

Tekeyan Cultural Association Launches Transparent Artsakh Refugees Aid Program Directly to Individuals

Dear fellow Armenians,

As over 100,000 of our brethren of Artsakh have suddenly and brutally been uprooted from their ancestral lands, and are in states of unimaginable despair in Armenia, many organizations are trying to set up different programs of assistance.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada (TCA), which has a well-recognized track record over several decades in providing assistance in Armenia and Artsakh through a reliable, transparent and individualized allocation of funds, is now launching a clear “**donor-identified aid receiver format**,” in one of the three following categories that donors can choose from.



- We will expand our successful **Sponsor a Teacher program** by allocating cash assistance specifically to identified newly displaced teachers from Artsakh as well as intellectuals and their families.

- Direct cash assistance will be given to identified displaced families**, giving priority to those who have elderly and child age members.

- Immediate help will be given to the burn victims** of the monstrous fuel depot explosion who are being treated at the Yerevan National Center for Burns and Dermatology hospital, and to their families.

The initial cash amounts allocated in each of the above cases will be \$200.

Under the supervision of the TCA’s Yerevan Representation office, a team of young volunteers will carry out this aid program. Donors will be provided confidentially with the identification of the receivers of such assistance.

The TCA Central Board will provide this program with an immediate starting seed fund of \$5,000.

Depending on the generosity of our donors we will hope to provide help in the very short term to 100 families, which we hope to be able to expand rapidly to 1,000 families and more.

Donors can specify one or more of the above-described categories. They will receive charitable donation tax exemption receipts. Tekeyan does not charge any service fees.

Donations in the US should be sent to Tekeyan Cultural Association Artsakh Aid, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472, or online at <https://givebutter.com/AGuStb>.

Donations in Canada should be sent to Tekeyan Cultural Association Artsakh Aid, 825 Manogian St., Ville Saint-Laurent, Québec H4N 1Z5, Canada, or online.

Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada



Children asleep in Goris in their family’s belongings (photo by Anoush Baghdasaryan)

Exodus after 10-Month Blockade

The Aftermath of a Bloody Peace

By **Lida Asilyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GORIS, Armenia — As one walks in the crowded, narrow streets of Goris in the south of Armenia, thousands of interrupted lives and destinies haunt a visitor. In all the corners of the city’s small square one can see bundled belongings in chaos, kids asleep on their bags, people queuing for warm food, and an endless number of cars and buses coming.

Anoush Aghajanyan, a woman in her 50s forcibly displaced from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), puts her current state succinctly, possessing: “only some documents and handbags. It has been ten days that we are wearing the same clothes.”

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Armenian Official Warns of ‘Imminent Azeri Attack’

By **Ruzanna Stepanian**

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Azerbaijan may attack Armenia in the coming weeks to open a land corridor to its Nakhichevan exclave unless the West imposes sanctions on Baku, a senior Armenian diplomat claimed in an interview published on October 9.

“We are now under imminent threat of invasion into Armenia because if [Azerbaijani President Ilham] Aliyev is not confronted with very practical steps taken by the so-called collective West, then he has no reason or incentive to limit himself to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh,” Tigran Balayan, the Armenian ambassador to the EU, told BrusselsSignal.eu.

“He and some of his Turkish counterparts have declared that they need to open a land corridor through Armenia’s sovereign territory,” said Balayan.

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Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tigran Balayan at a news briefing in Yerevan, May 22, 2018.

EU Official Visits Armenia, Discusses Aid to Karabakh Refugees

By **Anush Mkrtchian**

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A senior European Union official visited Armenia on Friday, October 6, to discuss details of the EU’s humanitarian assistance to the more than 100,000 residents of Nagorno-Karabakh who have fled to the country since last month’s Azerbaijani military offensive.

“I came to Armenia to show the full solidarity of the European Union to Armenia, the Armenian people and, in particular, the people displaced from Karabakh,” EU Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic said after meeting with Armenian officials and some refugees. He said they “can count on the EU’s full support in this difficult situation.”

“We very quickly mobilized more than 5 million euros in humanitarian aid, doubled it a few days later, and as of today have provided more than 10 million euros (\$11 million) in humanitarian aid... In addition, we have mobilized the European Union’s stock of humani-



EU Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic talks to refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, October 6, 2023.

tarian aid supplies, which will be sent to Armenia in the next few hours,” Lenarcic told a joint news conference with Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Khachatryan.

On top of that, he said, the refugees will receive separate aid from 13 EU member states, including France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

The head of the EU’s executive Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, discussed this assistance with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Thursday during a meeting held on the sidelines of an EU summit in the Spanish city of Granada. The Commission confirmed after the talks that it will also allocate 15 million euros to help the Armenian government buy food and fuel and address other “socio-economic needs.”

“The EU stands with Armenia,” von der Leyen tweeted. “We condemn Azerbaijan’s military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

It is not clear whether some of the EU aid will be used for providing the refugees with adequate housing, their most urgent need. The Armenian government claims to have accommodated half of them in hotels, disused public buildings and empty village houses. It says the others have told government officials that they will stay with their relatives or have other places of residence in Armenia.

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia Not Taking Part in CSTO drills

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia is not taking part in the military exercises Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which kicked off near the Kyrgyz town of Balykchy on October 6.

The defense ministry of Kyrgyzstan said troops from all other CSTO members are involved in the drills.

In January, Armenia refused to host a CSTO exercise and on March 10 it renounced its right to take part in the bloc's leadership rotation.

Pashinyan, Putin Discuss Forced Resettlement of Karabakh Armenians

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on Saturday, October 6.

The situation that developed after the forced resettlement of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as a number of issues on the bilateral agenda were on the table.

On September 19, Azerbaijan launched a military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh, which left hundreds of Armenians killed and thousands of others displaced. On September 20, the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh agreed to a ceasefire on Azerbaijan's terms, including the dissolution of the Defense Army. On September 18, President of the Republic of Artsakh Samvel Shakhmuroyan signed a decree, according to which the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) will cease to exist by January 1, 2024.

Rights Defender Issues Report on Refugees

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Human Rights Defender of Armenia Anahit Manasyan on October 10 published a preliminary report in English on the results of the fact-finding activities conducted at the registration centers of forcibly displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh, as well as the analysis of individual conversations held with displaced persons.

Manasyan summarized and analyzed the information obtained regarding the atrocities committed by the Azerbaijani armed forces, documented the evidence of forcibly displaced persons, targeting of ambulances, and violations of the rights of children and women. The cases of targeting civilians, as well as vital infrastructures, and the damage caused to the property of individuals were also presented.

The report, among others, is another summary of evidence and analysis that confirms the policy of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is also the result of a systematic policy of Armenophobia at the state level in Azerbaijan.

The ombudswoman presented recommendations to the state authorities regarding the improvement of the system of protection of the rights of the mentioned group of persons and the introduction of special mechanisms.

Areni Village, Near Azerbaijan, Is Now in 'Permanent Fear'

ARENI, Armenia (AFP) — Khalida Asryan is still anxious two weeks after fleeing the breakaway enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh which was seized by Azerbaijani forces, fearing they may advance further after their victory.

Asryan has resettled with nine family members in the wine-making village of Areni, a few kilometers from the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhichevan.

Now she is worried, like many Armenians, that Azerbaijan will launch military operations around her new home — this time to create a land corridor to Nakhichevan.

"We didn't realize we were going to be near another border when we came here," Asryan told AFP.

Nakhichevan does not share a border with Azerbaijan but has been tied to Baku since the 1920s and is located between Armenia, Turkey and Iran.

September's offensive triggered the exodus of over 100,000 ethnic Armenians, who regarded Nagorno-Karabakh as part of their ancestral land. A hundred and six people found refuge in Areni.

From her new home, Asryan can see the



Locals like Ara Musaelyan have little faith in Moscow's support© Aris MESSINIS

red mountains marking the borders of the Azerbaijani enclave.

"The elders try to calm us down, but the younger ones are very worried," she said.

Far from reassuring them, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last month went to Nakhichevan to celebrate the victory of his ally, Azerbaijan.

During the visit Erdogan said a "window of opportunity has opened to settle the situ-



The wine-making village of Areni is a few kilometres from the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhchivan© Aris MESSINIS

ation in the region".

Asryan's family was housed for free in a bed and breakfast belonging to Alina Mayrapetyan, a 48-year-old farm owner.

But Mayrapetyan is also worried by the looming threat.

"We're ready to leave at any time. We have this permanent fear in our hearts," she said.

AFP spoke to Mayrapetyan from her family home, as her mother was de-seeding bell peppers, and she said that every day she wakes up "happy to be in our own home."

But her family has stopped renovation work on their house, in case it ended up in the hands of Azerbaijanis.

"We don't know how long we'll stay here," she said.

Such concerns are widespread in the village, said Norayr Gregoryan, an official in charge of commerce and tourism at the city hall.

"Of course, we see that people are anxious, we hear that in every conversation," he said.

The few shops in the village were still

open, and children biked down the dirt roads.

But the mood is heavy.

Authorities have cancelled a planned wine festival, which was due to attract thousands of tourists.

Everyone "is preparing to defend the village," Gregoryan said.

Nestled in between mountains, Areni does not look like an unassailable target.

Russia negotiated the ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan after their latest war in 2020, and stationed peacekeepers in the region.

But it refused to intervene during Azerbaijan's offensive on Karabakh, and locals like Ara Musaelyan have little faith in Moscow's support.

Musaelyan also fled to Areni from Karabakh with his three children.

The former soldier is moved by revenge, rather than fear.

"Of course, there will be war again, it doesn't matter where I have to fight," he told AFP from the terrace of the house, still in renovation, where his family settled.

Musaelyan said he saw Azerbaijani troops commit atrocities during the September offensive.

"I want to get revenge, no matter where I am," he said.

Refugee Children Arriving in Armenia Show Signs Of Severe Psychological Distress — UNICEF

GENEVA/YEREVAN — Refugee children arriving in Armenia are showing signs of severe psychological distress, according to reports from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) supported social workers providing specialized care to children and families who have fled their homes in recent weeks.

Social workers operating in two safe spaces that UNICEF established with partners in Goris, which can serve up to 300 children daily have reported that children are dealing with intense feelings of sadness, anxiety, fear and anger, manifesting in nightmares, bedwetting, and inconsolable crying. Others have shut down and become detached, leaving them unable to express emotions or connect with the situation around them.

More than 30,000 ethnic Armenian children have arrived in Armenia since

the escalation of hostilities in their home communities two weeks ago. In addition to displacement, children arriving in Armenia have not been able to access quality education continuously and have lived in an unsafe or insecure environment with families reporting the fear of attacks.

"We are now seeing the extent to which these children have suffered. Displacement and hostilities, compounded by deprivation have wreaked havoc on their physical and mental health and psychological well-being. Without sustained support, children are at risk of bearing the effects of these deeply distressing events for years to come," said Christine Weigand, UNICEF Armenia Representative.

"As we come together to mark World Mental Health Day, UNICEF calls for adequate investment in mental health and psychosocial support for children through the health, child protection and education

systems. This is equally important not only in terms of early identification and immediate support but also in the long run as families will continue to deal with loss and post-traumatic stress."

UNICEF is working with the government of Armenia and other partners to help refugee children access the care and support they need to overcome the challenges they have faced. UNICEF is training and supporting front-line professionals to provide psychological first aid and psychosocial support. Together with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF has formed mobile pediatric teams to enable wider outreach across the country to ensure screenings to identify and respond to mental health needs.

UNICEF is appealing for \$12.6 million to provide critical services including education, health, child protection, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene in the first six months.



ARMENIA

Aftermath of a Bloody Peace

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In the early afternoon of September 19, 2023, Azerbaijani armed forces launched a large-scale military offensive against Artsakh, resulting in 200 dead and 400 injured. The attack came nine months into Azerbaijan's blockade of Artsakh that left 120,000 ethnic Armenians, including 30,000 children and 2,000 pregnant women, deprived of food, medicine, and basic necessities. Azerbaijan also disrupted Artsakh's fuel and gas supplies, restricting the movement of ambulances and cars.

"I was at work, at school, teaching, and all of sudden, I heard everyone screaming that a war had started. We were trapped by war, like being in the middle of a burning pot," Aghajanyan said. She rushed from the school to her house, grabbed her grandchildren, and ran to the center of the village, where there were some cars trying to evacuate people.

"We had just 30 minutes to pack everything and escape. If we were a bit late to exit the checkpoint, we would've been imprisoned in the village and besieged by Azeris," Anoush added. Later, they weren't able to return to the village; it was already besieged.

Anoush and her family of three arrived in Goris after taking a long and exhausting two-day trip with scarce food and water.



A young man with a Karabakh flag in Goris (photo Anoush Baghdasaryan)

An endless queue of cars and buses was trapped on the road of life. As they reached the Azerbaijani checkpoint at the Lachin corridor, different measures were taken to check, scan, and humiliate the people, with the guards making the Turkish fascist group Gray Wolf's hand signal and calling the men insulting names.

"It seemed we entered another world. We were scared that our relatives wouldn't make it and would be caught," Aghajanyan said.



A young woman in Goris is trying to engage a child from Karabakh in Goris (photo Anoush Baghdasaryan)

After a 10-month blockade imposed by Azerbaijan, not having bread, regular water, electricity, and gas, the people of Artsakh continued their daily routines, busily engaged in their work and trying to make ends meet, as impossible as it seemed.

"The blockade itself was a huge issue. However, being at home meant being free, while being in foreign lands means being a captive," she whispered, pulling her gray jacket that has her only comfort for the past ten days closer to her.

"Yet we adapted to the situation. We could never have imagined that we would be forced to flee, leaving the graves of our relatives behind and losing our Artsakh," she shared.

Let the Numbers Speak

As of today about 100,625 forcibly displaced persons have arrived in Armenia from Artsakh, and 91,924 of them already have been registered by Armenian officials, Armenian Prime Minister's Press Secretary Nazeli Baghdasaryan said: "The number of registered and already identified persons is increasing hour by hour. As of now, it is 99.2 percent. We are confident that this number will reach 100 percent in the next one or two days."

Baghdasaryan also noted that 8,000 people have already been connected to primary health care centers while 324 people continue to receive treatment in medical institutions.

Among the forcibly displaced persons, there are students and children. According to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport, 8,000 students — 32

percent of children — are already visiting various educational institutions in Armenia.

If You Fall into Their Hands, You're Done!

"I have been forcibly displaced twice. The first time I was displaced from Shushi to Stepanakert after 2020, and this time here. I didn't bring anything with me. I just got up and came. It was cold, and I was freezing," said Edik Edigaryan, a gray-haired man in his early 60s, who sent his family to Goris first and then came later with his fellow villagers.

When the war started, the Azerbaijani armed forces first attacked the electrical station of their village. People stayed without

electricity and then things got even worse when the Azerbaijani forces started shelling the village. He helped to take out the bodies, but the hospitals were full. People were placed on the ground and in the corridors as all the rooms were full, he said.

"There were young boys among us, 13, 14, 18-year-old boys, who came to help us, so we managed to take out the corpses. We did it at night to escape the shooting from their side, but they were shooting anyway. We barely took out the bodies," Edigaryan said.

Coming from a village near Stepanakert, he saw Azerbaijani forces making a "big, big fire on the mountain" to put psychological pressure on the villagers.

