



The French delegation (photo Paris municipality)

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo Visits Lachin

By Jean Eckian

PARIS — At the head of a delegation of French personalities and deputies, Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo visited the entrance to the Lachin (Berdzor) corridor in Nagorno-Karabakh to try to get trucks carrying supplies, pharmaceutical products and basic necessities through to the people of Artsakh.

The mayor declared: “Here, at the Lachin corridor, we bear witness to the

fact that no humanitarian aid can enter Artsakh, in total violation of human rights. Our 10 humanitarian aid trucks are blocked. A humanitarian crisis is underway, it’s an emergency,” she declared. Aid has been allocated by the Paris, Ile de France, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Haut de France, Occitanie and Loire regions. A total of 22 truckloads of humanitarian goods sent by France were moved to the border area of Kornidzor.

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On the way to Lachin (photo Max Sivaslian)

In Memory of Nazar Nazarian

There are many millions of Armenians in this world, and for that we are grateful. Among these many millions, there always emerges in each generation a number of key people who play a crucial role in supporting Armenia and the Armenian community with heart and soul. Nazar Nazarian was one outstanding example of these precious individuals, and so it is



with heavy hearts that the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada acknowledges his passing on August 28.

Blessed to have been on this earth for 98 years, Nazarian, a successful businessman born in Aleppo but raised in Lebanon, became one of the most important supporters of Armenian institutions and the

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Former BU President, Medical Pioneer, Philanthropist Dr. Aram Chobanian Dies

BOSTON — Aram V. Chobanian, M.D., President Emeritus of Boston University, and previous Dean of Boston University School of Medicine died peacefully at home on August 31, 2023.

Born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, he grew up among the Armenian immigrant community and like many others, was encouraged to pursue and excel in education, as well as to participate in outside interests such as sports and music. Chobanian attended Brown University before earning his M.D. from Harvard Medical School.

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BERLIN

Armenians in Germany Hold Rallies in Support Of Artsakh

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JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS

Armenian Nursing Home Resident Mary Vartanian Celebrates Her 109th Birthday

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CAMBRIDGE, MASS

Holy Trinity Armenian Church Celebrates Century Of Founding

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HALO Trust Temporarily Pivots From Mine Clearing to Assistance as Artsakh Faces Down Famine

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — Just imagine how bad the situation in Artsakh is that HALO Trust, whose charge is to clear landmines and cluster explosives, is instead temporarily pivoting toward helping the most desperate among the 120,000 residents of the imperiled republic survive the eight-month-long deadly, illegal blockade by Azerbaijan.

To that end, the group has launched an effort to raise and distribute \$250,000 to the 1,000 poorest and sickest residents as well as a campaign to raise awareness about the horrifying situation the residents face.

In an interview last week, Chris Whatley, the executive director of HALO USA, in Washington, said, “We can’t create food where food doesn’t exist, but since we have the staff and we have the ability to reach populations of varying income level, we have a great relationship with the government, we have financial capacity and an understanding of how to get resources to people in Nagorno Karabakh [NK], what we’ve done is continuing to provide our core mission, but pivoting a bit to focus on providing cash assistance to provide cash assistance to the 1,000 most vulnerable families,” he said.



Chris Whatley

The amount of cash given to each family is based on need. “Our goal is to raise \$250,000 so that we can provide for at least 3 months, a key bridging period for vulnerable NK residents. We realize it’s modest, but we’ve got to do something,” Whatley said.

He added, “When you’re out there and you see your own teams have spent all night waiting for bread, we’re saying go home, you shouldn’t be out clearing cluster munitions.”

And they are the lucky ones. He added, “We know at least our staff have jobs. They can purchase the bread at the front of the line if they get there.”

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Three Killed, One Wounded By Azeri Fire

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — An Armenia soldier wounded in an Azerbaijani cross-border attack last week remains in critical condition, the Defense Ministry reports.

Three Armenian soldiers were killed and two others injured in Azerbaijani shelling near the border villages of Sotk and Norabak on September 1.

The Defense Ministry initially put the Armenian death toll at four. However, it subsequently revised the casualty count to three after one soldier, identified as Narek Poghosyan, was resuscitated in hospital.

He remains in critical condition after undergoing complex surgery, Defense Ministry spokesman Aram Torosyan told [Panorama.am](#) on Monday.

In addition, Azerbaijani troops again violated the ceasefire in Artsakh on September 4, targeting a harvester in the Sarushen community.

3-Time Olympic Champion Azaryan Dies

YEREVAN (news.am) — Three-time Olympic gymnastics champion, four-time world and two-time European champion Albert Azaryan has died at the age of 94, Gagik Vanoyan, President of the Gymnastics Federation of Armenia, informed about this on Facebook.

He was the 1956 and 1960 Olympic Champion on the still rings. Azaryan was the first gymnast to become an Olympic Champion in rings twice. He was the first person to do one of the rings most famous variations of the Iron Cross called the Azaryan Cross (not to be confused with the Azarian Roll to Cross), which incorporates a quarter turn to the side.

On December 1, 2022, the bust of the champion was unveiled at the courtyard of the Albert Azaryan Children and Youth Gymnastics School in Yerevan.

Foreign Ministry: No Alternative to Lachin Corridor

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Lachin Corridor has been agreed to as a link between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and has no alternative, Armenia's Foreign Ministry told [RFE/RL's Armenian Service](#) (Azatutyun) on September 4.

The comments came in response to Azatutyun's request to say whether Baku demands the opening of the Aghdam supply route as a precondition to unblock the corridor.

The Foreign Ministry insisted on the reopening of the Lachin Corridor, adding the issue of an alternative supply line to Nagorno-Karabakh should be settled within the framework of an international mechanism for Baku-Stepanakert dialogue.

The Lachin Corridor has been blocked by Azerbaijan for over eight months.

Artsakh Foreign Minister Hopes for Concrete Steps by International Actors

By Aram Arkun

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — When Foreign Minister of the Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) Republic Sergey Ghazaryan took office in January 2023, the now over-eight-month blockade of Artsakh had already begun. The 44-year-old Stepanakert native was chosen in part for the position because as Artsakh's representative to Armenia since July 2020, he was already located in Yerevan, and so could have easier communications with the outside world. In fact, he said that taking into consideration the various difficulties connected with shortages of electricity, fuel, and as a result no public transportation, and issues of daily life now in the capital of Stepanakert, a good amount of the work of the ministry must be carried out in Yerevan.

As people begin to die of malnutrition in Artsakh due to the blockade, the current objective of Azerbaijan is clear to Ghazaryan, who declared: "Azerbaijan is trying to reach its genocidal goal to ethnically cleanse Artsakh of its indigenous Armenian population. Even now no Armenian is safe. The abduction of our citizens in the illegal Azerbaijani checkpoint at the Lachin Corridor is a vivid example. The declarations of the Azerbaijan president, that those who are not ready to accept Azerbaijani citizenship must abandon these territories, also attest to that. I do not know people in Artsakh who will be ready to accept Azerbaijani citizenship. Back in 1991, our people, declared independence and expressed the collective will to live safely and freely in their ancestral homeland. Until today, our collective view has not changed."

Expectations from International community

Ghazaryan expressed his dissatisfaction with the results of the United Nations Security Council meeting discussing the blockade on August 16. He declared: "As you know on August 8, 2023, the Artsakh Republic's president issued an urgent call outlining the expectations from different actors of the international community, including the Republic of Armenia. In response to that appeal, the Republic of Armenia called for this urgent UN Security Council meeting. We had great hopes. If there were a resolution adopted, it could have prepared a strong basis for an airlift to be carried out and bring necessary humanitarian aid, despite the obstacles that the Azerbaijani side might create. However, once again we witnessed the politicization of human rights and human lives."

The Artsakh government's position has not changed. He said: "We have declared on numerous occasions that the time for statements is over, and we expect concrete steps, mostly by the global actors represented in the UN Security Council, three of whom for many years were involved in the Artsakh-Azerbaijan or Nagorno-Karabakh peace process through the Minsk Group co-chairmanship. We have consistently stated that they in their turn bear responsibility for the situation created." More specifically, he said of the Security Council that "now we expect this process will have its logical continuation, which will be expressed not only in the adoption of a resolution, but also concrete steps emerging from all this to suppress Azerbaijan."

Previously, in January 2023, the International Court of Justice of the United Nations ordered Azerbaijan to end the blockade, and reaffirmed this order in July, without



Foreign Minister Sergey Ghazaryan

result. Ghazaryan added: "If the decision of the International Court of Justice is ignored by Azerbaijan, this also pertains to the authority of the entire structure of the UN. This is a very bad precedent for the entire system of international relations."

Conflict Resolution through Negotiations?

When asked about the prospect of negotiations on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through direct talks between the Artsakhi and Azerbaijani delegations, Ghazaryan said that resolution of such complex conflicts necessitates first of all the genuine engagement of international stakeholders as mediators. Meaningful and constructive negotiations between Baku and Stepanakert, mediated by international actors, can only occur within the framework of an internationally agreed-upon format, thereby ensuring compliance with the norms of international law.

Such a format existed for many years by means of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), led by French, Russian and US co-chairs. However, its attempts failed to prevent the 2020 war. In fact, Ghazaryan pointed out, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev rejected all efforts and the format of the Minsk Group itself, declaring that he solved the conflict himself by force. "This was a serious blow to the international community and the Minsk Group co-chairs," he stated.

"The Republic of Artsakh is the most interested party in negotiations that can lead to a peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict, as the people of Artsakh know the best the value of peace," Ghazaryan declared. "For that, we have always demonstrated a proactive and constructive stance in the negotiation processes. There have been no reasonable offers of talks that have been rejected by Artsakh. In contrast, we have consistently communicated proposals on the meetings through different international actors."

Reports in the media periodically emerge of proposed meetings with Artsakh Armenians on Azerbaijani soil, such as, most recently in Yevlakh. When asked about this, Ghazaryan commented, "The Azerbaijani suggestion to hold a meeting in the territory of Azerbaijan, be it Baku, Yevlakh, or any other place, is questionable at best. Not only can the conditions for productive and substantial negotiations not be ensured in such a format, but also there are additional personal risks for any potential Armenian/

Artsakh negotiator. It is well established that security and right to life cannot be guaranteed at all to any Armenian appearing on Azerbaijani territory. This has been evidenced by the numerous cases of individual captives who have been tortured to death just because of their ethnic identity."

Changes in Blockade?

Since June 15, only the Red Cross has been allowed to transfer patients who need urgent medical treatment in Armenia, and during the week of August 21, with the mediation of Russian peacekeepers, an agreement was reached to allow the transfer of some students who start their first year in different universities of Armenia. However, this process was politicized by Azerbaijan. Moreover, the world witnessed the kidnapping of 4 Armenians – an elderly patient and three students – from the Red Cross vehicle and the Russian peacekeepers.

Ghazaryan stated that such actions are evidence that the purpose of the unlawful blockade is to terrorize the people of Artsakh.

He concluded: "This circumstance, and that we have hundreds or more citizens who are on the territory of the Republic of Armenia since the beginning of the blockade separated from their families and until today have not had the possibility to return to Artsakh, testifies that the goal of the Azerbaijani side is to de-Armenize Artsakh."

Ghazaryan further illuminated the extent of the blockade with the example of a young woman named Helen Dadayan who had died in an August 14 car accident in Armenia. Despite the wishes of her family in Artsakh, up to the date of this August 25 interview, the latter had not been given permission to return her body to Artsakh for burial. Ghazaryan said, "This very step is the most expressive sign of the policy being conducted by Azerbaijan."

Ghazaryan asserted that Artsakh still relies on the Lachin corridor as the only physical connection to Armenia and the outside world, and there is no other way via aircraft or drones to compensate. He said that not only is the humanitarian crisis connected to shortages of food, medicaments and other necessities, but it is also connected with restoring the ability to go on with regular daily life. People cannot work when the economy has been completely destroyed. Public institutions are no longer able to operate. Medical services are no longer working.

The shortages of fuel are seriously impeding agricultural work, Ghazaryan said, along with the frequent shooting from the Azerbaijani side on the line of contact on agricultural laborers.

When asked how long the populace can hold out under these conditions, he said, "As you know, our people are very hardy, and despite various types of difficulties and issues, it has historically turned out thus that despite such matters we have found the strength to resist."

Russian or Other Peacekeepers

Ghazaryan emphasized the role Russian peacekeepers have played in post-war Artsakh's security, declaring, "The role of the Russian side connected to the halting of the 2020 war is very great." The Russian peacekeepers were initially meant to serve as one of the pillars for the security of our country and our population. The latter perceived the peacekeeping mission as an additional assurance to return to Artsakh after the 2020 aggression and continue their lives with sustainable plans for the future."

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ARMENIA

Tensions Mount Between Russia, Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russia denounced on Monday, September 4, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's fresh criticism of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh and his claims that Moscow is "unwilling or unable" to defend Armenia and may eventually leave the South Caucasus.

Highlighting unprecedented tensions between the two allied countries, a Russian official warned Yerevan against helping the West "squeeze Russia out" of the region.

In an interview with Italy's *La Repubblica* daily publicized by his press office over the weekend, Pashinyan declared that his government is trying to "diversify our security policy" because Armenia's long-standing heavy reliance on Russia has proved a "strategic mistake."

"Armenia's security architecture, including the logic of weapons and ammunition acquisition, has been connected to Russia by 99.999 percent," he said. "But

now that wRussia itself needs weapons and munitions [amid the war in Ukraine] it is obvious that in this situation the Russian Federation could not provide for Armenia's security needs even if it wanted to."

"The Russian Federation has been in our region, the South Caucasus, for quite a long time. But we have seen situations when the Russian Federation simply left the South Caucasus in one day, one month or one year," he went on, apparently referring to the 1917 collapse of the Russian Empire.

"There are processes that, of course, lead one to think that the same scenario could be repeated and that one day we will simply wake up and see that Russia is not here," added Pashinyan.

Russia hit back at Pashinyan, with an unnamed "diplomatic source" in Moscow calling Pashinyan's comments "unacceptable."

"In fact, they are trying to artificially squeeze Russia out of the South Caucasus,

using Yerevan as a means of achieving this goal," the source told the official TASS news agency. "As Armenia's closest neighbor and friend, Russia does not intend to leave the region. However, this should be a two-way street. Armenia should also not become a weapon for the West to squeeze out Russia."

