

France and Armenia to Sign Weapons Agreement

PARIS (Azatutyun) — France pledged to boost Armenia’s air defenses, train Armenian military personnel and help the South Caucasus country reform its armed forces as the French group Thales and Yerevan signed a contract for the purchase of three radar systems on Monday, October 23.

French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu and his Armenian counterpart Suren Papikyan also signed a “letter of intent” on the future delivery of Mistral short-range surface-to-air missiles.

They gave no financial or other details of these deals during a joint news conference held after their talks in Paris. Lecornu emphasized the defensive character of what will be the first-ever Western-manufactured major weapons supplied to Armenia.

“It is a weapon system which, by its very nature, can only be used when there is an aggression against Armenian territory and often with civilian populations underneath,” he said, alluding to the risk of Azerbaijani invasion of Armenia.

Lecornu also announced that France will train Armenian officers to operate the military equipment known for its “remarkable detection capabilities” and assist in ongoing reforms of the Armenian armed forces. A special French military official will advise the Armenian Defense Ministry on those reforms, he said, adding that French instructors will be sent to Armenia to teach its troops new combat techniques.

The French government first signaled arms supplies to Armenia last year following large-scale fighting on the country’s border with Azerbaijan which resulted in Azerbaijani territorial gains. It gave the green light for them following last month’s Azerbaijani military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh that led to the restoration of Azerbaijani control over the region and displaced its virtually entire ethnic Armenian population. French President Emmanuel Macron suggested that Baku might now attack Armenia as well.



French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu, right, with Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan

“France has given its agreement to the conclusion of future contracts with Armenia which will allow the delivery of military equipment to Armenia so that it can ensure its defense,” French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said during an October 3 visit

to Yerevan.

The Azerbaijani government condemned Colonna’s announcement as further proof of Paris’s pro-Armenian bias in the Karabakh conflict. Baku itself has increased its military expenditures after the 2020 Karabakh

war, buying more weapons from Turkey, Israel and possibly other countries.

Armenia is stepping up military cooperation with France, a major NATO member, amid its worsening relationship with Russia, a long-time ally. The tensions stem in large measure from what Yerevan sees as a lack of Russian support in the conflict with Azerbaijan. Moscow’s failure to prevent, stop or even condemn the Azerbaijani offensive in Karabakh only added to them.

Also, Armenian leaders have implied over the past year that Moscow has failed to supply more weapons to Yerevan despite Russian-Armenian defense contracts signed after the 2020 war in Karabakh. They have said they have no choice but to look for alternative arms suppliers.

France, which is home to a sizable and influential Armenian community, has become Armenia’s leading Western backer during Macron’s rule. Lecornu said on Monday that he is committed to the South Caucasus nation’s territorial integrity despite the fact that “we are not part of the same military and political alliances.”

Iran Hosts Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks as Russia Says Main Issue Resolved in Karabakh

TEHRAN (Reuters/Public Radio of Armenia) — The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan met on October 23 in Iran, their first talks since Azerbaijan secured control over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, with Russia saying the main issue had been resolved pending further work on a peace treaty.

The meeting in the aftermath of Azerbaijan’s lightning offensive into the disputed territory also took place against the background of rising tensions in the Middle East.

“The conflict has, on the whole, been settled. Both sides agree that Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan and that was the main issue to be settled,” Russia’s Tass news agency quoted Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as saying in Tehran.

“Of course, practical steps remain for a full normalization of relations, particularly preparations for a peace treaty, the demarcation of borders and the establishment of economic transport links without impediment.”

see TALKS, page 4



David Ignatius Has His Ear to the Ground In Washington’s Foreign Policy Circles

By Aram Arkun
 Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — David Reynolds Ignatius is one of the best known journalists writing on foreign affairs in the

United States. Called “one of the wise men of Washington” by a *New York Times* columnist, the 73-year-old Ignatius remains at the pinnacle of his long and eminent journalistic career and has also been quite successful in a parallel career as a prolific novelist who primarily writes on espionage. His 2007 novel *Body of Lies* was made the following year into a film directed by Ridley Scott and starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Russell Crowe. His syndicated column for the *Washington Post* appears twice a week in scores of newspapers around the world and Ignatius is known for his access to well-informed insider sources.

The Washington Post



see IGNATIUS, page 12

NBC News Correspondent Dilanian to Speak at Mirror-Spectator Panel, Gala

By Aram Arkun
 Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Ken Dilanian is the justice and intelligence correspondent for NBC News, based

in Washington D.C. He will be one of the panel members discussing “Media Coverage of Armenia and Artsakh Today” at Tufts University on Friday, October 27, and at the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator’s* 90th anniversary gala the following evening.

Starting last year, Dilanian’s focus has been the Justice Department. He has an office in the Justice Department’s press room, and covers the FBI, the Attorney-General, and the various things the Justice Department is doing, including the special council investigations and prosecutions of the prior president, and the investigation of the current president and his son.



see DILANIAN, page 8

ARMENIA

Wings of Tatev Cable Car Nominated For World Travel Awards 2023

Page 3



PASADENA

Pasadena Armenians Unites to Raise Awareness for Armenian POWs

Page 5



LOS ANGELES

UCLA Promise Armenian Institute Hosts Evening Lecture with Garo Paylan

Page 10





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Government to Allocate AMD 870 Million to Subsidize Grape Purchases

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The Armenian government decided on October 19 to allocate 870 million drams for subsidizing grape purchases.

The funds will be provided to the Ministry of Economy to subsidize purchases of grapes by economic entities which bought from 6,000 to 9,000 tons and from 15,000 tons and more.

According to the Ministry of Economy, the surplus grapes in Armavir and Ararat provinces this year is estimated at about 65 thousand tons.

Also, the government will provide Hay-Almost CJSC a budgetary credit of 2 billion drams for purchasing up to 1 million liters of Armenian brandy alcohol of at least five-year ageing. The loan is granted for two years at 0.01% per annum.

Respiratory Viruses Surge

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia's health authorities report a surge in acute respiratory infections in the country. In a statement on Thursday, October 19, the Health Ministry said the number of people seeking medical care in clinics and other medical facilities for respiratory viruses had increased.

The virus cases in Armenia exceed the epidemic threshold 1.3 times, it said.

70% of cases have been confirmed among people under 18 years of age. Of them, 57% are children under four years old.

The Health Ministry urges all to get vaccinated to contain the spread of influenza and other viral infections.

UNICEF Calls for Increased Access to Education for Refugees in Armenia

GENEVA/YEREVAN — Two-thirds of refugee children in Armenia are enrolled in national school systems, one month after more than 21,000 school-age children fled their homes. Efforts must now focus on increasing access for the remaining 1 in 3 children currently not attending school, UNICEF said on October 24.

Children who arrived in Armenia have not had continuous access to quality education in recent years, making an inclusive school system that provides catch-up classes and tailored support critical.

"Schools are more than places of learning. This is especially true in times of displacement and uncertainty. Access to education provides refugee children with the structure and support needed to help them overcome their experiences. Schools also provide children with nutrition and mental health services, socialisation and much more to support their health and well-being," said Christine Weigand, UNICEF Armenia Representative.



Samvel Shahramanyan is greeted by a protest.

Exiled Karabakh Leader Meets Protestors in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Samvel Shahramanyan, the exiled president of Nagorno-Karabakh, appeared to backtrack on his decision to dissolve the unrecognized republic as he was confronted by angry Karabakh refugees in Yerevan on Friday, October 20.

More than a hundred of them gathered outside Karabakh's permanent representation to Armenia in the morning to demand answers on Azerbaijan's September 19-20 military offensive that allowed Baku to regain control over the region and caused the mass exodus of its ethnic Armenian population.

The mainly male protests also sought explanations for Shahramanyan's September 28 decree which said that the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, set up in September 1991, will cease to exist on January 1.

"No document can dissolve the republic created by the people," Shahramanyan told the angry crowd when he emerged from the building. "I am going to publicly explain this soon."

Shahramanyan said he signed the decree to stop the hostilities and enable the Kara-

bakh Armenians to safely flee their homeland.

"We saved the lives of our guys, we saved the lives of our civilian population which was in danger. Had the war been stopped an hour later, they would have entered the city [of Stepanakert] and slaughtered people," the Karabakh leader added in his first public comments made since the Azerbaijani assault.

The protesters were unconvinced. Some of them broke into the building shortly afterwards, forcing Shahramanyan to meet with them. The meeting did not satisfy them either.

Shahramanyan again emerged from his office early in the afternoon, condemning the protesters' "provocations" and urging them to disperse. The crowd did not heed the appeal, continuing to block an adjacent street.

Some protesters stopped and vandalized a car that drove out of the Karabakh mission's compound later in the afternoon. They also brawled with people, presumably Karabakh officials, sitting in the black SUV.

The chief of Shahramanyan's staff

was reportedly injured in the violence. A spokesman for the Armenian Interior Ministry said that four men were detained on the spot.

Some Armenian opposition figures were quick to accuse Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of organizing the protest through other Karabakh leaders loyal to him. They said Pashinyan, who faced mass protests in Yerevan late last month, is thus trying to deflect the blame for the fall of Karabakh. Pashinyan's political allies have openly blamed the region's current leadership, backed by the Armenian opposition, for the Azerbaijani takeover of Karabakh and its almost complete depopulation.

Shahramanyan was elected president by Karabakh lawmakers mostly critical of Pashinyan just ten days before the Azerbaijani offensive. His predecessor Arayik Harutiunian, who was arrested by Azerbaijan after the assault, was thought to be more loyal to Pashinyan.

According to Armenian press reports, Shahramanyan has tried in vain to meet with Pashinyan since joining more than 100,000 Karabakh Armenians in taking refuge in Armenia.



Protestors enter the Karabakh offices in Yerevan.



ARMENIA

Latest Number of Forcibly Displaced Artsakh Armenians at 101,000

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — The number of forcibly displaced persons who've arrived to Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh stood at 101,848 according to the latest updated registration data released on October 20.

Of that total, 48,964 are male and 52,884 are female, Migration and Citizenship Service Director Armen Ghazaryan told reporters.

On October 20, 15,207 forcibly displaced persons (9,447 minors, 5,760 adults) received a one-time support of 100,000 drams (\$248). According to the Ministry

of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, in general, more than 95,200 people have already received the one-time sum.



Convoys moving Artsakh natives to safety in Armenia

of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, in general, more than 95,200 people have already received the one-time sum.

A group of people forcibly displaced from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) on October 23 gathered outside the French Embassy in Yerevan, asking for asylum in France.

"Today I live in Armenia together with 14 members of my family, but I would like us to be granted asylum in France," Artsakh war participant Alexander Hayrapetyan said.

"We are taking this step because the Artsakh people are separated in Armenia," he added.

The man ruled out living under Azer-

baijani rule in Artsakh, citing examples of grievances.

"Seeing someone being killed before your very eyes, recalling the Sumgait events which were repeated in Artsakh, how can you live with these cruel people and be sure that there is a future there?" he said.

More than 3,000 of the over 100,000 forcibly displaced persons who arrived to Armenia have left the country, PM Nikol Pashinyan said this week.

"As of today, more than 3,000 forcibly displaced persons of Nagorno-Karabakh

have left the Republic of Armenia. I don't want to make conclusions regarding this topic. Perhaps most of them are visiting their family members to spend some time with them. I hope we are giving this message very clear, and also calling upon our brothers and sisters forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh to consider staying in Armenia a priority. We are doing everything to support them," Pashinyan said at the Cabinet meeting.

"We've allocated over \$100 million, we will implement the most various projects," Pashinyan said, calling on the forcibly displaced persons of Nagorno-Karabakh to stay in Armenia.

(Stories from Armenpress and Panorama.am were used to compile this report.)



WORLD TRAVEL LEADING CABLE CAR RIDE 2023 Wings of Tatev as a Nominee

Wings of Tatev Cable Car Nominated For World Travel Awards 2023

YEREVAN — The Wings of Tatev cable car has once again been nominated for the prestigious international tourism award, World Travel Awards 2023, in the category of "World's Leading Cable Car Ride 2023." The project previously won in this category in 2021. Now it is competing with cable cars from Bolivia, Brazil, Vietnam, Canada, New Zealand, the USA, and South Africa.

Wings of Tatev is the world's longest passenger cable car. It entered the Guinness Book of Records not only because of its length — 5,752 meters — but also as the world's only engineering structure of this scale built in just 10 months. The ropeway project was realized by the Austrian-Swiss company Doppelmayr/Garaventa, a leader in the field of ropeway construction.

On October 16, 2023, the Wings of Tatev cable car celebrated its 13th year of operation. Since its opening in 2010, it has been used by more than 1,300,000 people. Thanks to it, every fifth tourist in Armenia visits Tatev. The Wings of Tatev project is part of the "Tatev Revival Program," initiated by Ruben Vardanyan and Veronika Zonabend. The cable car is a non-profit project, and all its proceeds are directed towards the restoration of the Tatev Monastery and community development. The cable car is managed by Impulse Business Management.

To vote for the Wings of Tatev, follow these steps: 1. Visit the official award website by following the [link](#). 2. Register with your email. 3. Confirm the received email. 4. Click on the "Vote Now" button. 5. Choose the "World" section. 6. Select line 60: "World's Leading Cable Car Ride 2023." 7. Vote for "Wings of Tatev, Armenia."

The voting deadline is November 17, 2023.

Noubar Afeyan and His Family Foundation Commit \$2M to Help Displaced People of Artsakh

BOSTON — Noubar Afeyan, co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, and Anna Afeyan, co-chair of the Afeyan Foundation, announce a commitment of \$2 million to serve over 100,000 displaced people from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) who were uprooted from their homes following the deadly attacks by Azerbaijan in September. The donation will be provided by the Afeyan Foundation, which previously teamed up with Aurora to help the people of Artsakh in the aftermath of the 2020 war. The latest financial support will focus on several areas including meeting basic needs, providing medical and psychosocial care, and establishing longer-term educational opportunities.

"The people of Artsakh were terrorized for months, attacked in their homes, and then forcibly expelled overnight," said the Afeyan Foundation in a statement. "Each of the refugees deserves dignified resettlement in Armenia. With winter approaching, the time to act is now. We thank those who have already taken action and implore the global commu-



Children from Artsakh in Armenia (Narek Aleksanyan photo)

nity to come together to provide the support needed to address this humanitarian crisis."

In September 2020, after a large-scale armed attack was unleashed against Artsakh, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

launched the Aurora for Artsakh program to help local people facing a grave humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the war. The displaced persons were given food, shelter, and clothes, as well as kits with essentials

and vital medication. Over the course of the program, Aurora allocated \$2.2 million to support 93 humanitarian aid projects implemented by 70 local and international partners. The program concluded in June 2023.

INTERNATIONAL

Armenian, Azeri PMs to Travel to Tbilisi for Silk Road Forum

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Armenian and Azerbaijani prime ministers are scheduled to attend the Fourth Tbilisi Silk Road Forum to be held in the Georgian capital on October 26-27, according to data on the event's official website.

