

# Azerbaijani Invasion of Karabakh Leads to Deaths, Heavy Injuries

*World Leaders Condemn Action, While Karabakh Leaders Seek To Talk with Baku*

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — On September 19, Azerbaijani military forces launched rocket-artillery systems, combat UAVs and air force in its attack on Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh.

“Battles continue along the entire line of contact. The Azerbaijani military is using artillery and rocket systems, combat UAVs and combat aviation,” the Defense Army said, adding that it will release additional updates in case of developments.

So far, as a result, 25 deaths and about 80 injuries have been reported



Many are huddled underground (AP photo)

as of this writing (M-S press time is Tuesday night).

“There are fatalities and wounded persons, including women, elderly and children as a result of the large-scale military operations by Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh on September 19. As of this moment, 80 wounded are hospitalized in the Republican Medical Center of the Artsakh Healthcare Ministry, and accord-



Destroyed apartment building in Stepanakert

ing to preliminary information 15 of them are civilians. Unfortunately, five deaths have been recorded. Doctors are doing everything possible to save the lives of the gravely wounded,” the NK healthcare ministry said.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said that its troops are taking “counter-

terrorism measures” against Karabakh Armenian forces in order to restore the Azerbaijani “constitutional order” in Karabakh.

“On September 19, at around 1 pm, the Azerbaijani armed forces violated the ceasefire along the entire Line of see INVASION, page 2

# Karabakh Blockade Obstructs Education For 20,000 Students

**By Sona Hovsepyan**

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

STEPANAKERT — Narine Yakhshibekyan, a 20-year-old student at Mesrop Mashtots University, is unable to go from Martuni town to the city of Stepanakert due to the lack of fuel and regular transportation. The blockade of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) is having a direct impact on around 20,000 students struggling to go back to class, as reported by the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh.

As Yakhshibekyan stated, she sometimes participates in class activities online despite power outages. However, it’s challenging to organize lessons in a remote mode.

“The Internet is terribly unstable. You rarely hear anything. Joining online guarantees only your presence. I can’t listen to anything or participate in lessons,” Yakhshibekyan told the *Mirror-Spectator* over the phone.

see BLOCKADE, page 3

# Destruction of Armenian Cultural Heritage in Artsakh Raised at UNESCO

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (Public Radio of Armenia) — Azerbaijan is constantly politicizing the cultural platform of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), making groundless and false accusations against Armenia, Harutyun



Hautyun Vanyan at the UNESCO meeting the Department for Protection of History and Cultural Monuments of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, said on September 18 at the 45th extended see UNESCO, page 5

# Yerevan’s Nairyan Vocal Ensemble Simultaneously Sings, Signs and Strives for Social Justice

**By Aram Arkun**

*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

WATERTOWN — There are a fair number of Armenian soloists and ensembles who come to the United States on tour, but the all-women Nairyan Vocal Ensemble is distinguished from them by two characteristics: its primarily a cappella performances are accompanied by sign language and it works for social justice. The group toured the Eastern US and even the Mid-West in April and May of 2023 and gave eight concerts, including several in the Boston area, Philadelphia, Providence, Washington, DC, New York, and Chicago.

## Sign Language

The group was founded in 2015 through the Mughdusyan Art Center with five professionally trained young women and began using sign language in 2018. Yelena Azaryan, one of the singers, said that the Art Center was attended by deaf students, among others. When the center planned an exhibition of the works of students and non-students, which was to be accompanied by a concert, it became clear that children with hearing disabilities did not understand anything about the concert. She said, “So that the children could at least understand something concerning what the songs were about, see NAIRYAN, page 16



The Nairyan Vocal Ensemble at Alice Millar Chapel, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois (courtesy Nairyan Vocal Ensemble Facebook page)

**FRANCE**

**Paris Gala for Artsakh: One Nation, One Culture, One Child, One Hope**

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**Tekeyan Metro Los Angeles Members Meet LA Angels General Manager Perry Minasian**

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**CALIFORNIA**

**Zack Minasian Publishes Memoirs On Mentor Tommy Lasorda**

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ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Vardanyan Urges Armenia To Recognize Artsakh

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — Artsakh's former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan calls on the Armenian authorities to recognize Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and defend its Armenian population amid a fresh Azerbaijani attack, on September 19.

"The Armenian leadership must recognize Artsakh's independence and join the protection of its citizens. We must all protect our homeland!" he said in a social media post.

Vardanyan said earlier that Azerbaijan had launched a massive artillery attack against Nagorno-Karabakh, targeting its cities and civilians.

### Marukyan Reminds US of Statement Not Tolerating Ethnic Cleansing

YEREVAN (news.am) — A few days ago at the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Yuri Kim, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, stated that "the United States will not tolerate any attempts to 'ethnically cleanse' Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. Edmon Marukyan, Ambassador-at-Large of Armenia, on September 19 noted this on X—former Twitter. He added as follows: "Now, Azerbaijan has started a large-scale aggression and military operation against the peaceful people of Nagorno-Karabakh. It is the US's turn now as to what measures will be used to stop the aggression and military attack on the trapped and starving people.

"Naturally, Azerbaijan is committing another war crime by killing peaceful and unprotected people in an addition to ethnic cleansing. All this must be condemned and stopped with all its consequences."

### MFA: Azerbaijan Will Not Be Limited to Unleashing Aggression in Karabakh

YEREVAN (news.am) — On September 19, Deputy Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Armenia Vahan Kostanyan and Paruyr Hovhannysyan held a meeting with the heads of diplomatic missions and representatives of international organizations accredited in Armenia regarding the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh resulting from another large-scale aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan.

Kostanyan presented the latest large-scale aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan on September 19, emphasizing that armed forces of Azerbaijan are targeting civilian settlements, including Stepanakert, Askeran and other cities and villages, using large-caliber artillery.

Kostanyan said the widespread dissemination of false narratives by the Azerbaijani side is aimed at justifying the use of force and completing their policy of ethnic cleansing of the population of Karabakh.

Kostanyan noted that in the absence of adequate responses from the international community, Azerbaijan will not be limited to unleashing aggression in Nagorno-Karabakh and may also use force against the sovereign territory of Armenia.

# Azerbaijani Invasion of Karabakh Leads to Deaths, Heavy Injuries

INVASION, from page 1

Contact by launching rocket artillery attacks," read a statement released by Karabakh's Defense Army. It said its units are putting up "stiff resistance" to Azerbaijani attempts to advance into Karabakh.

"The sound of explosions can be heard in Stepanakert right now," a local journalist, Marut Vanian, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "Screaming children, their parents went down to basements for cover."

"The whole Stepanakert is shelled from all directions," said Metakse Hakobian, a local parliamentarian. "Parents and children have lost each other. The situation is terrible. People have no fuel to look for their kids."

An Armenian opposition lawmaker, Tigran Abrahamian, said that the Azerbaijani army is targeting Karabakh's military installations.

"It's not yet clear whether civilian facilities are also being targeted," Abrahamian wrote on Facebook.

Abrahamian said later in the afternoon that Karabakh forces are engaged in "heavy combat" with the Azerbaijani army at various sections of the Karabakh "line of contact." "At a number of sections the enemy's advance was stopped by intensive gunfire." He said.

Baku claimed earlier in the day that six Azerbaijanis were killed in an Azerbaijani-controlled part of Karabakh after hitting landmines planted by Karabakh forces. It did not identify the victims. The authorities in Stepanakert strongly denied the claims.

Shortly afterwards, fighting reportedly broke out in Karabakh's eastern Askeran district, with the Karabakh army saying that Azerbaijani troops opened mortar fire at its positions in the area.

Social media is one way of getting information from Artsakh. Former Premier Ruben Vardanyan, on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, released a short video in which he described the state of Stepanakert. He decried the attack and asked for help.

Similarly, Artsakh Human Rights Ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan and former premier Artak Beglaryan are regularly updating their social media about the situation there.

One worrisome situation is the village of Yeghtsahogh, outside Shushi, which is completely surrounded by the Azerbaijani forces.

Stepanyan said that the Azerbaijani military has destroyed the village school.

"Yeghtsahogh community of Shushi region with a total of 150 residents has come under the direct target of the Azerbaijani side. The Azerbaijani Armed Forces have destroyed the school of the community. There is no opportunity to evacuate the residents, they are completely surrounded by Azerbaijan," Stepanyan said on X.

In the wake of the attack, Nagorno-Karabakh's leadership offered to negotiate with Azerbaijan.

"The Karabakh side appeals to the Azerbaijani side to immediately cease the hostilities and sit down at the negotiation table with the aim of settling the situation," it said in a statement issued late in the afternoon.

The office of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev responded by saying that it is ready to meet with Karabakh Armenian representatives in the Azerbaijani town of Yevlakh. It stressed at the same time that the Azerbaijani offensive will continue un-

less the Karabakh Armenians disband their government bodies and armed forces.

#### World Reactions

Russia's peacekeeping contingent in Karabakh did not immediately react to what appeared to be the worst fighting in and around Karabakh since the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war was stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire. Baku said that it informed the peacekeepers about its offensive.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said Moscow is in touch with the conflicting sides and is urging them to stop the fighting. She also said the peacekeepers are continuing to do their job.

Russia said on Tuesday it was only given notice of Azerbaijan's operation "minutes" before its launch, denying it was told in advance.

Zakharova said in statements that media reports suggesting Azerbaijan warned the Russian peacekeepers stationed in the region in advance "does not correspond to reality."

"Military actions of Azerbaijan must be stopped immediately to allow for a genuine dialogue between Baku and Karabakh Armenians," EU Council President Charles Michel said later in the day.

Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry insisted on the "complete withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces" from Karabakh. Armenia's Defense Ministry again strongly denied having any troops there.

The EU is calling for halting of any hostilities and for looking for solutions diplomatically, EU External Action spokesperson Peter Stano told Armenpress when asked what steps the EU is going to take to restrain Azerbaijan's genocidal policy in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"We are assessing the situation very closely, watching the developments on the ground. The EU was always very consistent when it comes to our position regarding relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, that we discourage unilateral steps, we call for halting of any hostilities and for looking for solutions in the process of diplomatic dialogue in case of Armenia and Azerbaijan through the normalization process which was launched and also is facilitated by the EU," Stano said, adding that a more specific comment and more specific reaction on the situation will be done by High Representative Josep Borrell.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairman-in-Office Bujar Osmani, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, expressed deep concern.

"As OSCE Chairman-in-Office I am deeply concerned by reports of military operations and the related danger for civilians in Stepanakert/Khankendi. I call for immediate deescalation. Peaceful dialogue should be the only option and humanitarian concerns must prevail. Today I will meet Azerbaijani FM Jeyhun Bayramov and Armenian FM Ararat Mirzoyan at UNGA78 in #NYC and renew my call to continue diplomatic engagement and prioritize efforts towards sustainable peace," Osmani said on social media.

Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock accused Azerbaijan of going back on its word by launching military action in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, "Baku's promise to refrain from military action was broken."

Speaking from the sidelines of the Unit-

ed Nations General Assembly in New York, Baerbock urged, "Azerbaijan must immediately stop shelling and return to the negotiating table."

"The crucial thing is to protect the civilian population in Nagorno-Karabakh," the diplomat said. "This is also the task of Russian soldiers stationed there."

Baerbock said Berlin supported peace talks as the only path forward, claiming, "In view of today's escalation, these are more urgent than ever."

France urged the United Nations Security Council to immediately convene following Baku's operations.

The French Foreign Ministry said in a statement that no pretext could justify the military operation Azerbaijan launched in Nagorno-Karabakh.

France said that the outbreak of fighting "threatens thousands of civilians already affected by a month-long illegal blockade and which runs against efforts by the international community to reach a negotiated settlement."

Paris said it was working with its partners to prepare a "strong response" to this "unacceptable offensive."

In addition, members of the European Parliament David McAllister, Marina Kaljurand, Andrey Kovatchev, Željana Zovko have condemned in strongest terms the pre-planned and unjustified attack of Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh.

"We deplore the loss of life in reported landmine explosions earlier in the day and express our condolences to the families of the victims. However, this under no circumstances justifies Azerbaijan's large-scale military escalation. The clearly pre-planned attack, reported along the entire line of contact, coming just hours after the blasts and following weeks of observed Azerbaijani military build-up and aggressive rhetoric, is totally unacceptable," the MEPs said in a joint statement.

"We deplore the fact that Baku's offensive seriously undermines the ongoing peace negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia and urge the President of Azerbaijan to accept recent calls of the Armenian Prime Minister for the resumption of talks at the highest level," the lawmakers said.

"We recall that the attack takes place in the context of a major humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, following Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor for the past nine months, in violation of Baku's commitments under the ceasefire statement of 9 November 2020 and of the legally binding orders of the International Court of Justice. Humanitarian access to Nagorno-Karabakh needs to be fully and permanently restored," the continued.

"We are seriously concerned about the consequences of Azerbaijan's actions on the civilian population and urge Azerbaijan to refrain from using military escalation as a pretext to force the exodus of the local population. In the absence of an immediate halt to the ongoing attack, we call on the Council to fundamentally reconsider the EU's relations with Azerbaijan in this light, and consider imposing sanctions against responsible Azerbaijani," Members of the European Parliament said.

The Freedom House has strongly condemned the Azerbaijani government's violent attacks in Nagorno-Karabakh, heightening the risk of ethnic cleansing against the region's Armenian population.

"Any attempt to forcibly change the

*continued on next page*



## ARMENIA

# Karabakh Blockade Obstructs Education for 20,000 Students

BLOCKADE, from page 1

On December 12, dozens of Azerbaijani “eco-activists” blocked the Lachin corridor, which is the only road connecting Armenia to Karabakh. However, Azerbaijan halted the “eco-protest” after establishing a checkpoint on the Lachin corridor. This causes humanitarian problems including power, food, education, internet access, as well as other humanitarian issues. The 120,000 residents, including about 30,000 children, are isolated from the world due to this situation. Luis Moreno Ocampo, the former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has referred to it as genocide.

The International Committee of the Red Cross delivered humanitarian aid to Nagorno-Karabakh via Lachin Corridor and Akna (Aghdam) road on Monday, September 18. Trucks from Armenia carrying 23 tons of flour reached Stepanakert. Medical and hygiene items of Russian and Swiss manufacture have also been delivered to Stepanakert via the Akna road from Azerbaijan.