Pashinyan also slammed the Russian peacekeeping forces for their failure to reopen the Lachin corridor, Nagorno-Karabakh's only land link with Armenia, blocked by Azerbaijan last December. The blockade, he said, means the peacekeepers are "not fulfilling their mission" defined by the Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the 2020 war in Karabakh.

The Russian source cited by TASS rejected Pashinyan's "baseless attacks" on the peacekeepers. He said that the Armenian premier's controversial recognition of Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh

"made the work of the Russian peacekeeping contingent as difficult as possible."

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, likewise charged on August 30 that Pashinyan's far-reaching concession to Baku paved the way for the Azerbaijani blockade and the resulting humanitarian crisis in Karabakh. Her Armenian opposite number dismissed the claim and cited a long list of Armenian grievances against Moscow.

The rift between Moscow and Yerevan has deepened over the past year, fueling speculation about a pro-Western shift in Armenia's traditional geopolitical orientation. Some of Pashinyan's political allies and Western-funded civic groups have welcomed such a prospect. By contrast, Armenia's main opposition groups are seriously concerned about it, arguing that the West is not ready to give Armenia security guarantees or significant military aid.

Karabakh to Ration Bread Due to Blockade

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Authorities in Karabakh have decided to ration bread in Stepanakert to cope with a serious shortage of flour resulting from Azerbaijan's nine-month blockade of the Lachin corridor.

On September 4 they began handing out ration stamps. Starting from September 5, every Stepanakert resident will be able to buy only half a loaf of bread weighing 200 grams.

Bread has become an even more important staple food since Azerbaijan tightened the blockade in mid-June by halting all relief supplies to the Armenian-populated

region carried out by Russian peacekeepers and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Local food stores have run out of most other basic foodstuffs rationed since January.

The bread shortage worsened at the end of August, with locals spending more hours waiting in lines to buy up to two loaves per person from bakeries.

Karabakh's Agricultural Support Fund again urged local farmers at the weekend to sell off their wheat stocks and thus help alleviate the deficit. The fund set a higher price —

250 drams per kilogram (65 US cents) — and offered other incentives in hopes of buying more wheat grown by them.

By comparison, the market-based wholesale price of wheat in Armenia currently stands at less than 100 drams per kilogram.

"Dear farmers, please ... sell the stored wheat to the fund so that we can together overcome the existing crisis as soon as possible," the public agency said in a statement. "The struggle is not only war, this is also a struggle from which we can emerge victorious only thanks to our unity."

The humanitarian crisis has prompted serious concern from the United States, the European Union and other international actors. As well as insisting on the immediate reopening of the Lachin corridor, the Western powers have implicitly urged Karabakh to agree to another, Azerbaijani-controlled supply route sought by Baku.

Most Karabakh Armenians appear to remain strongly opposed to that route. Scores have been blocking a road leading to the Azerbaijani town of Aghdam to prevent two Azerbaijani trucks loaded with 40 tons of flour from entering Karabakh. They as well as the authorities in Stepanakert believe that the proposed aid is a publicity stunt aimed at legitimizing the blockade.

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The negative statements about the Russian peacekeepers in the Azerbaijani press, that they are there only temporarily and supposedly aid Artsakh Armenians in transporting weapons or soldiers, do not correspond to reality, Ghazaryan said. On the contrary, the Azerbaijanis attempt to undermine the significance of the peacekeeping mission. He said, "We must view all these activities in this context and understand very well that the presence of the Russian peacekeepers is an important factor in assuring our physical safety. It is for this very reason that the Azerbaijani side wishes to discredit and neutralize that factor."

When asked about the possibility of deployment of other international peacekeepers if the Russians are limited in their ability to respond to Azerbaijani attacks due to the constraints of the Ukraine war and other factors, Ghazaryan responded, "Our official position is that the international community possesses various different tools which can be used in order to restrain the criminal policy of the Azerbaijani side. And those steps, or the use of a toolkit, is connected to the context that exists on the ground. We must at least clearly see how those international actors characterize the situation: what political and legal assessment they give and whether they will exercise the mechanisms which can suppress Azerbaijan. That is what we await."

He said that "there are cases when because of the violation of the rights of one person, the international community uses the corresponding toolkit and carries out punitive measures. In this case, an actual genocidal policy is being carried out against 120,000 people, and this is not only

our opinion but of other renowned experts like [Luis Moreno] Ocampo and [Juan Ernesto] Mendez, but no mention has yet been made about using those tools. The international community still does not put forward clear language."

Artsakh Foreign Policy

This year, there have been some changes in the Artsakh government, starting with the dismissal of State Minister Ruben Vardanyan on February 23. Vardanyan continues to play an active public role even without an official government post and has criticized Harutyunyan on [social media](#). More recently, Speaker of the National Assembly Artur Tovmasyan resigned in July due to health reasons, according to Ghazaryan, and was replaced by Davit Ishkhanyan of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Furthermore, after the *Mirror-Spectator's* interview of Ghazaryan took place, Artsakh President Arayik Harutyunyan resigned on September 1 and State Minister Guren Nersesyan was replaced by Samvel Shahramanyan.

When asked about the nature of policy differences in Artsakh political circles, Ghazaryan replied, "The difficult serious situation that has been created presupposes that in making political decisions we must take into consideration different points of view because we find ourselves truly in a fateful situation, and every single political decision can have serious consequences. For this reason, all political forces and different social circles are involved in this process. Yes, there are issues on which there can be different ideas and points of view, but we understand that the responsibility [of political decision-making] first of all falls on the president and the corre-

sponding governing bodies of Artsakh."

Meanwhile, though no country in the world recognizes the Artsakh Republic, Ghazaryan said that there are numerous friendly groups in many countries which accept the right of the Artsakh people to live independently. For example, in the United States, a number of states and city councils have recognized Artsakh's independence. In those countries where there is an organized Armenian diaspora, Ghazaryan said that the Artsakh Foreign Ministry's structures also work towards recognition of Artsakh's independence or call attention to this issue. "We in our turn, through our diplomatic representatives," he said, "try to develop our relations with various official circles of those countries."

Armenia's Role

When asked about the consequences of the government of the Republic of Armenia's statements on recognition of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Ghazaryan declared that the 2020 war's results were disastrous not only for Artsakh but for Armenia, and that the preservation of Armenian Artsakh is a challenge of a pan-Armenian significance. He said, "There are disagreements on certain issues between the Artsakh Republic and the Republic of Armenia, even concerning the perception and the management of relations with Azerbaijan."

He declined to go into specifics on "sensitive" issues but concluded that "despite our different points of view, we must understand that those grounds that unite us are more profound, are stronger, and it is on this understanding that we must construct our policies."

Diaspora's Role

Ghazaryan thanked the Armenians of

the diaspora for always standing by Artsakh. When asked what they could do at this point to help the situation, he gave a detailed answer: "First of all, we find that in different countries, our diasporan structures must attract attention and form the public opinion that will bring officials and state bodies so that through them we receive a political and legal assessment of the situation on the ground in Artsakh."

In addition to working with governmental bodies, diasporans can contact various human rights organizations. Thirdly, they can work with the mass media to place Artsakh's situation on the agenda. He said, "The Armenian diaspora was created as a result of the Armenian Genocide. Armenians were forced to abandon their ancestral homeland, take refuge in different countries to save and then reestablish their lives. Every year, on April 24, in commemoration of the victims of the Armenian Genocide different events take place where officials in the aforementioned countries express their solidarity with Armenian people. The important message that we need to pass to all those countries is that if they do not want another day like April 24 to appear on their calendars, they must go beyond words and act now. This would be the greatest step we can expect from them."

Specifically concerning the United States, Ghazaryan said, "What you do in the US is very important because the US is exactly that country which has the authority and the capacity to put a pressure on Azerbaijan."

He summed up: "This is not a one-day exercise. It requires continuous and united efforts of all of us. We believe that this is possible, despite all the difficulties."

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Revealed: £200M of UK Property Owned by Aliyev Family

LONDON (*Daily Mail*) — The children of autocrats have been revealed as the ultimate owners of £250million worth of British properties after new transparency rules allowed them to be identified.

New laws require offshore companies that own property in England and Wales to name their ultimate owner in a public register of overseas entities. Previously this had often been kept secret.

Analysis of the Register of Overseas Entities by *The Times* revealed that nearly £200m of UK property is owned by the family of Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev and families of their political appointees.

This includes £21 million in property in London controlled by Aliyev's daughters, Leyla and Arzu, who were educated at Queen's College for girls in Westminster.

Armenians Demonstrate in Buenos Aires

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A demonstration was held on September 2 in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, to raise awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh and the ongoing genocide against Armenians committed by the Azerbaijani regime, *Diario Armenia* reported.

The demonstration took place on the 32nd anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).

The demonstrators condemned the actions of the Azerbaijani government and called for the reopening of the Lachin Corridor.

"We demand the whole world to raise its voice because what's happening in Artsakh is a gross violation of human rights and an act of genocide," said Miguel Harutyunyan, the president of the association of Armenian expats in Argentina. He recalled that the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo has also described the Azerbaijani actions as genocide.

Moscow Asks Yerevan About ICC Statute Ratification

MOSCOW (Public Radio of Armenia) — Moscow has asked Yerevan for clarification on the ratification by the Armenian Parliament of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and will build actions based on the response of the Armenian side, Spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova said at a briefing on September 5.

"We have already asked the Armenian side for clarification on this matter and will determine our further steps based on the content of Yerevan's response," the diplomat said.

The Armenian Government sent the Rome Statute to Parliament for ratification, the Prime Minister's Office said last week.

German Press Sounds Alarm On Threat of Genocide

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

It was two hundred years ago that Edmund Burke coined the term, the Fourth Estate, but the point he made is as relevant today as then. The reference is to the press, which the British philosopher and politician catalogued as a major power in public affairs, after the three "estates" of the clergy, the nobility and the commoners or bourgeoisie.

Roughly analogous today would be the church, government and the people. Notwithstanding modern perversions and manipulations of mass media, it remains true that the capacity for moral judgment and action, be it on the part of political bodies or the general public, depends on knowledge—awareness and understanding of increasingly complex developments in today's world affairs.

The threatened genocide of Armenians in Artsakh (Karabakh) is the immediate issue. In Germany the press had been silent or low-key. Following publication of the expert opinion by former International Court of Justice Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo, journalists opened their eyes and followed up with increasingly attentive, documented coverage.

Most important in Germany was coverage provided by Deutschlandfunk (DLF: Radio Germany), a public broadcasting radio. On August 22, it ran an interview with Anna Aridzanjan, a Yerevan-born journalist for the weekly *Stern* magazine, titled, "An Underreported Conflict."

Aridzanjan explained the dearth of coverage with the fact that Azerbaijan bars outside reporters from entrance. Asked if her sources, Artsakh journalists and human rights organizers, were reliable, she explained, they would reap no benefits from false reporting; their interest is to provide accurate information. German press attention has been scant, she said, due not only to lack of access, but because some consider the conflict too distant to be of interest.

The themes introduced by the Armenian writer would be echoed and expanded in following coverage, on a daily basis. To cite the most important: on August 25, Germany's largest press agency, Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA), issued a release, picked up in the Berlin press, entitled, "No Bread, No Medicine: Desperate Situation in Caucasus." Providing objective, factual information, it cited Ocampo's report, adding that this recalls the genocide of 1915. Another dispatch that day dealt with "Europe's Role in the Berg-Karabakh Conflict," and a Berlin daily, Tagesspiegel, carried an article, whose title quoted a Karabakh Armenian, "We Have Lost the Right to Dream."

The expert opinion of Ocampo was featured as well on August 25 in Zeit Online, the online platform of Germany's largest weekly, Die Zeit, with over a half-million distribution.

"Nagorno-Karabakh: Facing Starvation" presented facts and figures — 20 trucks with 400 tons of humanitarian goods waiting at the border — and complained that "only appeals" had been forthcoming from the international community, European

Union, and Germany. What is required is a UN Security Council resolution to lift the blockade, and an airlift. The daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), also a newspaper of record, joined the growing press coverage on August 26 with a major article, "Blockaded, Threatened, and Vulnerable: Nagorno-Karabakh Cut Off Since December: --The Situation Continues to Worsen."

Friedrich Schmidt, correspondent for Russia, Belarus, Caucasus and Central Asia, received his report via video hook-up from 26-year-old Gohar Gyurjyan in Martakert, who described the lack of all vital needs, food, medicine, fuel, electricity (none at night and limited by day). The energy crisis has been aggravated, she said, by reduced efficiency of hydropower plants, due to low water levels. A social worker, who walks to work daily and has lost ten pounds, Gohar sees no future as part of Azerbaijan: "How can you co-exist with people who want you dead, merely because you are Armenian?" Aliyev's "main aim is Artsakh, but without the Armenians." Nonetheless, she will remain, convinced that "Evil will lose out."

The FAZ also spoke with Ocampo, who reiterated points from his written opinion.

GERAYER KOUTCHARIAN RECALLED TURKISH PRESIDENT ERDOGAN'S COMMENT AT THE 2020 "VICTORY PARADE," THAT THEY WERE "FINISHING WHAT WE BEGAN IN 1915."

The same day, an updated commentary by Ronya Othmann in the FAZ sounded the alarm: "Look at Nagorno-Karabakh!"

A leading expert on the region, Dr. Stefan Meister, provided insight into the geopolitical and economic dimensions of the crisis in an OpEd appearing August 27 in Zeit Online under the heading, "People Are Starving in Nagorno-Karabakh, the EU Looks the Other Way."

Meister, who is head of the Center for Order and Governance in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), drew attention to the role of Russia. Though a military and political ally of poorly armed Armenia, Russia seeks relief from sanctions through alternate trade routes, like the north-south corridor from Azerbaijan to Iran and India, as well as Turkey. "This, in turn," he wrote, "strengthens the negotiating position vis-à-vis Russia of Azerbaijan and Turkey," who have deep military and economic ties. Meister believes Russia and Azerbaijan must have agreed on the latter's aggressions against Artsakh, since Russian troops "always withdraw in time and do nothing against the blockade." As for Azerbaijan's strategy, Meister sees a "salami tactic" at work: Aliyev moves from blockade to isolation, progressively black-mailing Yerevan to accept Azerbaijan's unconditional sovereignty over Artsakh.

By August 28, public exposure of the genocide danger — and of governmental inaction — escalated. The leftist *Tageszeitung* (TAZ) featured a commentary by Tigran Petrosyan, who minced no words. "Germany Shares Guilt/ The Accepted Genocide: Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh is Cut Off from the World, the Population is

Starving, Fuel-rich Azerbaijan is More Important to the West."