Passing the checkpoint was an additional challenge, especially for the men. "I was lucky to be in a car with only old passengers and children. There was an old woman, an old man, and three children. They [Azerbaijanis] didn't pay any special attention to us, but when there were younger people, those who were in their 30s, and the Azerbaijani soldiers called them out of the car, started to bully them, make fun of them to provoke a fight, and arrest them."

Edigaryan also says Azerbaijani soldiers filmed some people to say things "that weren't true." "They force people to say that 'Karabakh is Azerbaijan' and that everything is peaceful now and so on, putting psychological pressure on them."

For a moment, Goris seems like a station where all destinies converge in chaos and uncertainty.

"Witnessing all of this, one starts to lose touch with reality. I am afraid Azerbaijan won't leave Armenia alone," he said.



Town square in Goris filled with bags and belongings of Karabakh refugees (photo Anoush Baghdasaryan)

Armenian Official Warns of 'Imminent Azeri Attack'

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Asked just how imminent the attack is, he said. "I think if bold steps are not taken, it's a matter of weeks."

The Armenian Foreign Ministry did not clarify as of Monday evening whether Balayan's remarks reflect his official position and, if so, what they are based on. For its part, the Defense Ministry in Yerevan said only that the situation along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border is "relatively stable" now.

Yerevan said in early September that Azerbaijani troops are massing along the

border and the "line of contact" in Nagorno-Karabakh in possible preparation for a large-scale attack. About two weeks later, they launched an offensive in Karabakh that caused a mass exodus of its population and paved the way for the restoration of Baku's control over the region.

The Azerbaijani takeover of Karabakh raised more fears in Yerevan that Baku will also attack Armenia to open an extraterritorial land corridor to Nakhichevan passing through Syunik, the only Armenian province bordering Iran. Aliyev and other Azerbaijani leaders regularly

demand such a corridor.

Iran has repeatedly warned against attempts to strip it of the common border and transport links with Armenia. Iranian leaders reiterated last week Tehran's strong opposition to "any changes in the geopolitics of the region." According to a deputy chief of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's staff, he told visiting Armenian and Azerbaijani officials that the corridor sought by Baku is "resolutely opposed by Iran" because it would give NATO a "foothold" in the region.

The EU and the United States voiced

strong support for Armenia's territorial integrity following the latest escalation in Karabakh. But they signaled no sanctions against Azerbaijan, which is becoming a major supplier of natural gas to Europe.

Balayan suggested that the sanctions include price caps on Azerbaijani oil and gas imported by the EU. He said the 27-nation bloc should also suspend a visa facilitation agreement with Baku if the latter refuses to withdraw troops from Armenian territory seized in 2021 and 2022.

INTERNATIONAL

Lavrov Says Peacekeepers Ready to Help

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Russian peacekeeping contingent is ready to contribute to the strengthening of trust in the South Caucasus, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on October 7

“Now, when leaders in Yerevan and Baku have resolved the issue of mutual recognition of the sovereignty of the two countries, the time has come to establish peaceful life and strengthen trust,” Lavrov said in an article. “The Russian peacekeeping contingent is ready to maximally contribute to this,” he added.

The Russian Foreign Ministry accused the West of destabilizing the situation in the South Caucasus and imposing its mediation upon Armenia and Azerbaijan.

UN Seeks \$97 Million for Aid to Karabakh Refugees

GENEVA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with other UN agencies and NGO partners, have appealed for more than \$97 million to provide urgent humanitarian aid and protection to forcibly displaced residents of Nagorno-Karabakh and those generously hosting them in Armenia, in support of the Government-led response, according to Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General.

The Armenia Emergency Refugee Response Plan was launched over the weekend. It covers relief efforts for a six-month period, until the end of March 2024. The joint plan aims to support 231,000 people including 136,000 refugees and 95,000 members of local host communities. The plan takes into account the upcoming harsh winter months, when critical support will be required.

UNHCR said earlier that another two trucks with humanitarian aid arrived in Armenia.

French Town Removes Ukraine Flag after Zelensky Thanks Aliyev

VIENNE, France (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The mayor of the French city of Vienne, Thierry Kovacs, on October 7 ordered the removal of the Ukrainian flag from the pediment of the administration building after Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky's statement about cooperation with Azerbaijan, Dauphiné libéré reports (via RIA Novosti).

“You cannot refer to Western values and on this basis call on the West for help, while sharing the vision of the regime — the initiator of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh. This form of support for the Azerbaijani dictator is unacceptable. The removal does not in any way detract from the support that Vienne provides to the Ukrainian people,” the publication quoted the mayor.

Zelensky said in a tweet on October 4 that he had a call with Aliyev and thanked him for Azerbaijani's “significant humanitarian assistance, particularly in the energy sector as winter approaches.”

Azerbaijan, Turkey Start Construction Of Nakhchivan Gas Pipeline

By David O'Byrne

Azerbaijan and Turkey have broken ground on the construction of the long-planned gas pipeline linking Turkey's gas grid to the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan (Nakhichevan).

Construction was formally launched at a ceremony in Nakhchivan on September 25 attended by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan which saw the signing of agreements on energy, transport and public housing.

The new pipeline, which is being constructed under a memorandum of understanding signed between Azerbaijan and Turkey in December 2020, and is expected to be completed by the end of 2024, will run for 80 kilometers inside Turkey between Turkey's main transit pipeline at Iğdir to the border, and then for a further 17.5 kilometers inside Nakhchivan.

Once complete, the line will enable Azerbaijan to supply Nakhchivan with its own gas delivered via Turkey, ending the enclave's dependence on Iranian gas imported directly through a separate pipeline from Iran.

Nakhchivan's annual gas demand is reported to be around 500 million cubic meters a year with President Aliyev's official website reporting that the pipeline being laid will have a capacity of around 2 million cubic meters a day, or around 730 million cubic meters a year which “can be more than doubled.”

That ultimate capacity of around 1.5 billion cubic meters a year appears to be borne out by documents relating to the construction tender for the Turkish section of the line

which specify a pipeline with a diameter of 16 inches.

If so, that would for the time being at least put to rest speculation that Baku is interested in laying a major gas export pipeline through its proposed “Zangezur corridor” that would connect mainland Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan through Armenia.

Speaking in March, Azerbaijan's energy minister Parviz Shahbazov suggested that the Zangezur corridor could be used as both a transport and energy corridor between Azerbaijan and Europe, but did not clarify further on whether this would include gas exports.

The status of the corridor itself is equally unclear. The notion was born out of the Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that ended the 2020 Second Karabakh War. The ninth point of the ceasefire stipulated that Armenia would “guarantee the security of transport connections” to Nakhchivan “in order to arrange unobstructed movement of persons, vehicles and cargo in both directions.” Russian border guards would be responsible for “overseeing” the route.

But Baku and Yerevan remain at odds both over what that means - a simple re-establishing of transport links, or a full-on corridor through Armenian territory that is beyond Armenian sovereignty.

That said, a major gas pipeline connecting Azerbaijan with Turkey through Armenia - as politically improbable as it seems now - could benefit Yerevan as well as Baku.

As well as providing a new route for transiting Azerbaijani or other Caspian gas to Turkey and on to Europe, it could also provide Armenia with new sources of gas as competition for Russia's Gazprom, which

currently enjoys monopoly control over Armenia's gas imports from both Russia and Iran.

Transit and trading potential

Whether or not the Turkey-Nakhchivan pipeline is extended further through a corridor to Azerbaijan, the modest pipeline under construction already offers some potential for regional gas trading which could potentially expand gas exports through Turkey to Europe.

Although ostensibly designed to supply Azerbaijani gas to Nakhchivan in place of the Iranian gas the enclave currently uses, pipelines can be constructed to operate in two directions.

The pipeline could also simply offer to supply Azerbaijani gas as competition for Iranian gas, encouraging Tehran to drop its prices in return for being allowed to transit its gas through Nakhchivan to Turkey.

If Nakhchivan's gas demand remains unchanged at around 500 million cubic meters a year, and the Turkey-Nakhchivan pipeline is expanded to its full capacity of around 1.5 billion cubic meters a year, that would offer a potential capacity of around 1 billion cubic meters a year for transiting Iranian gas to Turkey.

Turkey already imports Iranian gas under a long-term contract but is keen to find new sources of gas to be traded on Ankara's planned gas trading hub in northwestern Turkey, both for sale into the Turkish market and for transit via Turkey's existing transit grid to Europe.

(David O'Byrne is an Istanbul-based journalist who covers energy. This article originally appeared on the site www.eurasiainet.org on October 7.)

EU Official Visits Armenia, Discusses Aid to Karabakh Refugees

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However, there have been multiple reports of refugees remaining homeless days after their evacuation from Karabakh. RFE/RL's Armenian Service spoke to several such persons outside a government aid center in Parakar, a village just outside Yerevan. They as well as other refugees went there to inquire about a one-off cash payment of 100,000 drams (\$245) promised by the government to every displaced Karabakh Armenian.

“We are living in a church courtyard, we have no relatives here,” said Elmira Nersisyan, a 74-year-old woman from Stepanakert who fled to Armenia with her disabled daughter. “We didn't know what to do, who to apply to.”

“If they give us this [financial] aid, we will get by until I find a job,” she said, adding that government officials have pledged to provide them with temporary housing.

The government has also pledged to provide every refugee renting an apartment or house up to 50,000 drams per month for at least six months. The money can only be spent on housing rent and utility fees.

Von der Leyen Promises More Aid

The European Union and the United States will organize a conference of donors as part of their efforts to deepen ties with Armenia, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen indicated over the weekend.

“I strongly condemn the Azerbaijani military operation which led to the exodus of more than 100,000 Armenians from the Nagorno-Karabakh region,” she told a

youth conference held in the French city of Bordeaux. “I reiterate my absolute support for Armenia's territorial integrity in line with the principles of the United Nations.”

“Our immediate priority is to help Armenia receive the displaced persons and support the Armenian state in this ordeal,” she said, pointing to over \$11 million in humanitarian aid to Karabakh refugees and \$16 million in separate financial assistance to the Armenian government provided by the EU.



Five Armenian families, who fled Nagorno-Karabakh following the Azeri offensive, are seen settled in a house given to them by a neighbor in Goris until they find a new home, October 4, 2023

“In addition, with the United States, we will organize a joint meeting to support Armenia. This is a first step to strengthen our bilateral relations. Because Europe and Armenia share a long and rich common history and the time has come to write a new chapter in this shared history,” added the head of the EU's executive body.

In her speech repeatedly interrupted by rapturous applause, von der Leyen gave no dates or other details of the donors' con-

ference announced by her. She met with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on the sidelines of an EU summit in Granada, Spain last Thursday.

Pashinyan also held a separate meeting there with the EU's top official, Charles Michel, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. In a joint statement, the European leaders expressed their “unwavering support” for Armenia and called for the “strengthening of EU-Armenia relations in all its dimensions.”

While in Bordeaux, von der Leyen also met with a group of pro-Armenian French lawmakers. They reportedly told her that the EU must also provide military aid to Armenia and impose sanctions on Azerbaijan.

The European Parliament urged such sanctions in an October 5 resolution that accused Azerbaijan of committing “ethnic cleansing” against Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population. It criticized von der Leyen for describing Azerbaijan as a “key partner in our efforts to move away from Russian fossil fuels” during a 2022 trip to Baku.

None of the 27 member states — including France, Armenia's main Western backer — has backed the idea of sanctions. French President Emmanuel Macron said on October 5 that they would be counterproductive at this point.

The EU as well as the United States are moving to forge closer links with Armenia amid the South Caucasus state's mounting tensions with Russia, its longtime ally.



ARMENIA

Pan-European Brussels Protest Calls for Action On Artsakh, Punishment for Azerbaijan

By **Mélanie Tuysuzian**

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

BRUSSELS — On October 1, more than 5,000 European Armenians gathered in front of the European Parliament in Brussels. The protest was organized by the group Europeans for Artsakh. It intended to pressure European politicians to sanction Azerbaijan after its invasion of Artsakh on September 19.

On October 1, Artsakh flags flew in large numbers in the streets of Brussels, the heart of the European Institutions. *Mer Hayrenik* was played and people were holding huge signs that read “Is Azeri gas more important than 120,000 Armenian lives?” and “Sell 2000 years of Armenian civilization for Azeri gas.”

In July 2022, the European Commission’s President Ursula Von der Leyen signed an agreement to double Azerbaijani gas imports by 2027. That was one of the reasons Armenians came from all over Europe to give voice to their indignation at the European Parliament this Sunday afternoon.

The Europeans for Artsakh Movement is a coalition composed of 500 organizations from 17 European countries, involving more than 200 from France, that have come together to condemn Azerbaijan’s actions against Artsakh Armenians over the last ten months.

The gathering had been planned for several weeks to raise awareness of the Azerbaijani blockade of the Lachin Corridor. However, with the invasion of Azerbaijan in Artsakh last September, the goal of the demonstration took on a new urgency. It was a protest that the European Union officials feared, as they placed long lines of barbed wire to prevent people from crossing the street to the Parliament building.

“It’s surprising that the European Commission is afraid of a peaceful demonstration; all we want is justice,” said Alexis T. from Switzerland.

Political Promises

Several speeches in support of Artsakh were made during the demonstration. Representatives from Europe’s Armenian communities, including Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany, were present to speak on their behalf. The majority of non-Armenian political figures were French, such as Patrick Karam, vice president of the Ile-de-France region. Moved by his visit to Stepanakert in 1992, he urged European Union members not to vote for Ursula Von der Leyen again for the next election.



Protestors in Brussels (photo Mélanie Tuysuzian)

Pascall Doll, the mayor of Arnouville, a city with one of the largest Armenian communities in France, and which has a friendship history with the city of Chekher in Artsakh, also spoke. “I’m deeply wounded, and I suffer with the Armenian people. If the European Union does not act quickly against [Azerbaijani President Ilham] Aliyev’s dictatorship, we will all pay the consequences,” Doll stated.

Former French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner also came especially to support the cause. “Europe must participate in the surveillance of Armenia’s borders. Preserving and protecting Armenia’s borders is very important now,” he told AFP [Agence France Press, or French Press Agency].

‘Aliyev, Murderer’

Those present screamed repeatedly, “Aliyev, murderer,” “Wake up Europe,” and “Artsakh belongs to us, not Baku.”

For the day, Armenians could travel from Paris, Marseille, Alfortville, or Issy-les-Moulineaux on free buses. Parisian Anahid Ouzounian took one of them and traveled for 7 hours that day. “I can’t believe exactly 36 years ago I went to the UN Parliament with my grandfather because they recognized the Armenian genocide,” she said, her face sad. “I remember it was raining but everyone was so happy, we thought

it would help Armenia. But today, the UE proved the opposite and completely failed.”

“I’m European, and today I’m ashamed.” That is the sentence used by Daniel Salvatore Schiffer to start his speech, at the end of the demonstration. Around 40 French

since the invasion, the European Union finally denounced the Azeri aggression this week and voted for a new resolution. The statement mentions “a gross violation of human rights and international law” and “unjustified military attack.” Members of



A poster at the protest (photo Mélanie Tuysuzian)

intellectuals, including Elisabeth Badinter, Edgar Morin and Dominique Schnapper, signed a tribune for the defense of Armenia at the initiative of this Belgian philosopher (link to the tribune : Pour l’Arménie : l’appel des intellectuels (lepoint.fr)).

As a Jew, Schiffer encouraged Israel to abandon its defense pact with Azerbaijan and to provide help to Armenia instead.

