vahagn Khachaturyan, telling them that Armenian officials have no right to use the term “genocide” to describe Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor since December 2022, causing the starvation of 120,000 Artsakh Armenians.

The rabbis wrongly claimed that the term genocide should only be used to describe the Jewish Holocaust. These rabbis’ ignorance is only exceeded by their arrogance. Not only do they not know the true meaning of the term ‘genocide,’ they are also harming their own cause by claiming that since the Holocaust is “unique,” no other human tragedy is comparable to it, thus precluding anyone else from being sympathetic to Holocaust victims. It is in the Jewish interest to describe the Holocaust as a universal calamity with which other people can identify. Even though all genocides have similarities, there are obvious differences in timing, scale and location. However, the similarities between genocides far exceed their differences. No one should have a monopoly on claims of human suffering.

These rabbis do not seem to know that according to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, besides outright mass murder, genocide also includes “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” This is exactly what Azerbaijan is doing—causing the starvation of 120,000 Artsakh Armenians by depriving them of food, medicines and other basic necessities.

The denialist rabbis claimed that the terms “ghetto,” “genocide” and “holocaust” are “inappropriate to be part of the jargon used in any kind of political disagreement.” The starvation of Artsakh Armenians cannot be described as a “political disagreement,” but genocide, according to the UN and Luis Moreno Ocampo, former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Continuing the series of errors and misjudgments the rabbis made in their pro-Azerbaijan propaganda letter, they demanded that Armenia’s leaders “explicitly and unequivocally clarify that the Armenian people recognizes and honors the terrible human suffering undergone by the Jewish people” and stop “minimizing and belittling the extent of the Jewish people’s suffering to further any political interest through incessantly using phrases associated with the holocaust suffered by the Jewish people.”

Rather than lecturing Armenia’s leaders about the Holocaust, the rabbis should have addressed their letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who has denied the Armenian Genocide and has pressured the Knesset to reject a resolution recognizing it. Israel should have been the first country to recognize the Armenian Genocide, not the last.

Furthermore, these Rabbis should have had the moral courage to issue a letter condemning the government of Israel for providing lethal weapons with which Azerbaijan in 2020 killed thousands of Armenian soldiers.

Instead of supporting the genocide denialists in Ankara and Baku, these Rabbis should have known that some of the most prominent backers of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide are Jews: Dr. Israel Charny (Director of Institute of Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem), Prof. Yair Auron (historian, author of several books on the Armenian Genocide), Raphael Lemkin (who coined the term genocide), Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Elie Wiesel (Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor), Yossi Beilin (Israel’s Minister of Justice), and Yossi Sarid (Israel’s Minister of Education).

After President Joe Biden recognized the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2021, both the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) and the AJC (American Jewish Committee) supported Biden’s recognition. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., also issued a statement on April 27, 2021, welcoming President Biden’s determination that genocide was committed against the Armenian people. Furthermore, the World Jewish Congress also acknowledged the Armenian Genocide.

In addition, 126 Holocaust scholars issued a joint statement on March 7, 2000, “affirming the incontestable fact of the Armenian Genocide.” Among them were professors Yehuda Bauer, Stephen Feinstein, Irving Horowitz, and Steven Katz.

These rabbis did not condemn former Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan and former Baku Mayor Hajibala Abutalybov, who stated during a 2005 meeting with a municipal delegation in Bavaria, Germany: “Our goal is the complete elimination of Armenians. You, Nazis, already eliminated the Jews in the 1930s and 40s, right? You should be able to understand us.” This was reported in the Realny Azerbaijan publication on February 17, 2006.

Since these Rabbis feel that they are entitled to the exclusive use of the term genocide, have they ever sent a single letter of complaint to their dear brother Aliyev for his repeated references to the fake ‘Khojalu Genocide?’ Isn’t this a shameful example of double-standard?

The rabbis should have remembered Hitler’s infamous words uttered on August 22, 1939: “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?” Noticing that the world ignored the Armenian Genocide, Hitler was emboldened to commit the Holocaust.

Yaron Weiss of Jerusalem, a grandson of Holocaust survivors, wrote: “I condemn the cynical self-appropriation of the memory of the Holocaust victims by that group of Rabbis.” Yaron also reminded the Rabbis that “Azerbaijan refuses to condemn and apologize for the acts of mass murder committed during the Holocaust by the soldiers of the Azeri Legion.”

These rabbis themselves have belittled the Holocaust by writing it with a lower-case “h”, instead of capital “H.”

I urge these rabbis to apologize for their revisionist and insulting letter, a smear-campaign instigated by Azerbaijan, as a result of which, they have lost their sense of decency and morality. Should their letter embolden Azerbaijan to commit more atrocities against Armenia and Artsakh, these rabbis will be considered partners in the Azeri crimes.