For Petrosyan this is "a déjà-vu." In 1915 it was 1.5 million Christian genocide victims, today 120,000 Armenians face starvation. "This genocidal situation," he writes, "could come into being because the international community — as earlier during World War I — is not looking."

Petrosyan recalled the 2016 Genocide resolution passed by the Bundestag, which acknowledged German co-responsibility. And he reminded readers that, following protests by Turkey, the government two months later specified that the resolution was "not legally binding."

On August 22, at a government press conference in Berlin, a government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit was confronted by a question on Karabakh. It was all well and good, said Jenny Günther, for the government to express concern regarding the crisis. Comparing the clear sanctions against Russia and Putin for the Ukraine aggression with the response to genocide threatened against ethnic Armenians, she referenced Chancellor Scholz's appreciation of Azerbaijani President Aliyev as a reliable partner in energy deals. The question she

had was, whether a genocide of Armenians was being considered "acceptable."

Hebestreit replied, "I almost reacted with 'Naja' — that's what I say when I'm confronted with propaganda and not questions." (The German "Naja" is a slang ex-

pression of dismissal, roughly translated as "oh, well" or "y'know," "anyway" or perhaps better, "whatever...") Hebestreit continued, saying the Russian war on Ukraine was not comparable to the "case" of Armenia and Azerbaijan, that the international community was concerned and engaged. He denied ignoring a genocide, criticizing use of the term as a "battle cry," "inappropriate," and "propaganda."

The incident provoked an uproar in the press. It was not the first time Hebestreit had had problems with the issue of genocide. It was recalled that he had committed a comparable blunder one year ago, when he failed to react after Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, at a joint press conference with Chancellor Scholz, had uttered offensive remarks relativizing the Holocaust.

AGA chairwoman Tessa Hofmann cited Armenian UNICEF representative Lussine Karachanyan, who deplored the fact that on September 1, when worldwide, schools at all levels will open, in Artsakh "the school bells will not ring" but "silence will be deafening" as "thousands of undernourished children and youngsters" must bear the brunt of this terrorist action. "For the love of God, prevent this Hell ... otherwise it will guarantee the destruction of human civilization."

Gerayer Koutcharian recalled Turkish President Erdogan's comment at the 2020 "Victory Parade," that they were "finishing what we began in 1915." Today, Azerbaijan has assumed the role, aiming to eliminate Armenia, seen as an obstacle to the union of Turkic peoples; "first Artsakh, then Syunik" in southern Armenia, a country Aliyev considers "West Azerbaijan."



INTERNATIONAL

Armenians in Germany Hold Rallies in Support of Artsakh

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — On September 2, Armenians in Berlin, Hamburg and Frankfurt were joined by local human rights groups in demonstrations to protest the threatened genocide in Karabakh (Artsakh), and demand effective humanitarian and political intervention.

The Berlin-based grass-roots movement Theophanu Club Germany, along with the Central Council of Armenians in Germany (ZAD), the human rights group AGA, and others, shared a call issued by the United Peoples Movement to Save Artsakh for simultaneous demonstrations worldwide on September 2. In Frankfurt, in addition to the ZAD were the Armenian Cultural Association in Hessen (AKH), Association of Genocide Opponents (VVG), Democratic Peoples and Cultural Center (DVK), New Democratic Youth Club (VNDJ), and in Hamburg, also the Armenian Youth Association-Cilicia (AJK).

When the groups announced their plans for protest actions, news of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis had finally broken in the German press, and by the time organizers put up their banners, the impending hunger catastrophe had become major news in national media. The mass weeklies, *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, and *Stern*, as well as leading dailies, online media, and national radio and television, ran interviews and reports.

In the wake of growing public exposure, expanding protest letters, petitions, and demonstrations, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock was forced to issue a stronger statement than heretofore. In the context of the EU Foreign Ministers meeting in Toledo, Spain on August 31, she declared: “The people in Nagorno-Karabakh must finally receive what they need to live. The Lachin Corridor must be open for hu-

manitarian aid.”

In Berlin, Lilith Kocharyan from the Theophanu Club stressed that their gathering was taking place on 32nd Independence Day of Karabakh: its population now blockaded, facing starvation, and its very existence threatened. Thus, the crucial im-

powers.” Since calls from several governments, and orders from international courts to lift the blockade have fallen on deaf ears, she demanded that the EU “implement its Responsibility to Protect (R2P) commitment,” which means protection from ethnic cleansing and genocide, by imposing

sanctions in Berlin, and other cities, on September 23.

On September 1, weltkirche.de (world church-germany) reported that the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Germany, Bishop Sevpépé Isakhanyan, warned of impending geno-



“NK Blockade We won’t survive the winter. Catastrophic situation in NK” read the signs.

portance of international solidarity.

Summarizing the developments leading up to the existential crisis, she outlined the measures required to save the population. “Genocide Watch,” she reported, “classifies the situation in Artsakh to be at the ‘Persecution’ stage, the 8th of 10 recognized stages of Genocide, and urges immediate intervention and sanctions to be imposed on Azerbaijan by the world

sanctions, launching international criminal prosecutions, “and as a last resort, military action.”

Concretely, the EU should pressure Azerbaijan to open the Lachin Corridor, and humanitarian air corridor in Artsakh; withdraw its troops from Armenia’s sovereign territory, refrain from future military aggressions, and work towards peace; unconditionally and urgently release all Armenian prisoners and detainees from the 2020 war and thereafter, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and 2020 ceasefire document. In addition, she called for an international fact-finding mission in Artsakh as well as the establishment of a “self-determination and security plan for Artsakh’s Armenian population.”

Gerayer Kocharyan of AGA spoke, as did Jonathan Spangenberg, chairman of the ZAD, who issued a plea for all Armenians in the diaspora to come together to mount enough pressure to force political action.

At the same time, farther south, protesters in Frankfurt unfurled banners and held up pickets denouncing the genocidal actions of Azerbaijan and presenting their demands. Shushan Tumanyan, vice chairwoman of the AKH, greeted the growing crowd, and Samwel Lulukyan (ZAD) followed. AKH member Susanna Margaryan, who is a journalist from Armenia, reported on the worsening situation, and Döne Gündüz (VVG) read an appeal issued on August 16 by a group of Turkish intellectuals calling for a humanitarian airlift for Karabakh.

The simultaneous demonstrations in three German cities, themselves only one part of a worldwide mobilization, signal a growing process of unification of political and civil society forces in the Armenian diaspora. Among the most important institutions is the Armenian Church, which is co-organizer of the next planned demon-

cide in Karabakh and called for German assistance. According to the news wire, Isakhanyan demanded that Foreign Minister Baerbock, who had just spoken on the issue, take “concrete steps toward an immediate opening of the Lachin Corridor and the protection of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.” He also criticized the German government’s position to date. Referring to a recent comment by government press spokesman Steffen Hebestreit, who had characterized the term “genocide” as a “battle cry” and “propaganda” in connection with Artsakh, the Bishop said such terms would remind many Armenians of



“Open your eyes, world! 120,000 people are starving and suffering. The 2nd Armenian Genocide.”

Mayor of Paris Visits Lachin

LACHIN, from page 1

Artsakh President Arayik Harutyunyan thanked all those involved in the French initiative to send humanitarian aid, stressing that “Artsakh will never forget it.”

While voices from all over the world are calling on Azerbaijan to unblock the Lachin corridor, President Ilham Aliyev persists in his desire to integrate Artsakh into Azerbaijan.

The French flag was hoisted in Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh, as a sign of gratitude.

The Lachin corridor has been blocked by Azerbaijan since the end of 2022, leading



Mayor Anne Hidalgo, front (photo Paris municipality)

to a permanent humanitarian crisis in Nagorno Karabakh.



Trucks with humanitarian aid

Community News

AIWA to Hold 9th International Conference in Yerevan

BOSTON — On October 5-7, the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) will hold its ninth international conference in Armenia. The conference will be titled "Local to Global: Uniting for Change."

Over three full days, meet and engage with inspiring female leaders from around the world, with talks in key field areas, including *Fostering Mind, Body and Soul*, *Gaining Grounds in Technology*, and *Mobilizing the Power of Women in Business, Government, and Media*.

AIWA organizers hope that the conference would serve an all-in-one resource for personal growth where attendees will hear inspiring talks, meet experts through networking opportunities, participate in skill-building workshops and walk away with a support network of Armenian women spanning the globe.

A welcome reception on Wednesday, October 4, and a gala dinner on Saturday, October 7, are included in the conference package, with additional add-on excursions before and after the conference.

Among the speakers will be Baroness Caroline Cox, an ardent advocate of human rights and a vocal ally of the cause of Armenians in Karabakh. Other speakers will include Tatevik Aghanbekian, director of sexual Assault Crisis Center NGO, songwriter Anush Alexanyan, UNESCO Finance Officer Arevik Anapiosyan and attorney and senior government advisor Sara Anjargolian.



Christine Soussa

Christine Soussa, the president of the AIWA San Francisco Affiliate as well as AIWA's global board, recently expressed her enthusiasm about the upcoming conference.

She said, "This year's conference theme 'local to global' is very intentional. We are profoundly mindful of what is happening locally in Armenia and Artsakh, we hope to raise awareness of the issues on a global stage while also reminding the women locally that they are loved and supported by a global community. Over the years AIWA has hosted many beloved conferences, given the current realities and everything that has been going on since 2020, this conference is particularly special and important. see AIWA, page 7



The Vahan Tekeyan School of Beirut, Lebanon

Tekeyan Cultural Association Contributes \$10,400 towards School Bus for Beirut's Tekeyan School

WATERTOWN — Tekeyan Cultural Association West Coast members and friends have contributed \$10,400 towards the purchase of an urgently needed school bus for the Vahan Tekeyan School in Beirut, Lebanon.

The school was established in 1951 by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Founders Body. It has survived despite many difficult periods during which the entire country of Lebanon was affected by catastrophes, including civil war, war with neighbors, a deteriorating economic situation and inflation, and only a few years ago, a largescale explosion of stored fireworks. All this has led to a decimation of the population, including the Armenian community.

Since its inception, the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada has permanently contributed financially for the well-being of the school. Successful graduates of the school such as Sam Simonian of Dallas, TX, as well as the Armenian General Benevolent Union, help the school annually.

The generous recent donation of \$7,000 towards the purchase of the Vahan Tekeyan School bus by Harout Bronozian, a philanthropist who believes in the education of the next generation in the diaspora, is highly appreciated. He also supports regularly many worthwhile projects in Artsakh and Armenia.

Other contributors to the bus project were: Mr. & Mrs. Ara and Sonia Babayan, \$500, Mr. & Mrs. Vartan and Berta Nazerian, \$500, TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter, \$500, Mr. & Mrs. Jirair and Irma Frounjan, \$300, TCA Los Angeles Metro Chapter, \$200, Dr. & Mrs. Raffi and Patty Balian, \$200, Mr. & Mrs. John & Tamar Poladian Peron \$200, Mr. & Mrs. Jano and Jenny Aintablian, \$200, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph and Karine Kanimian, \$200, Mr. & Mrs. Carl and Maria Bardakian, \$100, Mr. & Mrs. Avedis and Armig Markarian, \$100, Mr. & Mrs. Panig and Narineh Keshishian, \$100, Mr. & Mrs. Levon and Houry Keshishian, \$100, Mr. & Mrs. Ara and Maral Simonian, \$100 and Mr. & Mrs. Hovsep and Azniv Melkonian, \$100.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association Central Board of Directors of USA and Canada thanks Mr. Bronozian for his spontaneous generosity, along with the other donors listed above, and commends its West Coast Office for initiating and realizing this fundraising effort.



Harout Bronozian

40 Ecumenical Leaders Urge US President to Act For Artsakh

This week, a coalition of Christian church and organizational leaders in the U.S. made an urgent appeal to President Biden, to intervene on behalf of the Armenians of Artsakh.

In their August 29 letter, more than 40 faith leaders voiced concerns over the continuing blockade of Artsakh and the humanitarian crisis it has caused.

"We urge you," the letter reads, "to use the influence of your good offices to seek an immediate end to the devastating Azerbaijani blockade of the Lachin Corridor, which is the only point of access to more than 120,000 Armenians who live there and whose families have resided there for centuries. Of the 120,000 Armenians at risk, 9,000 of them are people with disabilities, 20,000 of them are elderly, and 30,000 of them are children, particularly vulnerable to the effects of starvation."

The religious leaders left no doubt in their appeal that the Armenians of Artsakh are facing a "soft genocide" due to the blockade, whose goal is to deprive the people of food and other essentials needed for survival. The letter references (and links to) recent reports from expert observers, United Nations officials, and human rights groups, all attesting to the gravity of the situation and the need for intervention to prevent a large-scale human tragedy.

An emphatic final statement implores President Biden "to take urgent action to end the blockade of Artsakh, to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance that is needed to sustain life and to ensure that such supplies can be delivered, and to end the suffering of the people of Artsakh so that the soft genocide we are witnessing is averted. We also urge you to do all that you can to seek an immediate diplomatic solution — including working with international partners and the governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey — to find a resolution to this continuing political crisis and humanitarian disaster."

Assembling a Moral Consensus

The letter emerged from an August 14 video conference call, organized by Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan and Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director Archbishop Vicken Aykazian. During that conference, Fr. Mesrop thanked the high-ranking faith leaders for their earlier support of Armenia and Artsakh, and gave an overview of the present crisis and its background in the long-simmering Karabagh conflict.

"We are living through another time of trouble," the Primate told listeners. "It is not the first such time in Artsakh's long history. But this time, the stakes are very high; the forces against us are very powerful. The urgent truth is that this time, the very existence of Artsakh as an Armenian see ECUMENICAL, page 12



COMMUNITY NEWS



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

**Dr. Nubar Berberian 2023 Annual Awards**

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

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

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

Watertown, MA, August 10, 2023

AIWA to Hold 9th International Conference

AIWA, from page 6

It's a reminder that despite what is happening locally, we remain globally united."

Soussa added, that the conference, "is an opportunity to drive powerful, positive change and to be part of something bigger than oneself. Originally this conference was scheduled to be in 2020; it's important that we gather together, advocate together, create together, inspire together."