In the middle of the crowd, student Arpi Kouyoumdjian, from Germany, listened to the different speeches with emotion. “I went to Artsakh in 2017 and it’s a painful memory because it was such a peaceful place, with the mountains, nature, kind people, and I couldn’t imagine there would be a war there,” she shared. “I came here because I expect Europe and Germany to stand up for European rights, which are human rights and democracy. I hope this demonstration will also allow us to be seen from all over the world,” she added.

Europe Finally Condemns Azerbaijan

After calling for peace on both sides

parliament urged the EU and its member states to reconsider their relationship with Azerbaijan and to stop “all imports of oil and gas from Azerbaijan to the EU in the event of military aggression against Armenian territorial integrity.”

Also this week, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and European Council President Charles Michel met with Nikol Pashinyan in Spain. Aliyev was scheduled to attend but canceled due to France’s “militarization” of the Caucasus, the European Union’s attitude towards the region and Turkey’s absence. France and the European Union have been among the first three countries to financially assist Artsakh refugees since October 3, contributing €5,000,000 and €12,500,000 respectively.

As *Zartir Lao* echoed in Brussels, just after another speech full of promises to support Artsakh, the demonstration ended with a tired protester’s voice, which everyone could hear: “I’m not [totally] hopeless, but...a little bit.”



Barbed wire outside the European Parliament building (photo Mélanie Tuysuzian)

Community News

Young Women in Armenian Local Governments to Visit Mass.

CAMBRIDGE, MA — The Congressional Office for International Leadership (formerly known as the Open World Leadership Center), an agency of the U.S. Congress, will send a delegation of young women from local governments across Armenia to Cambridge, from October 13 to 21. The group consists of five delegates who currently serve on local councils and will be accompanied by a bicultural/lingual facilitator and an interpreter. While in the Cambridge area, the Open World program participants will be hosted by the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA). The delegation will stay in the homes of local residents who serve as hospitality hosts.

They are Arusyak Avetisyan, Member of Vardenis Local Council; Shushanik Danielyan, Member of Yeghegis City Council; Lilit Hajatyan, Member of Artik Local Council; Lilit Haroyan, Member of Charentsavan City Council; Meri Harutyunyan, Deputy Head of Development and Investment Programs Department for Yerevan Municipality; and Lilit Antonyan (Facilitator for the program), Political Assistant, US Embassy in Armenia.

Prior to their arrival in Cambridge, the participants will complete orientation in Washington, D.C.

In the Cambridge area, delegates will collaborate on best practices for good governance and advancement of women's leadership. Delegates will meet staff of U.S. Rep. Katherine Clark (MA-DISTRICT #5), local leaders in Cambridge and other communities, and state legislators. Additional activities include a visit to Tufts University Tisch College of Civic Life, the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Women and Public Policy program, meetings with the MA Caucus of Women Legislators and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and a social/networking event with the AGBU Young Professionals group.

In addition, the delegates will participate in a panel discussion on Advancing Women's Leadership in Local Government in Armenia at NAASR on Thursday, October 19 at 7:30 p.m. that is open to the public. The event will take place at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. In addition to the five visitors, Svetlana Hovhannisyanyan will provide translation for the program. Jonathan Hecht, Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association Board Member and former State Representative and Watertown City Councilor, will serve as moderator.

More than 30,000 current and future leaders from partner countries have participated in the Open World program. The Open World program offers one of the most effective U.S. exchange programs to promote mutually beneficial options for depolarized engagement between future national leaders. It is a unique but no see CYSCA, page 9



On February 28, 2023, hundreds of SEIU 121RN members came together to rally in front of St. John's Regional Medical Center in Oxnard and march to the California Public Health Department district office to say, "Patient Safety Can't Wait." At left, California Treasurer Fiona Ma, with Astine Suleimanyan at right (courtesy Astine Suleimanyan Instagram).

Astine Suleimanyan Works for Labor, Supports Armenians as SoCal Union Political Director

By Aram Arkun
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

labor unions began as an attempt to improve conditions for workers during the start of the Industrial Revolution. Astine Suleimanyan may well be the highest-ranking Armenian in the labor movement in the United States at present, as she is the political director for Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 121RN, an alliance of nurses and healthcare professionals in Southern California, with headquarters in Pasadena.

Each local union only has one political director, so this is an influential position, especially if the local is a larger influential one like Local 121RN. Suleimanyan said, "The political directors are basically the political leaders of the union. I am the one that figures out what to lobby, what bills are a priority. Obviously I work with our members and we work with our team, but I am the one that pushes it forward. I work with the lobbyist in Sacramento and I am the one that works with International [the top union leadership]. I am basically the connection from labor to our sister locals, out state affiliates, our national affiliates, politicians and all organizations."

The Union Way

Suleimanyan was born in Abovyan, Armenia, and was five years old when her family moved to Glendale in the late 1980s. She said that in college she, like many Armenians, aspired to go into the medical field, but she had been involved in local politics since she was 15 years old. For example, she knocked on doors for Paul Krekorian's first schoolboard campaign in Burbank, when Adrin Nazarian was campaign manager. She also volunteered for the Armenian National Committee (ANCA) Western Region.

As an undergraduate at the University of California, Irvine (2004-2007) she switched her major to women's studies and learned about the labor movement. She wanted to work for the American Civil Liberties Union. She did an ANCA internship and this helped her become an ACLU field assistant in Washington.

continued on next page

Jan. 6 Defendant Who Wanted to Arrest 'The Traitors' to 'Protect the Capitol' Is Sentenced to 4 Years

By Ryan J. Reilly

WASHINGTON (NBC News) — A conspiracy theorist convicted of felony Capitol riot charges told a federal judge at his sentencing on September 26 that he wanted to "protect the Capitol" by "arresting the traitors" on Jan. 6 before he was sentenced to more than four years in prison.

Ed Badalian, of California, said at his sentencing Tuesday that he was "frustrated" that officers protecting the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, "did not join us in arresting the traitors," referring to members of Congress who did not overturn the 2020 presidential election in Donald Trump's behalf.

Badalian was convicted in April of conspiracy to commit an offense



Edward Badalian wearing a cap that says "Trump" in Armenian, on January 6, outside the Capitol (US Attorney of District of Columbia photo)

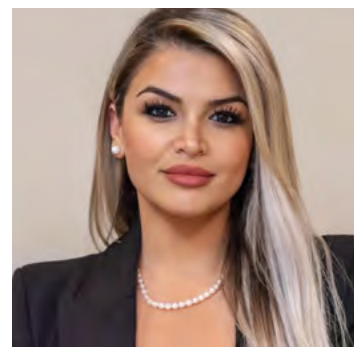
against the U.S., obstruction of an official proceeding and a misdemeanor count. Evidence showed that he organized paintball training sessions after Trump's 2020 election loss and was preparing for war. He made it to the lower west terrace tunnel on Jan. 6 and into the suite of Senate hideaway offices that were ransacked by rioters.

Badalian was charged alongside two co-defendants. One, a Trump supporter named Danny Rodriguez, drove a stun gun into Washington Police Officer Michael Fanone's neck and was sentenced to 12.5 years in federal prison in June. Rodriguez shouted "Trump won!" as he was led out of the courthouse after his sentencing.

The other defendant, Paul Belosic, is a Hollywood background actor who has appeared in several music videos and

"We need to violently remove traitors and if they are in key positions rapidly replace them with able bodied Patriots," Badalian wrote in an encrypted chat on Dec. 21, 2020, two days after Trump's "will be wild" tweet inviting supporters to Washington on Jan. 6. Badalian's post put the "PATRIOTS45 MAGA GANG" into action, according to prosecutors. Among those Badalian wanted to arrest on Jan. 6: then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and incoming President Joe Biden.

see DEFENDANT, page 9



Astine Suleimanyan (courtesy Astine Suleimanyan)



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

She worked there on the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, helping lobbyists push it (it was signed into law in January 2009). It was during this work that she met people in labor organizations such as AFSCME [American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees] and SEIU International, which today has over 2 million members across the US and Canada. After three years in Washington, she wanted to return home to California, and began working there for SEIU International with a one-year contract.

In this job, she said she traveled all around the country. She was in Milwaukee, Wis. for four months, organizing the community there against Governor Scott Walker, who was trying to get rid of unions. She added she joined a march of 100,000 people to Madison, with the teachers union and slept in the capitol as part of the civil disobedience movement. She next went to Ohio and many red states, to oppose efforts to get rid of collective bargaining.

After all this traveling, in 2013 she began working in Los Angeles for another labor organization called the California School Employees Association (CSEA) as a union representative. She said, "I always wanted to know how to do representation because I felt that would make me a strong advocate for workers." At CSEA she learned bargaining and arbitration, she said.

She pivoted back to labor politics, working for SEIU Local 2015, which represents long-term care workers, for two years. She managed campaigns for candidates for office endorsed by this local. After this, she became a political organizer for United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), the largest teachers union in the state and the second in the country, from 2015 to 2019, this time leading lobbying and field campaign efforts.

Finally, after a three-month stint working as deputy political director and labor liaison in California for Tom Steyer's 2020 presidential campaign, she returned to SEIU, this time to Local 121RN, working first as legislative coordinator, then interim political director, and finally, from April 2023, as full political director.

Suleimanyan declared that SEIU 121RN had a little over 9,000 members working in Southern California, in Ventura, Inland Empire and Los Angeles County. She said, "All of our hospitals are private hospitals so our fight is a lot bigger than most. There are a lot of challenges in dealing with corporate hospitals." The union negotiates every contract with each hospital and has a president within each hospital who reports on developments concerning healthcare workers. These presidents serve on the executive board of the union, which has over 30 members. This board, she said, decides on political endorsements, letters, and all types of action on issues to be taken, including priority bills, for which there is a lobbyist at the State Assembly who works with Suleimanyan and the SEIU International lobbyist in Washington.

When asked why union membership numbers and engagement are in a historical decline, Suleimanyan replied, "It doesn't benefit corporate America for [organized] labor to exist. Corporate America would prefer not to pay its workers a livable wage. It would prefer to have temporary workers, like the Koch brothers, who love temp workers, bring them in, use them as disposable workers, and then let them go. They don't pay them health care, because it is cutting money from their own pockets. They would rather take this money and give themselves bonuses."

She said Republicans in general are anti-union for this reason and push for anti-labor laws, such as creating "right to work"

states, which are largely red states. In these states, non-union members benefit from union bargaining and representation without having to pay union dues, thus weakening the unions' strength.

On the contrary, she said, "In my opinion, this is the backbone of the economy: you pay your workers a fair wage, you give your workers health care, you make sure that they are happy. Then a lot of people would say you have a great workforce, and you would not have such economic downturns every single time."

Representing as Well as Reaching Out to Armenians

With a smile, Suleimanyan confessed, "As committed as I am to the labor movement, I probably would say I am more committed to the Armenian cause. I probably shouldn't say that, but I am — just naturally, it is who we are." From the early days of her labor career, Suleimanyan said, "Always, in the back of mind, was how do I use my voice in labor to activate more Armenians and get our issues out across the board. We are a minority that is always

claimed: "Believe it! In Southern California, they are everywhere. There are nurses, there are county and social workers, our state workers, and our homecare workers are the large majority in the city and county workers." She said she comes across Armenian stewards and nurses all the time. She said, "For example, we represent a hospital in Burbank. The majority of our nurses there are Armenian. We represent a couple of hospitals in the [San Fernando] Valley and the majority of our nurses there are Armenian. There is just a large number of Armenians."

When asked why should people in labor unions be involved in international issues, including those concerning Armenians, Suleimanyan replied: "We do it because they [the nationalities concerned] are part of our community of labor. There are 100,000 Armenians in Los Angeles. There are builders, nurses and healthcare workers. We do it, for example, for immigration rights. There is a lot to be said about what we do for API [Asian/Pacific Islander] communities or Black American communities. We fight for communities we encompass."



Astine Suleimanyan, left, at the state legislature in Sacramento, in February 2023 with California State Assemblyman Miguel Santiago, and Monique Hernandez also from SEIU 121RN (courtesy Astine Suleimanyan Facebook)

overlooked even in California, where [in some places] we have a majority."

She recalled that because of the limited number of Armenian labor leaders, she became "the Armenian go-to girl," whenever there were any issues concerning this community. There were some 20,000 Armenian members of SEIU Local 2015 and a big part of her job was to get more of them engaged. Everywhere she would go, Suleimanyan said, she would check the number of Armenian members of each local. For those who want to have some kind of cross-check on official government census figures, this could be useful.

Suleimanyan said that she checks first on politicaldata.com (PDI), a political data intelligence database on all voters used by all political campaigns, which allows searching for people of Armenian descent. Secondly, there are databases which can be searched for -ian or -yan endings of surnames. Thirdly, the unions may ask for member language preferences, including Armenian.

Her current union, SEIU Local 121RN, has many Armenian members, as do many other Los Angeles area unions. She ex-

A second factor, she said, is that "we fight for mental health every single day in the labor movement...one component is that we are taking care of the communities within our labor movement, and Armenians are big." She explained that the 2020 war and its aftermath, including what is happening now, has created a lot of trauma impacting Armenian families in the US. This also affects work-life balance and thus is important for the labor movement.

Only a few weeks ago (prior to the Azerbaijani invasion of Artsakh), SEIU 121RN sent a letter to President Joe Biden to ask him to stop the Artsakh humanitarian crisis and end the blockade. SEIU International was heavily involved in getting Biden into office as president and so presumably SEIU communications would carry some weight. Suleimanyan gave the background to the letter, which sheds further light on union commitment to Armenian and other international issues: "To be honest, the Biden letter didn't come from me. The Biden letter came from our Executive Board, whose members are non-Armenians. They wanted to support me. They wanted to show they stand in solidarity with me. This is a really

important issue. They saw how it impacted me and how important it was for their Armenian colleagues as well, so they wanted to have a voice in the process." She said that this empowered a lot of other Armenian union members to ask their labor organizations to do the same.

Another reason for this kind of support, Suleimanyan said, is that the union members and representatives are not just concerned about their own interests, but have patient care as a main concern. A lot of their patients, in places like Burbank, Encino and Tarzana, are Armenian, she said, and so they have this connection with the Armenian community.

Suleimanyan noted that there is only one organized Armenian labor body in labor in California, the Armenian Caucus of SEIU Local 721 (representing service workers in various fields in Southern California), with which she is in communication. It works to develop leadership among its Armenian members. The latter are largely county workers who have been rank-and-file members for a long time, said Suleimanyan, adding: "I think they do their due diligence. ... I always watch them and they do great work." The members do both union work and Armenian engagement, pushing for whatever they think is needed for the Armenian membership. Shoushan Baghboudarian is the leader of this caucus.

She recalled that it has yearly gatherings at a banquet hall, where many politicians are invited. The caucus and its members take delegations to Armenia. Suleimanyan said, "A lot of elected officials love those trips to Armenia. They always ask me, how can I get to go on one?"

She said that over the last ten years there has not been much growth in Armenian leadership in labor. She thought the reason to be, she said, that "generally speaking the majority of Armenians come from where they don't trust government and they put the union into that hat, where they feel there is a specific agenda." She pointed out also that there is a misconception that only progressives or Democrats are in unions, but in fact there are Republicans, anti-vaccine people, and in general very diverse points of view joining together only to improve workplaces and to fight for the workers.

Suleimanyan said that she attempted to get Armenians more involved in labor by having some positive success stories for them. She said she helped to get SEIU 2015 to join in the Armenian Genocide centennial March for Justice in Los Angeles. She said, "We had a very, very large number [of labor union members]. I just loved being there, marching around with non-Armenians. The Armenians were looking at each other and they felt empowered to see non-Armenians and labor marching in solidarity with them." When she was at UTLA, she helped get it to pass a resolution recognizing the centennial.

