



## Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra To Perform at Symphony Hall in Boston

BOSTON — The Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra will appear at Symphony Hall in Boston on Tuesday, November 21, at 8 p.m. as part of its North American tour.

The orchestra, under the direction of Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Eduard Topchjan, will pay tribute to composers Aram Khachaturian and Sergei Rachmaninoff to mark the respective 120th and 150th anniversaries of the births of these composers.

Selections from Khachaturian's *Spartacus* Ballet Suites and the magnificent *Symphony No. 2* by Rachmaninoff will open and end the evening's program. Distinguished Armenian-American pianist Sergei Babayan will join the orchestra in a performance of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 3*, one of the iconic and challenging pieces in the piano repertoire. Mr. Babayan, who will be making his Boston debut as soloist with an orchestra, has been described as an "unstoppably volca-

nic force" (*International Piano Magazine*) and a "magician of the piano sound" (*Die Rheinpfalz*). Babayan's much-anticipated appearance is sure to attract the city's music aficionados and piano enthusiasts.

As the concert is underwritten by generous donors and sponsoring organizations, funds from the sale of tickets — available only through the Symphony Hall Box Office — will support the humanitarian needs of the displaced people of Artsakh.

see PHILHARMONIC, page 4

## Blinken Warns Lawmakers Azerbaijan May Invade Armenia In Coming Weeks

WASHINGTON (Politico/Azatutyun) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned a small group of lawmakers last week that his department is tracking the possibility that Azerbaijan could soon invade Armenia, according to two people familiar with the conversation.

The call indicates the depth of concern in the administration about Azerbaijan's operations against a breakaway region in the west of the country and the possibility of the conflict spreading.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has previously called on Armenia to open a "corridor" along its southern border, linking mainland Azerbaijan to an exclave that borders Turkey and Iran. Aliyev has threatened to solve the issue "by force."

In an October 3 phone call, lawmakers pressed Blinken on possible measures against Aliyev in response to his country's invasion of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in September, the people said, who were granted anonymity to discuss the sensitive call.

see BLINKEN, page 5

## TCA Artsakh Refugees Aid Program Continues Helping Burn Victims

WATERTOWN — The Artsakh Refugees Aid Program launched by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) already has begun to help forcibly displaced Armenians from Artsakh and continues to raise funds for this purpose.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association has supported Armenia and Artsakh for decades through numerous projects. The Armenians of Artsakh persevered despite a nine-month blockade initiated last

see AID, page 4



At the Yerevan National Center for Burns and Dermatology



## Mirror-Spectator Panel Speaker Eric Hacopian Stars in Wildly Popular Yerevan Online News Show

By Aram Arkun  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

WATERTOWN — The media commentator traveling the longest way to participate in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* journalists' panel on Media Coverage of Armenia and Karabakh Today (October 27) at Tufts University is coming from Yerevan, but spent most of his life as a Democratic political consultant in California. Eric Hacopian has a weekly video show on Civilnet.am and cable television called "Insights with Eric Hacopian," which is viewed by as many as 80,000-100,000 people on a good week and translated from English to Armenian and Russian versions.

Hacopian moved to Armenia in 2017 with his wife and children, thinking he was going to retire. He had a successful career in California but, he said, "I was 50 years old and doing that for another 15 years didn't have any appeal." However, circumstances took over. His Californian clients did not want him to stop working for them and when Covid happened, this made distance working normal.

see HACOPIAN, page 2

### ARMENIA

Armenian Citizens Return From Israel on Special Flight

Page 5



### BOSTON

Sen. Edward Markey Expresses Solidarity With Boston Armenian Protesters

Page 7



### NEW YORK

Karagheusian Foundation Steps Up to Aid Artsakh Refugees

Page 10







## ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Pashinyan Discusses Refugee Assistance in Strasbourg

YEREVAN (Arka) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejcinovic-Buric on October 17 as part of his working visit to Strasbourg, the Armenian government press service reported.

It said Pashinyan and Marija Pejcinovic-Buric discussed the humanitarian situation resulting from the forced displacement of more than 100,000 Armenians from Karabakh due to Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing policy. They discussed also steps to be taken by the international community in solving the problems of the refugees.

The sides touched upon the developments in the region and the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. Later Pashinyan laid flowers at the Armenian cross-stone erected in front of the headquarters of the Council of Europe.

### Five Teens Injured in Explosion Transferred to U.S., Belgium

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Five teenagers injured in an explosion at a fuel depot in Nagorno-Karabakh on September 29 have been transferred to the United States and Belgium for treatment, the Armenian Health Ministry said on October 8.

The ministry said the latest transfers join at least 12 others who had been taken to France, Bulgaria and Italy.

Authorities in Karabakh said at least 170 people were killed and 290 injured in the explosion as they lined up for fuel to make the journey from Karabakh to Armenia amid a military offensive by Azerbaijani forces.

### 15,000 Children from Karabakh Receive Financial Aid

YEREVAN (Arka) — Some 15,000 children from Nagorno-Karabakh, who fled their homes with their parents after Azerbaijani military offensive on Sept. 19-20, and arrived in Armenia, have received one-time financial aid of 100,000 drams, Labor and Social Affairs Minister Narek Mkrtychyan said on October 17.

The aid is transferred to the bank cards of the mothers or legal representatives of the displaced minors.

"A special platform was launched where parents have to register their children. Some 27,300 children out of nearly 30,000 have already been registered," Mkrtychyan said at a press briefing.

He also reminded that the refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh will also be receiving monthly assistance each of 50 thousand drams (40,000 drams for paying rent and 10,000 drams for paying utility bill) for the next six months.

"From November this year, our compatriots from Nagorno-Karabakh who have their own housing in Armenia will receive 10,000 drams every month to compensate for utility expenses," the minister added.

# Mirror-Spectator Panel Speaker Eric Hacopian Stars in Wildly Popular Online Show

HACOPIAN, from page 1

Meanwhile, Salpi Ghazarian, cofounder and director of the Civilitas Foundation, which established CivilNet as its media program, knew Hacopian from California. She invited him to have a small media interview show. After the 2020 war, one of the producers suggested he should do his own solo show, Hacopian recalled, and when he did, the audience multiplied exponentially.

"So my retirement was not only not a retirement," he said, "but I ended up having two careers rather than one. One you do in the mornings and the other at night, that starts at 7 o'clock at night and goes until 2 or 3 in the morning."

### Politics in the U.S. of A.

"I'm a red diaper baby," Hacopian said. Born in Iran to a leftist family who moved to California, as a young man Hacopian first worked for a Ralph Nader acolyte, pursuing auto insurance reform as an organizer fundraising door-to-door for 2-3 years. He soon embarked on a career in politics. He said that was quite rare, as out of one thousand people only one makes it in this field, and he had no connections or rich family. He said wryly, "I succeeded by knowing nothing. If I had ever known the odds, I would never have gotten into it."

He had his own consulting firm since 1997, and some of his prominent non-Armenian clients include Congressmen Adam Schiff, Brad Sherman, Robert Garcia and Alan Lowenthal; Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, California State Senator Ben Allen, and former mayor of Los Angeles Antonio Villaraigosa.

Most of the Armenian Americans elected in California over the last 20 years were his clients too, both locally and regionally, but his involvement with Armenians took a tortuous path. He said, "When the opportunity came, when I was a kid, I sort of escaped Glendale, and I escaped that immigrant vortex. To me it was like a town of wide lawns and narrow minds. I moved out and never moved back. I was completely in non-Armenian circles."

He said, "Armenians were white everywhere except in the places I grew up. Every day, going to school, people would drive by and yell at you, 'F---g Armos'. Teachers would say things. There was a lot of racism against Armenians." There were fights all the time. Hacopian said, "I don't want to exaggerate it, but some of it actually just built character."

Busy organizing in politics, he did not meet another Armenian in that line of work for three years, and, he said, "I was not even interested in anything Armenian. Looking back at it, I have no idea where that came from. At some level, though I wouldn't say I am ashamed of it, I am not proud of it."

The second Armenian he met in politics was Paul Krekorian, who was an attorney and a volunteer, working on a campaign for Jackie Goldberg, the first LGBT person to get elected to the Los Angeles City Council. Years later Hacopian worked on his first campaign for office, which he lost, and the second campaign, which he won. Henceforth, Krekorian won all his races.

Hacopian then started to work on local campaigns in the Los Angeles area for Armenian candidates, which was a new phenomenon in the late 1990s, and came to know everyone involved. He got Raffi

Manoukian elected to Glendale City Council in 1999, while registering many new Armenian voters. Hacopian worked with various Armenian organizations and political parties at that time, but never became a member of any Armenian party (and has never worked in a professional capacity on any election in Armenia either).

### The Show and CivilNet

Aside from working on "Insights," Hacopian said that he does fundraising for CivilNet occasionally. Physically, he is only at CivilNet for two days a week at the most. "You see the topics of the week and where your political instincts kick in and your experience kicks in as to what is relevant with what is being discussed, the specifics of it."

He noted that sometimes there are topics that should be discussed but are not necessarily beneficial to the country so he does not engage in them. Essentially, he said that he does not target the shows to reach the maximum of 100,000 watchers. He is shooting to be watched by the people "who matter," who might in certain cases only be 50 people.

Initially, Hacopian said that he was writing a lot of articles, but he found that it is much better to say whatever you want to say in a video. He said that an article might be read by only 50 or 100 people, compared to the much greater viewership of the videos.

When asked why he thought his show was so popular, he said, "You can leave the United States, but you can't take the American out of you. The show is very American in style, while European and local media are boring as hell. No one ever says anything." On the other hand, the format of his show is much more aggressive and he often calls people out. In Armenia, he said, "They are not used to that kind of language or that kind of aggressiveness. Some of it really comes from the political world that I come from, where you don't have to be nice. You can beat people over the head without having any reservations...It is almost shocking for some of them."

Only 15-20 percent of viewership is in the United States, while there is a huge Russian-speaking Armenian audience, because of the great numbers of Russian-educated Armenians in Armenia. There is a much smaller group of Armenians in Russia, or Russians in Russia and Armenia, who are viewers.

Hacopian gets a lot of feedback about the show from different circles. He said, "Sometimes the feedback is that you become an outcast, and in many ways I am. I don't get invited to many embassy parties."

He said that CivilNet's overall role in Armenia is very important, since there are few credible Western-style media sources in the region. Instead, he said, CivilNet "becomes the go-to person in narrative telling, trying to shape the news. The fact that a good part of its programming is done in English puts a stamp on the country. Most media in Armenia is awful, straight-up awful." Many outlets are cut-and-paste services, he said, with "no questioning, no attacking, no investigation."

Moreover, domestically, he said, "it is a very important part of building a media culture, building a critical culture and one of responsibility, in the sense that if you are an elected official, you will be held responsible. What I have learned with

elected officials here is there is a little Stalinist in every Armenian and there is also an anarchist in every Armenian."

Most of CivilNet's money comes from diasporan Armenians, and some even from local Armenians. Hacopian said that only small amounts come from grants or Western sources. He said that some diasporan "anti-everythings" claim that CivilNet is Western-controlled because it took money from this or that thing. "What they are actually saying is that you are not oligarch-controlled, because in this part of the world, you are either raising money from every source that will give you some, whether it is local big Armenian donors or international donors, or you are going to become the plaything of some degenerate oligarch. So, which one do you want?"

He added, "The issue is does this money paint your coverage? I don't think it does. If you watch my show, I speak probably more critically of Western things than I do of others."

He admitted that some Western funders tried to pressure him or CivilNet on certain topics, but he exclaimed, "Who cares! You go to somebody else [for funding]. One thing about Armenia, unlike Georgia and others, there are plenty of Armenians you can go to for money." Moreover, he said that George Soros, who is "everyone's boogeyman," has spent only a few million dollars in Armenia, which is pocket change nowadays. He said, "This notion that giving \$10,000 to the Vanadzor Women's Center is something revolutionary...If people only knew how irrelevant he is."

More somberly, Hacopian worried that the media model that CivilNet was trying to spread in Armenia is dying all over the West. He said, "Every newspaper reporter I know [in the US], the good ones, are trying to leave and become PR people. There is no money in it and they are getting laid off. Media is disappearing." Therefore, he considered the possibility that this type of media would die in Armenia in a decade or so.

### Western Media on Armenia and Artsakh

When asked how he assessed US and world media coverage of recent events in Artsakh and Armenia, he replied, "For the most part, the media coverage of everything from September 2020 on has been horrendous. There is no other way to describe it...I think that in the first six, seven months of the blockade it was nonexistent. I was working on that, by the way, as a side activity, and then I think after the [Luis Moreno] Ocampo report, it sort of made a breakthrough, and then there was a lot of coverage."

He said that overall Armenians cannot blame the world media for not covering them. He declared that, "Seventy to eighty percent is our fault. We have never up until very recently done a successful job of telling our narrative in a way that matters to the world, at least the parts of the narrative that are sellable to the world, and we paid the price for it literally in blood and treasure in the last few years." He said that there are some better and organized efforts now.

On the other hand, he said, "I think that there are some media sources which have distinctive biases against Armenians and Armenia in general, for reasons that are sometimes comprehensible and sometimes instinctive in nature. We are too white for the left and too dark for the right."

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## ARMENIA

# Pashinyan Addresses EU Parliament, Blasts 'Armenia's Allies'

STRASBOURG, France (Azatutyun/PanArmenian.net) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan denounced Russian peacekeepers for not preventing the fall of Nagorno-Karabakh and seemingly accused Russia of using Armenia's conflict with Azerbaijan to try to topple him in a speech delivered at the European Parliament on October 17.

Pashinyan addressed the European Parliament's legislative body amid Yerevan's deepening rift with Moscow, its long-time ally locked in a geopolitical standoff with the West.

"Democracy in Armenia ... continues to receive strong blows that follow an almost exactly repeated scenario. foreign aggression, then the inaction of Armenia's security allies, then attempts to use the war or the humanitarian situation or external security threats to subvert Armenia's democracy and sovereignty by inciting internal instability with hybrid techniques directed by external forces," he said.

Pashinyan pointed to Azerbaijan's September 19-20 military offensive in Karabakh which caused a mass exodus of the region's ethnic Armenian population and sparked renewed anti-government protests in Yerevan.

"As hundreds of thousands of Armenians were fleeing from Nagorno-Karabakh to the Republic of Armenia, our security allies not only did not help us but also made public calls for regime change in Armenia," he said. "But the people of Armenia united for their own independence, sovereignty, democracy, and another conspiracy against our state failed."

Pashinyan already implicitly accused Moscow of fomenting the angry street protests against his rule in the immediate aftermath of the Azerbaijani assault. Their or-



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan addresses the European Parliament in Strasbourg, October 17, 2023.

ganizers and participants blamed him for Baku's takeover of Karabakh, saying that he precipitated it with his recognition of Azerbaijani sovereignty over the region.

Pashinyan again sought to shift the blame to Moscow, saying that the Karabakh Armenians fled their homeland due to the "inaction of the Russian peacekeeping contingent." President Vladimir Putin and other Russian officials have defended the peacekeepers.

The Russian Foreign Ministry accused Pashinyan late last month of seeking to ruin Russian-Armenian relations and reorient his country towards the West. Earlier in September, it deplored "a series of unfriendly steps" taken by Yerevan.