The AIWA San Francisco Affiliate will present a session on October 5 at the Tumo Center, highlighting the many ways technology continues to impact our lives and the significant involvement of women. Focusing on the profound influence of technology on women's empowerment and the incredible role women play in innovation and disruptive technology globally, this event features two-panel discussions highlighting successful women in IT/HighTech and female Founders of AI companies. The event also features two presentations that explore how cultural perceptions of women in High Tech shape Armenian society and share about AIWA's High Tech scholarships dedicated to further empowering women in these fields.

The program on October 6 will focus on "Mobilizing the Power of Women in Government, Media, & Business."

Soussa, the Global Client Director of Equinix, said she was looking forward to the program and was delighted with the organization's mission.

"Over three decades ago, AIWA was established because its founders noticed the unique needs of women, particularly during times of uncertainty. AIWA was established right after the devastating earthquake with a commitment to create a global community that supports and uplifts women. Thus, AIWA is an exceptionally unique organization that attracts women worldwide who also have the same commitment: to be a part of something greater than oneself, to drive meaningful, lasting, positive impact. Over the years, AIWA has participated in numerous life changing activities," she said.

Soussa singled out the organization's "robust scholarship program," and added, "we keep in touch with our scholars who then often become a part of our community and comment on how special AIWA is to them. Many of our scholarships also have internship opportunities."

In addition to IT, AIWA has been outspoken against domestic violence.

Said Soussa, "Domestic violence has always been a key pillar of ours. Over the years we have given financial support, expert support for mental and physical healing, helped craft legislation, written curriculum for schools in Armenia and more. Most recently we helped purchase a safe house in Armenia."

Soussa concluded by noting that people of different ages can benefit from AIWA. "AIWA is a global community for changes that has generational impact, for example my grandmother was an active member, today, my mother and I now are, as are my children. Often at our events, we will see generations of women who are drawn to the unique magnetism and love that AIWA has."

To learn more about AIWA and the conference, visit <https://aiwainternational.org/9th-international-conference/>

— Alin K. Gregorian



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OBITUARY

Nazar Nazarian, Leader in Philanthropy and Industry, Passes Away

NEW YORK — The pre-eminent Armenian patron Nazar L. Nazarian passed away on August 28, 2023, at age 98.

Blessed with longevity, Nazar had ample opportunity to fulfill his destiny as the successor of a long line of distinguished patrons of education, health care, nation-building and above all, the Armenian Church. It is a family legacy that he and his late wife, Artemis, who passed in 2020, instilled in their family who survive them: their daughter Seta and son Levon and his wife Claudia, as well as their five grandchildren: William, Matthew, Nicholas, Daniela, and Gregory Nazarian. Nazar also recently welcomed two great-grandchildren: Henry Peraino and Madeline Nazarian.

Born in Aleppo, Syria to Levon and Satenig Nazarian, Nazar was raised in Lebanon where the family served as bastions of the local Armenian community.

He graduated from the American University of Beirut with a BS in pharmacy.

Nazar immigrated to the U.S. in the 1950's to expand the family business where he met the love of his life, Artemis Topjian, a native of Watertown, MA. The couple committed themselves to sharing their good fortune by supporting a wide range of Armenian endeavors. Their generosity fostered the development of local Armenian communities —not only in the Greater New York area, where they lived, worked and raised a family, but to various corners of the world, in North America, South America, Lebanon, and later, in independent Armenia and a struggling Artsakh.

Nazar's love for the vision and the values of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) stemmed from a deep-rooted family association and upbringing. Between 1978 and 2007, he served on the AGBU Central Board of Directors, holding positions as vice president and treasurer, and thereafter as member of the Council of Trustees and finally, as Emeritus Trustee. He distinguished himself as among the most far-reaching figures in modern AGBU history. He and Artemis created community



centers, supported schools and established educational scholarships under the AGBU banner around the world. From the Levon and Satenig Nazarian Primary School (Beirut, Lebanon) to the Levon Nazarian Hall (Saddle Brook, NJ) to the Nazarian Center at Camp Nubar (Delancey, NY) to the Artemis Nazarian Preschool at AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School (Canoga Park, California) to the Salon Nazarian (Buenos Aires, Argentina), innumerable gatherings have been held and thousands of children have laughed and played under the Nazarian name.

In 1998, Nazar took the initiative of funding construction of a building dedicated to the memory of his brother, Noubar, under the AGBU banner. This complex serves as the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Lebanon.

In 2000, while Armenia was still reeling from the collapse of the Soviet health system, Nazar helped fund the first ultrasound

teaching facility in the country, the Levon and Claudia Nazarian Radiology Center, as a project of AGBU.

In addition, the Nazarians have distributed dozens of ultrasound machines to hospitals throughout Armenia, Artsakh, and the region of Javakhk in the Republic of Georgia, where a large community of ethnic Armenians reside.

In 2015, thanks to Nazar and Artemis, the AGBU Armenia building in Yerevan opened its doors to 5,000 square meters of office space. This initiative secured a permanent physical presence for AGBU in the homeland. Since then, AGBU has implemented numerous socio-economic development and humanitarian relief initiatives and has become a hub for cultural events.

Nazar's commitment to his faith drove many philanthropic projects. Locally, in 1969 he became one of the Godfathers of the construction of the St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York City. He was among one of the founding leaders and benefactors of St. Thomas Armenian Church in Tenafly, NJ as well as a patron of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New Rochelle, NY, where he served for many years on the board. He and his wife donated generously to the education of future Armenian priests and church leaders.

The Nazarians were also instrumental in supporting the Armenian Church in the newly independent homeland. Early on, they funded the construction of the Holy

Echmiadzin Chancellery, which houses the administrative offices and the secretariat of the Catholicosate. They were also the benefactor of the St. Dertad chapel within the St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral in Yerevan. He was the recipient of the highest honors bestowed by Holy Echmiadzin as well as countless other awards and recognitions from church leaders around the world and heads of state.

The Nazarians' generosity extended well beyond the walls of the Armenian world. They were consistent community donors giving to cultural and arts programming. They established funds and scholarships at Boston University and Wesleyan University, while also offering individual grants to students around the world.

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, through the years, has printed many appreciations for Nazarian, a longtime benefactor of the newspaper, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, and the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Funeral Services took place on Saturday, September 2, at St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Cathedral, New York. The service was followed by a private interment. In lieu of flowers, the family has asked for donations in his memory be directed to the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). Funds will be distributed to AGBU and to the Diocese of the Armenia Church of America (Eastern), www.agbu.org/memory-nazar-nazarian.

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In Memory of Nazar Nazarian



TRIBUTE, from page 1

Armenian heritage together with his wife Artemis, who passed away some three years ago. He immigrated to the United States in the 1950s and as his business grew, hired many Armenians to work with him.

As a philanthropist and a patriotic Armenian, he was a key supporter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and its publications, including the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, *Baikar* and *Azg* newspapers, the Armenian Church, and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), as well as of numerous other Armenian organizations. He funded the construction and renovation of many churches in the United States and Armenia, and schools and community centers for the AGBU, on whose Board of Directors and later Board of Trustees he held important positions for decades. His benevolence extended also to the Middle Eastern and Argentinian Armenian communities.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association wishes to express their condolences to Nazarian's daughter Seta, son Levon and wife Claudia, his five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Nazar Nazarian's kind and generous heart and his good deeds will not be forgotten, and his benevolent influence will continue to be felt no doubt for a long time to come.

The Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association
of the United States and Canada
August 30, 2023



OBITUARY

Medical Pioneer, Philanthropist Dr. Aram Chobanian Dies

CHORBANIAN, from page 1

A world-renowned cardiologist, Dr. Chobanian was principally responsible for establishing the connection between hypertension and accelerated vascular disease, including atherosclerosis. His research accomplishments propelled him into the leadership of the Joint National Commission on Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure, which developed the national health care guidelines for hypertension for the United States. Dr. Chobanian was recipient of the first Lifetime Achievement Award in Hypertension of the American Heart Association, the Modern Medicine Award for Distinguished Achievement, the American Heart Association Award of Merit, the NHLBI Freis Award, and the Massachusetts Medical Society Lifetime Achievement Award.

He had a long and storied career at Boston University and its Medical School, becoming the founding Director of the Whitaker Cardiovascular Institute in 1973. From 1975-95, he also served as Director of the Hypertension Specialized Center of Research, funded by the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Chobanian was appointed University Professor and John I. Sandson Distinguished Professor of Health Sciences. He became Dean of the School of Medicine in 1988 and Provost of the Boston University Medical Campus in 1996. In October 2003, he was appointed President of the University and served in this role until June 2005.

In September 2022, the School of Medicine at Boston University was renamed the Boston University Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine after a generous gift by Avedisian, his childhood friend. The gift supports scholarships, endowed faculty chairs, and cutting-edge research.

He was passionately dedicated to improving healthcare in Armenia and involved in several programs to advance undergraduate and graduate medical education and science programs there. Dr. Chobanian was a past member of the board of directors of the Fund for Armenian Relief and proud of the mission and work of the organization. For several years, he also chaired the International Advisory Board of Yerevan State Medical University. He was an elected Foreign Member of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences and is a Gold Medal recipient from the President of Armenia.



Dr. Aram Chobanian, right, with Edward Avedisian at the renaming ceremony at Boston University

A lifelong fan of music, he taught himself to play the piano. During his later years he studied music composition, composing a variety of pieces, including songs, operas, operettas, and musicals.

Beyond these many accomplishments, he was first and foremost a family man. He was the beloved husband of the late Jasmine Chobanian, father to his three children Karin Chobanian Torrice, Lisa Chobanian (Wolfgang Ramboeck), and Aram Chobanian, Jr. (Louise Hagopian Chobanian), and adoring grandfather to Marc Torrice and Vanessa Torrice, M.D. He was also a devoted uncle and grand uncle to both his

brother's and his wife's extended families.

Visitation was held at St. Stephen's Armenian Church, 38 Elton Ave, Watertown, on September 6. Interment followed. A memorial service will also be held in his honor later in the fall.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Fund for Armenian Relief, 630 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10016; The Aram V. Chobanian Assistant Professorship at Boston University Medical Center at Giving | Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine; or St. Stephen's Armenian Church, 38 Elton Ave, Watertown, MA.

George Chakoian

WWII Vet, Musician, Engineer, Active in Church

LINCOLN, R.I. — George Chakoian, 99, of Lincoln, RI and formerly of Singer Island, Fla., passed away on August 30, 2023. He was the husband of Marion (Mahdesian) Chakoian.

George was born and raised in Providence and was the son of Daniel and Margaret (Derderian) Chakoian. He graduated from Mt. Pleasant High School in 1943 and immediately volunteered to serve in the US Army Air Force. He completed aviation cadet training, radio school and gunnery training and was assigned as a radio operator and gunner on a B-24 Heavy Bomber at 23rd Bomb Squadron, 13th US Army Air Force. George flew 46 combat missions during World War II in the Southwest Pacific, including Australia, the Netherlands, East Indies and Philippine Islands. He received 8 WWII medals from US Senator Jack Reed to recognize his military service.

After completion of his military service at the end of World War II, George returned to Rhode Island and married Marion Mahdesian in 1948. He graduated from the RI School of Design with a Bachelor of Science degree in Machine Design in 1949. George and Marion then traveled to Indiana where he attended Tri State College and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1950. After graduating, George designed and built the house that he and Marion lived in for

over 65 years.

George had an impressive career as a mechanical engineer and an aerospace engineer. He worked at BIF Industries as a design engineer on pneumatic and electrical control systems, and as an engineer at the US Naval Underwater Ordnance Station designing submarine-launched torpedoes. His work on torpedoes continued at the US Naval Aircraft Torpedo Unit at Quonset Point, where he was awarded 3 invention patents by the US Navy for research, test and evaluation of aircraft-launched torpedoes.

His work then took him to the US Army Natick Laboratories in Natick, MA where he spent 25 years developing airdrop systems for heavy loads. He was Chief of the Automated Systems Division, which was equivalent to the rank of full colonel.

George was very active in the international arena. He traveled worldwide for his job, chairing international NATO conferences, presenting flight safety briefings to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and presenting papers in the USA, England, Belgium, Germany and Canada. He retired in November 1990.

His work extended beyond his career into his local and church community. He served as Chairman of the Lincoln School Building Committee, Chairman of the church investment committee for Sts. Sahag Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church and Chairman of the Board of the Armenian Student Association.



He was a member of the Parish Council for seven years and was vice chairman for two years. He later served as a Diocesan Delegate for 32 years and served on the Diocesan Council for four years representing the Eastern Diocese.

George was honored with numerous awards throughout his life. He was most proud of his induction into the RI Aviation Hall of Fame for his voluntary service in the US Army Air Force, the St. Nerses the Graceful Medal and Pontifical Encyclical presented by the Catholicos of All Armenians for his lifetime service to the Armenian Church, and his nomination for the

Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

His professional listings include Who's Who in Aerospace, Who's Who in the World and Who's Who of Armenians, among many other publications.

He authored or co-authored 30 technical reports in professional journals and has been featured in publications such as the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Aviation Week*, *Machine Design* and *Astronautics and Aeronautics*.

George formed the New England Ararat Orchestra in 1955 and served as bandleader. The band played over 1000 weddings, anniversary parties and social events throughout the Northeast for over 55 years. He released 3 albums of Armenian and Middle Eastern music.

George is survived by his wife of 75 years Marion; daughter Janis Dulgarian and husband Robert of Cumberland, RI; daughter Cynthia Nahigian and husband Thomas of Lakewood Ranch, Fla.; daughter Laura Chakoian of Cumberland, RI and brother Anthony Chakoian of Medford, Mass. and several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his brother Jack Chakoian of North Providence.

His funeral service were held on Wednesday, September 6 at Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church, Providence, followed by burial with military honors at Swan Point Cemetery, Providence.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to: Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Church, 70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI 02908.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Nursing Home Resident Mary Vartanian Celebrates 109th Birthday

JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. — Staff and residents at the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center recently joined together to celebrate a huge milestone: Mary Vartanian’s 109th birthday. Amidst a rousing rendition of *Happy Birthday* and the well-wishes of every person in attendance, Vartanian gave a big “thumbs up” when presented with her cake.

Mary has been a resident of the Armenian Center for the past six years and is beloved by residents and staff alike.

“Mary is such a pleasant, friendly individual,” said Salpy Yeterian, activities director at the Armenian Nursing Center. “She is very appreciative, throwing kisses to the staff each time they greet her. Moreover, she is just a joy to be around.”