Her efforts were recognized in 2017 when she was honored as Armenian Champion of the Year by the Southern California nonprofit organization Parents, Educators/Teachers and Students in Action (PESA) at the Vardavar "Festival of Love" event and given a flag by Congressman Brad Sherman which had flown over the US Capitol.

SEIU 121RN also releases communications every April 24 on the Genocide.

Aside from her official job in labor, Suleimanyan also joined the ANCA Western Region Educational Committee. She worked hard to get the Los Angeles Unified School District, the largest such district in the state of California and the second largest in the US, with 650,000 students and 35,000 teachers, to close its schools on April 24 in memory of the Armenian Genocide.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Astine Suleimanyan Works for Labor as SoCal Union Political Director

ASTINE, from page 7

During the Artsakh war, Suleimanyan said that she, along with other representatives of labor, went from city to city and pushed a resolution for the Democratic Party in California to condemn Azerbaijan and stop the war crimes.

Two years ago, the ANCA honored Suleimanyan and the Educational Committee at a gala, and her colleagues at SIEU 121RN bought a table and attended to support her. Suleimanyan said, "I was very happy to see that support from my leadership."

Politics

Suleimanyan worked on the presidential campaign for Tom Steyer in 2020. A billionaire in California, he did not know much about Armenia or Armenian issues, she said, but he hired Rostom Sarkissian as his California deputy director and Suleimanyan as his deputy political director and labor liaison. She recalled, "We walked to him a lot about Armenian issues. I think that as a result of these types of conversations, he became aware. So you now had a candidate running for president who was fully aware of what was going on with Armenian issues and was talking about them in California. He did meet with Armenian leaders. We set that up for him."

She continued her political activities with SIEU 121RN. Suleimanyan goes to the Armenian television or cable channels often to push for candidates that SIEU endorses. She said: "People who run for office in Glendale, Burbank, the [San Fernando] Valley, the Armenian districts – I am the person they want to have lunch with. I am the person they want to talk with. I am the person they want support from."

She confessed that she also serves on the Government Affairs committee of the ANCA-Western Region, which conducts political endorsements. She said, "It is a little bit challenging because we have our own endorsement process for SIEU 121RN and sometimes the endorsements don't fall in the same hat. For the most part, ANCA is respectful of the lines I cannot cross."

At the same time, Suleimanyan said, "I work with everyone. I don't really get involved in Armenian politics. I feel like I don't know much about it. I appreciate all of them. As long as we are all working for the same cause, I am happy to do what I can."

Suleimanyan declared, "In California, I would say that the majority of Armenians

good for our community is the best approach." Consequently, she has been working closely with Californian Armenian Democratic politicians or officeholders like Adrin Nazarian, Ardashes Kassakhian and in the past Zareh Sinanyan, as well as Republicans like Ara Najarian, who she said is a good friend.

Back to Armenia



Astine Suleimanyan, at right, honored in 2017 as Armenian Champion of the Year with the gift of an American flag flown over the nation's capital (courtesy Astine Suleimanyan Facebook)

are Democrats. There is a misconception that they are conservative, but that is not true. If you pull the numbers, it is very big." She said that she has looked at the voter demographics for nearly every area in which there are Armenians, and it is approximately 70 percent Democrats and 30 percent Republicans. There are always some undecided too."

However, she said, "I always say that when it comes to Armenian issues, it is non-partisan. We always have to look at it from a non-partisan angle. Whatever is

Suleimanyan said that she has gone back to Armenia in 2011, 2018, 2021 and this year, and plans to "go more and more, because I just feel the need to go there. I like to spend my American dollars there. I would rather spend it there rather than anywhere else." She said she tried to meet with people in the labor movement in Armenia but that there does not seem to really be a structure there as in the US. There are a couple of labor bodies but they are not very active, she noted, and workers do not seem to have a strong voice as in the US. She

said, "I would love to organize Armenia – that would be a dream of mine."

She noted that while she was in Yerevan, "there were a million restaurants on every block. I saw 15-16-year-olds working as waiters or waitresses. Those restaurants are often owned by somebody outside of Armenia who is very well off." She said she spoke to these workers who said they make around \$10 a day working 14 hours, sometimes straight, often with no weekends off. There are days that they said they went home with less than that. With restaurants making a lot of money from outside tourists at present, Suleimanyan said the workers should be making more than 10 dollars per day. Labor in the US has moved the minimum wage threshold in the US and could try the same in Armenia.

Political Future?

When asked whether she has any aspirations for political office, she said, "I did want to run for office at one time but now I am very happy as a political director. I feel I have more leverage and more power in this capacity. I can move more things for our community as a political director than as a state assemblymember or legislator."

She pointed out that a legislator can keep the Armenian Caucus going in Sacramento, but in her current position she has the ability to ask elected officials to do this. She would have many other considerations in her district as an elected official, but, she said, "I have more flexibility as a political director...I get to pick. I know that nurse issues are number one in my work, and when Armenian stuff comes up, I can push for that too."

Maybe just as importantly, she said when she works to move bills through the legislative process, "I am the one who sometimes makes these tough calls. I call elected officials and tell them how upset I am. I wouldn't want to be the person on the other line. I want to be the person calling."

Of course, in the end, with good political sense, she murmured, "Maybe one day. We'll see."

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&
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Cal Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Asks Biden to Help Displaced Armenians

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation this week sent a letter to President Joe Biden requesting him to make every effort to send aid, relief, and peacekeeping to the Armenians in both Nagorno Karabakh and the displaced Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh arriving in Armenia. The United States immediate assistance is needed during this humanitarian crisis to ensure that international human rights violations do not continue.

The letter reads in part, “It is with great urgency that the California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation is

asking you to make every effort to send aid, relief, and peacekeeping to the Armenians in both Nagorno Karabakh and the displaced Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh arriving in Armenia. The United States immediate assistance is needed during this humanitarian crisis to ensure that international human rights violations do not continue.

“Since December 12, 2022, Azerbaijan has blocked the Lachin Corridor, a road that connects Armenia to Nagorno Karabakh creating a human crisis blocking much needed food, fuel, medical supplies, transportation and essential services. The

situation rapidly worsened as the Azerbaijani military moved into Nagorno Karabakh launching attacks on the 120,000 ethnic Armenians who inhabit Nagorno Karabakh. With the recent collapse of the Nagorno-Karabakh government, more than 80% of the Armenians inhabiting Nagorno Karabakh have fled the unsafe region and are flooding Armenia. Azerbaijan continues their horrific attacks on the Armenian people.

“We ask that you help to ensure that Armenians who are trapped in Nagorno Karabakh be given resources and assistance to leave the region. Many do not

have access to transportation, gasoline, have health conditions that make travel difficult, etc. These individuals are trapped and in need of protection. Their lives depend on your help.”

The letter was signed by Senators Bob Archuleta, Maria Elena Durazo, Anthony Portantino, Scott Wilk, Assemblymembers: Lisa Calderon, Wendy Carrillo, Mike Fong, Vince Fong, Laura Friedman, Jesse Gabriel, Chris Holden, Tom Lackey, Cottie Petrie-Norris, Luz Rivas, Blanca Rubio, Miguel Santiago, Rick Chavez Zbur, and Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian (Ret.).

Third Annual ‘Couples Night Out’ Aims to Strengthen Marriages

WATERTOWN — Members of the New England clergy announce the return of “Couples Night Out.”

The third annual “Couples Night Out” will be held on Thursday, November 9 at 6 p.m. at the social hall of St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown.

The goal of the program, which started in 2018, is to give Armenian Christian homes the support and encouragement they need to make their marriage a priority, ultimately making a direct impact on a vibrant and healthy Armenian community.

This year’s keynote speaker will be Rev. Dr. John Mokkaosian of the New England Pastoral Institute. Dr. Mokkaosian is a renowned licensed pastoral psychotherapist, who specializes in individual, couple and family relationships. He will be leading an interactive session on “Giving and Receiving Love as a Couple: The Heart and Soul of a Marriage.”

In years past, dozens of Armenian couples in various stages of their marriage relationships have opened their hearts and been inspired and encouraged by “Couples Night Out.” It’s a unique opportunity for fellowship and supporting healthy and thriving marriages.

“Marriage starts like a big fire, burning hot and bright,” said one member of the



Local members of the clergy at the 2019 iteration of “Couples Night Out”

Couples’ committee. “Over time, the large fire burns down to small embers which need to be stoked once in a while to relight the flame that is always there at the core. During this Couples’ Night Out, we will learn how to keep the marital love shining bright and how to rekindle the flame to keep your marriage healthy and alive.”

Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian, who has been married to his wife, Dr. Arpi Boynerian, for 35 years, describes the marriage relationship as a transition from a “self-centered life” to an “other-centered life.”

“The ‘other-centered life’ is grounded in selflessness, which is an important in-

redient in the covenant of marriage,” he explained.

Dr. Torkom Garabedian, pastor of Spring of Life Church Boston, is encouraging couples to center their relationship around the Word of God. “Family is the nucleus where God’s love is displayed. The nucleus of the family is the couple,” he said. “Today more than ever, it is paramount to grow strong in the unity of marriage. A couple found on God’s Word is unbreakable and can navigate through any turmoil in life.”

Tickets cost \$120 per couple and include a catered dinner. Reserve your tickets by October 31 by contacting Arpi Boynerian at avedisb1@gmail.com.

Young Women in Armenian Local Governments to Visit Mass.

CYSCA, from page 7

less powerful tool for Congress to engage legislatures in critical regions of the world.

The Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association, Inc. (CYSCA), is a sister city association between Cambridge, Massachusetts and Yerevan, the capital city of the Republic of Armenia. CYSCA is a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization, that for over thirty-five years has been actively engaged in a wide variety of citizen exchanges including Open World exchanges, US State Department “Community Connections” programs for professionals, youth exchanges, and many other educational, cultural, humanitarian/philanthropic projects with its sister city based on shared values.

To learn more about CYSCA, visit www.cambridgeyerevan.org.

Jan. 6 Defendant Who Wanted to Arrest ‘the Traitors’ To ‘Protect the Capitol’ Is Sentenced to 4 Years

DEFENDANT, from page 7

After his conviction, Badalian told NBC News that he thought “any person has the right to arrest anyone if they see them committing a crime or if they have knowledge of them committing a crime” and that he would have arrested Pelosi, D-Calif., for “suspicion of knowing” about “election interference.”

Prosecutors sought more than 10 years in federal prison for Badalian, citing, among other evidence, his interview with NBC News and photos in which he displayed his ankle monitor as he posed in front of the Capitol.

A defiant Badalian repeatedly interrupted U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson on Tuesday, to the point that she remarked it was “tempting” to lock him up for the full decade prosecutors requested. Ultimately, she sentenced him to 51 months in federal prison, saying such a sentence would be more in line with what other defendants convicted of similar conduct received.

Badalian’s behavior was “all about getting and stopping the ‘traitors,’” Jackson said. He was not trying to protect the Capitol as he claimed, she added.

“Arresting the traitors would protect the Capitol,” Badalian bellowed, drawing a rebuke from the judge. “I guess arresting traitors is not good for the country?”

Badalian, Jackson said, “can’t let go of the false story of bringing down antifa,” referring to a video that shows Badalian grabbing a person breaking a Capitol window who he claims is a member of antifa. Online sleuths have since identified that person, who is a Trump supporter but has not been arrested by the FBI.

“What you attacked was the Constitution,” Jackson said, “you were attacking the very foundation of the nation itself.”

“You are a legend in your own mind,” she told Badalian. “A hero in your own head.”

There had to be consequences for his “misguided, violent vigilantism — you do not think the rules apply to you,” Jackson said before she informed him he would be committed to the custody of the U.S. marshals immediately.

As Badalian removed his suit jacket, his tie, his belt and his shoelaces under the close watch of two marshals, he proclaimed that “this is what you get for defending the Capitol building” and questioned the loyalty of one of the law enforcement officers taking him into custody.

“How do you feel about this?” he asked. “You feel like this is right?”

Just before he was handcuffed and led out of the courtroom, Badalian told the marshal that he had the duty to resist unconstitutional orders.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

ABMDR New England's 12th Annual Walkathon Benefits Life-Saving Mission

WATERTOWN — On September 23, supporters from throughout New England converged on Watertown to take part in the 12th annual Walk of Life of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR). Every year, the celebrated pan-Armenian event draws enthusiastic youth participation, with numerous students from area schools and colleges. The walkathon is also supported by local organizations, businesses, and community leaders.

Since its inception 12 years ago, Walk of Life New England has received support and sponsorship from several large and

James Armenian Apostolic Church, Rev. Arakel Aljalian, and Yeretsgin Natasha for hosting the commencement of this year's walkathon. Der Torossian went on to acknowledge Rubina Varjabedian, who has served as the treasurer for the New England ABMDR Committee for years, as the recipient of the ABMDR 2023 Volunteer of the Year Award. "Rubina Varjabedian and her family have been among the very first volunteers of ABMDR New England," Der Torossian said.

Young Telo Ghazarians, Salpy Yeterian and Miganush Stepanians of PROMETRIKA, LLC were awarded the Gold, Silver and Bronze top-fundraiser awards, respectively. For the 11th consecutive year, the Armenia Tree Project will plant commemorative trees in Armenia in honor of the walkathon winners, as part of the #LivingCentury Initiative.

Der Torossian extended the Walkathon Organizing Committee's appreciation to the event's sponsors for their continued support year after year. "Funds raised through the walkathon and all other donations go a long way in ensuring that ABMDR is able to continue to fulfill its mission, by educating the public, recruiting donors, and facilitating bone marrow stem cell transplants for patients throughout the world."

Prior to the start of the walkathon, participants held a moment of silence in honor of fallen soldiers in the Armenian homeland, and for all those who were displaced from Artsakh.

The walk concluded at Saltonstall Park in Watertown Square, where participants celebrated the day's achievements and enjoyed great music and food, along with those attending the annual Faire on the Square festival.

For more information about ABMDR, visit abmdr.am.



The Walkathon Organizing Committee.

small businesses, including PROMETRIKA, LLC, of Cambridge; the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute; the Armenian-American Pharmacists' Association; Watertown Savings Bank; ThermOil, Inc.; and Armenian Women's Welfare Association; as well as the Armenia Tree Project, Amaras Art Alliance, St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Suphi Furs, Waverly Oaks Athletic Club, and the Armenian Museum of America.

At the opening ceremony of the walkathon, which took place on the grounds of the Charles Mosesian Center, Shant Der Torossian of the ABMDR New England Walkathon Organizing Committee welcomed the participants. "Once again, we're touched to see many community organizations and individuals that have come together today to participate and collaborate for this walkathon," Der Torossian said. "Some of you have been with us since day 1. A big thank-you to those who assisted with promoting this event among their co-workers, friends, and family. We couldn't do this without you!"

Der Torossian conveyed the Walkathon Organizing Committee's gratitude to St.



Young Telo Ghazarians receiving the Gold Award.



Sharisse Zeroonian (second from left) receives the Bronze Award on behalf of Miganush Stepanians.



Salpy Yeterian (second from left) receiving the Silver Award.



Walkers and supporters.



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Complimentary parking. Light Reception to Follow.

