

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932

Volume LXXXIX, NO. 20, Issue 4810

DECEMBER 2, 2023

\$2.00

Yerevan Won't Rule Out CSTO Exit

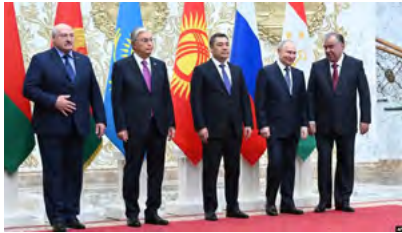
By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia could leave the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) due to the Russian-led alliance's reluctance to openly support it in the conflict with Azerbaijan, a leading member of the ruling Civil Contract party said on Monday, November 27.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan also did not rule out such a possibility on Friday one day after boycotting a summit of the leaders of Russia and other CSTO member states held in Minsk. He again accused the CSTO of not honoring its security obligations to Armenia.

"There is a defined situation in which we would definitely leave [the CSTO,]" Gevorg Papoyan, the deputy chairman of Civil Contract's governing board, told journalists. "We don't have that situation yet."

"But there is also a situation where we would definitely participate in those [CSTO] meetings. There is no such situation either," he said, alluding to an effective freeze on Armenia's participation in the alliance's activities.



The presidents of Russia and other CSTO member states meet in Minsk, November 23, 2023.

Papoyan did not specify those "situations." Nor did he say if Pashinyan's government wants to obtain security guarantees from Western powers before officially reorienting Armenia's towards the United States and the European Union.

The Russian Foreign Ministry accused Yerevan of planning such a re-orientation in late September as tensions between the two long-time allies rose further following Azerbaijan's military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh which Moscow did not prevent, stop or even condemn.

In recent months, Pashinyan has repeatedly said that the alliance with Russia cannot guarantee Armenia's national security. His refusal to attend the CSTO summit in Minsk stoked see CSTO, page 5



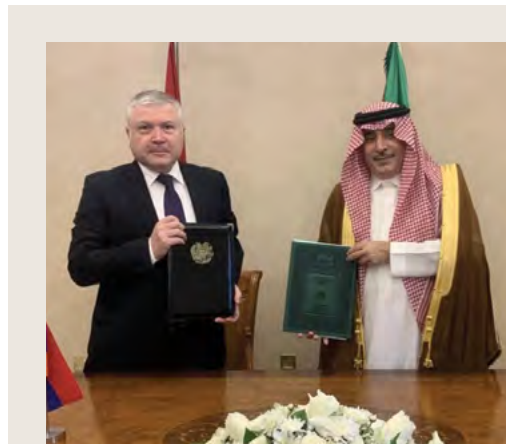
Image from the destroyed Shushi cemetery

Azerbaijanis Damage Another Armenian Cemetery in Shushi

ITHACA, N.Y. — Between October 5 and November 3, another Armenian cemetery in Shushi was damaged, the Caucasus Heritage Watch, based in Cornell University, reported on November 27.

It appears that bulldozers dumped heaps of debris atop the old Ghazanchetsots cemetery (southeast of the cathedral), endangering the already fragmented tombstones.

The location of the cemetery is confirmed by maps, publications, and recent photographs. The 18-19th c. cemetery had been severely damaged during the Soviet era. see DAMAGE, page 6



The Armenian and Saudi ambassadors in Abu Dhabi signed a protocol on establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations, November 25, 2023.

Armenia, Saudi Arabia Establish Diplomatic Relations

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Saudi Arabia on Saturday, November 25, formally agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, ending a decades-long policy related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

see RELATIONS, page 6

Bruce Boghosian Returns for a Second Term as AUA President

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Dr. Bruce Boghosian has spent a good part of his career as a professor in the Department of Mathematics at Tufts University in Medford, Mass., and even served as department chair from 2006 to 2010, but twice he has done something very different. He served as president of the American University of Armenia



(AUA), a university founded in 1991 in Yerevan after Armenian independence, from 2010 to 2014; he has returned for a second term starting this September.

Round One

"It was from 2010 to 2014, and one of the challenges of that time was that the university was in a period of growth. It needed to grow. It needed to add an undergraduate program. The challenges of figuring that out and the challenge of leaving the university in a better financial situation thanks to the undergraduate program, of growing the number of students, all of those things were interesting challenges to figure out," Boghosian reminisced.

When Boghosian first arrived at AUA, there were only 400 graduate students at the university but the Paramaz Avedisian Building had just been completed at the end of 2008 and could provide room for many more students. External consultants, Boghosian said, had suggested it needed to add an undergraduate program to grow. "That was all an interesting and ultimately rewarding thing to do at the time for the university," Boghosian declared.

He put aside his research for four years while focusing on administration, yet he found some parallels. He explained, "Mathematics in many ways is problem solving. You have conditions you have to satisfy and you have constraints you have to satisfy see AUA, page 3

ARMENIA

Vahan Tekeyan School in Karbi Celebrates Golden Autumn Festival

Page 2



NEW YORK

Catholicos Aram I Hosts Final Celebration in New York Upon Conclusion Of US Tour

Page 7



NEW YORK

Armenian National Philharmonic Performs at Carnegie Hall

Page 12





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

World Bank Offers Help with Artsakh Refugees

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Khachatryan hosted Rolande Pryce, World Bank Regional Director for the South Caucasus on November 27.

Welcoming the guests, Tigran Khachatryan presented the humanitarian situation formed as a result of the forced displacement of more than 100,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the measures implemented by the Government to overcome it. The Deputy Prime Minister emphasized the importance of cooperation with partner structures within the framework of the Government's response toolkit.

Pryce assured Khachatryan that the World Bank is ready to support Armenia in effective management of the situation.

During the meeting, the interlocutors touched on a wide range of issues of bilateral cooperation, including irrigation and drinking water, healthcare and a number of other directions.

PM Pashinyan Lauds Record Number of Jobs

YEREVAN (ArmenPress) — Armenia has set a new historic record in the number of registered jobs, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said.

"We've surpassed the number of 730,000, setting a new record in registered jobs, according to data of October 2023," he said at the November 23 Cabinet meeting.

Pashinyan said that approximately 183,000 jobs were created during his administration since 2018 and new jobs will be created, citing the economic dynamics.

He expressed hope that the economic growth dynamics will become even better as a result of fully involving the forcibly displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh in the job market and the economic system.

State Budget Revenue Grows 13.8 Percent

YEREVAN (ArmenPress) — State budget revenue comprised 1 trillion 708 billion drams in the nine months of 2023, amounting to a 13.8% growth compared to the same period of 2022, Deputy Finance Minister Vahan Sirunyan told lawmakers on November 27.

"The state budget revenues outperformed compared to the plan," Sirunyan told MPs at a parliamentary committee hearing on the budget performance. "Revenues amounted to 1 trillion 708 billion drams in the nine months of 2023, growing 13.8% compared to the same period of 2022. The expenditures amounted to 1 trillion 633 billion drams, growing 12.7% compared to the same period of 2022, while the implementation was 84.6%," he said.

The surplus was 74.6 billion drams against the originally projected 248.4 billion deficit.

Vahan Tekeyan School in Karbi Celebrates Golden Autumn Festival

By Gayane Ohanyan

KARBI, Armenia — The Vahan Tekeyan School in Karbi, Aragatsotn Province of Armenia, celebrated the Golden Autumn festival on November 22.

Principal Zhanna Avetisyan, and Deputy Principals Rita Aleksanyan and Vardanush Hovhannisyanyan, organized the traditional "Golden Autumn" celebration.

With the participation of teachers, parents and students, the day was meaningful with the display of the harvest and goods, which are the result of the hard work of the working people of Karabakh. Thanks to their efforts, they were turned into lavish tables and decorated in the schoolyard.

In the presence of Vahan Tekeyan's statue (built by the financial assistance of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada), junior, middle, and senior grade students with their parents entertained the audience with love, blessings and glorifying the fertile land.

Schoolchildren who moved from Artsakh and settled in the village and their parents also participated in the event, bringing with them Artsakh relics, vessels, specific dishes of Artsakh cuisine, including traditional jingalov bread.



Bust of Vahan Tekeyan at the school

Schoolchildren from Artsakh performed in their costumes, vocabulary, songs, and dances. One boy held a symbolic clay bowl with earth brought from Artsakh (bottom right photo).

The schoolchildren welcomed the guests



Young participants in the Golden Autumn Festival

with bread and salt, joyful games, beautiful recitations and good humor, which confirmed the vitality of the Armenians.

Giving away autumn products and celebrating such a solemn event had become a tradition in the village of Karbi even in the pre-war period. It was celebrated with great solemnity every year in the month of November. This year it was dedicated to Karabakh.

As a result of the tragic events of war of 2020, the tradition was broken in Karbi for about three years due to six victims. However, thanks to the special will and creative spirit of the Armenian people, the Karbetsi rediscovered the challenge of living and creating, the right to be happy with the fruits of their own labor.

May peace prevail in Armenia and may the spirit of the Armenians, being reborn, rise again like a phoenix.

At the end of the event, the schoolchildren bowed with flowers to the statue of Vahan Tekeyan, communicating with the thought of the great poet, listening to his whisper; What is the spirit, the spirit of the Armenian...

(Gayane Ohanyan is the director of Secondary Education at Tekeyan School in Karbi and a teacher of Armenian language and literature. This piece originally appeared in *Sardarabad* newspaper of Argentina.)



Young participants in the Golden Autumn Festival





ARMENIA

Bruce Boghosian Returns for a Second Term as AUA President

AUA, from page 1

and you have to find a solution to it. I think of administration in roughly the same way. It is not as neat and nice as mathematics is, it is maybe not as elegant sometimes, but in the end, it is problem solving.”

Round Two

“These years later,” he said, “I have watched the trajectory of the university and I am really impressed with the way that the university has grown, impressed with the way that it has strengthened over the years, I am impressed with the way that it now has all of the infrastructure that you would expect of an American university.”

This infrastructure includes a faculty senate with various committees and policies protecting academic freedom.

Other changes include the donation of two buildings in Yerevan, Boghosian said. After K. George and Carolann S. Najarian gifted them in 2016, they were renovated by means of various grants, and one was named the AUA K. George and Carolann S. Najarian MD Building, which holds the Najarian Center for Social Entrepreneurship, and the second, the AUA Student Residence, a dormitory which makes AUA more accessible and affordable for students from the Armenian provinces.

Now the university has entered a phase when it needs to grow again, Boghosian said. The university had to reject hundreds of qualified students with combined SAT scores in the high 700s because it again had no room. “And the challenge of that appealed to me,” he said. “It is a harder task this time, I think. It is a bigger university.”

Land had been purchased already under prior administrations that will serve as space for a cluster of three buildings with an atrium connecting all three. This will essentially allow a doubling of the population of the university between now and late 2027 or 2028, Boghosian said. At present there are some 2,300 students, mostly undergraduate with a few hundred graduate students, but when the process is complete, there will be a total of 4,000.

He noted that while most of the demand appears to be in the undergraduate program at present, the university also wants to improve its research programs, which necessarily means improving its graduate programs. Boghosian said, “I would like to see a technology transfer kind of program that exist in American universities. It is one way that the university can connect with industry in Armenia. There are the beginnings of this at this point.” The university already has the Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (EPIC), which helps turn ideas into concrete business ventures through pre-incubation and incubator programs on campus. Boghosian continued, “We could go further. We could go into pre-accelerator and accelerator stages even, spinning off companies. That involves figuring out transfer of intellectual property in the same way that American universities sort out that.” In the US, around half of all research starts out in academia, he said, and it is critically important for the economy, the security and the defense of Armenia to have more research be conducted.

Finally, he wants to increase transparency and make the university more attuned to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI, or, adding justice, DEIJ in acronym form). Aside from gender equity, there is also equity between students from the provinces and the capital, and students from abroad and those native to Armenia, which means basically making sure to give people the same opportunities to excel if they have the capability and work ethic required.

Admissions and Student Aid

Part of this equity approach is what in the

US would be called a full need and need-blind policy. As Boghosian explained it, need blind means that admissions are based solely on merit, with financial factors not considered until after admission. Full need means that AUA then assesses what an admitted student will need financially based on family income, wealth and background, and provides that. The highest financial aid level the university will give is 90 percent, Boghosian said, as it always requires that students pay something.

A full need and need-blind policy is a common approach for public universities in the US but uncommon for private ones, like AUA. Boghosian said, “We are really proud to be able to offer this aspect of American education here as well.”

According to AUA Chief Communications Officer Narek Ghazaryan, in the academic year 2022-23, 79 percent of students applying for financial aid received it, with



Dr. Boghosian addressing guests at the American University of Armenia

the average reduction in annual tuition being 63 percent. Furthermore, 70 percent of applicants for international scholarships received them. Such third-party scholarships are in addition to what AUA itself provides to any student.

AUA has also not been indifferent to the special situation of the refugees from Artsakh. First, it has encouraged students themselves to help in any way that they can, Boghosian says, including gathering food and household supplies for them, while law students are providing them with legal help. The AUA development team raised funds thanks to the Manoogian Simone Foundation that will allow the 50 undergraduate and graduate students currently from Artsakh to study tuition-free for the rest of this year. AUA current students from Artsakh are offered counseling.

Programs will be made available to those preparing to go to college to allow them to study English between now and the time when they can apply to AUA or other universities next year.

AUA also had employees in Artsakh as part of its Open Education and Turpanjian Rural Development programs in Stepanakert. After monitoring their status until they made it out of Artsakh safely, AUA then worked to find new jobs for them in other parts of AUA, so that their paychecks were never interrupted, Boghosian detailed.

Educational Approach

AUA remains, Boghosian said, a traditional liberal arts institution, with colleges of science and engineering, humanities and social sciences, business and economics, and public health. “The barriers for interdisciplinary communication and cooperation between these fields is low in AUA,” he said, and there is a general education distribution requirement as well as a general education program.

Boghosian declared, “Our aim is to cre-

ate classically educated students who are familiar with the great ideas of intellectual history, who are able to quote the works from the ancients up to the present day, who are able to keep conflicting ideas in their head at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

The specific degree fields offered at AUA were chosen based on various criteria. Boghosian explained: “The principal thing is that there must be a sufficient number of faculty who are interested in doing it and participating and working in that degree program... You also need to look at the market and whether there is a demand for these students in Armenia and whether these students will have jobs when they graduate and jobs that keep them staying in Armenia. We look at that very closely. Part of our intention is to give students the deep education that they need to thrive in Armenia.”

you get on an airplane, you want the pilot to succeed. I don’t care what his political views are. I want him to succeed because I am on the airplane. That is how I feel about the different governments that have come to power here.”