Mary attributes her longevity to her faith – she prays daily – and hard work. Although not a fan of exercise, she could often be found cleaning, cooking, and helping her family. Mary reflected on her life by saying, “I lived a simple life, taking care of my family. I also went to church and volunteered at the functions. That’s what I most enjoyed.”

Mary was born in Aintab in 1914 during the Armenian Genocide. She lived in Syria for many years before ending up in the United States.

Mary was introduced by her doctor cousin to Hovhannes Vartanian, also born in Aintab, and they married in 1935. Hovhannes was a violinist as well as a composer and performed for the Armenian Radio of Aleppo, receiving the Syrian National Medal of Recognition for his talent.

Together, Mary and Hovhannes had four sons and two daughters. Sadly, Hovhannes passed away in 1969 when Mary was only 55 years old. She never remarried. One of their sons, Zaven, emigrated to the United States and settled in Watertown, MA. Mary, along with another son, joined them in 1972. Mary was a resident of Watertown for 45 years. Always active, she lived by herself until she was 101. After a fall, she decided to move into the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

Yeterian noted that Vartanian is generous and giving. “When her family brings in snacks or food, Mary immediately wants to share her bounty with the residents and staff. She is always looking out for the staff.”

Yeterian recalled, “I brought back to her room after a BBQ this summer. Mary looked at me and said, ‘Thank you, but you must be tired too. Go and sit down!’”

As Yeterian puts it, “Mary Vartanian is truly an inspiration to us all!”



Mary Vartanian celebrates her 109th birthday with staff of Armenian Center

AMAA Awards Scholarships To College And University Students

TENAFLY, N.J. — John Cherkezian, Chair of the Armenian Missionary Association of America’s Scholarship Committee, has announced that the AMAA has awarded \$193,000 in direct scholarship grants for the academic year 2023-2024 to 69 worthy students attending colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. An additional \$40,000 was also assigned for qualified university students in Armenia.

For over 50 years, the AMAA has helped thousands of college students with scholarships, thus lessening their financial costs and allowing them to better focus on their academic work and prepare for their future endeavors. Since its founding, the AMAA has supported the education of tens of thousands of Armenian students at all levels in the Near East, Europe, Continental United States, and Armenia. The AMAA also provides generous and abundant financial aid to schools and institutions of higher education in the Near East, including Haigazian University and the Near East School of Theology in Beirut.

The scholarships granted this year were provided from several AMAA scholarship funds established over the years to support these deserving students. Students may request applications from AMAA Headquarters in Paramus, NJ beginning in January of each year. The deadline to submit applications for the 2024-2025 academic year is May 1, 2024.

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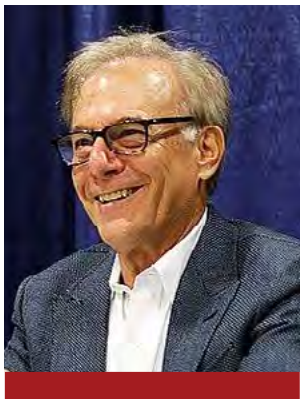


THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

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

With the participation of:



David Ignatius
(*Washington Post*)



Ken Dilanian
(*NBC News*)



Eric Hacobian
(*CivilNet*)



Amberin Zaman
(*Al-Monitor*)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023

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

Tufts University, Medford, MA

Joyce Cummings Center, Room 270

Complimentary parking. Light Reception to Follow.

90TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2023

Boston Burlington Marriott, Burlington, MA



**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

**Robert
Avetisyan**

*Representative of the
Nagorno Karabakh
Republic in the US*



EMCEE

**Sona
Movsesian**

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

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE



a cappella trio



From left: Teni Apelian, Anais Tekerian, Yeraz Markarian



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Sponsorship opportunities are available also at <http://givebutter.com/UMfFeB>



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



COMMUNITY NEWS



Members of the Armenian-American Veterans of Lowell, Mass.

Five students Recognized at Annual Lowell Veterans Scholarship Award Dinner

LOWELL, Mass. — The Sam Manoian Post #1 of the Armenian-American Veterans of Lowell awarded scholarships to the following outstanding area students: Eddie Gaffney, Max Hamel, Miana Hamel, Alexander Movsessian, and Zachary Ouellette.

Post Commander Rich Juknavorian, addressing the scholarship recipients and their parents, said: “For over 30 years the Armenian-American Veterans of Lowell have awarded some 200 scholarships to area students pursuing a higher education. This program started some 40 years ago, and the veterans are most pleased to continue offering this community service.”



The five students who received scholarships, at center of photo

Holy Trinity Armenian Church Celebrates Century of Founding

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — On Sunday, September 24, the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston will celebrate its 100th anniversary as a parish with a special mass followed by a banquet.

Trustees and Pastor of the Armenian Community of Boston purchased their first House of Worship in the city of Boston and formally established the Holy Trinity Armenian Church on November 11, 1923.

In realizing this dream, dedicated parishioners were called to oversee the care and governance of their church. Together, they maintained the church complex, secured her financial well-being, and organized spiritual and cultural programs that brought the greater community together.

For the celebration on September 24, 2023, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of America, the Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, on his first formal visit to the parish, will celebrate the Divine Liturgy, following which he will preside over the historic Diamond Anniversary Banquet. This banquet will honor all of Holy Trinity’s past Parish Council members in addition to celebrating 100 years of the parish.

Holy Trinity welcomes all who wish to



The original Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Boston

join the celebrations.

More information about the celebrations and about the history of the parish can be found at www.htaac.org/100years.

Ecumenical Leaders Urge US President To Act for Protection of Artsakh

ECUMENICAL, from page 6

Christian land is at stake; its material culture, its heritage, its people are all at risk of extermination.”

Archbishop Aykazian then described the present situation in detail, aided by Armenian community activists Sonya Nersessian and Lenna Hovanessian. The audience members — made up of leaders from the American ecumenical groups National Council of Churches, Christian Churches Together, and other faith organizations — were deeply moved by the presentation and suggested taking action through a direct appeal to the President.

AEBU Group Celebrates Fifth Anniversary, Awards Scholarships

PASADENA — On Sunday, August 27, the Armenian Educational Benevolent Union (AEBU) Scholarship Fund Committee celebrated its fifth anniversary and announced the 2023-2024 award recipients during a festive gala at the De Luxe Banquet Hall in Burbank.

The AEBU Scholarship Fund was established to encourage youth of Armenian descent to pursue higher education, be engaged in the Armenian community, and to give back through community service. This year, 14 recipients, seven in the United States, four in Armenia and three in Lebanon, were selected from a large pool of highly qualified candidates who had applied nationwide and from overseas.

The Armenian-American selected recipients were awarded their scholarships in the presence of the AEBU Scholarship Fund donors, friends, and family members during the event.

Stepan Hovagimian, Master of Ceremony, started the event with welcoming remarks.

The formal program began after dinner with a musical performance by Nektarine Chilyan, who delighted the audience playing the qanun and singing a collection of popular Armenian and international songs.

The keynote address was given by Dr. Hourri Berberian, professor of history and the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies, as well as serving as the Director of Armenian Studies at the University of California, Irvine. In her presentation, titled “Education, Scholarship, and Armenian Women at the Forefront,” Berberian established a connection between the AEBU mission and historical instances of Armenian women’s groups, their advocacy, and their active involvement in promoting education and supporting students.

Afterwards, Hovagimian invited committee members Tatios Koroghlian, Louise Boyamian and Karine Kojababian to present the 2023 Scholarship Awards to Sara Aprahamian, Sofia Gevorgian, Ani Hekimian, and Kathryn Sarkissian who at-



The scholarship recipients at the Burbank banquet with members of the AEBU Scholarship Fund Committee

tended the ceremony. Aren Avetisian, Ani Mkrtchyan, and Joseph Tertzakian-Harris accepted their awards via video messages.

Award recipients in Armenia and Lebanon received their awards from the AEBU local chapters in Armenia and Lebanon.

Arts & Culture

Armenia Tree Project To Host Wine Tasting Fundraiser in Arlington

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Armenia Tree Project (ATP) has partnered with Storica Wines and Anoush’ella restaurant, to present an evening of Armenian food and wine in support of the organization’s work in Armenia, on Saturday, September 23, at 6 p.m., at the Armenian Cultural Foundation.

ATP invites everyone to attend this benefit at the beautiful Armenian Cultural Foundation, located in a historic building on the banks of the Mystic River. Guests will enjoy a variety of wines from Armenia presented by Storica’s sommeliers. Storica is an Armenian wine import company in the US and carries Armenian wine companies such as Keusch, Zulal, Shofer, Oshin, Van Ardi and Voskevaz. Appetizers will be provided by Anoush’ella, whose translates to “may it be sweet.” Owners Nina



and Raffi Festekjian have created a menu based on traditional recipes found in an Armenian household, that incorporate the fresh, balanced ingredients and complex flavors of the Eastern Mediterranean.

ATP Executive Director Jeanmarie Papelian will share details about the organization’s work in Armenia and Artsakh, which includes plans to plant its 8th millionth tree by the end of 2023. As the organization prepares for its 30th anniversary in 2024, this benefit will kickstart a series of outreach events through the U.S. to engage and educate supporters of ATP.

Tickets are available on Eventbrite: ArmeniaTreeProjectWineTasting2023.eventbrite.com.



Composer Michelle Ekizian in front of a copy of Gorky’s “The Artist and his Mother”

‘Gorky’s Dream Garden’ Presented by Bergen Community College in New Jersey

PARAMUS, N.J. — The Bergen Community College’s Center for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation honors Lynn Needle, dancer/choreographer (and BCC faculty member), and composer/writer Dr. Michelle Ekizian for their collaboration on the composer’s “Gorky’s Dream Carden,” a musical theater opera of love, courage and modern art with the 2023 Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Award.

In tandem is scheduled “The Dream Garden” program, on Wednesday, September 20, at 7:30 p.m. at the campus’ Ciccone Theatre, 400 Paramus Road.

The concert-event will introduce Ekizian’s hybrid praised by the *New York Times* for its “forceful and intricate...inspired touch” and hailed in Broadway World as a “genre bending opera.” From recent showcases presented by Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Armenian Diocese and Newark Museum of Art, and its documentary film winning the Grand Finale Award from the Ridgewood International Film Festival, this festive, informative happening will herald the complete opera’s upcoming mainstage orchestral reveals.

The program explores up-close the art and life of artist Arshile Gorky — a founding father of American abstract-expressionism and a child survivor of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, the first genocide of the 20th century. As in the opera, it fuses the everyday of Gorky’s dynamic modern art world of pre and post-World War II America with tragedy (of genocide, amouiricide and suicide) where dreams of night-time, enigma and nostalgia collide. A mystical, magical, mystery tour of the artist’s incredible story of survival, the hour-length September concert is in Four Dream Garden Moments. The concert/soirée’s grand evening is dedicated to: Remembering the Armenian Genocide of 1915, Commemorating the September 21, 2023 Armenia Independence Day of The Republic of Armenia on her 32nd anniversary of freedom from the USSR, and Celebrating the Armenian-American artist Arshile Gorky on the 2024 and 2023 120th and 75th anniversaries of his birth and death respectively. Of a global perspective, the musical psychodrama is in tune with today.

Ekizian stated: “From 2020’s relatively unnoticed Azerbaijan War upon Armenian territories—echoing the disasters of the Armenian Genocide—to today’s War in Ukraine, the circle continues.”

see GORKY, page 17

Arin Karapet

*A Swedish Politician,
An Armenian Soul*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN - Arin Karapet (born 1988 in Spånga Parish in Stockholm County) is a Swedish politician (moderate) and a member of the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) since 2018. Karapet describes himself as a Swedish Armenian who grew up in Rinkeby and Hässelby, and has spoken out in favor of recognition of the genocide of Armenians and Assyrians between 1915 and 1925. He was previously a member of the Stockholm County Council. In 2021, Karapet received the Armenian Parliament’s Medal of Honor.

My conversation with Arin took place last July in Yerevan.

Arin, how did you become involved in Sweden political life?

If you live in a society which you want to change, you should engage yourself in it. Just to sit and be disappointed is not a right way. I am coming from a family, where very often discussions about the society, the world, conflicts, etc., were taking place. I was grown up in that kind of environment and always been interested in making efforts for everyone in society. I have never run after a nice car; it would not change my life if I have it. When I was 15-16 years old, I got conscious what is going on in our society, what is good, what is bad. Once my mom said: “Do not come home and complain; if you want some changes, we are part of changes.” In Sweden every political party has its youth section, so I started to read about various ideologies and decided to go into the youth sector of Liberal Conservative Party, identifying myself with that ideology. So after 12 years of studying and working in an insurance sector, people started to push me in the party saying I should go to the National Assembly of Sweden. In our internal elections of the party I got the trust and I was put on the list. I was elected in 2018 and re-elected in 2022, first years being in opposition and now - in Parliament. So, it has been a long journey.

You represent the Moderate party of Sweden. Could you please tell us a bit about it?

I would say being liberal conservative is like standing on two legs. Being conservative you keep whatever works in society, you don’t tear it down. You keep it and you develop it. It does not work, when you are liberal. Every society needs reforms. You cannot be against the changes. You can just control and be a part of changes. Just by resisting you will not take any step forward. That is very Armenian, I would say. Being Armenian, I always say, is like being resistant. But if we look to our own history, we were always been a part

see KARAPET, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

Concert at St. Vartan Cathedral Dedicated to Armenian Independence Anniversary

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — Poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow has said, “Music is the universal language of mankind.”

And legendary composer Ludwig van Beethoven called music “a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy. It is the electrical soil in which the spirit lives, thinks and invents, the mediator between spirituality and the sensual life.”

Living and bringing to life these profound sayings will be a concert in honor of Armenian Independence Day at St. Vartan Cathedral, on Wednesday, September 20, at 8 p.m.

Acclaimed artists at this auspicious event will be pianist Karine Poghosyan, and conductor Jason Tramm, leading the 45 members of the MidAtlantic Philharmonic Orchestra. They will perform the soulful and emotional music of Sergei Rachmaninoff and Aram Khachaturian in honor of their births — the 150th anniversary of Rachmaninoff, and 120 anniversary of Khachaturian.

The Primate of the Eastern Diocese, the Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan has stated that “this momentous occasion holds a special place in the hearts of Armenians around the world as we commemorate the hard-fought journey toward sovereignty and the enduring spirit of our beloved

homeland.”

And St. Vartan Cathedral Vicar, Rev. Fr. Davit Karamyan said “St. Vartan Cathedral is the presence of the Armenian spirit in New York City. By holding such an important concert in the Sanctuary, we bring a unique flavor of that spirit to both Armenians and non-Armenians alike.”