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a cappella trio



From left: Teni Apelian, Anais Tekerian, Yeraz Markarian

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



COMMUNITY NEWS

French Mission Schools and Education of Ottoman Armenian Women Topic of Talk at ACF

BOSTON — Dr. Paulette Houbouyan-Coutant, of Paris, will discuss the strategies and evolution of the 19th century French mission schools for Armenian girls and women in the Ottoman empire at a program on Sunday, October 22, at 2:30 p.m. at the Armenian Cultural Foundation in Arlington.

Established initially in 1840 in the larger cities, such as Constantinople and Smyrna, these mission schools rapidly spread to the smaller cities and towns in the Armenian plateau, ranging from Marsovan and Amasia in the north to Sivas and Kharpert in the central plains to Urfa and Adana in the south.

Dr. Houbouyan-Coutant will describe the nuns from convents in France who volunteered to serve in the Middle East,



Paulette Houbouyan-Coutant

the life and customs they encountered, the challenges they faced in setting up and operating their schools, as well as the broader effects of a French Catholic education for girls in the midst of the rapid economic, social and cultural transformations taking place in Ottoman Turkey during those years.

Beginning with a few nuns from the French Sisters of Charity, who arrived in the Ottoman capital in 1839 to establish a school there, the movement to provide a French Catholic education to Armenian girls and women was augmented by recruits from several other societies in France, such as the Sisters of St. Joseph of



Students at the French mission school in Urfa, in 1904

the Apparition, who traveled to Erzurum, Trebizond and Samsun, and the Franciscans of Lers-le-Saunier, who went to Mardin, Diyarbakir, and Urfa.

French mission work among the Armenians in Turkey is viewed by Houbouyan-Coutant within the larger context of the spread and popularity of French culture generally throughout the Ottoman Empire in those years. The schools for girls and women are also described as a response to, as well as competition with, the considerable American Protestant presence in mission stations throughout Turkey in those years. It was the minority populations in Ottoman Turkey, and mainly the Armenians, who were attracted to mission education.

Despite the widespread network of French mission schools for girls, the number of Catholic Armenian women in Ottoman Turkey remained low (an estimated 5 to 10 percent of the population), and most of them were from established Armenian

Catholic families. Notable was the formation in Angora in 1857 of a new congregation, the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, which spread to many other areas and provided teachers to assist in the classrooms.

With the massacres of the Armenians in 1894-1896, and then in Adana in 1908, both French and American missions responded to the great need for orphanages, which housed Armenian children of Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant faiths.

The 20th century saw the increase of forces threatening mission schools in Turkey: first, Ottoman censorship, which affected not only newspapers and correspondence but was applied to textbooks and educational material (even purely religious texts); second, the emigration of the Armenians, facing difficult living conditions, to the United States as well as to Russia; and third, the rising tide of Armenian nationalism, which fostered opposition to foreign educational institutions. The 1908

Revolution offered a brief respite to these trends, but the outbreak of World War I between France and Turkey in October 1914 marked the end of these missions, with French nationals rudely and abruptly expelled from the country.

Houbouyan-Coutant, the daughter of Armenian Catholic Genocide survivors from Angora, Turkey, was born and educated in Paris, receiving her doctorate from the School for Study in the Advanced Sciences (EHESS) in France. The results of her extensive research in 19th century Ottoman history and French missions can be found in her book, published in French and titled *Armenian Women in the Ottoman Empire at French Schools (1840- 1915): Missionary Strategies and Changes in a Traditional Society*.

Active for many years in educational cooperation between France and Armenia, she chairs the Amitié et Echanges Franco-Armeniens association, which offers scholarships to students at the University of Ijevan, in Tavush, Armenia.

The program “Competing Cultures: French Mission Schools and The Education of Ottoman Armenian Women (1840-1915)” is open to the public free of charge and is sponsored jointly by the New England Affiliate and the Publications Committee of the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA). Barbara Merguerian, who has made a study 19th century American Protestant mission schools for Armenian girls in Ottoman Turkey, will introduce the speaker.

Additional information about the October 22 event program or about AIWA’s programs to unite and advance the interests of Armenia women can be found by contacting info@aiwainternational.org.

Boston Armenian Protests/Vigils for Artsakh Target US Government

BOSTON — A coalition of Boston-area youth, activist, and advocacy groups has organized a series of protests/vigils in front of the JFK Federal Building in Boston to demand forceful action by the US government to stop the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh Armenians and to sanction the perpetrator Azerbaijani regime.

The JFK Federal Building is the most prominent US Federal landmark in New England. It houses the offices of Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren and is the regional headquarters of a number of US Federal Agencies.

This series of silent protests will be held every Thursday in October, during office hours, from 2 to 6 pm, to grab the attention of US senatorial and federal agency staff who work in this building.

Attendees are encouraged to arrive when they can and to depart when they must, within the four-hour time win-

dow.

The first protest was on Thursday, Oct 5, 2-6 p.m. This FB Event Page has details on all upcoming protest dates

The organizers have compiled a list of statements, trusted news articles, videos, and other resources about Artsakh into the following website: <https://artsakhsos.carrd.co>. We will disseminate this resource via QR code to passers-by.

This series of protests is organized and co-sponsored by the following Boston-area organizations: Zoravik Activist Collective, Armenian General Benevolent Union Young Professionals - Boston, Armenian Assembly of America - Massachusetts, Armenian National Committee of Massachusetts, Armenian Youth Federation - Boston Njdeh Chapter.

Organizations and ASAs that would like to join or co-sponsor this effort, should email zoravik@gmail.com.

CALL USA TO ACTION ON ARTSAKH

PROTEST/VIGIL

EVERY THUR IN OCT, 2-6 PM
JFK FEDERAL BUILDING, BOSTON

Arts & Culture

Elizabete Taivane

About the Big Armenian Family and Nerses Shnorhali

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Elizabete Taivane is a Latvian expert in the field of religious studies, specifically Buddhism. She is an associate professor at the University of Latvia in Riga, where she has been teaching since 1996, and is the author of several articles and books on religion. Since 2021 she has been visiting Armenia, the country of her maternal grandfather, on a regular basis.

I met her through a mutual friend, and the following conversation ensued. After greetings in Armenian, we switched to Russian, although our correspondence continues in English.



Elisabete, I always wonder what circumstances lead to someone's exploration of their unknown side. How was it for you?

My story began in Moscow, where I was born and lived for 19 years. But from a young age I missed Latvia, where my father came from and where our relatives on his side lived. We traveled there quite often, usually in the summer. I always felt a connection with Latvia, even though my dad did not teach me Latvian. In my teenage years, when my personality was forming, I started to learn the language on my own. Thanks to moving to Latvia shortly before country's independence and enrolling in the University of Latvia, I managed to complete my Latvian in a short period of time. So, my first identity was Latvian, which I loved with all my heart. Looking back, I can say that at that time in my youth I did not realize that my inner constitution was Armenian, not Latvian at all. At the same time, I had practically nothing to do with Armenia. I only knew that my grandfather Hmayak Arakelyan, a well-known photo correspondent in Rostov-on-Don in the 1950-60s, was a pure-blooded Armenian and a native of the small village of Por, which is located near Vaik in Armenia. Unfortunately, my beloved grandfather died before I was born, but I know him well from letters to my mother, which she carefully keeps until now.

But did you have any Armenian traditions in your family?

see TAIIVANE, page 14



Members of Zulal

Zulal Trio's Gentle Sounds Make a Big Impact

BOSTON — The angelic voices of three singers —Teni Apelian, Anaïs Alexandra Tekerian and Yeraz Markarian — form Zulal, the award-winning a cappella group.

Zulal, which means “clear water,” has one foot in the now and another in Armenia's historic folk melodies. While the songs they sing mark the trials and joys of old Armenian village life, they do so in esteemed venues as the Getty Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the Berklee College of Music, and the Kennedy Center.

In addition, Zulal has four critically acclaimed albums to its credit, the most recent “By the Shepherd's Clock.” The album got a rave review from Recorded A Cappella Review Board. The liner notes include the histories of the songs and how the melodies were saved in Western Armenia.

Apelian's love for Armenian folk music has guided her musical explorations. Her love for the a cappella genre began at Carnegie Mellon where she sang in the school's Jazz Choir and earned a master's degree in arts management. A trip to Armenia in 2000 eventually led her to the members of Zulal. In addition to arranging, recording and performing with Zulal, she enjoys teaching Armenian folk music in the classroom setting. Zulal has brought life and breath to her foremost passion and she considers herself lucky to share the creative process with two friends who are now truly sisters.

Tekerian, originally from San Francisco, discovered her joy of folk when she was a member and then director of the Yale Slavic chorus. A singer and writer now living in New York, she has created and performed several theater works for the stage, and has published essays and original songs. She also enjoys teaching piano. Celebrating her Armenian heritage through song with Zulal is a constant source of joy and inspiration.

Markarian was first introduced to a cappella at Barnard College at Columbia University where she began singing as a “bass.” A native New Yorker, she has a background in marketing and a PhD in clinical psychology. Her passion for Armenian folk music began at an early age, when she performed with the Hamazkayin's Armenian Children's Choir of New York at Lincoln Center at the age of 6. She is proud to take part in discovering, arranging and protecting Armenian folk music, and is overjoyed that what began as an innocent conversation among friends has led to the creation and sisterhood that is Zulal.

The trio responded to questions posed to them, as they sing — blended as one voice.

When/how did the group form officially? In what groups did you sing before? Or were you a soloist?

Armenians have a saying that your destiny is your *jagadakeer*, the writing on your forehead. We think that there is a bit of fate at play in how Zulal came to be. Teni met a friend from Armenia by chance on a street in Manhattan and that encounter led her to Anaïs. Yeraz heard Anaïs performing a cappella one night in New York and they talked afterwards about singing Armenian music together and decided to contact Teni. We had no idea our voices would fit the way they did, and we started the process of arranging and singing with no big plans in mind. We found each other and then really started to delve into Armenian folk music together. We met in a studio apt on Riverside Drive in NYC one night and arranged *Bingyol* as our first song, realizing we had stumbled upon something new that simply felt good. That feel-good feeling was echoed back to us by our very first listeners. That was back in the autumn of 2002 — and our trio has remained and evolved together since.

see ZULAL, page 16

Ecclesiastic Dictionary Published

By Dr. Prof. Angèle Nalbandian

A new publication was introduced to the Armenian people by Archpriest Reverend Father Zenob Nalbandian: *Ecclesiastic Dictionary: French-Armenian-English*, comprised of 1225 pages.

The dictionary is religious, liturgical, and theological. It will be extremely helpful for members of the clergy, intellectuals, seminarians and university students. Many lay people will probably find the book interesting, as well.

The author of this voluminous dictionary has launched on this important project since his student years at the Seminary of Holy Etchmiadzin in Armenia (1965-1969), when he was showing keen interest in French culture. In the following years, he assiduously worked on it despite all obstacles. The author has, undoubtedly, navigated through French literature competently.

The Reverend Father has used all the various sources at his disposal for gathering the necessary words. The lack of Armenian ecclesiastic dictionaries in our reality has made his job quite hard! As a guidance for his ecclesiastic dictionary the author has used French lexicologist



Émile Maximilien Paul Littré's *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française*, as well as religious dictionaries like *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, *Dictionnaire de la Foi Chrétienne*, and also famous armenologist Néandre or Norayr de Byzance's *French-Armenian Dictionary*, and other numerous large or small works.

The root, the borrowed word and the English translation are given in front of almost every word. In some instances, Russian words also are mentioned. The dictionary is full of examples taken mainly from the Bible and sacred books. It has been particularly enriched with explanatory remarks. Thus, the history of the word has been given where ample information is provided about the word from the point of view of the ritual and faith-related matters of the Armenian Church.

The dictionary is not limited only see DICTIONARY, page 15

ARTS & CULTURE

Elizabete Taivane: About the Big Armenian Family and Nerses Shnorhali

TAIVANE, from page 13

If only in the kitchen. My mom cooks *tolma* and *gata*, which she calls *kiata* (Vaik dialect). She remembers a little Armenian, some phrases, she told me about my grandfather who loved her and her sister fondly, but that's about it. My mother was not interested in her Armenian relatives, living in Russia and being surrounded by numerous relatives from her mother's Polish-Ukrainian side. When I was already a student at the Theological Faculty of the University of Latvia, one day I got an Armenian greeting card in my hand. The Armenian script aroused an interest and some emotional attachment in me. I approached my father, Leon Gabriel Taivans, Professor at the University of Latvia, and told him I would like to learn Armenian. My father found the Armenian Sunday school in Riga. There I was equipped with primers and some books in Armenian, which allowed me to start learning Armenian on my own. I met Valda Salmiņa, Latvia's only Armenian translator, and that was a great asset. I developed a warm friendship with Gohar Aslanyan, who studied at the University of Latvia and now translates literature from Latvian into Armenian, as well as her colleague Naira Khachatryan. I had big plans to write a doctoral thesis on Armenian theology, but things did not work out with my supervisor, and I had to reorient myself to comparative religion. No doubt it was an excellent choice for my career, but doctoral studies, delving into the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, intensive teaching at several universities, and the birth of my children Anush and Dominik separated me from Armenia for years.

Yet, your interest in Armenian issues never faded.

My encounters with Armenian topics were very sporadic until 2020. At one of the conferences on Armenia at the University of Latvia about 15 years ago, I met my dear friend Irina from Yerevan, who has been living in Riga for many years. She

supported me in the Armenian way in an extremely difficult moment of my life. Finally, four years ago, when my youngest child turned four years old, we ventured to Georgia, which completely captivated my heart. Literally a week after arriving from Tbilisi to Riga, we purchased tickets to Armenia, but we were not destined to go there in 2021 due to the covid-19 pandemic. The desire to see Armenia became an obsession. I went back to studying the Armenian language on my own. For an Armenian environment, I have not done very well in these three and a half years, but I can already read the Bible in Armenian and read simple texts. I practice oral Armenian only here in Armenia, and it's only two or three weeks a year. That is not enough, but I am happy. In these last two weeks that I have been in Armenia, I have started to understand spoken Armenian much better. I always have a notebook with me, and when I wake up in the morning, in the bus and between lectures, I repeat the Armenian words written down in it.

How was your first trip to Armenia?

I should start with the fact that first I searched for my Armenian relatives and my grandfather's grave in Rostov-on-Don, and then I had a plan to visit Armenia. I had no clue; all ties with my relatives were lost. Miraculously, among my old papers and notebooks I found my grandmother's letter to us from 2000, mentioning the surname Davtyan and the address in Rostov on the envelope. At that address I found our relatives in Rostov. Unfortunately, assimilation had done its work; they do not speak Armenian. It turned out that all these years they had been taking care of my Armenian grandfather's grave. Through them I managed to install a decent monument on my grandfather's grave, writing his name on it in Armenian. All this happened a year before our first trip to Armenia in 2021. We traveled around Armenia from the north to the south, visited almost all the famous places, and since I had dreamed of going where my grandfather was from,

we went to the village of Por. There we spent three hours at the home of the chairman of the village, Mesrop, with whom we later became very good friends. He tried to call someone and eventually found my relatives. It was already evening when two men from Vaik arrived. In one of them I instantly recognized my own blood, and I was not mistaken. Then my relative Harutyun from Yerevan arrived. We carefully checked the genealogy and talked a lot. He took us to Yerevan, where the whole family was waiting for us at the apartment at a late hour: his brothers and sisters with their children. We had never experienced such hospitality. My husband was absolutely amazed by this reception. And this is exactly what I have been missing since I was a child. I always told my mom that I wanted to have a big Armenian family. And now I have a big Armenian family. I love Latvia, but because of the emotional restraint of Latvians, I have always felt the lack of warmth of heart on their part. Latvia's extremely secular European spirit also gets in the way. Here in Armenia, I finally feel happy. I love my relative Harutyun, whose family welcomes us so warmly every time we are here, with all my heart like a brother. I must say that my children have also become very attached to their Armenian relatives. My youngest, Dominik, cries when he leaves Yerevan.