The university stayed out of the events leading up to the 2018 change of regime in Armenia because such institutional participation is not allowed by university policies, Boghosian said. In fact, during his first term, he communicated with Tufts University to find out its policies concerning political and religious activities at or by the university, and basically AUA adopted the same policies. If students or faculty as individuals want to go out on the streets and demonstrate, Boghosian said they do and the university does not ever attempt to stop them. “We’d like to think of it as an area where debate is open, encouraged, and civic participation is absolutely encouraged, but we don’t take sides and we try to teach students to respect other students’ points of view.

Debate and civic participation are encouraged. On the other hand, he said, “Partisan politics needs to be kept out of the classroom.”

However, there was a small incident at the end of this September, when some students were arrested by patrol police, commonly identified by their red berets, for having engaged in an on-campus protest. Boghosian said that the students were released within about 3 ½ hours. The AUA authorities reviewed security camera footage and Boghosian said, “Our students really were not doing anything wrong and we stand by the statement we made at the time expressing our concern.”

It was a difficult time, with the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh, and emotions were running high. Boghosian recalled that the day before this incident, a group of students tried to knock down the door of the president of YSU, so the police were probably on a hair trigger. He said, “I think they realized pretty quickly that they had overreacted and they let our students go.”

Connections with the United States

“Over the years the US government has been very supportive of AUA as representing American higher education and American values in Armenia,” Boghosian said. In the 1990s the US jumpstarted AUA’s endowment with a donation of 9.5 million dollars, according to Ghazaryan. Since then, the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) program of USAID has given about 15 million dollars’ worth of grants, which have been very helpful in building infrastructure.

Boghosian said that to his knowledge, ASHA or the US government never has asked in exchange for any modification to the university curriculum. He said, “I think that they are happy with the fact that we promote ideas like democracy and academic freedom. These are really specifically American ideas that we have here.” More-over things like AUA’s faculty senate or its whistle blower program are giving Armenia exposure to American values too, he added.

AUA is affiliated with the University of California (UC), which of course strengthens its American connection, and as a result of this affiliation is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission in the United States. Many of the board members of AUA, Boghosian noted, are from the UC system. The chair of the AUA board is the former UC system-wide provost while the chair of the UCLA Faculty Senate is another board member. In other words, there are fairly see PRESIDENT, page ?

In addition, he said, “We want to make sure that we produce people who are able to thrive in Armenia, are employable in Armenia and can help the Armenian economy, can help Armenian security, and can help Armenian defense.”

If enrollment numbers in any area falls too low, AUA can remove program offerings, and has done so in the past, Boghosian attested.

Relations with the Armenian Government and Politics

“The Armenian government has encouraged us over the years,” Boghosian stressed. During his first term as president, he said it encouraged AUA to start the undergraduate program. Though Yerevan State University (YSU) is a public university of the Armenian state, so AUA could be considered as competition, Boghosian said that the Ministry of Education considered this to be a healthy and constructive competition. In fact, he said that AUA belongs to a consortium of Armenian universities including YSU, and enjoys good relations with YSU, which is also growing and building up its infrastructure.

Another example of government support is AUA’s collaboration with the Central Bank of Armenia, which helped AUA start its master’s degree in economics through funding. This degree program migrated to the Central Bank’s research and training center in Dilijan, and now it may be the only one of AUA’s degrees which is given entirely remotely at this point, Boghosian said.

The “Velvet Revolution” of 2018 did not change anything in the relationship apparently. Boghosian said, “When I think back on my relationship with the Minister of Education at that time [during his first presidential term] and now, it is largely the same. It is a respectful, cordial relationship. They want us to succeed. And we want them to succeed in the same way that when

Armenian Authorities Seek to Dispossess Tsarukyan

By Naira Bughadarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Armenian authorities have moved to confiscate hundreds of millions of dollars in assets belonging to Gagik Tsarukyan, one of Armenia's richest men leading a major opposition party.

The assets include the largest of Tsarukyan's companies and about 90 properties owned by him or members of his family. The authorities are also seeking to seize over 86 billion drams (\$213 million) in revenue generated by them. All this may well account for most of the vast fortune made by the tycoon since the early 1990s.

The Office of the Prosecutor-General announced late last week that it has asked an Armenian court to approve the seizures in accordance with a controversial law that allows the authorities to confiscate assets deemed to have been acquired illegally. It said the court has already agreed to freeze them pending a verdict in the case.

A statement released by the law-enforcement agency did not publish any evidence in support of its claims that Tsarukyan and his family have amassed their wealth illegally. The tycoon's lawyers were quick to reject the claims and insist that "the origin of Gagik Tsarukyan's assets is illegal."

"There is weighty evidence of that, which will be presented to the court and the Office of the Prosecutor-General as soon as possible," they said in a statement.

The lawyers declined to comment further when contacted by RFE/RL's Armenian Service at the weekend. It thus remained unclear whether they see any political motives behind the case.

Tsarukyan is the founding leader of the opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) that had the second largest group in the country's former parliament. It challenged Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and demanded his resignation even before the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Tsarukyan was charged with vote buying and arrested in September 2020 just days before the outbreak of the war. The BHK

leader, who rejected the accusations as politically motivated, was released on bail one month later.

Like other opposition groups, the BHK blamed Pashinyan for Armenia's defeat in the six-week war and tried to topple him. It failed to win any parliament seats in snap general elections held in June 2021. Tsarukyan has kept a low profile since then.

The law invoked by the prosecutors allows them to seek asset forfeiture in case of having "sufficient grounds to suspect"



Prosperous Armenia Party leader Gagik Tsarukyan speaks at an election campaign rally in Aragatsotn province, June 15, 2021.

that the market value of an individual's properties exceeds their "legal income" by at least 50 million drams (\$100,000). Armenian courts can allow the nationalization of such assets even if their owners are not found guilty of corruption or other criminal offenses.

Over the past two years the prosecutors have petitioned the courts to dispossess dozens of former officials, including ex-Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan, and their relatives. So far there have been no court verdicts in any of those cases. Tsarukyan is apparently the first person who risks losing his assets despite having never held any executive posts in government.

Pashinyan has repeatedly portrayed the law in question as a major anti-corruption measure that will help his administration recover "wealth stolen from the people." Opposition figures counter, however, that Pashinyan is simply eager to suppress dissent and cement his hold on power.

In November 2021, opposition lawmakers appealed to the Constitutional Court to declare the law unconstitutional. They said that it contradicts articles of the Armenian constitution guaranteeing the presump-

tion of innocence and property rights. The court, dominated by judges installed by the current government, has still not ruled on the appeal.

Also, Pashinyan is facing growing media allegations that members of his entourage themselves are enriching themselves or their cronies. In February this year, the prime minister publicly urged senior officials to sue publications "falsely" accusing them of illicit enrichment. In March, hackers hijacked the YouTube channel of an Armenian newspaper just as it was about to publish a video report detailing expensive property acquisitions by several senior government officials and pro-government lawmakers.

Number of Passengers Traveling Through Yerevan Airport Increased Dramatically

YEREVAN (JAMnews) — The Civil Aviation Committee of Armenia reports an unprecedented increase in the number of passengers flying to Armenia and other countries through Yerevan airport, and by the end of the year a record of more than five million people is expected — the highest figure in the history of the country. The committee believes that both desire to travel and the tense situation in the world contributed to the rapid growth of passenger flow.

"Because of the Russian-Ukrainian war, there has been quite a large flow of passengers. A number of airlines have left these countries and redeployed to the south, including Armenia. In this context, we have become a natural hub," Stepan Payaslyan, deputy chairman of the Civil Aviation Committee, says.

For the first 10 months of 2023, they have already recorded substantial activity — 4.7 million people. Last year the number of passengers amounted to 3.7 million. And the previous year, 2021, the Civil Aviation Committee considered a "recovery" period after the coronavirus pandemic.

Payaslyan said that before the pandemic, in 2019, there were about three million passengers. According to Payaslyan, the country is considered by passengers both as an independent destination and as a hub for traveling to other countries.

In his opinion, the growth of air transportation and passenger traffic in the last two years is due to people's desire to travel again after COVID restrictions and the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Payaslyan believes that Armenia could become "a major hub if its own airlines managed passenger traffic." And some Armenian airlines are already taking on that role to some extent, but are not yet able to take full ownership of the situation: "There are many cases when, for example, citizens come to Yerevan from Russian destinations and from here fly to European countries using the services of other airlines, as these destinations are now closed to Russian airlines."

Provision of privileges to airlines, such as air duty and various navigation services to new destinations, also contributes to the growth.

"The activity of Armenian airlines has also become an important factor. Never before have six Armenian air carriers flown from Yerevan at once. This also contributes to the formation of passenger traffic. And competitive conditions also lead to lower ticket prices," Payaslyan explained.

Seven new airlines have joined the Armenian market this year. The deputy chairman of the Civil Aviation Committee says that a "dynamic process" has started with new airlines appearing and after some time they may leave the market or temporarily stop their activities.

Now it is possible to fly from Yerevan to Rome, Milan, Venice, Frankfurt, Paris, Lyon and other cities, Payaslyan notes. In the fall, a Yerevan-Sri Lanka direct flight was launched.

"In spring 2024, Eurowings will launch a direct flight Berlin-Yerevan."

According to him, Armenian airlines also make flights to various cities in Russia.

Bruce Boghosian Returns as AUA President

PRESIDENT, from page 3

high level administrators from throughout the UC system at AUA.

Boghosian said, "This is a wonderful resource because if we go to them with problems that we are having, chances are that they have experienced those problems before," including, of course, the growing pains of new campuses.

There are also domain specific areas in which AUA has cooperative agreements with UC. For example, the Turpanjian College of Health Sciences has a cooperative agreement with the University of California, Los Angeles Fielding School of Public Health.

AUA is also exploring offers from top universities in the US for cooperative agreements on teaching online courses, where AUA students can benefit from US-based courses, while American students can take courses offered by AUA.

AUA employs some faculty from the UC as well as other institutions in the US. According to the *AUA Factbook* for 2022-2023, 29 faculty members, 9 percent of the total, are US citizens. Boghosian remarked,

"We certainly do look for faculty who have had not only training, maybe a PhD or post doc, but also some academic experience in the US. That is important for us. If we can find somebody who maybe started in Armenia and got an academic position in the West and at some point in their career wants to turn around and come back here, we love getting people like that. That is ideal for us in many ways. It sort of reverses the brain drain a little bit and we like it when we can do that."

Financially, AUA relies a lot on its US connections. The majority of its endowment is managed by the UC system. "What that means in the case of the University of California," Boghosian said, "is that the same people who invest the endowment of the University of California invest AUA's endowment and they are very good at what they do. They get good returns on the funds that are donated to us for the endowment."

Furthermore, Boghosian said, the business model of the university is to raise funds in the United States for use in Armenia. For this purpose, AUA has a board in the US for what is named the American Universi-

ty of Armenia Corporation, a 501c3 non-profit corporation which can thus provide receipts for tax deductible donations in the US. Donations are then passed on to the AUA Foundation ("Himnadram") in Armenia, which has its own board and is an Armenian legal entity necessary for issuing higher education degrees there.

While there is some fundraising in Armenia from AUA alumni and some leaders of industry, Boghosian said, "There isn't quite the same culture of philanthropy in Armenia as there is in the US. Part of it is maybe the lack of tax-deductible donations in Armenia as there is in the US."

AUA has one more important connection in the United States, and that is the Armenian General Benevolent Union, with its international headquarters in New York City. The AGBU played an important role in AUA's inception, along with the UC system, the Armenian government and the US government. The AGBU continues, Boghosian said, to play a very helpful and committed role. The AUA board to this day has AGBU members, and a part of the AUA endowment is held by the AGBU.



INTERNATIONAL

Russia Tightens Border Controls For Armenian Trucks

By **Narine Ghalechian and Shoghik Galstian**

UPPER LARS, Georgia/Russia — Hundreds of Armenian trucks were stuck at the main Russian-Georgian border crossing on Monday, November 28 after Russia reportedly tightened import and export controls on them amid its unprecedented tensions with Armenia.

Truck drivers said that the Russian customs service is subjecting them to stricter sanitary and other checks, causing long lines of the heavy vehicles on both sides of the Upper Lars crossing vital for the Armenian economy.

“I’m stuck at Lars for a second day,” one driver told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service. “There is a problem with paperwork. It’s not just me but also other Armenian trucks.”

“According to our information, several trucks have already returned [to Armenia] and about 200 others are waiting in line,” Garnik Danielian, an opposition parliamentarian, wrote on Facebook.

Deputy Economy Minister Arman Khojayan confirmed that Russian customs officers have turned away some of the Armenian trucks carrying goods for the Russian market. But he did not give any numbers.

“As the head of the State Revenue Committee told me yesterday, it’s not that they are turning away all goods or entire categories of goods,” he told reporters. “We also have cargo crossing the border.”



Cars and heavy trucks are lined up near the Upper Lars border crossing with Georgia, November 21, 2023.

Khojayan would not say whether he believes there is a political reason for the stricter border checks introduced by the Russians.

Artur Khachatryan, another Armenian opposition lawmaker, suggested that Moscow is retaliating against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s decision to boycott last week’s Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) summit in Minsk which highlighted a significant deterioration of Russian-Armenian relations.

“I think that Russia is sending certain messages [to Yerevan],” said Khachatryan. “Let’s acknowledge that this is not accidental.”

The truck driver, who did not want to be identified, also felt that he and his Armenian colleagues remain stuck at Upper Lars because of the tensions between Moscow and Yerevan.

“The [Armenian] government picked a fight with the Russians and the Russians are now retaliating in this way,” he said.

Russia is Armenia’s leading trading partner, accounting for more than one-third of the South Caucasus nation’s foreign trade. It has long been the main export market for Armenian agricultural products, prepared foodstuffs and alcoholic drinks.

The total volume of Russian-Armenian trade, mainly carried out through Upper Lars, has skyrocketed since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the resulting barrage of Western sanctions against Moscow.