Since her orchestral debut at age 14 in her native Armenia, and her solo Carnegie Hall debut at age 23, Poghosyan has received many rave reviews for her “ability to get to the heart of the works she performs” leaving her audiences transformed.

Her most recent concerts include three sold-out performances at Carnegie Hall, one of which was a CD Release of a “Rachmaninoff and Stravinsky” recording on Centaur Records. American Record Guide wrote that “a more heroic program would be hard to find, and few could play as well as the Armenian-American Poghosyan.”

Oscar-winning screenwriter Alex Dinelaris has said, “Listening to and watching Karine Poghosyan play, fills one with life and energy. The combination of her formidable skill, and her unchecked passion is an experience recommended for anyone who has to be reminded of the artist and art within themselves.”

During the pandemic, Poghosyan performed 100 consecutive free virtual con-

certs receiving loyal world-wide fans and wide press coverage.

In addition to Carnegie Hall this season, she has given solo performances in Vienna, Chicago, and California. In February, 2023, Poghosyan released her third album Folk Teams on Parma Recordings’ classical label Navona Records, available on Amazon, AppleMusic, Spotify, and other sources.

For the 2023-2024 season, she will return to Carnegie Hall on February 14, 2024, for a special jazz-themed Valentine’s Day program.

Conducting this special program will be Tramm, called by *Symphony Magazine* as a “Conductor to Watch,” hailed for his choral symphonic and operatic performances, receiving critical acclaim throughout the United States and internationally.

In 2015, as the artistic director and principal conductor of the MidAtlantic Artistic Productions, he made his Carnegie Hall debut at Stern Auditorium. From 2008 to 2012, he served as director of the New Jersey State Opera. And in 2009, the HDTV broadcast with PBS affiliate NJN of the “Verdi Requiem: Live from Ocean Grove”, honored him with a prestigious Emmy nomination. He has also been featured on two National Public Radio broadcasts.

Tramm also is a proficient educator and

is the associate professor and director of choral activities at Seton Hall University, leading the University Chorus, Chamber Choir and Orchestra. In 2017, Seton Hall presented him with the “University Faculty Teacher of the Year” award.

In 2003, Tramm was honored with the “Rising Star Award” from SUNY, joining such world famous Metropolitan Opera luminaries as Renee Fleming and Stephanie Blythe who have also been feted with this much sought-after award.

Well known as a collector, curator, benefactor and civic leader, Vicki Shoghag Hovanessian who is organizing this unique concert, was recently appointed as cultural advisor to the Embassy of Armenia in Washington, DC. Since 1995, Hovanessian has promoted the works of Armenian artists through showings in galleries, private viewings and art fairs with high standards.

During her youth in Beirut, Lebanon, she attended the Armenian Evangelical College (high school), and the Beirut College for Women. At the Art Institute of Chicago, and at Sotheby’s Educational Institute in New York, she studied contemporary art. She is the former director of “Vicki Hovanessian Contemporary Art.”

Among her professional art presentations at St. Vartan Cathedral in New

continued on next page

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe
Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Two of a Kind Cooks' Orange Raisin Scones (Photos courtesy <http://www.twoofakindcooks.com/>)

Orange Raisin Scones

“I never imagined that I would be raving about dried grapes, but here I am. After discovering the jumbo mixed raisins at Sigona’s Farmers Market, I can’t get enough of them.* They are by far the best I’ve ever had — pretty, plump and packed with flavor,” says Allison Hau, the public relations professional, home cook, baker, and food blogger at Two of a Kind, who is based in San Mateo, CA.

“I grew up watching Martha Stewart, Jacques Pépin and Julia Child make magic in the kitchen. Now that I have cable, the Food Network is on almost all the time. But I don’t just watch TV - I examine cooking books, magazines and blogs, and sites like foodgawker and Instagram, too. This is where I get ideas for what to cook and bake - and the dishes I discover and recreate are what you’ll find here. With many cooking resources at my fingertips, it’s no wonder I’m always eager to try something new.”

“Jumbo mixed raisins are a convenient snack or versatile ingredient for cooking and baking. If you lack access to the product, don’t let that stop you from tackling this recipe. Use any kind of dried fruit (like cherries, cranberries or currants) when making these orange raisin scones. They will turn out great, I guarantee it. Orange raisin scones are delicious on their own with hot coffee or tea. But the pastries would also work well as part of a breakfast, luncheon, or brunch spread,” she adds.

- INGREDIENTS:**
- Dough:**
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 - 1/4 cup granulated sugar
 - 1 tablespoon baking powder
 - 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 2 teaspoons finely grated orange zest, more to taste
 - 8 tablespoons frozen unsalted butter, grated
 - 1/2 cup buttermilk (see note)
 - 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
 - 1 egg
 - 1/2 cup jumbo mixed raisins (or any dried fruit)
- Finish:**
- 1 egg beaten with 1 teaspoon buttermilk
 - 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- Orange glaze:**
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
 - 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed orange juice
 - 1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
- Makes 8 scones.

- PREPARATION:**
- Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
 - In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt and orange zest. Add the butter and stir to combine.
 - In a separate bowl, combine the buttermilk, orange juice and egg; mix well.
 - Add the wet mixture to the dry mixture and stir until just combined. Gently fold in the raisins.
 - Turn out dough onto a lightly floured work surface and pat into an 8” circle. Cut dough into 8 wedges and transfer to the prepared baking sheet. Brush tops of scones with the egg wash and sprinkle with sugar.
 - Bake for 18-20 minutes until golden brown. Transfer scones to a wire rack to cool.
 - Make the glaze: In a small bowl, whisk together the powdered sugar and orange juice and zest until smooth. Drizzle the glaze over the cooled scones.

NOTE:

“I rarely buy buttermilk because it’s so easy to make with ingredients you likely have on hand. Just pour 1 tablespoon lemon juice or white vinegar in a measuring cup and add enough milk to hit the 1-cup line. Let the mixture sit at room temperature for 5-10 minutes until curdled,” says Allison.

*Sigona’s Farmers Market is a small, family-owned produce and specialty foods market with locations in Redwood City and Palo Alto, CA. We welcome you to come to Sigona’s where you’ll take a step back in time to an old-fashioned, open-air market to taste, feel and experience the way a fresh market used to be. At Sigona’s you’ll find locally grown, organic and best-quality seasonal produce, local and globally sourced specialty foods, gourmet ingredients, over 250 varieties of artisan cheeses, fresh-cut flowers, microbrews and wine, fresh press and seasonal olive oils and balsamics, specialty dried fruits and nuts and more. See: https://www.sigonas.com/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=326

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from previous page

York are “Giving Form to Faith (2008)”, “Crosses and Icons: Celebrating Spirituality” (2011), “Legacy of Ten Armenian Artist’s” (2012), “25 Years, 25 Artists”,(2015), and “Artist Avedis Baghdasarian” (2018).

In 2008, Hovanessian was instrumental in bringing Arshile Gorky’s awe-inspiring “Artist and His Mother” painting from the Whitney Museum to the Eastern Armenian Diocese, where it was displayed under armed guard on the 60th anniversary of the artist’s death.

She has also has had award-winning exhibitions of Armenian artists in Chicago, the Northwest Indiana Art Center, the Bergen Community College, Southern Connecticut State University and the Collector’s Forum of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, where she was the chairman from 1994 to 1997.

And in Armenia, Hovanessian’s exhibitions have been viewed at the Yerevan State Museum and other venues and in 2017, she was ap-

pointed Diaspora Cultural Advisor to Armen Amirian, Minister of Culture of Armenia.

This special concert at St. Vartan Cathedral has been underwritten by Harry and Suzanne Toufayan, Vicki Hovanessian, and John Mahdessian in memory of his father, Noubar Mahdessian.

The September 20 concert is the first of a planned series of cultural events to be held at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral. Chairperson of the committee is Hovanessian, with co-chair Seta Pascalian Kantarjian, and members Sossy Setrakian, Lily Sarkissian, Alla Terzyan and Tamar Barsamian Degermenci.

Eastern Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan has remarked, “With prayers for the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh and their people, and with a heart brimming with hope, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to this memorable event, and to each individual who joins in this celebration of music, unity, and the indomitable Armenian spirit.”



From left, Sossy Setrakian, Tamar Dekermenci, Karine Poghosyan, Alla Terzyan, Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, Vicki Hovanessian, Seta Kantarjian and Rev. Davit Karamyan

ARTS & CULTURE

Arin Karapet: A Swedish Politician, An Armenian Soul

KARAPET, from page 13

of the changes. I would say that being conservative I have to care about my family, my neighbors, to have proper education system – I do not want to raise a child as a poor person. It is my responsibility if I can contribute through my taxes or another way, to give that little boy or girl a good education, which will make my life easier and richer. Being liberal is to make liberal reforms, freedom reforms, like lower taxes, more enterprising, to form economical turns, which is the Swedish model, different from European or American models.

Is it difficult for someone who is not an ethnic Swede to participate in Swedish politics, even if they are born in Sweden?

I would not say there are some obstacles. I have been elected twice, which shows that if you work hard, and if you are integrated into the society, you will achieve some position. There are plenty of Swedes who try to be elected in the Parliament, but they don't succeed. For example, in our parliament I am not the only one with foreign background; there are Kurdish, Arabic speaking, Latin American and African members. Twelve members are from Iranian extraction and they even count me as one of them, as my parents are from Iran. We have two ministers of Iranian origin. Of course, it is hard when you come to a country when you are 25 years old, you do not know the language, but if you were born in Sweden or came here in an early age, Sweden gives you all the chances. I went to the university, it was paid by the government (people say it is free, but actually it is not free, it has been paid by citizen's tax money), I had health care, etc., so Sweden gave me a lot.

I partly studied political studies. I have not finished it because it was very boring. I knew I could not be a good bureaucrat; you have to read and write ten times a day and never have your own opinion. So, I studied to become an insurance broker at Stock-



holm University, but I kept my political engagement. The beauty of Sweden is also in its representative democracy. You do not need to be a lawyer or have read political science to become a parliament member. You can have your business; you can be a doctor or a nurse. We even have a parliament member who was a former taxi driver and he is quite successful, being elected for three times.

Do Swedish Armenians see you as their representative?

You have to ask them. I have to be very humble. First of all, we have eight different political parties, so I am the voice of one of them. Of course, I became a voice of Swedish Armenian community, when it is about the questions regarding Armenia.

My dad was a leftist, I am a liberal conservative, so he voted for me because I am his son, but I do not expect that the Armenians should vote for me as I share the same ethnicity with them. They should vote for me because I have the right policy. The majority of the voters are Swedes or other ethnic peoples; there are also plenty of Iranians who support me. And I always should be Armenian, even if no Armenian will vote for me.

What are the activities of the Armenian-Swedish parliamentary friendship group?

I was the chairman of that group, now I am the vice-chairman. We are trying to strengthen ties between our two countries, how Sweden can with its knowledge educate the Armenian court, reform the police, help them with legislation when it comes to domestic violence. Unfortunately we don't discuss that issue much in Armenia. If there is a problem, we have to raise it and build a mutual trust between judicial system and the society, that the women (but also men, who are being beaten by their wives) should know there is a place they can go, there is legislation that will protect them. It can be also the environmental issues that Armenia has, but now the most urgent one is the humanitarian situation in Artsakh, where ethnic cleansing happens. Can Sweden play a role of a peacemaker? Even if we in Armenia have lost the trust of diplomatic tools, you cannot just throw it out. Right now we are writing a statement to the Swedish foreign minister and government about humanitarian crisis in Artsakh. In this modern world, we are witnessing how 120,000 people might lose their lives in front of mankind.

Armenia is a small dot on the map. Artsakh is even a smaller one, so it has no interest for the West, and this so-called civilized world does not care about it. Although the same world a while ago really did care about another small drops – Kosovo and Eritrea. So again, viva double standards!

For more than seven months I have been raising the alarm about the blockade of Artsakh, from the very beginning, that the Azeris are not going to open the borders. In the West they do not realize what is happening. For decades they were thinking that after the fall of Berlin war no more wars would happen in Europe. That is why Europe was

shocked after Russia's attack on Ukraine. As for Artsakh, I do not know what kind of dialogue the Armenian government is engaging in right now with its partners, but in politics sometimes everything is very cynical. It is very hard for many people to understand the situation. Every politician does not have bad intentions; we are in the middle of a regime that is very sensitive. To be honest, we are only democracy in this region right now — unfortunately, Georgia is going on wrong direction - so we have to try to find a way to survive. We have survived, but the history is repeating again, and I have no idea what is now happening in the closed rooms. The dictatorship in Azerbaijan is trying to proclaim the rest of the world that they are a multicultural ethnic society, but their actions toward the Artsakh people, the elderly men, women, children, all civilians, show the opposite.

Unfortunately, I think we Armenians have not thought about this scenario. This is very critical situation, but I am very sure we will survive this in one way or another, I do not know on what price, but I am sure we will. We have to stop to have this mentality that we know everything. We never listen to each other. We are a very small country, and we have to stop being egoistical. What I like is the new generation in Armenia, the youth, especially the young girls, who are more self-confident, than their mothers. I wish my mother, who is a very strong woman, who has many dreams and visions, grew up in an environment where a "no" was a "yes" and she could have reached her goals. I still cannot understand why every general in the army must be a man. It works very well in Sweden; 23 percent of our army is composed of women. If we go back to our history, we always have had women warriors. One issue we had during the last war was that the majority of women could not drive cars. That shows a little bit of ignorance. You think you will win the war, but what will happen if you need to retreat? How will the women leave if they cannot drive? I think every woman in this country should know how to drive a car - it is a matter of security. They always speak about the diaspora, which I am part of, but we are far away. When something crucial happens, you should put your hopes on those who are on the ground, not somewhere in Los Angeles, Buenos Aires or Australia.

Please, tell us a little bit about your family.

My last name Karapet was chosen by my grandfather. His and my grandmother's families were Genocide survivors from Western Armenia. But my grandparents have said almost nothing about it to my dad. My mother's side you can track back almost 700 years. My mother's family lived nearby Urmia lake, old provinces of Gharadagh, Nakhichevan, Salmast, Khoy. My mom speaks Armenian, Assyrian, Farsi, Azeri. Because of my mother I speak Armenian fluently. She set a rule: we will not have dinner, if I do not learn my lessons or do not speak Armenian at home. So, I am very happy, because for me coming back to Armenia is not a problem, I do not need to call anyone for help unless there is need to understand written on the physical paper. And one of good things in Armenia is that everybody is ready to help. Unfortunately, I cannot read and write in Armenian, so people here willingly do it for me. But one day I will learn to read Armenian, that is for sure! I set a goal that the day I have my own family, when my children start to read and write in Armenian, it will also be my duty to learn with them!