Yakhshibekyan’s younger sister, Nare, who is in the 5th grade, and her older sister, Nushik, who is in the 9th grade, walk two kilometers to school every day and take the same route back. Furthermore, as Narine points out, there are no school supplies or uniforms available in the stores. Narine and her sisters use last year’s stationery.

Food presents yet another challenge for residents, in addition to problems of stationery and transportation.

“My mother has been crying as she is unable to satisfy my younger sister’s needs. Most parents can’t bear it when their child craves something as simple as candy or sweet tea in the morning but there is no sugar or even bread. We only have half a loaf for each person and flour is in extremely short supply,” said Narine.

Rima Zargaryan from Aknaberd village of Shahumyan region, who studies at Grigor Narekatsi University in Stepanakert, also has a problem with transportation.

“We return to the village on weekends if there’s a bus available, but on days when there’s no transportation, we can’t attend classes. The unpredictability of power outages in both Stepanakert and the countryside makes it impossible for the university to conduct online classes,” she said during

a phone conversation.

The acute fuel shortage in Nagorno-Karabakh, that started on July 25 this year, has left the entire 120,000 population without public transportation. As reported by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh



A school closed due to gas supply disruption (Photo Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh)

Gegham Stepanyan, the absence of transportation means that many students will be physically unable to attend their classes in regular mode. The students who reside outside of Stepanakert and commute to the capital for their studies will no longer be able to do so.

Zakaryan’s four younger siblings, all of school age, have found leftover pens and notebooks from the previous school year. The school, according to her, also has a shortage of books. The only advantage is that the school is very close, enabling Zakaryan’s siblings to walk there.

Her brothers, on the other hand, couldn’t go to the nearby village for karate and boxing training due to transportation difficulties.

Children aren’t only deprived of their regular education but also of access to other extracurricular activities. Students and pupils cannot attend music schools,

art schools, sports schools, chess schools, language schools, or dance classes, all of which are essential for their comprehensive development as reported by Ombudsman Stepanyan.

The teaching staff face these issues too.

but I think Armenians should live in their land — not leave but stay, work, and create,” said the lecturer.

Nare Nikoghosyan, the head of the Information Department at the Artsakh Ministry of Education, told the *Mirror-Spectator* that school attendance is not as great a problem despite transportation.

“Absence has affected more students who commute to Stepanakert from outlying regions. The absenteeism rate ranges from twenty to twenty-five percent. It’s worth noting that the number was higher in the first week, but now students are making every effort to reach Stepanakert using any available means,” said Nikoghosyan.

Last month 41 citizens of Russia and Nagorno-Karabakh were transferred from Karabakh to Armenia by Russian peacekeepers. They included Nagorno-Karabakh citizens who have enrolled in universities in Armenia and abroad.

One of these students is 17-year-old Maria (the name has been changed for her own safety). She moved to Armenia to start her academic year at the Armenian State Pedagogical University.

Earlier during the blockade, she faced a difficult decision: whether to move to Yerevan. Maria shared her struggle, saying, “I felt like a traitor for leaving 120,000 people who are starving. When you remember that your family and friends are in such a situation, returning to normal life has a psychological influence on you,” said the student.

She crossed the Azerbaijan checkpoint with the last group of students and witnessed the arrest of three Armenian students by Azerbaijani border guards.

The Azerbaijani General Prosecutor’s Office issued a statement declaring that the men were arrested for insulting state symbols. Azerbaijani media claimed the men are featured in a 2021 social media video that appears to show a group of amateur football players from the town of Martuni stepping on the Azerbaijani flag. However, Baku ended up releasing the three Armenian university students.

As Maria mentioned, the Azerbaijani border guard put psychological pressure on the remaining students.

“They asked us where we are registered, and when we said Stepanakert, they insisted that we use the Azerbaijani name Khan-kendi,” Maria told the *Mirror-Spectator*.

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region’s demographics is illegal and unacceptable,” the organization said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

“We urge the international community to protect the civilian population in Nagorno-Karabakh, prevent crimes against humanity in the region, and hold the Azerbaijani government accountable for the wellbeing of Armenians in the region,” the Freedom House said.

## Condemnation from Armenia

Armenia on Tuesday strongly condemned Azerbaijan’s latest military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh and appealed to the international community to stop “the Azerbaijani aggression.”

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia brushed aside Baku’s claims that the military operation was launched in response to Yerevan’s failure to “withdraw the Armenian armed forces” from Karabakh.

“We again state that Armenia has no troops and military hardware deployed in Karabakh and all claims about [Armenian] land mining and sabotage activities are false and fabricated,” it said.

The international community and, in

particular, the Russian peacekeeping forces in Karabakh should “take clear and unequivocal steps to end Azerbaijan’s aggression,” added the statement issued during an emergency session of Armenia’s Security Council chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Over the past year, Pashinyan has repeatedly ruled out any Armenian military intervention in Karabakh. In May this year, he publicly recognized Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan.

Yerevan said earlier this month that Baku is massing troops along the Karabakh “line of contact” and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in preparation for another war. The Azerbaijani side denied that while alleging growing Armenian “military provocations” in the conflict zone.

The Foreign Ministry statement said that the “false” allegations were aimed at justifying the Azerbaijani military action launched more than nine months after Baku blocked traffic through the sole road connecting Karabakh to Armenia.

Armenia is not involved in the military actions and does not maintain any military presence in Nagorno-Karabakh, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said

amid the ongoing attack.

He said that the situation along the borders of Armenia is relatively stable, with no visible or significant changes in the situation.

“But as I’ve said, I repeat that the main and key target, the goal of this operation is to drag the Republic of Armenia into military operations,” Pashinyan warned.

Pashinyan stated that a number of Azerbaijani news media are falsely reporting that Azeri forces are targeting the military units of the Republic of Armenia, referring to Nagorno-Karabakh’s defense army.

“Unfortunately, a number of our colleagues are repeating this information, who say that they call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to halt the military operations. I want to state for the record that the Republic of Armenia is not involved in the military operations and I want to once again record that the Republic of Armenia doesn’t have an army in Nagorno-Karabakh,” PM Pashinyan said.

He warned that a number of domestic and foreign forces are seeking to drag Armenia into hostilities. “This is visible and with our stance we are recording that the attempts to drag the Republic of Armenia

into military escalation are unacceptable for us and we will manage this process, as much as we understand the emotional and other issues we all have in this situation. We shouldn’t allow some people, some forces, foreign or domestic, to question the statehood of Armenia,” Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan discussed in a telephone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron the situation.

According to the press service of the Armenian government, both sides emphasized the inadmissibility of the use of force and stressed the need to use international de-escalation mechanisms.

Macron said that France will initiate an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council in connection with the situation in Karabakh.

Pashinyan also spoke with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, his press office reported.

Both sides emphasized the inadmissibility of using force and the need to use international mechanisms for de-escalation.

(Stories from Azatutyun, Public Radio of Armenia, Armenpress, ARKA, Deutsche Welle were used to compile this report.)

## INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL

## Azerbaijan Tells Civilian Population to Leave Karabakh

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan has told the civilian population of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) to evacuate themselves through “humanitarian corridors” on the Lachin corridor.

The Defense Ministry of Azerbaijan has issued the statement amid an ongoing assault by Baku against Nagorno-Karabakh as a harrowing humanitarian crisis caused, again, by Azerbaijan, keeps worsening.

People in Nagorno-Karabakh are unable to find their children since the launch of the attack.

“It’s war. My three children are in school. They [the Azerbaijanis - Ed.] have been shooting for about half an hour now. They are shelling. There is no connection, we can’t reach them (the children - Ed.). We have all lost our children, there are no cars to pick them up from school,” Karabakh lawmaker Metakse Hakobyan told News.am.

## Armenian Director’s Film Wins Best Script Award at Film Festival

ASTANA, Kazakhstan (Panorama.am) — “Equation with Two Variables,” a state-financed short film written and directed by filmmaker Lusine Papoyan, has won the Best Screenplay Award at the Baiqonyr International Short Film Festival, the National Cinema Center of Armenia reported on Tuesday.

The cast includes Sergey Piloyan and Gurgen Zakaryan. It has been produced by Silhouette Studio.

## Turkey Could Part Ways With EU If Necessary, Erdogan Says

ISTANBUL (Reuters) — Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday that Ankara could “part ways” with the European Union if necessary when asked about the contents of a European Parliament report on Turkey.

The report, adopted earlier this week, said Turkey’s accession process with the 27-member bloc cannot resume under current circumstances and called for the EU to explore “a parallel and realistic framework” for its ties with Ankara.

Turkey has been an official candidate to join the EU for 24 years, but accession talks have stalled in recent years over the bloc’s concerns about human rights violations and respect for the rule of law.

“The EU is trying to break away from Turkey,” Erdogan told reporters ahead of a trip to the United States. “We will make our evaluations against these developments and if necessary, we can part ways with the EU.”

Turkey’s Foreign Ministry said earlier this week that the European Parliament report contained unfounded allegations and prejudices and took “a shallow and non-visionary” approach to the country’s ties with the EU.

## US Sanctions 5 Turkish Firms in Broad Russia Action on over 150 Targets

By Humeyra Pamuk & Daphne Psaledakis

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — The Biden administration on Thursday, September 14, imposed sanctions on five Turkish companies and a Turkish national, accusing them of helping Russia evade sanctions and supporting Moscow in its war against Ukraine.

The designations, first reported by Reuters, target shipping and trade companies accused of helping repair sanctioned vessels tied to Russia’s defense ministry and helping the transfer of “dual-use goods.” It is part of a bigger package of measures hitting Russia with sanctions on more than 150 targets, including the country’s largest carmaker.

The action was taken at a delicate moment for US-Turkey relations, with Washington hoping Ankara will ratify NATO membership for Sweden when the Turkish parliament reconvenes in early October.

The United States and its allies imposed extensive sanctions on Russia after its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, but supply channels from Black Sea neighbor Turkey and other trading hubs have remained open, prompting Washington to issue repeated warnings about the export of chemicals, microchips and other products that can be used in Moscow’s war effort.

Multiple senior US officials, including Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo, have traveled to Turkey since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as part of a pressure campaign to prevent any Turkish companies from helping Russia circumvent US curbs.

“For the past 18 months, we’ve shared our concerns with the Turkish government and private sector and informed them of the significant risks of doing business with those we’ve sanctioned who are tied to Russia’s war,” a senior US Treasury official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

“These designations reflect our ongoing commitment to target individuals and entities who provide material support to sanctioned entities,” the official added.

There was no immediate comment from the Turkish government.

The US Treasury Department in a statement said it imposed sanctions on Margiana Insaat Dis Ticaret and Demirci Bilisim Ticaret Sanayi, saying the Turkey-based companies were among those that Russia relied on for importing “much-needed dual-use goods to enable its unprovoked war of aggression on Ukraine.”

It said the former had made hundreds of shipments to sanctioned Russian entities that are part of the supply chain for producing military drones used in the Ukraine war, while the latter has sent sensors and measuring tools into Russia.

Reuters could not immediately reach the companies for comment.

The US State Department imposed sanctions on Denkar Ship Construction for providing ship repair services to previously designated vessels of a company connected to the Russian Defense Ministry.

Denkar did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The State Department also targeted Turkey-based shipyard agency ID Ship Agency and its owner Ilker Dogruyol as well as CTL Limited, which the State Department said was an intermediary that ships electronic components of US and European origin to companies in Russia.

The firms and Dogruyol had no immediate comment.

The broader sanctions package targets Russia’s industrial base, maritime sector and technology suppliers, as well as facilities producing and repairing Russian weapons systems.

Among those targeted was Russia’s largest carmaker, Avtovaz, while GAZ Group — another automotive manufacturer — was hit with a new round of sanctions. Avtovaz declined to comment.

The US also imposed sanctions on a major local copper producer - Russian Copper Company. The firm did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A Finland-based network that specializes in shipping foreign electronics to Rus-

sia-based end-users was also targeted in the action as Washington cracks down on sanctions evasion. The Treasury slapped sanctions on Finland-based logistics firms Siberica Oy and Luminor Oy, accusing them of sending a wide variety of electronics into Russia.

Russia’s construction sector, revenue streams from extractive industries and Russia-based banks, wealth management consulting, auditing and investment firms were also hit in the action.

Russia’s embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## NATO Membership

Turkey, a member of NATO, has sought to maintain good relations with both Moscow and Kyiv during the war. It opposes the sanctions on principle, but has said they will not be circumvented in Turkey and that no shipped products can be used by Russia’s military.

Ties with the US have been strained over Turkey’s reluctance to support the bids of Sweden and Finland to join NATO after Russia invaded Ukraine. While Finnish membership was sealed in April, Sweden’s application remains held up by Turkey and Hungary.

Washington is not worried that the sanctions imposed on Thursday could derail Sweden’s bid to join NATO, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters.

“We continue to work with them to communicate that NATO accession is important for Sweden, it should happen as soon as possible, and we take President Erdogan’s assurances that it will happen at great value,” Miller said.

“We don’t see these as any way connected, and we don’t see that in any way these sanctions should have any impact at all on that accession.”

The United States has repeatedly said Sweden has done enough to alleviate Turkey’s concerns and that its membership should be approved now.

## Iraq Condemns ‘Repeated Turkish Attacks’ after Kurdish Officers Killed

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq’s President Abdel Latif Rashid condemned on Tuesday, September 19, “repeated Turkish attacks,” a day after a drone strike on a northern airfield killed three Kurdish counterterrorism officers.

“The Turkish ambassador will be called in to receive a letter of protest addressed to the Turkish president,” Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Rashid’s office said in a statement.

“Mercy be on the martyrs of Iraq, the civilian and military heroes killed by repeated Turkish attacks.”

Turkish authorities have not commented on Monday’s strike which killed three members of the counterterrorism forces of Iraq’s autonomous Kurdish region and wounded three others at Arbat airfield, southeast of the city of Sulaimaniyah.

While such attacks against the Iraqi Kurdish security services are extremely rare, Ankara is leading a quickening campaign in northern Iraq and neighboring Syria, targeting Kurdish fighters.