Armenian entrepreneurs have taken advantage of those sanctions, re-exporting various goods manufactured in Western countries to Russia. This explains why Armenian exports to Russia nearly doubled to \$2.6 billion in January-September this year.



An Armenian truck passes through the newly expanded Upper Lars border crossing in Russia between Georgia and Russia, June 21, 2023

Yerevan Won’t Rule Out CSTO Exit

CSTO, from page 1

speculation about the South Caucasus state’s imminent exit from the alliance.

Alen Simonian, the Armenian parliament speaker and another senior Civil Contract member, said last week that he will not attend an upcoming session of the CSTO’s Parliamentary Assembly.

The secretary general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on Monday downplayed Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s refusal to attend last week’s summit of the leaders of ex-Soviet states making up the Russian-led military alliance.

Imangali Tasmagambetov, who is due to visit Yerevan soon, claimed that Pashinyan did not fly to Minsk for the summit last Thursday for purely “technical” reasons.

“In my view, it makes no sense to draw any categorical conclusions from this situation,” Tasmagambetov told the TASS news agency. “Armenia was and remains our ally.”

Pashinyan’s boycott of the summit highlighted his government’s mounting tensions with the other CSTO member states and Russia in particular. Pashinyan on Friday again accused the CSTO of not honoring its security commitments to Armenia. What is more, he did not rule out the possibility of eventually pulling his country out of his alliance.

Speaking on the eve of the Minsk summit, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said that Pashinyan’s administration is planning a “radical change” of Armenia’s traditional geopolitical orientation at the behest of Western powers. The ministry had earlier accused it of “ruining” Russian-Armenian relations.

For his part, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed over the weekend the criticism of the CSTO voiced by Pashinyan as well as other Armenian leaders. Peskov expressed hope that Yerevan will soon resume its “full-fledged participation in the organization.”

Earlier this year, Armenia also refused to participate in CSTO military exercises and boycotted a meeting of the defense ministers of the bloc’s member states.

Armenia Supports Territorial Integrity of Georgia, says Prime Minister

YEREVAN (ArmenPress)

— Armenia fully and unequivocally supports the territorial integrity of Georgia, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan was asked at an online Q&A with the public on November 24 whether Armenia is ready to recognize Abkhazia and Ossetia as occupied territories.

“Armenia’s votes in the UN have recorded very visible and certain differences before and after 2019. As a result, the representatives of our brotherly state, Georgia, have expressed their satisfaction. We fully and unequivocally defend the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and democracy of Georgia,” Pashinyan said.

INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Ready to Exchange Convicted Azeris With POWs, ‘All for All’

YEREVAN (ArmenPress)

— Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has expressed regret that Azerbaijan is using the purely humanitarian issue concerning the prisoners for political goals. He said on November 24 that Azerbaijan’s actions are illogical, while the Armenian government is focused on the issue of POWs.

“We’ve expressed readiness to display flexibility in this issue as well, and to work with Azerbaijan in order for our prisoners to return. Negotiations are one way, one direction. Furthermore, we have expressed readiness to even exchange the convicted Azerbaijanis in Armenia with our prisoners under the all for all principle, considering it a purely humanitarian issue,” the prime minister said.

“We’ve applied to the international human rights courts and other possible legal bodies in all cases. In several cases we have rulings on indicating urgent measures from these bodies, bringing international attention on the issue. But I have to say that obviously that work can’t be considered sufficient as long as our captive brothers haven’t returned to Armenia, and we will continue to make every effort in this direction,” Pashinyan said.

Armenia Observes Greece’s Drills with US, France

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net)

— Olympic Cooperation is carrying out 23 military exercises in northeastern Greece at the end of November, with the participation of the Greek armed forces and the land forces of Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Cyprus, the USA and France. This was reported by ANA-MPA (via Social Bites). Observers from Albania, Armenia, Egypt, India, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Romania and Saudi Arabia were also present in the drills.

Greek Minister of National Defense Nikos Dendias said that the presence of French troops was the result of the strategic partnership agreement. Dendias said, “The first agreement signed with the USA places the port of Alexandroupoli on the geopolitical map as the main transportation hub of NATO’s eastern wing and ensures the strengthening of countries that fight and defend international law on this wing,” he emphasized.

Asian Development Bank Ready to Expand Joint Projects with Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia)

— Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Masatsugu Asakawa, president of the Asian Development Bank. The prime minister highly appreciated the close cooperation formed between the Armenian government and the Asian Development Bank and emphasized that it contributes to the development of infrastructure in Armenia.

INTERNATIONAL

Blinken Again Talks to Armenian, Azeri Leaders

WASHINGTON (Azatutyun.am) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken telephoned the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan late on Monday, November 27 to discuss ways of kick-starting Armenian-Azerbaijani talks on a peace deal sought by Western powers.

His separate phone calls followed Baku's cancellation of a meeting in Washington of the Armenian-Azerbaijani foreign ministers scheduled for November 20. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry blamed the move on what it described as pro-Armenian statements made by James O'Brien, the US assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia.

Speaking during a congressional hearing in Washington on November 15, O'Brien condemned Azerbaijan's September 19-20

military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh and warned Baku against attacking Armenia to open a land corridor to its Nakhichevan exclave.

"We've made clear that nothing will be normal with Azerbaijan after the events of September 19 until we see progress on the peace track," he said, adding that Washington has cancelled "high-level visits" by Azerbaijani officials and suspended military and other aid to Baku.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev complained about O'Brien's comments during his phone conversation with Blinken. According to Azerbaijani media, Aliyev agreed to receive the senior US diplomat in Baku in December in return for Blinken's pledge to lift the "unfounded ban on Azerbaijani officials' visits to the United States."

"The Secretary welcomed President Aliyev's commitment to conclude a durable and dignified peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia," Matthew Miller, the US State Department spokesman, said in a statement on the call.

Blinken also "noted recent points of concern" in US-Azerbaijani relations and discussed "opportunities to strengthen cooperation, especially around the peace process," added Miller.

He did not say whether Blinken and Aliyev agreed on a new date for the Armenian-Azerbaijani talks in Washington. The press offices of Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan also did not report such an agreement.



James O'Brien, head of the State Department's Office of Sanctions Coordination, testifies during a Senate hearing in Washington, September 28, 2022

Aliyev and Pashinyan had been scheduled to meet on the fringes of the European Union's October 5 summit in Granada, Spain. Pashinyan hoped that they will sign there a document laying out the main parameters of an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty.

However, Aliyev withdrew from the talks at the last minute. He also cancelled another meeting which EU Council President Charles Michel planned to host in Brussels later in October. A senior EU diplomat indicated last week that the onus is on the Azerbaijani side to revive the stalled peace process.

O'Brien questioned Aliyev's commitment to signing a Western-backed treaty

with Armenia when he testified before a US House of Representatives subcommittee two weeks ago. The peace accord would commit Baku to formally recognizing Armenia's current borders.

Speaking to journalists earlier on Monday, O'Brien said there is still a "real opportunity for Azerbaijan and Armenia to make peace." He warned at the same time that the US is ready to "use whatever tools we could" to prevent Baku from forcibly opening the corridor through Armenian territory.

"So we've been very clear with the parties about what we hope to see and about the consequences of moving forward otherwise," added the US official.

Armenia, Saudi Arabia Establish Diplomatic Relations

RELATIONS, from page 1

Armenia's Foreign Ministry announced that the Armenian and Saudi ambassadors to the United Arab Emirates signed a relevant protocol in Abu Dhabi. It said the document cites the two countries' desire to "establish cordial relations in various fields."

Armenia has long maintained such relations with other Gulf Arab monarchies, notably the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Both nations have embassies in Yerevan.

It was not immediately clear whether Riyadh and Yerevan are planning to open embassies in each other's capital.

Saudi Arabia had for decades refused to establish diplomatic ties with Armenia due to its conflict with Muslim Azerbaijan over Karabakh. The oil-rich kingdom signaled a change in that policy after its relations with Armenia's arch-foe and Azerbaijan's ally Turkey deteriorated significantly several years ago.

The policy change was highlighted in October 2021 by then Armenian President Armen Sarkissian's visit to Riyadh. Sarkissian sat next to Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, at the opening ceremony of an international conference held there.

Saudi Arabia made more overtures to Yerevan in February 2022 when its Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan held talks on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in Germany. It was the first-ever face-to-face meeting of the top diplomats of the two states.

Armenia subsequently voiced support for Saudi Arabia's bid to host the Expo 2030 world fair. In another sign of warming bilateral ties, a Saudi airline launched first-ever commercial flights to Yerevan in June this year.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signaled the impending normalization of Armenian-Saudi relations in televised remarks aired on Friday.

"I hope that Armenia and Saudi Arabia will soon establish diplomatic relations, which would be a very significant development," he said.

Azerbaijanis Damage Another Armenian Cemetery in Shushi

DAMAGE, from page 1

By the 1990s, 45 tombstones remained. One marks the passing of Stepan, a blacksmith from Ghazanchi village in Nakhchivan, who died in 1758. He was one of many Armenian migrants from that village whose name was given to the city's well-known cathedral.

Stepan's tombstone recalls the destruction of the Armenian cemetery in his native village, the Old Cemetery of Ghazanchi/Shahkert. CHW documented its erasure in the investigation into the recent destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Nakhchivan.

This is the sixth Armenian cemetery impacted since Nov. 2020, after the destruction of Mets Tagher and Sghnakh, damage to the cemetery near Vazgenashen/Hajisamly, and damage to Shushi's Northern and Yerevan Gates cemeteries.



Image from the destroyed Shushi cemetery



Community News

Use of Force by Azerbaijan Against Armenia Is Not Acceptable, Says Subcommittee Chairman Kean

WASHINGTON — During a hearing on November 15 on “The Future of Nagorno-Karabakh,” House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe Chairman Tom Kean (R-NJ) made clear that the use of force by Azerbaijan against Armenia is unacceptable,” reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

In his opening remarks, Chairman Kean stated that “we cannot afford to look away from the region” and made clear that the “use of force against sovereign Armenian territory, including in the Syunik province, will be completely and totally unacceptable.”

Ranking Member Bill Keating (D-MA) echoed the Chairman’s message, stating that “military action is unacceptable”, and also indicated his support for a “safe and dignified return” of the Armenians of Artsakh.

Testifying before the Subcommittee, Department of State Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Europe and Eurasian Affairs James O’Brien repeatedly highlighted that the Biden Administration has no intention of waiving Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act for the foreseeable future and that such a decision does not negatively impact U.S. national security.

O’Brien highlighted that the Armenians of Artsakh should have complete access and that the Administration is insisting on the protection of their property and cultural assets as well as a “viable opportunity to return.” With respect to transport links (road and rail) in southern Armenia, O’Brien stated that it should not be created through force. When asked by Representative Darrell Issa (R-CA) about the use of sanctions against Azerbaijan if “other methods don’t work,” O’Brien committed to the use of sanctions.

The Assembly has repeatedly called for sanctions to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its genocidal policies, and its testimony today stated that “Azerbaijan should not be rewarded for their continued assault against the Armenian people, but rather sanctioned” and highlighted that the “U.S. has many tools at its disposal to do so from the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and economic sanctions to trade restrictions and the enforcement of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act,” along with the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act.

Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, and Dr. Alexander Sokolowski, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia U.S. Agency for International Development

Representative Dina Titus (D-NV) raised concerns about Turkey’s role
FORCE, page 9



Catholicos Aram I (center) at the ecumenical service on November 18 at St. Illuminator Cathedral in New York City

Catholicos Aram I Hosts Final Celebration in New York Upon Conclusion of US Tour

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia has been on a pontifical tour of the East Coast Armenian communities since arriving on November 6 in Washington.

He traveled at a breakneck pace after serving as Guest Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives, speaking about the plight of the more than 100,000 Artsakh refugees and their urgent need for care to the lawmakers, visiting the people of several areas, celebrating the Divine Liturgy, and conducting meetings with officials, organizations and youth groups.

On November 17, he finally reached his final stop in New York. On Saturday, November 18, he conducted an Ecumenical Service at St. Illuminator’s Armenian Cathedral where the eternal prayer of St. Nerses Shnorhali, “In Faith I Believe,” was recited in 17 languages.

After delivering his pontifical message at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, November 19, at St. Illuminator’s Cathedral, celebrated by Bishop Torkom Donoyan, Western Prelacy Prelate, the Catholicos was honored at a gala banquet at the Rockefeller Center Rainbow Room.

More than 200 attendees, who included the Armenian representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mher Margaryan, and Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Executive Director Zaven Khanjian, enthusiastically greeted the Catholicos as he walked in, led in by Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate, and surrounded by more than a dozen Armenian clergymen.

Following an invocation voiced by Catholicos Aram, the crowd was welcomed by Prelacy Banquets Coordinator Susan Chitjian Erickson and Mistress of Ceremonies Tamar Karanian, Executive Council Secretary. The American and Armenian national anthems were sung a cappella by Siran Tchorbajian.

Steering Committee Chairman Hrant Petrosyan, Esq., and Executive Council Chairman Col. Aram Sarafian both spoke of Aram’s many attributes, including “his love for all that is palpable,” “his efforts for those in need,” “his work as a prominent theologian,” “his pious role in serving Armenia, the Artsakh refugees, the Diaspora, and the youth.”

The church “is not four walls, it is the people,” said Sarafian emotionally, crediting Catholicos Aram for his valuable service in this regard.

Displaying the strong support that he has given to the young people, three youth voices took center stage. Siamanto Academy student Vahan Chaglasian, speaking in Armenian, welcomed Catholicos Aram, and called his visit “inspiring, uplifting and supportive of our parents and their children.”

St. Gregory of Datev Institute graduate Taleen Lakissian related the inspiring story of her father Rev. Mesrob Lakissian’s ordination as the priest of St. Illuminator’s Cathedral when she was only 10 months old. Her Datev journey that started when she was only a year old “taught me so many things — my faith, church history, culture and how to serve my church and community,” she said.

see CATHOLICOS, page 9

Armenia Fund USA’s 26th Annual Telethon Raises Over \$3 Million

LOS ANGELES — Armenia Fund USA has raised a total of \$3,110,000 as of the end of its Thanksgiving Day telethon. For the 26th year, donations from the Armenian diaspora poured in as viewers gave generously to benefit Armenia, its people and infrastructure.