Moscow has also been critical of Western efforts to broker an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal, saying that their main purpose is to drive Russia out of the South Caucasus. Putin offered last week to host fresh talks between Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

Pashinyan signaled on Tuesday that he still prefers the Western mediation and hopes it will result in an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty soon. He noted that he and Aliyev are due to meet in Brussels together with EU head Charles Michel later this year.

Pashinyan further stated that he wants to deepen Armenia's ties with the EU "as much as the European Union finds it possible."

## EU 'Unconditionally' Supports Armenia

The President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola said that the European Union "unconditionally" supports Armenia's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of borders.

Metsola made the remarks during a joint news conference with Pashinyan, maintaining that hosting Pashinyan at the Parliament proves that the bloc is "faithful to Armenia and you are faithful to the European family."

"The European neighborhood, now more than ever, is unstable and insecure, Armenia is the best partner within the framework of the Eastern Neighborhood of the EU, and we express unconditional support for Armenia's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of borders," Metsola said.

She added that they adopted a resolution two weeks ago, where they condemned the Azerbaijani military attack on Nagorno-Karabakh, and now the attention should be focused on the resumption of honest and fair negotiations, they call to respect the rights of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, the active participation of the international community. She said international guarantees for Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh for some time can help peace and reconciliation.

from previous page

## 'Velvet Revolution' and Nikol Pashinyan

Hacopian also addressed the Velvet Revolution and the rise of Nikol Pashinyan.

Hacopian said, "The [Velvet] revolution needed to happen. The revolution and the man leading it are not the same thing. The man leading it [Nikol Pashinyan] had grave limitations and has made some huge mistakes... We have the tendency for everything to be black and white. I am not for him; I am not against him. I was for the revolution but so was 80 or 90 percent of the Armenian world. I don't apologize for that. A lot of good things have come from it, but then a lot of disasters have come from it."

One key failure, he said, was that any student of history should have recognized that a successful revolution in a country like Armenia would be followed by war, as traditional enemies would take the opportunity to attack.

Along with his criticism, he did have some praise: "The best things that this government has done is what they have not done and who they are not. They are not crooked for the most part. They allowed this Armenian mercantile DNA gene to unleash itself." Armenia now offers the highest wages in the region, and its per capita income today already where the World Bank predicated it would be in 2028. Hacopian pointed out that the capitalization of the top four Armenian unicorns in the IT field is about 18-20 billion dollars.

However, Hacopian said, "I am far more nationalist, and frankly, militarist, than he [Pashinyan] is. I also understand the very distinct weaknesses and the weak hand that he has in many ways. I am arguing that he hasn't played his weak hand well. I am not claiming that he has a strong hand or that

the country has a strong hand at this point."

A difficulty that the Armenian leadership must grapple with, according to Hacopian is that "there are significant parts of this state, even today, which are not just disloyal to this particular administration, but disloyal to the country." He said that some people in the Defense Department and intelligence agencies still have loyalties to Russia. For example, there used to be generals with Russian citizenship and the national security service was, he said, essentially a Russian subsidiary.

Also, it was only in May of this year that the Armenian Defense Department started doing briefings and communications in Armenian. Previously, the Russian language was being used. He said, "It was so that the Russians could read them easily — think about it."

In other words, Hacopian said, "Yes, the regime has many failures, but what is the old line that paranoids have enemies too? It does have enemies."

While the current government may want, he said, "to replace people that are suspect with people who are with you, and that is totally understandable, at the same time, you also end up going for loyalty over competence, which is a very distinct Armenian disease."

## Artsakh and Armenia's Future

Hacopian said that the Artsakh issue has not ended: "In the long run, as the juxtaposition between these two countries [Armenia and Azerbaijan] changes, that issue is going to get revitalized — because of the way it was done, because of the fact that it was genocidal. The notion that this thing is going to go unanswered for 10-15 years from now... you don't know human nature if you believe that."

When asked how realistic are the prospects of Armenia regaining the

strength to defend its own territory, perhaps as a garrison state, Hacopian cited several positive factors. First of all, Armenia is becoming a world center for chip design, with two of the three top chip design companies in the world there. If you can design chips and write programs, you have the basis for a strong military-industrial complex.

Warfare is actually getting cheaper. As an example, Hacopian said, "The whole Iranian operation targeting Israel probably does not even cost 100 million dollars, and yet it utterly humiliated the Mossad, the ShinBet, for all their fancy listening stations and AI intelligence gathering."

Meanwhile weapons systems are starting to come into Armenia from India and France. By the end of the year, he said, there probably will also be established a Ukrainian-style national defense system of volunteers and reservists. He observed: "This country is becoming exceptionally militarized, though people don't really see it. Every afternoon you can be on a metro and you see forty 12-year old kids dressed in uniforms going on a train somewhere. It is going to become one of the most militarized states in the world."

Hacopian declared that economically, the tides will turn and the next 25 years will belong to Armenia. The World Bank estimates Azerbaijan's per capital income to be \$5,500 in 2050, while Armenia's is \$8,200 today. Armenia's economy grew 13 percent this year, while Azerbaijan's is expected to grow 13 percent over the next 26 years. Furthermore, by 2030 oil as an exportable commodity in Azerbaijan will be finished, leaving only limited natural gas resources, which are 7 times less profitable than oil per energy unit.

Meanwhile, the Armenian banking sector is exceptionally profitable and well run, he said, with foreigners starting to

buy dram treasury bonds in drams, which has never happened before. Advances in mining, chip design and business make Armenian more valuable and connected to the world, and not just tied to one country.

Consequently, while in the mid-term to long-term, Hacopian finds the prospects of Armenia being able to defend itself good (barring an invasion by Turkey). One important thing needed, he said, is reform of the army, but this takes time. He said, "One of the tragedies of the first Karabakh war in the 1990s was that it was won essentially because we created an Armenian army culturally. What I mean by that was that it was not a top-down operation. It was far more driven by local initiative but we essentially destroyed that to replace it with a failed Soviet army, where every decision needs to be made in the prime minister's office."

Though Armenia must become able to defend its own borders, Hacopian said that if it were possible for American or French troops to come to replace the Russian base in Gyumri, anybody in Armenia would accept in a heartbeat, but "the issue is, are they interested in coming?" While Hacopian accepted that Russia has to be dealt with in the region one way or another, he said "A Russia that allows a second Armenian Genocide in Artsakh is not a Russia that is useful to Armenia." Moreover a Russia that wins the Ukraine war will be a different Russia than one that loses it.

Ultimately, he said, "as far as the country becoming a garrison state, I think that is a given. I don't think that there is any way around it. ... We are going to see the complete Israelization of Armenian politics, where everybody that comes [to power] will be more militarist, more right wing than the one previous to it, or more nationalist."





## ARMENIA

# Explosion's Death Toll Close to 500

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — More than 220 residents of Nagorno-Karabakh were killed during last month's Azerbaijani military offensive and at least as many others died in the subsequent explosion at a local fuel depot, a Karabakh official said over the weekend.

Over 200 of them are Karabakh soldiers killed in action on September 19-20, Hunan Tadevosyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service in Yerevan. Two dozen other victims of the hostilities are Karabakh civilians who died as a result of Azerbaijani shelling of their communities.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry has acknowledged over 200 combat deaths among its military personnel involved in the operation. Its troops greatly outnumbered and outgunned Karabakh's small army that received no military support from Armenia. Karabakh's leadership agreed to disband the Defense Army in



The devastating explosion at the Stepanakert fuel depot

return for Baku stopping the assault and allowing the region's ethnic Armenian population to flee to Armenia.

The exodus began amid chaotic scenes

blamed for the September 25 explosion at the gasoline depot outside Stepanakert. With fuel in extremely short supply in Karabakh even before the Azerbaijani at-

tack, hundreds of cars converged on the facility to fuel up and proceed to Armenia.

Tadevosyan said the powerful blast and a fire sparked by it killed at least 220 people and left 50 others missing. About 150 bodies were burned beyond recognition, he said, adding that DNA tests are being carried out in Yerevan to identify them.

Hundreds of other Karabakh Armenians were injured by the blast. Tadevosyan said Karabakh authorities that are now exiled in Armenia continue to believe that it was most likely the result of human negligence, rather than a deliberate attack. The authorities failed to organize an orderly distribution of the fuel stored in the depot because of panic caused by fears that Azerbaijani troops could enter Stepanakert at any moment, he said.

"People were desperate to get out [of Karabakh] as soon as possible and save their families," added the spokesperson for the Karabakh interior ministry.

## TCA Artsakh Refugees Aid Program Continues Helping Burn Victims

AID, from page 1

December by Azerbaijan, and endured hunger, cold and many hardships to live on their ancestral land of thousands of years. Azerbaijan then on September 19 launched a massive attack, bombing settlements, schools and hospitals.

This final Azerbaijani invasion of the territories of the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) Republic forced a mass exodus of the population of the latter and led to a humanitarian crisis. For the first time in history this ancient land was emptied of its Armenian population in the course of only a few days. TCA could not remain indifferent to one of the greatest disasters in modern Armenian history.

During the exodus, news spread about

izens treated at the Yerevan National Center for Burns and Dermatology.

Gayane Muradyan, the director of the Armenian office of the TCA of the United States and Canada, relates some details about the process: "For four days on end, I went to the hospital, and had meetings at the reception area. I spoke with surviving mothers, sisters, wives, grandfathers or grandmothers, who were taking care of their sick... I took down the necessary information from them so that money could be transferred as donations to the bank accounts of the families. These transfers were made on October 9, 2023.

"The allocated aid was transferred from the bank account of the Armenian representative office of the TCA of the United States

Mher Arustamyan, 55-years old, was taken care of by his son Gurken, a doctor by profession. The latter did not go to his classes. Instead, dressed in a white coat, he came and stood next to the doctors in this hospital and helped bandage the patients.

Mher Martirosyan, 27-years old, was taken care of by his sister Marine. Yegor Khachatryan, 30, was taken care of by his wife, Snezhanna. "Her husband was in a very serious condition, so she asked me to transfer him abroad and continue his treatment there," Muradyan said.

Muradyan concluded: "I felt a special kinship with all of them and in those days I lived with their worries. I kept asking how the surgery went, how did he spend the night? The strong and proud citizens of Artsakh inspired endurance and optimism, as they gave glory to God that at least their father, son, or brother survived. Even with burns, which will later become a deep scar, at least he is alive. Many of the caregivers brought their children with them and stayed seated in chairs for several hours, hoping to get some good news from the doctors."

The TCA assistance programs for Artsakh Armenians continue without a break.



Gayane Muradyan, director of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada Armenia office, at right, at a recent meeting with Berdzor Armenian refugees

The TCA gratefully acknowledges all who have donated so far, including the generous gifts of Canadian Armenians John Kostanian (\$20,000) and Paul Ahmaranian (\$5,000).

If you want to help our compatriots, please send donations in the USA to the following address: Tekeyan Cultural Association Artsakh Aid, 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472, or online at <https://givebutter.com/AGuStb>; and in Canada, Tekeyan Cultural Association Artsakh Aid, 825 Manougian Str., Ville Saint-Laurent, Quebec H4N 1Z5, Canada or [online here](https://www.tekeyan.org).



At the Yerevan National Center for Burns and Dermatology

another terrible event. On the Stepanakert-Askeran road, at a filling station in Berkadzor near the city of Stepanakert, an explosion took place, followed by a terrible fire. The people of Artsakh, mostly men, had come to get gasoline so that they could escape Azerbaijani persecution. As a result of the explosion and fire, at least 220 people died, and there are still at least 50 people missing without a trace as of October 14, according to Artsakh Internal Affairs Ministry Spokesman Hunan Tadevosyan. The burnt remains of 150 people were extricated from the explosion site for identification in Armenia through DNA testing.

During the two days after the explosion, injured survivors were taken to hospitals in Armenia.

TCA determined as part of its assistance program first of all to help those Artsakh cit-

and Canada to the bank account of the beneficiary."

Muradyan noted that some of those who had been severely burned were transferred to France, Germany and other European countries for specialized treatment. Unfortunately, those with more than 60 percent of their bodies burned died.

Muradyan provided information about the situation of some of the victims. Narek Gabrielyan, 27-years old, was being taken care of by his sister, Egnara, who brought food for her brother every morning, sat next to him all day, fed him and took care of him.

The hands and faces of Levon Sagatelian, 25-years old, and his brother Vrezh, 24-years old, were burned. Their mother, Marine Karakhanyan, would rush to Levon at the burn clinic to feed him, and then to the dermatology hospital to take care of Vrezh.

## Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra to Perform in Boston

PHILHARMONIC, from page 1

The benefit concert is being planned under the leadership of the Pan Armenian Council of New England and YerazArt Foundation in partnership with the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Relief Society, Tekeyan Cultural Association and Friends of Armenian Culture Society, together with our community parishes and organizations.

"We believe in the power of unity and the positive impact we can make together," comments Dr. Shant Parseghian, concert chair and founder of the Pan Armenian Council of New England. "By presenting the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra, we wish to bring recognition to Armenia's exceptional musicians and their lasting contributions while shining a light

on the resilience of the people of Armenia and Artsakh."

Established in 1925 by Arshak Adamyan and Alexander Spendaryan, the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra is an international treasure with an illustrious history as one of the leading orchestras of the former Soviet Union. Its upcoming performances in New York's Carnegie Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall, Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall, and Montreal's Le Maison Symphonique present a unique opportunity to showcase Armenia's rich musical heritage.

Tickets are available in person at the Symphony Hall Box, by calling 617.266.1200, or online at

<https://www.bso.org/events/armenian-philharmonic-2023>.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Blinken Warns Lawmakers Azerbaijan May Invade Armenia In Coming Weeks

BLINKEN, from page 1

Blinken responded that the State Department was looking at avenues to hold Azerbaijan accountable and isn't planning to renew a long-standing waiver that allows the U.S. to provide military assistance to Baku. He added that State saw a possibility that Azerbaijan would invade southern Armenia in the coming weeks.

Still, Blinken expressed confidence about ongoing diplomatic talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan to the Democratic lawmakers, among them Representatives Nancy Pelosi and Anna Eshoo of California, and Frank Pallone of New Jersey.

Two additional people confirmed that a briefing happened on the situation in Azerbaijan, but did not provide details.

In a statement, the State Department declined to comment on the call, but emphasized the department's commitment to "Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and resolving conflict through "direct talks."

Interestingly, on October 16, the US State Department denied the report saying that Blinken has not ruled out the possibility that Azerbaijan will invade Armenia in the coming weeks.

"The reporting in this article is inaccurate and in no way reflects what Secretary Blinken said to lawmakers," the State Department spokesman, Matthew Miller, told Armenia's Armenpress news agency on

Sunday.

"The United States strongly supports Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We have stressed that any infringement of that sovereignty and territorial integrity would bring serious consequences," Miller said in written comments.

(The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* reached out to the offices of Pelosi, Eshoo and Pallone. Only Pelosi's office responded, stating they would decline to comment.)

The decision to hold off on renewing the waiver is also telling. Every year since 2002, the US has issued the waiver, allowing it to sidestep a provision of the Freedom Support Act that bars the U.S. from providing military assistance to Azerbaijan in light of its ongoing territorial disputes with Armenia. The waiver lapsed in June and State had previously provided no explanation as to why it hadn't yet requested a renewal.