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CALIFORNIA

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

MASSACHUSETTS

ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK WEEKLY THROUGH OCTOBER 24 AT 12:15PM MIDDAY LABYRINTH WALKS AT THE PARK. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Tuesdays for all who work and live in the city and beyond, an opportunity for connection and wellbeing. Offered In collaboration with Boston Public Health Commission and The Greenway Conservancy. Weekly through October 25 at 4pm

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

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

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

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

Sunday, December 10 at 4:30pm

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

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

SEPTEMBER 14 — Starting September 14, the Zangér Boston Youth Chorus resuming its rehearsals, 6-7.30 p.m. Accepting new students ages 6 to 17 for 2023-2024 season. Artistic Director Artur Veranian. Rehearsals on Thursdays, in the Function Hall of the Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown. For further information and registration please contact: Ms. Izabella Djevalikian: 781-839-0845, bellasahakian@yahoo.com

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

SEPTEMBER 29 — Save the date! City of Smile-USA will host "A Tribute to Coco Chanel Who Loved Pearls." Friday, 11.30 a.m., Oakley Country Club, Watertown. Pearl jewelry raffle fundraiser and shopping the world's largest collection of pearl jewelry designs at incredible direct-from-producer savings. City of Smile-USA is dedicated to treating the children of Armenia who have cancer.

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

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

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

NEW JERSEY

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

NEW YORK

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

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

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

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

'Gorky's Dream Garden' Presented By Bergen Community College in New Jersey

GORKY, from page 13

Gorky's seminal 1941 "Garden in Sochi" and his compelling Artist's Statement at New York's Museum of Modern Art describing his lost homeland's ancient folkloristic "Wishing Tree" and its rituals before the Armenian Genocide "colors" and "frames" "Gorky's Dream Garden"—in which five additional passionate abstractions of MoMA's Gorky collection are also key to its emotional/color spectrum.

Tracing Gorky's dramatic and "dramatic" journey for the concert's Four Dream Garden Moments are: "Nighttime, Enig-

ma and Nostalgia" (1931-'32), "Diary of a Seducer" (1945), "Agony" (1947) and 1941's "Garden in Sochi." Immersive visuals—real, unreal, surreal—will combine Gorky's enigmatic, "operatic" abstractions with breathtaking landscapes of his lost Armenian lands captured by Hrair "Hawk" Khatchikian, Armenia's foremost photo-journalist.

For the 15-minute post-concert on stage talk, "Gorky's and Ekizian's Mysteries, Seductions, Agonies and Gardens," will be explored with Dr. Pellegrino D'Acerno (Italian, Architecture & Cinema, Compar-

ative Literature Studies—Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Hofstra University) and Dr. Youssef Yacoubi (Middle Eastern & North African Studies—Professor, Seton Hall University).

The Art of Motion Dance Theatre with Lynn Needle, director/dancer; Janette Dishuk, dance captain/dancer (of BCC faculty); dancer M.A. Taylor and others—will be featured.

Special Guests in the Concert are the female vocal trio MOIPEI. The Kenyan born identical triplets — Mary, Maggy and Marta — will sing at the concert's climax,

the opera's cathartic anthem-ballad "Prayer for the Children" for a universal appeal for remembering all who have suffered at the hands of inhumanity throughout the ages. Direct from sold-out performances at NYC's 54 Below and DC's River Run Festival, Kennedy Center and the State Department, the sisters will add an extra special meaning and depth to the song. Quick-cutting scripted set-ups will be delivered by Cuban born actor Adela Maria Bolet, the opera's lead Art Whisperer.

To purchase tickets online, visit cicconetheatre.ludus.com/index.php.



THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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— SINCE 1932 —



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COMMENTARY

What Is Going on With Section 907?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Back in 1992, during Azerbaijan’s war against Artsakh and Armenia, thanks to the work of the Armenian community and lobbyists in the US, Section 907 was included in the text of the Freedom Support Act. It prohibited the US government from providing any support to Azerbaijan until the US president could report to Congress that official Baku was taking concrete steps to lift the blockade of Armenia and was not using force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The initiator of Section 907 was the Democratic Senator John Kerry and Senator Joe Biden was also actively involved in the whole process.

From the moment President George H. W. Bush signed the act, it came into force and became an obstacle to Azerbaijan-US relations, remaining in force for about 10 years. During those years, Azerbaijan was the only former Soviet country that could not receive direct assistance from the US government. Many attempts, through diplomatic channels or by lobbyists, were carried out to attempt to counter it, but Armenian lobbyists managed to leave Section 907 in force.

After the events of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush, on the basis of an imminent threat to national security, turned to Congress and requested the opportunity to waive Section 907 each financial year and provide military and other assistance to Azerbaijan for the fight against terrorism, coalition counterterrorism operations, and Azerbaijan’s border security, while assuring that this assistance would not in any way hurt the Azerbaijan-Armenia negotiation process and would not be used against Armenia.

Since 2002, every March-April, the president uses his right to waive Section 907 and provide assistance to Azerbaijan. As a result, Azerbaijan has been receiving assistance from different agencies, and the amount sent just in the last 4 years has been hundreds of millions of US dollars security assistance to Azerbaijan.

Interestingly, this year President Biden has not yet sent a waiver letter to Congress; that is, he has not yet waived Section 907 and has not provided security and other assistance to Azerbaijan. There could be several reasons.

First of all, until October, when the next financial year begins, Section 907 may still technically be waived. Second, it is possible to find some legal mechanisms to enforce the previous waiver letter, circumventing Section 907 for the next year.

But there are other issues too. In particular, President Biden personally knows the history and purpose of Resolution 907 in detail. Moreover, in the pre-election phase, particularly in 2020, candidate Biden urged President Trump not to bypass the resolution.

The next important circumstance is that the administration and Secretary of State Blinken have been involved in Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations very actively, and the waiver can, according to the American side, hinder the negotiation process.

Fourth, this instrument is most probably still kept to be used against Azerbaijan as a pressure tool if needed. What will happen with the waiver of 907 is really hard to predict. Most probably, the Biden administration will wait and see how the negotiation process goes between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

One thing is clear. Azerbaijan, just like 30 years ago when Section 907 was adopted, continues to keep Armenia and Artsakh under siege and blockade and uses force against Armenia and Artsakh.

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

Lachin Corridor Needs More Than EU Tunnel Vision

By George Menshian

In 1992, images of emaciated Bosnian men and boys in a Bosnian-Serb concentration camp shocked the world. Yet, three decades on, starvation is once again being wielded as a weapon in a bitter European territorial dispute which is being shamefully overlooked by most world leaders.

For almost nine months, Azerbaijan has imposed a brutal blockade on the Lachin corridor, the only land route into the ethnic-Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh — also known as Artsakh. It is effectively under siege.

Supermarket shelves lie empty, vital medicines for serious health conditions are in desperately short supply, miscarriages are on the rise and a severe lack of fuel has led to rolling blackouts across the capital, Stepanakert. Civilians are starving, while farmers do not have enough fuel to harvest crops. Last month the first prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, warned that a ‘genocide’ was brewing.

Azerbaijan is hoping that its man-made famine will eventually strangle the enclave into submission, forcing the Artsakh authorities to dissolve their republic and allow Azerbaijan to take control. This would be the final move in a 30-year campaign for Azerbaijani dominance in the region.

Perpetual war footing

Ever since the Soviet Union broke apart in the early 1990s, war has threatened the Caucasus. In 1991-4, conflict erupted between now-independent Armenia and Azerbaijan, which both laid claim to Nagorno-Karabakh. Tens of thousands died and even more were displaced. Armenia emerged the victor and the Republic of Artsakh secured its independence, which had been formally declared in 1991 yet never recognised internationally.

Despite the ceasefire, both sides re-

mained on a perpetual war footing, with sporadic clashes until September 2020 when Azerbaijan launched a full-scale offensive against Armenian forces in Artsakh. This time it held the advantage, having used its vast fossil-fuel wealth to purchase an array of Turkish drones and Israeli loitering munitions, which provided vital air supremacy in the battlefield.

The superior military technology, and cover from Turkey, allowed Azerbaijan to force Armenia swiftly on to the back foot, its military ally — Russia — failing to come to its aid. After two months of bitter fighting and Azerbaijani territorial gains, Russia brokered a ceasefire, deploying its own peacekeepers to keep the Lachin corridor open.

Russia’s reluctance to stand up to Azerbaijan highlights its waning influence in the Caucasus — a reality exacerbated by its reckless decision to invade Ukraine in February 2022. Yet Russia’s disastrous military gambit is one of the key factors distracting the west from the boiling tensions in the Caucasus.

The European Union, as with the United States, has thrown enormous financial, political, and military resources into Ukraine’s defense. This commitment has provided unwitting cover for the EU’s slow response to the actions meanwhile by Baku.

After the invasion, the EU tried to halt oil and gas imports from Russia, seeking supplies elsewhere. Gulf states, Algeria, Israel and Egypt helped to fill the void — but so did Azerbaijan, putting the EU in an awkward position regarding any negotiations over the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and the blockade of the Lachin corridor.

Although France is supposedly preparing a resolution to submit to the United Nations Security Council, and the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, has encouraged a step-by-step approach, other diplomatic efforts by the EU, the US and even Russia to end the blockade have

failed. Desperate pleas by the Armenian government to the UN and the International Court of Justice have seemingly fallen on deaf ears, leaving those trapped in Artsakh — but also those making the decisions in Azerbaijan — to believe western leaders have all but turned their backs on the crisis.

The situation in the Caucasus — as in Ukraine — highlights how unresolved territorial disputes can open the door to future conflicts, as well as undermining key relationships in geopolitical hotspots. This is no more apparent than in the far east, where regional disputes are affecting the outcome of conflicts in the South China Sea.

Dispute ignored

Just consider the longstanding Filipino claim to the Sabah region of Malaysian Borneo. For decades this dispute had largely been ignored, until militants — linked to an illegitimate heir of the defunct Sultanate of Sulu — landed on the coast of Sabah in 2013 and clashed with Malaysian security forces. Though Muedzul Lail Tan Kiram, head of the Sulu household, condemned the incursion, the violence left dozens dead and strained relations between Malaysia and the Philippines — two regional partners which remain key to repelling Chinese aggression in the South China Sea.

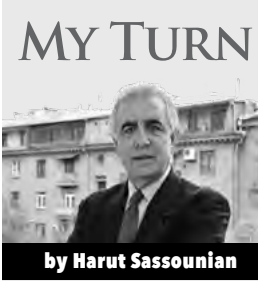
The clash still reverberates. Last year, the heirs of the sultanate were awarded \$15 billion in a controversial arbitration case against Malaysia for non-payment of a colonial-era land-lease fee. The award was a serious blow to Malaysian public finances and once again raised tensions between Malaysia and the Philippines, which despite distancing itself from the case still officially lays claim to Sabah.

Fortunately, on appeal the award was annulled — the Spanish arbitrator behind the original case even faces criminal prosecution for contempt of court. But the dispute eroded the credibility of international

see EU, page 20



COMMENTARY



500 Immoral European Rabbis Sell Their Souls To the Azeri Devil

Last month, I wrote about two groups of Righteous Jews who urged the government of Israel to intervene with Azerbaijan to open the Lachin Corridor.

The first group of 17 Israelis, including rabbis, journalists and scholars, sent a letter to the Foreign Minister of Israel on January 15, 2023. The second group of 35 Israelis, including rabbis, scholars, journalists, a former cabinet minister and Knesset member, architects and scientists, sent a letter to the President of Israel.

Contrast the righteous actions of the above two Israeli groups to the immoral behavior of 500 European Rabbis who are planning to hold a conference in Azerbaijan in November at the invitation of President Ilham Aliyev, the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS) reported. The visit is organized by the Orthodox rabbinical alliance in Europe that unites more than 700 religious leaders from communities across Europe.

“Azerbaijan is a place with a special memory for the Jewish people, and is home to one of the most unique Jewish communities in the world,” said Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis who met with Aliyev earlier this year.

Rabbi Goldschmidt’s words were followed by the ridiculous statement of Elchin Amirbayov, the representative of President Ilham Aliyev: “The fact that this European rabbinical conference will be held here in Baku is recognition of people feeling safe here; it is just the right place.” Equally ridiculous was the statement of Rabbi Zamir Isayev of Baku, who told JNS that Azerbaijan “is much safer than any country in Europe.” These Rabbis must have forgotten that just two months ago a terrorist group plotted to blow up the Israeli Embassy in Baku.

JNS reported that “the planned trip comes amid burgeoning relations between Israel and Azerbaijan that developed from a centuries-long affinity between the two nations into an unprecedented strategic partnership.” How could relations between Israel and Azerbaijan have a “centuries-long affinity” since Azerbaijan became a state only in 1918 and Israel in 1948?

In fact, relations between the two countries are not based on ‘affinity’ at all,

but on Azerbaijan supplying almost half of Israel’s energy needs, while Israel sells to Azerbaijan over \$5 billion of arms — 70% of its sophisticated weapons, including illegal cluster bombs — which Baku used during the 2020 War to kill and injure thousands of Armenian soldiers.

Rushing to gloat over the pending arrival of European Rabbis in Baku, Aze. Media published an article under the title: “A rabbinical conference in Muslim Azerbaijan,” reporting that “the Azerbaijani nation prides itself on having a rich multi-culturalism policy, which gives equal respect to all faiths and religions living in Azerbaijan.” This is a complete lie as all minorities in Azerbaijan suffer from discrimination and massive violation of human rights. Native Azeris themselves are victims of prosecution by Azerbaijan’s government in case they say anything critical about President Aliyev.

Azerbaijan’s love affair for Israel and Jews has a much more sinister agenda than the simple exchange of oil for weapons. It is prompted by Azerbaijan’s anti-Semitism under the false belief that “Jews control everything in America,” and if Azerbaijan is nice to Jews, then they will influence the United States to have a pro-Azerbaijani stance. This is Baku’s obvious plan to counter the Armenian ‘lobby’ in the United States.