“Our team is so grateful for the outpouring of generosity from the Armenian community around the world,” said Armenia Fund Board Chair Maria Mehranian. “The benevolence of the diaspora enabled us to kick off the Artsakh Refugee Fund, and today’s results will allow us to continue our mission.”

With these funds, Armenia Fund USA will implement the Sustainable Community Housing Program, which will ensure forcibly displaced Artsakh families have a home that provides the safety and sense of community in a village setting. Armenia Fund has been working with planners and architects both on the ground in Armenia and in the US to prepare village development concepts that can be built as fast as possible.

In addition, the Artsakh Live-Work Cultural Center will be established to help preserve the cultural heritage, specifically the art of carpet-weaving and similar creative arts and crafts while providing housing and employment for compatriots from Artsakh. Armenia Fund has been working with planners, architects, art historians and experts both on the ground in Armenia and in the US to prepare concepts for a live-work cultural center that can be built as quickly as possible. Carpet-weaving has been a part of the economic and cultural life of Artsakh for centuries; this program will help create opportunities for artists and artisans to re-engage in the work they have been doing for generations before.



Founded in 1992, Armenia Fund, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-governmental, and non-political humanitarian organization. Since its inception, Armenia Fund has raised more than \$300 million to provide emergency humanitarian assistance, housing, comprehensive medical relief, infrastructure repairs, and development and cultural-recovery programs, including schooling, and arts education for displaced communities in Armenia and Artsakh. For more information, visit www.armenianfund.org.

COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

AMAA Holds 104th Annual Meeting in San Francisco, Elects New Board Members

By Louisa Janbazian

PARAMUS, N.J. — This year, the Armenian Missionary Association of America's (AMAA) 104th Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, October 21, 2023, hosted by the Calvary Armenian Congregational Church of San Francisco.

AMAA President Nazareth Darakjian, M.D. welcomed the delegates and invited Rev. Hendrik Shanazarian, Minister to the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, to offer a devotional and the opening prayer. Rev. Shanazarian's devotional was based on Matthew 9:36 and Colossians 3:12. Focusing on the current situation in the Motherland and the Middle East, and the AMAA's outreach programs he said: "In a broken world filled with hate and anger, we are called to prayerfully show compassion following Jesus' example."

During the meeting, Darakjian, and Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian presented their reports covering the Association's activities during the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year. Reports were also received from the AMAA Officers, Directors and Committee Chairs, as well as Representatives of the Armenian Evangelical Unions, the Armenian Evangelical World Council, and affiliated organizations, who shared their joys and concerns and praised God for another successful year.

The AMAA's general membership elected the following nine members to the



AMAA Board of Directors meeting

Board of Directors Class of 2026 for a term of three years: Pamela Avedisian, Rafi Balabanian, D.D.S., M.A.G.D., Nazareth Darakjian, M.D., Karl Doghramji, M.D., Rev. Joseph Garabedian, Denise Gertmenian, Berjouhy Gulesserian, Gary Philips, Esq. and Michael Voskian, D.M.D.

The AMAA's 104th Annual Meeting concluded with a closing prayer offered by

Rev. René Léonian, Ph.D., President of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Union of Eurasia.

In conjunction with the AMAA Annual Meeting, the AMAA Board of Directors and the Armenian Evangelical World Council held their meetings on October 19-20.

On Sunday, October 22, members, and guests joined the Calvary Armenian Congregational Church of San Francisco, for a special Worship Service. Rev. Dr. Haroutune Selimian, President of the Armenian Evangelical Community in Syria, offered the Armenian Sermon.

The English Sermon was delivered by Rev. Joseph Garabedian, Pastor of Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, NJ.

During the Service, a prayer was offered

by Rev. Dr. Samuel Albarian, Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Marseille, France, in memory of AMAA members and friends who died during the past year. Rev. Calvin Sagherian, Moderator of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America and Pastor of the Calvary Armenian Congregational Church, officiated the installation of the members and officers of the AMAA Board of Directors.

"We take this opportunity to thank the members of the Calvary Armenian Congregational Church of San Francisco and its Pastor Rev. Calvin Sagherian for hosting the Annual Meeting and welcoming us with great warmth and hospitality. We pray that God will continue to bless this congregation and their ministry abundantly in the Bay area," said Khanjian.



Installation of AMAA Board of Directors and Officers



Delegates of AMAA's 104th Annual Meeting

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

DENNIS M. DEVENNEY & SONS

Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543
(781) 891-9876 www.NEMonuments.com

Giragosian

FUNERAL HOME

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC
Mark J. Giragosian
Funeral Counselors

576 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, TEL: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

OBITUARY

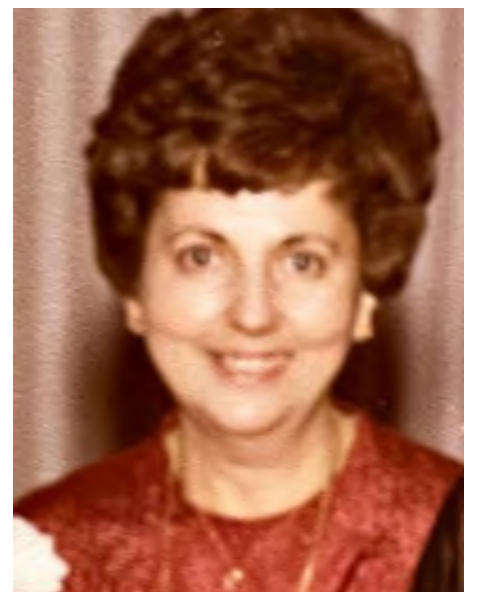
Dorothy John

BOSTON — Dorothy John, of Boston, passed away November 18, 2023.

She was the sister of the late Mary, Anna, Arthur and Charles John, and the late Lucine Tashjian (Souren). She was the aunt of Ronald S. Tashjian (Joyce) and Carol Zeytoonjian and her late husband Henry. Cherished great aunt of Ronald S. Tashjian Jr. (Heather), Amy Harrington (Keith), and Andrea Zeytoonjian. She was Auntie Dottie to William, Regina, Caroline, and Nicholas.

Funeral service at Saint James Armenian Apostolic Church, 465 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, on Wednesday, November 29. Interment followed at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Saint James Armenian Church.





COMMUNITY NEWS

Catholicos Aram I Hosts Final Celebration in NY Upon Conclusion of Tour

CATHOLICOS. from page 7

“Salt and Light” Youth Ministry member Hovsep Terterian praised the emphasis on the fostering of youth involvement in the church, the community, and with those who are in need of encouragement and hope in their everyday lives.

All three young people deservedly were given long cheering ovations by the appreciative attendees.

Inspiring and Powerful Address

Tanielian, in introducing Catholicos Aram, thanked all who had traveled from near and far to attend the reception and those who helped in making this Thanksgiving pontifical visit possible and successful.

Catholicos Aram I, speaking spontaneously to the rapt audience in English and emphasizing the important points he made on his two-week visit, including the unity of the Armenian people and the importance of a strong family foundation, focused this eloquent address on his many dialogues with the youth.

“Globalization,” he stated, “is no longer a word. It is a reality of life. It has its own vision, a culture that destroys all small communities. We are directly exposed to this culture. We can’t live in this world in isolation. We have to learn to be proactive and preserve our Armenian identity. We cannot live in the past. We have to keep pace with the changing times and become the church of the 21st century.”

The church “is not a museum.” We have to renew our church “to become a transforming presence. And the youth have the primary role in changing our church.”

Who are we, he asked. “We are Armenians living in the U.S. We must keep our Armenian identity,” he again said with great emphasis. “America is a nation of different origins.” The Catholicos recalled that in 1976, when he was a student, “the church was challenged. We cannot survive without our roots, and also, we must be an important part of the U.S. But there can be no assimilation. We are at the most crucial juncture of our Armenian nation. We are being invaded and impacted by many crises, polarization and tension in Armenia and the Diaspora.”

Today, as a nation, “we have to strengthen our faith, hope, vision. We need leaders who can lead our nation, leaders who have courage, wisdom, and who are aware of the geopolitical realities which are not in favor of our homeland. We need to develop. We cannot remain where we are. We

must engage with the challenges, and cope with the new reality in Armenia and the diaspora,” he advised with great emphasis.

“In the last two years, I have declared strongly to the Diaspora that we have to go forward with a new vision, and the youth have a very important role to play,” he stated again emphasizing each word.

“Our youth, with their life practices and courage, can play a pivotal role,” Cathol-

os sang a lilting *Keleh Keleh*, by Komitas, and Hooshere and Siran in a joyous duet presented the timeless and celebratory *Yerevan-Erebuni* by Edgar Hovhannisian.

Professional and acclaimed violinist Diana Vasilian followed the youngsters with an Armenian medley of favorites that had the audience singing in unison.

Archbishop Tanielian announced the awards which honored “our brave soldiers.

Saturday Ecumenical Service and Fellowship

On Saturday, November 18, at the St. Illuminator’s Armenian Cathedral in New York, the Catholicos conducted an ecumenical service, followed by the sacred prayer of the holy saint Nerses Shnorhali, “In Faith I Confess.”

Attending were Eastern Prelate Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Western



Catholicos Aram I (center) at the ecumenical service on November 18 at St. Illuminator Cathedral in New York City

icos Aram I declared to a standing loudly cheering audience, an ovation that lasted several minutes.

Celebratory Awards and Performances

Several young people delighted the attendees with several numbers displaying their musical artistry. Singer Anahit Indzhigulyan presented a powerful *Mardigi Yerkuh* (Ashot Satian), along with *Je te veux* (Eric Satie). Karina Vartanian performed Komitas Vartabed’s soulful *Groong* and Giacomo Puccini’s *O Mio Babbino Caro*.

Hooshere Bezdikian offered Khachatur Avetisyan’s *Caravan*. Siran Tchorbajian

“The Mesrob Mashdotz Medal was given to Armenian Studies scholar and Prelacy Executive Director Dr. Vartan Matiossian for his contributions to Armenian culture. Karnig Alajajian received the order of Knight of Cilicia for his active participation and philanthropic contribution to the Armenian community. The title of Prince of Cilicia was bestowed upon Richard Carolan for his longtime contributions to the Eastern and Western Prelacies and the Catholicosate of Cilicia, while his mother, Tina Carolan, was honored with the Queen Zabel medal.

Longtime and indefatigable community activist and Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Aram Hamparian offered greetings form sister organizations. “Our spiritual shepherd Aram Vehapar teaches us many things — among them are that we are owners of, not witnesses to, our Armenian faith, our Armenian freedom, our Armenian future,” he said.

He continued: “That our destiny does not await us, rather it must be written by us.” Referring to the recent tragedy in Artsakh, he declared “We must decide our future, or others will decide it for us. We either keep our seat at the table of nations, or others will have it taken from us, leaving us forgotten by history.”

Hamparian paid tribute to the recently deceased Dr. Dertad Manguikian, a “powerful lay leader, a great ally of Aram Vehapar,” and their timeless bond of *bardaganootyoon* (duty). That is what “connected them and what has brought us together here today. That is the hallmark of our church, our cause.”

The celebratory event concluded with a heartfelt chorus of *Giligia*, after which many in the crowd surrounded and congratulated the Catholicos.

Prelate Bishop Torkom Donoyan, Eastern NJ Prelacy Vicar Very Rev. Fr. Sahag Yemishian, and Eastern Diocesan Vicar the Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian, among others,

The prayer by the legendary saint Nerses Shnorhali, which has been translated into 50 languages, was read at this service in 17 languages. The reciters included Aram Catholicos (Armenian), Rev. Fr. Gabriel Alkass (Syriac), Bishop Athenagoras (Greek), Rev. Fr. Ryan Muldoon (Latin), Archbishop Gabriele Caccia (Italian), Metropolitan Zachariah (Malayalam), Bishop Gregory Mansour (English), Sophie Khachatryan (German), Bishop John (English), Karina Bayrakdarian (French), Anayis Bayrakdarian (Spanish), Aurora Bayrakdarian (Romanian), Rev. Fr. Gerald Murray (Portuguese), Medeia Mark (Georgian), Carlo Bayrakdarian (Arabic), Archdeacon Shant Kazanjian (Hebrew), Bishop Makarios (Ethiopian), Arevig Caprielian (Russian), Fr. Antoine Rizk (English), Fr. Jacob Ghali (English), Bishop Mikayel Mouradian (English), Rev. Fr. Athanasios (English), Rev. Fr. Efrem (English), and the Clergy and Congregation together (English).

The special service concluded with the profound thoughts of Catholicos Aram I praying for the Unity of all peoples. “Even though we are diverse, we have Christ in common. We need to act as one.”

The sacred hymn *Ourakh Ler* (Rejoice) was sung as the participants joined a fellowship hour in Pashalian Hall with the attendees.

During the festive gathering, soprano soloist Anahit Zakaryan, accompanied on the piano by Vagharshak Ohanyan, soulfully performed Caccini’s heartfelt *Ave Maria* and the lilting song *Yerkir Intz Hamar* (Sing for Me).

Use of Force by Azerbaijan Against Armenia Is not Acceptable, says Subcommittee Chairman Kean

FORCE, from page 7

in the region, including the use of Turkish F-16s in the 2020 war, while Representative Mike Lawler (R-NY) highlighted the fallacy of the U.S. providing military assistance to Azerbaijan to counter Russian and Iranian influence while Azerbaijan has significant energy ties to Russia and Iran. Assistant Secretary O’Brien acknowledged that the Administration is aware of the situation which it found not in the U.S. interest.

In his remarks, Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC) highlighted his position that “dictators with the rule of gun [should] not prevail over democracies with rule of law.”

Representatives Jim Costa (D-CA) and Brad Schneider (D-IL) expressed concern about Azerbaijan’s ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of Artsakh and the humanitarian needs arising from it. “It was ethnic cleansing that happened with the removal of these Armenians from their historic homeland in Nagorno-Karabakh... These folks did not want to leave,” stated Rep Costa who also asked about the Administration’s supplemental request and hoped that part of the humanitarian request would include Armenia. Rep. Costa also encouraged congressional visits to Armenia and the assistance of the Administration, to which O’Brien agreed.