Incidentally, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani Prime Minister Ali Asadov are named among speakers.

This year's forum is expected to host about 2,000 participants from over 60 countries, including political and business leaders, experts, and representatives of international organizations and IFIs, to examine factors that effectively define regional and global trade and connectivity.

The forum's key topics for discussion will include new architecture of the East-West Trade, increasing role of the Middle Corridor, digital connectivity, diversification in the energy sector, tourism sustainability, and diversified investments for resilient future.

New Bridge Linking Iran And Armenia May Be Built

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia and Iran have discussed the prospect of building a new bridge on the Armenian-Iranian border, the Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash said on October 23 in Yerevan.

Speaking at a signing ceremony of the agreement on constructing a section of the North-South Road, Bazrpash said Iran is ready to convey its experience in infrastructure development to Armenia.

The current bridge's capacity is no longer sufficient to ensure the growing trade volumes, he said.

An agreement has been reached to launch a working group on this matter.

"The Iranian government is expressing its readiness on cooperating with Armenia around various programs," the Iranian minister said, adding that many Iranian businesses want to be involved in the Armenian economy.

In turn, Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan said that the construction project of the southern part of North-South highway went through a rather difficult phase of discussions, but eventually reached its launch. He said that the project is of great significance for both countries.

Azerbaijan, Turkey Hold Joint Drills

BAKU (Reuters) — Azerbaijan said on Monday, October 23, it had begun a series of joint military exercises with close ally Turkey, the first since Baku retook the break-away region of Nagorno-Karabakh last month, prompting most of the territory's ethnic Armenians to flee.

Armenians, Germans Join Efforts To Help Artsakh Refugees

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WIESBADEN — Artsakh Armenians who have been forced to leave their homes and found refuge in Armenia, have brought with them little more than what they could hastily pack and carry. Welcomed in temporary shelters or homes of relatives and friends, they need everything. To answer the call, several non-governmental organizations in Germany have been raising funds to finance some of their most basic needs. In partnership with established organizations in Armenia, they are providing basic material and social needs.

Armenians in Gyumri and the Shirak region know best the value of immediate relief, as the memory of the devastating earthquake in 1988 is part of the collective memory. At that time, the German Red Cross as well as Caritas sent teams to Gyumri. The working group Hilfe für Armenien e.V (Help for Armenia) organized from 1989 to 1993, under direction of the German Red Cross, to build and equip

a polyclinic, the Berlin Center for Mothers and Children. Alexan Ter-Minasyan functioned as representative of the Red Cross, administrating donations from Germany. When in 1996 further financial support was required, Ter-Minasyan organized a social pilot project of the Red Cross to convert part of the building into a hotel, whose income would support the center. Ter-Minasyan continues to run the hotel, and in 2018 was named Honorary Consul of Germany.

Now Hilfe für Armenien e.V, which has continued financial support for the clinic, is again in the forefront of relief efforts. As of October 1, 4,400 refugees had been counted in Gyumri and Shirak, of 5,000 registered persons, who according to the government were to be accommodated there. In addition, about another 1,300 had prob-

ably found refuge in homes of relatives or friends. The Berlin Art Hotel has been providing free accommodation and care for large families, until they could find more permanent housing, among them a family of seven. These newcomers, especially the children, are traumatized and need not only shelter and food but also human warmth and care, which the generous personnel of the hotel are providing.

The problem faced by public authorities



Youngsters being helped by Hilfe für Armenien e.V. (Photo courtesy of Hilfe für Armenien e.V.)

in Gyumri and the region is that an estimated 10,000 "normal" housing units are lacking. Anyone familiar with the area has seen that there are people still living in containers (*domiks*) which were supplied back in 1988 as emergency shelters. Now the governor's administration is planning to make use of summer camps, a gym, and available school rooms. These facilities also require refurbishing; the camp needs to be winterized, and provided with heating, and all available locations must be outfitted with beds and mattresses, the very most basic needs. The For Armenia organization has quickly put together several programs to meet these requirements: local producers can start making beds and mattresses, quickly, and thereby provide jobs and local tax revenue. Transportation for delivery is a further consideration. Not to mention ba-

sic furniture, to start a new life. The group has issued calls for donations, stressing, "It's a matter of quick relief for people who have lost everything: homeland, belongings, hope, and future."

If For Armenia is making beds and mattresses available, AYO!, a project of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), is raising money for sheets and pillowcases. Significantly, FAR, too, is an organization that was founded in 1988, in response to the earthquake disaster. Just recently, AYO! announced it had delivered "bedding kits" to Noyemberyan in the province of Tavush. At least 122 families had arrived there from Artsakh, after a long trek which some of the refugees had made on foot. Several had found accommodations in available rooms in houses or apartments.

A roof over one's head, a place to sleep, hygienic facilities and food on the table are the most essential needs every Armenian expelled from Artsakh requires. For the many families with children, education comes next. An initiative to provide instruction in computer skills for youngsters is offered by the Social Support Computer Center NGO, in Echmiadzin. The president of the organization is Lilia Totalyan, who is the instructor of a course, "Internet Challenges—Cyber Security and Cyber Hygiene" within the framework of the "Civic Education" program of the World Council of Churches Armenia Round Table foundation. The course is designed for children from Artsakh, 10-15 years old, settled in Echmiadzin and its environs.

The course has three sections: computer literacy, with basic knowledge of computer types, structures, devices, operating systems (including Microsoft Office); photo and video editors, introducing graphic and video programs; and, engineering art and programming, basic as well as, in a second stage, relatively more advanced WEB programming.

In Wiesbaden, Germany, IT specialist Karen Gharslyan is working with the Social Support Computer Center NGO, organizing financial as well as logistical support for computer education projects. Collaborating in the effort is the Mirak-Weissbach-Foundation, also located in Wiesbaden.

Iran Hosts Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks as Russia Says Main Issue Resolved in Karabakh

TALKS, from page 1

Ministers from Iran and Turkey also attended. A joint statement said participants agreed to respect the territorial integrity of countries in the region.

Iran's foreign minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian, said before the meeting that the talks represented a "historic opportunity.... The war in South Caucasus has ended, and it is time for peace and cooperation."

"The presence of outsiders in the region will not only not solve any problems but will also complicate the situation further," he added, without elaborating.

That was an implicit reference to the United States and the European Union, whose involvement in the search for a peace agreement has particularly annoyed Russia.

In a statement referring to the meetings, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said the US welcomes any good-faith engagements that contribute to peace and stability for the people of the

South Caucasus.

"We welcome any good-faith engagements that contribute to peace and stability for the people of the South Caucasus regardless of where those talks happen or who is hosting them," Miller said at a daily briefing.

"But that being said, we recognize the South Caucasus' delicate geographic position regarding Iran and Russia, but we have not found these countries to be reliable partners, to understate matters," he added.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, quoted by state media, said Tehran "was ready to assist in resolving the existing disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia."

Russia regards itself as the security guarantor between Azerbaijan and Armenia but the demands and distractions of its war in Ukraine have led to a weakening of its influence in the South Caucasus.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, in a statement posted on the X social media platform, said Ankara hoped the talks

would "give impetus to normalization and peace processes."

In Paris, French Defense Minister Sebastian Lecornu said France was helping improve Armenia's air defense capacity with the sale of three radars and an agreement on the future delivery of Mistral anti-air missiles. (See related story on page 1.)

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi received Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

The interlocutors hailed the high-level political dialogue established between the two neighboring and friendly countries, which is based on mutual respect and thousand-year-old brotherhood of the two peoples.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and the President of Iran emphasized the deepening of Armenia-Iran cooperation in various fields and underlined efficient steps towards the implementation of agreements in that direction.

Mirzoyan and Raisi also discussed regional and international security issues.



Community News

Alex Koceyan is 2023 Recipient Of Boyajian Fine Arts Scholarship

PALOS HEIGHTS, Ill. — Alex Koceyan has been named the 2023 recipient of the annual Myron and Carol Boyajian Fine Arts Scholarship.

Koceyan is attending the College of Creative Studies in Detroit. He served as an instructor with the Arts of Armenia summer arts camp at St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield, Mich.

The scholarship is awarded through the Sts. Joachim and Anne Armenian Apostolic Church of Palos Heights.

The first recipient was Tatevik Kocharyan, who was studying for a master's degree in operatic perfor-



Carol Boyajian

mance at the Longy School of Music in Boston.

Carol Boyajian passed away on March 5, 2021 after a 10 year fight with cancer. She herself began her college career with a scholarship to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) with academics at the University of Chicago (UoC). Graduating from high school as an awarded student artist, Carol was unable to afford college, and considered joining the Army or Navy to gain an education later on the GI Bill. Her high school art teacher told her to register at the Art Institute and "that things would be taken care of." Carol never learned the name of her benefactor, but rewarded that confidence by hard work in the arts and her academics. She was granted a full 4-year scholarship to SAIC and the University of Chicago after one semester of school. After Carol graduated (with high faculty honors), the couple promised each other to find a way in the future to "pay forward" that good deed. Carol taught art to mostly adults for over 35 years and produced numerous commissioned fine and illustrative art until she became too ill to work.

"I am happy to be able to honor Carol's memory this way; to see other young people get a start as Carol did years ago," Myron Boyajian said. "Carol and I were married in the Sts. Joachim and Anne Armenian Apostolic Church, then in Chicago, now in Palos Heights, IL. Carol was baptized in the Armenian Church and came to look upon all of our Armenian families and friends as members of her own family."

The fund is administered by Father Tavit Boyajian (no relation) in coordination with other Church Diocesan Council members.



Alique Bardakian reading names of abducted Armenian civilians

Pasadena Armenian Community Unites to Raise Awareness for Armenian POWs

PASADENA, Calif. — On Friday, October 20, 28 Pasadena-based Armenian organizations united to shed light on the plight of Armenian POWs, MIAs and captured civilians and demand their immediate release from Azerbaijan.

The event commenced with a vigil at Pasadena Memorial Park's Armenian Genocide Memorial. The vigil began with renowned duduk player Ruben Harutyunyan performing solemn melodies. Very Rev. Fr. Yeremia Abgaryan led the clergy and deacons in the Requiem Service and remembered those who made the ultimate sacrifice for Armenia and Artsakh. Jonathan Dergazarian led the collective singing of *Der Voghormia*. In front of the Armenian Genocide Memorial, those in attendance paused for a moment of silence to show solidarity with Artsakh and remember those who were ethnically cleansed from their over two millennia homeland. Immediately following the vigil, the Armenian General Benevolent Union and HMEM (Armenian General Union for Physical Education and Scouts) Scouts were at the forefront of a long

see DEMONSTRATION, page 7



Mihran Toumajan, assistant secretary of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, being interviewed by KABC Channel 7 TV



Very Rev. Fr. Yeremia Abgaryan addresses the crowd prior to the start of the Requiem Service

Michigan Armenian Community Meets With Senator Peters To Discuss Artsakh Humanitarian Crisis

SOTUHFIELD, Mich. — The St. John Armenian Church and the Michigan Chapter of the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) hosted a luncheon meeting and briefing with United States Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) and members of the Armenian Community.

The members in attendance, as well as Very Rev. Aren Jebejian, pastor of the St. John Armenian Church who attended virtually, extended their appreciation to Peters for standing with the Armenian people during the Artsakh humanitarian crisis, and for his recent fact-finding trip to Armenia.

During the luncheon, which was graciously underwritten by Assembly Michigan Co-Chair John Jamian, Senator Peters spoke about his visit to Armenia, where he had the opportunity to meet with Armenian officials and witnessed for himself Azerbaijan's blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Peters made clear that he recognizes how critical the situation is on the ground and emphasized that the "US must help ensure that the Armenians from the region receive humanitarian assistance and that the US must stop all military assistance to Azerbaijan."

Senator Peters advised the attendees that he has introduced the Armenian Protection Act (Senate Bill 3000), which is co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of Senators to repeal the waiver authority to Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act with respect to assistance to Azerbaijan. This legislation would "prevent taxpayer dollars from financing Azerbaijani aggression," according to the Senator.

A question-and-answer portion of the program followed, with many attendees expressing their thanks to Senator Peters for his leadership in the Senate regarding Armenians displaced from Artsakh, as well as



Senator Gary Peters answering a question from Harry Kezelian, Jr, with from left, John Jamian, Michigan Assembly Co-Chair, Senator Gary Peters, Gary Assarian, David Terzibashian, and Kezelian.

his involvement with the Assembly, where he recently headlined an event honoring former Secretary of the Navy Paul Ignatius.

The meeting concluded with a tour of the Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum, where Museum Director Lucy Ardash gifted Peters a book as a gesture of gratitude from the Michigan Armenian community for his efforts regarding the Armenian people.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Barry Tashian

*On the same stage with
The Beatles*

By Ashot Grigoryan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Barry Tashian's band, The Remains, was one of the opening acts on the Beatles' final US tour in 1966. The Remains was formed in Boston in 1964. In 1965, like the Beatles, they appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, but gained international fame as representatives of garage rock only after the band broke up in 1966. Later, they reunited several times.

Barry and his wife, Holly, created an eponymous country, folk and bluegrass duo, which was very popular and won many awards.

Their son, Daniel, is a musician, producer and songwriter who, among other awards, has received two Grammys.

Unfortunately, due to his health condition, Barry is not able to do any interviews now, but Holly Tashian kindly agreed to answer my questions.

Where were Mr. Tashian's parents from? What do you know about his ancestors?

Barry's mother's parents (Misak Apoyan and Esther Barsumian) immigrated from Anitab, Turkey in the Holocaust. They settled in the Chicago area.

Barry's father's parents (Vahan and Nazelie Tashjian) immigrated from Sivas, Armenia in 1897 and also settled in the Chicago area.

Barry's parents met at the World's Fair in Chicago and eventually moved to Westport, CT to raise their family. Barry's father (Melkon Tashian) worked in New York City as an advertising art director. He was a brilliant artist and we have his collection of work.

My family also moved to Westport in 1953 and my father worked in New York City. Barry and I went to high school together and were good friends there. It wasn't until after I finished my college education, and Barry finished his tour, opening for the Beatles, that we actually dated each other and eventually decided to get married. That was 50 years ago!

We both grew up in musical families, so it seemed only natural that we began playing music together and eventually formed a country band in 1972.

Our career together is a long story in itself, maybe for another article...



The Remains

I read a lot about The Remains. What is the phenomenon that after so many years this group is so popular?

Barry formed the Remains while in college at Boston University. They were very popular, mainly because they "rocked", and I do mean "rocked" like the Rolling Stones. If you listen to their recordings from those days, you can hear why the band could draw a lot of fans. However, being a "rock star" was not what Barry was willing to do, so he disbanded the Remains, right after their tour with the Beatles ended in 1966, and moved back to Westport.

To answer your question as to why The Remains are still popular in some circles, I would venture to say they had all the ingredients of being major rock stars, only lacking in the willingness to make that happen.