A senior military official in Baghdad said that the drone which killed the counterterrorism officers had originated in Turkey.

Around 5 pm (1400 GMT) on Monday, September 18, “the drone entered Iraqi airspace, crossing the border from Turkey, and bombarded the Arbat airfield,” which is mainly used by crop-spraying aircraft, said General Yehya Rassoul, spokesman of the federal armed forces commander in chief.

“This attack constitutes a violation of Iraq’s sovereignty,” he said, adding: “Iraq reserves the right to put a stop to these violations.”

“These repeated attacks are incompatible with the principle of good neighborliness between states. They threaten to undermine Iraq’s efforts to build positive and balanced political, economic and security relations with its neighbors,” Rassoul said.

On Sunday, a Turkish drone strike killed a senior official and three fighters of the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) in the Sinjar Mountains of northwestern Iraq, Iraqi Kurdish authorities said.

Ankara and its Western allies classify the PKK as a “terrorist” organization.

The United Nations mission in Iraq condemned the attack on Arbat airfield.

“Attacks repeatedly violating Iraqi

sovereignty must stop,” it said. “Security concerns must be addressed through dialogue and diplomacy — not strikes.”

The Turkish army rarely comments on its strikes in Iraq but routinely conducts military operations against PKK rear-bases in autonomous Kurdistan as well as in Sinjar district.

The PKK has been waging a deadly insurgency against the Turkish state for four decades and the conflict has repeatedly spilt across the border into northern Iraq.

Turkey operates dozens of military posts in northern Iraq initially established under an agreement struck in the eighties with the government of executed dictator Saddam Hussein.

In April, Baghdad accused Ankara of carrying out a “bombardment” near Sulaimaniyah airport while US soldiers and the commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces — a US-backed alliance dominated by the PKK’s Syrian Kurdish ally, the People’s Defence Units (YPG) — were present.

That strike too drew condemnation from the office of president Rashid, who is himself a Kurd.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Paris Gala for Artsakh: ‘One Nation, One Culture, One Child, One Hope’

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — “Wars may come to an end, but traumas last for a long time thereafter. All wars present the same forms of horror, and they leave survivors with weighty handicaps, both visible and invisible.” These are the words of Eugénie Alecian, a leading French-Armenian musician and composer. And the most seriously affected, she adds, are children and their families. It is this awareness that has motivated Alecian to lend her support to the efforts of Santé Arménie (Health Armenia), a non-profit association of doctors and psychologists who are offering psychiatric and child-psychiatric care, not only as immediate relief, but as long-term support for children and their families in Armenia and Artsakh.

To this end, as founder and president of Action Musicale Internationale, Alecian decided to organize a charity gala event in Paris to raise funds for Santé Arménie on

velopment, and partnership with Armenian institutions.

Devoting particular attention to the needs of the traumatized, Santé Arménie, which cooperates with other French medical missions in Armenia and Artsakh, has proposed projects reinforcing the treatment of psycho-trauma. These include the creation of a chair in child psychiatry — the first in Armenia — which is an inter-university project between Yerevan State University and Université Paris Est Créteil; and, partnership with Arevamanuk Psycho-Social Support Foundation, to strengthen psychotherapy support, with remuneration of 14 psychologists in Yerevan, Dilijan, and Gyumri to provide psycho-trauma care for military personnel, their families and, more generally, the entire Armenian civilian population. In addition, projects offer psychological and psychiatric care in the Syunik region, including support group therapy for teenagers; and, mobile units in Artsakh in partnership with the Empathia

revan, National Psychiatric Association, National Association of Armenian Veterans and Resistance Fighters (ANACRA), and enjoying the support of Mayor Jacques Kossowski, offered two sessions, a discussion among experts and an exceptional music program.

The afternoon opened with a round table on Armenia: 1894 – 2023, Patrick Alecian introduced the discussion with remarks on “History and its repetitions, when denials become weapons.” He located the subject of childhood in chaos within the broad expanse of history.

“What I want to introduce,” he said, “is the need to understand the persecution of Armenians from 1894 in Anatolia to today in the Caucasus as a continuum, seeking an erasure of all their footprints. From this reality we must understand the childhood of Armenians in the eyes of a mirror broken into 8 million splinters. Each of these splinters carries a capacity for revival, but to this day the mirror remains broken.” It was the task of the symposium to explore and analyze the multiple and transgenerational effects of the persecution in the search for therapeutic means to promote a revival.

Next up was historian Claude Mutaflan, on “The different Armenian diasporas,” and ANACRA Vice-President Léon Hovnanian whose theme was “Between war and childhood, the work of remembrance.” Arsène Mekinian, professor of internal medicine and founding president of Santé Arménie spoke, as did Anne-Marie Royer, who presented her specialized field, “Child psychiatry and child protection: an indispensable union.” The session concluded with “Adolescents, their place in the care system, their needs and expectations,” presented by Sevan Minassian, also a child psychiatrist associated with Santé Arménie. The special guest was Philippe Juvin, anesthetist and intensive care physician, university professor, Head of the Emergency Department at the Hôpital Européen Georges Pompidou, and Member of the French Parliament.

## From Trauma to Music

To end the day, a group of extremely talented instrumentalists, singers and dancers joined in a tribute to their shared French and Armenian heritage, with traditional and contemporary art, classical, and jazz. Like all participants in the day’s gala event, they volunteered their talents and art.

It was not a “normal” concert. Eugénie Alecian had invited Taline Kortian, the professor and author, to be mistress of cer-



Taline Kortian and Levon Minassian (Photo Wasmuth)

emonies, or “Tamadah,” as she said, someone who proposes toasts. She would lend meaning to the transition from words to music, as one would move from the negative, the pain and suffering, without forgetting, but shifting the focus to where the eyes lead, to the future, to a tomorrow of justice and dignity, far from the horrors of war.

And yet, she felt bound to describe once again that horror — the horror of the 44-day Karabakh war, which she has written about. Kortian read from the text of a piece called “J’accuse,” (I accuse) she had published in the *Revue des deux mondes*. The text (whose title recalls that of Emile Zola’s letter in reaction to the Dreyfus affair), is impossible to summarize, but one may characterize it as a dramatic evocation/description lamenting the suffering of the Nagorno-Karabakh blockade, followed by a series of accusations addressed to those bearing direct or indirect responsibility: from Ilham Aliyev, the perpetrator, to Recep Tayyip Erdogan, his military supporter, from Israel, a weapons provider, to Europe, purchaser of Azerbaijan’s gas, from Russia, the unprotecting protector, and France, shedding “crocodile tears;” from NATO, for kowtowing to Turkey, and the UN for not sending peacekeepers, to the international community, for its failure to organize an air lift.

Taline Kortian moved then to introduce the musicians, first Levon Minassian. Recalling the names of the many great artists he has accompanied, the number of films and recordings featuring him, she introduced him, on the duduk, with Serge Arribas on the piano. Citing, singing from Armenian melodies, interspersed with echoes of the Artsakh drama, Kortian, she said Levon Minassian’s did not belong to folklore, “museum of dead souls resuscitated,” nor to any geographically defined space, but to a sphere beyond time and space, where the soul rediscovers its unity. Levon Minassian then appeared, with Serge Arribas who has accompanied him for 30 years.

Performers included the Akhtamar Quartet from Brussels, France, and Armenia; the Troup’ Adour choir, directed by Onnick Adourian; Pierre Boussaguet (doublebass) and Giovanni Mirabassi (piano); Ingmar Lazar (piano); Jean-Samuel Bez (violin); and The YERAZ dance company. Works were performed by Sayat Nova, Komitas, Komitas/ Aslamazian, Judith Adler De Oliveira, Pierre Boussaguet, Ravel, Tatoul Altounian, Giovanni Mirabassi, Eugénie Alecian, Beethoven, Edgar Hovhannessian and Charles Aznavour...



Pierre Boussaguet and Giovanni Mirabassi (Photo Wasmuth)

September 16, at Espace Carpeaux, in the Courbevoie commune.

Santé Arménie came into being on the initiative of Prof. Arsène Mekinian (Internal Medicine Department, Hôpital Saint-Antoine, Paris) in partnership with AGBU France, following the September 2020 war on Artsakh. Volunteer healthcare professionals from France, Belgium and Switzerland intervened immediately with medical assistance for the victims, and followed up with working groups (now numbering 22) to help develop the healthcare system in Armenia and Artsakh for the longer term. Their four priority areas are care and infrastructure reinforcement, training and transfer of expertise, research and de-

velopment, and partnership with Armenian institutions. Directing these ambitious initiatives are the leaders of the psycho-trauma team, Dr. Irene Nigolian, Dr. Anahit Dasseux-Ter Mesropian, Dr. Sevan Minassian and Dr. Patrick Alecian.

Dr. Patrick Alecian is musician Eugénie’s brother. He has worked in child protection since 1982, and is specialized in trauma and post-traumatic changes in children and adolescents. Currently he is training a medical and psychological corps in Armenia to deal with the devastating effects of almost 40 years of conflict.

## Raising Awareness

The gala event, held under the patronage of the Embassy of Armenia in France, Yerevan Medical University (YSMU), Ye-

## Destruction of Armenian Cultural Heritage in Artsakh Raised at UNESCO

UNESCO, from page 1  
session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee held here September 10-25.

He noted that this behavior contradicts the organization’s values and principles.

The Armenian representative also objected to the Azerbaijani proposal to include the Azokhi and Verin Tagher caves in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) in the preliminary list of Azerbaijan. He noted that the caves are located in the Hadrut region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which came under Azerbaijani control as a result of the war unleashed by the latter. Since then, he said, Azerbaijan has embarked on a state-sponsored cultural genocide of the thousand-year-old Armenian [cultural](#) heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh, with numerous documented cases of destruction of cultural sites, desecration and usurpation of Ar-

menian identity.

Satellite photos of the recently destroyed Saint Sargis Church in the village of Mokhrene, Hadrut region, among others, serve as a vivid example of Azerbaijan’s disregard not only for Armenian cultural heritage, but also for the decision of the International Court of Justice, which has obliged Azerbaijan to “take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration against Armenian cultural heritage, including churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artifacts.”

The Armenian delegate also cited the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on March 10, 2022, in which the organization condemns Azerbaijan for the destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh and the spread of Ar-

menophobia in Azerbaijan.

Vanyan noted that to date, Azerbaijan has refused to grant a UNESCO fact-finding mission the right of access to Karabakh and adjacent territories to carry out the inventory of the most important cultural values, which was proposed by the Director-General of UNESCO in November 2020 as a prerequisite for the effective protection of the region’s heritage. “Along with the inhumane blockade of Nagorno Karabakh since December 12, 2022, these actions of Azerbaijan testify to the genocidal intent to destroy the indigenous Armenian population and erase any trace of its cultural heritage,” he said.

The urgent need for the deployment of the UNESCO mission was also emphasized and Armenia’s readiness to cooperate with UNESCO on this matter was emphasized.



# Community News

## Der Matossian Tackles Genocide Denial In 21<sup>st</sup> Century At Fresno Talk

FRESNO — Dr. Bedross Der Matossian will present a lecture titled “‘It Never Happened’: Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century,” on Friday, September 29, at 7 p.m., in the Smittcamp Alumni House on the Fresno State campus. The presentation is part of the Fall Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program. Support for the presentation is provided by the Florence Elaine Hamparson Fund.

Throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> 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



Prof. Bedross Der Matossian

es 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. By concentrating on factors such as the role of communications and news media, global and national social networks, the weaponization of information by authoritarian regimes and political parties, court cases in the United States and Europe, freedom of speech, and postmodernist thought, Der Matossian will discuss how genocide denial is becoming a fact of daily life in the twenty-first century.

Der Matossian is a professor of modern Middle East history at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem he is the author, editor, and co-editor of seven books. His latest edited volume, *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century*, was published by University of Nebraska Press (2023).

Copies of *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century* are available to purchase from Amazon.

The lecture is free and open to the public. The Smittcamp Alumni House is located at 2625 E. Matoian Way on the Fresno State campus.



Zack Armen pictured in the NOA of Areni vineyards in Aghavnadzor, Vayots Dzor, Armenia<sup>1</sup> Credit: Zenith Photography

## Storica Just Wants You to Try Wines from Armenia — You’ll Love Them

By Alin K. Gregorian  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

BOSTON — If Zack Armen, the cofounder of *Storica Wines*, has his way, wines from Armenia will be as popular as those from France, Italy or Napa.

“My journey to discovering Armenian wine is a good example of how I think Armenian diasporans can and should pay attention to the wine history and culture of Armenia. Not only is it exciting and positive and high quality, but it’s a great way to share our story with the outside world and that was really my motivation in starting Storica,” he said.

Armen wants everyone, not just Armenian-Americans, to try the wines.

Armen, who cofounded Storica in 2018 with his friend, Kevork Derkevorkian, and his father, Garo Armen, said that many wines in Armenia are equal to much more expensive vintages but since the country is not a part of the traditional elite wine-producing countries, he has to make people try the wines to convince them.

“There is always apprehension because there is a preconceived notion that if the wine is from a place that someone doesn’t know, it’s not going to be good wine,” he said. “That’s why our big focus is getting lips to glasses, getting people to try it. The wines are very cleanly made, in the style that is familiar to the discerning wine palate.”

Among the wines that Storica is distributing are wines “in the style of those in France, Italy and Napa. There are stylistic similarities to wines we know and love, but there are distinctive qualities to the wines because they are coming from a different grape, a different soil, a different vineyard, a different climate. It’s a great combo of some familiarity but some uniqueness. That’s what people look for when they try a new wine,” he said.

Storica imports 19 different wines from *Keush, Noa, Oshin, Shofer, Van Ardi, Voskevaz* and *Zulal*. The wines distributed by Storica are currently available in 600-700 stores and restaurants around the US.

It’s not just Armen who is singing the praises of the wines; the wines have won gold and silver awards in the Los Angeles International Wine Competition as well as *Texsom Awards* starting in 2018.