Isn't it strange for your husband that you aspire to visit Armenia?

My husband Ramunas, a pure-blooded Lithuanian, a native of Lithuania, lives outside his homeland, which he misses very much, so he understands more than anyone else my aspirations to visit my grandfather's homeland again. It was with his active support that our first expedition was possible, not only in the abstract Armenia, but also to the village of Por. Ramunas has even learned a little Armenian, repeating words after me, and here in Armenia he actively uses these words. We both try to speak Armenian here as much as we can.

And now you, as a specialist of religions, knowing Armenian to some extent, will be able to deal with Armenian topics as well.

I read different courses on religion and Eastern art, and I also deal with issues of modern European religiosity. In Armenia, after seeing ancient temples and chapels, I became fascinated with the topic of folk religiosity in Armenia. This spring I was fortunate to meet Bishop Vardan Navasardyan, the Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church diocese in the Baltic States. By the way, he is not only an excellent organizer, but also a man with a very big heart. Surprisingly, he finds a common language with everyone, he finds a key to every heart. He talks about theology with world famous Armenologists, and he plays backgammon with ordinary parishioners in the courtyard of the Armenian Church in Riga. That is why Bishop Vardan is always surrounded by people. This fall, together with the Faculty of Theology of the University of Latvia, he will organize an international conference dedicated to the 850th anniversary of the death of Nerses Shnorhali. This is the first event that will be financed by the recently established Armenian Studies Foundation under the auspices of the University of Latvia. We have invited very solid Armenologists from Europe, America and Armenia; the second part will feature participants from Latvia. I am also going to read a paper; it will be on

the Christology of Nerses Shnorhali. His work "Jesus the Son" is of special interest from the point of view of comparative religion.

What is your main thesis and your vision of the situation?

Shnorhali's doctrine of Christ is rather progressive and useful for modern Armenian theology. Shnorhali worked at the crossroads of two cultures, East and West. If we analyze Christology phenomenologically, in the popular consciousness of the Christian East the Savior is perceived more as God, and in the West as a man. It is common knowledge that the two natures, i.e., the divine nature and the human one, were united in Christ, nevertheless at the level of popular mentality the violation of proportions takes place. In Armenia, due to the Eastern perception of Christ and other circumstances (Muslim persecutions, bans on icons), it was not customary to depict Christ. The idea of Christ is mainly connected with cross-stones. Their curious and very rich symbolism, however, seems to have overshadowed the image of the Crucified One himself. Jesus can be seen only on cross-stones called Amenaprkich (All Savior) that are extremely rare in Armenia. It was this visual absence of the image of Christ, imposed on the Eastern idea of him as God, that caused the Savior to become a distant God in the people's consciousness. In Aram Ganalyan's "Legends of Armenia" there are several legends about Christ, which testify to the fact that in the Armenian popular consciousness Christ more often has the features of a righteous judge. Sometimes he appears as a God of mercy, but the deficiency of the charitable aspect in the folk Christology is obvious. Modern Armenians transfer this most merciful aspect to the Saints (Sourbs). It is the saints, not the distant Christ, who come into direct contact with people. They appear to them in dreams, help and guide them. This explains the large number of chapels (matours) dedicated to different saints in Armenia. In this way, ordinary people communicate with the sacred realm without the mediation of clergymen, as if directly.

Shnorhali, in turn, offers a unique Christological approach: it is both Eastern and Western. His Savior is both the Almighty (Omnipotent), i.e., the Creator of heaven and earth, and a humble shepherd suffering on the cross as an ordinary man. In Shnorhali's interpretation, Christ is one of us, He is close to every human being. A return to the distinctly human image of Christ and the good news of the Gospel is necessary for modern Armenians, who are literally mired in the animistic cults of the *Sourbs* (saints). And note that the mentioned deficiency in the image of the merciful Christ manifests in the Western iconography as the heart of Jesus, which you can see in every single altar. Therefore, Nerses Shnorhali should be adopted by local theologians for the purpose of revitalizing Church Christianity in Armenia.

Everything you have said is thought-provoking. Do you intend to continue Armenian studies?

Since we have an Armenian Studies Foundation at our university, which will be able to finance the publication of books, I think that with the Armenologist Valda Salmiņa we will make a couple of publications on Armenian topics. First, I would like to write something about the cult of *Sourbs*, and then we will see. Armenia is a bottomless storehouse for religious studies.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Two of a Kind's Baklava Pull-Apart Bread

“If you appreciate sweets, you’ll love this baklava pull-apart bread, featuring a sweet yeast dough, spiced nut filling, and a sticky honey syrup,” says Allison Hau, the public relations professional, home cook, baker and food blogger at Two of a Kind. “But be warned: It’s dangerously addictive, just like the iconic Middle Eastern dessert from which this bread was inspired. Baklava pull-apart bread requires some patience, but the process is straightforward. First, make the dough. While it’s rising, prepare the filling and finish. Next, roll out, slice, stack and arrange the components in a pan. Once the loaf doubles in size, pop it in the oven.”

“This baklava pull-apart bread is best eaten warm with coffee, tea or vanilla ice cream. If you happen to have leftovers, revive them in the microwave,” she adds. Recipe adapted from Sprinkle Bakes.

INGREDIENTS:

Dough:
1/3 cup almond milk
3 tablespoons water
2 1/4 teaspoons active dry yeast

1/4 cup sugar, divided
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
3 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 eggs

Filling:

1/2 cup sugar
1 1/4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/2 cup pistachios
1/2 cup walnuts
1/4 cup almonds
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1/4 teaspoon sea salt
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

Honey syrup:

1/3 cup honey
1/3 cup water
Pinch of salt

PREPARATION:

Make the dough:

In a large bowl, heat the milk and water until warm — about 30 seconds in the microwave should do. Add the yeast and 1 tablespoon sugar. Whisk together until thoroughly combined and let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes.

Add the remaining sugar and the rest of the dough ingredients (butter through eggs) to the milk mixture, stirring everything until it comes together to form a shaggy ball. Then knead the dough by hand (or with a dough hook attachment) until it’s smooth and elastic — this will take about 10 minutes (or less if using a stand mixer). Shape dough into a ball and place in a lightly oiled bowl, cover and let it rise until doubled in size, for 1-2 hours.

Make the filling:

While the dough rises, combine the sugar and cinnamon in a small bowl. Set aside.

Combine the pistachios, walnuts, almonds, lemon zest and salt in a food processor. Pulse until finely ground. Add the vanilla extract and pulse a few times until well combined.

Make the honey syrup:

In a small sauce pan, combine the syrup ingredients. Bring to a boil. Then reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has reduced by half, for 5-10 minutes.

Shape and bake the loaf:

Lightly grease a 9-inch round springform pan.

After the dough has risen, turn it out onto a lightly floured work surface. Roll out dough to a 24”x12” long rectangle.

Spread the butter over the dough in an even layer. Sprinkle the sugar mixture over the butter. Sprinkle the nut mixture over the sugar mixture.

Using a sharp knife or bench scraper, cut dough crosswise into 12 equal-sized strips. Stack four strips on top of one another and cut each stack into five equal-sized pieces.

Layer the dough stacks, cut sides up, in the pan. It’s alright if some stacks stick up higher than others. If the dough doesn’t fill the space, remove one or two stacks, cut them in half and nestle them back in the pan.

Cover loaf with a clean kitchen towel and let rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour. About 15 minutes before the dough has finished rising, preheat the oven to 350°F.

Bake for 30-40 minutes until golden brown. Remove pan from the oven and drizzle syrup over the loaf.

Let the loaf cool for 30 minutes and then remove ring and transfer to a wire rack. Serve warm.

For this recipe, see: <http://www.twoofakindcooks.com/baklava-pull-apart-bread/>

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Ecclesiastic Dictionary Published

DICTIONARY, from page 13 to Christian religion words, but it also includes words from many different religions, so that readers might broaden their horizon and enrich their vocabulary.

The dictionary has old forms of words which were full of life in the past, but at the present time, they have become obsolete. These kinds of words and expressions have been

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The author’s wife, Yeretsgin Hasmig Nalbandian has brought her invaluable contribution towards the enrichment

and completion of the dictionary by her constant wise suggestions, moral support, and advice.

I, daughter of Fr. Zenob, have done the editing of the entire dictionary with great pleasure and pride.

It is needless to say that we appreciate Fr. Zenob’s tremendous input in the Armenian lexicography. His ability and proficiency in French language is highly admirable and commendable.

Limited copies are available. Write to: zenobn@yahoo.com.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

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

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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 .

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 21 — Saturday from Noon to 7 pm **FAC FallFest 2023.** Join us @ First Armenian Church, 380 Concord Avenue, Belmont. Delicious Kebab

Dinners: Lamb, Beef, Chicken and Losh. Combo Platters and Vegetarian Dinners Available. All dinners served with Salad, Pilaf and Pita Bread. Armenian Desserts, Cookies and Choreg. Pre-order and Take-out on-line at <https://www.facbelmont.org/fallfest>. For more information contact (617) 484-4779 or office@facbelmont.org

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

OCTOBER 27-28 — 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, Eric Hacopian from CivilNet and filmmaker Carla Garapedian, 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. See the full-page ad about the events in this issue.

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.

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

NEW JERSEY

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

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.

Zulal Trio's Gentle Sounds Make a Big Impact

ZULAL, from page 13

All three of us had backgrounds in singing and performing a cappella music. Yeraz sang bass at Barnard College's pop a cappella group, Teni sang in an a cappella Jazz Choir throughout her time at Carnegie Mellon and Anaïs directed the Slavic chorus at Yale University. The arrangements we weave together as Zulal are informed by the harmonics inherent in Armenian folk music as well as all of our musical leanings since college, which was quite some time ago!

How do you come up with the intricate, velvety harmonies?

Armenian folk music is full of odd time signatures and melismatic singing so it does demand some precision, for which our backgrounds in Balkan, jazz and rock have been helpful. Armenian folk resides in a curious place between Eastern and Western traditions, and we therefore explore it through the prism of both. And while vocal training provides control and flexibility, this music calls for more than that. It is soulful, like most music that has survived for hundreds of years, and one must access something deeper than skill in order to do it justice. We each separately studied singing in the a cappella style in college and had a love for the sound of harmony and voices blending without instruments. We collaborate with instrumentalists and love singing with other musicians too, but felt that our venture together at the start was meant to honor the sound of voices.

How often do you tour?

We remember our last performance before the lock down at the National Cathedral in DC and how drastically performers around

the world were affected by what unfolded afterwards. We have been very fortunate to have a wonderful performing career as a trio over the last twenty years. The lockdown was devastating on so many fronts. In addition to the inability to share live music, we also found it hard to rehearse digitally. So much of the arrangement process also taps into the energetic fields between us and it simply doesn't translate to digital platforms.

Why do these songs mean so much?

Armenian folk music is based on a connection to nature, to the cycles of the seasons, the quiet inner wisdom that ties us to our ancient roots, simultaneously universal and at the same moment so intrinsically tied to our sense of identity. Although we are all quite different — we all share a reverence for this genre and its meaning. It is what binds us still. The mother's call for a blessing as she rocks her child to sleep is a call that is shared among mothers around the world and at the same time it is singular to our small tribe. As we three grew together and deepened our exploration of the folk genre, we came upon more and more music that related to women: women's work, lullabies, flirtations, women's rituals, laments of a girl married too young, songs about marriage and wishing for the right match, songs of spinning wool and gossip, songs that appeal to the female goddesses of rain. As we worked and arranged we found such synergy in exploring themes of the hearth and nature, the female voice and sisterhood.

Our earlier repertoire consisted of more familiar songs but as our interest and access developed we came upon melodies

that had been notated but not necessarily entered into the mainstream consciousness of the Armenian canon. Most Armenian music lovers adore a popular set of songs, often credited to Komitas or Altounian. We have enjoyed finding and building upon worthy harmonies that haven't necessarily been heard by Western Armenians.

Where do you find the songs?

We have spent two decades researching Armenian folk music. Most often, we find our favorite gems in songbooks, archival recordings, through Houshamadyan, or the website Tsaynatran. We have loved studying the work of musical archivists Hayrik Muradian, Komitas Vartabed and the work of ethnomusicologist Bedros Alahadoian. Then of course there are all the artists we grew up listening to, like Haig Yazdjian from Greece, the Shoghaken Ensemble from Armenia, Parik Nazarian transplanted from Beirut, Kotchnak from Paris and Knar from Istanbul, to name just a few.

Do you think by singing these folk songs, you are preserving the cultural heritage of Armenians?

From our inception we realized that the music of our ancestors is not only a treasure trove for its incredible beauty, but also for the amount of information and history it contains in its lyrics and melodies. We made the decision as a group to concentrate on the folk music that is our heritage to honor those who came before us, but also to be part of the preservation of this invaluable wealth for future generations. Especially in a world that seems to want to erase so much of different cultures' uniqueness, it is the artist's duty to

uphold the beauty that is her inheritance.

Do you have songs from Artsakh in your repertory?

We do not have any songs that originate directly from Artsakh, but we do have songs that reference people from Artsakh, i.e., Karabaghtsis, like the song *Zoulo*, on our newest album, that features Yeraz's aunt Berjoohi Yessaian which was passed down to us through oral tradition. The majority of our songs stem from what was Western Armenia. We have many songs from Moush, Sassoun, Van, Palu, and quite a few that are troubadour songs or attributed to Komitas. Now more than ever, we will extend our research efforts to protect folk songs from Artsakh.

What is next for you?

In addition to smaller performances and fundraisers we are excited to sing shows at NYC's DROM and UC Irvine in February. Then, as mentioned earlier, in May we join Carnegie Hall's Musical Explorers for a third time for a series of professional workshops and concerts. Our artistic collaborators this year will be in the genres of Blue Grass and Kenyan songs; in the past it was Hip Hop and Cumbia.

Musical Explorers is an inventive program in which Carnegie Hall partners with teachers at schools throughout New York City to provide young children with basic music skills, singing and listening skills, and exposure to a diverse range of cultures in their local communities. Zulal has been selected to be in this program and to teach Armenian folk music to a very large audience (8,000) of young children in New York City about the traditional music we hold so dear. We will also be teaching the children to dance the Tamzara!



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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Samantha Power Visits Armenia

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On September 25, the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development Samantha Power arrived in Armenia accompanied by US Department of State Acting Assistant Secretary for Europe and Eurasian Affairs Yuri Kim.

Power previously served in the Obama Administration as the 28th US Permanent Representative to the United Nations (2013-2017). Before that, Power served on the National Security Council staff as special assistant to the president and senior director for multilateral affairs and human rights. As for Armenians, Power became well known thanks to her book called *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, which analyzed US foreign policy – more specifically how it failed to respond in the face of the genocides of the 20th century, including the case of the Armenian Genocide. Despite the book and her extensive work in the area of human rights, the Obama Administration, which Power was part of, did not recognize the Armenian Genocide and hence, Power was seriously criticized for not strongly advocating for its official recognition. Years later, Power apologized, stating that she was “sorry that, during our time in office, we in the Obama administration did not recognize the Armenian Genocide.”