Mr. Tashian has a book about their tour with the Beatles. Could you tell me a bit about it?

This project took the two of us a year to compile. Like detectives, we contacted newspapers and photo archives, fans who had been to the shows, a *Teen Magazine* writer who was on the tour, and numerous other sources, trying to recreate those 14 days on the Beatles last tour of the US. All we had to use was Barry's hand written diary in a notebook that he took on tour with him. Wisely, his father had suggested that he keep a daily diary of the events during the tour. It wasn't until nearly 40 years later that we discovered the diary. A friend of ours said, "You have a book here." And so we went to work putting it all together. Bar-



Barry and Holly Tashian duo

ry's father did the layout for us. Fortunately we found a publisher interested in putting the book on the market to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the Beatles' last tour.

The book is out of print now, although there are copies to be found on Amazon Books.

When did the duo Barry and Holly Tashian stop performing? Do you perform solo?

Barry and I began playing in a country band in the early '70's. By 1980, Barry was recruited by country singer Emmylou Harris to play rhythm guitar and sing harmony vocals with her in the Hot Band. They toured and recorded many albums together until 1989, when Emmylou decided to disband the Hot Band. It was then that Barry and I started touring as a duo. We recorded 7 albums together and toured throughout the US, Europe and Australia. Sadly, we never got to Armenia. That would have been very interesting, and I think our music would have been well received. But, at that time, we knew no one to connect with in Armenia.

I think it was around 1998 that the Armenian Diocese celebrated their 100th Anniversary in America. Shahan Arzruni contacted us because he had heard one of our songs *Spinning Straw into Gold* (a song we wrote about Barry's ancestors immigrating

to America and starting a new life). Shahan wanted to name the event "Spinning Straw into Gold" and asked us to perform the song as part of the celebration. That was a huge honor for us, and included meeting the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin I.

We continued to tour until 2005 when we decided that it was not cost effective to continue traveling. We still played local shows and recorded one more album.

Barry is no longer able to play music except in our living room, jamming with a few friends. I continue to play upright bass in four local bands ranging in styles from Mexican folk tunes to Eastern European folk dance tunes, and classical music, as well as bluegrass music.

Have you and Barry ever been to Armenia?

We enjoy cooking Armenian foods and going out to the Turkish restaurants for Lahmajun and Shish Kebabs. Barry's brother visited Aintab, Turkey about 10 years ago and loved meeting the people there, trying to find his grandparents' home in one of the old sections of town. Although he wasn't able to find it, he still had a wonderful time trying.

As for Barry and I visiting Armenia, that is a dream that I'm afraid will not come true...



The Tashjian family in 1900



COMMUNITY NEWS

Pasadena Armenians Unite to Raise Awareness for Armenian POWs

DEMONSTRATION, from page 7
 procession of young students and participants in a march towards Pasadena City Hall.

Television personalities Sona Movsesian and Jill Simonian served as co-masters of ceremony and shared heartfelt remarks at both Memorial Park and City Hall. Committee member Vache Sevadjian presented the Armenian language message on behalf of the coalition and highlighted that, for the first time, Artsakh is now tragically void of Armenians. Committee member Aleksan Giragosian presented the English language message and stressed the unity of the committee in seeking the immediate release of Armenian POWs and captured civilians. He also noted that there are 1,016 Armenians missing in action.

A poignant point of the program featured students reading – one by one – the names of Armenian civilians and prisoners of war currently imprisoned in Azerbaijan. With vigor, the students chanted the message, “You are not forgotten,” in English and Armenian. Great attention to detail was put into composing the list to show the utmost respect to those heroic Armenians over 8,000 miles away, who face inhumane treatment and bear witness to man’s inhumanity to man on a daily basis.

While each name was being read, a group of students held a large banner which read, “We appeal to the Lebanese government to secure the release of Lebanese citizen Vicken Euljeckjian,” who has been imprisoned in Azerbaijan since 2020.

The program concluded with the clergy joining to sing the Lord’s Prayer in Armenian.



Armenian students in front of Pasadena City Hall

Students holding a sign “We appeal to the Lebanese government to secure the release of Lebanese citizen Vicken Euljeckjian from Azerbaijan.”

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COMMUNITY NEWS

NBC News Correspondent Dilanian to Speak at *Mirror-Spectator* Panel, Gala

DILANIAN, from page 1

The 55-year-old Dilanian said that at NBC currently he has three different types of work. “One job is to go on cable and do a live shot. I just talk off the cuff or sometimes read a teleprompter about a breaking story of the day,” he said, but he also still writes articles. These are usually on something interesting and new but not suitable for television, or an article summarizing a television story that he had done.

His third category of work is preparing the television package. He said, “For that you go out and shoot the story. You do the interviews, bring together the visual elements with the help of a producer, and then you write a script putting all that together.”

A Career Path Leads to Iraq

When Dilanian was studying at Williams College, choosing journalism as a career was still not definite. In fact, he said, “I kind of stumbled into it.” He majored in political science and history, and would write for the *Williams Record*, the weekly college newspaper. There was no journalism program at Williams, so he took one month winter study courses from outside journalists.

During his senior year, in 1990-1991, he recalled that there was a lot going on in international affairs, including the Gulf War. “I got the bug writing weekly columns that people were reading. It was fun, but I still wasn’t 100 percent sure how do you even get into journalism,” he said. He also worked on a weekly Williamstown newspaper called *The Advocate*, whose editor took him under his wing and taught him basic news writing skills.

He interviewed for a job in a New York ad agency but did not get accepted. As he was graduating he decided to try to get a job with a newspaper somewhere, he said, and he finally was accepted by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as a suburban reporter. He said, “Even though it was a great newspaper, at the time I was at the very bottom rung, making very little money.” He was green and untrained, he said, and learned on the job.

He became fully hooked on journalism there, exclaiming: “The *Philadelphia Inquirer* at that time had just won the Pulitzer Prize for 17 years in a row. It was filled with these amazing reporters and writers. At the time, they had some six foreign bureaus around the world. It was the height of the metropolitan daily newspaper. It was a really heady time and I just really loved it.”

The job was basically a two-year internship, so he had to leave. He went on to newspapers in Texas, the *Fort Worth Star* and the *San Antonio Express*, before being hired back by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as a staff writer in 1997. He covered city hall and the state legislature, before becoming the *Inquirer’s* last foreign correspondent, based in Rome for three years.

Dilanian said that he had never worked abroad before, but regional newspapers would send their local reporters out when international positions opened. When he came to Rome in the fall of 2002, the buildup to the Iraq War was happening. The *Inquirer* was owned by the American media company Knight Ridder, which owned many other newspapers such as the *Miami Herald*, and all these newspapers decided to pool resources for coverage of the war. They embedded reporters with various American military units, all arranged through the editors back in the US.

Dilanian worked with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, based in Italy, which parachuted into northern Iraq. Aside from being embedded with it, he also worked independently out of what became the newspaper’s bureau in Baghdad. This gave him experience from two different perspectives.

He said, “When you are embedded, you are living with the US military... They are protecting your life, so it does influence how you approach your job as a journalist. There are some concerns about whether that is a fully independent relationship, but you certainly see things from their point of view.” He saw, for example, terrified 18-year-old privates worried about incoming cars being suicide bombers at checkpoints.

However, when he was living in Baghdad with a “fixer” and translator, and driving around, he also saw horrible civilian casualties. He said, “Families would drive up to US military checkpoints, not realizing the implications of that, and get gunned down.”

While in Iraq, he said, he was not ever in any really heavy combat, though he was shot at a couple of times while on patrol with the US troops. He said the most dangerous situation was probably when he was going around independently as a reporter all over the country, from Baghdad to Basra. He even reported in Falluja, which became a no-go zone and a hotbed of the insurgency. He said, “We didn’t realize how dangerous it really was until reporters started getting kidnapped and Americans were

being snatched. All of a sudden, the things that we used to do, nobody could do any more.”

Of all his journalistic work in his career, Dilanian said, “I am most proud of the work I did as a foreign correspondent. That was incredibly fun and rewarding. We were telling stories, giving voice to people who have no voice. I can remember interviewing these marsh Arabs who lived, in a garbage dump outside of Baghdad, and thinking, I had never seen people like this and never will again. It was just incredible, the kind of people that you met – for example, migrants on a boat, coming into Lampedusa, trying to get from Africa to Italy.”

Coming back to the United States, Dilanian eventually took a new position with *USA Today* as State Department and Congressional correspondent from 2007. Remaining in Washington, he became National Security correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times* from 2010-14, after which he continued to cover the intelligence for Associated Press for several years, and finally, in 2007, began his current position with NBC News.

Covering Intelligence Agencies and Department of Justice

For some ten years, Dilanian covered the intelligence agencies. He said, “That was the hardest thing I have ever done in journalism. It never got easy. In the beginning, it is almost impossible, and it takes years to build up your sources. It is every day trying to get people to talk to you who have no incentive to talk to you, and every incentive not to talk to you, and to try to find breadcrumbs, bits and pieces of information.”

Intelligence officers who are currently serving are actually prohibited from speaking with the media. They are periodically polygraphed and asked whether they are talking with reporters, Dilanian related. Consequently, he had to talk with a lot of former operatives who still have contact with people on the inside, as well as consumers of intelligence, including on the Hill. He is using the skills he developed then, he said, to find out at present some answers about how the Hamas attack happened in Gaza and what is going on with the hostages.

Avoiding reliance on just one set of sources is one important way to not be manipulated or deceived about a news situation. Dilanian cited the great lesson of the very company that he was working for at the *Inquirer*, Knight Ridder covering the Iraq war: “My colleagues at the time who were in Washington covering the intelligence agencies were the only people who consistently questioned the account of the Bush administration, putting those stories on the front page. They did that because they were lowly Knight Ridder, and they couldn’t get the kind of people who were talking to the *New York Times* to talk to them, so they were talking to low level people who told them the truth. I always keep that in mind.”

In other words, he summarized, “The best way to explain how to do that is you have to triangulate. If official intelligence sources tell you something, you should check with people on the Hill who do oversight of those folks, and others – different political parties if there is a dispute about something, to make sure that you are not overly reliant on one source of information.”

(While Dilanian was accused in 2014 of submitting some materials he was working on to the CIA for review prior to publication, Dilanian said that the situation was not really what it appeared to be, and he was trying to get information out of the CIA, while he also wrote a lot of stories that were very tough on the agency.)

Dilanian said that his work at the Justice Department is even harder than reporting on spy agencies. He noted: “It is a felony for a prosecutor to talk about a pending grand jury investigation, so that is even tougher than the [situation of a] CIA person talking about unclassified information.”

Since the Justice Department won’t talk about pending investigations officially, almost all the information reported on comes from other sources, such as defense lawyers, lawyers for witnesses who have to come in to a grand jury, and people briefed on what is happening.

Armenian Family Background

Dilanian’s father’s parents were from various parts of the Ottoman Empire. Dilanian said that the family legend was that his grandfather Vahan came over to the US before World War I. When the war broke out, he was not allowed to enlist in the US army, so he went and joined the Armenian Legion (under French command), going to Port Said, Egypt. He was a medic and saw combat, and returned to get US citizenship, though he never learned English.

His grandparents settled in Jamaica Plain in Boston, where Dilanian’s father grew up with his older brother and

sister and had to at least learn some broken Armenian in order to communicate at home.

Dilanian said, “My dad grew up in the 1940s in the time of assimilation [in American society]. He was sort of walking away from his ethnic roots.”

His father later moved for work to Springfield, MA, which is where Ken grew up. Dilanian said there weren’t a lot of Armenians there, in comparison to the Boston area. Nevertheless, he was sent to Armenian school as a child and tried to learn the language a bit, but it didn’t take.

While he has not visited the Republic of Armenia, as a foreign correspondent he went through the Kurdish areas of Turkey like Diyarbakir, which of course used to be Armenian-populated places, but most people there looked at him as an American, he said.

Elsewhere, his last name has led people occasionally to recognize his Armenian background, leading to interesting conversations. Just a week before his interview with the *Mirror-Spectator*, a French ambassador saw his name and spoke about the difficulties of his posting in Turkey.

US Coverage of Armenia and Artsakh

Dilanian said that US media coverage of recent events in Armenia and Artsakh have been “pretty paltry... Most American news consumers are not getting a good picture of what is happening.” He said that perhaps during most of the last few decades, with the semi-frozen Karabakh/Artsakh war, the situation might have been seen as similar to a typical regional war, of which there are many around the world which don’t get coverage. “But when you have this incredible change of status and displacement of all these people? I think ordinarily it would have been a huge story, but because of the Ukraine war, and the craziness in American politics, and the news environment that we are in, it suffered from that environment,” he said.

He felt that prominent people like Rep. Adam Schiff in government, or in business, bringing the issue to the fore could make a difference in getting the press interested, but concluded, “At the end of the day, the news cycle is unforgiving.”

When asked about the utility of demonstrations for attracting press attention, he first declared that it is hard to say, but then added: “Look, journalists are human. If they don’t know about a story, they might learn about it because they might ask themselves, why are all these people down there demonstrating.” While the people deciding what to feature on the evening news would not be swayed by a demonstration, he said it could certainly raise awareness, which in turn could lead people to ask questions and evaluate the topic on its merits as an important story.

In the end, he said the market signal is the most significant determinant: “If there was a demand for this story, every network and every major newspaper would be telling it. It is kind of a chicken and egg situation. I’m sure people are saying, if you’d cover it more, maybe there would be more demand for it. However, the *New York Times* has covered it pretty thoroughly in recent weeks and you are not seeing it really take off as a big story.”

Future for US Newspapers

Dilanian said that it was important to separate the demise of the metropolitan American newspaper from what is happening at the national level. He said, “One story is that all these metro dailies like the one I used to work for, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, or the *Boston Globe*, or the *Chicago Tribune*, used to be these huge robust journalism engines, with reporters all over their region, covering city hall, the legislature and watching for corruption. They are shells of their former selves, and they are just not doing what they used to do. Nothing that I can see has filled that vacuum. That is really a tragic story for our democracy because there are fewer people watching elected officials and public officials, and how they are spending money, what decisions they are making, and how they are exercising power. That business model collapsed, and nothing has moved in to fill it.”

The television news industry is going through its own upheaval as people cut the cord for cable and streaming, so it is not clear how news will be delivered ten years from now, Dilanian opined. The rise in the level of partisanship on cable is affecting politics, and not in a great way, he said.

On the other hand, he declared that at the national level there is more journalism than ever, with new types of coverage by websites or organizations such as Politico, and more recently Semafor and Puck, while the *New York Times* and to a lesser extent papers like the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* have risen to the fore.

Overall, he concluded that it was not clear where the future of journalism was headed.