COMMUNITY NEWS



ACYOA Seniors Gather for Fellowship, Fun In Wisconsin

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese held its annual Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Seniors National Fall Retreat over the weekend of November 10-12, at St. Iakovos Retreat Center in Kansasville, Wis. Some 40 young adults from 19 parishes across the Eastern Diocese gathered for a weekend focused on the theme “Be a Witness.”

The participants were excited to have the Primate, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, with them on Friday and Saturday, so they could spend time interacting with and learning from him. Bishop Mesrop led the opening session on “Witnessing Christ to Others,” which laid the foundation for the weekend’s spiritual explorations.

“During our time together,” said Bishop Mesrop, “we



Prayer session at the ACYOA Retreat



Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan speaks at the gathering.



delved deep into the essence of what it means to be a witness to Christ in our daily lives. I was particularly moved by the enthusiasm and insight of our youth. Their perspectives and commitment to living out their faith in real and tangible ways were both inspiring and a testament to the vibrant future of our church.”

Also speaking to the young participants were Fr. Avedis Kalayjian, Fr. Yeprem Kelegian and Fr. Sahak Kaishian, who served as chaplain for the weekend and celebrated the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. Members of the ACYOA Central Council led group discussions with titles like “How I Live as a Witness,” “Witnessing God in Your Life, and “Faith in Action.”

Sarah Stites from the Fund for Armenian Relief’s Ayo! platform addressed the group via video conference, to share ways to bear witness on behalf of Armenians in the homeland, through FAR’s humanitarian projects like #ForArtsakhtsis.

During daylight hours, participants had time to enjoy the beautiful setting and nature trails. At night they held vespers services and gathered in fellowship around the campfire.



Participants had fun with some animals at a farm near the retreat.

They were also blessed by the presence of clergy from throughout the Diocese’s Midwest region, including Fr. Tavit Boyajian, Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan, Fr. Guregh Hambarzumyan, as well as St. Nersess seminarians Arin Parsanian and Karo Boyadzhyan.

ACYOA Central Council members Yn. Lucine Sabounjian and Mardig Klachian coordinated the retreat along with their adviser on the Diocesan staff, Jennifer Morris.



COMMUNITY NEWS



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

To Our Readers

We thank all who supported our recent sold-out gala and journalists' panel celebrating more than 90 years of serving the community. The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US. Readers can learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

The *Mirror-Spectator* has covered the violence and political uncertainty affecting Armenia and Artsakh, supported efforts at humanitarian fundraising, and secured new young correspondents in Armenia, Artsakh and the US as well as two prominent political columnists from Armenia. We continue to provide periodic video reports online. Send us your email if you wish to regularly receive links to articles and videos.

We continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year's wishes, and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. In case you wish to give gift subscriptions of the *Mirror-Spectator* for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in the newspaper as well as one below.

Sincerely,

Alin K. Gregorian
Editor

Aram Arkun
Managing Editor

I/We would like to make a contribution \$5000 \$2000 \$1000 \$500 \$300 \$200 \$100 other by check by Credit Card

Name _____

Billing Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Card Number _____ Expiration date: Month _____ Year _____ Security Code _____

Your Christmas Message:

Please make checks payable to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and mail this voucher in your envelope. The deadline for receiving the messages is Dec. 16, 2023.

For gift subscriptions fill out the credit card information above, OR send a check, for: \$80 US \$125 Canada \$200 International and write: Yes, I/We would like to gift a subscription to: NAME _____

ADDRESS _____





Arts & Culture

NAASR Holiday Open House to Feature Illustrated Talk by Ani Babaian

BELMONT, Mass. — Ani Babaian, the Curator of NAASR's Mardigian Library and accomplished artist and art restorer, will be the featured speaker during the NAASR Holiday Open House on Wednesday, December 13, at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

Babaian's talk will be titled "Revealing the Murals of Amenaprkich Vank of New Julfa," and will be the third and final program in the 2023 series on the art of Armenian Church Mural Painting that has been supported by a grant from the Dadourian Foundation. Her presentation will begin at 7:30 p.m. in-person at NAASR and streamed live on Zoom and on NAASR's YouTube channel. (Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/NAASR-Babaian12-13-23>)

The Open House will run from 4 p.m. until the conclusion of the evening's programs. Light refreshments will be offered prior to the 7:30 program. There will be a one-day-only 20-percent discount for in-store and online sales of all items in the NAASR bookstore.

Nor Jugha (New Julfa) played a unique and essential role in the history of the Armenian community of Iran. Surb Amenaprkich Vank (St. Savior's Cathedral, 1664) is the seat of the Diocese of Isfahan and the southern part of Iran, and until the mid-20th century also for Armenians in India.

Ani Babaian will talk about S. Amenaprkich Vank's murals — the artistic styles, the artists, the projects to conserve the murals, and new findings discovered during the conservation process. The construction of this remarkable church began in 1655 and ended in 1664. The church is decorated with fascinating murals, which show scenes from the Old and New Testaments, the life of Gregory the Illuminator, the Last Judgment, floral ornaments, and bands of ceramic tiles.

Babaian has worked at NAASR since 2013. She is also an independent researcher, artist and art conservator who holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Alzahra University in Tehran, where her thesis was titled "Mutual Influences: New Julfa and Isfahan Mural Paintings of the 17th Century." She has authored numerous articles on Armenian and Persian art, has participated in conferences held in Iran and Armenia, and presentations on Armenian Art in the U.S. She has contributed to the volumes *Armenian Frescoes* edited by Dr. Karen Matevosyan (2019) and *Armenian Communities of Persia/Iran* edited by Richard G. Hovannisian (2022).

During her tenure at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Isfahan, Babaian worked on conservation projects, including the murals in the *gavit* or narthex of S. Amenaprkich Vank, in Chehel Sotoun Palace, and in the Museum of Decorative Arts of Isfahan. She has continued her conservation work for private collections and institutions including Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston.

Admission is free and all are welcome.



Conductor Eduard Topchjan thanks the first violinist of the orchestra

Armenian National Philharmonic Performs at Carnegie Hall

By Florence Avakian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — The Stern Auditorium of Carnegie Hall came to Armenian life on November 15, as hundreds of music lovers crowded into most of

its 2,300 seats to see and hear the glorious sounds of the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra. The long awaited event was presented by Classic Music TV.

This highly acclaimed professional ensemble is currently on a world tour in support of Artsakh. As the hundreds of enthusiastic Armenians filled the hall almost to capacity, and the members of the huge orchestra filled the stage, the anticipation was palpable.

The program in honor of the anniversaries of Aram Khachaturian (120th), and Sergei Rachmaninoff (150th), presented their legendary, timeless and captivating artistry, and was conducted by the celebrated Eduard Topchjan, with the ultra-brilliant violinist Sergey Khachatryan.



Sergey Khachatryan

As Topchjan strode onto the stage and shook the first violinist's hand, a traditional gesture, the crowd erupted in long and deafening applause which he graciously acknowledged.

Excerpts from Khachaturian's ballet, "Spartacus," which was composed in 1954 and received the Lenin Prize, were performed, including the rhythmically melodious *Variations of Aegina and Bacchanalia*, and the majestic *Dance of Geditanian Maidens and Victory of Spartacus*. However, it was the mellow and heartfelt *Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia* which gorgeously captured their soulful love affair.

Khachaturian's *Violin Concerto in D Minor*, composed in 1940, is a masterpiece of lively melodies filled with melancholy, but with a hopeful conclusion. This composition featured Khachatryan, with several solo interludes, playing with exquisite precision and powerful emotion.

The sublime second movement, "Andante" was enchanting in relaying its deeply felt feelings with its very Armenian motifs.

Both compositions received spontaneous cheering ovations for several minutes from the large crowd.

Rachmaninoff in the House

Sergei Rachmaninoff once said that he composed "to give expression to his feelings, somber and brooding, but also warm and tenderly romantic." And his one-hour long *Symphony No. 2 in E Minor*, written in 1906, and conducted by the composer see PHILHARMONIC, page 13

Caroline Consten

'I Want to Become the Voice of Armenia'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — When last year at a regular cultural event in Yerevan I was introduced to Caroline Consten, who moved to Armenia from France, I was thinking that this fluent Armenian-speaking woman is a diasporan Armenian, especially when she said how right it would be if Armenians from abroad come and unite in Armenia. Yet from further conversation, I was surprised to find out that Caroline does not have any Armenian origin.



Consten, a communications specialist, was born in Paris and worked in many countries (Ethiopia, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, Iran, Armenia). In recent years, she has lived in Yerevan, received Republic of Armenia's citizenship and now jokingly introduces herself as Caroline Qonstanyan. "The name is not important; my heart is Armenian," she says.

My conversation with her took place at her workplace, at the newly opened Nor Aleppo restaurant in Yerevan. It was conducted in Armenian, sometimes in English.

Dear Caroline, was it difficult to learn Armenian?

Very much. I am still learning every day.

And many foreigners living in Armenia, even those of Armenian descent, do not think about learning Armenian.

I have seen how much people's attitude changed towards me when I started communicating in Armenian — when they realized that I am not Armenian, but I am trying to learn their language.

When and how did your relationship with Armenia begin?

The first time I came to Armenia in 2009, for work, I had a contract with the "Orange" mobile phone company for three months; then they kept extending my contract. I did not try to study Armenian from the beginning, and when I started learning it was in the wrong way, learning words, but not being able to make sentences. In

see CONSTEN, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Caroline Consten: 'I Want to Become the Voice of Armenia'

CONSTEN, from page 12

2012, I found a very good teacher, Anahit Avetisyan, who has written a book on learning Eastern Armenian. I was practicing with her three times a week for two hours and then I started to speak and write better — reading is still difficult for me. Then I went to work in other countries, where I did not speak Armenian with anyone, but whenever I had time, I would come to Armenia, meet my teacher and practice again. In France, I watched Armenian TV channels, although my teacher told me, “Caroline *jan*, they speak Armenian very poorly on our TV.” But by hearing the language, it helped not forgetting it too much.

And now you live and work in Armenia.

Yes, in this very restaurant, as a marketer. I also work as a volunteer with the International Women's Association of Yerevan.

Now many foreigners live in Armenia: Russians, Indians, Iranians. What would you say to those who want to come and live here?

I will tell the Russians to stay here, their life here is better than in Russia. There are few Europeans, but I know another French man who loved Armenia as much as I did and decided to stay here. I will say that the people here are very kind (not all of them, of course, like in all countries), the fruits and the food are very tasty, the weather is very good. Armenia is sunny, the air is dry, not humid in the winter. And you can find a job. Of course, you cannot compare the wages with Europe or America, but there is work. And if you want to open a small business (I'm not talking about a big one), it is very easy here. Also, now many people work remotely, so from here you can work with the entire world.

Armenia is experiencing a difficult time now: do you follow the political situation?

For 30 years the state was just shouting and was on the side of Russia. (*From this moment, Caroline started speaking English*). There is a lack of political knowledge, plus you cannot change overnight a whole system, which has been corrupted

for 30 years. I see differences now, I see democracy, but it is very hard for the government to manage the situation. I do not speak about the previous governments, because they were just sold to Russia. Now more people realize that Russia is not a friend and ally, abusing Armenia all the time, but there are still people who think that Russia is a supporter. People should understand they have to take their destiny, their responsibility in their own hands and not wait for anyone to be their support. This is why I love people who join VOMA and Azatazen: they are patriots, not nationalists, who have the right mindset and work to make sure that this country will continue existing and they can properly protect it.

And you are also a part of Azatazen, which Turkey recently announced a terrorist organization.

Of course, they say so. Azatazen members are real patriots working to protect Armenia against the real terrorists! Yes, I participate in Azatazen. The first time I went was with Repat Armenia, who took us there after the September events near Jermuk. When I heard the gunshots, it was frightening. I was very tense when I held a gun in my hands for the first time in my life. But it goes away with practice and it teaches you the right way to react: we should not be in a panic mode if something happens. When Jermuk was attacked last September, people were saying: Oh my Gosh, this could happen again and what should we do? Many people were putting their heads in the sand, being in a total denial, which is not a right way to react. More people need to be able to defend themselves or at least know what to do. If something would happen (which I hope will never happen), we should be prepared, have the right reaction and not be frozen in fear. We need a critical number of well prepared civilians; I compare it with the Resistance in France: these patriots, I repeat — patriots, not nationalists, were a minority but very active and efficient. They were that critical number of civilians.

And besides of being prepared, what else would you like to see radically

changed in Armenian society?

First, people need to understand that they need to work, everybody should mind their own business. We have very good people, we have a very beautiful country and very good soil, a lot of things could be done here, so just plant the seeds and start working and stop blaming others and weeping, because everything is possible. There is this Armenian saying “Amen inch lav klini” (Everything will be good), but it cannot happen by miracle, without doing anything - you have to take action. But again, I am very confident because of the new generation that has totally different mentality. Another thing: Armenia still is a very macho country, women are not always well treated, so this also needs to change.

You recently received Armenian citizenship. Congratulations! Some people say that it is very difficult to get an Armenian passport.

This is not so true now. I was so happy to become an Armenian citizen. (*From this moment, Caroline started speaking Armenian again*). Before it was a little longer procedure. You still have though you to wait for the whole day in OVIR (Passport and Visa Department), which is a nightmare. This could be organized better. It is interesting that two years ago they refused to give me my Armenian citizenship, without explaining why, but this time they accepted it. And I had to study the constitution of Armenia. Diasporan Armenians don't need it, but non-Armenians have to pass a test. I could have taken the exam with a translator, but I decided to learn the constitution of Armenia in Armenian, which was not very difficult. Now with this Armenian passport I feel that I am Armenian. Of course, if I could only hold one citizenship, I would not give up my French one, but my Armenian passport is like my proof of my commitment to Armenia!

What are your favorite places in Armenia?

I love everything: the villages, nature, Yerevan, musical groups, dances (I have been practicing Armenian traditional dances for a while), the architecture, but I am

very unhappy that the oligarchs demolished the old buildings and built ugly buildings. That is why I love Gyumri a lot, even more now that they have renovated a lot of places. I was once in Artsakh, in 2010... Such a pity I did not go again and I now ... it is gone.

As a French woman living in Armenia, what message do you have for Armenians living abroad?