### New Idea

In terms of quality vintages, the tide in Armenia turned in 2013-14, Armen noted. Armen said he has been visiting Armenia at least once a year for years and it was

*continued on next page*

## Kasparov Subsides At St. Louis Chess Tourney While Sam Sevian Scores Career Best

ST. LOUIS, Missouri (*Guardian*) — The 2022 Champions Showdown 9LX (Fischer Random) in St. Louis proved a horror show for Garry Kasparov, who in his prime as world champion from 1985 to 2000 won 15 consecutive tournaments. The 60-year-old, who rivals Magnus Carlsen and Bobby Fischer as the No 1 of all time, managed only a single solitary draw in nine games, and blamed it on the demands of his political work.

Back again last week for another try, Kasparov had a brilliant start with 3/4, leading the 10-player elite field headed by the world Nos 2 and 3, Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura, unbeaten after impressive wins against Wesley So and Ray Robson and draws with Nakamura and Levon Aronian.

Round five against Jeffery Xiong proved the turning point. Kasparov created a strong pawn centre at e4 and f4, then failed to strike. When the opportunity arrived for e5, f5 and fxe6 opening up the black king he missed it, soon lost on time, then lost his final four games to end up in eighth place with 3/9.

The main culprit was his poor clock handling. He often used more than half his 20 minutes time on the opening, and had to play with only the 10 seconds per move increment for the final part of the game.

Kasparov may yet return for the St Louis Rapid and Blitz in November. One of his predecessors, Emanuel Lasker, who held the world crown for a record 27 years from 1894 to 1921, also competed sparingly in his later years, yet achieved one of his best career performances when aged 67 at Moscow 1935, finishing third just half a point behind Mikhail Botvinnik and Salo Flohr, who were then world top 10 players and 40 years or more his junior.

Kasparov enjoyed his brief day in the sun at the start of the Champions Showdown. When Magnus Carlsen sent him congratulations on his performance, he was able to thank him: “From one ex world champion to another.”

For Sam Sevian, first place in the Champions Showdown was a career-best performance at age 22. He has always been very talented, known for his brilliant final move

see CHESS, page 10



Sam Sevian



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Storica Just Wants You to Try Wines from Armenia

from previous page

during one such visit that the idea for Storica began to germinate.

“On my trip in 2017, it seemed all of a sudden there was all this really good wine around Yerevan, and it was served in Yerevan in the restaurants and the cafes and it was all Armenian and I had never been aware that we had been a wine producing country,” he said.

His entry into Armenian wines was through meeting vintners Vahe and Amy Keushkerian, the founders of Keush, who were part of the “renaissance” of the Armenian wine scene, and later, Varuzhan Mouradian.

“Vahe was someone who had worked in the wine industry for 30 years in Italy, France and the US,” he said.

“Varuzhan Mouradian of Van Ardi was not a person who worked in wine,” he said. “He taught himself how to make wine and brought in bunch of consultants from Germany and the US and other places to help him produce really beautiful wine on a piece of land he bought.”

“They came in from wherever they lived and they discovered that there was this palette, a blank slate of really high-quality ingredients to make great wine: the climate of Armenia, the elevation of its vineyards, the soil, the grapes themselves that are indigenous to Armenia. All of these are quality attributes to make great wines,” he noted.

What Vahe Keushkerian said to him, Armen said, really drove home to point: “For Armenian wine to be a thing, meaning for it to truly matter, for the country, from an economic perspective, for the broad culture and the recognition of our culture, it needed to create its place in the US market. The US is the largest market for exported wine, by an order of magnitude, like \$7 or



Younger vines planted at the Zulal vineyards in Areni, Vayots Dzor, Armenia

and I decided I needed to build a company and find investors to help me finance what was going to be a very expensive and difficult project to go find people who knew how to go create the sales, marketing and distribution infrastructure and story and make this a successful endeavor. And that is what Storica is.”

“We did a little homework and saw no one is really doing this. No one is building a national-scale sales, marketing and operationally thoughtful and comprehensive effort in the US,” he said, “which is what I realized is the necessary thing to do.”

What Storica is trying to do is get buyers to see Armenian wines in the vast sea of available wines.

He added, “What Armenia is competing against are very well entrenched wine categories: Italy, France, Argentina, Napa.”

He wrote a business plan in 2020. “I was fortunate to meet an Armenian from the wine industry, Ara Sarkissian, who helped us really understand what it would take as far as going and pitching our portfolio to distributors, who are the middle men in every state, and get them to not only take us on but get behind our portfolio,” including training their own distributors so that they could “do the selling.”

With the business plan in place, he said, he felt comfortable to go and find investors.

He still has his “day” job at Agenesis, founded by his father, but the rest of his time is dedicated to Storica. He graduated from Johns Hopkins University and later received an MBA from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The biggest markets for Storica are Boston and LA, he said, followed by New York City.

“The fourth highest selling state for us is Alabama, the fifth is Nebraska and the sixth is Minneapolis,” he said.

## Ancient Winemaking History

While Armenian wines may be new to the European and American palates, wine has a deep history in Armenia. In fact, Armenia may be one of the first wine-producing regions; tests reveal that there is evidence of wine making in the Areni-1 site, a cave in Armenia, dating back to around 4100 BC and 4000 BC.

Said Armen, “By ancient standards, it’s a well-entrenched wine producing place. If you go back in history to the era of the Roman Empire, the Babylonian times, the Urartian kingdoms, Armenia was always looked to as a place with high quality production of wine. Armenian merchants were among the only ones allowed up the Euphrates River in a certain direction because they had the best wine that all the Roman Empire higher-ups wanted,” he added. “There’s a whole lot of proof points that says Armenia has been a place of high-quality wine production for thousands of years.”

During the Soviet era, all that changed and the government focused only on the production of brandy and wine became secondary and therefore inferior. Those lower-quality wines “were not really reflective of the quality of Armenia and its terroir. The whole wine culture was lost, both in the country and the recognition of Armenia by contemporary standards as a quality producing region was just not known.”

Things began to change again after Armenia’s independence, he said, when groups of diasporan Armenians came and started exploring winemaking.

“Now, these wines are all of the quality and taste profile of old-world wines from France Italy, Germany, Napa wines, wines of Argentina. We’ve seen that validated by a lot of the reaction we get in the US market,” Armen said.

When Armenian vineyards started becoming a bigger industry, many winemakers expanded into Artsakh. With the horrifying 2020 war, most of those vineyards were taken over and absorbed into Azerbaijan.

None of the wineries that Storica worked with were affected.

“I actually remember having breakfast that Sunday morning in Boston when the

war broke out with a Providence-based Armenian whose family was from a village in Artsakh and he had built a winery there. He got a call from his winemaker who basically said we’re under attack. This is not looking good. Unfortunately, a few weeks later, the winery was taken over. He and I were having a conversation about having the wine brought into our portfolio,” he said.

## Trying New Wines

So a discerning oenophile wants to try a Storica wine and wonder where to start.

The quality is there, he stressed again and again. For example, he said, the Keush Origins is a sparkling wine made in the way traditional champagne is made in the French region. It is Storica’s best-selling wine.

“It’s about \$25 per bottle ... and would compare to a \$50-60 Veuve Clicquot or Taittinger. We have a vintage sparkling wine that is like \$40 that you can compare to a \$100-150 champagne,” he noted.

According to Armen, “As far as red wine is concerned, that is the Zulal Areni wine, which is just the Areni grape fermented in a stainless-steel vat, which means all you are getting as far as the taste and aroma is the grape. Or the Van Ardi Estate Red Blend.... That’s also a beautiful red wine if people like more earthy, structured wines. If you like fruitier wines, like a pinot noir, you start with the Areni.”

On the white side, he suggested Shofer Voskehat, which won silver and bronze this year at the Los Angeles International Wine Challenge and Texsom.

Later this month, Storica will be launching a wine club. Those who enroll can sign up for different levels, such as four or six wines every three months, as well as participate in some winetasting events.

“I see Armenian wine as a way to create a durable impact of Armenia in the hearts and wines of people,” he said. “Wine is something people create an emotional connection to” by connecting it to emotion.

“Very few products that a country can produce itself are agricultural oriented, service oriented and manufacture oriented, and wine is all of them,” he said.

There are [store locators](#) on the website, but Armen said the best way to buy the wines is from the website.



Clay pots, or “karas,” the ancient method of wine fermentation, are used in the “Karasi Collection” of Voskevaz Wines; here pictured at the Voskevaz Winery in Ashtarak, Armenia

8 billion worth of wine exported into the US annually. This is on top of Napa being a \$4-5 billion industry in and of itself.”

“All the wine experts, the senior sommeliers, the highest end wine collectors, the vast majority are concentrated in the US,” he added.

Curious, he said he asked Keushkerian who was trying to bring Armenian wines to the US.

He explained, “I very quickly realized what was happening wasn’t good enough



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Aurora Prize Announces 2024 Aurora Humanitarians

NEW YORK — The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative on September 19 announced the three Aurora Humanitarians who have been shortlisted for the 2024 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity. The announcement was made at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) annual meeting in New York City. One of the 2024 Aurora Humanitarians will be named the next Aurora Prize Laureate at a Ceremony to take place in Los Angeles, California in May 2024. The 2024 Aurora Prize Laureate will receive a \$1,000,000 award together with a unique opportunity to continue the cycle of giving by helping people in need.

“We are delighted to announce the three exceptional individuals whom we have selected as the 2024 Aurora Humanitarians. They come from diverse backgrounds but are united by their commitment to serving humanity. They have each shown extraordinary courage and commitment in helping others in dangerous situations without regard to their own safety and



From left, Denis Mukwege, Nasrin Sotoudeh and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja

well-being,” said Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee and Co-Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London. “By their actions they have demonstrated for the world to see what it

means to be a humanitarian.”

The 2024 Aurora Humanitarians are:

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja (Bahrain/Denmark), a human rights advocate who has been fearlessly defending the most vulnerable communities in Bahrain, especially those who have been subject to systemic violations of their human rights. Mr. Al-Khawaja has been arrested several times for this work, including in 2011, for peaceful protests during the Bahraini Uprising, which resulted in him being sentenced to life in prison by a military tribunal.

Denis Mukwege (Democratic Republic of the Congo), a gynecologist and human rights activist who has been working since 1999 to provide medical, legal, and psychosocial aid to women subjected to sexualized and gender-based violence and to advocate for gender equality and the elimination of rape as a weapon of war in the DRC and worldwide. Dr. Mukwege has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize.

Nasrin Sotoudeh (Iran), a human rights defender who has been working as an attorney since 2003, representing Iranian opposition activists, young prisoners, and women’s rights activists, including women who were arrested for protesting compulsory headscarves (hijab) in Iran. Due to her work, Mrs. Sotoudeh has been frequently imprisoned, including in solitary confinement.

“With more than 700 submissions this year, the Aurora Prize Selection Committee had the difficult task of narrowing a long list of extraordinary individuals to three,” said Nubar Afeyan, Ph.D., Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and Founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering. “These three outstanding Humanitarians are undaunted in their efforts to help others in the face of unimaginable circumstances, and we are honored to raise awareness of their work and impact.”

The nomination period for the Aurora Humanitarian Prize ran from June 1, 2022 through May 31, 2023, bringing 732 submissions for 675 unique candidates in total. The applications for the 2024 Aurora Prize hailed from 75 countries.

“We have an astonishing need for humanitarian assistance in all corners of the world, and each of the individuals recognized by Aurora is making a tangible difference in the lives of those who need it most and serves as an inspiration to us all,” said Dame Louise Richardson, Aurora Prize Selection Committee member and President of Carnegie Corporation of New York.

To date, the Initiative has benefited over 2.7 million people affected by war, conflict, displacement, persecution, and other issues worldwide.



## Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

### Dr. Nubar Berberian 2023 Annual Awards



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

#### ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

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

Watertown, MA, August 10, 2023





COMMUNITY NEWS

# Tekeyan Metro LA Members Meet LA Angels General Manager Perry Minasian

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Seventy Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles chapter members and friends attended the Detroit Tigers versus Los Angeles Angels baseball game at Angel Stadium on Saturday, September 16, 2023. Prior to the game, the group met with Perry Minasian, General Manager of the Los Angeles Angels, in the Angels press conference room. Minasian answered many questions, ranging from the current roster of the Angels to recent developments in Artsakh. Minasian emphasized the resilience of the Armenian people and the importance of his Armenian heritage.



Los Angeles Angels General Manager Perry Minasian addressing the group



Armenian youth displaying the Armenian flag at the Los Angeles Angels baseball game



Los Angeles Angels General Manager Perry Minasian with Armenian youth



Armenian youth displaying the Armenian tricolor at the Los Angeles Angels baseball game

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Kasparov Subsides at St. Louis Chess Tourney While Sam Sevian Scores Career Best

CHESS, from page 6  
against Alexey Shirov, but like other US GMs in their 20s has found it hard to break into the elite trio of Caruana, Nakamura and So.

Sevian has made a specialty of studying 9LX, and it paid off in his final-round battle with Caruana for first prize, where he launched a deadly attack with queen and both rooks on the world No 2's king, blew open the defenses with a bishop sacrifice at b2, and clinched victory in this week's puzzle diagram.

Elsewhere, the Vladimir Kramnik v Hans Niemann dispute reported last week continued as the former world champion issued a long video claiming to identify suspicious moments during their first game.

Kramnik's allegations have left many unconvinced. One typical comment on Reddit was: "Hans moves fast, sus. Hans moves slowly, sus. Hans plays a good move, sus. Hans plays a bad move, sus. Hans knows the ideas and nuances, a good player. Hans misses an idea, sus. Hans doesn't play an obvious move but plays something worse, sus. Hans thinks when there's an obvious move, sus." It was 3/2 blitz, and Niemann was streaming throughout the game.

The Danish GM Jacob Aagaard, 50, is a respected chess trainer and author, who while domiciled in Scotland, won the 2007 British Championship. Aagaard is one of the few people to have been close enough to Niemann to assess the controversial 20-year-old objectively.

A few days ago he wrote: "Our training session was a week. It was meant to be a camp, but no one else could make it. Hans was difficult to train. I tried to do calculation and endgame training with him (he had requested endgame training). At first, I showed exercises from recent games (last 18 months) that I really liked. He knew them ALL. I was astonished by his memory. I was astonished by his intuition. Both were off the charts for what I have seen training Shankland, Gelfand, and other 2600+ and a few 2700s."