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Menendez Pleads Not Guilty to Latest Charge of Acting as Foreign Agent

By Jason Beeferman

NEW YORK (Politico) — Sen. Bob Menendez pleaded not guilty in Manhattan federal court Monday, October 23, to a charge he secretly acted as an agent for the government of Egypt during his tenure as the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Menendez's appearance was his second in the past month. He pleaded not guilty in September to charges of bribery and extortion connected to his influential position in the U.S. Senate.

The New Jersey Democrat, 69, appeared before the federal judge for less than 15 minutes. He entered his not guilty plea and then ignored questions from dozens of reporters stationed outside the courthouse.

Menendez wore a navy blue pinstripe suit and a salmon tie, and walked straight toward a black car waiting for him upon exiting the federal building.

He held a stern, expressionless face throughout the proceeding and appeared without his wife, Nadine Menendez, who

was with him in federal court in September during his arraignment for conspiracy to commit bribery, conspiracy to commit honest services fraud and conspiracy to commit extortion.

In that first indictment, prosecutors said the senator and his wife accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes and payments, as well as gold and a Mercedes-Benz, in exchange for him using his office to help three businesspeople and the Egyptian government. Menendez, his wife and the three businesspeople pleaded not guilty to the original charges.

The indictment drew swift condemnation from New Jersey's top Democrats, and over half the Senate called for his resignation. But Menendez has refused to step down, only giving up his position as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Then prosecutors unveiled a superseding indictment about two weeks ago alleging Menendez, his wife and one of the businesspeople charged in September, Wael Hana, acted as unregistered foreign

agents.

The indictment said that Menendez, as Senate Foreign Relations chair, "promised to take and took a series of acts on behalf of Egypt, including on behalf of Egyptian military and intelligence officials." The charging document also said Nadine Menendez and Wael Hana "communicated requests and directives from Egyptian officials" to the senator.

In May 2019, for example, the three met with an unnamed Egyptian intelligence official and discussed an American citizen who'd been injured in a 2015 airstrike by the Egyptian military, according to the indictment. A week later, the Egyptian official told Hana that if Menendez helped resolve the matter, he's "sit very comfortably." Hana told the official to "consider it done." The official then sent a statement from the American citizen's attorney, which Hana sent to Nadine Menendez. She then forwarded it to her husband, according to the indictment.

She had arranged another meeting between Bob Menendez and the Egyptian official in 2020 about a Nile River dam

regarded as one of the most important policy issues for Egypt, according to the indictment. Menendez wrote a letter to top administration officials urging them "to significantly increase the State Department's engagement on negotiations surrounding the [dam]," the indictment said.

Menendez, who withstood bribery charges in a 2017 mistrial, has insisted he is innocent of the latest charges and that prosecutors have targeted him. Still, the latest accusations have put him in the greatest political peril of his nearly 50-year career.

Although he has refused to resign his seat, he has not said whether he will run again next year. Given the deep drop-off in support back home for him in New Jersey, though, it's difficult to see how he could run a viable reelection campaign in a presidential year and potentially risk what should be a safe Democratic seat. Menendez has hinted he is aware of that reality, telling reporters this month, "I'm not going to jeopardize any seat in New Jersey under any circumstances."

OBITUARY

Edgar Danielyan

Died in Horrific Artsakh Fuel Depot Explosion

The Tufenkian Foundation team this week announced the death of a colleague, Edgar Danielyan.

Edgar has been a part of the Tufenkian Foundation team for 18 years, serving in various capacities, including as the manager of the organization's Artsakh projects. He tragically lost his life in the explosion at a fuel depot near Stepanakert on September 25, which claimed many lives and injured many more.

Edgar's dedication to his work was unwavering. He started as a driver and worked his way up, always striving for the highest quality and effectiveness in our projects. His love for his homeland, Artsakh, was

evident in everything he did. Whether it was rebuilding homes damaged in the 2016 and 2020 Artsakh Wars, aiding in resettlement efforts, or addressing food security issues, Edgar's commitment was unmatched.

During the 2020 Artsakh War, Edgar was not content to stand on the sidelines. From the onset of the war, he took up arms, defending his homeland and his people with courage and determination. Edgar has also participated in the 2016 4-day war.

Beyond his professional life, he was a loving husband and a proud father to his two daughters. He was a beloved son, brother, uncle, and a dear friend and colleague to all who knew him.

During a small ceremony last year where the foundation handed over the keys to a renovated home to a 2020 Artsakh War veteran and his family, Edgar expressed his unwavering commitment: "We will continue to stand by the people of Artsakh, especially our wounded heroes." These words were a testament to his character and dedication to our mission.

Edgar Danielyan's passing leaves a void that cannot be filled. He will be deeply missed by all of us at the Tufenkian Foundation and by the communities he served in Artsakh. However, his legacy will endure, inspiring us to continue our work and to honor his memory by supporting the people of Artsakh.



Natalie (Gazoorian) Barmakian

Active, Dedicated to Family

BELMONT, Mass. — Natalie (Gazoorian) Barmakian of Belmont passed away peacefully on October 16, 2023, a few weeks shy of turning 95.

Natalie was born in Worcester to Sarkis and Maritza (Babolian) Gazoorian and graduated from North High School (Worcester, MA) and the Salter School.

She worked as a secretary for both the American Red Cross and Worcester Art Museum.

After raising her children with her husband Ara, she enjoyed working at the "family business," Barmakian Brothers Jewelers. Natalie loved to stay active, playing tennis, cooking, visiting with friends and family, attending her grandchildren's recitals and sporting events, and if ever there was Armenian music playing, to everyone's delight, she was dancing.

Natalie was the wife of the late Ara Levon Barmakian for 53 years and the mother of Karen Herosian and her husband Glenn, of Belmont; Gail Barmakian of Oak Bluffs, Janice McCullough and her husband David, of Sudbury, and Ara Barmakian Jr. and his wife Beth, of Belmont; grandmother (Menzie) to Carly, Aria and Alexis Herosian, David III, Leah, Ethan, and Jesse McCullough, and Ara III, Eliza, Daniel and



James Barmakian; sister of Marcia Gazoorian, of Worcester, and the late Rosalie Chorbajian and the late Sarkis Leon "Lee" Gazoorian. She is survived by many nieces, nephews, and relatives of whom she felt blessed to have as family.

Funeral service was held at Saint James Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, on Monday, October 23. Interment followed at Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

Giragosian

F UNERAL H OME

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UCLA Promise Armenian Institute Hosts Evening Lecture with Garo Paylan

LOS ANGELES — On October 17, Turkish Armenian politician and human rights advocate Garo Paylan delivered a seminal lecture at UCLA entitled “Armenian Rebirth: The Last Plight.” The lecture coincided with Paylan’s visit to the United States and followed a lecture at the University of California, Irvine.

Hosted by the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA in partnership with the Center for Truth & Justice, the lecture was co-sponsored by the UCLA Armenian Student’s Association, the Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA School of Law, the UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research.

As founding member of the People’s

Democratic Party (HDP) in Türkiye, Paylan achieved international acclaim as a Turkish-Armenian human rights defender and advocate for multicultural coexistence after his successful election into the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye.

Paylan was introduced to the stage by Professor Ann R. Karagozian, Distinguished Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at UCLA and Inaugural Director of the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA. Karagozian, a noted scholar and educator in Armenian studies, lauded the achievements of Paylan and his commitment to human rights.

In the context of the recent forceful expulsion and ethnic cleansing of the indigenous inhabitants of Artsakh Republic by the Republic of Azerbaijan, Paylan’s dynamic discussion focused on relevant factors threatening the existence of Armenians in their indigenous homeland. The Republic of Artsakh, Armenian sovereignty, diaspora relations, and the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia were among the topics discussed during the lecture.

The lecture concluded with a question-answer forum from students and attendees that included discussions about Armenian foreign policy with regional interests in the Caucasus and Asia Minor. Afterwards, the Promise Armenian Institute hosted an informal meet-and-greet with the Mr. Paylan.

— Levon Karamanoukian.



Garo Paylan speaking at the UCLA event



Garo Paylan at the UCLA event



Garo Paylan and attendees

Garo Paylan Speaks at UC Irvine Program

IRVINE, Calif. — The University of California Irvine’s Center for Armenian Studies in partnership with the Armenian Students Association and the Center for Truth and Justice hosted former member of Turkish Parliament Garo Paylan on October 16, 2023.

The program began with a few words of welcome and introduction by the Center’s Director and Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies, Professor Hourii Berberian, who recognized the audience’s presence on the ancestral and unceded homeland of the Tongva and Acjachemen peoples. She

did so not in a performative way but because of its resonance and meaning for Armenians whose ancestral homelands, including most recently in Artsakh, are also unceded territory.

The hall exceeded its capacity as 120 members of the campus, including students and faculty, and the Orange County community attentively listened to Paylan’s message of unity as a path to strength and peace for Armenia and its newest refugees forced out of their homeland in Artsakh.

Attendees imbibed Paylan’s message of unity in the face of an existential threat

and welcomed his point of view informed by his inside knowledge of Turkish politics as a former parliamentarian (2015–June 2023). In brutal honesty, Paylan emphasized the need to move beyond victimhood and recognize past mistakes and missed opportunities for reconciliation. He encouraged reassessing maximalist and inflexible stances, maintaining that Armenia has much more to gain by treaties and accords with its historical enemies/neighbors, such as Turkey, than by taking an unyielding approach. After a long and spirited question-and-answer session with some challenging questions,

the program ended as eager attendees surrounded Paylan continuing the conversation and probing further. Whether they agreed or disagreed with all of his points, they seemed appreciative of his voice, position, and intervention.

Armenian Studies at UC Irvine includes undergraduate coursework in Armenian history and language, as well as a quarterly lecture series that bridges historical and cultural topics regarding Armenians worldwide.

To learn more about Armenian Studies at UCI, visit: <https://www.humanities.uci.edu/armenianstudies>



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Boston Burlington Mall, MA



EMCEE
Sona Movsesian
Author, podcast co-host and personal assistant to Conan O'Brien



Ken Dilanian
(NBC News)



Eric Hacopian
(CivilNet)



Carla Garapedian
(Film Director/producer)

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE



a cappella trio



From left: Teni Apelian, Anais Tekerian, Yeraz Markarian

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David Ignatius Has His Ear to the Ground In Washington's Foreign Policy Circles

IGNATIUS, from page 1

Covering Foreign Affairs

In an interview last week, Ignatius said that in effect, his opinion column is usually just reporting about foreign affairs. He declared, “The paradox for me is that I am an opinion columnist, but I don’t often have strong opinions. I am much more driven by reporting. What I like to do in every column is to tell you something that you don’t know...relevant to what is going on.” He gave the example of a recent column on the Gaza fighting: “I just got fascinated by tunnel warfare, a very exotic sphere of warfare that turns out to have all kinds of specialists, weapons and lore...I ended up writing a column that tells you more than you would have ever dreamed you’d want to know about tunnel warfare.”

He said that he tries to present US foreign policy based on the best sources he has, and sometimes does not reveal their names. He said, “I trust that my readers will assume that if I am writing it, it is true, and they will assume that if I am saying it is the top level of the Pentagon or NSC [National Security Council], that I have a reason for saying that...I try never to write something that I am not confident is accurate.”

Having access at the highest circles of power and government can also create some challenges, which Ignatius realizes. He said, “You do have regular contact with the most powerful people in the country, and it is heady. They turn to you and they want you to give a speech and moderate a program, and, hey, how are you, David. It is too congenial. It is a struggle to remind yourself that in terms of your readers you should be an outsider, not an insider. It is a constant struggle and I am not sure that I always do it well. I recognize that.”

It also can narrow your point of view. Ignatius explained, “I think the hardest thing for a columnist like me, who is trying to write an inside informed account of what is going on, is the danger of writing for your sources. By that I don’t just mean that I am trying to keep them happy...It is that you are writing about the particular issues, sometimes narrow ones, that they are thinking about and not standing back and thinking about the issues that the country as a whole is thinking about.”

In other words, he ruminated, while covering the US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan for some many years, it was easy to report some new three-point plan a general offered for progress over 18 months, as opposed to seeing whether the broader approach made any sense.

He did not feel that he has been deceived by his sources often, because, he said, efforts at manipulation on a particular subject are fairly obvious. He said, “I think the problem is different. The problem is really red teaming yourself, thinking about the ways something could go wrong, and working back to where you are.” In other words, “I think the big mistakes are the ones that are just in the air that you are all breathing in common.”

He does still take trips to examine certain international situations personally. He has traveled to Ukraine during the current war with security professionals. Early in the Syrian war, he went with smugglers across the border to Aleppo. He said, “It was just exceedingly dangerous and could easily have ended very badly, as happened to other American journalists who, as we remember, were captured by ISIS with terrible consequences. I think that is the last time I do something quite as crazy as that. My wife still hasn’t forgiven me.”

On the other hand, he said, “You could stumble walking down the steps of the Capitol. I think the final thing for me is that you never know what could happen. You just make sure that what you are doing is worthwhile for readers. If it is, then some risk is appropriate and warranted. What I don’t like to see in our business is people taking big risks for very low payoff for readers.”

When asked about his world view or ideology, he said, “I think that in my writing I am always struggling between two tendencies that are both very much part of me: one is idealism that is American – I want to say Armenian – dreaming of a better world. I have been in favor of using American power to try to help people achieve that better world. So if there is an idealistic strand in our foreign policy I have it also.”

However, he continued, “I have a more pragmatic re-



David Ignatius at a 2018 event of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, with Mount Ararat in the background

alist side. Having seen so many disasters, having made so many mistakes in judgment of my own, I increasingly [say], when people say, let’s give Ukraine X weapon, what the heck. I think we need to be careful about the risk of getting into a war with Russia. We need to understand what our national interests are and why they are not identical with those of Ukraine. I think I am balanced sometimes awkwardly between the two, but that is probably where I think people should be.”

Ignatius has around 136,000 followers on X (formerly Twitter) but deliberately has asked the *Washington Post* not to reveal to him the numbers of readers of his columns. He said that if he has written about something, he did it because it was important, and therefore does not want to be influenced by the metrics. When pressed, he admitted drolly, “Often my column is the most widely read opinion piece in the *Washington Post*. Beyond that, in terms of my inbox and comments, I do have a sense that I am widely read and widely disliked on all sides. It’s humbling to know how many people don’t like what you write.”

Conspiracy Theories and the Political Establishment

Ignatius has served both on the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Affairs. There have been all kinds of outsized rumors about their influence in the world. Ignatius said, “I have only attended one meeting of the Trilateral Commission, and it wasn’t very interesting. I think the Trilateral Commission is just an object of conspiracy.” He said he attended once because his friend Zbigniew Brzezinski, with whom Ignatius had written a book in 2008, was one of its founders, but he does not go to meetings and has not paid his dues.

On the other hand, he said that he has been a member of the Council on Foreign Relations for some forty years, and at their best, organizations like the Council are connection points for a conversation about American foreign policy and issues that matter for the world. They sponsor events with speakers.