As part of the Biden administration, Power was sworn into office on May 3, 2021 as the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). As administrator, Power was much criticized for being not active concerning atrocities conducted by the Azerbaijani government against the population of Artsakh. Critics believed that during the 9-month-long blockade against Artsakh, Power as USAID Administrator did not take any concrete steps to support the people of Artsakh. Her only action was in the form of statements condemning the blockade.

Her visit to Armenia took place after the blockade, while more than 100,000 people of Artsakh were fleeing from their homes, after Azerbaijan attacked and occupied the remainder of Artsakh. During her visit Power met with the Armenian prime minister and personally delivered Joe Biden’s letter, which read “I have asked Samantha Power, a key member of my cabinet, to personally convey to you the strong support of the United States and my Administration for Armenia’s pursuit of a dignified and durable regional peace that maintains your sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and democracy. ...I assure you that the United States will continue to stand besides Armenia.”

This message was also reiterated a few times by Power herself.

During her visit, Power announced the provision of \$11.5 million in urgent humanitarian assistance (\$1 million through USAID and \$10.5 million through the State Department). When asked about sanctions against Azerbaijan, for example the suspension of the provision of assistance to Azerbaijan, Power dodged those questions, vaguely responding that the United States is yet looking into “what the appropriate response is” to Azerbaijani actions.

On September 27, Samantha Power traveled to Baku. The same day, Ruben Vardanyan, co-founder of Aurora Foundation, for which Power served as a member of its prize selection committee, was captured by the Azerbaijanis. However, this incident was also left without any response from Power.

During her trip Azerbaijan, Power was accompanied by Acting Assistant Secretary Kim, and US Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations Louis Bono. The three had a meeting with President Ilham Aliyev. During this visit Power also reiterated “the importance of respecting Armenia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

This statement that was reiterated many times at the highest level by the United States together with the events that unfolded can bring us to the conclusion that there has been some pressure brought to bear by the US on Azerbaijan and Turkey. The latter were strongly pushing for the so-called “Zangezur corridor” through Armenian territory, threatening the use of force in case Armenia resisted their plan. However, following the visit of Power, the aggressive rhetoric from both Azerbaijan and Turkey seems to have abated. For example, following the meeting between Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Nakhijevan, Aliyev did not talk much about the issue, just stating that “construction of the railway connecting Azerbaijan with Naxcivan [Nakhichevan] and Turkey is also progressing successfully.” There was no mention of Armenia or the term “Zangezur corridor.” Erdogan commented on the issue upon returning to Turkey, stating that “If Armenia does not pave the way for [the corridor]...It will pass through Iran.”

Thus, despite the fact that there have not been any sanctions so far against Azerbaijan for all its atrocities committed against the population of Artsakh, and there is no information on suspending US assistance to Azerbaijan, Power’s visit seems to have had an impact on the issue of the so-called “Zangezur corridor.” Aliyev and Erdogan, who were previously aggressively pushing for it, softened their statements right after Power’s visit, who reiterated many times the United States’ support of Armenia’s territorial integrity.

(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.)

Power Failure: Biden Official Turns Blind Eye to Genocide

By Michael Rubin

Samantha Power, famous for her Pulitzer Prize-winning book about how American administrations repeatedly fail in the face of genocide, has betrayed her moral brand once in government, as I have written several times before. Many government employees spend their entire careers without much, if any, authority to make policy or even significant decisions. Power has been an exception.

Winning the confidence of then-Sen. Barack Obama during his campaign, she served in a senior role on his National Security Council before becoming America’s ambassador to the United Nations during Obama’s second term. Now, she is the administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, a National Security Council post under President Joe Biden. More than almost any other official, her word could matter.

Alas, has ambition interceded. The Atrocities Prevention Board she headed during Obama’s first term became window-dressing as atrocities spun out of hand. She sat idle for five years as the Syrian civil war spun out of control and became the incubator for ethnic and sectarian cleansing on a scale never seen before in the Middle East. After the Islamic State overran Sinjar and northern Iraq, Power sat idle while Obama told his aides to stand down as he would

not make the mistakes of his predecessors and resort to military action.

He eventually changed his mind, but the damage was done, not only in terms of the Yazidi genocide but also in the ability of the Iran-backed militias to fill the vacuum unimpeded. Had Power resigned over any of these instances, not only might she have changed the policy conversation in a positive way, but her moral clarity would have helped make the case for her eventually to become secretary of state, a post she clearly craves.

The situation is worse under Biden, who may be the most genocide-friendly president in recent American history. He turns a blind eye to his climate envoy John Kerry’s gleeful subordination of Uyghur genocide in hopes of a transitory climate deal with Beijing. Power herself was ineffective as Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed pursued a genocidal campaign against the Tigray, and she was silent as Biden rehabilitated him.

While Power’s book examined Rwanda’s anti-Tutsi genocide in detail, Power was (and is), as USAID administrator, silent as Obama changed policy to withhold recognition of the genocide’s anti-Tutsi intent. Even now, she remains silent as the former genocidaires rearm in U.N. camps just across the Democratic Republic of the Congo border and prefers demands for policy concessions to historical truth.

Perhaps Power’s greatest hypocrisy, however, has been both her silence and cynicism with regard to Azerbaijan’s offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh’s Armenians, the region’s indigenous population. While Biden recognized the Armenian genocide, he balanced that by continuing military assistance to Azerbaijan. Power was silent as Azerbaijani dictator Ilham Aliyev broke every pledge he made and agreement he signed. Both the White House and State Department infused their statements with bothsidesism, drawing an equivalence between those ethnically cleansing and those being cleansed.

Power did not care. She declined to testify or allow any USAID official to testify in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing last month examining the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. This is why her visit to Armenia, replete with an entourage of photographers, in the wake of Azerbaijan’s conquest of Nagorno-Karabakh was particularly tone-deaf and engendered anger rather than appreciation.

On the day she traveled from Armenia to Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani officials captured Ruben Vardanyan, a former state minister in Nagorno-Karabakh’s now-defunct Republic of Artsakh. I had written about Vardanyan earlier this year to counter the calumny that he was a Kremlin puppet. Azerbaijani authorities will likely torture
see POWER, page 18

Armenians

By The Interested Observer

(NOTE: The identity of the author is known to the *Mirror-Spectator*)

We are a deeply traumatized nation. What is needed to overcome this condition is pride and no further humiliation.

We are paying a heavy price for the incompetence, lack of vision, lack of political culture, not to mention the corruption of the successive ruling classes of Armenia since 1991.

As most Armenians live outside Armenia, a major mistake of Armenia's political leadership was to exclude them in the development of our little, land-locked and largely underdeveloped country. Irrespective of whether some Armenians abroad are disengaged from what is happening, there is a wealth of individuals in the diaspora who are highly-skilled, globally minded and utterly invested. These people have been substantially underutilized by Armenia's public institutions, all the while few nations can claim such a diverse international network. Taking into consideration that under Soviet times, the country was cut off to a great extent from the outside world, other than the ruling class' hubris, nothing else explains this lack of integration.

Since 1991, we have done virtually everything wrong and the consequences are in front of us.

After the victory of the first war with Azerbaijan, there were basically two strategies to be applied

a) to negotiate from a position of strength, Artsakh versus conquered territories

or

b) to arm strongly.

Neither one of these options were pursued.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan had pursued a considerable growth path across the board: both economically and politically.

People familiar with geopolitics know well how extensive the presence of American, English, Israeli and Turkish secret services is in Baku. Not to mention that while Aliyev is authoritarian, he is also highly ingenious and pragmatic. He graduated with a PhD from the best international relations School (MGIMO) in Moscow. and is well versed in dealing with the Russians and.. the west.

Major powers have different priorities and if need be, they are indifferent to the fate of the small ones.. thus, when necessary, they will not hesitate to crush them.

The incumbent chief of MI6 (British secret service) is both fluent in Turkish and Turcophile, BP's (British Petroleum Company) investments in Azerbaijan are substantial and it is no secret that MI6 collaborates very closely with BP.

For the US, petroleum in Azerbaijan is important but even more important is its foreign policy against Russia. As a reminder, according to both the Rand Corporation (the Pentagon's thinktank) and Zbigniew Brzezinski (national security advisor of different US administrations) there were / are three major points to weaken Russia: Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

The last one failed as it was thwarted by the Russians after another 'Orange Revolution'. Ukraine is at war and on the contrary to western mainstream media narrative, Kiev is losing very badly.

In the case of Azerbaijan: both the west and the Russians are doing whatever necessary to keep this country on their side.

As for Israel, its presence in Azerbaijan is far-reaching, especially with its bases on the Iranian border and the presence of the Mossad (Israeli secret services) across the country. The sale of arms to Baku, including high caliber drones, amounts to billions of dollars while Tel Aviv buys 40 % of its petroleum needs from Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan has widespread influence in Washington through the use of multiple expensive public relations firms and its close ties to the pro-Israel lobby ensures that the public image of this – very – authoritarian regime is presented under a "neutral" angle to the international public.

Last but not least is Baku's extremely close relationship with Ankara, Turkey which has been a NATO member since 1952. The US military disposes of a very important air base in Incirli, near Adana and Turkey remains today a crucial US strategic ally.

It is by looking into all these considerations that we can understand the unfortunate destiny, and let's call it by its name, the ethnic cleansing of the people of Artsakh, against a background of general indifference.

Artsakh is gone and now what about Armenia? Armenia (and Armenians, especially in the US) should always keep in mind its geography, which is surrounded with hostile forces. Unless it is able to switch its position with Switzerland, in the midst of Europe, there are basically two countries which can help: Russia and Iran. If Armenia is to survive in its present environment, people in Yerevan and the diaspora should keep this in mind at all times.

We Just Saw What the World Is About to Become

By Georgi Derluguian

The history of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh was ended in the old manner of conflict resolution: siege, conquest, expulsion. After a 10-month blockade, Azerbaijan launched an attack on Sept. 19, claiming the enclave in a day and causing nearly the entire ethnic Armenian population to flee. Give war a chance, as the saying goes.

For Armenians, a classic relic ethnic minority whose Christianity and peculiar alphabet date to the epic struggles between the Romans and the Parthians, it was another genocide. For the Azerbaijanis, Turkic in language and historically Shia Muslim, a great triumph. Yet despite appearances, the conflict is not a Samuel Huntington-style clash of civilizations. Instead, in its emboldening of traditional regional powers like Turkey, scrambling for geopolitical spoils after the retreat of superpowers, it's a harbinger of the coming world disorder.

Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous region in the South Caucasus, is perennially contested. Ceded by Persia to Russia in the 19th century, it fell into dispute with the emergence of the Soviet Union, Armenia and Azerbaijan both claiming it. In 1921, Stalin attached the enclave to Azerbaijan, home to oil resources and a thriving intellectual culture. Yet the thin crust of Azeri modernist intelligentsia was eliminated in Stalin's purges of the 1930s and replaced by corrupt functionaries overseen by the formidable K.G.B. general Heydar Aliyev. (His son, Ilham Aliyev, is the dynastic president of Azerbaijan.)

In 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev's dreams of achieving a more rational, humane Soviet Union emboldened Armenian intellectuals to start a tremendous popular movement for uniting the Armenian-populated Nagorno-Karabakh with mainland Armenia. This seemed deceptively easy: transfer a province from one Soviet republic to another. But the Armenian demands ran into protests in Azerbaijan that almost immediately turned violent. Gorbachev looked impotent in the face of disasters he had provoked. From there to the end of the superpower, it took just three years.

In the chaotic aftermath of Soviet collapse, the Armenians undertook to defend Nagorno-Karabakh by force. Instead of poetic intellectuals, the wartime generation of Armenian leaders became militia commanders. They proved earthier and, soon, brazenly corrupt. Defending the country became their sole means of legitimacy, ruling out the concessions that peace would require. By 1994 the Armenians, mobilizing around the traumatic memories of genocide, succeeded in expelling scores of Azeris from the enclave. Last month, Azerbaijan got more than even.

In that project, it had a powerful backer: Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a master of vertiginous visions, has already tried Islamic liberalism, joining Europe, leading the Arab revolts, challenging Israel and negotiating peace in Ukraine. He now has another dream: opening a geopolitical corridor from Europe through Central Asia, all the way to China. This is the "Zangezur corridor," a 25-mile-long strip of land to be carved through Armenia as part of a peace deal imposed at gunpoint.

Iran is not happy with Azerbaijan's victory. As openly as the Iranians ever do, they've threatened to use force against any changes to the borders of Armenia. Iran, a millenniums-old civilization central to a whole continent, cannot tolerate being walled off behind a chain of Turkish dependencies. India, sim-

ilarly, is on Armenia's side and has been sending a regular supply of weapons. One spur for such support, no doubt, is Pakistan's joining the Azeri-Turkish alliance. In the jargon of American lawyers, this opens a whole new can of worms.

Then there's Russia, whose absence from the denouement in Nagorno-Karabakh was striking. Even after the 1990s, Moscow still remained by far the biggest supplier of weapons to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Their economies and societies, above all the elites and their corruption networks, were until very recently molded together. What we are seeing now, as both nations slip out of Russia's orbit, might be the second round of Soviet collapse.

Once again, Armenia started the shift. In spring 2018 a tremendously hopeful uprising, reminiscent of 1989 in Central Europe, forced the post-communist elites to surrender power. Vladimir Putin was visibly displeased to meet Nikol Pashinyan, the anticorruption journalist and street rebel elected Armenia's premier by an overwhelming majority. Mr. Pashinyan admittedly had neither political team nor experience; he is learning statesmanship on the job, often at great expense to his nation. Yet he managed to significantly reduce corruption, helping to unlock the legendary entrepreneurship of Armenians. Amid all the grim news, the Armenian economy, led by the I.T. sector, is registering impressive growth.

All that, to Moscow, is punishable. When in September 2020 Azerbaijan launched a massive offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh lasting 44 terrible days, Russia effectively allowed Azerbaijan and Turkey to nearly destroy its Armenian ally, under the pretext that Karabakh was outside the mutual defense treaty. At the cusp of Azeri victory, however, Mr. Putin personally brokered a cease-fire and ordered a crack force of his peacekeepers into the enclave.

That brought nearly all the perimeter of the former Soviet Union into Russia's sphere of influence. Rebelious Belarus, its dictator dependent on Russian support, was in hand; so too the war-torn Caucasus. The large and oil-rich Kazakhstan itself requested Russian peacekeepers during a bewildering bout of street violence in January 2022. Strangely, the elite Russian troops soon departed from Kazakhstan. A month later, the whole world realized that they had been dispatched to Ukraine, the last sizable piece of Mr. Putin's post-Soviet gambit. And there his plan broke down.

History has a habit of serving the same lessons with changed variables. In 1988, it was the dreamer Gorbachev stumbling over Nagorno-Karabakh that unwittingly shattered the world order. Today, Mr. Putin could become the second, much darker incarnation of the Kremlin aggrandizer going awry on all fronts. The consequences — from emboldening international aggression to reanimating the West under the banner of NATO — will be profound. As events in Nagorno-Karabakh show, the fragile post-Cold War order is giving way to something else entirely.

The Caucasus might seem strange and distant. Yet it might prove the wedge that turns the fortunes of world order. Trieste, Smyrna, Sarajevo, Danzig and Crimea were all such places. Let us not have to relearn history at the cost of yet another ethnic cleansing.

(Georgi Derluguian is a sociologist at New York University Abu Dhabi and the author of *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*. This commentary originally was published in the *New York Times* on October 9.)