Come, live, stay in Armenia! Many Diasporan Armenians have never set a foot in Armenia. They say it is our country, our capital, but they know nothing about their country. I want to become the voice of Armenia, that's why I am struggling, I want everyone to know what Armenia is like, what's happening here, what injustice happens toward the country. In France, now they talk more about Armenia, but I have many friends who have not heard anything about Armenia. I would like more American Armenians to come here, for the future of Armenia. It would also help protecting the country, because their way of thinking is a little different. Our biggest problem is that people who are 50-60 years old have that Soviet mentality and they cannot change. But I also see that the young people now have a different way of thinking.

Today, France is strengthening its presence in Armenia. They are opening a consulate in Goris, etc. Some people say that French culture is very good for Armenia, but history shows that the policies it conducted were not in favor of Armenia.

Yes, France is trying to be a good friend to Armenia, but it is a member of the European Union and is connected to other European countries, there is the gas problem, etc. Now all over the world the values are very low, everything is for money, for profit. At this time, it is terrible in all regions, you cannot understand what will happen tomorrow.

In Armenia, people live for the day, but they must have vision, this is a very important thing. This is something that should be changed in Armenia. But everything will be fine, we must have hope and work to make this hope a reality.

Armenian National Philharmonic Performs at Carnegie Hall

PHILHARMONIC, from page 12

himself in 1908 at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, certainly evoked those emotions.

The four movement symphonic masterpiece is replete with lyrical, long-lined dramatic intensity, from pensive, haunting feelings, to powerful, emotional harmony, and finally to exuberant triumph, all driven by powerful emotions.

And the audience responded with standing ovation to standing ovation, for several minutes, which brought on the encore, Khachaturian's much loved and dynamic *Masquerade Dance*. Another long and very loud ovation concluded this special joyous evening.

It was truly an evening that should have been on every music lover's agenda. And Deacon Adam Bullock from the Eastern Armenian Diocese who said he was attending Stern Auditorium for the first time, voiced the feelings of many when he said he could not have had “a better concert to attend.”

He commented that the orchestra from Armenia did an excellent job of capturing the emotion of Khachaturian's and Rachmaninoff's works. And Topchjan's dynamic conducting style was alluring, and the passion with which Khachaturian



drew his bow kept me on the edge of my seat,” he said. “I hope to see more Armenian artists like these in the spotlight.”

Outstanding Artists

The Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra was established in 1925, and is based in Yerevan. Many of the world's greatest artists, including David Oistrach, Sviatoslav Richter, Mstislav Rostropovitch, Emil Gilels, Pinchas Zukerman, Placid Domingo, and many others have performed

with it.

The orchestra has toured extensively throughout the US, Canada, most of Europe, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Iran, Russia, the UAE, China and Japan.

Topchjan, a former violin student at the Yerevan Conservatory, was appointed the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra in 2000.

Violinist Khachatryan at age 15 won First

Prize at the VIII International Jean Sibelius Competition in Helsinki, Finland, and in 2005, First Prize at the Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels, Belgium. Since then, he has performed with famed orchestras in France, Germany, England, Sweden, Australia, and the USA including the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the San Francisco Symphony, and several others in Seattle, Cleveland and Washington, as well as the Mostly Mozart Festivals.



ARTS & CULTURE

Books

REVIEW:

Denis Donikian's *Trashland: 'Der Voghormia. Der...'*

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The world of *Trashland* (Nauset Press, 2023) is a world of doom and gloom. A garbage dump and a cemetery, separated by a narrow dirt road, and a nearby lunatic asylum/prison provide the setting. Normal human beings live in an environment where human values have completely broken down. The protagonist Gam, a muck-raking journalist, probes this world to expose its inhumanity and to return dignity to "his own people." The novel opens with Gam relieving himself standing on a hill above the Armenian capital of Yerevan. The acrid fumes set the tone for the "shit-filled air that clogged everything up" and the putrid smell of the smoldering trash dump the citizens rummage through to dig out their dinners.

There is no suggestion in the book that this world, where leaders oppress and murder and where the police repress the citizens with brutal force, will change anytime soon, except perhaps that the "black air" will become heavier and the "grey stench" more fetid and nauseating. Indeed, the crimes committed in this rotting world seem tame, almost "humane," when juxtaposed with the ruthless assaults and the destruction we have brought upon ourselves. They are, nonetheless, in Donikian's words, "the same eternal crimes."

While the ills the novel conjures are universal, the specifics are intrinsically Armenian. References to the corruption and the pollution of the pre-independence Soviet days and the post-independence Republic of Armenia abound. The first three presidents of the new Republic who failed to work for the good of the people are directly evoked. The garbage dump guard's favorite sow, the one "with the largest teats," is named after the second president's wife, Bella. The lewd poems the characters recite, and the profanities, "some of the spiciest in our language," in the words of the guardian of the cemetery gate, help spill the rage, the bitterness and the helplessness

of the citizens whose only source of sustenance is the rotting dump.

Alongside the scathing criticism, however, the novel also reveals the deep love Donikian has for his country. Mount Ararat, with the purity of its eternal snows, "floating atop an eternal space, wedged between men and the sky high above," is always in the background. The all-too-familiar expressions — *aghber djan*, *Seko djan*, *djanikess* — and the names of the streets that the trash truck drivers take to transport the waste from Yerevan to the dump site in Noubarashen — Abovian Street, Mashdots Avenue — convey a sweet feeling of intimacy. The goodness and the generous spirit of Gam's mother, Anna, whose funeral procession launches the novel, is also ever-present. Anna inspires her son to fight for the peace and the justice his people deserve. "Can you abandon the sky that gives birth to you... and abandon your own people to their decay?" Gam muses.

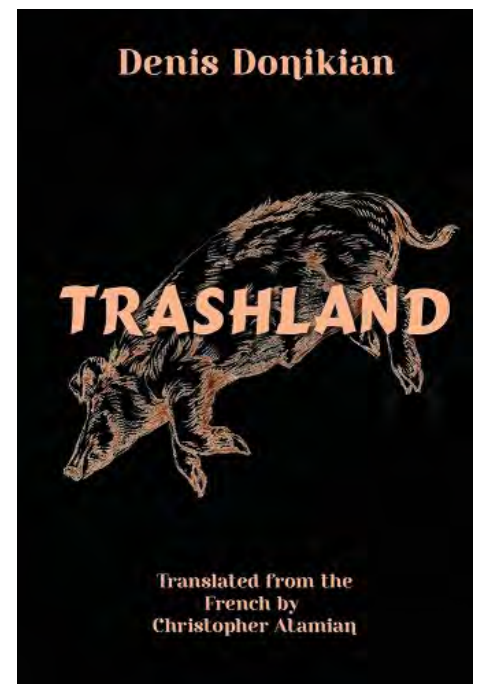
Most compelling are the "dumpster stories," accounts of the individual tragedies of the garbage pickers. We learn of old Susho who bent down so low to sort out the trash "that she was practically one with the ground." This "zibil collector" is, in her own words, "living proof that this country is sick." We also learn of Larissa *djan* who, along with the stray dogs, the pigs and the rats, digs into the decomposing waste to feed her "poor *balik* . . . her husband lost in God knows what corner of Russia." Even as they expose the humiliating and dehumanizing lives of these miserable souls, the stories help bring back the human into a world lost to human dignity.

Donikian's fairy-tale ending, with the sky, so pure, so calm, that it "filled men with joy" and bathed everything in a luminous glow, only reinforces "the chaos and the stench," for it ignores, in Donikian's words, "everything that went into the making of this novel . . . where the guard at a trash dump curses the businessman responsible for a nation's woes . . . where the dead flee their tombs to smell life's

fresh air . . . where a buried woman still suffers from the slightest harm committed against her son and where her son, a certain Gam, dead or alive, fights valiantly in one world before falling inexorably into another, whispering on the way down *Der Voghormia. Der . . .*" Despair remains the dominant mood.

In fact, prior to the "*Storybook Ending*," the rag pickers, with only their hooks and shoulder bags to defend themselves, have been brutally attacked and demolished with armored cars come to hunt down the garbage dump. Gam's friend Garo is clubbed to death and will be buried in a "hole somewhere on the hill," freshly dug "for someone who's supposed to arrive tomorrow." Garo is to be buried with "not a trace. And no name on it either." The dead will not Rest in Peace in this infernal world. Indeed, "the wretch" being taken to jail in the novel's "storybook ending" did not marvel at "the colors [that] appeared more alive than usual," or feel "the ecstasy of the wind's light currents," as did the truck driver. "Men see the world only through their own personal anguish," writes Donikian, affirming that a dignified life is the only definition of life.

Christopher Atamian's masterful translation of Donikian's French original, *Vidures* (Actes Sud Editions, 2011), a book he describes in his foreword as "a wake-up call . . . a comprehensive critique of the Armenian world and a quest for justice for the Armenian people," captures the power and the beauty of the original. The vivid descriptions of the devastating earthquake and the frantic escape from the crumbling city, the "*Khorovadz Saturday!*" when Dro shares the flesh of "My sweet Bella"—Dro's favorite sow has died—with the rag pickers, and the final scene of the brutal attack on the rag pickers make it impossible to put down the book and leave "this rotting Eden" behind. Atamian's exquisite, "the rag pickers' eyes fixed on their Garo's body. Dead indeed, Garo, curled up on his bloodied red cardboard, erect when before he was always



trembling year-round. Haik took off his own windbreaker and placed it over his dead friend's remains. . . . Each person threw in a farewell handful. Haik, whom Roubo had given his shovel to as well as the difficult task of erasing Garo from this world, began to fill in the trench," reaffirms the human connection of the friends reduced to popping open plastic bags at the dump site to survive.

One leaves *Trashland* with anguished questions. Maybe "kindness isn't a human trait," as Gam himself begins to wonder. Will there ever be an end to the "Misery. Such misery?" To flee the catastrophic earthquake, Gam and his family leave their home city of Gyumri for Yerevan, "without knowing what sort of new collapse awaited us." If the "either/or" meaning of Gam's name in Armenian is any indication, the world of *Trashland* is not a world of certainties. Pursuing the truth is an absurdity.

Yet, pleading with a Merciful God to "Let your goodness pull the voiceless creatures, suffering and near death, out of the abyss for they have not sinned," does suggest the possibility of a peaceful and dignified life for humanity. "Your *Der voghormia!* will stay with me until the day I die. Light and human. A sky that rains its joy upon us," Gam tells his friend Sako *djan*. Whereas he rejects the offer of the bearded priest, clad in "holy clothes richly woven, chalices and crucifixes made of solid gold," to recite a prayer and chant *Der voghormia!* on his mother's tomb.

"My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

Fresno State Armenian Series Publishes *Western Armenian Music Book* by Hachig Kazarian

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program announces the publication of Hachig Kazarian's *Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States*, Volume 18 in the Armenian Series of the Press at California State University, Fresno.

"Western Armenian Music is a comprehensive overview of the history and development of the traditional music brought by immigrants to the United States," said Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, general editor of the Armenian Series. "Kazarian's depth of knowledge and research makes this book unique."

Silenced for over a century, the Western Armenian music brought to America by the first Armenian immigrants has become an integral part of Armenian culture in the United States. *Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States* examines the many facets of Western Armenian music and how it has been neglected due to the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

"This book has taken me two long years

to research, organize, and compile," said Kazarian. "It is the product of my 60 plus years of performing, my formal musical education, and my endeavor to learn as much as I possibly could about Western Armenian folk music. The motivating factor for producing this book was the lack of concrete information and the misunderstanding of this wonderful form of Armenian music."

The author discusses such topics as: the Modal System used in Armenian folk and sacred music since the 8th century; traits and characteristic elements of Armenian music; the 19th century Armenian musical notation created by Hampartsoum Limonjian; and the two contrasting styles of Western Armenian music performed in the United States. *Western Armenian Music* also describes how the children of the first-generation Armenian immigrants started Armenian bands as an effort to keep Armenian culture alive in the United States. As a way to preserve the music of

the first immigrants to the United States, this volume also includes over 100 Armenian dance songs with notations.

"Knowledge used to be transmitted via the oral tradition, which created many inconsistencies. However today, in order to perpetuate knowledge, scholars have written books and treatises so that information is accurately preserved," stated Kazarian. "I have found that there is virtually no scholarly printed material on Western Armenian folk music. Therefore, this book will be an invaluable resource for the study of that music."

Kazarian was born in Detroit to immigrant parents of the Armenian Genocide. He is a retired secondary instrumental music educator with 46 years of teaching experience, which includes a suburban Detroit school system and the Clark County schools in Las Vegas. He earned a B.S. and M.A. degree in clarinet performance from the Juilliard School of Music. He also attended Eastern Michigan University, where

he received an M.A. degree in Music Literature/Ethnomusicology.

Kazarian has performed Western Armenian music for many Armenian churches, societies and patriotic organizations throughout the United States. He has been a leading role model for many young Armenian-American clarinetists for decades and performs as he was taught by an Armenian immigrant musician.

Western Armenian Music: From Asia Minor to the United States, is available, in both hardcover and paperback, for purchase from: Abril Bookstore, <http://www.abrilbooks.com/in-front-of-the-eyes-of-the-world.html> or the NAASR Bookstore, https://naasr.org/products/western-armenian-music-from-asia-minor-to-the-united-states?_pos=1&_sid=0126b36b5&_ss=r.

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



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

THE ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK PROGRAMS

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 .

DECEMBER 3 — Sunday, 1 p.m., Stephen Jrbashyan Choir & Folk Orchestra (Online Concert) @ Virtual via the Facebook page and website of the Armenian Museum (www.ArmenianMuseum.org), under events. The Stepan Jrbashyan Music School provides an outstanding education for Armenia's most talented young musicians. Groups from the school have won prizes at competitions like the Gyumri Renaissance and Art-Music festivals. This concert will showcase three ensembles that demonstrate a range of musical ability and stylistic range. The choir will be directed by Mamikon Andreasyan, the chamber orchestra by Arman Grigoryan, and the folk instrument orchestra by Levon Tevanyan. Recorded and produced in Armenia last summer by Daniel Ayriyan. The bi-monthly Hybrid Concert Series is free through a grant from the Dadourian Foundation. The concert will be posted on our Facebook (click "going" to receive a reminder), website, and YouTube channel.