Moreover, for nearly 20 years, Ignatius was a trustee of the German Marshall Fund, which is an NGO which seeks to encourage civil society networks across Europe, from Eastern Europe into the former Soviet Union. He commented on this and the aforementioned organizations: “These organizations I am sure are easily characterized as the foreign policy establishment. I am sure there are ways in which they are limiting. For me on balance I think it has been enriching. I have learned a lot more, I have taken more than I have put in. I am embarrassed about that. They always gave me a range of people who were thinking about a big issue that I didn’t know much about.”

When asked whether he could consider himself a political actor in some ways, he definitively responded: “No, I don’t. I truly don’t. I see myself really as a reporter/

columnist, but in no way as a political actor. And I should say, I see myself, when I fall asleep at night, as a novelist. I am really proud of the books I have written. It was a kind of accidental second career, but I think they will probably last a lot longer than my journalism.”

President Biden

Recently Ignatius wrote a column stating that it was time for President Joe Biden to think about whether somebody else could do better in beating Donald Trump in the upcoming presidential elections. When asked whether this column achieved the desired effect, he chuckled and said, “I think the only effect it had was to make him double down and say, ‘No, I am the guy who can beat Donald Trump and I am not going anywhere.’”

Ignatius said that throughout the summer, he had been going to social events at which prominent Democrats, including members of the cabinet and Congress as well as governors, would talk about Biden’s prospects. He said that it bothered him that he was not writing about what so many people were discussing, while time was running out for changes. Though the article has not led to any new Democratic action, Ignatius said, “I felt that even though it infuriated a lot of people I had a responsibility to write it.”

Attraction to Journalism, Falling into Love with Foreign Affairs

Journalism appealed to Ignatius from a young age. He said, “Journalism really was the thing I was best at.” He wrote for his high school newspaper, took summer jobs writing for other newspapers, and when he went off to Harvard College, studying political theory, he immediately joined the college newspaper, and freelanced for regional papers. He started writing for the *Washington Post* while studying economics in a graduate program at Kings College in Cambridge (United Kingdom).

He applied for journalism jobs and after his first job at the *Washington Monthly* magazine in 1975, got a new position in 1976 covering the steel workers union for the *Wall Street Journal*. He exclaimed, “If at that time there was a less likely person to cover the biggest industrial union in the country than me, I would like to know who it was. But I loved it. I fell in love with the job.” He said he began to get scoop after scoop about the union and just knew this was his calling.

However, it took some years to solidify this belief. Ignatius recollected, “Through my 30s and early 40s, I used to say, I wonder if it is too late to go to law school. I thought journalism is not really a profession. Some day you will grow up. All of a sudden it was too late.”

After the union, Ignatius covered industry, but moved on to the Defense Department and then the US Senate. He said, “I had a classic apprenticeship as a journalist.” In 1980, the *Wall Street Journal* asked whether he would like to switch and cover the Middle East.

Ignatius recalled, “I said I have never been there. I don’t speak any of the languages. I don’t know anything about it... The editor said, in a classic ‘Front Page’ [classic newsroom comedy film] way, ‘that’s perfect. That is just what we want.’ So I took off and did it and I fell in love with it again.” He became more and more interested in foreign affairs, and he said that this interest was solidified when as editor for the *International Herald Tribune*, he moved with his family to Paris for not quite three years (2000-2003).

Family Background

Ignatius has an illustrious family background. His mother, Nancy, an environmental activist who passed away in 2019, was a descendant of Cotton Mather, a Congregational minister known in connection with the Salem witchcraft trials in the 17th century.

His father Paul has just turned a vigorous 103. He was born in Glendale, Calif. in 1920, while his own father, a native of Agn, was among the first Armenians to settle in Glendale in 1911. Paul has achieved the highest rank in the US government of all living Armenians, having served as Secretary of the Navy, as well as Assistant Secretary of Defense, during his long career (his only rival being Thomas Corwin, Secretary of the Treasury back in the mid-nineteenth century).

Paul Ignatius also for two brief years, was president
continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

of the *Washington Post*, but he did not get along with its publisher at the time, Katherine Graham, and was let go. David said, “I do think that was a burr under the saddle for me – you know, motivation. Ben Bradley [*Post* executive editor] used to kid me about that when I worked for him.”

More significantly, said David, “What I got from my dad was the passion and interest in foreign affairs, and increasingly, national security issues, something we talk about every night when I am with him. I try out ideas. I have stolen many ideas from my dad. It is like a running seminar.”

The family pride and love is evident. David exclaimed, “I will just be honest. He is an inspiration to me as he should be to everybody that deals with him. He is turning 103 and he is still going strong.” David’s accomplished siblings are just as proud, including sisters Sarah B. Ignatius, a lawyer, writer and novelist who until recently was the executive director of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research and Amy L. Ignatius, a judge in the Superior Court of New Hampshire, and Adi Ignatius, editor-in-chief of the *Harvard Business Review*.

David’s Armenian identity is no secret. He said, “In the Middle East, where everybody knew my background, I was often referred to as the Armenian.” In fact, when he went to



Starting second from left, bottom row, David Ignatius, Paul Ignatius, Sarah Ignatius and Adi Ignatius with Armenian Assembly of America Board at September 26, 2023 event honoring Paul Ignatius in Washington D.C. (courtesy Armenian Assembly)

Lebanon for the first time in 1980 he said that something just clicked and he felt an intense commitment to the story, the place and the people. He said, I felt there was some odd resonance to me. Was it cultural? Was it ethnic? I couldn’t figure it out... I just feel certain that there was something about the Armenian sensibility that I grew up with from my father, my grandfather – maybe something in the blood mysteriously that led to that connection.”

David reminisced, “I feel lucky to have the Armenian-American heritage... Although I didn’t grow up learning to speak Armenian, and we didn’t go to the Armenian Church, the Armenian part of my life was something that was present.” Every Sunday his father would typically make an Armenian meal and tell stories about his friend William Saroyan, and his eccentric family. These, David said, were “stories that I will never forget, the characters of my youth.”

His father Paul was very much an assimilated person, who didn’t learn to speak Armenian because his own father wanted him to live an American. David said, “His service in Pentagon is illustrative of that commitment to America, but we’re lucky that he gave us – and I tried to give my own children – a taste of some of this wonderful richness and sometimes silliness. There were stories that still make me laugh when I think of them. That is the way I remember growing up.”

As an adult, Ignatius has been attracted to the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, founded by Vartan Gregorian, Ruben Vardanyan and Noubar Afeyan with the slogan “gratitude in action,” because, he said, “for me as an Armenian American, it offered a way to look forward to an Armenia in the future, rather than always to 1915 and the past. It gave a positive Armenian identity. Armenians were not the victims but in general people who succeeded and wanted to give thanks for other people helping humanity in the same way that people saved our ancestors.” Starting some six years ago, he said that he would go to Yerevan every year for the event and try to be as active as he could, though the Artsakh issue has recently overwhelmed the effort (especially with the arrest of Vardanyan in Artsakh).

Journalism as an Armenian American

Ignatius was the moderator of a 2009 Davos World Economic Forum panel discussion with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Secretary of the Arab League Amr Moussa, at which Erdogan, attacked ferociously by Peres, stalked off angrily after Ignatius told him he was out of time to talk. While this may not have been directly connected to Ignatius’s Armenian background, it complicates relations.

“The Turks certainly haven’t forgotten it,” Ignatius said. Nevertheless, “I do when appropriate stop by the Turkish embassy to visit the ambassador, who is often helpful. I talk to other people in the government when there are issues on which I think I need to get a Turkish perspective. Despite that famous incident, the work of being a journalist doesn’t stop.”

The same approach holds true on Armenian issues. “When I write about Artsakh, I try to reach the Azerbaijani ambassador. That is just what we do,” Ignatius observed.

Ignatius recalled that when he first started working at the *Wall Street Journal* and then the *Washington Post*, the prevailing journalistic ethos was to check all personal luggage at the door, meaning all personal political beliefs. Journalists were not supposed to go to political demonstrations or sign petitions, and some did not even vote.

“So, he said, “I have tried to find over the years ways to write about Armenia and Armenian issues that still felt journalistic, so that I could look a Turkish colleague in the eye and say, I am writing about this because it is important. I am writing about this as an analyst of foreign policy. Yes, I am an Armenian American but you should not just discount what I have to say just for that reason.”

“Is this the right approach?” he wondered. “I think about it a lot and I think it is a question, but it is something that the Armenian community needs to understand. Armenian-American journalists are journalists, and they feel they do need to live by their professional rules much as if

they were doctors or lawyers. There are all these rules that make people do different things than what activists might want them to do.”

Armenia/Artsakh Current Events

Ignatius evaluated the coverage of recent events in Armenia and Artsakh by US media as “fair to poor – I am tempted to say, poor to awful.” As to why, he said, “The suffering of Armenians does not seem as immediate and emotional to American readers and the journalists who write for them as that of other people. It is a mystery as to why that is so. Part of it is, I think, that Armenia is remote. The Caucasus is a region that people don’t know much about.” Moreover, Armenia has been under the aegis of Russia, and before that, the Soviet Union, for so long, that people see it differently, he said. There are also few resident correspondents in Yerevan working for any international media outlet, so it is typically covered from Moscow, though it is quite distant from it.

Another factor, he said, was that “the Artsakh/Karabakh fight has been going on for so long that there has been a sort of journalistic fatigue. People have trouble remembering what the underlying issues are. I also think it hurt Armenia that the status of Artsakh/Karabakh legally remained Azerbaijani, controlled by an Armenian majority.”

He said he admired Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for acknowledging that he should have had the courage to push for negotiations back when the Armenians were in a stronger position but this was unpopular.

A way to improve US media coverage in the long term would be to have journalism schools provide more background information so as people prepare for careers as foreign correspondents, they understand that this is an issue worth covering. Correspondents who are based in Turkey also could routinely include Armenia and the Caucasus as part of their beat, he said. He remarked that “I think Armenians sometimes made a mistake in their understandable insistence on focusing on 1915 and the Genocide, so that this [current] conflict to readers sometimes seems frozen in the past.”

He did not think that demonstrations, like that in front

of CNN in Los Angeles during the 2020 war, help much, though he also said, “I have to admit that over the years, covering the Arab-Israeli dispute, the pressure that was brought to bear by organized groups on both sides that sometimes was quite intense for newspapers and media companies did make a difference. It made us careful, made us understand that this was important, that each word was going to be read very carefully.”

As far as the recent events themselves in Artsakh and Armenia, Ignatius said, “as I wrote in one column, this teaches you the truth of what Mao Tse Tung said, that all power flows out of the barrel of a gun. If you don’t have the weapons, you are at the mercy of your friends, and Armenia’s history is a long lesson in the unreliability of your friends. We just had another chapter of that.” In other words, Armenia must make itself stronger.

It also needs to change its approach to foreign affairs, Ignatius declared. He said: “I would like to see some different security arrangement for Armenia. What exists now clearly doesn’t work.”

If, as this may imply, Armenia leaves the Russian orb for the US one, it would have to also deal with regional US allies. Ignatius noted, “Turkey is an old member of NATO. It is hard to imagine the US doing something in that part of the world entirely in defiance of Turkey. Azerbaijan is very close to Israel, an ally of the United States. Somehow, we have to get our minds around a security zone that has Armenia less dependent on Russia and more dependent on a group of nations led by the United States.”

He continued: “I know that there is a lot of thought that has gone on in the State Department. I try to write about it whenever I have a chance. They [State Department officials] don’t have answers but they are asking the right questions. I think the Armenian community needs to understand that and not lecture them, [but] help them.”

Future of Newspapers

Newspapers are still facing dire straits in the United States and many other countries as the aftereffect of the Internet revolution, which made information easily accessible online and initially without cost. However, Ignatius noted, “I have believed that as sources of information about our communities, about any subject, become less reliable, more like drinking from a stream that is polluted, people will pay more money to be assured that they are not consuming information that is wrong. The best example obviously is financial information. If you are trading in the financial markets you need to know that the information is accurate. You will pay a lot for it. You will pay a lot for the *Wall Street Journal*.” This should be true about information in any field.

At the same time, society and politics have also changed. Consequently, Ignatius said, “The problem is that people’s media tastes have moved from wanting reliable information that challenges them to wanting information that tells them they are right about their biases. As long as that continues, we are going to have the media that we deserve. If people want to be told that their heroes are really good guys and that the other side is really worse than they thought, they are going to get more and more of that media.”

Ignatius said that the *Washington Post* owner Jeff Bezos is absolutely right in demanding that newspapers like the *Washington Post* must be profitable: “If you are not producing stuff that people will put out money for, you have a problem.” The *Post* has lost around 500,000 subscribers since the end of 2020 and is set to lose \$100 million in 2023, according to *The New York Times*.

The *Post* like a lot of the media got on a Trump jagg of sorts, Ignatius said, meaning that for some years people would constantly look to the papers to see the latest inflammatory thing the president had said. This perhaps excessive interest, boosting newspaper readership, is over.

While he said it was hard to praise a competitor, he pointed to the *New York Times* as knowing exactly who its readers are and drawing them in with both fun and useful features (e.g. Wirecutter or various puzzles, along with traditional news). The *Washington Post*, he said, will offer a different collection of things, as “we have to provide a package about every aspect of life that is just so compelling that you just want to buy it.”

The recent cutting of jobs at the *Post* this October is part of the process. He said, “These layoffs are getting us to a reasonable cruising speed, and while we are doing this discovery, we will not lose a ton of money.”

Ignatius had a few words of comfort for the *Mirror-Spectator* too: “Your newspaper has a specific mission. It has a community. Its community wants the news that you provide. I don’t know how you finance it but I do know that you have a mission that is not likely to go away. It has lasted nearly 100 years, and I can imagine it lasting 100 years more in different forms because you know what your job is... You have a brand that people trust.”



Arts & Culture

Armenian Museum Of America Presents 'Early Recordings of Armenian Classics' By Ara Dinkjian

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America will present "Early Recordings of Armenian Classics" featuring the eminent musician and composer Ara Dinkjian, on November 9, at 7 p.m. At the event, Dinkjian will discuss early recordings of well-known Armenian songs, play recordings made more than 100 years ago, and share historic photographs.

"We invite music enthusiasts from all backgrounds, both Armenian and non-Armenian, to join us for this unique exploration," said Jason Sohigian, AMA's executive director. "Our Sound Archive, a digital repository of rare historic recordings, offers an auditory journey through time. The experts behind this significant endeavor, Jesse Kenas Collins and Harout Arakelian, are the nation's foremost experts in the domain of vintage audio preservation and the history of Armenian-American music. With support from the SJS Charitable Trust, their expertise has transformed a heritage that was once confined physically in 78 rpm records, making it universally accessible under the Virtual Resources tab of the museum's website.

Recently, the museum hosted an evening with Ian Nagoski of Canary Records. This memorable event revolved around the enchanting tale of soprano Zabelle Panosian, an Armenian talent who migrated to Boston in 1907. Those in attendance were captivated by audio tracks that had been meticulously restored, some of which took hundreds of hours to perfect in sound quality.