Meanwhile, as Niemann continues to stream, the World Junior Championship in Mexico City, where he is top seed with an opportunity to revive his over-the-board career, is now less than two weeks away.

England's Shreyas Royal, 14, is seeded 36th out of 139 entrants, and will regard this as another opportunity to score his second (of three needed) for the grandmaster title.



Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan at the Bayside Armenian Way Festival

## Primate Visits Bayside Armenian Way Festival

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — On Saturday, September 16, Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan attended the "Armenia Way Festival" at Holy Martyrs Church.

"I was surrounded by the beautiful colors, tantalizing aromas, and melodious sounds that make our Armenian culture so rich and unique," he said. "Cultural displays were in abundance, with joyful dances and heartfelt songs performed by community members of all ages."

The annual festival, which takes over

the streets surrounding the Bayside parish, has become a compelling testimony to the vitality of Armenian culture and faith. But this year's event also included a moment of solemn reflection amid the festivity.

"What moved me most profoundly was the communal prayer for our brothers and sisters in Artsakh," Fr. Mesrop recalled. "In that sacred moment, we were united together, affirming that faith is the cornerstone of our unity and resilience, providing us with the strength to face challenges and

endure difficulties. I left the event feeling deeply grateful for a day that exemplified the best of what it means to be both Armenian and Christian."

The Primate concluded: "To Holy Martyrs' pastor Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan, the festival committee, parish council, and all who organized, participated, or attended: thank you! Your efforts made this more than just an event; it was a gathering of hearts and minds, and I am blessed to have been a part of it."

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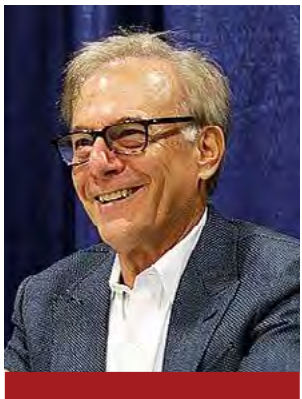
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Cocktail Reception | 6:30 pm  
 Dinner and Program | 7:30 pm  
 Seats are \$300 per person



COMMUNITY NEWS

# AIWA Los Angeles Affiliate Pays Tribute to Founding Members

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA) Los Angeles Affiliate hosted a memorable luncheon on August 25, to honor and celebrate the lives of three esteemed members who recently passed away. The event, held at the elegant California Club, brought together 200 guests to remember and pay tribute to Lily Ring Balian, Flora Dunaians and Savey Tufenkian.

Dunaians and Tufenkian, both founding members of the AIWA Los Angeles Affiliate Chapter, were instrumental in shaping the organization’s growth and mission. Balian was an early member and past president of the organization. Their dedication to AIWA’s values and their tireless efforts to support Armenian women and communities left a profound impact that continues to inspire.

The event was a reflection of the grace and strength that these remarkable women embodied throughout their lives. Beautiful floral arrangements adorned the venue, setting a lovely and uplifting atmosphere. The See’s Candy favors, a love that all three honorees shared, reflected the sweet memories they created together.

The program included speeches and tributes by prominent individuals who knew and admired the honorees. Emmy Award winning Fox 11 news anchor, Araksya Karapetyan, and AIWA-LA past president, Cindy Norian, shared stories about the life and legacy of Lily Ring Balian. Talar Bilemjian, Flora Dunaians’ granddaughter, spoke with admiration about her grandmother and the importance of keeping Armenian traditions alive, while AIWA – LA co-founder, Hermine Janoyan, eloquently conveyed the profound impact of work with dear friend Flora on so many projects. Tufenkian’s granddaughter, Sarah Cipolla, and AIWA, LA co-founder, Elizabeth Agbabian, paid tribute to Savey, whose dedication to AIWA and many other causes will forever be remembered.

Beautiful music was provided by Greg Hosharian on piano and Angela Amirian on violin who performed interludes featuring songs that were favored by the honorees.



AIWA Los Angeles Executive Committee with Fox 11 News Anchor, Araksya Karapetyan, front center.

The AIWA Los Angeles Affiliate extends its deepest gratitude to all who attended this special event which served as a testament to the enduring influence and spirit of these three beloved women. Their contributions to AIWA and the Armenian community will forever be cher-

ished and celebrated.

For more information about AIWA and its ongoing initiatives, including details about the upcoming conference, Local to Global – Uniting for Change, in Armenia, October 5 – 7, visit [www.aiwainternational.org](http://www.aiwainternational.org)

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# Arts & Culture

## Song and Conversation With Soprano Mané Galoyan at St. John Church of Southfield

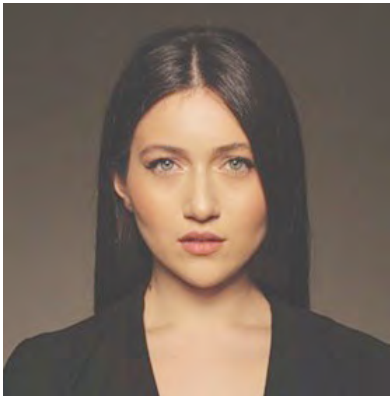
SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — On Friday, October 20, St. John Armenian Music Guild and the Detroit Opera will host a conversation with acclaimed opera singer Mané Galoyan about her rise to stardom from Armenia to the most important opera stages around the world.

Galoyan will discuss her Armenian heritage, her musical family and her exciting career and sing selections accompanied by pianist Nathalie Doucet, Head of Music, Detroit Opera.

Galoyan will be on the stage of the Detroit Opera House October 28 for Detroit Opera's concert "Arias and Overtures" and for the title role in Detroit Opera's "The Cunning Little Vixen" in May 2024.

The Houston Press exclaimed Galoyan was "...radiant as dewy Gilda in her first throes of love, heavenly as a daughter disgraced, and positively stoic as martyr...she possesses a crystalline voice that cuts through any orchestral texture. She waltzed through Verdi's dramatic coloratura without effort. She can float incandescent pianissimos then belt with Verdian thunder."

Additionally in her current season, Galoyan will sing Suor Angelica and Lauretta in a new production of "Il Trittico" with Donald Runnicles at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Pamina in "Die Zauberflöte" with the Wie-



Mané Galoyan

ner Staatsoper, Donna Anna in "Don Giovanni" with the Canadian Opera Company, Violetta in "La traviata" with Santa Fe Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin, Suor Angelica with the Bayerische Staatsoper.

In concert, she will sing Rachmaninoff's "The Bells" with the Swedish Radio Orchestra, and a holiday concert with the Basel Symphony Orchestra.

Galoyan is a winner of numerous international competitions, including First Prize in the 27th Eleanor McCollum Competition and Concert of Arias with Houston Grand Opera. She holds two degrees from the Yerevan State Komitas Conservatory in Armenia, where she was named the 2013 winner of the President of the Republic of Armenia Youth Prize.

The program begins at 7 p.m. with an afterglow immediately following the presentation at St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall (22001 Northwestern Highway, Southfield, MI). Admission is with free will offering.



Tommy Lasorda spending time with the young Minasian boys at Wrigley Field (1985)

## Zack Minasian Publishes Memoirs on Mentor Tommy Lasorda

By Kim Bardakian Demirjian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Zack Minasian grew up like many young men in the 1960's, loving baseball.

Lucky for Zack, having a father like Edward Minasian who worked as the banquet and catering manager at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles provided access to some big names in the sports and entertainment industries, including Tommy Lasorda.

Tommy, who would later go on to become a Hall of Fame baseball manager with the Los Angeles Dodgers for 20 years, started out his career managing the minor league Ogden Dodgers in the Pioneer League. A friendship was struck between Edward and Tommy, who requested Edward's son, Zack, to spend the summer in Ogden, Utah running the clubhouse. Zack was only fifteen years old at the time.

The rest is history and baseball became part of Zack's life and the family business.

Fifty-five years after that summer of 1968 with the Ogden Dodgers, Minasian wrote a memoir about this time which was recently published as *Lasorda University: A Recollection of My Summer of '68 with Tommy Lasorda and the Ogden Dodgers*.

The book provides more than 100 photos and a rare glimpse into the magical season along with recounting many recollections from Lasorda including life and leadership lessons, as well as insights into Lasorda's motivational tactics.

As a young clubhouse manager, Minasian witnessed several future baseball superstars including Steve Garvey, Bobby Valentine, Tom Paciorek and Bill Buckner, all young, raw, inexperienced players at the time. That summer in 1968 was only the beginning of Minasian's love of baseball and benefiting from a lifelong father figure in Lasorda.

Compiling and writing the book took Minasian down memory lane with many of the players from that summer in Ogden. While seven of the players have passed away, Minasian was able to eventually connect with twenty-one to obtain their personal recollections of Lasorda and the impact he had on them. He had not spoken to some of the players since he was that young, fifteen-year-old clubhouse manager.

Needless to say, those calls included fond team memories and countless funny stories, many captured throughout the book. The overarching theme remained clear over the decades – the respect and admiration they shared for Lasorda who passed away in January 2021.

see MEMOIR, page 14

## Presentation Of *After the Ottomans* to Take Place at NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will present a hybrid (in-person and online) program, on the new book, *After the Ottomans: Genocide's Long Shadow and Armenian Resilience*, with Seyhan Bayraktar and Khatchig Mouradian in conversation with Nanore Barsoumian, on Tuesday, September 26, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern) / 4:30 pm (Pacific).

This program will be held at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave. It is free and open to the public. Copies of *After the Ottomans* will be available for purchase and signing.

It will also be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and on NAASR's YouTube Channel. To register go to <https://bit.ly/NAASR-9-26-23>.

Edited by Kieser, Bayraktar and Mouradian, *After the Ottomans: Genocide's Long Shadow and Armenian Resistance* (I.B. Tauris, 2023), presents the work of eleven scholars of history, anthropology, literature, and political science exploring the Ottoman Armenians not only as the major victims of the First World War and the post-war treaties, but also as agents striving for survival, writing history, transmitting the memory and searching for justice.

Bayraktar is PhD-coordinator at the Graduate School of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Zurich. She has a PhD in social sciences from the University of Konstanz (Germany). Her research focuses on the politics of memory and apology and political communication. She is the author of *Politik und Erinnerung: Der Armeniermord im türkischen Diskurs zwischen Nationalismus und Europäisierung* (Politics and Memory: The Armenian Genocide in Turkish Discourse Between Nationalism and Europeanization) published by transcript 2010.

Mouradian is a lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies at Columbia University, and the Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist at the Library of Congress. He also serves as co-principal investigator of the project on Armenian Genocide Denial at the Global Institute for Advanced Study, New York University. Mouradian is the author of the award-winning book *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915-1918*.

Nanore Barsoumian is the former editor of the *Armenian Weekly* newspaper and the author of the chapter "Genocide Commemorations in Turkey: A Social Identity Perspective" in *After the Ottomans*.

For more information contact NAASR at [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org).



ARTS & CULTURE

# Zack Minasian Publishes Memoirs on Tommy Lasorda

MEMOIR, from page 13

Little did they all know at the time how that one summer in Ogden would change them all forever.

### Beginnings

Zack is the grandson of Armenian Genocide survivors, Kevork Minasian and Yag-sa Cholakian, both from Kharpert. Zack, an only child, was born in Chicago and early

tance of marrying an Armenian girl. Even when his grandmother passed away, he kept her in his heart and promised to fulfill her wishes.

Zack did just that when he met and later married Barbara Ipjian from St. James Armenian Church in Evanston, Illinois. Barbara came from an active family in the church which made Zack feel welcome into the Armenian community.

Zack and Barbara lived in Chicago and started a family where their four sons were born in Evanston. Then in 1988, Zack received a phone call to run the visiting team clubhouse for the Texas Rangers, handling everything from the food to equipment and uniforms. The family packed up and headed south to Texas to begin a professional baseball journey.

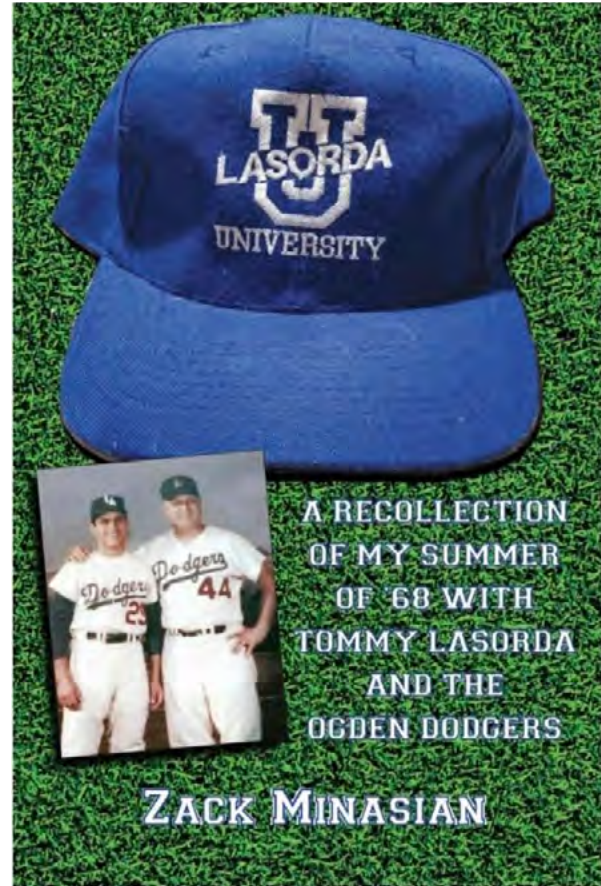
With many years of experience in Ogden as well as learning from the best with Lasorda, Minasian was known to be tough, but also a good guy who loved to talk and tell stories. One thing was for sure: there wasn't any screwing around in Minasian's clubhouse and all the players knew.

One never knew who was going to walk into his clubhouse. Prior to becoming the 43rd US President,

George W. Bush, a part-owner of the Texas Rangers at one time, had a great relationship with Zack. The president would workout at the stadium and have many long chats afterwards. There was also the time Minasian warmed up legendary golfer Tiger Woods before the latter was to throw out the first pitch in 1995.

on moved with his parents and grandparents to Los Angeles, ultimately residing in Burbank, long before many Armenians lived there.