Since the briefing, Pallone has said publicly that he's worried Azerbaijan could invade soon. "Aliyev is moving forward with his objective to take Southern Armenia," Pallone tweeted Wednesday, arguing that "his regime is emboldened after facing little consequences" for invading Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan's military incursion into that region last month prompted more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians living in the Nagorno-Karabakh to flee. Local leaders

capitulated as part of a Russia-brokered surrender and agreed to dissolve their three-decades-old unrecognized state. Azerbaijani forces have since detained more than a dozen ex-leaders.

In a September 20 statement, Blinken said he was "deeply concerned by Azerbaijan's military actions" and declared that "the use of force to resolve disputes is unacceptable."

But Nagorno-Karabakh is not the only territorial dispute between the two Caucasus countries. Baku has proposed a route to the Nakhichevan exclave that would cut through Armenia's southern Syunik region, known in Azerbaijani as Zangezur, and enable road traffic to bypass Iran.

Aliyev has said "we will be implementing the Zangezur Corridor, whether Armenia wants it or not."

Tigran Balayan, the Armenian ambassador to the European Union, similarly claimed on October 8 that Azerbaijani forces could soon try to open an extraterritorial land corridor to Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan exclave through Armenia's southeastern Syunik province. He said the West should impose sanctions on Baku to prevent such an attack.

Syunik is the only Armenian province bordering Iran. Tehran has repeatedly warned against attempts to strip it of the common border and transport links with Armenia.

## Armenian Citizens Return from Israel on Special Flight

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A special flight from Tel Aviv, organized by the Armenian government brought back home Armenian citizens and ethnic Armenians, including more than 70 children, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ani Badalyan said on October 15.

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia informs, in total, 149 citizens of the Republic of Armenia and persons of Armenian origin, including children, were transported from Israel to Armenia.

Rev. Tirair Hovakimyan, the spiritual

pastor of Israeli city of Haifa and the northern regions of Israel, announced at a briefing with journalists that he had brought his family to Armenia and intended to return to Israel again to continue his spiritual service.

Angelina Baloyan, who arrived in Armenia on a special flight from the Israeli city of Ashdod, presented the situation in the city and noted that the children were very frightened.

"The kids would wake up in the middle of the night and say, 'Mom, did the air raid siren sound again?' It is impossible to

convey what a mother experiences at such moments.

"Now I am in Armenia with my children, but my husband has stayed there," she said.

Naira Arakelyan, who came home from Haifa with her daughter and newborn grandchild, said that she constantly feared for the lives of her children and grandchildren.

"I would like to thank the Armenian government for the support provided and for organizing a special flight from Israel," Arakelyan added.



Armenian citizens in Tel Aviv awaiting the flight back to Yerevan

## INTERNATIONAL

### Inter Milan Wants to Hold On to Mkhitarian

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Inter Milan plans to extend its contract with Henrikh Mkhitaryan, according to Italian media reports.

The current contract is signed until 2024, and the Italian club seeks another 1-year extension, according to the reports. The Armenian football star will earn a yearly salary of 3.8 million euros.

### Putin, Aliyev to Discuss Russian Peacekeepers — Kremlin Aide

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on the sidelines of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit in Bishkek to discuss the Russian peacekeeping contingent's further presence in Nagorno-Karabakh and the "peaceful integration of Armenians living in this territory into Baku's legal field," Interfax reports.

Russian presidential aide Yuri Ushakov told a press briefing in Moscow on Wednesday, October 11 about the program of Putin's visit to Kyrgyzstan on October 12-13, where he will pay an official visit, as well as about a meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of State. The Russian president also has bilateral talks scheduled as part of the visit.

### France Says It Will Seek UN Security Council Resolution on Karabakh

PARIS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — France will demand the adoption by the UN Security Council of a resolution that will create conditions for the return of Armenians to Karabakh, Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna told the French Senate on October 11, Sputnik Armenia reports.

Said conditions must include firm guarantees for the observance of the rights of the Armenians of Karabakh, including historical and cultural ones, Colonna said, which requires a permanent international presence on the ground, and the goal of all French efforts is to achieve that.

"No matter how [Azerbaijan] tries to present the situation, it must be stated: yes, Azerbaijan planned and organized the exodus of more than 100,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. This is an extremely serious crime, which cannot be followed by a reaction," she said.

According to the minister, solution to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan can only be found through negotiations, and peace must be fair and long-term.

For this reason, she added, France supports the mediation efforts of the European Union and demands that no concessions be made on the issue of compliance with international law, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia.

It is necessary to give Azerbaijan a signal that it should not follow the path of using force, and these signals are being given, Colonna said.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Azerbaijani President Visits Karabakh's Abandoned Main Town

Azerbaijan's president traveled to the former de facto capital of the now-defunct Nagorno-Karabakh Republic on October 15.

Baku established full control over the region in a lightning military operation on September 19-20 that triggered the exodus of the entire 100,000-some Armenian population.

Ilham Aliyev's visit was full of aggressively triumphant symbolism, captured in a 4-minute video released by APA TV.

Clad in military fatigues, Aliyev toured the building that formerly housed the de facto Armenian government in the town known to Armenians as Stepanakert and Azerbaijanis as Khankandi.

As he entered the building, he stepped on a Nagorno-Karabakh flag that had been placed on the floor.

At one point, he opened a window and laughed as he wafted out the air he seemed to suggest had been contaminated by the breath of the previous inhabitants.

At another he gestured at an atlas turned to a map showing a conception of a historical Armenian state that encompassed much of the South Caucasus, eastern Anatolia, and northern Iran.

"This is their disease, so-called Great Armenia. It's what made them wretched," Aliyev remarked.

Outside, Aliyev raised the Azerbaijani flag in front of the building, which had already had the Azerbaijani state seal installed on its facade.

He delivered a triumphant speech in which he noted that his visit coincided with the 20th anniversary of his first inauguration as president, an office that he effectively inherited from his father, Heydar Aliyev.

"Twenty years ago, when I began discharging my duties as President, I set myself the top priority task of raising the Azerbaijani flag in all our territories, all our lands, cities, and villages that were occupied at the time," he recalled. "Every day, every hour, we moved towards this sacred goal. Every day, we were bringing

this cherished moment closer and repeatedly saying that each of us should try to bring this day closer with our hard work."

Armenian forces defeated Azerbaijan in the first Karabakh War in the early 1990s, gaining control over the Armenian-populated former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast of Soviet Azerbaijan, as well

decades of talks that Aliyev called "meaningless and fruitless."

"Unfortunately, the mediators dealing with this issue wanted to freeze the conflict, to perpetuate it. They wanted this wound to fester. The people and the state of Azerbaijan could never come to terms with this situation. I have often said that

October 1 reported that as few as 50 Armenians likely remain in the region. As of October 4, Azerbaijani authorities reported that 98 Armenians had applied to receive Azerbaijani citizenship.

Aliyev did not mention any prospect of reintegration or return of Armenians back to Karabakh in his speech.

But he did gloat over Azerbaijan's arrest on terrorism and separatism charges of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's last three de facto presidents and several other former officials.

"The three clowns who used to sit here and call themselves 'president' await their deserved punishment today. I wonder if the man who used to sit in one of these buildings and call himself a 'prime minister' will ever dare to threaten us again. His tea is being served in the detention facility as we speak," he said.

"A separatist who called himself a 'foreign minister' once sarcastically said that Azerbaijan should open an embassy in our country if it wanted to raise its flag in Khankendi. Now, his tea is also served there in the detention facility. Our flag is flying high here. This should be a lesson to them."

Caucasus analyst Thomas de Waal criticized Aliyev's address in a post on X.

"It's an angry speech, dwelling on past grievances, with nothing about the future or reconciliation. No olive branches," he wrote. "The message is very much 'Karabakh without Armenians.'"

De Waal continued: "It bodes ill for what comes next with the Republic of Armenia. No sign here of what Westerners are urging: that Aliyev should start to treat Armenia and Pashinyan as a partner, rather than a defeated adversary. Instead it suggests that Aliyev still believes he derives legitimacy from the public by mobilizing anti-Armenian sentiment. So strong indications that he will keep on threatening Armenia itself."

(This piece originally appeared on Eurasianet.org on October 16.)



President Aliyev stepping on Artsakh's flag

as seven surrounding Azerbaijani districts. That control lasted until the Second Karabakh War in the fall of 2020, when Azerbaijan took back most of the territory it lost. It left only a rump Armenian de facto statelet that was surrounded by Azerbaijani territory and under Azerbaijani blockade for the nine months prior to the September offensive.

He accused international mediators - which were chiefly Russia, France and the U.S. - of being uninterested in achieving a real resolution of the conflict during three

we will never accept this situation; we will never allow a second Armenian state to be created on our land."

After the offensive and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's surrender, Azerbaijani officials had two meetings with representatives of Karabakh Armenians, where they reportedly discussed the reintegration of the population to Azerbaijan.

Now, with practically the entire population having fled, it's not clear what reintegration could mean. A UN mission deployed to Khankandi/Stepanakert on

## UN Statement: Karabakh Displacement Stems From Azerbaijan's Offensive, Blockade

GENEVA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On Wednesday, October 11, representatives of 34 countries issued a joint statement during the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, expressing extreme concern on the dire humanitarian and human rights crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"We are extremely concerned by the dire humanitarian and human rights crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh and the situation of the population who have fled from there in the past weeks," the statement said.

"According to the report of the UN Mission to the region, nearly the entire ethnic Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh has fled to Armenia - more than 100,000 people. Their report rightly notes the suffering this experience must have caused.

The statement said this massive displacement of ethnic Armenians from their homes stems from Azerbaijan's military operation launched on September 19th and a nine-month long blockade of the Lachin corridor leading to dire humanitarian conditions.

"We appreciate that High Commissioner [Volker] Turk's statement of September 26 urged safeguarding the rights of ethnic Armenians, protection of civilians, and observance of international law. We wholly agree that "reported violations of human rights or international humanitarian law require follow-up, including prompt, independent and transparent investigations," the statement added.

"We believe the appropriate next step is for the OHCHR to closely monitor the

situation of human rights in Nagorno-Karabakh, meet refugees and displaced persons and those who remain, and to keep this Council informed. We therefore urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to invite the OHCHR to provide them with such technical assistance as soon as possible.

"At this time, we urge Azerbaijan to ensure the rights and security of those Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians who remain and to promptly create conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of those who wish to go home. Their cultural and religious heritage should also be guaranteed and protected.

"We further urge Azerbaijan to comply with the interim measures issued by the European Court of Human Rights on 22 September and the provisional measures of the ICJ adopted on 7 December 2021, 22 February 2023 and 6 July 2023.

"We urge Armenia, with the support of the international community, to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to those displaced by the crisis.

"International access to Nagorno-Karabakh is crucial to provide assistance and independent monitoring, including to report on the human rights situation.

"Furthermore, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Armenia and Azerbaijan should be fully respected. We strongly support dialogue among all parties to secure a comprehensive and lasting peace.

"We will continue to follow the situation closely and consider any and all appropriate further steps by the Council."





# Community News

## Armenian Community Of Pasadena Unites for Solidarity Vigil, March And Rally for Artsakh

PASADENA, Calif. — In a powerful display of unity and support, the Armenian community of Pasadena and the greater San Gabriel valley is set to organize a vigil, march, and rally to stand in solidarity with Artsakh and the various challenges faced by its people. This momentous gathering, set to take place on Friday, October 20, will begin at Pasadena's Memorial Park Armenian Genocide Memorial at 6 p.m. and conclude at Pasadena's City Hall in Centennial Square.

Artsakh, a region of historical and cultural significance and historical to the Armenian people, has been the site of conflict and strife for many years due to the Azerbaijani dictatorship's policy of ethnic cleansing of Armenians in the region. The Armenian community of Southern California has been closely following the developments in Artsakh and Armenia.

The vigil, march, and rally serve as a collective response to express support and solidarity for the people of Artsakh. The event is expected to draw members of the Armenian community from across the region, as well as individuals from various backgrounds who share the same sentiment. The Tekeyan Cultural Association is among the coalition partners.

One of the central themes of the gathering is the issue of displaced Armenians. As a result of the Azerbaijan's aggression, many Armenian families have been forced to leave their homes and communities. The vigil and rally will bring attention to their plight and the need for humanitarian aid.

A significant aspect of the event will be the focus on prisoners of war held illegally by Azerbaijan. The Armenian community aims to raise awareness of these individuals' unjust detention and to advocate for their immediate release. The event organizers hope that international attention will help resolve this humanitarian crisis.

The vigil will also honor the memory of those Missing in Action (MIAs) due to the ongoing aggression by Azerbaijan. Families of these individuals continue to seek answers and closure, and the event is expected to be a platform for raising awareness about their plight.

Additionally, the vigil, march, and rally will show support for those Armenians and government officials who are being held illegally in Azerbaijan. Their illegal detention has been a matter of concern, and this gathering seeks to bring attention to their situation and advocate for their release.

The event will commence at the Memorial Park Armenian Genocide Memorial, a place of great historical significance for the Armenian community, and will culminate at Pasadena's City Hall in Centennial Square. It is expected that participants will see VIGIL, page 8



Sen. Edward Markey speaking with protesters

## Sen. Edward Markey Expresses Solidarity with Boston Armenian Protesters

BOSTON — On October 5, the Zoravik Activist Collective together with a coalition of Boston-area youth, activist, and advocacy groups held a silent protest outside of the JFK Federal Building in Boston to condemn the silence of the US Congress and the inaction — or worse, the near-complicity — of the Biden Administration regarding the blockade, invasion and ethnic cleansing of over 100,000 Artsakh Armenians by the genocidal regime in Azerbaijan.

The demonstrators demanded sanctions against Azerbaijan, accountability for war crimes, and the release of all Armenian civilian hostages, kidnapped political leaders, and prisoners of war held in Baku. Conversations were held with individuals entering and leaving the JFK-Federal building as well as with interested passers-by. All were directed to visit [ArtsakhSOS.carrd.co](https://ArtsakhSOS.carrd.co), an informational and action resource put together by the organizers and embedded — via QR code — in all protest signs and handouts.

see MARKEY, page 8



The October 5 protest outside the JFK Federal Building in Boston

## Armenian Assembly Western Region Adds Ojakian, Saraydaroglu to Staff

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America recently welcomed David Ojakian as its Western Region director and Bettina Saraydaroglu as its grassroots associate.

The Assembly's recent Advocacy Summit, where over 300 in-person meetings were held on Capitol Hill, was bolstered by Ojakian and Saraydaroglu, who helped mobilize community advocates to brief Members of Congress on the grave humanitarian crisis in Artsakh.

"The Summit could not have come at a more crucial moment given the tragedy our Armenian nation is experiencing with genocide, ethnic cleansing, and forced relocation of the Armenians of Artsakh due to Azerbaijan's genocidal aggression," said David. "Through our work at the Assembly, we must continue to rally our community to be a voice for our brothers and sisters of Artsakh and do everything possible to ensure robust aid for them and sanctions against Azerbaijan."