DECEMBER 4 — Monday, Saint James Men's Club Dinner and Fellowship Gathering. Guest Speakers, Dr. Anna Ohanyan Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Stonehill College. She is also a Nonresident Senior Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace/Russia and Eurasia Program., also Attorney Anthony Barsamian, Co-Chair of the Armenian Assembly of America's Board of Trustees. Anthony just returned from a trip to Armenia. The topic will be "The Fall of Artsakh, the forced displacement of Armenians, and its implications in the Soth Caucasus Region." Losh Kebab and Kheyra Dinner 6:15 pm Mezza and social / 7:00pm Dinner \$20 per person. All our Welcome. 465 Mt. Auburn Street , Watertown.

DECEMBER 7 — Armenian Museum of America, 5-8 p.m. Members Reception & Christmas Gallery Stroll. Wine, hors d'oeuvres, and sweets will be served. Free parking is available in the lot on the Church Street side of the Museum. This event is complimentary for current members; 100 percent of proceeds from the purchase of the new line of Michael Aram ornaments in our Gift Shop will go towards humanitarian relief for the Armenians of Artsakh. If

you are not a member, now is a great time to renew or join! Memberships start at only \$50 for an Individual and \$75 for a Family. Please visit <http://www.armenianmuseum.org/membership>. To register for the event, please visit our Eventbrite page: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/members-reception-and-christmas-gallery-stroll-tickets>. The museum is located at 65 Main St., Watertown.

DECEMBER 10 — Sunday at 7 p.m. Holy Trinity Armenian Church will host Erevan Choral Society for the annual Christmas Concert. This year's concert—honoring the 850th anniversary of St. Nersess Shnorhali, and supporting humanitarian efforts for families of Artsakh—will feature soloists Rubik Mailian and Astghik Martirosyan, who will join the chorale under Maestro Konstantin Petrossian. The public is warmly invited to attend this complimentary concert.

DECEMBER 12 — Author Victoria Atamian Waterman will present her new book, *Who She Left Behind*, at a talk with Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist Stephen Kurkjian, co-sponsored by the Armenian Museum of America and Watertown Free Public Library. 6 p.m. Tuesday, Watertown Free Public Library, Watertown Savings Bank Room, 123 Main St., Watertown. Registration required at <https://reservations.watertownlib.org/evening-victoria-atamian-waterman-who-she-left-behind>

DECEMBER 17 — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church presents the Meghedi Children's Vocal Ensemble under the patronage of the Most Reverend Mikael Mouradian, Bishop of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg in the USA and Canada. 4 p.m. 200 Lexington St., Belmont. Join us for an enchanting afternoon, as we celebrate Christmas with songs and ply, unfolding the beautiful message of the nativity. A Christmas bake sale to follow. Free admission. 617-489-2280, email holycrossbostonma@gmail.com.

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 8 — The Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church presents "Silent Night, Holy Night" Christmas Concert featuring Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island Soloists The Junior Choir Friday, December 8, 2023, at 7 p.m. Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Refreshments following concert Donations greatly appreciated.

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

Ariel Djanikian's *The Prospectors* Is Barnes & Noble's October 2023 Book Club Pick

Selected by Barnes & Noble as their book-of-the-month for October, Ariel Djanikian's newly-released *The Prospectors* is a sweeping rags-to-riches story of survival and greed across American history following a family transformed by the Klondike Gold Rush.

The middle daughter of struggling California fruit farmers, Alice Bush is accustomed to feeling inferior and destitute. But when her elder sister's husband strikes a vein of gold in the Yukon Territory, Alice finally seizes control of her destiny by joining a wave of white settlers making the dangerous trek to the Klondike.

What follows is an awakening of ambition for the quietly opportunistic Alice, who, by luck and circumstance, becomes tightly intertwined in her sister and brother-in-law's newfound fortune, as well as the beginning of a generations-long family quest for wealth that unfolds against the icy Canadian wilderness and the booming oilfields of California.

One hundred years later, in 2015, Alice's great-great-granddaughter Anna must grapple with moral conflict and questions of justice as she travels to the Klondike to bequeath her would-be inheritance to the First Nations peoples who paid the price for its creation.

Bringing the Klondike and turn-of-the-century California to vivid life, Djanikian weaves an ambitious narrative of claiming the American Dream and its rippling effects across generations. Sweeping and awe-inspiring, *The Prospectors* is an unforgettable story of family loyalties that interrogates the often-overlooked hostilities and inequities born during the Gold Rush era.

"Told in glimmering prose and rich with historical

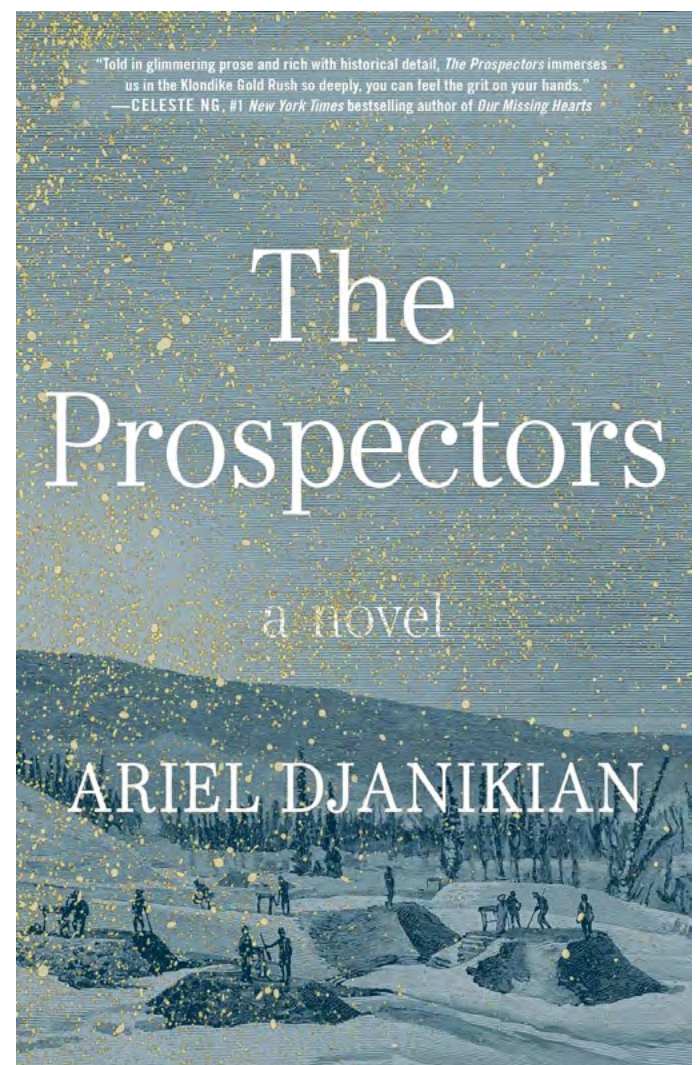
detail, *The Prospectors* immerses us in the Yukon Gold Rush so deeply, you can feel the grit on your hands." — Celeste Ng, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Our Missing Hearts*

"Smart, surprising, and epic: the sort of adventure that brings to life both a nineteenth-century gold rush and a twenty-first century fight for the family riches that remain." — Chris Bohjalian, #1 New York Times bestselling author of 23 books, including *Midwives*, *The Sandcastle Girls*, *The Guest Room*, and *The Flight Attendant*

"Ariel Djanikian's *The Prospectors* is pure gold — the beauty of Alice's character, the precise rendition of terrain, the pain of the First Nations people who lost to the gold prospectors, Anna's attempt to right her ancestors' wrongs. Only Djanikian could've written this book—it's tender, it's precise, it's brutal, it's complex. It made me realize how much I'd waited for this after *The Office of Mercy*. I'm already waiting for Djanikian's next." — Uwem Akpan, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Say You're One of Them*

Djanikian was born in Philadelphia and attended the University of Pennsylvania. She holds an MFA from the University of Michigan and is the previous recipient of a Fulbright grant, Meijer Fellowship, Cowden Award, and Hopwood Award. She is the author of the novel *The Office of Mercy*, and her writing has appeared in *Tin House*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Glimmer Train*, *The Millions*, and *The Rumpus*. She currently lives near DC with her husband and children and teaches fiction writing at Georgetown University.

To purchase *The Prospectors* on Bookshop.org, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and local bookstores in the





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Sonia Uvezian's Missov Dziran (Armenian Lamb and Apricot Stew)

"Apricots were known in Armenia during ancient times, and have been cultivated here for so long that it is believed to have been originated in Armenia. An apricot seeds were found during an archaeological excavations at Garni. Many scientists suggest that Alexander the Great took apricots from Armenia to Greece, thus introducing it to the Mediterranean region," according to Armenian Geographic.

"But there are other theories which deny that Armenia is the homeland of apricot, and state that it originates from India and China. Despite the disagreements over origin, no one can reject the fact that apricots that grow in Armenia are quite different from the ones that grow in other countries. And you will never find real Armenian apricots growing outside the borders of Armenia. Legend has it that apricot tree is the only tree that Noah brought down from the Ark and planted it in the new soil. The Great Flood destroyed many fruit trees, however, the apricot survived it."

"The apricot, which was cultivated in China and Central Asia as early as 2000 B.C., migrated with the country's traders, who traveled the Great Silk Road. The Chinese merchants, botanist Berthold Laufer suggests, very probably introduced the fruit to the Persians. They called it the yellow plum (*zardaloo*). Widely dispersed, it was spread throughout the Eurasian steppe by nomadic, horseback-riding tribesmen."

"According Middle Eastern food expert Sonia Uvezian, peasant women traditionally crushed apricots with their feet in stone troughs. They then extracted the pits and spread out the paste in the sun to dry."

Uvezian was born and brought up in Beirut, Lebanon. A leading authority on Middle Eastern and Caucasian cooking and the winner of a James Beard Award, she is the author of six other highly acclaimed cookbooks, including *The Cuisine of Armenia*, *Cooking from the Caucasus* and *The Book of Yogurt*. Several of her books have been selections of Book-of-the-Month Club and published internationally. Uvezian has contributed articles and recipes to *Gourmet*, *Bon Appetit*,



Internationally acclaimed author
Sonia Uvezian

Vogue and numerous other publications.

Enjoy her fragrant Armenian lamb and apricot stew that is simple to make, and is always tender and delicious.

INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons butter
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1 pound lean boneless meat*
2 cups water
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3/4 cup dried apricots
2 tablespoons walnuts, chopped
2 tablespoons sugar

*Note: Meat should be lamb or mutton, weighed boneless and defatted, and cut into 2 1/2 inch cubes.

PREPARATION:

In a heavy saucepan or casserole, melt the butter over moderate heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until soft but not browned, stirring frequently. Add the meat and sauté until browned on all sides. Add the water, lemon juice, ginger, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer until the meat is nearly tender (about 1 hour for lamb, 3 hours for mutton).

Add the apricots, nuts and sugar (to taste), stirring well to dissolve the latter. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until the meat and fruit are tender. Serve with Armenian rice or bulgur pilaf.

Recipe by Sonia Uvezian from *The Cuisine of Armenia*.

Yield: 4 servings

For this recipe, go to: <https://souvigne.pagesperso-orange.fr/recipes/main590.htm>

Upon its initial publication in 1974, *The Cuisine of Armenia* by Sonia Uvezian received outstanding reviews and was a selection of four different book clubs, including Book-of-the-Month Club. Written by a James Beard Award winner who is a leading authority on the food of the Middle East and Caucasus, it is a "must have" volume, whether you already own one or a dozen books on Armenian, Middle Eastern, or eastern Mediterranean cooking. To order this cookbook, go to:

<https://www.amazon.com/Cuisine-Armenia-Sonia-Uvezian/dp/0970971672>

Situated at the crossroads of east and west between the Mediterranean, Black, and Caspian seas, the richly historic region of Armenia has provided the world with one of its most varied and exciting culinary traditions. Fragrant with the aroma of spices and herbs and ranging from earthy peasant fare to noble creations, Armenian cuisine abounds in succulent kebabs, stuffed vegetables and fruits, opulent pilafs, delectable breads, and irresistible pastries and confections that have been perfected by generations of ingenious cooks over a period of many centuries.

The 375 recipes and variations in *The Cuisine of Armenia* include many highly original specialties from the Caucasus, which were previously unknown in the West. As a bonus, the book contains a number of Sonia Uvezian's own superb creations, derived from the Armenian tradition, which are important contributions to a vigorous culinary style. Among these are Pomegranate-Glazed Roast Chicken with Apricot and Chestnut Stuffing; Fried Fish with Oranges, Black Olives, and Mint; Saffron Rice Pilaf with Toasted Almonds and Sesame Seeds; and Yogurt Cream. Also included are much valuable historical information, a selection of perfectly harmonized menus, and an excellent glossary.

"A triumph of a cookbook." -- *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

"The standard in its field...covers the range of Armenian cookery more thoroughly than any other book on Armenian cuisine." -- *The International Cookbook Revue*

"This classic cookbook... remains a standard reference for any interested in Armenian cuisine, with its range of recipes and cultural insights." -- *The Midwest Book Review*

"Still the definitive guide." -- *The Reader's Catalog*

REFERENCES:

<https://www.armgeo.am/en/armenian-apricot/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/06/14/481932829/moon-of-the-faith-a-history-of-the-apricot-and-its-many-pleasures>

See:

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/?s=apricot>

<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/khashlama-newly-discovered-very-old/>

<https://foodtourist.com/the-cuisine-of-armenia-a-great-book-by-sonia-uevezian>

<https://www.astray.com/recipes/?show=Missov+dziran+%28armenian+lamb+and+apricot+stew%29>

<https://worldcupoffood.wordpress.com/2014/03/12/armenian-cuisine-kolik-meatball-soup/>

<https://www.austinchronicle.com/food/1999-11-26/74787/>

<https://souvigne.com/recipes/main590.htm>

<https://www.bigoven.com/recipe/missov-dziran-armenian-lamb-and-apricot-stew/112267>

[https://www.mealsteps.com/recipe/missov_dziran_\(armenian_lamb_and_apricot_stew\)](https://www.mealsteps.com/recipe/missov_dziran_(armenian_lamb_and_apricot_stew))

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/food/recipes/2015/01/16/hearty-lamb-stew-armenian-style/21884741/>

<https://www.curiouscuisiniere.com/khashlama-lamb-stew/>



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Atamian, Artsvi Bakhchinyan,
Florence Avakian, Christine Vartanian
Datian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Philippe
Raffi Kalfayan, Ken Martin, Gerald
Papasian, Benjamin Poghosyan, Suren
Sargsyan, Harut Sassounian, Hagop
Vartivarian

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Ani Duzdabanyan-
Manoukian, Kevork Keushkerian,
Michelle Mkhlian
YEREVAN: Raffi Elliott
BERLIN: Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
PARIS: Jean Eckian
SAN FRANCISCO: Kim Bardakian
Demirjian
CAIRO: Maydaa Nadar

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is
published weekly, except two weeks in
July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.A.	\$80 one year
Canada	\$125 one year
Other Countries	\$200 one year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston,
MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

Postmaster: Send address
changes to The Armenian
Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount
Auburn St.,
Watertown, MA 02472

Other than the Editorial, views
and opinions expressed in this
newspaper do not necessarily
reflect the policies of the
publisher.