Power Failure: Biden Official Turns Blind Eye to Genocide

POWER, from page 17

Vardanyan and seek to humiliate him — no matter that he committed no crime against Azerbaijan other than advocating Nagorno-Karabakh's self-determination.

Here is where Power's cynicism comes front and center. After leaving the Obama administration, she joined the prize selection committee for the Aurora Foundation, founded by Vardanyan and Nubar Afeyan with former Brown University President

Vartan Gregorian to reward people working against genocide.

The question now, with Vardanyan in chains, is this: Will Power find her voice? Or will her ambition win out?

(Michael Rubin (@mrubin1971) is a contributor to the *Washington Examiner's* Beltway Confidential blog. He is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. This commentary was originally published on October 2.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

After the Loss of Artsakh, Pashinyan Should Declare 2020 Agreement Null & Void

On Nov. 10, 2020, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of Russia Vladimir Putin signed a ceasefire agreement in the Artsakh War.

Ceasefires usually signify that the warring sides stop the fighting wherever they had reached until then. Oddly, in the case of the 2020 ceasefire agreement, Armenia surrendered to Azerbaijan large swaths of land where no Azeri soldier had set foot on, such as the Aghdam, Kelbajar and Lachin districts, but not the Corridor.

Therefore, the 2020 agreement was more of a capitulation than a ceasefire for Armenia. Here are the resulting problems:

1) Prime Minister Pashinyan had no reason to sign a ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan since the war was between Azerbaijan and Artsakh, not Armenia. Neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan had declared war against each other.

2) Pashinyan had no authorization to turn over to Azerbaijan territories that belonged to Artsakh, not Armenia.

3) The 2020 agreement set deadlines for Armenia, but not for Azerbaijan, to carry out various obligations, such as the evacuation of territories and exchange of prisoners of war. Unwisely, the Armenian government handed over all the Azeri prisoners right away, while Azerbaijan released only a small number of Armenian prisoners. Three years later, dozens of Armenian prisoners are still languishing in Baku jails. Pashinyan is not only making no efforts to return these prisoners but does not even talk about them.

4) Under the 2020 agreement, the Lachin Corridor — the only road that connected Artsakh to Armenia — was forcefully and illegally taken over by Azerbaijan on Dec. 12, 2022, even though Russian Peacekeepers were supposed to control it.

5) The 2020 agreement mandated that “all economic and transport connections in the region shall be unblocked.” This means that both Armenia and Azerbaijan would be able to cross each other’s territories. Pashinyan expressed his readiness to allow Azeris to travel through Armenia from the eastern part of Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan, but never mentioned that such access was to be reciprocal. Contrary to the 2020 agreement, Azerbaijan demanded not just a passage, but a ‘corridor’ which means that the road through Armenia would belong to Azerbaijan. President Aliyev never once mentioned that he will in turn allow Armenians to cross Azerbaijan’s border. To make matters worse, Turkey has been falsely demanding that Armenia accept the “Zangezur Corri-

dor” before it would agree to open the Armenia-Turkey border.

6) Pashinyan has repeatedly talked about his plan to sign a peace treaty with Azerbaijan. There is no need to sign such a peace treaty since Armenia was not at war with Azerbaijan. Peace treaties are signed between warring parties. Azerbaijan was at war with Artsakh, not Armenia.

7) Contrary to the 2020 agreement, which mandated that Russian Peacekeepers would remain in Artsakh until 2025, Azerbaijan violated that provision by invading and occupying the remainder of Artsakh last month, forcing its 120,000 inhabitants to flee to Armenia.

8) Azerbaijan’s occupation of Artsakh in September 2023 made the role of the Russian Peacekeepers unnecessary, which means that the Russian soldiers would have to leave what is now Azeri territory.

9) While there are good reasons to blame Russia for its inaction in protecting Artsakh Armenians, there is an equally good reason to blame Pashinyan for conceding that Artsakh is part of Azerbaijan. It is clear that despite Russia’s alliance with Armenia, given its involvement in the Ukraine War, Pres. Putin has decided that Turkey (the only NATO member that has not sanctioned Russia) and its junior brother Azerbaijan are much more important to Russia’s national interests than Armenia or Artsakh. Meanwhile, the West has not been of much help to Armenia either, except for issuing supportive statements, but no action.

10) After the 2020 War, when Azerbaijan’s army entered and occupied the eastern territory of Armenia, Pashinyan not only makes no effort to dislodge the enemy from Armenia’s sovereign territory but does not even talk about Azerbaijan’s illegal presence there.

11) Pashinyan’s long list of mistakes includes acknowledging that the Soviet-era Azeri inhabited enclaves inside Armenia are part of Azerbaijan. There was no reason for Pashinyan to offer to Azerbaijan these enclaves, especially since Aliyev had made no such demands.

12) Pashinyan unilaterally recognized Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity without any reciprocal recognition by Aliyev.

Given Pashinyan’s mishandling of the above 12 critical issues, refusal to resign and turn over his seat to a competent leader, the only option left for him is to declare that the 2020 agreement is null and void since Azerbaijan has violated most of its provisions.

Pashinyan should refuse to sit at the negotiating table with Aliyev until he releases all Armenian prisoners of war and withdraws his troops from Armenia’s territory. Aliyev should first honor his previous commitments before Armenians can trust him to abide by future agreements.

Fortunately, the 2020 agreement can easily be discarded because it was not ratified by the Parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia as an international treaty. It was simply signed by Pashinyan without consulting anyone. The next leader of Armenia, on his first day in office, should nullify the 2020 agreement.

Form a Government In Exile of the Republic of Artsakh

By Hagop Avedikian

Last week, azg.am published an article titled “Create a Government in Exile of the Republic of Artsakh” as a proposal, admonition and a demand addressed first to the Artsakh Armenians who emigrated to the Republic of Armenia, and secondly to all Armenians, to encourage and support this initiative. Right away, I was pleased to find other articles with the same proposals on the Internet, which proves that this or similar initiatives can become public demands emerging from multiple voices. This is because the situation created after the “surrender” of Stepanakert and other territories of Artsakh, the difficult situation of more than 100 thousand Artsakh Armenians, the issues of the future protection of the rights of the latter, as well as already noticeable foreign and domestic sad circumstances, all remain unresolved, while it is necessary to find urgent and organized solutions for them.

The proposal, which is embodied in the title, is to endow the Artsakh Armenians with a higher representative body, preferably with the status of a government in exile, bearing in mind the compelling fact that such a body is necessary for international relations with states, the United Nations and its subsidiary structures, national and foreign organizations, press and more. It would, finally, protect the interests of the Artsakh Armenians and cooperate with the state bodies of Armenia, local organizations and individuals. The existence of such a representative body is also very necessary for diasporan Armenian organizations and individual philanthropists, whose 30-year efforts have been great in the reconstruction of Artsakh and in the creation of a school network and sub-structures. I am more than confident that proof already exists that

the diasporan Armenians are more than willing to provide political, public relations, and financial support to Artsakh Armenians and their/our cause.

I didn’t use the word lawsuit in vain. Right now, urgently, we have the most serious need to launch a judicial assault against President Ilham Aliyev and Azerbaijan, and against their accomplices. First of all, it must be in defense of the captured statesmen of the Republic of Artsakh, who will be subjected to torture and humiliation in Azerbaijani jails. They appear currently to be abandoned by the Armenian authorities, giving the president of Russia the opportunity to refer to the ill will of official Yerevan towards them and in this way to feel free in that sense not to recognize obligations, and not to take any steps.

Second and more fundamentally, we must file a lawsuit against Aliyev’s regime for not carrying out the double judgments of the International Court of La Hague,

“THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO THE CREATION OF A GOVERNMENT IN EXILE MAY POTENTIALLY BE THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA”

for keeping 120 thousand Artsakh residents under siege for 9 months, and then attacking the starving population with modern weapons and conducting a massacre.

Thirdly, there are numerous testimonies, also by the Azerbaijani media, about the atrocities, slaughters and other horrific acts committed against individual citizens of Artsakh. Only a body endowed with state powers can organize the hard work of gathering witnesses and testimonies, preparing proper court documents and presenting them to the court.

Fourth, it is no less important to prepare the documentation of state, public and personal properties, and immovable and movable belongings. Only the highest state body can undertake such a difficult duty.

And there is still other work to be done, equally and

more important, such as the settlement, food, health care and care of refugees, as well as providing them with work, receiving foreign and domestic donations, and work in the adjacent provinces.

The numerous mentioned and not yet mentioned works will require huge financial resources. Where will these funds come from? Are there any cents left in the state treasury of Artsakh? Have they not been spent on first necessities? And in general, with what means will the newly created structure function? This is a question which the rich Armenians in Armenia and the diaspora may be able to answer, at least in the initial period.

Probably, some will point to the state of Armenia, which recently received, under the condition of helping the Artsakh Armenians, the poor, pitiful amount of 11.5 million dollars from the United States, and will receive only 24 million euros from the European Union. How will it meet all the needs, which require the allocation of hundreds of millions?

In addition to this, the main obstacle to the creation of a government in exile may potentially be the current government of Armenia, which in the last 5 years has not allowed the existence of any organization outside of itself. A reasonable government would be the first to initiate the formation of such a body, which would be used as a true and natural claimant on international platforms.

Nevertheless, one should never retreat in the face of the abovementioned and many other obstacles. Like all governments, this government will end sooner or later.

Let’s not forget that the Republic of Artsakh had and will continue to have all the structures and symbols necessary for a state, as an unrecognized but de facto functioning government, like many other bodies around the world.

The Artsakh story is not finished. The ones who will keep that story going will be the Artsakh Armenians with their representative, although for now exiled, government, with the efforts of all Armenians.

(Hagop Avedikian is a founder and editor of the Yerevan-based newspaper Azg, which helped introduce Western-style journalism to Armenia. This article has been translated from the original Armenian.)



Israeli Arms Quietly Helped Azerbaijan Retake Nagorno-Karabakh, to the Dismay of Armenians

By Isabel Debre

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel has quietly helped fuel Azerbaijan's campaign to recapture Nagorno-Karabakh, supplying weapons to Azerbaijan ahead of its lightning offensive last month that brought the Armenian enclave back under its control.

Just weeks before Azerbaijan launched its 24-hour assault on Sept. 19, Azerbaijani military cargo planes repeatedly flew between a southern Israeli airbase and an airfield near Karabakh, according to flight tracking data and Armenian diplomats, even as Western governments were urging peace talks.

The flights rattled Armenian officials, long wary of the alliance between Israel and Azerbaijan, and shined a light on Israel's interests in the restive region.

"For us, it is a major concern that Israeli weapons have been firing at our people," Arman Akopian, Armenia's ambassador to Israel, told the Associated Press on October 5. In a flurry of diplomatic exchanges, Akopian said he expressed alarm to Israeli politicians and lawmakers in recent weeks

over Israeli weapons shipments.

"I don't see why Israel should not be in the position to express at least some concern about the fate of people being expelled from their homeland," he told AP.

Azerbaijan's September blitz involving heavy artillery, rocket launchers and drones — largely supplied by Israel and Turkey, according to experts — forced Armenian separatist authorities to lay down their weapons and sit down for talks on the future of the region.

The fighting prompted over 100,000 people — more than 80% of the enclave's ethnic Armenian residents — to flee in the last two weeks. Azerbaijan has pledged to respect the rights of ethnic Armenians.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has termed the exodus "a direct act of an ethnic cleansing." Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry strongly rejected the accusation, saying the departures are a "personal and individual decision and (have) nothing to do with forced relocation."

Israel's foreign and defense ministries declined to comment on the use of Israeli weapons in Nagorno-Karabakh or on Ar-

menian concerns about its military partnership with Azerbaijan. In July, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant visited Baku, the Azerbaijan capital, where he praised the countries' military cooperation and joint "fight against terrorism."

Israel has a big stake in Azerbaijan, which serves as a critical source of oil and is a staunch ally against Israel's archenemy Iran. It is also a lucrative customer of sophisticated arms.

"There's no doubt about our position in support of Azerbaijan's defense," said Arkady Mil-man, Israel's former ambassador to Azerbaijan and current senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv. "We have a strategic partnership to contain Iran."

Although once resource-poor Israel now has plenty of natural gas off its Mediterranean coast, Azerbaijan still supplies at least 40% of Israel's oil needs. Israel turned to Baku's offshore deposits in the late 1990s, creating an oil pipeline through the Turkish transport hub of Ceyhan that isolated Iran, which at the time capitalized on oil flowing through its

pipelines from Kazakhstan to world markets.

Azerbaijan has long been suspicious of Iran, its fellow Shiite Muslim neighbor on the Caspian Sea, and chafed at its support for Armenia. Iran has accused Azerbaijan of hosting a base for Israeli intelligence operations against it.

"It's clear to us that Israel has an interest in keeping a military presence in Azerbaijan, using its territory to observe Iran," Armenian diplomat Tigran Balayan said.

Few have benefited more from the two countries' close relations than Israeli military contractors. Experts estimate Israel supplied Azerbaijan with nearly 70% of its arsenal between 2016 and 2020 — giving Azerbaijan an edge against Armenia and boosting Israel's large defense industry.

"Israeli arms have played a very significant role in allowing the Azerbaijani army to reach its objectives," said Pieter Wezeman, senior researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which tracks arms sales.

Israeli long-range missiles and exploding drones have made up for Azerbaijan's small air force, Wezeman said, even at times striking deep within Armenia itself. Meanwhile, Israeli Barak-8 surface-to-air missiles have protected Azerbaijan's airspace in shooting down missiles and drones, he added.

Just ahead of last month's offensive, the Azerbaijani defense ministry announced the army conducted a missile test of Barak-8. Its developer, Israel Aerospace Industries, declined to comment.

But Azerbaijan has raved about the success of Israeli drones in slicing through the Armenian defenses and tipping the balance in the bloody six-week war in 2020.

Its defense minister in 2016 called a combat drone manufactured by Israel's Aeronautics Group "a nightmare for the Armenian army," which backed the region's separatists during Azerbaijan's conflict with Nagorno-Karabakh that year.

President Ilham Aliyev in 2021 was captured on camera smiling as he stroked the small Israeli suicide drone "Harop" during an arms showcase.

Israel has deployed similar suicide drones during deadly army raids against Palestinian militants in the occupied West Bank.

"We're glad for this cooperation, it was quite supportive and quite beneficial for defense," Azerbaijani's ambassador to Israel, Mukhtar Mammadov told the AP.

At a crucial moment in early September — as diplomats scrambled to avert an escalation — flight tracking data shows that Azerbaijani cargo planes began to stream into Ovda, a military base in southern Israel, known as the only airport in Israel that handles the export of explosives.

The AP identified at least six flights operated by Azerbaijan's Silk Way Airlines landing at Ovda airport between Sept. 1 and 17 from Baku, according to FlightRadar24.com. Azerbaijan launched its offensive two days later.

In March, an investigation by the *Haaretz* newspaper said it had counted 92 Azerbaijani military cargo flights to Ovda airport from 2016-2020. Sudden surges of flights coincided with upticks of fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, it found.

"During the 2020 war, we saw flights every other day and now, again, we see this intensity of flights leading up to the current conflict," said Akopian.

Israel's defense ministry declined to comment on the flights.

The decision to support an autocratic government against an ethnic and religious minority has fueled a debate in Israel about the country's permissive arms export policies. Of the top 10 arms manufacturers globally, only Israel and Russia lack legal restrictions on weapons exports based on human rights concerns.

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