Dinkjian, an alumnus of the Hart School, boasts the distinction of earning the nation's singular specialized degree in the oud. Recognized globally as one of the premier



Ara Dinkjian

oud players, Dinkjian's compositions have graced movie soundtracks and have been embraced by artists in a staggering 16 languages. His melody *Homecoming* (Dinata, Dinata) resonated globally during the closing ceremonies of the 2004 Athens Olympics. Furthermore, his compilation of more than 6,000 Armenian and Turkish 78 rpm records stands as one of the grandest archives of its kind.

This event is free for members and \$20 for non-members. The museum will also be raising funds for humanitarian relief for the Armenians of Artsakh. All gifts will be matched by an anonymous donor. Please RSVP via Eventbrite: <https://aradinkjian.eventbrite.com>

For more information about the museum visit www.ArmenianMuseum.org.



Victoria Atamian Waterman signs a copy of her new book (Ken Martin photo)

Book Release Event Held for Victoria Atamian Waterman at Worcester Historical Museum

By Kenneth Martin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WORCESTER — Victoria Atamian Waterman presented her new book, *Who She Left Behind*, at the Worcester Historical Museum on October 17. *Who She Left Behind* is a multi-generational historical novel about survival, love and motherhood and redemption from the Armenian Genocide to rebirth in a new land, based on the author's own family history. The narrative is framed by a mysterious discovery made almost six decades later of a pair of Armenian dolls left at a gravesite.

The genesis of the story is in Gurin, Armenia, during the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Genocide, and visits many of the location along the way of the forced migration from the Western Armenian homelands, from Aleppo and Istanbul to Providence and Warwick, in Rhode Island, and Worcester and Lawrence, in Massachusetts.

The exciting atmosphere was further enhanced by the presence of the hosts for the evening, Worcesterites Val and Steve Loring and Judy King. The interview was conducted by Alicia O'Connell Rogers, Youth Librarian of the Worcester Public Library.

Waterman is a writer speaker and women's rights advocate born and raised in Rhode Island. Growing up in an immigrant, bilingual, multi-generational home with survivors of the Armenian Genocide has shaped the storyteller she has become. *Who She Left Behind* is her first novel.



Alicia O'Connell Rogers, left, with Victoria Atamian Waterman

Diana Sahakyan Honors Women Composers

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Armenia is famous for its musical culture, and the excellence of musical education. As my husband and I learned during our first visit there several years ago, the teaching staff of the numerous schools and conservatories pride themselves on training world-class musicians. It is almost proverbial to note that in the best orchestras, operas, and music academies anywhere, you can usually find an Armenian.

Diana Sahakyan, who lives and works in Germany, is a particularly interesting artist, and not only as a performer. On October 6th to 8th, she hosted a Festival for Women Composers in Frankfurt, a unique



Diana Sahakyan

initiative featuring works by famous composers, as well as complete discoveries, both from earlier centuries and the contemporary scene.

Born in Yerevan, Sahakyan grew up in musical family and started playing the piano at the age of 6. When she was a teenager, she had made up her mind to dedicate her life to music. She graduated from the Spendaryan Specialized Music School in Yerevan, then moved to Germany where she continued at the Frankfurt School of Music and Performing Arts with Lev Natocenny, Catherine Vickers, and Oliver Kern. Awarded a scholarship for her achievements, she completed her studies at the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofia in Madrid.

Inspiration for the festival initiative, which she launched last year, came from Fanny Hensel (1805-1847), the brilliant pianist and composer who is better known as the sister of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. The talented Fanny, who composed 450 known works, both vocal and instrumental, presided over Sonntagsmusiken, music events held at the family home in Berlin on Sundays, which were attended by up to 300 guests. It is this tradition that Sahakyan seeks to continue with her festivals.

The celebration, which offered three concerts over consecutive evenings, opened with Romances op. 94 by Robert Schumann, the First Piano Trio by his wife Clara Schumann, and the First Piano Trio by Johannes Brahms. On the second evening participants were treated to works by a lesser known composer, Mel (pseudonym for Mélanie) Bonis (1858-1937), and the Piano Quintet in F minor by César Franck. Bonis see COMPOSERS, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

Aftershocks

Nadia Owusu's Earthquake Of a Memoir

By Christopher Atamian

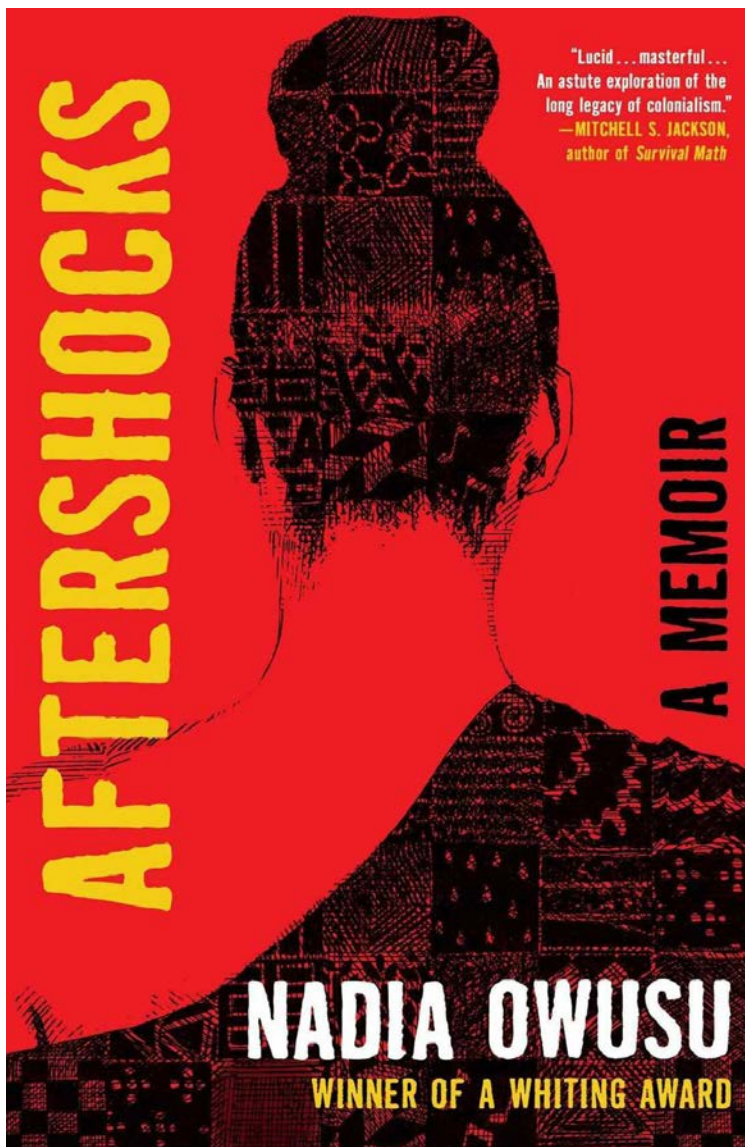
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

It's hard not to fall in love with Nadia Owusu after reading her 2021 tell-all memoir, *Aftershocks*. The daughter of a Ghanaian father and an Armenian mother, Owusu grew up in Rome and in different African cities including Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Addis Ababa. She also attended boarding school in England for a spell. In *Aftershocks* her mother, the daughter of Armenian Genocide survivors, cannot form lasting emotional attachments and abandons her family. She then moves to Watertown, Mass., where she remarries and starts a new life with her second husband. Owusu surmises this to be at least partly the result of epigenetic trauma transmission, since her maternal grandmother was abandoned several times during a long deportation march away from her hometown of Marash.

Owusu's father brings up Nadia and her sister, and also remarries. Several years later when Nadia is but 14 years old, he succumbs to cancer, leaving her and her sister at the mercy of Anabel, their religious and disciplinarian stepmother. Her father's death sends Nadia into an emotional tailspin: until then he was her entire world. Yet the young Nadia soldiers on. She is both beautiful and brilliant. She acs all her courses (except math!) at various international schools, drinks, smokes and otherwise acts naughty at every turn.

Several years later while studying at Pace University in New York City she meets Anabel for dinner in a Chinese restaurant. They quibble and Anabel makes a shocking announcement that speeds up Nadia's hitherto slow descent into madness. Medication doesn't help much as she spends entire days rocking back and forth in a blue chair that she finds in the street.

But *Aftershocks* is much more than a simple memoir of a girl gone mad. Owusu sprinkles her text with key episodes in Ghanaian, Ethiopian, and Tanzanian history that curious readers stateside will welcome, given the dearth of African history lessons in most school curricula. Though Owusu spends more time describing her paternal heritage, Armenians will identify with the trauma that the Genocide caused its victims and their descendants. As for the book's



title, it applies to her mother abandoning her, to the aftershock of her father's death, and to the Armenian Genocide as well.

Owusu's writing style is spontaneous and spunky, often using short declaratives to get across a point or surprise the reader, or to alternatively deliver new or surprising information: "Here on earth Tanzanians believe in hard work, in long days swinging machetes in banana fields picking corn, and digging up beetroots from dirt. They believe in Dolly Parton. And long before Francis learned the lyrics to *Jolene* and songs sung by George Strait, Willie Nelson, and Johnny Cash he believed in cowboys."

Some of Owusu's turns-of-phrase border on the truly el-

egant: "When I was seven my mother showed up with an earthquake and red balloons. I remember her shaking hands and I remember the shaking earth. In me, private and seismic tremors cannot be separated."

Owusu sprinkles her text with humorous episodes which include making fun of too-serious adults during church. In another scene, a gaggle of Ghanaian women make fun of her accent. One of them jokes: "Who wants to hear someone speak Twi with an English accent?" Indeed, who would?

In spite of everything that has transpired Owusu remains the little girl who awaits, both in everyday life and deep inside her heart, for her mother to return, as if abandoning her and her sister had been a colossal mistake that she wanted to rectify. Owusu's love for her mother comes through most clearly in anecdotes she tells about her that display the latter's intelligence and pluck. In one such episode her mother confronts a neighbor while young Nadia visits her one summer in Watertown:

"Toward the end of that visit, I was playing with my cousin Aaron, who is white — half-Armenian and half-Jewish. The neighbor poked his head over the hedge. He asked my mother how long it had taken for the adoption to come through. He and his wife were hoping to adopt a baby from Ethiopia too. Wasn't the famine there awful? My mother looked up from the novel she was reading and took a long slow sip of her lemonade. She smiled brightly though her eyes looked fierce.

'How nice' she said. 'I was lucky to have avoided all that paperwork. I just married an African man and gave birth to my own black babies. Ten long hours of labor though.'

The neighbor's mouth went slack and he hurried away muttering something about a pot on the stove."

Children of immigrants and those who have been exposed from birth to multiple cultures and languages will find much to identify with in these pages. In time Owusu climbs out of her dark madness into the light of day. One short review hardly does justice to such a compelling story. The reader speeds through the book entranced, but its aftershocks remain with him long after he has finished.

Purchase *Aftershocks*: www.amazon.com/Aftershocks-Memoir-Nadia-Owusu/dp/1982111224

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

Fresno State Armenian Series Publishes *Memoirs of Setrak Timourian*

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program announces the publication of *In Front of the Eyes of the World: The Memoirs of Setrak Timourian*, Volume 19 in the Armenian Series of the Press at California State University, Fresno. The book was translated by N. Ipek Hüner and edited by Vahé Tachjian, Yaşar Tolga Cora, Murat Cankara and Barlow Der Muğrdechian.

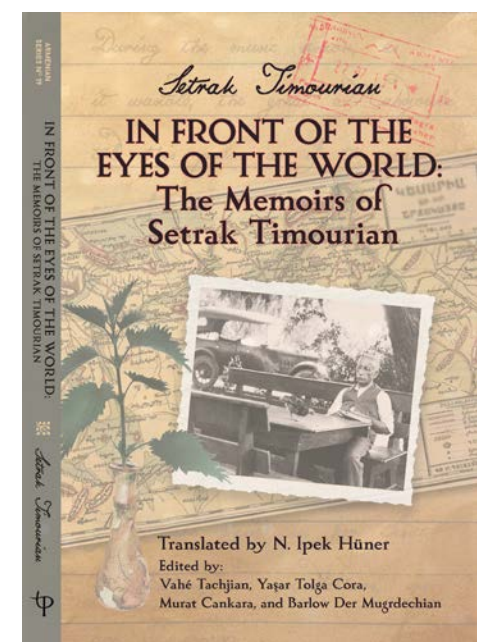
"In Front of the Eyes of the World is a valuable addition to the Armenian Series at Fresno State," said Prof. Barlow Der Muğrdechian, general editor of the Armenian Series. "The memoir sheds light on an important period of Armenian history."

The significance of the memoir is explained in this excerpt from the editors, "Today, when we attempt to study Ottoman-Armenian history, to reconstruct the social landscape and daily life of Ottoman-Armenians through primary sources... memoirs like the one written by Setrak Timourian stand before us as shining beacons, illuminating our way forward."

In Front of the Eyes of the World is an example of a genre of writing which has been under-studied. The manuscript is written in Armeno-Turkish, i.e., in Turkish using Armenian script. This was quite common among Turkish speaking Ottoman Armenians, but has since become a rare item.

In Front of the Eyes of the World: The Memoirs of Setrak Timourian gives the

reader a fascinating and detailed story of the life of Timourian, who was born in 1860 in Kayseri. He documented in a thor-



ough manner, his life, the life of his family, and his many adventures. Timourian lived during an eventful period in Armenian and Ottoman Turkish history and thus provided insight into the life of Armenians.

The memoirs cover Timourian's life from the 1860s to the 1930s, and stretches from see MEMOIR, page ?



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Sarelle Plays' Momma Anita's Armenian Eggplant and Spiced Beef Casserole (Batlijanov Tava)

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. — “I use my food blog, Sarelle Plays, as a creative output for many of the things I enjoy, namely, good food, cooking, travel, and anything else I want to share. If you like my recipes or stories, that’s just icing on the cake,” says Sarelle Hayek. Sarelle’s parents came to the United States from Lebanon and Iraq. Her great grandparents were from Urfa, Turkey.*

“Until the age of 9, we lived in England. I went to an all-girls’ Catholic school that was about 200 years old. We had lunch in a dining hall each day and were served a three-course meal starting with soup. The food was standard English fare: lamb with peas, minced meat with pureed carrots,” she says. It was a cultural shock for Sarelle when her family moved to Orange County in 1985. She went from a private English school to a casual California public school. Instead of a dining hall, kids ate outside on picnic tables and most kids brought their own lunches.

“Back then, Orange County wasn’t the culturally and culinary diverse place that it is today. When other kids were bringing ham and cheese sandwiches to school, my mother packed lahmajoon and dolma for us.”