Zack recalls the impact his grandmother had on him, when his grandparents would speak Armenian to one another. He especially remembers her reiterating the impor-



A young Zack Minasian with his father, Edward Minasian

Zack's four sons, Rudy, Perry, Calvin and Zack were often spotted in the clubhouse spending time with their father and the players as youngsters. Inevitably, Zack's love of baseball wore off on his children.

It's no surprise that three of Zack's sons currently hold positions in Major League Baseball in various capacities: Perry as the General Manager for the Anaheim Angels; Calvin as the Director of Clubhouse and Equipment with the Atlanta Braves; and Zack as the VP of Pro Scouting with the

San Francisco Giants.

Minasian is proud of all his sons and their commitment to their professions. He knows his grandmother is especially proud and smiling down that two of his sons met their Armenian brides at Hye Camp in Ingleside, Illinois, which is organized by the Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern).

To purchase the book, read sample chapters, or receive an autographed copy of Lasorda University visit [www.Lasordauniversity.com](http://www.Lasordauniversity.com) and Amazon.com.

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Ogden Dodgers Big Four: from left, Bill Buckner, Tommy Lasorda, Steve Garvey and Bobby Valentine



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



## Joumana Accad's Lamb and Bean Soup (Ab Gusht)

BEIRUT — “My Lebanese heritage taught me that good taste is easy to achieve by using just a few fresh, simple ingredients. There is no need for costly and numerous ingredients. Good cooking is not about impressing people, it is about knowing how to season and balance ingredients, and keeping it simple is best,” says Lebanese food blogger, cookbook author and stylist Joumana Accad at Taste of Beirut. Taste of Beirut began in 2009 and its main goal is to share Joumana's beloved Lebanese heritage with the world through her many recipes, anecdotes, cultural history, and travels.

“This ancient stew is popular in Iran (from where it originated) as well as in Iraq,” says Joumana. “Iran's most beloved and ubiquitous peasant dish, ab gusht (abgoosht) (or ‘meat water’) is made with inexpensive, bony cuts of meat, which take a back seat to the broth and the sheer ceremony involved in serving it all. In Iran, people like to gather the solid ingredients, drain them a bit and mash them, and then eat them in a wonderful flatbread called sangak with pickles, onions, radishes, and herbs. Some describe it as a ‘hearty mutton Persian soup thickened with chickpeas.’” A similar dish in Armenia is also called abgoosht. The difference is that in Armenia beef rather than lamb is used.

“Sangak or nân-e sangak is a plain, rectangular, or triangular Iranian whole wheat leavened flatbread. It is usually made from wheat flour or a variation of

three parts whole wheat flour with one part white flour. The dough is considered to be a mild sourdough. The sangak bread is so good, I brought some back with me to Beirut and ate it for several days (it was at least 2 feet long),” she adds.

“In Persian ‘sangak’ means little stone. The bread is baked on a bed of small river stones in an oven. There are usually two varieties of this bread offered at Iranian bakeries: the generic one which has no toppings; and the more expensive variety which is topped with poppy seeds and/or sesame seeds. Sangak is said to be one of the most prized Iranian breads.”\*



The traditional Iranian bread Sangak

### INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 lb. lamb shanks  
 1/4 cup olive oil or ghee  
 1 16-oz. can chickpeas (garbanzo beans), rinsed  
 1 16-oz. can navy beans (or red kidney beans or yellow split peas), rinsed  
 2 large onions, peeled and roughly chopped  
 2 dried limes, poked with a hole in two or three places  
 1 small can tomato paste  
 1/4 cup rice (or coarse bulgur or quinoa)  
 2 large potatoes, peeled, cut in chunks, soaked in water  
 Salt, black pepper, ground cinnamon (1 teaspoon), turmeric (1 teaspoon), cayenne pepper (1 teaspoon or to taste)  
 1 beef stock cube  
 1/2 cup fresh chopped parsley, to taste  
 Optional: a pinch of saffron, bloomed in 1/4 cup of warm water (previously powdered in a mortar with a dash of salt or sugar)  
 Serves 4-6.

### PREPARATION:

Wash and pat dry the meat, then season with salt and pepper.

In a large dry pot, heat the oil or ghee and fry the meat and onions for about 10 minutes over medium heat, or until the meat is browned.

Add the tomato paste and pour about 6 cups of water (or stock); add the dried limes and season with cinnamon, turmeric, and cayenne pepper. Wait until the stew is ready to add salt after tasting. Simmer for about 1 hour or until the meat is tender. At this point, add the potatoes, rice, and beans and simmer for 30 minutes; adjust seasonings at the end. Discard the lamb bones, and squeeze the dried limes to extract every possible flavor.

Taste for extra seasoning.

To make Gushte Kubideh:

Using a strainer, lift all the solid ingredients from the stew (meat, beans, rice, potatoes) and mash until you obtain a thick coarse purée like mashed potatoes, adding a little more broth if necessary. Keep the broth warm. Serve the broth in bowls and the gushte kubideh with sangak bread or any flatbread like lavash, saj or markouk, and some raw radishes, herbs and green onions. Joumana says: “I like to add some chili sauce to this dish.

The traditional Iranian dish contains yellow split peas and rice. It's easier to poke holes within the dried limes if they're softened in hot water.”

Sangak bread in Shiraz (Iran) <https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/lamb-and-bean-soup-ab-gusht/>

For this recipe, go to:

<https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/lamb-and-bean-soup-ab-gusht/>

For information and more recipes: <https://www.tasteofbeirut.com>

For Joumana's YouTube videos, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/user/tasteofbeirut/videos>

For Joumana's Baklava in 10 Minutes, go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7I7-9Amsqk>

For Joumana's Kibbeh stuffed with shredded beef, go to

<https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/kibbeh-stuffed-with-shredded-beef/>

For Joumana's Iranian cabbage and rice pilaf (Kalam Polo) recipe, go to: <https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/kalam-polo/>

For Joumana's Red Lentil Kibbeh, see: <https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/red-lentil-kibbeh/>

Also see the Authentic Abgoosht recipe at Taste Atlas: <https://www.tasteatlas.com/abgoosht/recipe>

<https://gulfnnews.com/friday/art-people/sangak-is-one-of-the-most-prized-iranian-breads-1.2092579>

Abgoosht or dizi is one of the most famous and popular dishes in Iran. Courtesy <https://arachef.com/134-abgoosht-recipe/>

Joumana has worked in the United States and in Lebanon, and has a large inventory of styled, copyrighted food images available if needed. She is interested in styling food for corporate clients and in brand sponsorships. Contact her by e-mail at [joumana\\_accad@yahoo.com](mailto:joumana_accad@yahoo.com) or on social media. Subscribe to her food blog and receive notifications of new posts by e-mail: <https://www.tasteofbeirut.com/about/>

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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Nairyan Vocal Ensemble Simultaneously Sings, Signs, Strives for Social Justice

NAIRYAN, from page 1

and be involved in some way in the process, we invited an interpreter, who interpreted throughout the concert. Seeing what a beautiful language it is, how dance-like and visual it is, we decided to start to do it ourselves.”

She said that it took months and years to master the language and integrate it into their performances, and observed, “That is how our difficulties began, because not being familiar with that language, we could not imagine what difficulties we would have to confront.”

The broader musical community at first had difficulty in accepting what the Nairyan Vocal Ensemble was doing. Naira Mughdusyan, musical director of the group, said, “When we began to sing with sign language, many, especially senior musicians, would exclaim, ‘What are you doing? What kind of dance are you dancing?’ Gradually they became reconciled with it.”

Another singer, Anna Minasyan, stated: “We have translated approximately 30-40 songs. We cannot fully speak. Naira is the only one who speaks sign language a little in our group. We only sing in sign language.”

Naira declared, “When we speak with sign language, the song becomes more discernable and more understandable even to those who can hear. Of course, for those who cannot hear, naturally only the words are translated and they are translated more in connection with their meaning.” She said that this is much more interesting for those who had lost their hearing later in their lives.

Deaf people explained to the singers how they benefit from such concerts. Naira said, “They say that they understand what rhythm of song we are singing because our gestures are subject to certain rules, dependent on the song’s tempo — whether the song is slow or fast, anxious or calm — so they feel everything.”

Naira recalled the first time the group sang with sign language and invited deaf people to be present. She said, “The audience members, very moved, approached us and asked that we do not stop, that we should definitely continue to keep singing songs with sign language, and turn Komitas’s songs, for example, accessible to them. We promised them, and ourselves, that independent of whether in the ranks of our audience there would be people with hearing difficulties, we would always sing accompanied by that language.”

There is a school in Yerevan for children with hearing difficulties with which the Nairyan Ensemble has established a connection, and the Ensemble also circulated a notice through the organized deaf community to let people know of their concerts with sign language.

Naira added that the Mughdusyan Center set the goal for itself that if it had anything important to say, it must also translate it into sign language. She said, “We decided, for example, to translate into sign language Zabel Yesayan’s letter to her daughter Sophie... It surprised me to find out that it is harder to simultaneously talk in sign language and read a letter than to sing accompanied by sign language.”

## Mughdusyan Art Center

The Mughdusyan Art Center was established in 2014 in Yerevan. Naira, one of the founders, said, “The Mughdusyan Art Center is a space which gives the possibility for all to connect with art. It gives children the opportunity to obtain an art education. As for adult artists, it gives the space to develop.”

When Naira said “for all,” she meant it. It provides education to children whether handicapped or from poor families. Those who can pay for education do. She said, “We decided that we need to establish the same conditions for children coming from different social classes, meaning the same educational model and the same quality. With us, educa-

tion is based on an academic foundation. We have a fine arts direction and a vocal one.”

The Mughdusyan Center financially is supported by Naira, her mother, and her sister, Maryam Mughdusyan, a painter who both sells her pictures and works in different places. Naira said, “We all place all our financial means at the disposal of the Mughdusyan Art Center. When the children of families, the families provide the necessary materials for their children, while we do this for the children from poor families. Unfortunately at this time few paying families attend.”

The Nairyan Ensemble also for many years sang on a purely voluntary basis, without any permanent financing or salaries. Naira elaborated: “We all work different jobs to earn money, but we try to have our activity connected with music. Anna Minasyan is a music teacher with 40-50 students in a choir. Yelena worked at a military orchestra for five years, playing clarinet... However now, I can say honestly, that the Nairyan Ensemble is not in the early stages where they would invite us purely on a voluntary basis for performances. Now they already know and love us, and the time has come that we begin to get paid.”

The Mughdusyan Center acts as an umbrella for many different initiatives. Naira said that at present, with the Nairyan Ensemble giving many concerts, not only in Yerevan but in the Armenian provinces, it did not have the resources to keep the children’s singing group active, but the fine arts activities, both with pottery and drawing, continue on an academic basis. Naira noted, “We do not work on the model of a general education school, but on a painting school model, which has meetings after regular school, a few times a week for a few hours.”

In addition to the Yerevan center, it has initiated a project called “Kenats Kav-Berdavan” [Clay of Life-Berdavan] in the small village of Berdavan of Tavush Province which is still ongoing. Two years ago, Naira related, it sent specialists to Berdavan with its own means, and started a group there, giving children the possibility of learning pottery. It sent two clay ovens, one for learning and a larger one for production. Naira said, “We have shown the children that it is possible with your skills and education to also earn money. We put their products on sale and give the revenue to them. They were very inspired.”

One of the older children seemed to have native skill, Naira said, so the Center gave her the possibility to come to Yerevan to continue to develop her skills and education, on the condition that she then returns to Berdavan to teach the little ones there.

In 2021, the Center established the Masoor Art House, located in Jrvezh, in Kotayk Province. Here there is a display about 12 Armenian intellectual women. Naira said, “Through this, we tried to turn those ladies and intellectual women, thanks to whom we are here today, more recognizable. We always had the impression that only our men had an intellectual life, but that is not true. There was the first female [Armenian] novelist Srpuhi Dussap and also Zabel Yesayan; there were three Armenian female deputies during the first Republic.”

The Masoor Art House also provides classes on different skills and hosts concerts by the Nairyan Ensemble. There are even cooking classes teaching how to make traditional Armenian dishes which are today not made often. Naira concluded, “This is a zone where you can truly feel Armenian, both in connection with food and also by means of clothing, because we also have costume samples, which you can try on and be photographed.”

## Nairyan Vocal Ensemble

Normally, there are five members of the ensemble. However, Naira said, during the

recent tour of the US the fifth person was preparing for her final examinations at the conservatory, and it was also not initially clear whether all five could be invited, so four singers came: Naira Mughdusyan, Yelena Azaryan, Anna Minasyan and Tina Asatryan.

While it is possible to sing with fewer members, the group also makes small dramatic presentations, for which they usually need all five. Naira said that the presentations are accompanied by short musical numbers. In other words, they both speak and sing about the theme. Examples include a presentation on the role women played in the 2020 war, or on the Armenian intellectual women of 100 years ago.

Naira declared that many singers have started but were not able to continue as part of the Nairyan Ensemble. She said, “They were not able to both sing and accompany this with sign language. It is a difficult process. However, the interest in our group is great and many people try to sing.”

The most recent singer to succeed in joining the group is Tina Asatryan, who is still a student at the Khachatur Abovyan Pedagogical University. She loved singing from childhood and learned how from her family. She related: “In 2021, when the Nairyan Vocal Ensemble came to my village, Berdavan of Tavush Province, I sang with them for the first time Komitas’s *Karun*. After that, I stated that I had always wanted to sing, and that I had wanted to wear costumes like those of the Nairyan Ensemble since childhood. Since I didn’t know the songs, nor sign language, I had to learn both at the same time. I hope I succeeded.”

Musically, Naira said, “We primarily want to make Armenian songs more popular and prominent. We try to present the works of Komitas as they are. But concerning traditional songs, in the last part of our concert, we try to turn monophony into polyphony, and harmonize, with different instruments, which is rare in our traditional music. We all play different instruments, and it is interesting that it is possible to combine our traditional songs with contemporary instruments. This is an innovation I think.”

Yelena added, “When we founded our group, we only started with classical songs — from Komitas, Karo Zakarian, Tatul Altunian, etc. We started from the classical school but understood over the years that we could turn any song into polyphony, and we can even write our own songs. Our group is a cappella, but we understood that if you want to be more influential, there must be musical accompaniment. We are now trying to compose in different styles.”