Also participating in previous Advocacy Summits as a student at the George Washington University, Saraydaroglu emphasized the important timing of this Fall's conference and the Assembly's efforts.

"The Summit came at a time when the Armenian people needed us most," said Saraydaroglu. "I was proud to stand united with advocates from across the country in sounding the alarm and the urgent need for the U.S. to take decisive action."

A decades-long activist in the Armenian American community and a leader on regional, national, and international levels, Ojakian has served the Assembly's Northern California Regional Council as a grassroots volunteer and participated in the National Advocacy Conferences in Washington, D.C.

His professional background in marketing and sales, including a recent role in marketing communications with Cisco Systems' global sales team, is coupled with his non-profit management experience.



David Ojakian

In his role as Western Region Director, David will be responsible for leading the Assembly's outreach and grassroots advocacy efforts in the Western Region, as well as briefings and events across the region. He will also focus on coalition building with Armenian and non-Armenian organizations alike.

see STAFF, page 8





## COMMUNITY NEWS



The October 5 protest outside the JFK Federal Building in Boston

## Sen. Markey Expresses Solidarity with Armenian Protesters

MARKEY, from page 7

Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) and several of his senior staffers came out of the JFK-Federal Building to personally meet with the protesters and to share a message of support and solidarity. Senator Markey announced that he had just signed legislation to provide humanitarian support to

the “Armenians in Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh impacted by the genocidal actions taken by the government of Azerbaijan and to establish sanctions against select Azerbaijani officials.” He declared his active involvement in a bipartisan effort to urge the State Department and Treasury Department to “impose sanctions under

the Global Magnitsky Act on select individuals in the government of Azerbaijan.”

Senator Markey also announced that he is “convening a roundtable with Armenian Americans from Greater Boston in ten days so that I can hear, specifically, what their concerns are,” and added: “But I don’t think I need much more than seeing all of you standing out here to [know what] your concerns are and what has to happen from the perspective of the United States government.”

The activists thanked Senator Markey for meeting with the protesters and for his steadfast support of issues of concern to Armenian-Americans, including the bi-partisan initiatives on Artsakh he’d just mentioned. They also conveyed to him and to his political staff that, during the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Artsakh and the existential threat confronting democratic Armenia by the autocratic regimes in Azerbaijan and Turkey, a significantly more vigorous and vocal level of advocacy is expected from allies of the community.

In conversations with Jim Cantwell, senior advisor, and state director to Senator Markey, the activists presented several additional actions that the senator can take to meet the expectations of the Armenian community. These included making one or more speeches on the Senate floor to demand that the leader of his party, President Joe Biden, publicly condemn the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Armenian

population of Artsakh from their ancestral lands and lead the world in imposing punitive sanctions against the perpetrator regime in Azerbaijan.

The demonstration marked the beginning of a series of planned protests to be held in front of the JFK Federal Building every Thursday afternoon during the month of October (check out Zoravik’s FB page for more information). In a call to action, the organizers urge the community and activists to join their movement in pressuring US representatives and federal authorities to take meaningful action on Artsakh.

The protests are 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 Nj-dah Chapter. Organizations and ASAs that would like to join this effort, should email [zoravik@gmail.com](mailto:zoravik@gmail.com).



### Armenian Community Of Pasadena Unites for Solidarity Vigil, March And Rally for Artsakh

VIGIL, from page 7

I bring placards, banners, and candles to symbolize their solidarity with the people of Artsakh.

The Armenian community is calling on the local and international community to join them in expressing solidarity with Artsakh. This gathering serves as a reminder that, even from afar, they stand together in support of justice, peace, and the well-being of the Armenian people.

With the continued Azerbaijani threat of war, the event promises to be a poignant moment in the ongoing quest for a peaceful and just resolution to the challenges faced by Artsakh, Armenia and its people. It is an opportunity for all those who believe in the principles of self-determination, human rights and justice to come together and show their support.

## Armenian Assembly Western Region Adds Ojakian, Saraydaroglu to Staff

STAFF, from page 7

“I’m grateful and honored to join the Armenian Assembly as the Western Region Director and I look forward to utilizing my experience and my passion for advocating for Artsakh and Armenia in this new role,” said David, who earned his Executive MBA from Santa Clara University and his B.S. in Business Administration and Marketing Management from California State University, East Bay. “There are great challenges before us, which makes this role and the work of the Assembly even more vital.”

A graduate of The George Washington University where she double majored in International Relations and Geography, Saraydaroglu is a former participant of the Assembly’s flagship Terjenian-Thomas In-

ternship Program, where she interned for the Armenian National Institute (ANI) and subsequently served as the Intern Coordinator.

In her role as Grassroots Associate, she will assist with advocacy engagement, outreach, and social media.

“I’ve seen first-hand the impactful work of the Assembly and all of their efforts for the people of Armenia and Artsakh,” said Saraydaroglu. “I am excited to join the Assembly team and look forward to strengthening and expanding our grassroots initiatives.”

Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny added: “At this critical time, the Assembly is expanding our staff and is proud to welcome Bettina and David. Together, we will continue our important work.”



Bettina Saraydaroglu





## OBITUARY

## Edward Alexander

### Cold War Diplomat, Former VOA Armenian Service Chief

BETHESDA, Md. — Edward Alexander of Bethesda, MD, passed away on October 5 at the age of 103.

He was a career diplomat in the US Foreign Service during the Cold War, where he served as a Public Affairs Officer in West Berlin; Budapest, Hungary; Athens, Greece; and East Berlin, GDR. He played a key role in the visits of President John F. Kennedy to Berlin in 1963 and Richard Nixon to Bucharest in 1969. During his tour as deputy director for the Soviet Union and East Europe, Alexander traveled throughout the Soviet bloc supervising American press and cultural affairs, at which time he was the most senior Armenian-American official in the US government.

After graduating from Columbia University with a degree in musicology followed by a master's degree from the Columbia School of Journalism, he entered the US Army in World War II, serving in Europe on the staffs of Generals Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley in the Psychological Warfare Division. After the war, he worked as Public Relations Director to Sir Laurence Olivier on the two Shakespeare films, "Henry V" and "Hamlet." In 1950, he joined the Voice of America, organizing broadcasts to Soviet Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Tatarstan and was appointed Chief of

the Armenian Service, where he remained for ten years.

Following his Foreign Service postings, he served on the Board for International Broadcasting, overseeing Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty broadcasts, at the State Department in the Freedom of Information Division, and was Spokesman to three international conferences on Human Rights. He was official Escort and Interpreter for the White House visit of Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I with President Bush in the Oval Office and also for the visit of former Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian. Shortly after Armenia's independence, Alexander was invited to Armenia to serve as advisor to its foreign ministry.

He lectured about Armenia at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Tufts University's Fletcher School of Diplomacy, the Library of Congress, the Armenian Embassy in Washington and several universities. Alexander wrote three books, *The Serpent and the Bees*, about the 15-year attempt by the Soviet KGB to recruit him; *A Crime of Vengeance*, about the Berlin trial of the murder of Talaat Pasha, and *Opus*, a novel about the search by two Armenian diplomats for a stolen Beethoven manuscript.

After the 1988 earthquake, he served as

Chairman of St. Mary's Church Earthquake Committee, collecting nearly \$400,000 in donations and clothing. He also served as Chairman of the William E. Docter Fund Scholarship Committee dispensing educational grants to young Armenians throughout the country. Ed was an avid tennis player well into his nineties, a golfer, a jazz authority and devotee of gin martinis.

He was born in New York City in 1920 to John der Alexanian, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, and Nevart Faljian Alexanian. Edward Alexander is survived by his wife Roseann, son Mark of Franklin, TN, and Wellington, FL, and his wife JoAnn Palazzo; son Scott, of Boca Raton, FL, and his wife Cathy Davis; and son Christian of Washington, D.C., and Thousand Oaks, CA, and his wife Arlene Saryan, and five grandchildren, Derek, Maya, Miranda, Garen and Sean Alexander.

On a future date yet to be determined, a memorial service will be held and his remains will be laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in his memory to Traveling Doctors (for Artsakh/Nagorno Karabagh refugees) at [www.travelingdoctors.org](http://www.travelingdoctors.org) or via mail: Traveling Doctors, 175 Sand Key



Estates Dr., Clearwater Beach, FL 33767, or to National Association For Armenian Studies and Research at [naasr.org](http://naasr.org), or via mail: NAASR, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont, MA 02478.

## Janet Acopian Yegumians

September 24, 1940-October 8, 2023

WALTHAM, Mass. — Janet Acopian Yegumians, passed away peacefully at the age of 83, with her daughters by her side, at her home on October 8, 2023.

Her spirit was extraordinary in that al-



though she suffered great personal losses at a very young age, she rose to meet life's challenges with vigor and enthusiasm. She often was heard telling her daughters, how blessed she felt that she was granted every wish she had ever made. However, anyone who knew Janet, knows that those wishes were not granted — they were earned

through her drive, hard work, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Among her many valuable life-lessons were: success is solely dependent on your confidence; a woman's place is everywhere; be selective with your friends and commitments; gossip is a distraction best avoided; in the face of adversity, lead with grace; a soft-boiled egg and a cup of tea daily will sustain you and a dry martini in the evening will reward you.

Janet, the only child of Pepron Nazarian and Garegin Acopian, was born in Tehran, Iran and attended the Armenian Mariamian Elementary and Secondary School and continued her studies at the University of Tehran. She married her beloved "Alfie" (Alfred Yegumians) at 22 in 1962 and had two daughters.

She worked for Iran's Ministry of Planning in Tehran until her departure in 1976 and worked on the planning team charged with executing the international "Celebration of the 2,500th Anniversary of the Founding of The Persian Empire" (Jashnehaye Shahenshahi). Simultaneously, she opened and operated JanMari Maison, a shop specializing in evening-wear, followed by TinTin Boutique which imported

European children's clothing.

The couple's determination early-on to ensure a life of opportunity for their daughters, drove their family's decision to leave Iran in 1976 and they, along with her mother, settled in Boston in 1978.

Janet's entrepreneurial spirit and creative abilities lead her to open Dreamers Bridal Boutique, which she operated for more than 25 years. Janet's brides were family to her and she considered it an honor to contribute to their special day. Her brides never forgot the kindness and grace with which Janet showered them and often connected with her to share their life's milestones, well past her retirement in 2010.

Her quiet commitment to her family was unwavering and she kept ties even with the remotest family members who were scattered across generations and continents. Her most treasured time was spent with her grandson, Alec, whose presence she adored and with whom she shared a special bond, declaring that a day with him restored her

soul.

Janet leaves behind her daughters, Arlette Yegumians and Yvette Yegumians Der-Sirakian; son-in-law, Edward (Teddy) Der-Sirakian; grandson Alec Der-Sirakian; brother-in-law Victor Yegumians and his wife Violet Vosghanian; cousins Vrej and Varooj Fataei, Garnik, Hasmik and Jora Haghazarian, Manoush Mardirosian, Stella Sarkisian, Flora Stouffs, Knar Sukasian, Juliet Vartanian, Katia Yeghousians-Hurts and their respective families.

Funeral services were led by Fr. Antranik Baljian on Friday, October 20 at Saint Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown, followed by interment at Ridgeway Cemetery, also in Watertown.

Arrangements were handled by the Giragosian Funeral Home, 576 Mount Auburn St., Watertown.

Memorial donations may be made to the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR), Brides Across America or Saint Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Karagheusian Foundation Steps Up to Aid Artsakh Refugees

NEW YORK — The Karagheusian Foundation Board of Directors has unanimously committed an initial allocation of \$1 million to the Howard Karagheusian Medical Benevolent Public Organization (HKMBPO) for emergency relief, announced Harry S. Cherken, Jr., Chair. The funds will provide immediate assistance and medium-term solutions for the incoming Armenian refugees from Nagorno Karabagh (Artsakh). These funds are in addition to the Karagheusian annual donation for pediatric dentistry, social and ophthalmic services, and children's hearing aid assistance, in Armenia. Founded in 1992, the HKMBPO operates four centers in Armenia located in Yerevan (Nork), Gyumri, Goris and Vanadzor.

The catastrophic exodus of the Artsakh population from these ancestral lands is yet

again another mass resettlement for the Armenian nation. Deprived of the bare needs of survival, refugees have begun to arrive at the plaza in Goris where the HKMBPO and others are coming forward to assist displaced residents of Artsakh with food, water, personal hygiene necessities and baby supplies. Distribution of consumables in the form of family parcels of essentials at the Goris refugee registration center is ongoing during the arrival of the population. The HKMBPO offices in Goris have also been converted into temporary housing for families in transit.

"The need is great, and the situation is dire," said a staff member of the HKMBPO Goris operations. "In addition to beginning to distribute life's necessities to these refugees," she continued, "we accommodated families in our center temporarily and



A boy from Artsakh received food and lodging.



Refugees are joining forces with volunteers and staff to expedite the aid to the needy

distributed 700 food boxes as of Saturday, September 30. We will continue as crowds come in. Then we will enact our short- and long-term assistance plan."

"We are closely monitoring the rapidly evolving situation on the ground," commented Karagheusian Foundation managing director Irina Lazarian. "We are preparing to make swift adjustments to channel the aid where it's needed the most." Lazarian noted that the Foundation has extensive experience in crisis management over its 102 year history, including the assistance it has given to the Armenian populations that resettled in France, Greece, the Middle

East and elsewhere following the Armenian Genocide.

With other Armenian NGOs, the Karagheusian Foundation will also seek solutions for the immediate lodging needs and will procure appropriate clothing for the upcoming winter.

The Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation (Karagheusian Foundation) is a charitable organization founded in New York City in 1921. It provides funds to the HKMBPO for Armenians in need.

Karagheusian Foundation, 381 Park Avenue South, Suite 617, New York, NY 10016, email: [info@thkcc.org](mailto:info@thkcc.org).

## Second San Diego SparkleS Children's Fundraiser Helps AMAA Provide Assistance for Armenian Children

SAN DIEGO — San Diego youth strolled the runway for the San Diego SparkleS Foundation Children's Benefit Fashion Show on August 26, 2023, at the Hilton La Jolla Torrey Pines Hotel, La Jolla, CA. The Foundation's second-year event was a resounding success raising \$100,000 to help protect at-risk children at home and abroad. This year's event included a \$20,000 donation to the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) to benefit Armenian children who evacuated with their families from war-torn Artsakh. Funds raised will help provide much-needed items such as food, clothing, education, and hope for the future.

"The San Diego community hit it out of the ballpark," said Kathy Kassardjian, president of SparkleS. "We had VIP Padres Tickets and a Machado autographed baseball that got the bidding going wild."

In addition to a festive reception and musical entertainment, San Diego fashions were featured and included: Pretty Please (Del Mar), 5 loaves two fish (Coronado), Satori Designs (Solana Beach), and Mabel's (Solana Beach).



Guest speaker Summer Stephan, District Attorney of San Diego, spoke about the enormity of the child trafficking problem, how it affects the San Diego community, and the need for more efforts to combat the growing crisis.

"The AMAA truly appreciates being chosen as one

of the recipients of the SparkleS Foundation for the second year in a row," said Magda Poulos, AMAA Director of Operations and Donor Relations. "Their mission of helping children will have a direct impact on the children we are serving in Armenia, especially at this time."