Kim Kardashian, Eric Esrailian Plead with Biden for Help on Artsakh

By Kim Kardashian and Dr. Eric Esrailian

We are Armenian. We are the descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors, and we do not want to be talking about the recognition or commemoration of yet another genocide in the future.

Since December of last year, Azerbaijan has blockaded the only lifeline between the indigenous Christian Armenians of Artsakh (also known as Nagorno-Karabakh) and the rest of the world. For many years, they have been dependent on the transport of food, medical supplies, and humanitarian aid through the Lachin Corridor. The war in Ukraine has made Azerbaijan a seemingly more favorable alternative to Russian oil and gas for some countries. However, this reliance has emboldened the autocratic Azeri government to use starvation as a weapon against the Armenian population in the region. There is no more time for thoughts, prayers, or concern.

The 2020 war, after Azerbaijan attacked Armenians in Artsakh without provocation, has never ended in the minds of Armenians around the world. Despite a cease-fire agreement, the attacks on Armenian soldiers have been constant and without repercussions. Armenophobic policies have been designed and widely promoted by the Azeri government and others. Regional peace should not involve sacrificing the sovereignty of the Armenians in Artsakh, but regardless of what anyone believes about our opinion, it is clear that this ruthless blockade has crossed all red lines of human rights and humanitarian law. Blocking human rights groups, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the hateful rhetoric accompanying the blockade are signs of genocidal intent.

Azerbaijan’s government and its allies claim that there are alternate routes that should be used. Using a separate

Azerbaijan-controlled passage for the occasional delivery of supplies is disingenuous at best. More likely, it will signal the beginning of the end for Armenians and Christians in Artsakh. At the start of this crisis, there were approximately 120,000 Armenians, including 30,000 children, living in the republic. Unfortunately, because of starvation and the inability to receive adequate medical care, there has already been a significant and tragic loss of life — and it will only get worse without immediate action. For those who survive, the trauma will be permanent. While there was a disingenuous attempt to portray the blockade as one related to environmental concerns, Armenians and international observers knew that the desire was to make the republic so uninhabitable that people would either die or agree to leave. Meanwhile, supporters of this starvation use coordinated social media campaigns to pretend that a blockade is not taking place. This dystopian propaganda may be absurd to those with knowledge, but the defenders of these human rights abuses are trying to confuse people given everything else happening in the world.

Numerous genocide watchdog groups and the United Nations’ own independent Special Rapporteurs — including the first UN Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, Professor Juan Mendez — have been trying to alert the world about these impending atrocities for months. Last month, Luis Moreno Ocampo, the first chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, published his independent report. He concluded that a genocide is already underway because under Article II, (c) of the Genocide Convention, Azerbaijan is “Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction.”

The University Network for Human Rights, in collaboration with students, lawyers, and academics from

Harvard Law School Advocates for Human Rights, UCLA’s Promise Institute for Human Rights, Wesleyan University, and Yale’s Lowenstein Project, conducted two fact-finding trips in Nagorno-Karabakh and four in Armenia between March 2022 and July 2023. Their recently published briefing paper states, “Moreover, the abuses we documented are not a string of unrelated rights violations; taken together, these abuses reveal a synchronized, comprehensive campaign to empty Nagorno-Karabakh and parts of Armenia of Armenians.”

The collective silence or inaction by individuals, governments, and governmental organizations like the United Nations and European Union has perpetuated the crisis. Every passing day puts more lives in danger. American taxpayer dollars are now facilitating and enabling this behavior by providing foreign aid to an oil-rich nation. Through economic sanctions, cutting off foreign aid to Azerbaijan, boycotting international events in Azerbaijan (such as concerts and sporting events like soccer and Formula 1), and through proceedings in international courts, we can collectively achieve results, but this process has been too slow and time is running out. As citizens, we are appealing to leaders such as President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and their colleagues to take a stand immediately. They must pressure Azerbaijan to open the corridor without preconditions.

We are just two people. We have been working behind the scenes to support our Armenian brothers and sisters, but this diplomatic approach has not yielded meaningful results. This crisis will clearly not be remedied by individuals, but we will continue to do what we can to use whatever influence we have. We are not politicians or government leaders, and despite our own diplomatic efforts, this humanitarian crisis has persisted with no clear



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that it might elect its own government is anathema to Aliyev.

The second reason is racism. Aliyev dehumanizes Armenians in his rhetoric and his country's schoolbooks. This is why the former International Criminal Court prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo released an open letter calling Azerbaijan's starvation of Armenians genocide.