## Social Justice

There is one other key aspect to the group. “In truth our team not only must sing but also share the values, that system of values, with which the group operates,” Naira said. “Living in our society,” she continued, “we saw many issues, so we decided that we should not only sing but also through our songs raise issues and propose solutions. Our center is thus. Our group could not help but be affected by such things. And the Mughdusyan Center already did this through drawing.”

Yelena recalled that in the Covid period, since it was not possible to give theatrical presentations or concerts in halls, the group prepared various videos and programs. One was on human rights, more particularly on women’s rights. A song called “*Hamardzak em*” [I Am Bold] was created by the Nairyan members. The words were written by Mariam Mughdusyan, one of the founders of the Mughdusyan Center, and the ensemble members composed the music. Yelena noted that the next video program they did was called “*Oror, nani*” [Lullaby, Nani], which presented Armenian lullabies. The theme was gender-selective abortions in

Armenia, where unborn girls are subject to discrimination. The latest video prepared by the group, Yelena said, was filmed this year on the fight against breast cancer, in which the group calls on all women, and people in general, to go to a doctor to see if they have this illness, and if yes, fight against it.

Naira said, “Songs don’t exist about those topics. In fact, we know very few groups which speak about social issues through song... We would be very happy if more artists would deal with such issues. Perhaps our society would be better.” She added that the Nairyan Ensemble has always been independent and does not belong to any political party. She clarified, “There have been proposals but we have turned them down because we believe that art must not enter into politics, nor in any political party.”

The Velvet Revolution has not changed this approach. Naira said, “We sang before the revolution and we sang also afterwards. We were in general, in my opinion, people about justice, because it is not important for us who is in power. What is essential, for is, is what is right as citizens. It is true that we are not in the field of politics and do not want to be there, but as citizens, we cannot be indifferent to whatever takes place in our country, whether good or bad. We reflect every circumstance in our songs.”

## The US Tour

Arman Gharibyan has been the administrative manager of the Nairyan Vocal Ensemble for the last two years, and the US tour was the first one on which he accompanied the group. Gharibyan is cochairman and cofounder of the Human Rights Power NGO in Yerevan and a screenwriter at Content Media Production.

He said, “I am first of all a worshipper of the group. I joined to help the group because I like what they do so much. My second motivation is that I don’t want the girls to work always as volunteers and that there is someone to negotiate on their behalf and organize administrative work.”

He stressed that because this music is not pop or “easy” music, and it has an educational component, “This type of art always needs supporters. We don’t have a mass audience so that with many views we get money, or that our CDs are bought so much to obtain sufficient financing. In general, high art always needs patronage.” He suggested that people go to the group’s Facebook page to find out more or provide support.

Naira related that this was the first visit of the group to the US and that the members were impressed by the warm response of the Armenian community. They previously had participated in international competitions, winning first prize in Moscow, and had also visited Egypt on the invitation of the Armenian community of Cairo.

The tour was organized by the Amaras Art Alliance and supported by the Naregatsi Art Institute, founded by Nareg Hartounian. The Armenian Museum of America was a cosponsor, and conductor Konstantin Petrossian helped make arrangements with the host churches for the concerts (some of his compositions were sung by the group during their tour too).

Yelena declared, “During our concerts we learned that the Armenians who live here like the *Pari Arakil* [Good Stork] song a lot, and we perform that song. We also are moved by it a lot. We understand why, because of the feelings of *garod* [nostalgia, yearning]. So I wish for our American-Armenian community that their *garod* be light in their hearts. Although the *garod* may remain, let them be able to return sometimes to the homeland and let them not forget it. Let the homeland always be with them irrespective of where they may be in the world. I wish that Armenia will always remain in their hearts.”





## ARTS &amp; 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 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 Rowes Wharf Plaza, 1:30pm Jean Appolon Expressions at Armenian Heritage Park, 2:30pm Public Displays of MoWon at Carolyn Lynch Garden

**NOVEMBER 12 — Sunday at 2pm GIVING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION** Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. Share the Warmth: ABCD Winter Drive

Sunday, December 10 at 4:30pm

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

**SEPTEMBER 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. A raffle fundraiser is slipping the world's largest collection of sea shell designs at incredible direct-from-producer savings. City of Smile-USA is dedicated to treating the children of Armenia who have cancer.

**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 2** — Saint James Men's club and Holy Trinity T.M.U. joint gathering, Guest Speaker ; Legendary Boston News Anchor Natalie Jacobson, speaking about her new book, *Every Life A Story*. Losh Kebab- Kheyma dinner. \$20.per person. Book Sale and Signing will be available..6:00 pm Reception, 6:45 Dinner . Speaker 7:15 est. All our Welcome. St. James Armenian Church 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Contact Church office for more details 617 923-8860.

**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 Zeronian, 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 con-

sideration should contact Sharisse Zeronian at [szeronian@gmail.com](mailto:szeronian@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@stthago.com](mailto:info@stthago.com) or visit [www.stjameswatertown.org/bazaar](http://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, 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](http://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 21** — Saturday from Noon to 7 pm FAC FallFest 2023. Join us @ First Armenian Church, 380 Concord Avenue, Belmont. Delicious Kebab Dinners: Lamb, Beef, Chicken and Losh. Combo Platters and Vegetarian Dinners Available. All dinners served with Salad, Pilaf and Pita Bread. Armenian Desserts, Cookies and Choreg. Pre-order and Take-out on-line at <https://www.facbelmont.org/fallfest>. For more information contact (617) 484-4779 or [office@facbelmont.org](mailto:office@facbelmont.org)

**OCTOBER 22** — Competing Cultures in the Education of Ottoman Armenian Daughters: French Mission Schools in the Homeland (1840-1915), presentation by Dr. Paulette Houbouyan-Coutant, from Paris. Sponsored by the Armenian International Women's Association. 2:30 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation, Arlington. The public is cordially invited to attend. (Info: 781-237-6858; 617-926-0171; or [info@aiwainternational.org](mailto:info@aiwainternational.org).)

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

**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](mailto:avedisb1@gmail.com).

**NOVEMBER 21** — SAVE THE DATE. Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra, Symphony Hall, Boston, 8:00 PM. Details to follow.

### NEW JERSEY

**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](http://www.stnersess.edu).

### NEW YORK

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

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email [alin@mirrorspectator.com](mailto:alin@mirrorspectator.com) or [alin.gregorian@gmail.com](mailto:alin.gregorian@gmail.com). You can also visit our website, [www.mirrorspectator.com](http://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.



## Jean Appolon Dance Company to Perform at Armenian Heritage Park

BOSTON — On Saturday, September 23, at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., the Jean Appolon Expressions Dance Company will premiere an original dance at Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, inspired by the park's design and key features. Rain date is September 24. The dance performances are a part

of the Greenway Conservancy's Momentum Dance Series, presented by Amazon. Jean Appolon, founder and artistic director of Jean Appolon Expressions (JAE) chose the park to create this original piece. "This collaboration means a lot to JAE because our work revolves around connecting different

communities and cultures," he shared. "The Armenian Heritage Park is uniquely related to some of our most recent work." The original dance will again be performed during Festival Dance on October 7 at 1:30 p.m. at the Park. (Photo courtesy of Jean Appolon Expressions Dance Company)

## COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN  
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# Dance May Be Armenians' Only Hope at Dire Time

By Toros Kehribarian

Thousands of miles away from Armenia, the American branch of our diaspora is in a consistent state of panic and immeasurable angst; as we are fighting alongside our motherland, finding ways to save our soldiers, there may be a few surprising methods they've been trying out on the frontlines.

Living in North America never stopped me from expressing my Armenian pride and heritage. Since I developed the skill of movement, I dance the dances of our culture. Starting as a 4 year old, I joined the Gevorkian Dance Academy, an internationally renowned dance group, led by the Gevorkian family, with a sole mission; to keep the flame that is Armenian dance and culture always ignited, undying. This taught me the meaning of the word "pride." Although we live countries away from Armenia, my group and I would dance our hearts out and engulf in the euphonious rhythms of Armenian music, one of the oldest melodies the world has seen — dating back to the 3rd millennium BCE. Sharing our culture on the stage of the Dolby Theatre, and on the red carpet of the glimmering Hollywood Parade, my dance was my story; I shared the tales of my ancestors through the trained movement of my feet. Eventually, the dances became more than an entertaining act at a wedding or a concert, I noticed as they were performed on the frontlines between war and death

Dance is one of the sole factors connecting me to my history, and I grew curious how it affected our ancestors fighting the ongoing war. I asked myself, "What did dance mean to my Armenian brothers and sisters when they had no hope left?" In order to conduct my research for this question, I knew I had to dig deeper. I had to hear from an Armenian residing in the motherland.

Foremost, I got in touch with my cousin who lives in Armenia. Her name is Siranush. My whole life I have only ever

known that she is a dancer just like me. My grandma always told me she was precise and beautiful, and we shared similar skills when we danced our ritual performances. I lived in America, and she lived in Armenia. Trying to understand if dance meant to me the same it meant to her, I interviewed my cousin. Translated from Armenian, she began by saying:

"It is simple. Dance meant unity."

She explained to me how dance gave the young soldiers of the war the confidence and strength to fight in the unpredictable war.

"They had never fought before. Many were teenagers, but they had to go to the frontlines in a matter of 2 minutes. It was an unbelievable phenomena, videos were trending of Armenian soldiers doing group dances, chanting with pride, representing our culture through movements on those frontlines."

She said she fully believes that when our soldiers danced, something awoke in them, a willingness to fight, as if God injected them with power and strength. It was just a dance. However, the dances and music were the power they needed. Only those who share our DNA share our dances. The movement was equivalent to pride.

It was unheard of for Armenian women to fight in the war, it had been centuries since the last Armenian woman fought alongside men. However, in an empowering manner, countless women dropped everything and went to fight the war. My cousin further explained to me the great juxtaposition between men's and women's Armenian dance (women being much more graceful and precise, while men had to be stoic and flamboyant). She mentioned that this difference of music and rhythm did not stop the women. They danced beautifully on the frontlines, and maintained a strong focus and strength, just like the men. The perplexing Siranush Sargsyan shared her story, "Like We Do Not Exist" on *Ms. Magazine*, saying, "I was so, so tired but my father was

carrying my little sister and my uncle, his son. I lay down on the ground and said I'm not coming, I cannot. My uncle said whoever makes it to the top of the mountain will get his weapon to shoot. I took off and ran up the mountain; my brother and sister followed me. My motivation was the highest, and when we all reached the top, my uncle gave me his weapon. That was my happiest moment." The strength and power displayed by Armenian women, and men, is empowering to Armenians of every generation, around the world.

It seemed unreal, to hear that thousands of Armenian men and women were seen dancing to our song in the mountains, to energize their bodies as they would soon proceed to fight. The way my brothers and sisters overturned their ruthless faiths, and turned it into beauty and art, is chilling. Yet, it is no surprise. My people have been, and always will be, a strong and magnificent mystique the world has to offer. Apart from the diaspora, we correlate dances such as "Shalaxo" and "Bert" to be a fun activity— associated with a feeling of happiness. Realistically, there is versatility in these movements. Men and women of Armenia, teens and elders, danced the same dances and sang the same songs in a completely different connotation; they were unsure if they'd ever come back home in the fight for their motherland, or if their motherland would soon be exterminated. These thoughts in the back of their mind seemed to disappear when they all united and danced— dance gave them power, and hope, unlike any other force in the world.

(Toros Kehribarian is a senior at Burbank High School, in Burbank, Calif. He has been dancing traditional Armenian since he was a child, performing all over the nation. He also performs with his school's show choir. He strives to spread awareness about Armenia, doing research and displaying Armenian culture.)

## Armenian Society of Fellows Issues Nagorno-Karabakh Manifesto

The Armenian Society of Fellows (ASOF), having identified a particular vacuum in current efforts to draw urgent attention to the security of the people of Karabakh and future humanitarian crises involving Armenians, has prepared the following manifesto — now endorsed by 20 international Armenian organizations.

More than a hundred years after we Armenians were subjected to Genocide, we once again are facing the same — this time in Nagorno-Karabakh, and once again in the presence of a world order that is more interested in commemorating calamity than preventing it.

We, a collective of organizations and foundations, pledge to bear witness to this history, and commit to securing accountability from all parties with regards to what happens in Nagorno-Karabakh in the next weeks.

We pledge to coordinate our efforts, pool our resources, utilize all legal means — wherever we are, through scholarship, the press, and outreach to friends of Armenian culture everywhere, to expose those who orchestrate these crimes but also those who enable them through tacit collusion, inaction, or complacency.

We call upon all people of conscience and governments to set aside politics and embrace their legal and moral responsibilities

with respect to the Genocide Convention. We ask for an immediate international humanitarian intervention to break the blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh and deliver food and medicine to the civilian population, and urgent collective action to enforce the recent decision of the International Court of Justice ordering Azerbaijan to unblock the Lachin Corridor and allow for the movement of persons, vehicles, and cargo between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, in both directions.

Signatories

Armenian Bar Association, Armenian General Athletic Union and Scouts, Armenian International Women's Association, Armenian National Committee of America, Armenian Society of Fellows, Armenian Student Association USA, Armenischer Verein Zürich, Artzakank-Echo Center for Truth and Justice, Conseil Français-Arméniens, Fragments Association, Fund for Armenian Relief, Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society, KASA - Komitas Action Suisse Arménie, Miassine Association, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Portugal-Armenia Friendship Association, Switzerland-Armenia Association, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Union Arménienne de Suisse UAS



## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Righteous Jews Urge Pro-Azeri Rabbis To Cancel Planned Conference in Baku

Shortly after I wrote a column two weeks ago condemning European pro-Azerbaijan Rabbis for planning to hold their conference in Baku, I was pleasantly surprised to receive an email from 18 mostly Jewish prominent individuals, including eight righteous Rabbis, who condemned the trip to Azerbaijan and called for its cancellation.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis of the UK, the 18 signatories wrote: “We earnestly seek to initiate dialogue with you to appeal the decision of the Conference of European Rabbis and ensure that this conference does not go ahead in a country that is so opposed to the core values of Judaism and the teachings of the Torah.” The letter quoted Prof. James Russell of Harvard University who recently wrote: “It takes bullets to kill people, but indifference pulls the trigger.”