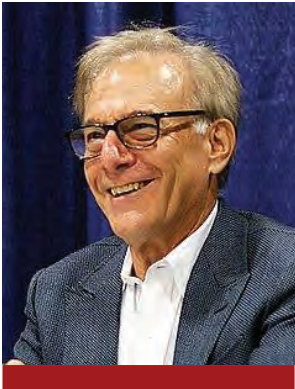


# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

*Reflecting ~ Connecting ~ Inspiring*

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

*With the participation of:*



**David Ignatius**  
*(Washington Post)*



**Ken Dilanian**  
*(NBC News)*



**Eric Hacopian**  
*(CivilNet)*



**Carla Garapedian**  
*(Film Director/  
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## 90TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2023

Boston Burlington Marriott, Burlington, MA



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

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**Ken Dilanian**  
*(NBC News)*



**Eric Hacopian**  
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**Carla Garapedian**  
*(Film Director/  
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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

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COMMUNITY NEWS

### NAASR's 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly to Feature Talk by Theriault on Artsakh Crisis

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research invites the public to attend its 69th Annual Assembly of Members on Saturday, November 4, 2023, at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., convening at 1 p.m. EDT / 10:00 am PDT. All are welcome to attend. Members current as of the date of the meeting may vote. Attendees have the option of in-person or online participation.

The Assembly will feature a talk by Dr. Henry Theriault, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Worcester State University, Past President (2017-2021), International Association of Genocide Scholars, Founding Co-Editor, Genocide Studies International, entitled "The Artsakh Crisis: Scholarly Ethics, Activism, and Genocide."

Theriault's talk and the NAASR business sessions are open to the public, though only NAASR members with dues paid for the current year are eligible to vote. For in-person participation two actions are required: 1) register online (for voting) at <https://bit.ly/AA23NAASR>. and 2) RSVP by email to [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org) by October 30, 2023. For online participation it is necessary to register online by November 3, 2023, at <https://bit.ly/AA-23NAASR>.

For help with registering online, email Laura Yardumian ([laura@naasr.org](mailto:laura@naasr.org)).

The assembly will also include presentations of certificates to 25-year, 50-year, 60-year, and 65-year members and the Chairperson's report from NAASR Chair Judith Saryan. Following Dr. Theriault's talk the business session of the Assembly will take place as will the election of directors.

## Architect Arto Kurkjian Receives Boston Architectural College Alumni Award

BOSTON — Arto Kurkjian has been selected for the Boston Architectural College (BAC) Alumni Selfless Labor Award. The award ceremony will be held on the evening of November 8 at BAC. Kurkjian earned a Bachelor of Architecture in 1982. Most recently, he was a senior project manager and construction administrator for Elkus-Manfredi Architects until 2022 and is retired now.

Kurkjian has over 40 years of architectural experience, primarily in the Boston area, specializing in construction documents and construction administration of large-scale mixed-use commercial, residential, educational, healthcare, and science projects. A few of his completed and celebrated projects include Liberty Mutual, Atlantic Wharf, Children's Hospital, World Trade Center East Office Building, Fidelity Smithfield Campus, MIT Tang Center, Joslin Diabetes Center, 73 Tremont Street, Four Seasons Hotel and Condominium, the Children's Hospital Pedestrian Bridge, and the West End Garden Garage Residential Tower.

Over the course of his career, Arto held several positions within different Boston architectural firms, developing document management and construction administration workflows with different construction software.

Arlo has been a dedicated volunteer throughout Boston and beyond for years. Since 2004, he has been involved in the design of the Armenian Heritage Park, in addition to serving on the board. He also is the founder of the Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston, the National Archivist for the Knights of Vartan (a philanthropic Armenian organization), and the Building Committee President for the St. James Armenian Church

in Watertown.

Arto also generously gave his time to the BAC, where he participated in AOP Alumni Reviews, and was a member of the Alumni Board, Alumni Council, and the Practice Faculty (2002-2010) for almost twenty years.



Arto Kurkjian

Those who want to honor Kurkjian and the other 2023 BAC Alumni Award recipients can come to BAC (320 Newbury Street, Boston) for the 6 p.m. reception and 7 p.m. awards ceremony. Registration is free, at <https://funraise.org/give/Boston-Architectural-College/72c76fe4-a5b8-4689-adb7-26861a195dcd/>.

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# Arts & Culture

## Sebouh Aslanian to Present *Early Modernity And Mobility at Hybrid NAASR Event*

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host an in-person and online lecture by Prof. Sebouh D. Aslanian on his new publication *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers Across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512-1800*, on Tuesday, October 31, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern)/4:30 (Pacific), at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont, MA.

The program will be presented as the 4th Annual Prof. Charles B. Garabedian Lecture at NAASR and is co-sponsored by the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University and the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS).

This will be an in-person event and also presented online live via Zoom (Registration: <https://bit.ly/NAASR-Aslanian>) and YouTube ([www.youtube.com/c/Armenian-Studies](http://www.youtube.com/c/Armenian-Studies)).

*Early Modernity and Mobility* (Yale University Press, 2023) explores the disparate yet connected histories of Armenian printing establishments in early modern Europe and Asia. From 1512, when the first Armenian printed codex appeared in Venice, to the end of the early modern period in 1800, Armenian presses operated in nineteen locations across the diaspora.

Drawing on extensive archival research, Aslanian explores why certain books were published at certain times, how books were sold across the diaspora, who read them, and how the printed word helped fashion a new collective identity for early modern Armenians. In examining the Armenian print tradition Aslanian tells a larger story about the making of the diaspora itself.

Dr. Sebouh David Aslanian is professor and Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (2011) and has published in many leading scholarly journals.

Prof. Charles B. Garabedian (1917-1991) was born in Everett, Mass., and graduated magna cum laude from Everett High School and Tufts University (A.B. English and History). He attended Harvard Law School and graduated magna cum laude from Boston University Law School. During World War II he served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and in the late 1940s he began his teaching career at Suffolk University Law School. His expertise was tort litigation and damages, courses which he continuously taught at Suffolk University Law School for over 40 years. At the time of his death, Garabedian was the Senior Faculty Professor at Suffolk University Law School. The annual lecture in his memory has been established at NAASR by Prof. Garabedian's niece, NAASR Board Member Joan E. Kolligian.

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



Gayane Aghabalyan and Elma Ayvazyan (Houry Pilibbossian photo)

## Armenian Wonderwomen: Unveiling the Hidden Stories

By Lida Asilyan  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — Let's do a small experiment: in less than 10 seconds, how many prominent Armenian women can you name? Now, let's do the same with prominent Armenian men. I couldn't hear your answers but I will go on a limb and say you named more men than women.

Inspired by the book *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls* and driven by deep-seated anger at the lack of recognition for Armenian women, the authors of the children's book *Armenian Wonderwomen*, Gayane Aghabalyan and Elma Ayvazyan, embarked on a mission to change this and create their own empowering anthology. Through this book, they sought to highlight the remarkable achievements of Armenian women throughout history.

"We were truly angry that there were so many wonderful Armenian women, and we didn't know about them, so that put us on a quest to find more women," Aghabalyan shares. The project began with the discovery of Zabel Yesayan and Diana Apar, whose growing popularity and integration into textbooks and public spaces provided the catalyst for their quest. Encouraged by their findings, the authors delved deeper into the world of Armenian women, gradually uncovering the hidden legacies that had long been overlooked.

### Unveiling the Hidden Stories

The *Armenian Wonderwomen* book was born out of a conversation between Aghabalyan and her on a lack of representation of women and prevailing gender stereotypes. They wanted to bring to light the extraordinary women who have shaped Armenian history but have remained unnoticed for far too long. They also wanted to bridge the past and present to inspire the future by featuring the stories of contemporary Armenian wonderwoman too. "In the book, you first read about historical women and learn about not only their lives but what they fought for then you read about contemporary women, and what they stand for today," the co-author said.

The discussions evolved into a comprehensive book, offering a platform to tell and celebrate the remarkable stories of Armenian women. Their goal was to create a children's book where kids could read and learn about these women, who could serve as an inspiration for future generations.

The book touches diverse fields such as science, arts, activism, and leadership, going beyond the traditional fields. The pages come alive with the stories of feminist activists like Zabel Yesayan, who fought for women's rights and social justice, and Sose Mayrig, a symbol of the Armenian liberation movement.

The research phase of the project faced challenges, such as the scarcity and varying accuracy of information about the featured women. However, the team was fortunate to have the guidance of scholars and experts who provided valuable insights and access to resources. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Armenia added additional obstacles. These challenges proved once again the importance of the project, so the authors remained focused on their work and made it come true.

### The Team Behind the Work

This project is a testament to the collective efforts of a dedicated team, who worked tirelessly throughout the summer of 2019, compiling material, writing sample stories and collaborating with illustrators to give shape and form to their vision. The preliminary title, "The Female Powerhouse of Armenia," still lingers in their Google Drive folder.

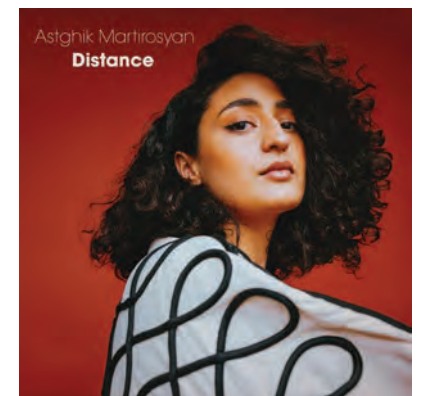
In the interview, Aghabalyan expresses deep gratitude, stating that each person has brought their unique expertise, enabling them to create a comprehensive and inspiring collection.

Acknowledging the invaluable guidance provided by advisors, Aghabalyan specifically mentioned Dr. Hourig Attarian, Dr. Melissa Bilal, Dr. Lerna Ekmekcioglu, Dr. Neda Bebiroglu and Dr. Robert Sukiasyan. "Their expertise and support were instrumental in shaping the content and direction of the book," said Aghabalyan.

see WONDERWOMEN, page 14

## Vocalist, Composer Astghik Martirosyan Reflects on Hope, Mutual Care in Midst of Sorrow on Debut Album

NEW YORK — Vocalist, Composer Astghik Martirosyan is proud to present her debut album, "Distance," an artistic statement born of intense reflection on the relationship between present and past, self and nation, one's inner emotional life and the call of homeland. Martirosyan wrote the music in 2020 while experiencing a stark duality: tremendous artistic growth and fulfillment at New England Conservatory in Boston, gut-wrenching news from an Armenia embroiled in a 44-day war with neighboring Azerbaijan over the status of the long-disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. This was during the pandemic as well, giving the title "Distance" another fraught layer of meaning. "All these emotions were happening," Martirosyan recalls. "I was experiencing it at a



Astghik Martirosyan on the cover of her new album, "Distance"

distance, by myself, far from my family and my country, and all of this came out in the music. This was my way of trying to heal, hope and dream, but also to express real sorrow. I lost friends in that war, I have friends who lost their homes. Music was my outlet."

Born and raised in Yerevan, where she began her career at 15, Martirosyan went on to earn a master's degree from New England Conservatory in Boston, studying with Dominique Eade and Frank Carlberg, among others. She now divides her time between New York and Los Angeles. She captures the uniqueness of her journey to brilliant effect on "Distance," which features some of the finest musicians on the LA scene. Pianist Vardan Ovsepian (who co-produced the date with Martirosyan), veteran bassist Darek Oleszkiewicz and top-ranked rising drummer Christian Euman make up the core band, with vital assists from tenor saxophonist Daniel Rotem and cellist Maksim Velichkin on two tracks apiece.

The seven pieces included on Distance weave between genres and idioms, blending lyrical influences of Armenian folk songs and Eastern European poetry with the modalities of classical, jazz and improvised music. *Silence*, the leadoff track and the only one on which Martirosyan plays see DEBUT, page 14





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Armenian Wonderwomen: Unveiling the Hidden Stories

WONDERWOMEN, from page 13

Furthermore, Aghabalyan emphasized the significant contributions of researchers who delved into the lives of specific women featured in the book, illustrators, editors, and so many individuals whose efforts and support helped to turn this book into reality.

“And then, of course, we have the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation who supported the project financially,” Aghabalyan said. With the foundation’s support, they released the Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian versions of the book, created a teacher’s guide aimed at turning the book into an educational resource, launched [armenianwonderwomen.com](http://armenianwonderwomen.com) and did a small regional book tour in Armenia.

## From Vision to Reality

Aghabalyan and Ayvazyan aimed to create a book that introduced readers to the lives and accomplishments of Armenian women. The team faced the challenge of condensing each story into a single page, which required careful selection of the most essential details. Initially intended for a younger audience, the project evolved as they realized the complexity of Armenian history and the need to address sensitive topics like genocide and exile. This led to a shift in the target audience to middle schoolers and older, enabling the inclusion of more in-depth information.

The process of selecting the women featured in the book was subjective but guided by certain principles, the co-author said. They aimed for diversity in terms of geography, time periods, and professions, emphasizing the breaking of stereotypes. They also recognized the importance of including contemporary women whose voices would bridge the past and present, inspiring readers with their stories of success and resilience.

Reflecting on the selection process, Aghabalyan emphasized, “We wanted to show that prominence is when you achieve your



Gayane Aghabalyan and Elma Ayvazyan speak to young women. (Houry Pilibbossian photo)

goals and determine your own goals. There is no one job that is more important than the other.”

By featuring women from diverse backgrounds and professions, Armenian Wonderwomen encourages readers to embrace their own aspirations and contributions, regardless of societal expectations. “We hope that our readers can reflect on how issues that were relevant two centuries ago are still relevant and what we can do to change that. We also want to show that there are many ways people can drive positive change. We are all different. We have different plans, goals, visions, dreams and purposes and

these diverse paths are a testament to our ability to contribute to the larger goodness in our own ways,” she said.

## Future Plans and International Distribution

While completing the Eastern and Western Armenian versions of the book and making it accessible within Armenia is a primary objective, the team also recognizes the importance of reaching a global audience. Aghabalyan reveals, “We aim to make these stories accessible worldwide, ensuring that the accomplishments of Armenian women resonate beyond our bor-

ders.”

To make the books available to Armenian communities worldwide, the team is exploring options for international distribution. They are open to collaboration with organizations and individuals interested in promoting Armenian history and culture.

In addition to publishing the book, the team has organized events, meetups, and discussions to engage with the public and foster a deeper understanding of the stories presented. These events provide an opportunity for dialogue, reflection, and celebration of Armenian women’s contributions throughout history.

## ‘Echoes of Kef Time’ to Premiere in Fresno with Film Director Avo John Kambourian

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program is presenting the Fresno premiere film screening of “Echoes of Kef Time” at on Friday, October 27, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191. The presentation is part of the Fall Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program. Director Avo John Kambourian will be present at the film screening and will participate in a discussion following the screening.

Produced by Bryce Ferendo and Robin Wang, “Echoes of Kef Time” is “a celebration, not just of Armenian culture but the Armenian spirit.”