It Is Not Just Kosovo: Law Is on Artsakh's Side

But if the world recognizes Azerbaijani sovereignty over the land on which Artsakh operates, can Azerbaijan be blamed for taking action to restore that sovereignty? Put aside the illogic of demanding residents subordinate themselves to a government that deliberately starves them. Here, there is a parallel to Darfur. The law regarding Azerbaijani sovereignty is far from cut-and-dry.

Many Americans, even within the State Department, misunderstand Washington's historical position regarding Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh. While Baku insists the United States recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as Azerbaijani, those engaged in the issue during the George H.W. Bush administration say that such recognition was conditional on a diplomatic process and recognition of the cultural and human rights of those living in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan now turns its back on both. As such, the United States will not necessarily continue to recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty.

Then there is the issue of self-determination. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's May statement that "Azerbaijan's territory includes Nagorno-Karabakh" does not end the question about Artsakh's self-determination. Before Pashinyan's statement, no Armenian government recognized Artsakh's independence, so there is little new to the position. But because Artsakh is not part of modern Armenia, Pashinyan has no right to concede Nagorno-Karabakh's residents' right to self-determination.

Nor is Artsakh on its face illegitimate. It is neither Donetsk nor Luhansk, nor for that matter Crimea. Nagorno-Karabakh's claim to self-determination began prior to the fall of the Soviet Union when the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast's government first petitioned Moscow to separate from Azerbaijan. This was their right under the Constitution, and their residents chose independence in a free and fair referendum. Nor can Azerbaijan dismiss the referendum as the case of one community voting and the other boycotting. Censuses throughout the Soviet period and before show the Armenian majority. Few Azerbaijanis had deep roots in the region. Aliyev compels Azerbaijanis to resettle in the region by holding pensions and government employment hostage.

No Room for Moral Equivalence on Azerbaijani Aggression

Azerbaijan today turns morality upside down with its narrative that it is the victim of aggression. Putting aside the fact that Artsakh is an indigenous republic rather than a vestige of occupation, and that it was autonomous under the Soviet system, the Azerbaijani narrative elides important context. Against the backdrop of the Armenian Genocide, neither the Ottoman Empire's Young Turks nor the nascent Azerbaijani state accepted Armenian statehood. Just as Turks drove Armenians out of their eastern Anatolian homelands to open the land for Turkish colonization, many Turkish chauvinists hoped to complete the process by uniting Turkey and Azerbaijan, bringing the notion of "one nation, two states" to its natural conclusion.

While the Soviet conquest temporarily put a lid on the pressure cooker, Stalin's gerrymandering catalyzed grievance. As the Soviet Union descended into chaos, populists in Azerbaijan, including its capital Baku, staged an escalating series of pogroms against the Armenian Christian community reminiscent of those that occurred during the Armenian Genocide. Azerbaijan subsequently sought to encircle, blockade, and starve the Armenian towns and villages in Nagorno-Karabakh. It was in this context, and with the widespread recognition that Azerbaijan sought a final solution for the Armenian population, that the United States Congress included Section 907 in the Freedom Support Act banning most assistance to Azerbaijan.

After 9/11, Azerbaijan played its cards well. It offered to join the U.S. War on Terror in exchange for a waiver to Section 907. Under the terms of that waiver, the United

Biden nor Blinken take the lead on the Caucasus. That falls to Acting Assistant Secretary of State Yuri Kim, who most recently served as US ambassador to Albania. That the current crisis accelerated under Kim's tenure as assistant secretary is no coincidence. Within the State Department, Kim's ambition to be ambassador to Turkey is an open secret, based partly on her comments to colleagues and to others while she was political counselor at the US Embassy in Ankara. Perhaps then, some of her moral equivalence in the face of growing Turkish and Azerbaijani aggression toward Armenia and Artsakh is simply self-censorship in order to assuage those whom she hopes will be her future hosts, or perhaps her moral equivalence is simply her style. Either way, her default reaction tends to exacerbate conflict and undermine U.S. interests.

The end of her tenure in Albania should

as being rooted in religious hatred. They see Albania as wrong and Beleri as the victim. Kim's approach caused Albania to double down, putting its EU aspirations in jeopardy and undermining stability in the Western Balkans.

Back to Artsakh: As Azerbaijan mobilized forces, Kim tweeted, "We urge all sides to work together now to immediately simultaneously open Lachin and other routes to get desperately needed humanitarian supplies into Nagorno-Karabakh."