While Turkey and Azerbaijan woo American Jews and Israel hoping to benefit from their lobbying in the United States, it is unwise of Israel and Jews to go along and reinforce the anti-Semitic attitude of Azeri officials. The group of immoral European Rabbis is under the mistaken impression that Azeris welcome them with open arms because of their love for Jews. These Rabbis do not realize that they are simply allowing themselves to be exploited by Azerbaijan for its perceived political gains.

Even though Israel opened its Embassy in Baku in 1993, Azerbaijan established its Embassy in Tel Aviv in 2023, only after announcing the opening of its representative office in Ramallah, West Bank, the de facto capital of the Palestinian Authority, to counter the backlash from many Muslims within Azerbaijan and around the world.

French historian Marc Knobel wrote an indignant article in Le Point French newspaper on August 8, harshly criticizing the European Rabbis’ planned trip to Baku. Knobel wrote: “Gentlemen Rabbis, I am ashamed and I am Jewish.” Importantly, he reported that Haim Korsia, the Chief Rabbi of France, will not accompany the other Rabbis to Azerbaijan “to flatter the dictator of Baku and will not allow himself to be bribed by such a regime.”

The 500 immoral European rabbis, instead of siding with the starving 120,000 Artsakh Armenians, are selling their souls to the devil in Baku.

Another Ethnic Cleansing Could Be Underway — And We’re Not Paying Attention

By Nicholas Kristof

With its Russian torture chambers and slaughter of civilians, the war in Ukraine is horrifying enough. But what if another country is taking advantage of the distraction to commit its own crimes against humanity?

Meet Azerbaijan.

You probably haven’t heard of Azerbaijan’s brutality toward an ethnic Armenian enclave called Nagorno-Karabakh, but it deserves scrutiny. The former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, whom I got to know years ago when he sought accountability for the genocide in Sudan’s Darfur region, now describes what is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh in a similar fashion.

“There is an ongoing genocide against 120,000 Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh,” he wrote in a recent report.

We tend to think of genocide as the slaughter of an ethnic group. But the legal definition in the 1948 Genocide Convention is broader and doesn’t require mass killing, so long as there are certain “acts committed with intent to destroy” a particular ethnic, racial or religious group.

That is what Azerbaijan is doing, Moreno Ocampo argued, by blockading Nagorno-Karabakh so that people die or flee, thus destroying an ancient community.

“Starvation is the invisible genocide weapon,” he wrote. “Without immediate dramatic change, this group of Armenians will be destroyed in a few weeks.”

“It is critically important to label this as genocide,” Moreno Ocampo told me, and also crucial that the Unit-

ed States and other world powers — including Britain, which has been too quiet — step up pressure on Azerbaijan.

The concept of genocide was developed in part as a reaction to the Ottoman Empire’s mass killing of Armenians in 1915 and 1916, so Azerbaijan’s starvation of Armenians today suggests that history risks coming full circle. The group Genocide Watch has declared a “genocide emergency,” the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention recently issued an “active genocide alert,” and the International Association of Genocide Scholars warned of “the risk of genocide” and called for Azerbaijan to be held accountable for crimes against humanity.

The current crisis began late last year, when Azerbaijanis began blockading the only road into Nagorno-Karabakh, the Lachin corridor to Armenia, on which the territory depends for food and medicine.

The International Court of Justice ordered Azerbaijan to remove the blockade. Instead, the Azerbaijani government established a checkpoint on the road and began

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blocking even humanitarian aid carried by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

“People are fainting in the bread queues,” the BBC quoted a local journalist as saying from Nagorno-Karabakh. The report added that the Halo Trust, a nonprofit that works to clear minefields, has had to suspend operations “because its staff are too exhausted to work after queuing for bread all night and returning home empty-handed.”

A third of deaths in Nagorno-Karabakh are attributed by the local authorities to malnutrition, the BBC said. I have no way of verifying these reports, but every indi-

cation is that the situation is dire — and getting worse by the day.

Yet I fear that the West is fatigued and looking inward, for it has likewise paid little attention to other global crises other than Ukraine, from horrendous atrocities in Ethiopia to Sudan’s warlords’ slaughtering of civilians. For dictators, tragically, this isn’t a bad time to commit war crimes.

The backdrop is that authoritarian Azerbaijan has a mostly Muslim population speaking a Turkic language, while Nagorno-Karabakh has a mostly Christian population that speaks Armenian. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Nagorno-Karabakh sought independence; a war ended with a stalemate in which the enclave operated autonomously but with close links to neighboring Armenia. In 2020, Azerbaijan fought a brief war in which it reclaimed most of the enclave, and it now wants to recover the rest — and, I suspect, to push out much of the ethnic Armenian population.

The world, including Armenia’s prime minister, acknowledges that sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan feels it has a right to integrate Nagorno-Karabakh politically and economically with the rest of the country. Though this is not integration but starvation, and the one point even countries as far apart as the United States and Russia agree on is that Azerbaijan should reopen the Lachin corridor and end the suffering.

One possible compromise to end the looming catastrophe is outlined by Benyamin Poghosyan of the Applied Policy Research Institute of Armenia: Azerbaijan would open the Lachin road and Nagorno-Karabakh would simultaneously open one or more roads into Azerbaijan (which Azerbaijan seeks). The U.S. State Department hinted at this approach in a statement denouncing the blockade. As part of that compromise, Azerbaijan would guarantee the freedom of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

This would be unsatisfying, for it rewards Azerbaijan for starving civilians, and no one could much trust promises from Azerbaijan. But the sad job of diplomats is to devise flawed, much-hated agreements that are better than any alternative outcome, and in this case a defective deal is preferable to the mass starvation and ethnic cleansing of Armenians, again.

(This commentary originally appeared in the *New York Times* on September 2.)



HALO Trust Pivots From Mine Clearing to Assistance as Artsakh Faces Down Famine

HALO, from page 1

Whatley said that the organization is using information through their staff surveys and assessments, as well as contact with the government, to reach the neediest.

Whatley said that at the peak of their operation, in 2018-2019, HALO had about 200 employees in Artsakh.

“Continuing to fund work in NK has been a challenge. Luckily we have managed to find enough funding to keep our operation going,” he noted.

HALO currently has 99 people working there with an annual budget of about \$1.5 million.

He stressed, “We have some of the most amazing employees we have around the world working there.”

All the staff are natives there. “Many have been with us for 20 years, so they know what they are doing,” Whatley said.

One of those longtime employees is HALO’s Deputy Program Manager in Artsakh Gala Danilova. In written and verbal answers, she made clear that the dire situation is reaching a critical point.

In two voice memos, Danilova, speaking through tears, said that for most people there, “just eating enough to have strength” is a major problem, not to mention the situation of people with chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure or diabetes, who have either already run out of medications or will very soon.

“The shelves are completely, completely, empty,” she said. At least 11,000 have lost their jobs since those jobs were dependent on supplies entering the country, or fuel, electricity and gas. “So this situation is what we can call a humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately as the days pass, it is getting worse and worse. It is going to be a catastrophe. It’s really going to be a catastrophe,” she said.

“Everyone knows Artsakh people are very strong, and tough. People can adapt to situations, try their best to survive and do everyday things when there is hope, when

they think a better day is coming,” she added. The people there have no such hope.

Her voice cracking, she noted, “There are 30,000 children. Kids. Kids who don’t understand what is going on. It is very difficult to explain to your child when they look in your eyes and say ‘I am hungry,’ that there is nothing for them to eat. Or you are standing in line the whole day to bring bread and you couldn’t [buy any].”

She added, “You don’t want to pressure on children, to make them think too much. They are children. The only thing they should do is run and play. None of the parents wants for their kids to face this. ... It is very difficult and these people, they need support. They need everyone’s voice outside to be as loud as possible, to help.”

Danilova, 43, joined HALO in 2002. She has worked in a variety of jobs for the organization, including mapping and explosive risk education as well as a government liaison, before becoming deputy program manager.

Not only is food scarce, she said, but the produce and grains of Artsakh are going to waste because “farmers have no fuel to transport them to market.”

The scarcity of food has pushed prices up by 400 percent.

She continued, “Schools should be starting in September – but how can they with no transport and heating? And how can we feed our children? Nothing will be available. There is a huge shortage of flour. There is no bread, no vegetables, no vitamins, no formula for babies. Pregnant women or outpatients cannot make hospital appointments. Shelves in food stores are empty.”

Cluster Explosives

In June, Whatley said, HALO cleared a playground at an Askeran children’s center and turned it over to the municipality, but, unlike before, the news is not greeted with as much happiness.

“As important and as urgent as it is for people to live lives of safety and dignity in

the aftermath of the war and the explosives from it, the hunger crisis is an even greater priority for all the people of NK,” he said.

Back in 2000, Artsakh was “viewed as one of if not the most landmine contaminated place in the world,” he said. After the 2020 war, the focus has shifted to cluster munitions dropped in the 2020 war.

“The overwhelming majority of what we have been clearing since the war of 2020 are munitions that have fallen from the sky,” including launched by rockets and artillery shares or drones, he said.

Whatley added, “We even found them in people’s homes. We were proud to finish the clearance of all known contamination inside Stepanakert last year, and more recently, Askeran. Sadly we have had to suspend our clearance operations in Martakert due to the blockade. This is deeply regrettable as it is NK’s second most populous city and home to many people who were displaced after 2020. We had to close the base in January because of fuel shortages and because our staff needed to finish work earlier so they had time to cultivate or forage food for their families.”

According to him, HALO has cleared and destroyed about 12,000 mines and more than 60,000 other explosive items.

Helping Artsakh Survive

The website for HALO asks for help for Artsakh residents and also asks visitors to raise their voices regarding the ongoing tragedy there.

According to Whatley, the funds raised will be sent by direct bank transfers. “We will be making the first payments imminently,” he said.

He added that HALO “is a global family of 12,000 deminers in over 30 countries, so we can harness lessons learnt from other crises where we’ve had to be agile and creative. Our highly trained workforce and logistics capacity means we can pivot quickly – as demonstrated by our current initiative to provide financial assistance to vulnerable

families identified through our monitoring and evaluation processes.”

Danilova thanked longtime HALO supporters. “We are enormously grateful to the American families who have donated to HALO so that we can issue emergency financial assistance to vulnerable local people so families can feed themselves. Our staff are conducting household surveys so we can establish where the most critically vulnerable people are – for example older people or people with a disability, lone-parent households, pregnant and breastfeeding women and infants under five years old – so we can distribute emergency funding to them.”

She added, “We are in a humanitarian crisis and if it continues much longer, it will be a catastrophe.”

The lack of action to relieve Artsakh of this stranglehold is frustrating Whatley.

“I definitely feel that frustration. On a personal level, you feel it a unique way,” he said. “I didn’t grow up with the understanding of the population of Karabakh,” he said, adding that now, he feels for this tiny land with “churches that go back 1,000 years and a population that is trying to just live in its community.”

He added, “I would love for there to be more people who just realize what is happening in Nagorno Karabakh and feel the empathy that comes from knowing these conditions,” he said.

“We’ve got to do what we can,” he said.

“I would like to personally emphasize that I think it’s important for any organization that is connected to NK and has first-hand perspective on what’s happening to share what’s happening as well as figure out how you can help. That’s really our charge right now. We will continue to deliver our lifesaving work in clearing explosives but we need to tell the story of what’s happening in NK and find a way to help in this particular acute phase of humanitarian need,” he said.

To learn more about the campaign or to donate, visit <https://www.halotrust.org/>.

Lachin Corridor Needs More Than EU Tunnel Vision

EU, from page 18

arbitration mechanisms, which remain a profoundly important instrument for the peaceful resolution of intricate and tense territorial disputes among sovereign nations.

Pivotal moment

Returning to the Caucasus, a failure of diplomacy now could have consequences for decades. To avoid the situation in Artsakh spiraling into genocide, more must be done by major powers to bring the countries in dispute to the negotiating table.

World leaders and the UN must step up their diplomatic efforts to end the blockade of the corridor, by undermining Azerbaijan’s strong negotiating position. If they succeed, this could even become a pivotal moment for western powers offering a critical counterbalance to Russia’s waning influence in the region.

This begins with the realisation that energy security cannot trump human rights. The EU must step up investment in renewable-energy production to wean itself off fossil fuels controlled by autocratic powers — a move long overdue.

But the union must also use every tool at its disposal. For example, Azerbaijan enjoys firm support from Turkey for its policy towards Armenia and Artsakh. The EU must use its strong, if complex, ties to Turkey to press Azerbaijan to lift the blockade. Without Turkey’s unequivocal support, Azer-

baijan would find itself very isolated in the region.

Flouting international norms

Time is of the essence. And dialogue — on which the European Council wishes to rely — can only go so far. If diplomatic negotiations do not progress, the UN must send human-rights investigators to assess Azerbaijan’s forced starvation of Artsakh. This could even entail slapping sanctions on Azerbaijan to help it understand it cannot act with impunity and flout international norms.

Without action, thousands of civilians in Artsakh — including children and new-born babies — are at risk of starvation and death. If Azerbaijan’s oil and gas wealth were to allow it to withstand meek diplomatic efforts to end the blockade, not only would the EU and others be complicit in an ever more serious humanitarian crisis, but genocide could once again darken the skies of Europe — emboldening autocrats and dictators around the world.

(George Meneshian, a former soldier in the Greek army, is a Greek/Armenian international-relations and security expert specializing in the middle east and the Caucasus. He is a researcher at the Washington Institute for Defence and Security and the Institute of International Relations in Athens. This commentary originally appeared in www.socialeurope.eu on September 5.)

EBRD First Vice President Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (news.am) — The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) First Vice President and Head of Client Services Group, Jurgen Rigterink, on September 4 began a week-long visit to the Caucasus. Starting in Armenia, the trip will continue in Georgia and finish in Azerbaijan.

Rigterink, accompanied by Matteo Patrone, EBRD Managing Director for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, will meet government officials, central bank governors, business leaders and representatives of international financial organizations in each country. He will also mark the handover between the outgoing EBRD Regional Director for the Caucasus, Catarina Bjorlin Hansen, and her successor, Alkis Vryenios Drakinos.

In Armenia, the First Vice President will sign a credit line with a local partner bank to further boost the development of the private sector. In Georgia, Rigterink will launch a program with one of the EBRD’s key partner banks as part of its commitment to supporting small and medium size enterprises. In Azerbaijan he will participate in the launch of the public-private partnership for technical and vocational education and training organized by the State Vocational Education Agency, aimed at strengthening skills capacity in the food production industry.