Richard Hagopian, a legendary Armenian-American musician, pioneered one of the most fruitful genres of Armenian cultural folk music and the joyous, dance-filled events that his band was notorious for holding: Kef Time. But times change, and the once sold-out shows faded into history. “Echoes of Kef Time” dives into Richard’s quest to pass on the music to his grandchildren, Phillip and Andrew, before it’s too late and tracks them against the rich cultural backdrop of the music and the community as they attempt to honor his legacy and revive the tradition for another generation of Armenian-Americans.

Avo John Kambourian was born and raised in the Armenian community of Los Angeles. In 2012, he earned his BA in Communication at UC San Diego. In 2017, he released a documentary series called, “Echoes of Survival,” about artists whose work has been influenced by their cultural identity as Armenians in America as a result of the Armenian Genocide.

The series won an Audience Award at the Pomegranate Film Festival in Toronto and was also screened at festivals in Los Angeles and New York City. His goals are to hone the skills he has acquired on the field, as well as expand his network, by collaborating with fellow filmmakers to tell stories that aim to be both thought provoking and cutting edge.

The film screening is free and open to the public. Parking is free (permits not required) in Fresno State Lots P5 and P6, near the University Business Center, 5245 N. Backer Ave., Fresno State.

For more information about the lecture visit [www.fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies](http://www.fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies).

## Astghik Martirosyan Reflects on Hope, Mutual Care in Midst of Sorrow on Debut Album

DEBUT, from page 14

piano, was loosely inspired by a line of Emily Dickinson’s: “I many times thought peace had come when peace was far away.” The title track *Distance* is inspired by Marina Tsvetaeva’s poem “To Boris Pasternak,” while *Song of the Final Meeting* is based on Anna Akhmatova’s poem of the same name.

*Silence* and the haunting *Spring Is On Its Way* feature Martirosyan’s original music and lyrics. The latter she describes as “an intimate letter to my homeland, written during the eerie silence of a temporary ceasefire, in which Azerbaijan claimed ownership of the mountains in the disputed territory.” Martirosyan evokes these

sentiments in a musical language that is flowing, harmonically rich, full of melodic and formal invention and a surefooted vocal delivery (with layers of backing vocals heightening the emotional sweep).

*Summer Night* and *I’m Calling You* are Armenian folk songs, sung by Martirosyan in her native tongue. The former is heard in an epic, meter-shifting arrangement by the leader, while *I’m Calling You*, with tenor sax and cello enhancing the ensemble texture, is Ovsepiyan’s. “It was important to keep these melodies as pure as possible,” says Martirosyan, noting that Armenian music in general is monophonic, with the single melodic line predominant.

*Heartsong* has been recorded sever-

al times by its composer, the great Fred Hersch, whose vocal version with singer and lyricist Norma Winstone (a major influence on Martirosyan) can be heard on *Songs & Lullabies* from 2003 (under the alternate title *Song of Life*). “Lyrically the song expresses hope and celebrates life, and I felt it was important to include that perspective,” says Martirosyan. “It’s the bright star on the album.”

“This is not a protest album,” Martirosyan says in sum, “but rather a statement about the human side of separation and conflict, and the need to care for one another and our communities. I want to show how there can be hope, and how we can move forward.”





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine  
Vartanian



## Tahini Chicken Schnitzel

Amy Zitelman takes tahini, a ground sesame paste used in making hummus, to the next level in her new cookbook, *The Tahini Table: Go Beyond Hummus with 100 Recipes for Every Meal*. Zitelman, CEO of Soom, a Philadelphia-based company that makes tahini products, is part of the ever expanding hummus craze. You don't have to think that far back to remember when hummus, the Arabic word for chickpeas, was just a plain Middle Eastern chickpea dip usually served with warm pita bread. Now hummus, whose historic roots go back to 13th-century Egypt where the climate and soil are just right for growing chickpeas, comes in over 20 flavors such as beet, roasted red pepper, basil tomato and chipotle.

Zitelman's goal is to make tahini with its ancient roots a favorite of American home cooks. If that sounds farfetched, consider the increasing popularity for condiments such as Tabasco, Sriracha and pesto as well as a variety of flavored mayonnaise, barbecue sauces and mustards. "The world hummus market, according to Market Research Future, is forecast to grow at a rate of nearly 13 percent per year until 2027. That's a lot of chickpeas. But Zitelman, who founded Soom Foods with her sisters Shelby and Jackie, wants it to be more than an ingredient for just one single dish no matter how popular it is."

Founded by sisters Amy Zitelman, Shelby Zitelman and Jaclyn Horvitz, Soom offers a range of tahini, a roasted sesame paste pressed from single-sourced Ethiopian White Humera sesame seeds, available in jars and single-serve squeeze packs. Photo courtesy <https://soomfoods.com/pages/our-story>

"The three sisters formed Soom after a trip to Israel where they tasted a carrot cake made by Jackie's mother-in-law. It was so delicious that they wanted to make it back home in the U.S. but couldn't find the type of tahini needed. Since then, Zitelman has been named to Forbes magazine's "30 under 30" class of 2018 and their products featured in *The New York Times* and food magazines such as *Bon Appetit* and *Food & Wine*. Soom specializes in tahini products such as their single source origin premium tahini and Soom Chocolate Sweet Tahini though they've also added another Middle Eastern ingredient — Silan Date Syrup — a natural sweetener made exclusively with dates from the Jordan Valley. They source their sesame seeds from the Humera region of Ethiopia that is considered the prime place to grow them."

Serves 4

### Tahini Chicken Schnitzel

#### INGREDIENTS:

2 cups Creamy Tahini Vinaigrette (below)  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon harissa seasoning or other dried hot pepper seasoning, divided  
4 (8 oz.) boneless, skinless chicken breast halves  
3/4 cup panko breadcrumbs or cornmeal  
3/4 cup all-purpose flour  
1 tablespoon coarse sea salt  
Mild vegetable oil, such as grapeseed, for frying  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs, such as flat-leaf parsley, dill, or thyme (optional)

#### PREPARATION:

Mix the tahini vinaigrette, cumin, and 1/4 teaspoon of the harissa in a 2-cup liquid measuring cup (one with a handle and a spout). Pour half of vinaigrette mixture into a gallon-size zip-top plastic bag and set the rest aside.

Flatten the chicken breast halves by pushing down on the thicker parts with the flat of your palm, until each piece of chicken is no more than 1-inch thick at its thickest part. Try to make the thickness the same for each piece to keep the frying time consistent. Put the chicken in the bag with the vinaigrette mixture. Seal the bag, leaving an inch open at the corner, and squeeze the empty parts to force out any air. Zip it fully closed. Massage the bag to disperse the liquid all around the chicken and put in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour; longer (up to 24 hours) is better.

About 30 minutes before you're ready to serve, mix the breadcrumbs and all-purpose flour, salt, and remaining 1/4 teaspoon of harissa on a plate.

Set a wire rack on a rimmed sheet pan or on a sheet of aluminum foil beside your flour plate. Designating one hand for only the dry flouring and one hand for only the wet chicken, use the "wet" hand to lift one piece of chicken from the marinade, allow any excess to drip back into the bag, and put the chicken in the flour.

With your "dry" hand, flip the flour all around the edges of the chicken. Without touching the wet parts, use the same hand to flip the chicken over. Keep flipping until the chicken is well coated. With the same dry hand, lift the chicken and shake it gently to remove any loose flour, then transfer it to the prepared rack. Repeat this process with the rest of the chicken pieces, remembering to use your designated hands to prevent battering your fingers.

Put a large skillet over medium-high heat and fill with 1 inch of oil. Warm until an instant-read thermometer registers 355°F, about 5 minutes. (If you don't have a thermometer, you can test the temperature by sticking the end of a wooden spoon into the middle of the oil. If bubbles form within a few seconds, it's up to temp.) Turn the heat down to medium-low. Set a clean wire rack over another sheet pan or sheet of foil next to the stove.

Gently slip the breaded chicken into the hot oil, being careful not to splash. Fry until golden brown on the bottom side, about 3 minutes. (If it's still not brown at 5 minutes, turn up the heat a little.) Flip the chicken pieces over and fry on the other side until browned, about 3 minutes more. Be patient when frying. Rushing will make the crust too dark and hard. We're going for a lightly golden and delicately crisp crust.

Drain the chicken on the clean rack for a few seconds, then transfer to a serving platter. Drizzle some of the reserved vinaigrette mixture over the chicken and serve the rest on the side. Scatter the herbs (if using) over the top and serve right away.

### Creamy Tahini Vinaigrette

Makes about 1 3/4 cups

1/3 cup premium tahini paste  
2 tablespoons brown or Dijon mustard  
1 garlic clove, minced with coarse sea salt  
1/2 cup ice-cold water  
1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice  
1/3 cup red wine vinegar  
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil  
1 1/2 teaspoons fine sea salt  
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Whisk the tahini, mustard, garlic, lemon juice, vinegar, olive oil, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl until smooth and creamy. It should be the consistency of a creamy salad dressing, like ranch. Store in a closed container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

### Tahini Sugar Cookies

Makes 30 cookies

6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
1/2 cup premium tahini paste  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar  
1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt  
1 large egg  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
2 tablespoons raw sugar, such as demerara or turbinado, and/or sesame seeds (optional)

#### Preparation:

Set two oven racks near the center of the oven. Turn the oven to 350°F. Line two sheet pans with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.

Beat the butter, tahini, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and salt in a large bowl with a wooden spoon until just combined. Mix in the egg and vanilla.

Mix the flour and baking soda in a small bowl, then stir the flour mixture into the batter until it is no longer visible.

Scoop the batter with a 1-tablespoon measure and arrange as mounds on the prepared pans, about 1 1/2 inches apart. You should be able to fit 10 cookies per sheet. Wet your hands and flatten the mounds so that each is about 3/8-inch thick. Sprinkle the tops with the raw sugar or sesame seeds (if using).

Bake until the bottoms are lightly browned, about 10 minutes, switching the pans between racks halfway through. Cool the cookies on the pans for 5 minutes, then transfer them to wire racks to cool completely. When the pans are at room temperature again, form the remaining batter into cookies and bake in the same way. Store in a closed container at room temperature for up to 4 days or freeze for up to 1 month.



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# History Poignantly Retold: ‘Aurora’s Sunrise’ and ‘Amerikatsi’

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons of history.

-Aldous Huxley

In light of recent events in Artsakh, two historically-based feature films released in 2023, “Aurora’s Sunrise” and “Amerikatsi,” recall difficult but important periods in Armenian history. Each one delivers its own particular lesson to both Armenian viewers and the world-at-large. “Aurora’s Sunrise” cleverly meshes animation with found footage of a film otherwise lost (“The Auction of Souls”), with interviews of that film’s star, Aurora Mardiganian, conducted when she was elderly.

Expertly directed by Inna Sahakyants, “Aurora’s Sunrise” tells the true story of this remarkable Armenian Genocide survivor. Born in the village of Chmshgatsakh where her father was a master silk dyer, Mardiganian saw almost her entire family deported and shot in 1915. She miraculously escaped a harem and made it back to her now destroyed hometown, and then on to Erzurum from where she escaped to America in search of her lost older brother Vahan. Once there, thanks to her beauty and some luck, she’s cast as the star of “The Auction of Souls,” a feature film which recreates her experience during the Armenian Genocide. The film became a rousing success, raising over \$100 million and helped the Near East Foundation literally save an entire generation of Armenian

orphans from certain starvation.

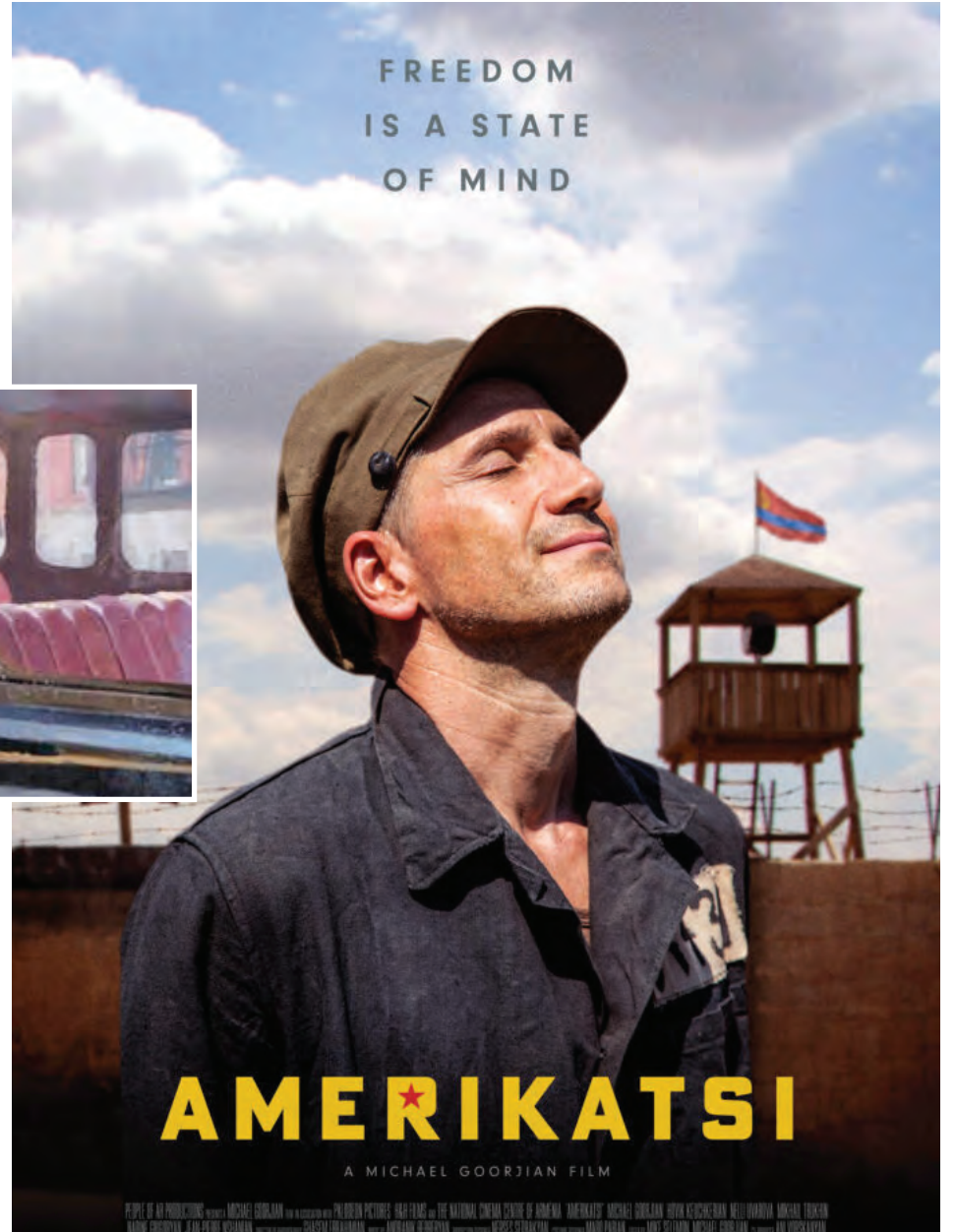
At the end of the film, an elderly Mardiganian tells viewers that what she desires the most is not revenge, but that Turkey be brought before a court of law and held accountable for its actions. “Aurora’s Sunrise” has performed beautifully at festivals and deserves all the praise heaped on it for its seamless integration of cinematic genres — not an easy task — and for its lovely and at times breathtaking retelling of an important



A still from “Aurora’s Sunrise”

page in both Armenian and film history. The hard lesson for Armenians: when faced with state-sponsored fascism — be it Turkish or Azeri — they can only count on themselves. This is something that the government of Armenia and the Armenian diaspora have unfortunately still not fully internalized, if the events of the past few years in Artsakh are any indication.