As a child, Sarelle says she found it embarrassing that these Armenian foods marked her as “different.” Like many Armenians, she grew up eating a variety of Middle Eastern foods at home, but says she wasn’t always proud of her food heritage as a child. At 14, she became a vegetarian. She says her mother couldn’t fathom cooking separate meatless meals every night. This propelled Sarelle to begin cooking for herself, and she remembers being surprised and encouraged when many of the recipes she made were actually edible.

Sarelle attended UCLA, majored in political science. In college, she took Mandarin language classes. After graduation, she moved to Beijing rather than return to Orange County where her family lived. Looking back, she says she doesn’t know where she found the courage to move to another country at that time. She spent seven years in China, and considers those years some of the best years of her life.

Beijing is where Sarelle first met her husband. When she arrived in China, she was still a vegetarian. However, she quickly gave up vegetarianism, as even vegetable dishes in China were often made with meat stock. When she began to eat meat again, she was introduced to a new, amazing world of food. “I found Chinese

food to be incredibly delicious and varied, all the way from kebabs in Uyghur restaurants to those fiery Sichuan hot pots. I credit Chinese food for re-awakening my taste buds and developing a more discriminating palate.” (The Uyghurs are an ethnic minority group mostly living in the Xinjiang autonomous region of the People’s Republic of China. The Uyghurs are predominantly Muslims).

Sarelle adds, “I had a love affair with Korean food, too, since I tried it for the first time while living in Beijing in the late 1990s. Beijing has a sizable ethnically Korean population. I was mesmerized by the number of small plates brought to me before the main plates arrived. I relished the assortment of spicy fermented vegetables, fish cakes, and delicately prepared seaweed. They were quite good and suited my palate.” See: <https://sarelleplays.com/2020/03/16/kimchi-pork-stir-fry/>

A constant in Sarelle’s life is her curiosity about trying new foods and testing recipes. This includes collecting old cookbooks and talking to relatives and friends about almost forgotten recipes. “I’m curious about the world, and want to learn more about my heritage. This includes learning about my ancestry, the foods and recipes my relatives made in Urfa over a hundred years ago, and their history and culture. Preserving these recipes for future generations is vital. In 2019, my family went to Armenia for the first time. It was a memorable trip and exceeded my expectations so much, I can’t wait to go back again.”

Orange County is more diverse than it was years ago, she adds. No longer are dolma, gata, grape leaves or kufta considered exotic. Her refrigerator is well stocked with kimchi, miso paste, and fermented black beans alongside red pepper paste, tahini, olives, pita bread, and Armenian string cheese. “I want to continue to add more Armenian recipes to my blog, in particular those from Urfa. I want to preserve these recipes so they can be passed down to the next generation.”

“This eggplant and spiced beef casserole is one of my mother’s signature dishes. It’s an old Urfa Armenian recipe we call batlijanov tava, passed down from generation to generation. The recipe calls for seven spice mix (or baharat). Seven spice can be found in Middle Eastern markets, as well as online at Amazon or Kalustyan’s. It’s a mix of common spices such as allspice, pepper, cumin, paprika, coriander, cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, cardamom, and ginger, give or take a few (depending on the brand). If you can’t find seven spice mix, just use the same amount of allspice. The taste will be similar,” she adds.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 medium eggplants (common globe variety)
- 1 lb. ground beef (85% lean)
- 14.5 oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 6 oz. can tomato paste
- 2 medium tomatoes, if desired
- 1 medium green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon seven spice (or allspice)
- 1/2 teaspoon Aleppo pepper or crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt and a few rounds of fresh black pepper
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups hot water lightly seasoned with salt

PREPARATION:

Make 3/4-inch diagonal slits in the eggplants. Do not slice all the way through. It should look like an accordion (see photo).

In a large bowl, mix the ground beef with the rest of the ingredients except for about a quarter of the tomato paste, the tomatoes, olive oil and water.

Stuff each eggplant slit with the meat mixture. Once you’ve stuffed an eggplant, place it in a large baking pan or Dutch oven. All four eggplants should fit snugly inside. If you have meat mixture left over, you can stuff a few tomatoes by making 1/2-inch slits, as with the eggplant. Place the tomatoes on top of the eggplant.

Combine the olive oil, salted water, and the rest of the tomato paste in a separate bowl. Pour mixture over the top of the eggplants, cover, and cook over high heat. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium. Keep covered. After 35 minutes, check the eggplant. Push down on the eggplants a bit so more of the eggplants will be immersed in liquid.

Taste for seasonings and cover again. Cook for another 30 minutes, or until the eggplants are fully cooked through and soft. Check to ensure the bottom does not burn.

For this recipe, go to: <https://sarelleplays.com/when-guests-come-over/momma-anitas-armenian-eggplant-and-spiced-beef-casserole-batlijanov-tava/>

For Sarelle’s Red Lentil Soup with Curry and Black Pepper, go to: <https://sarelleplays.com/weeknight-quick-family-dinners/red-lentil-soup-with-curry-and-black-pepper/>

*For Beijing Street Food: Uyghur style kebabs (Yangrou Chuanr) and Tiger Salad (Laohu Cai), go to: <https://sarelleplays.com/2015/06/24/beijing-street-food-uyghur-style-kebabs-yangrou-chuanr-and-tiger-salad-laohu-cai-2/>

Connect at:

- <https://sarelleplays.com/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/sarelleplays/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/sarelleplays/?hl=en>

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- <https://sarelleplays.com/category/armenianmiddle-eastern-dishes/>
- <https://sarelleplays.com/about-me/>
- <https://sarelleplays.com/trips/>
- <https://sarelleplays.com/armenianmiddle-eastern-dishes/>



Sarelle and her mother, Anita Bablanian Hayek, in Newport Beach, California in 2018



ARTS & 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 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 Charles Mahtesian from Politico, 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.

NOVEMBER 11 — Annual Church Bazaar of Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, Saturday, 12 to 5 p.m. Delicious Armenian Food, Lamb, Chicken, Shish, and Losh kebab, Dinners, Kheyma, and Vegetarian Plates. Armenian Cuisine and Pastries. Booths and Table with Products from Armenia. Gift Baskets and Cash Raffles. Armenian Cookbooks for Sale. Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road (Rte 125), Haverhill (Exit 106 off Rte 125). For more information visit <http://www.hypointearmenianchurch.org> or call (978) 372-9227.

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 Chammassian, 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.

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 Megrdichian, Soprano. Friday, 7 p.m., in the church sanctuary. 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Refreshments following concert. Donations greatly appreciated.

Diana Sahakyan Honors Women Composers

COMPOSERS, from page 14

took piano lessons from Franck, who, recognizing her talent as a musician and composer, facilitated her study at the Paris Conservatory, where she continued as his pupil.

The festival concluded with a Tribute to Sona Talian, a contemporary pianist and composer who graduated from the School of Music and Performing Arts in Frankfurt. A musical prodigy like Sahakyan, she discovered the piano at the age of four, and developed her talents also as a composer. Her concert program featured her own works, combining Armenian folk music, classical, and jazz. There followed Dvorák's Piano Quintet No. 2, Op. 81 in A major, Sergei Rachmaninoff's Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor. Ensemble musicians in the program were Hans Christian Aivik and Dima Udovychenko, violin, Mino Kawali, viola, and Frederick Winterson, cello.

For many music lovers the festival represented their first encounter with the compositions of three distinctly individual women, from different cultures and epochs. Sahakyan has made recordings of her own performance of works by two of them. "Das Jahr" (The Year) is the title of a CD with Fanny Hensel's 1841 work, a series of pieces reflecting the months of the year, inspired by a trip to Italy. In "Femmes de Légende" (Legendary Women), Sahakyan offers a musical portrait of Mel Bonis, with her performance of this composition for piano with its sketches of legendary women.

Fresno State Armenian Series Publishes *Memoirs of Setrak Timourian*

MEMOIR, from page ?

Kayseri, to Istanbul, and Fresno, including his sojourns in Europe, in London and short stays in New York. His travels to Constantinople and then later to the United States chronicle his life as a carpet merchant and the many challenges



Setrak Timourian on his porch in Pasadena

that he faced. He also recorded his own views on the important events of the day. In *Front of the Eyes of the World* is an invaluable record of one man's indomitable spirit and enthralling life story.

In February of 2022 the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and The Armenian Dress and Textile Project (ADTP) organized a special two-day, international hybrid conference "1860 Gesaria (Kayseri) to Los Angeles 2022: Mapping Culture & Sharing Stories," an exhibit which highlighted the early 19th-century Armenian life and cultural history featured in Setrak Timourian's memoir.

Copies of *In Front of the Eyes of the World* are available for purchase from: Abril Bookstore, <http://www.abrilbooks.com/in-front-of-the-eyes-of-the-world.html>.

All of the books in the Armenian Series can be found at the following website: <https://cah.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies/resources/armenianseries/index.html>

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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COMMENTARY

Armenia Should Avoid Replacing Foreign Policy Diversification with an Anti-Russian Strategy

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Since the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war, diversification has probably been the most-used term in discussions about the future of Armenian foreign policy. It should be noted that Armenia has sought to pursue a diversified foreign policy since the early years of independence. In parallel with establishing a strategic alliance with Russia, Armenia has launched a pragmatic partnership with the EU and NATO.

Armenia signed its first IPAP (Individual Partnership Action Plan) with NATO in 2005. NATO was actively involved in the defense reforms in Armenia accelerated after 2008, including defense education and strategic defense review.

Armenia joined the EU Eastern partnership initiative in 2009. It failed to conclude the Association Agreement with Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Instead, it signed the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement in 2017, now serving as the solid base for Armenia-EU relations.

However, the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war, Azerbaijan's incursions into Armenia in 2021 and September 2022, and the Russia-Ukraine war made more diversification a necessity. Being bogged down in Ukraine, Russia could not fully implement all its security obligations towards Armenia. At the same time, the growing role of Azerbaijan and Turkey for Russia impacted overall Russian policy in the South Caucasus.

Azerbaijan exploited this situation quite successfully. It imposed a blockade on Nagorno Karabakh in December 2022. It launched a military offensive in September 2023, forcing the dissolution of the self-proclaimed Nagorno Karabakh Republic and the displacement of the entire Armenian population of the region. However, Azerbaijan's appetite is only growing, and now the targets of Azerbaijan are so-called enclaves and the establishment of routes that will connect Azerbaijan with Nakhijevan and Turkey via Armenia.

Yes, after establishing a checkpoint in the Lachin corridor in April 2023, Azerbaijan dropped demands for an extraterritorial corridor via the Syunik province of Armenia. However, Baku still demands special guarantees for the safety of Azerbaijanis who will pass through Armenia. "Special guarantees" is quite a vague term and may be exploited by Azerbaijan in various ways.

As the threat of new military incursions by Azerbaijan remains high, and Russia continues to be distracted by Ukraine while simultaneously seeking to improve its relations both with Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia should take robust steps to diversify its foreign and defense policy, seeking to find new sources for arms supplies and political deterrence against Azerbaijan. The steps taken by Armenia in the last year, including the arms supplies deals signed with India, efforts to increase the EU presence in Armenia, and the start of the discussions about potential arms supplies from France, are steps in the right direction.

However, a clear line exists between further diversification of Armenian foreign and defense policy and pursuing an anti-Russian policy, which will bring Armenia into the Russia-West or "democracy vs authoritarianism" war. As Armenia faces significant threats from Azerbaijan and Turkey, including the poten-

tial of small or large-scale military invasions, making Armenia another anti-Russian and pro-Western hotspot in the post-Soviet space will significantly increase the security risks for Armenia.

Russia will do everything to prevent domination over Armenia by the West, and the Kremlin has a wide range of options to pressure Armenia. It may use multiple economic leverages, starting from the price of Russian gas and ending with creating obstacles for Armenian businesses to reach Russia, which is the destination of up to 40 percent of overall exports of Armenia. What is more dangerous, Azerbaijan may use these anti-Russian sentiments of Armenia in its negotiations with Russia, portraying Armenia as a "hostile spot for Russia," which wants to bring the US and EU further into the close vicinity of Russia's southern borders.

Iran also may not be happy with the potential geopolitical shift of Armenia. Since the end of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, Iran has been signaling that it opposes any geopolitical changes in the region. Many in Armenia interpret this only as Iran's objections to the Azerbaijani attack and occupation of Southern Armenia, but Iran messages also its objections to the U-turn in Armenia's foreign policy from Russia to the West.

Iran and Russia support establishing a regional format (3+3, or 3+2) for the South Caucasus, circulating the idea that regional problems first of should be solved by regional powers. Azerbaijan and Turkey pushed the idea immediately after the end of the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war, and Turkey came up with a similar idea after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. A real or perceived U-turn of Armenia towards the West, while portraying itself as a new launchpad for the West in the South Caucasus, may present Armenia in a negative light for Russia, Iran, and Turkey.

While hoping to increase its influence in the South Caucasus by decreasing Russia's presence, Ankara does not want to see the West more in the region. Azerbaijan may skillfully use this situation in its bargaining with Russia, Iran, and Turkey, portraying Armenia as the main spoiler in the South Caucasus, which opposes the regional formats and seeks to bring the West deeper into the region. It may create a situation where Russia and Iran will not be against seeing additional harm imposed on Armenia, while Azerbaijan and Turkey will only be happy to do that.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that anti-Russian policy is not a mandatory or necessary condition for the further diversification of Armenian foreign policy. It is challenging to assume that India demands Armenia to become vocally anti-Russian to sell Indian weapons, France requires public steps against Russia for arms supply, or the EU wants anti-Russian statements to provide additional financial support to Armenia or discuss the potential expansion of its monitoring mission.

As the post-Cold War order is waning, and the new order has not emerged yet, the world has entered a period of interregnum. The next decade or even decades will be full of turbulences, conflicts, and the establishment of ad-hoc alliances. In the current situation, Armenia should be cautious not to jump into the middle of the Russia-US war, portraying itself as another fighter against authoritarianism or for democracy. In other words, Armenia should not seek to become a new Georgia in the South Caucasus, repeating Tbilisi's path of 2004-2012. It will be wiser to look into the example of Georgia in 2022-2023. Georgia has an Association Agreement, Free Trade Area, and visa-free regime with the EU, a strategic partnership with the US based on the charter signed in 2009, a free trade agreement and newly established strategic partnership with China, and growing economic cooperation with Russia.

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

Understanding the Armenia-Iran Relationship

By Michael Rubin

Armenians are increasingly frustrated at Western inaction in the face of ethnic cleansing. Just five days before Azerbaijani forces moved to snuff out militarily Armenian self-rule in Nagorno-Karabakh, Acting Assistant Secretary of State Yuri Kim declared to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "We will not tolerate any attack on the people of Nagorno-Karabakh." Yet tolerate the Biden administration did. In the wake of the Azerbaijani move that sent more than 100,000 of the region's indigenous Armenians packing, the State Department did little more than issue perfunctory condemnation.