The letter described “the grave humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Artsakh” caused by Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only route linking Artsakh to Armenia, thus risking the starvation of 120,000 Artsakh Armenians. The letter stated that Azerbaijan is a country “widely recognized for having one of the lowest rankings in the world for upholding political rights and civil liberties.”

This group of righteous Jews wrote: “We are saddened that this prominent organization that represents so many Jewish people across Europe is, by choosing to host their conference in Baku, supporting the Azeri government rather than standing up for human rights and living and breathing the lesson of the Shoah -- ‘never again’. While we acknowledge and appreciate the freedom that Jews can enjoy in Azerbaijan, the fact that these same inalienable rights do not extend to other minorities and religions in the country give us cause to worry about how long Jews will be able to enjoy freedom in what is otherwise a totalitarian government in the Muslim world.... Despite numerous international appeals and the decision of the International Court of Justice, the authorities of Azerbaijan have callously ignored calls to lift the blockade, disregarding the agreement signed in November 2020 by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia regarding unimpeded traffic through the Lachin Corridor.”

The letter was signed by: Tamar Fyne, Seda Ambartsumian, Josh Kirk, Benjamin Nahum, Rabbi Avidan Freedman (Director of Yanshoof), Prof. Israel Charny, Dr. Oded Steinberg, Rabbi David Rosen, James R. Russell (Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies, Emeritus, Harvard University), Scott Jason,

Lernik Jason, Michael Stone, Rabbi Yehoshua Engelman, Rabbi Tyson Herberger (Associate Professor of Religion and Religious Education, University of South-Eastern Norway), Rabbi Shimon Brand, Rabbi Irving ‘Yitz’ Greenberg, Rabbi Chaim Seidler Feller and Rabbi Alana Suskin.”

In a separate statement issued jointly by Israel W. Charny and Rabbi Avidan Freedman was titled: “This Kosher certificate for Azerbaijan stinks.” They explained that the 50 European Rabbis, who had written to the leaders of Armenia complaining about Armenians using of the term genocide, “are being used by Azerbaijan to prove the government’s Kosher bonafides to the world, and to shut the world’s ears to the cries of the afflicted.”

Charny, the director of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem, and Freedman, a Jerusalem-based educator and Orthodox rabbi, stated: We “say in the clearest terms possible that in our eyes, this rabbinic letter misrepresents the facts, misunderstands the fundamental moral significance of the Holocaust, and misses a major pillar of Jewish ethics.”

Charny and Freedman then enlightened the pro-Azeri Rabbis about the true meaning of the terms Holocaust and genocide: “In the Encyclopedia of Genocide, the word ‘holocaust’ was used to refer to the Armenian Holocaust in 1909, and even earlier in other contexts, and the word ‘genocide’ was coined in 1942 by a Polish Jewish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, to describe the crime that had been committed against the Armenian people by Turkey, and that was then being committed by Germany against the Jews. The entry on the topic in the encyclopedia ends with the following conclusion: “the word (holocaust) belongs historically to all people’s suffering, and certainly that it not become a basis for excluding the suffering of any other people.”

Charny and Freedman described the pro-Azeri Rabbis “claim that any contemporary comparison of the suffering of people is a desecration of the holy memory of the Holocaust, and a belittling of the Jewish people’s suffering is itself an absurd desecration of Holocaust memory.”

Charny and Freedman explained that “What the European Rabbis letter does is to cynically weaponize the memory of the Holocaust in order to enable the infliction of mass suffering. After all, these rabbis do not deny that 120,000 residents of Artsakh are in danger of starvation because of the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan. They do not deny that Azerbaijan is using mass starvation as a tactic for political gain. But by silencing Armenian criticism of Azerbaijan’s actions, they are the ones who cynically use the ‘Holocaust card’ for political purposes.”

Charny and Freedman concluded their statement: “The decision of these rabbis to raise their voices on the side of the oppressor is a desecration of Holocaust memory and of Jewish values. In the spirit of this season of repentance, we call on the Conference of European rabbis, or at the very least, on individual rabbinic members of conscience, to have the moral courage to remember their rabbinic duty, and retract their decision.”

# Starving Armenians and Very Tasty Cookies: The Blockade Of Nagorno-Karabakh Is a Form of Terrorism

By Nancy Kricorian

When I was growing up in the Armenian community of Watertown, Massachusetts, in the sixties and seventies, attending a church founded by genocide survivors and their children, I found it confusing when I heard the parents of my non-Armenian schoolmates say to their children, “Eat your food. Think of the starving Armenians.” Who were these starving Armenians? I certainly wasn’t one of them. I had never been explicitly told about the genocide, although I knew that the Turks had done something terrible to my grandmother’s family, something we didn’t talk about because it was too upsetting for her.

I gradually learned about the systemic mass deportations and massacres of Armenians by Ottoman authorities that started in 1915 and resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1.5 million people. This genocide caused the virtual destruction of Armenian community life across the empire. Images of the survivors, most of them orphaned children, who were on the verge of starvation in desert camps and orphanages inspired an international campaign spearheaded by Near East Relief and other charitable organizations to care for them. Photos of near skeletal Armenian children dressed in rags were circulated, giving rise to the expression that reverberated for decades, “starving Armenians.”

Fast forward to 2023, and the specter of starving Armenians, this time 120,000 people trapped in an enclave in Nagorno-Karabakh, known to Armenians as Artsakh, has awakened trauma and triggered fear in Armenians around the world. In the past few weeks, the dire situation has started to receive mainstream media coverage as the alarm is sounded. Former International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo stated that Azerbaijan’s ongoing blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only land route connecting Artsakh to the Republic

of Armenia, which provides food, medicines, and other supplies to the local population, is tantamount to genocide. It is, at the very least, already a humanitarian catastrophe.

Azerbaijan is an oil and natural gas rich country ruled over by president and de facto dictator Ilham Aliyev, who has close alliances with Turkey and Israel, receiving weapons shipments and political support from both. It is beyond the scope of this article to describe the complicated and long history of the struggle for control over Nagorno-Karabakh, but this 2020 interview with Berkeley history professor Stephan Astourian provides a short primer on the conflict.

Suffice it to say that in the post-Soviet 1990s, Armenia wrested control of the enclave from Azerbaijan, to whom it had been assigned by Stalin, and a 30-year frozen conflict ensued, ending in September 2020 with a military assault by Azerbaijan, during which three-quarters of the territory was taken. The remaining area, the city of Stepanakert and surrounding villages populated by ethnic Armenians, was put under the control of Russian peacekeepers, while a permanent settlement was pursued.

In December 2022, Azerbaijani agents posing as purported “environmental activists” blockaded the Lachin Corridor, under the pretense of protesting ore mining operations, but the effect of their actions was to strangle and starve the people of Artsakh, who are seen as an impediment to full Azerbaijani control over the area.

Genocidal incitement against Armenians is a regular feature of statements from Azerbaijani government officials and in its media. Destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Artsakh has proceeded under Azerbaijani rule, bolstered by the claim, disproven by international art historians, that Armenian churches and monasteries are actually “Albanian Christian” monuments. The Azerbaijanis have been removing Armenian inscriptions from medieval churches and razing cemeteries. It is not

enough to attempt to destroy the Armenian presence in the area, but their history must also be wiped out.

Former International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo stated that Azerbaijan’s ongoing blockade of the Lachin Corridor... is tantamount to genocide. It is, at the very least, already a humanitarian catastrophe.

In April 2021, when a “Military Trophies Park,” celebrating Azerbaijan’s victory over Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, was inaugurated in Azerbaijan’s capital city, the displays showed the helmets of fallen Armenian soldiers and life-sized dioramas featuring hook-nosed Armenians with distorted faces. When Aliyev said that the Armenians of Artsakh were welcome to stay as citizens of Azerbaijan under his rule, one Stepanakert resident said that locals feared “that they will slit our throats or drive us out of our homes.”

It seems that Azerbaijan’s territorial ambitions are not restricted to Nagorno-Karabakh. Aliyev would like to grab land in Armenia’s Syunik province, desiring to create a “Zangezur Corridor” as a land bridge to Turkey, inspired by the Pan-Turkic motto “one nation, two states.” Aliyev has further asserted that Armenia is “Western Azerbaijan,” and has set his sights on Yerevan, the capital city of the Republic of Armenia. Armenia is in an increasingly precarious position, with Russian attention diverted from its nominal peacekeeping role in Artsakh by its disastrous war in Ukraine, Azerbaijan in close alliance with Turkey, and the European Union under Azerbaijan’s sway because of its vast energy resources.

With the European Union (EU) increasingly turning to Azerbaijan as an alternative source of natural gas in the face of sanctions against Russia, the Aliyev government is being portrayed as a friend and ally despite its terrible human rights record both at home and in Nagorno-Karabakh. In July 2022, the EU and Azerbaijan

see TERRORISM, page 20



# The Blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh is a Form of Terrorism

TERRORISM, from page 18

signed a “Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership on Energy.” White-washing of Aliyev’s repressive dictatorship is facilitated by Azerbaijan’s lobbyists and trading partners, as evidenced by a short documentary aired on the BBC, “The Wonders of Azerbaijan,” which was sponsored by a foundation with ties to the ruling family and underwritten by British Petroleum.

This week I spoke over the telephone with Lusine Vanyan, a writer and lecturer at Artsakh State University who lives in Stepanakert and is completing a doctorate in phonology at Yerevan State University. In May 2023, Lusine wrote an essay about the devastating mental health effects of the blockade, and she told me that things are even worse three months later. Her mother was recently diagnosed with cancer, and there is no way for them to travel to Yerevan to consult with a medical specialist because the road is blockaded, there is no fuel, and transportation is close to impossible.

Not even the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is currently able to facilitate transfer of patients and humanitarian goods. (Recently, when the ICRC was moving a patient from Stepanakert to

Yerevan for treatment, the patient was arrested by Azerbaijani forces in violation of international humanitarian law.) Lucine told me that local clinics are running out of supplies for medical procedures, and basic medications are almost gone. On the Armenian side of the Lachin Corridor, trucks filled with food and medicines are waiting, but Azerbaijan will not allow them to pass.

The blockade is a form of terrorism, meant to drive people from their homeland....but for the moment Artsakh’s residents are doing everything they can to hold on.

Procuring food has become a full-time occupation in Artsakh. Supermarket shelves are bare, and the prospect of mass famine seems increasingly real. Bread is hard to find—people rise at 4 a.m. to go to a bakery and take a number. They wait in line for hours, and by the time their number comes up the bread may already be gone. Villagers are cultivating their land to have something to eat, but Azerbaijani forces frequently shell the border villages and snipers often shoot at farmers when they are harvesting their wheat. If villagers produce more than they need for their families, they will bring it to the city to sell.

Lusine said that people roam the city

looking for someone peddling their vegetables on the street, and things sell out quickly. She said she saw some boys by the road picking blackberries. They reported they would give the berries to their mothers to barter for vegetables that they otherwise couldn’t afford. People are often hungry and are beginning to show the effects of long-term malnutrition; it has been reported that among pregnant women the miscarriage rate has tripled.

With the end of the growing season approaching and the hard days of winter looming, Azerbaijan’s intermittent throttling of natural gas supplies and rolling electricity blackouts are on everyone’s mind. Unemployment has skyrocketed as businesses fail because of shortages. University students from outside the city have no way of getting to their classes because there is no gas for cars or for communal transport. The idea seems to be to make people as miserable as possible so they will rush to flee when the road is eventually opened.

The blockade is a form of terrorism, meant to drive people from their homeland. Starvation is a weapon of genocide, but for the moment Artsakh’s residents are doing every-

thing they can to hold on. “Aliyev wants to be master of the land,” a Stepanakert resident told me, “but we want to stay here where our great-grandparents are buried.”

Meanwhile, at a recent United Nations Security Council hearing on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan’s representative, Yashar Aliyev, disputed the genocide charges by holding up paper printouts of Instagram photos of people in Stepanakert celebrating weddings and birthdays. “They have very tasty cookies,” he said, while brandishing one such photo.

(This piece by author Nancy Kricorian originally appeared on [www.tempestmag.org](http://www.tempestmag.org).)

## Armenian Government Faces Angry Protests Over Karabakh Fighting

By Naira Bulghadarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Riot police clashed late on Tuesday with angry protesters who gathered outside the main government building in Yerevan to demand Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s resignation following Azerbaijan’s large-scale military attack on Nagorno-Karabakh.

The protesters, who included refugees from Karabakh, blamed Pashinyan for the Azerbaijani offensive and demanded that Armenia intervene to prevent a mass killing and deportation of Karabakh’s ethnic Armenian population.

Some participants of the spontaneous rally scuffled with security forces guarding the prime minister’s office located in Yerevan’s central Republic Square. The latter fired stun grenades to try to push the crowd away from the building.

The Armenian Ministry of Health said that several protesters and police officers were injured and hospitalized as a result.

Armenia’s Investigative Committee launched a criminal investigation into calls for violent overthrow of the “constitutional order” which it said were made by some of the little-known speakers at the rally. The committee said it made an unspecified number of arrests in connection with such calls.

It warned that law-enforcement authorities will counter any attempts to topple the Armenian government by force. The National Security Service issued a similar warning in a separate statement.

Appealing to Armenians earlier in the day, Pashinyan claimed that “external and internal forces” are trying to “draw Armenia into the military escalation” in Karabakh and calling for a “coup d’état” in the country. He did not name them.

Pashinyan’s critics believe that he emboldened Baku to tighten its blockade of Karabakh and then take the military action with his decision to recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over the Armenian-populated region. The prime minister insisted on Tuesday that he “did not give anyone a mandate to carry out ethnic cleansing in Karabakh.”

The rally continued peacefully at Republic Square. Andranik Tevanyan, an opposition politician who joined it after the first scuffles, urged the demonstrators to camp out in the sprawling square and keep protesting there until Pashinyan agrees to step down.

“Nikol Pashinyan is the biggest threat to Armenia’s security,” declared Tevanyan. “His exit is the only way to ensure the security of Armenia and Artsakh.”

The police intervened again at midnight to stop the protesters from pitching tents there. The crowd tried to push back, chanting “Nikol traitor!”



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