The light-hearted “Amerikatsi” tells the story of another, perhaps more obscure period in Armenian history known as the “Nerkagh,” which took place in the late 1940s, when some 100,000 diasporans repatriated



to Soviet Armenia. Used to freer and more open societies, many of these repats ended up in Soviet gulags or eventually escaped back to their home countries, forever traumatized.

Writer-Director Michael Goorjian plays Charlie, an affable American born in Western Armenia who had barely escaped the Genocide in 1915 as a young boy. Best known for his role as Justin, Neve Campbell’s dreamy love interest in the 1990s TV series “Party of Five,” Goorjian does not disappoint.

Now all grown up, Charlie decides to heed the call of the Soviet Armenian government and return to the homeland. But he speaks only broken Armenian and he is naïve as to the true nature of Soviet Armenian society. The film begins with a minor act of heroism when Charlie rescues a young boy from potentially dire circumstances. This earns the eternal gratitude of the child’s mother, Sona, a role elegantly played by Nelli Uvarova, but not that of her husband Dmitry (Mikhail Trukin), a local Communist Party apparatchik who in a pique of jealousy sends him to prison.

From his Yerevan jail cell over the course of several years he daily observes a couple across the street, through whom he lives vicariously. He shares in their joys and deceptions, the birth of their child, their holiday celebrations. This voyeuristic pleasure keeps him alive in spite of the constant beatings and food deprivation that he experiences at the hands of the sadistic Warden Sargsyan (Jean-Pierre Nshanian). It’s “Next Stop: Siberia” for Charlie until one day when Sona accidentally sees him in jail and comes to his rescue.

“Amerikatsi” runs a tad overlong in parts

and focuses on Charlie’s depressing prison life long after the audience has understood the full ironic horror of his situation. Yet in the end, the technique of repetition and the close ups and medium range shots work to great effect, making viewers feel the full gravitas of his daily existence. Goorjian the actor gives a bravura performance: he straddles the sometimes fine line between humor and drama like a tightrope walker — never falling and deftly keeping a potentially over sad story easy going in tone. And the film’s somewhat surprise ending delivers one of the more touching resolutions in recent times. A shout out also goes to Karine Janjughazyan as Vladlena, the party functionary.

A minor quibble: the repressed romantic attraction between Charlie and Sona never gets developed—it might have added more suspense to the proceedings. Producing “Amerikatsi” in Armenia with COVID and the Artsakh situation and a hundred other small hindrances was a herculean task. Goorjian and the other producers — who include Eric Esraïlian — should be recognized for bringing this important topic to the big screen at such a difficult time in Armenia’s history. If the lesson of “Aurora” is one of self-reliance then “Amerikatsi” suggests that Armenians should treat each other well before they expect others to do the same. In the end both films take the viewer on unexpected cinematic journeys — one outward to the world-at-large, and the other inward to a world of self-reflection.

For more information on theatrical release show times and “Amerikatsi”

For more information on “Aurora’s Sunrise” check the website here.

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- Available on Digital in 2024.

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





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# CALENDAR

## OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

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

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

**OCTOBER 27-28 — 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.

**OCTOBER 29 — Neighbors in Memory: The Entangled Legacy of the Armenian Genocide.** Screening and Discussion, 2 p.m., Mandel G03, on campus of Brandeis University, Waltham. Unique look at one of the most consequential human rights violations in history. This event will explore the history and the ongoing legacy of the Armenian genocide of 1915. From the re-education journey of one Turkish-American, to the personal stories of Armenians of various backgrounds, the audience will witness the weight and veracity of this historical event and its legacy, through a variety of short videos that are part of the Neighbors in Memory initiative. Featuring presentations from Prof. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, columnist Ohannes Kılıçdağı, and video producer/storyteller Gonca Sönmez-Poole, the event will touch upon the story of TAWA (The Turkish-Armenian Women's Alliance). Question-and-answer session with a panel consisting of the presenters with the addition of artist Apo Torosyan and educator Laura Bilazarian-Purutyan. Sponsored by the Global Community Engagement Program of the Samuels Center for Community Partnerships and Civic Transformation (COMPACT) and the Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation (CAST) minor, along with the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department.

**NOVEMBER 6 — St. James Men's Club Monthly Dinner & Fellowship.** Guest speaker will be Scott Kerman, Humor Columnist and host of the long-running Boston Sports Talks show, "The Grandstanders Live!" Kerman was a

stand-up comedian for over 20 years with appearances on HBO & Comedy Central. His recent released book is titled *The World According to Scott*. The son of Shirley Bagdoian and Norman Kerman, Scott grew up in Methuen and graduated from American University in Washington, D.C. Social Hour [mezza] 6:15 p.m. Losh Kebab& Kheyma Dinner 7 p.m. \$20 per person Ladies Welcome

**NOVEMBER 9 — The Armenian Museum of America presents "Early Recordings of Armenian Classics"** by musician and composer Ara Dinkjian. Ara will discuss early recordings of well-known Armenian songs, play recordings made more than 100 years ago, and share historic photographs. Thursday, 7 p.m. at the Armenian Museum (65 Main Street Watertown, MA, 02742). Purchase your tickets at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ara-dinkjian-early-recordings-of-armenian-classics-tickets-736552096147?aff=oddtcreator>. This event is part of our "Sound Archive" series sponsored by the SJS Charitable Trust. It is free for members, and we will raise funds for humanitarian relief for the Armenians of Artsakh. All donations will be matched by an anonymous donor.

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

**NOVEMBER 18 — The Armenian Catholic Youth Group of Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church invites members of all the community to A Thanksgiving Dinner, Featuring Famous Stand-up Comedian, Pierre Chamassian,** on Saturday, November 18, 2023, Dinner starts at 7 PM, at Nishan and Margrit Atinjian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont, MA 02478, Ticket: \$75, For Reservations Please Contact: Harout 617-461-7411, Arpy 617-240-4438. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the displaced residents of Artsakh.

**NOVEMBER 18 — Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church Food Festival.** 11 a.m. – 7 p.m., 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Eat-in or Take-out. The Food Festival menu includes lamb, chicken, and losh kebab dinners, and a vegetarian platter; a country store with a variety of Armenian specialties and deserts. The festival also features a jewelry table, an antique treasures boutique, gift items from Armenia as well as tours of the church's sanctuary. For further information, call the church office at 978-256-7234.

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

### NEW JERSEY

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

### RHODE ISLAND

**NOVEMBER 17 — Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church's Cultural Committee Proudly presents its Armenian Spiritual and Classical Music Concert** titled "Sird Im Sasani (My Heart Quivers)" dedicated to the loving memory of the Rev. Archpriest Nersess Jebejian. Featuring Asatur Baljyan, Opera singer, laureate of many Internationals competitions, Armen Ghazaryan, Violin, Levon Hovsepian, Organ, Piano, Mari Megrđichian, Soprano. Friday, 7 p.m., in the church sanctuary. 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Refreshments following concert. Donations greatly appreciated.

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email [alin@mirrorspectator.com](mailto:alin@mirrorspectator.com) or [alin.gregorian@gmail.com](mailto:alin.gregorian@gmail.com). You can also visit our website, [www.mirrorspectator.com](http://www.mirrorspectator.com), and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More." You can also mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication.

## TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group Rehearsing Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing'

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, N.J. — Rehearsals are taking place every evening at the Tekeyan Cultural Association Center in Englewood Cliffs, NJ in preparation of a performance of William Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing" in Armenian translation with English text as subtitles. The Center's theatre company, the Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group, is getting ready for a special evening to celebrate its 25th anniversary.

The challenge is enormous since the actors are amateurs and Shakespeare and its Armenian translation are quite demanding for them, to say the least. Yet these amazing men and women come every day from different places such as Queens, Manhattan, and Brooklyn, which depending on their homes, may take an hour or more to drive. They even must pay tolls to cross bridges

to enter and exit New Jersey. Even those who live in New Jersey sometimes must drive half an hour to 45 minutes.

Director Gerald Papasian exclaimed, "I am awed at the dedication and love they have for theatre. But of course, 'amateur' means love; it comes from the Latin word for 'lover' (amator), 'one who performs something for love rather than for money.' Many professionals could learn from them on this issue. Bravo to all and break a leg for the opening of the show on November 4! We're doing our best to offer a memora-



Director Gerald Papasian



ble evening for our audiences.

I keep on thinking of the famous English saying: 'It'll be all right on the night!'"

Tickets for the November 4 7:30 p.m. performance at the Peter Norton Sympho-

ny Space (2537 Broadway and 95<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC) are available either by calling 212-864-5400 or visiting [www.symphonyspace.org/events/vp-tca-mmgtg-much-ado-about-nothing](http://www.symphonyspace.org/events/vp-tca-mmgtg-much-ado-about-nothing)



## COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN  
**MIRROR  
SPECTATOR**  
SINCE 1932



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# An Analysis of Blinken's Statement: Azerbaijan Won't Invade...For Now

By Varouj Vartanian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On October 13, a Politico article reported that US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken stated that the US State Department is concerned about a possible invasion of Armenia by Azerbaijan. The context of this must be underlined, because the article has caused severe panic among Armenian citizens and diasporans. This conversation took place as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-linked Artsakh government folded and surrendered to Azerbaijan in the aftermath of the Azerbaijani offensive (September 19-20). In the following weeks, Armenians from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) were forced to flee to Armenia due to valid fears of abuse, kidnapping, rape, homicide, and genocide. As of October 13, nearly all of the 120,000 Armenians from the region have fled, and the only Armenians who have stayed behind are essentially elderly, mentally disabled, or unable to escape. As this was ongoing, it was uncertain what Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev was planning to do, regarding any further escalations.

It was unexpected for the Artsakh government to surrender in one day. Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the international community were caught off guard. Regarding how these talks of an Azerbaijani invasion of Armenia came about, it is possible that Aliyev had a plan to invade Syunik if Artsakh put up a fight, so that concessions (dissolving Artsakh's government) could be made in exchange for Azerbaijani forces retreating from Syunik.

It should be noted that Aliyev has used the tactic of invading Armenia in the past with the purpose of getting what he desires from the Armenian government. When Armenia resisted Aliyev's desire to oversee the "Zangezur Corridor," and Aliyev saw that Armenia's government was not open to the idea of giving a road connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan, Aliyev began to change his rhetoric to a more aggressive tone. In May 2021, Azeri forces invaded the Armenian provinces of Gegharkunik and Syunik, and the excuse was that the border is not demarcated or delimited. Later in July 2021, clashes occurred along the Armenian-Nakhichevan border, and a few months later in November, Aliyev ordered his troops to shoot at Armenians in Gegharkunik.

All of these minor incursions in 2021 were met with little to no resistance from the Armenian side, as Armenia was trying to signal to the international community that Armenia is not an aggressor and is trying to follow all terms of the November 9 Ceasefire Agreement (it should be noted here that Armenia stayed true to all terms and agreements, however Azerbaijan violated every single term listed by blocking the Lachin Corridor, continuing hostilities in Artsakh on a regular basis, not allowing refugees to return to the region, and holding on to hostages and prisoners of war. These were all explicitly prohibited, yet Azerbaijan disregarded the entire agreement). These minor incursions from 2021 could also have been a chess move to see if Aliyev could trick Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan into retaliating, giving Azerbaijan the *casus belli* to invade and occupy Armenia properly. From May 2021 to November 2021, we saw these minor incursions play out to pressure Armenia, but they failed.

As 2022 was approaching, Aliyev began to plan a full invasion of Armenia. In September 2022, Freedom House, Reuters, the *Jerusalem Post*, Eurasianet, and Carnegie Europe were quick to report that Azerbaijan had launched an attack, and that this was indeed a proper invasion. The invasion lasted two days as the Armenian army put up strong resistance and caused serious losses on the Azerbaijani side. Armenian forces lost 202 servicemen defending Armenia while 431 Azerbaijani soldiers were killed during the invasion. Due to heavy losses, Azerbaijan failed to progress forward but is still holding onto captured strategic heights along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. Approximately 140-215 square kilometers of Armenian territory are currently occupied by Azerbaijan.

The EU and US failed miserably trying to placate the leader of an authoritarian dictatorship, and Aliyev will only ask for more and more after seeing such a weak response from Western powers. The indecisive plans among Western nations and lack of action to protect Armenians in Artsakh proved to be fatal, but there is a new attitude emerging among European and regional leaders towards Aliyev and his genocidal rhetoric.

While it is alarming that Azerbaijan has plans to invade Armenia and forcefully connect Azerbaijan's mainland to Nakhichevan, it is important for Armenia to stay alert and not panic. While Azerbaijan's goal is the extermination of all Armenian civilians and removing Armenia from the world map, it seems unlikely that Azerbaijan will be successful in achieving their goals

in the near future due to various obstacles that can quickly result in setbacks and losses for Azerbaijan:

1. Compared to 2020, Armenia's military is much more developed and organized. With Azerbaijan's invasion of Artsakh in September 2020, many analysts argue that it wasn't a true Armenian-Azerbaijani war as Armenia couldn't use its military to its full potential. Many Armenians are also fearful that if Artsakh collapsed, then Armenia is also powerless. This opinion doesn't coincide with reality, however. Artsakh had a population of 150,000, while nearly 3,000,000 live in Armenia. It will be difficult for Azerbaijan to accomplish. When Azerbaijan invaded Artsakh in September 2023 as the final blow, Azerbaijan was fighting against a total of 5,000 soldiers. Artsakh had been starved and blockaded for 9 months, and was in an extremely fragile and insecure state.

2. Invading Armenia's Syunik Province is different from invading Artsakh. Artsakh was never recognized as a country, despite being a de facto independent state. Artsakh is such a complex, contentious, and disputed territory that it cannot be compared to the actual invasion of a recognized country. The backlash from the international community would be tremendous and it wouldn't come as a surprise if Azerbaijani oligarchs were to be sanctioned if Aliyev gave the order for total war.

3. It is expected that Iran will retaliate if Aliyev is emboldened to attack and conquer territory. It would be a huge loss to Iran to lose Armenia as a neighbor, and a complete disrespect and disregard to Iran as a regional power will almost certainly result in a swift response. If Azerbaijan does attack, and Iran does not act, Iran's bluff will be called, and non-friendly countries will seek to take advantage of Iran or weaken Iran even further. Azerbaijan's rhetoric in recent years shows that officials, TV commentators, and the public generally view Iran's northern territory as "historical Azerbaijan." This is a term that confuses many internationally, as Azerbaijan was never on the world map before 1918, while Iran has been a state for millennia. Due to Azerbaijani desires of "liberating" northern Iranian territories, the last thing Iran would want is Azerbaijan as a northern neighbor supplying and arming a separatist organization. Although Iran hasn't fought a conventional war since the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), warfare doctrine has changed in recent decades and Iran has used missiles, psyops, and commandos in Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Bahrain, Yemen, and Iraq to accomplish goals. As tension is quite high between Israel and Iran due to the terrorist actions of Hamas, if Israel acts in a manner against Iranian interests, Iran could also indirectly act against Israel by punishing Azerbaijan. When two nations have a balanced and near equal chance of causing serious damage, they don't war head-to-head but often fight in proxy wars if it's an option. It would be quite a shock to see an Azerbaijani invasion of Armenia without consequence.