The reason for inaction is multi-fold. The United States is distracted elsewhere. The

speed of the Azerbaijani action created a fait accompli. There is widespread misunderstanding about Armenia's geopolitical orientation. As Azerbaijan cultivates an image of being pro-Western and pro-Israeli, Armenia has maintained close relations with both Russia and Iran. While a sense of betrayal inside Armenia has led the country to pivot quickly away from Russia, what is the reality of Armenia-Iran ties?

Armenia does have ties to Iran. In 2021, Armenia-Iran trade amounted to \$471 million annually, an amount less than the total United States trade with Aruba. Context matters, though. Armenia's trade with Iran is equivalent to Azerbaijan's trade with the Islamic Republic. In recent years, though, it appears Azerbaijan's trade has grown as the regime of President Ilham Aliyev re-

gime's entrance into a gas swap and trade scheme with Iran. Turkey's trade with Iran, meanwhile, is approximately \$6.4 billion and growing. Put another way, Turkey's trade with Iran is equivalent to the entire budget of Armenia.

The difference between Armenia on the one hand and Azerbaijan and Turkey on the other is that Yerevan's relationship with Tehran is one of necessity, while Baku and Ankara's ties to Tehran are relationships of greed and choice. Armenia has two open borders and two closed ones. Turkey and Azerbaijan have blockaded Armenia for decades. Azerbaijan's blockade was nominally about Nagorno-Karabakh, but Turkey has had no border dispute with Armenia. Its blockade is illegal under the 1921 Treaty of see IRAN, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Boasts About Armenia's Fake Democracy At European Parliament

Regardless of whether I like Armenia's prime minister or not, I want to be fair to him. I praise him when he does something right and criticize him when he does something wrong.

For example, I wrote an article in April 2019 praising Nikol Pashinyan for his speech at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg, France. Here is what I wrote: "Pashinyan gave an impressive speech to the representatives of 47 European countries. Even more impressive were the Prime Minister's answers to their dozen questions. While his speech was prepared in advance, the questions were impromptu and the answers had to be delivered on the spot."

Pashinyan posted my article on his Facebook page which has over one million followers. Here is the comment he added: "I am happy that one of the most prestigious Diaspora newspapers, the California Courier, has appreciated my speech at PACE." My article received 4,000 Likes, 197 Shares and 185 comments.

I will now comment on Pashinyan's speech at the European Parliament on October 17, 2023, in Strasbourg, France.

In his speech, Pashinyan used the word "democracy" or "democratic" 21 times to describe Armenia's current government. He emphasized that democracy provides "security, peace, unity, well-being and happiness?" Regrettably, Armenia does not enjoy any of these attributes, since Artsakh was lost and Azeri troops have been stationed inside Armenia's borders since 2021. Armenia's problems are mostly due to the incompetence of its leader. Pashinyan came to power under the guise of promoting democratic values, but ended up violating the basic principles of democracy. What we have in Armenia now is one-man rule. Pashinyan listens to no one, whether they are ministers, advisers, his party members, the Parliamentary majority or the President. He makes all decisions by himself. He claimed in his speech that Armenia "would have simply been paralyzed, would have lost its independence and sovereignty if it were not democratic."

Pashinyan falsely said that his government "did not violate any principle of democracy." The fact is that Pashinyan has turned Armenia into a police state. When he first came to power, he used to go to the Prime Minister's office on a bicycle. Now, he hides behind hundreds of policemen before he puts one foot out the door. The policemen, who receive big salaries and bonus payments, beat up and arrest demonstrators. Pashinyan's political opponents face trumped up charges in court. He has threatened to squash his critics on the asphalt and slam them to the wall. Unbelievably, while campaigning for the parliamentary elections in June 2021, he waved a hammer in the air, threatening to smash the heads of his domestic opponents. Is that democracy?

Even Diaspora Armenians are not immune from the long arm of Pashinyan's dictatorial regime. Anyone who criticizes him from outside Armenia is banned from entering the country after arriving at the Yerevan Airport. What happened to the democratic principle of freedom of expression?

Pashinyan described Azerbaijan's May 12, 2021 attack on Armenia as a "provocation that took place before the parliamentary elections... to fail the upcoming parliamentary elections and paralyze the statehood of Armenia, or at least its government." The fact is that Azerbaijan's attack on Armenia was unrelated to the Parliamentary elections. Such attacks have taken place before and after the elections. Furthermore, President Aliyev has no reason to topple Pashinyan since he is making endless concessions to Azerbaijan on Artsakh and Armenia.

Pashinyan bragged in his speech that Armenia was able to settle the 100,000 refugees from Artsakh. He claimed that thanks to democracy in Armenia, "We did it honorably." The fact is that despite the persistent indications for years that Azerbaijan intended to occupy the remainder of Artsakh and force out its inhabitants, the Armenian government made no preparations to settle the refugees in Armenia. Many of them spent days in their cars, deprived of food, water and shelter. As a result, several thousand Artsakhtsis have already left Armenia.

In his speech, Pashinyan explained his readiness to allow Azeri cargo, vehicles, people, pipelines and electricity lines to traverse Armenia's territory from Azerbaijan proper to its exclave of Nakhichevan. Even though such access is supposed to be reciprocal, as mentioned in the Nov. 9, 2020 agreement, Azerbaijan has never indicated its willingness to allow similar transit for Armenians through Azerbaijan. The same disparity applies to Pashinyan's recognition of Azerbaijan's territory as 86,600 square kilometers, without President Aliyev agreeing to Pashinyan's proposed size of Armenia's territory as 29,800 square kilometers. Pashinyan also conceded that the former Azeri-inhabited enclaves within Armenia belong to Azerbaijan, without President Aliyev accepting a reciprocal exchange.

Finally, Pashinyan repeated his offer to sign a peace treaty with Azerbaijan by year-end even though there is no necessity for such a treaty as Armenia and Azerbaijan had not declared war on each other. The peace treaty will only serve as an opportunity for Azerbaijan to extract further concessions from Armenia.

Pashinyan concluded his 45-minute speech by repeating the word 'democracy' two more times: "I am convinced that democracy can provide peace, security, unity, prosperity and happiness. Let's prove this together. Long live democracy!"

The European Parliament members were extremely pleased with Pashinyan's remarks. Why shouldn't they? Pashinyan is going along with the interests of the West, Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey, which is the abandonment of Artsakh, to facilitate the flow of Azerbaijan's natural gas (partly bought from Russia) to Europe. Besides offering supportive words, European Parliament members are not willing to do anything concrete for Armenia.

I am sure Pashinyan will not post this article on his Facebook page.

Inappropriate Toronto Demonstration Directed Against Wrong Targets

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, C.M.

Now, our homeland and the Armenian people, both in the homeland and in the diaspora, are living through one of the roughest periods in our modern history. In this time of severe physical and psychological crises, it is inevitable — and even expected — that our people, facing irreversible losses to the entire territory of the homeland, express its anger with righteous revulsion under the pressure of successive profound disappointments.

In the diaspora, in our turn, as responsible Armenians, many of us have considered that one of the main duties of our lives, within the limits of our abilities, is to devote an important part of our time and material and intellectual resources, to serve our nation.

As a result of this situation, in such an electrified atmosphere of justified anger, it would be difficult to find any Armenian in the entire diaspora who would not feel the need to participate in protest or aid efforts in one way or another in favor of our people.

Our complaint and anger is in the first place directed at our age-old opponents, the Azerbaijanis and the Turks. Our protest is successively addressed to the other nations of the world, especially the so-called great nations, which are supposedly committed to implementing justice according to international standards. The latter also deserted us today. Shame on them, a thousand times over.

Finally, in the ranks of those responsible are inevitably, in Armenia and Artsakh, the so-called political forces of the day who have assumed the responsibility of the political leadership of the country, which are divided into groups called the government and the opposition. Among all the abovementioned guilty ones, the latter in particular are responsible for the heinous crime of bringing the homeland to the edge of the existential abyss.

Facing this deplorable and unbelievable national situation, it is our profound duty, especially in the diaspora, to realize that today there is one supreme sanctity, the Armenians' independent statehood, that is, the Republic of Armenia with all its symbols, and to disseminate that knowledge. The statehood of Armenia and its symbols are superior to and more sacred than any political movement, party or leader. In the diaspora in particular, those sym-

characteristics as a skilled diplomat, as a result of her influential interventions in Canadian diplomatic circles, as well as a wholehearted supporter of all important initiatives of our community, without exception.

Undoubtedly, we all have justified serious criticisms about the political circles and authorities who have assumed responsibility today in our homeland of Armenia-Artsakh. We also have comments regarding some of

THE STATEHOOD OF ARMENIA AND ITS SYMBOLS ARE SUPERIOR TO AND MORE SACRED THAN ANY POLITICAL MOVEMENT, PARTY OR LEADER. IN THE DIASPORA IN PARTICULAR, THOSE SYMBOLS ARE OUR NATIONAL FLAG, THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND THE AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

bols are our national flag, the embassy of the Republic of Armenia and the ambassador of the Republic of Armenia who heads the latter. These three are our supreme sanctities as Armenians and we must stand up for them.

That is why, last weekend in Toronto, on the occasion of an important event of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund, the demonstration that was made against the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Armenia to Canada Anahit Harutyunyan, preventing her to be present at that initiative for the benefit of the Armenian nation, was completely inappropriate, and even more seriously, fundamentally wrong and reprehensible. This ambassador is known throughout our community for her exceptional

the ways the Hayastan All Armenian Fund operates.

However, there are right and wrong ways of expressing all this.

The demonstration which took place in Toronto was completely inappropriate and wrong. The time and energy wasted there should have been directed against the Azerbaijani and Turkish ambassadors, and even, as Canadians, to the leadership of this country.

On my part, as a Canadian Armenian, recipient of the Order of Canada medal and one of the founding members of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund in 1992, I would like to apologize to Ambassador Anahit Harutyunyan, the representative of the Republic of Armenia to Canada.



Understanding the Armenia-Iran Relationship

IRAN, from page 18

Kars that stipulated the “free transit of persons and commodities without any hindrance” between Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia. The Turkish blockade forces Armenia to rely upon Iran’s transportation system. Because Armenia’s export economy relies on agriculture and manufacturing, affordability depends upon accessing markets by land.

If given a choice between a pomegranate transported by truck and a pomegranate an order of magnitude more expensive due to the expense of air cargo, consumers will universally choose the former. If the goal were to reduce or end Armenia’s trade with Iran, the best way would be to demand Turkey lift its unilateral blockade. That targeting Turkey would also benefit Israel is an added bonus, given how Turkey competes with Qatar to be Hamas’ chief financial and diplomatic sponsor. Trade also transits through Georgia, but that country’s tilt toward Russia imperils

that already limited route.

This does not mean that Armenia’s trade with Iran is not at times problematic, even if it is a matter of survival. Yerevan recognizes this. Armenia works with the United States and the West to limit its necessary trade and keep funds out of the hands of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Especially as Armenia prepares to decommission its Soviet-era Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant, Yerevan consults with Iran to provide goods in exchange for electricity to ensure no cash goes to Iran. Such an understanding grows even more critical as Armenians consider the inevitability that Russia will cut off gas to Armenia as early as this winter to punish the country’s westward pivot. Azerbaijan’s oil and gas trade with both Russia and Iran is different: It is a choice and purely profit-driven. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps monopolizes Iranian gas and oil, so Azerbaijan’s energy deals with Iran only help the terrorists the Aliyev regime claims to fight.

Baku helps the Kremlin bypass sanctions for a cut of the cash. In the latest deal, announced this month, Russia’s Lukoil will provide SOCAR, Azerbaijan’s state oil company, with a \$1.5 billion loan so that Lukoil will provide crude to SOCAR’s refinery in Turkey. Put another way, Russia is pumping money into Azerbaijan’s state oil company to fill the coffers of one of Hamas’ top funders. The news of the arrangement came amid travel to Moscow by Azerbaijani Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov for discussions not only about augmenting the Azerbaijan-Russia energy trade but also for trilateral meetings with Russia and Iran about energy infrastructure integration. While Azerbaijan seeks to cash in on the Iran trade, Armenia pursues neither free trade deals nor does it solicit significant Iranian investment.

Meanwhile, for all the hype, Armenia does not purchase weaponry from Iran, a very tempting thing to do given the Russian and, up to a few months ago, Western

restrictions on weapons sales to Armenia. Instead, Armenia has turned to India in its hour of need. Nor is there significant laundering of sanctioned goods or money from Armenia to Iran. While there have been a few marginal cases, U.S. government officials say the Armenian government has cooperated fully with investigators and shut down leaks where they do occur. In effect, Armenia follows the path of Cyprus in cracking down on money laundering. Nor, despite tremendous pressure from Tehran, has Armenia cracked down or rejected Iranian dissidents who flee growing repression in the Islamic Republic. Indeed, while Turkey returns Iranians to the Islamic Republic, Armenia has established itself as a stop along the Underground Railroad for Iranians to reach safety in Europe or America.

Azerbaijan’s supporters in Washington argue that the battle against Iran mandates deference to Aliyev’s supposed intelligence support for Israeli and Western efforts to counter Iranian terror and Tehran’s nuclear drive. In reality, much of the infiltration today occurs via Iraqi Kurdistan’s much more permissive border. For Iranian, Turkish, and Israeli agents, Erbil is the Casablanca of the twenty-first century. All Western intelligence services today, however, operate in Armenia, most often focusing on Iran. They do so without interference.

The Armenia-bashing of some analysts is deeply dishonest and comes at a substantial moral cost for the United States. Armenia is a country of genocide survivors. It is the first and only remaining Christian nation in the Middle East. Today, Russia, Turkey, and Iran jointly hold it hostage. It is an American interest to free Armenia from their grip rather than sacrifice it and other pro-Western democracies for the illusion of Azerbaijan and Turkish support. It is time to base American policy on reality, not endless Twitter repetition of the big lie.

(Michael Rubin is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.)

Sham Trial of Karabakh Resident Vagif Khachatryan Continues in Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (news.am) — The judicial farce in the “criminal case” against Nagorno-Karabakh resident Vagif Khachatryan continues in Baku.

The next court session into this will be presided over by Zeynal Aghayev, Chief Judge of the Baku Military Court, the Azerbaijani media report. The reporter in the case is Judge Jamal Ramazanov.

Khachatryan, a participant in the first Nagorno-Karabakh war in the early 1990s, was abducted by the Azerbaijanis this summer while crossing the Lachin corridor into Armenia—and being accompanied by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Azerbaijani authorities accuse Khachatryan of committing serious crimes for participating in combat operations. Despite these obviously illegal actions by Azerbaijan, including the abducting of a person under the protection of the ICRC, Khachatryan was not only not released, but is standing trial.

A total of 59 people are considered “victims” in this fabricated case, and all of them have “recognized” Khachatryan and spoken about his “crimes.”

Khachatryan, however, has pleaded not guilty to the charge against him, and stated that he did not participate in any crimes against Azerbaijanis.

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