Within the State Department, hands hit foreheads for two reasons: First, for her bizarre choice to draw equivalence between those withholding food and those starving. Azerbaijan and Artsakh are no more moral equals than the Soviets were equivalent to those they blockaded in Berlin. Second, it has been less than three years since Aliyev agreed in writing to allow aid to flow unimpeded from Armenia through Lachin and into Artsakh. Aliyev's violation of that agreement is not up for debate. Does Kim not realize the damage she does to diplomacy by signaling that intransigence works, and agreements need not be honored?

Make no mistake: The person responsible for the starvation of Artsakh's Armenians is not Biden, Blinken, or Kim. It is Aliyev. And, just as with Darfur, his decisions should lead him to The Hague. That said, not every dictator puts his closet desire to eliminate an ethnic group into action. They read the tea leaves to try understanding whether an outside power will care enough to act. Unfortunately, Biden, Blinken, and Kim have each repeatedly signaled disinterest. They care little about right or wrong, or about defending the liberal order.

Aliyev, like Abiy, may allow some aid trucks in and hope the spotlight moves on, but genocide in Artsakh looms. Bill Clinton apologized for doing nothing to head off Rwanda's anti-Tutsi genocide. The Dutch government apologized for Srebrenica. Armenians do not need an apology after the fact. They need the West to show moral backbone and signal, through sanctions on Azerbaijan and direct aid to Artsakh, a red light that Aliyev would be foolish to ignore.

[This article first appeared at 19fortyfive.com. Now a 19FortyFive Contributing Editor, Dr. Michael Rubin is a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). Dr. Rubin is the author, coauthor, and coeditor of several books exploring diplomacy, Iranian history, Arab culture, Kurdish studies, and Shi'ite politics, including *Seven Pillars: What Really Causes Instability in the Middle East?* (AEI Press, 2019); *Kurdistan Rising* (AEI Press, 2016); *Dancing with the Devil: The Perils of Engaging Rogue Regimes* (Encounter Books, 2014); and *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos* (Palgrave, 2005).]



Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken meets virtually with the AFL-CIO Executive Council, from the US Department of State in Washington, D.C. on July 9, 2021 (State Department Photo by Ron Przysucha/ Public Domain)

States could assist Azerbaijan on the condition that Azerbaijan remained committed to resolving its dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh diplomatically and foreswore any effort to impose a military solution. Azerbaijan's September 2020 attack, timed to coincide with the centenary of the Ottoman effort to invade Nagorno-Karabakh, violated Azerbaijan's commitment and should have ended American assistance. Hakan Fidan, Turkey's new foreign minister (and its intelligence chief at the time), has since acknowledged what the CIA and Pentagon had already learned through covert means: Turkish special forces participated in the assault.

While US President Joe Biden fulfilled his campaign promise to recognize the Armenian Genocide, he soiled that recognition by allowing further military sales to Azerbaijan. This convinced Aliyev that he could get away with murder. Indeed, Azerbaijani aggression against not only Artsakh, but also Armenia proper, grew in direct proportion to Blinken and his team's moral equivalence and inability to call out Azerbaijani aggression as the source of the problem. State Department officials from Blinken on down based their pronouncements less on moral clarity and more on "Chicken Kiev."

Yuri Kim Takes a Bad Situation and Makes It Worse

There is an unfortunate irony that Biden, who promised as a candidate to stand against genocide and took *A Problem from Hell* author Samantha Power under his wing, now through negligence or incompetence appears to greenlight the eradication of the region's oldest Christian community.

On a day-to-day basis, though, neither

have been a red flag. In May 2023, just two days before Albania held municipal elections, Albanian forces arrested Fredi Beleri, the opposition candidate to be mayor of Himara, who hailed from Albania's ethnic Greek minority, on unsubstantiated vote-buying charges. Beleri nevertheless won. Albanian authorities proceeded to keep Beleri in jail in a cynical attempt to keep him from being sworn in. The case has ramifications for NATO solidarity and, by extension, for American interests. Kim should have realized this, but she did not press the message with her superiors. As a result, Greece did not invite Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama to the Western Balkans Summit in Athens last month, distracting from some Ukraine conversations. Most other observers see Albania's actions

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end in sight — except for the potential for ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population. We will continue to use our voices to amplify the truth.

The people in Artsakh want to live in peace. Now is the time for true leadership. We need for those who have a meaningful role in these affairs to immediately demand that the Lachin Corridor is opened to stop another genocide. We want to draw more attention to the crisis and appeal to those in our own government who truly care about humanity to intervene. The United States has the ability to mobilize a response. Leaders who are effective and help our people will be remembered for their heroism. Even if well-meaning, the ones who are inert and ineffective will be remembered for allowing a genocide to take place under their watch. The choice is theirs.

(This commentary was released by Kim Kardashian and Dr. Eric Esrailian on September 8.)