4. Azerbaijan forcing a corridor to open and connect with Nakhichevan could cause Russia to object to it. Due to the fact that there is a serious concern of Iran being pulled into a regional war with Aliyev's hypothetical decision, it would mean that Iran would not be able to ship drones and other supplies to Russia. Not because the road would be closed (Iran uses the Caspian Sea), but because if Iran gets pulled into a regional conflict, it could threaten Russia's stream of drones and arms from Iran for the Ukraine conflict, as Iran would need all war matériel for its own needs.

5. Aliyev is an evil and despicable dictator, but he is smart. He waited decades to develop Azerbaijan's military. Azerbaijan used their natural gas and oil industry to build wealth, all while forming close diplomatic relations with relevant nations. Aliyev waited until there was a drift in Russian-Armenian relations, which sparked in 2018 and continuously got worse since. Aliyev struck when the iron was hot in 2020, and the 2nd Nagorno-Karabakh War aftermath was in Azerbaijan's favor. The recent assault in September 2023 couldn't have unfolded better for Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan now has complete control over Artsakh, without any Armenians in it. There are no concerns about future insurgencies or rebellion movements. There are no concerns about sanctions or consequences from the international community. There isn't even the problem of how to commit genocide and get away with it without international backlash. Everything lined up in Aliyev's favor. If Aliyev is calling the bluff of the EU, US, and Iran and instead chooses to wage war and invade Armenia, it could be a deadly mistake. Aliyev already has Artsakh. If he wagers a bet and loses, it could potentially risk what he has gained and accomplished so far. A severe enough backlash could be detrimental to the Aliyev family and oligarchs in his circle. Hence Aliyev will wait again to strike at another time in the future.

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





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Why is the US Government So Vigilant About Israel, but Not Armenia?

The most common question among Armenians these days is: Why did the United States government support Israel so strongly and promptly, but not Armenia and Artsakh?

This question became more pertinent after Politico disclosed last week that Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned: “Azerbaijan may invade Armenia in the coming weeks.”

During an October 3 phone call with Representatives Nancy Pelosi, Anna Eshoo and Frank Pallone and others, Blinken reportedly told them: “The State Department was looking at avenues to hold Azerbaijan accountable and isn’t planning to renew a long-standing waiver that allows the U.S. to provide military assistance to Baku.” Blinken added: “The State [Dept.] saw a possibility that Azerbaijan would invade southern Armenia in the coming weeks.” Politico wrote that two other unidentified sources confirmed the phone conversation. Rep. Pallone tweeted on Oct. 11 that “Aliyev is moving forward with his objective to take Southern Armenia.” On Oct. 15, in a written statement to Armenpress, State Dept. spokesman Matthew Miller said that the Politico article “is inaccurate and in no way reflects what Secretary Blinken said to lawmakers.” However, Politico said it firmly stands by its report.

Surprisingly, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated on Oct. 11 that the “risk was “extremely low,” and that there was no military buildup on either side of the border. Thus, the Prime Minister contradicted what Tigran Balayan, Armenia’s ambassador to the European Union, said on Oct. 6: Azerbaijan is actively preparing an invasion of Armenia within weeks.

More importantly, Blinken and other US officials have repeatedly said that they are committed to “Armenia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.” They have stated that “they are deeply concerned by Azerbaijan’s military action, declaring that the use of force to resolve disputes is unacceptable.” However, the U.S. government not only ignored its own warnings to Azerbaijan, but also the occupation of Artsakh and parts of Armenia proper. The United States, France and Russia have apparently decided that Turkey and Azerbaijan are much important for them than Armenia, regardless of the agreements Russia signed with Armenia and the sympathies of Western countries for Armenians. They have offered Armenians merely sympathetic words with zero action. Such shameful behavior has emboldened the dictator in Baku to move forward with impunity with his expansionist plans. These major powers did not even have the courage to pass a UN Security Council resolution to condemn Azerbaijan or impose sanctions.

Understandably, most Armenians are furious at the Israeli government for permitting its arms manufacturers to provide 60% of Azerbaijan’s advanced weapons which have killed and wounded thousands of Armenian soldiers during and after the 2020 War.

The more important issue is: why the United States is so protective of Israel, but not Armenia? The short answer is: due mostly to the activism of the Jewish-American community. There was a time when Jewish Americans were discriminated against in many ways. From the 1920’s until after World War II, American universities limited the number of Jewish students they admitted. After World War II, the United States even refused to accept thousands of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust.

However, Jewish Americans overcame many obstacles by playing prominent roles in all aspects of American life, such as business, science, arts, literature, music, films, theater, comedy, media, civil rights and politics. As of January 2023, there were 37 Jewish Americans in Congress: 10 Senators and 27 House members. Sen. Charles Schumer is the Senate Majority Leader. The US government contributed \$53.6 million to build the US Holocaust Memorial Museum on donated federal land. Over the years, scores of Jewish Americans have served on the US Supreme Court. Shelley Greenspan is the White House Jewish Liaison. In the State Dept., Ellen Germain is the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues and Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt is the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. Vice President Kamala Harris’s husband Douglas Emhoff is a Jewish American. There are several Jews serving in high-level governmental positions, such as Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellin, Attorney General Merrick Garland, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, Deputy Director of the CIA David Cohen, Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission Gary Gensler, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy Eric Lander, Deputy Health Secretary Rachel Levine, and National Security Agency cybersecurity director Anne Neuberger.

Eighty years ago, when 400 Rabbis asked to meet with President Franklin Roosevelt, they were turned down. But last week, a group of Jewish Americans met with President Joe Biden in the White House which was lit up in the colors of the Israeli flag. They have come a long way.

In the category of “Israel lobby in the United States,” Wikipedia mentions Christians United for Israel with more than seven million members, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) which has three million members and \$100 million annual budget, and J Street with an annual budget of \$2 million. On the other hand, Armenian-Americans have two advocacy groups: the Armenian Assembly of America and Armenian National Committee of America with limited budgets. Armenians need to hire powerful US lobbying firms to counter those of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Armenian-Americans should increase their involvement in political campaigns and run for elective office. College students should specialize in political science or international relations. Armenians should increase their contacts with the US media; write letters to the editor and commentaries in local and national newspapers. The community should support financially the Armenian advocacy groups and contribute to the fundraising campaigns of political candidates. By playing prominent roles in American life, Armenians can influence domestic and foreign policy of the United States and help support Armenia and the Armenian Cause.

# No Food, No Water: I Saw Azerbaijan’s Blockade Up Close. Armenians Need Our Help — Now.

By Sen. Gary Peters

Two weeks ago, I stood with Armenian officials on a steep overlook near the border of Azerbaijan. Rugged hills surrounded us on all sides. The barren landscape was covered with harsh boulders and dirt paths, and military outposts dotted the terrain. A lone electrical tower sprang up a few feet away. It was eerily quiet — the only sound came from the gravel beneath our boots.

Through binoculars, we inspected a bridge down the hill. The paved passage and military tents seemed innocuous at first glance. But this nondescript road — the Lachin corridor — has become a weapon of the Azerbaijani government and the focal point of a deepening humanitarian crisis.

That single bridge separates Nagorno-Karabakh — an ethnic Armenian enclave of Azerbaijan — from the rest of the world. Last December, the Azerbaijani government closed it down. Their purpose was clear: to eliminate the ethnic Armenian presence in the region.

They are succeeding.

Azerbaijan’s blockade, the subsequent military campaign, and the dissolution of the self-declared Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh are all part of a plan.

Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh are facing an existential threat — and we must come to their aid.

Over several months, Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin corridor deprived 120,000 residents of food, water, fuel and other essential supplies. Pregnant women were forced to walk miles to medical clinics. Fuel short-

ages shut down schools and sidelined emergency vehicles. People got sick from untreated water, then visited pharmacies with empty shelves. Starving citizens lined up for bread in the street, wondering how they would find their family’s next meal.

From our vantage point above the border, we could see a line of close to 20 trucks, filled with the supplies that Armenians so desperately needed, sitting idle on the side of the road. The Azerbaijani government had kept them from entering Nagorno-Karabakh for months.

Our Armenian counterparts made it clear that the crisis is getting worse. Increased military aggression from Azerbaijan has already claimed hundreds of lives. In this chaos, dozens and possibly even hundreds more — mainly civilians — were killed or injured in an explosion at a gas station. They were getting fuel in order to flee — just a few of more than 100,000 people who have left their homes to seek safety in Armenia over the last week. The cause of the explosion is still unknown — but its deadly toll was a result of the Azerbaijani campaign to force Armenians out.

Although these stories were deeply disturbing, so too was the lack of information. Until international observers are allowed unimpeded entry into Nagorno-Karabakh, we will be forced to speculate about the extent of these crimes. But almost the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh has already fled — they would not do so unless it was their only choice.

We cannot bear witness to these atrocities in silence. We cannot let these stories fall on deaf ears. The Arme-

nians I met did not want to hear just words — they wanted action, and we must come to their aid.

The U.S. must help ensure that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh receive the humanitarian assistance they desperately need. Critically — given the history of this region — we must do everything we can to bring in neutral observers to shine a light on the conditions that the Azerbaijani government has created.

But there must also be consequences for this violence. We must halt all U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan, and empower President Joe Biden to impose harsh sanctions. I am working to pass legislation that would hold Azerbaijan accountable and prevent taxpayer dollars from financing Azerbaijani aggression. There must be a price paid for these crimes against the Armenian people.

The day after seeing the border, I paid my respects at the memorial to the Armenian Genocide. The monument is a reminder of a devastating history, and the deep resonance of genocide across generations of the Armenian people. But as I lay flowers near the eternal flame, I also saw it as a call to action, urging us to do everything in our power to stem the tide of ethnic violence. If we are to truly heed that call, we must stand firmly beside the Armenian people.

(Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) has represented the state of Michigan in the United States Senate since 2014. He currently serves as Chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and a member of the Armed Services Committee. This article originally appeared on Detroit Free Press on October 9.)





# What Next for Nagorno Karabakh?

By **Benyamin Poghosyan**  
Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

On September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan launched a military offensive against the self-declared Nagorno Karabakh Republic with one clear goal – to destroy it. It was a logical continuation of Azerbaijan's decades-long policy, including the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war and the blockade of the Lachin (Berdzor) corridor imposed in December 2022. After 24 hours of intensive fighting, the self-declared Nagorno Karabakh Republic surrendered. A few days later, the large exodus of the Armenian population started, and by the end of September 2023, less than 100 Armenians were left in Nagorno Karabakh. On September 28, the president of the self-declared Nagorno Karabakh Republic signed a decree to dissolve the Republic by the end of 2023.

The reaction in Armenia to these events was somewhat surprising. The government made it clear that Armenia would not intervene to prevent the destruction of Nagorno

Karabakh. Most Armenians went to social media, lamenting the lack of actions by Russia, the EU, and the US. Many were genuinely surprised that for Russia and the collective West, geopolitical or economic interests had more value than the fate of 100,000 Armenians who lived in Nagorno Karabakh for the last several millennia.

Most Armenians appeared to live in a parallel universe where the world powers were acting based only on values. The second reaction of Armenian society was the quest to find culprits. The list was quite long – starting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and ending with President of the European Council Charles Michel, with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and even US President Joe Biden somewhere in the middle. Another trend was to change social media profile photos, putting pictures either taken in Nagorno Karabakh or with cultural and historical monuments of Nagorno Karabakh.

Yes, many Armenians also take part in

numerous private initiatives to support the forcibly displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh, but all know that this will not continue forever. Several months later, many will be overwhelmed by the problems of their daily lives, and few will continue to support Karabakh Armenians, as was the case with the forcibly displaced Armenians from Shushi and Hadrut due to the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war.

What is mainly missing are the debates and discussions on what should be done now, after Azerbaijan finished with Nagorno Karabakh by force. There are two ways forward – the first path is to concentrate on the humanitarian issues of the forcibly displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh, seeking to accommodate some of them in Armenia and forget about the 32 years of existence of the self-declared Nagorno Karabakh Republic. Part of this strategy is the talk about the “right of return” of Armenians to Nagorno Karabakh and the discussions about to whom Armenia should apply to secure that right – the UN, the EU,

the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the international Court of Justice, the US, or other countries such as France, or, to put this in other words, who should become the “savior of the Armenians” this time.

The problem here is the crystal-clear fact that no Armenian from Nagorno Karabakh can live under Azerbaijani jurisdiction, regardless of any international presence in Karabakh “to secure their rights.” The only way to secure the right of returns of Armenians is to end Azerbaijani control over Nagorno Karabakh, and Armenia can do that only through military means. All other discussions about the international community, international law, and other fascinating terms are simple manipulations for some political gains and political goals, either inside or outside Armenia. Option one is the direct path to very soon transform Nagorno Karabakh into a new “Western Armenia” or “Nakhijevan” with songs, restaurants with Karabakh toponyms in downtown Yerevan, or even some residential areas replicating the names of Karabakh towns or Stepanakert suburbs/neighborhoods.

However, there are other available options. Option two envisages the perception of the fact that the world will pass through a very turbulent one or two decades as a transition is underway from a unipolar system to something different. It is too challenging to assess this new order, but it can be argued that the South Caucasus will be part of this turbulence and transition. Thus, the geopolitics of the South Caucasus will continue to change, including the balance of power and the relations between key players. It fully applies also to the future of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno Karabakh. However, if Armenia sits and waits, it will probably continue to lose, as it has been losing since 2020.

The first thing which should be done, and it should be done immediately, at least by the end of 2023, is to repeal the decree of the president of the self-declared Nagorno Karabakh Republic on the dissolution of the Republic. Without going into legal battles about the legality of this decree, it is clear that if it is not repealed, it will significantly complicate any actions to reverse the situation beyond 2023. The repeal of the decree will mean that both the president and parliament of the self-declared Nagorno Karabakh Republic will continue to function until spring 2025, as both were elected in the spring of 2020 for five years. They should continue to function in Yerevan, or, if the Armenian government thinks that Azerbaijan will use their functioning as a casus belli to justify its new aggression against Armenia, which Azerbaijan prepares to launch in any case, discussions should be held to find another country which may allow these bodies to function.

Canceling the September 28 decree does not mean Armenia should withdraw from negotiations with Azerbaijan on a peace treaty. An Armenia – Azerbaijan peace treaty, including the recognition by Armenia of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within Soviet Azerbaijan borders (86,600 square km.), has nothing to do with the existence of the self-declared Nagorno Karabakh Republic. The Republic should continue to function, and Armenians should be ready to restore it if the necessary conditions emerge amidst the global and regional turmoil. No one can guarantee that these conditions will emerge, but no one can argue that they will not. What should be done is to be ready to use them if they appear, and the first step in that direction is the cancellation of the September 28 decree.

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

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