How Azerbaijan Fooled the West During Armenia – Azerbaijan Negotiations

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

The apparent impasse in Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations after the military takeover surprised many, especially in the West. Many saw the existence of the self-proclaimed Nagorno Karabakh Republic and Armenians living there as the only major obstacle on the road to peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

According to this logic, as all Armenians were forced to leave Nagorno Karabakh and the latter's president, Samvel Shahramanyan, was forced to sign a decree on the dissolution of the republic by the end of 2023, the stage was set for a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Then, the narrative goes, Armenia will normalize relations with Turkey, and finally, it can take tangible steps to decrease its dependency on Russia. Then, a new era of peace will emerge in the region, with less Russia and Iran and more West, while Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Turks and Georgians will happily live, trade, and interact with each other.

It is challenging to argue that this was the primary motive behind the EU's intensive involvement in the Armenia – Azerbaijan negotiations, as this narrative requires strategic thinking, which Brussels still lacks. However, many in Washington looked in that direction with some hope. Thus, when on September 26, Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's foreign policy advisor Hikmet Hajiyev in Brussels, many in the West were anticipating the biggest triumph of the EU in the post-Soviet world to happen soon — Armenia and Azerbaijan signing a peace agreement in Brussels or some other Western capital by the end of 2023, marking the beginning of the new era for the EU and the region.

However, instead of creating a triumph, the next two months resulted in confusion, irritation and anger in the Western capitals. Azerbaijan suddenly reduced its involvement in the Western platforms of negotiations, canceling meetings in Granada, Brussels and then Washington. Baku started to speak about the destructive role of the Western powers in the region, accused them of being pro-Armenian and called for solving the region's problems by regional powers — sounding precisely like Russia and Iran.

Instead of having a region with less Russia and Iran and more West, the military takeover of Nagorno Karabakh by Azerbaijan resulted in a more volatile South Caucasus, where Azerbaijan now puts pressure on Armenia and takes steps to renew its relationship with Russia and Iran, and where the 3+2 platform appears more and more influential. At the same time, the EU and the US are confused and have no clear idea what to do next. The EU now says that instead of putting pressure on Azerbaijan, it will increase its support to Armenia, but apparently, this is not what the EU hoped to achieve just two months ago.

So, what happened in the last two months? To answer this question, we must analyze the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations under the Western umbrella of the last two years. After the first meeting of President Aliyev and Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan took place in Brussels in December 2021, the idea emerged that Armenia should lower its bar on the status of Nagorno Karabakh and recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within Soviet Azerbaijan borders. Everyone understood that if Armenia recognized Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, then Armenia eventually should agree with the dissolution of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and all its institutions, including the NK defense army. Having a separate state inside Azerbaijan and another army besides the Azerbaijan army is impossible.

From the Western perspective, recognition of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity with Nagorno Karabakh would eliminate the main obstacle for Armenia-Azerbaijan peace: the future of NK and Armenians living there. Simultaneously, the West was hoping to convince or force President Aliyev to agree to provide special rights to Armenians living in NK. The trade-off seemingly was this — Armenia drops any talks about status, including demand for autonomy, and stops any reference to the right to self-determination. At the same time, Azerbaijan agrees to provide acceptable conditions to Armenians. Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to this equilibrium, and Armenian government officials have stopped using the terms “status” and “right to self-determination” since the summer of 2022, instead speaking only about the “rights and security of Armenians.”

This approach was institutionalized first in October 2022, during the Prague summit of the European Political Community, and then during meetings in May and July 2023 in Brussels. The EU and the US were happy — despite military escalations, including a large-scale incursion of Azerbaijani troops into Armenia proper in September 2022, negotiations in the Western platforms were moving forward, while the Russian track was de facto frozen. Russia organized a meeting between two leaders in late October 2022, but it did not bring about any results. Thus, Russian influence appeared to be declining, and Armenia and Azerbaijan were moving towards signing a peace deal in Brussels, Washington or some other West-

ern capital.

Azerbaijan's blockade of Nagorno Karabakh spoiled this idealistic picture, but it could not derail the negotiation process. As people in Nagorno Karabakh were semi-starving, Armenian and Azerbaijani officials were meeting in Washington and Brussels.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan used the recognition of Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan by Armenia as justification to demand the dissolution of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and its institutions. The worrying sign, however, was the fact that Azerbaijan rejected any possibility of international presence in Nagorno Karabakh and the provision of any special rights to Armenians. It showed that Azerbaijan used the Western platforms of negotiations not only to get the recognition of NK as part of Azerbaijan from Armenia and then demand the dissolution of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic but also to exploit Western platforms to receive the “green light” for a military takeover of Nagorno Karabakh. Azerbaijan told the West that it would not tolerate the existence of a de facto independent Nagorno Karabakh republic and would not allow it to transform the November 10, 2020, trilateral statement into another May 1994 ceasefire, with an additional 26 years of negotiations. Azerbaijan's position was clear — either convince Nagorno Karabakh Armenians to dissolve the republic themselves, or Azerbaijan would use force to reach that goal.

The EU and the US publicly and privately told Azerbaijan that the use of force against Nagorno Karabakh was unacceptable. However, they also understood that the situation had reached an impasse. The Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh were refusing the idea of self-dissolution of the republic. The Armenian government demanded special rights for them and called for establishing international mechanisms for Baku-Stepanakert talks, while Azerbaijan categorically rejected both options. The West, and in particular, the US, was interested in reaching a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan as soon as possible, viewing it as a possibility to bring about tectonic shifts in the geopolitics of the South Caucasus — less Russia and less Iran in the region. However, they could not force Azerbaijan to accept Armenia's offers and overcome that impasse. In that situation, as Azerbaijan used force and closed the Nagorno Karabakh chapter in September 2023, the West had a relatively muted reaction, presumably hoping that now the peace deal is within reach.

Thus, Azerbaijan tricked the West quite skillfully. First, it endorsed the Western platforms of negotiations to reach the recognition of Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan by Armenia, then used it as a pretext to demand the dissolution of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, and in September 2023, hinted to the West that the “forced closure of Nagorno Karabakh chapter” would bring in the era of regional peace.

As a result of skillful diplomacy, Azerbaijan reached the almost impossible — forcibly kicking out all Armenians from NK and receiving zero consequences from the West. Immediately after that, Azerbaijan turned to Russia and Iran, telling them that Baku was happy to solve regional issues with them and did not want to see increased Western influence in the region. At the same time, Armenia now faces multiple crises — more than 100,000 refugees from NK, the destruction of NK, tense relations with Russia, and a frozen Western platform of negotiations.

The West is now in confusion. Azerbaijan broke its promises not to use force against Nagorno Karabakh and afterward declared Western platforms as biased and ineffective, turning towards Russia and Iran; Armenia faces more security challenges while still calling for negotiation in Western platforms while Russia and Iran “without any noise and dust” push forward the 3+2 format in cooperation with Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Some in the EU now call for increased support for Armenia as a victim of Azerbaijani manipulations and as a fledgling democracy that is trying to break its ties with Russia, while others are arguing that it will alienate Azerbaijan more and will push Baku even closer to Russia and Iran. More support for Armenia in the “anti-Russian sauce” may make Armenia more vulnerable and increase threats to Armenian security. Yerevan may become the only “spoiler” in the South Caucasus, which wants to bring more West in the region. It may bring more volatility and chaos to the region.

The problem is that the EU and the US have no good options. No reaction to what Azerbaijani did to them will undermine their stance in the region, while any action may worsen the situation. Thus, the 2022-2023 Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations under Western auspices may enter the diplomatic textbooks as an excellent example of how a relatively small country tricked the powerful collective West while another small country became the victim of geopolitical manipulations and idealistic hopes. Even if the EU and the US can bring Azerbaijan back to the western platforms of negotiations, it most probably will be “a show for ticking boxes” for Baku.

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



COMMENTARY

Defeated Armenia Looks to a New, Post-Russia Foreign Policy

By Mikayel Zolyan

Armenia is on the brink of formulating a new foreign policy. Moscow's silent acquiescence during September's one-day war, in which Azerbaijan seized the long-disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, prompting the flight of all Karabakh Armenians, means most Armenians no longer see Russia as an ally, never mind a security guarantor. Armenia is likely to both turn to the West and make overtures toward other major powers, particularly India and Iran.

At the same time, Yerevan will be looking to retain constructive relations with Moscow. And despite the trauma of losing Nagorno-Karabakh, there will be continuing efforts to solve the long-standing conflict with Azerbaijan and normalize relations with Turkey.

For both the Armenian elite and the broader population, events in Nagorno-Karabakh—which they see as nothing short of ethnic cleansing—have destroyed the idea of Russia as a security guarantor: an idea that had been common currency since at least the beginning of the nineteenth century, even becoming a part of the Armenian national identity. Now, however, even if the immediate crisis is resolved, Armenians will never see Russians the same way again.

Of course, there were always Armenians who called for closer ties with the West, including through joining the EU and NATO, but they were outliers until at least the Second Karabakh War in 2020. Even the Velvet Revolution of 2018 that swept Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to power did not alter the elite's foreign policy outlook. While Pashinyan found common ground with young Western leaders like French President Emmanuel Macron and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, there was no attempt to chart a more pro-Western course. Pashinyan even irritated the United States by sending military doctors and engineers to Syria as part of Russia's military intervention in support of President Bashar al-Assad.

While the 2020 war revealed Yerevan to be internationally isolated on Nagorno-Karabakh, Russia managed to partially preserve its reputation among Armenians by preventing the total destruction of Nagorno-Karabakh forces or ethnic cleansing there, and deploying peacekeepers. Only when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 did it dawn on Yerevan that the status quo was untenable.

Yerevan began distancing itself from Moscow in the spring of that year, seeking closer ties with the West and expressing a readiness to compromise over Nagorno-Karabakh. There was a growing awareness that something was going to have to give. While the West offered diplomatic support to Armenia during clashes with Azerbaijan in September 2022, Russia pointedly stayed neutral.

Some Armenians, most fatefully the de facto government of Nagorno-Karabakh, remained stuck in the old paradigm, believing Russian peacekeepers were a genuine safeguard against a renewed Azerbaijani offensive. But this year's one-day war and the ensuing exodus of Karabakh Armenians proved to even the most ardent pro-Russian Armenians that Moscow was either unwilling or unable to protect them.

Russia did not even step in to help Nagorno-Karabakh politicians seen as pro-Russian. As it took over the region, Azerbaijan arrested three former presidents of the self-proclaimed republic—Arkadi Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan, and Arayik Harutyunyan—as well as the prominent Russian-Armenian tycoon Ruben Vardanyan. They all remain in jail in Azerbaijan.

Contrary to expectations, the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh did not lead to the fall of Pashinyan. Instead, it has weakened Armenia's pro-Moscow opposition, and helped shape an emerging consensus that a continued alliance with Russia is impossible.

What would a "post-Russia" Armenian foreign policy look like? The most serious problem, of course, is still the conflict with Azerbaijan and its Turkish backers. Azerbaijani officials have been less aggressive in their rhetoric since the seizure of Nagorno-Karabakh, but President Ilham Aliyev is in no hurry to sign any documents that would normalize relations.

Perhaps counterintuitively, the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh has convinced Yerevan that solving the conflict with Azerbaijan and Turkey is more urgent than ever. Such peaceful rhetoric faces some internal opposition, but most of the Armenian elite believe it is the only option. Any other position would simply lead to a fresh escalation, and another defeat.

Armenian officials have ramped up contact with their Western counterparts, and Yerevan insists it wants to discuss a peace agreement with Baku somewhere in the West—not in Russia. In October, Armenia even signed an agreement with France for the delivery of military equipment.

Still, Yerevan does not want to repeat its past mistakes by relying too much on a single ally. As a result, it is unlikely to limit its search for new partners to the West alone.

The most obvious choice for Armenia when it comes to a non-Western ally is Iran, which has said repeatedly that it supports the territorial integrity of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Iran has also expressed opposition to an extraterritorial corridor through southern Armenia that would link Azerbaijan with its exclave of Nakhichevan.

The other partner from the Global South that Yerevan is hoping to recruit is India. New Delhi took note of Armenia after the 2020 war, when Azerbaijan was also backed by Pakistan. Ties have grown ever since, up to and including arms deliveries.

None of Armenia's theoretical new partners can replace Russia as a security guarantor, however. Armenia also remains dependent on Russia when it comes to other issues like energy and transport. It would be naïve to think that the West can simply be a substitute for Russia in all these areas—particularly while wars are raging in Ukraine and the Middle East. Many in Yerevan repeat the mantra: "If we lose Russia as an ally, we must at least ensure it doesn't become an enemy."

Unfortunately, any Armenian steps toward the West tend to be perceived as a hostile act in Moscow. And the Kremlin still has plenty of ways to exert influence over Yerevan: it could give the green light to Baku to launch another military operation, halt natural gas exports, or deport ethnic Armenians from Russia, for example.

While such radical measures would harm Armenia, they would not return the country to the Russian fold. Instead, they would only strengthen anti-Russian feeling and intensify Yerevan's search for new partners.

There are, therefore, considerable grounds to hope that Moscow and Yerevan can overcome their current difficulties and build a new relationship—or at the very least have a civilized divorce. But the history of Russia's relations with other post-Soviet countries shows that Moscow does not always behave rationally in such matters.

(This article first appeared on November 27 on the website of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Mikayel Zolyan is an associate professor at Yerevan State Linguistic University with a Ph.D. in History.)

Communique from the Founders of the Future Armenian

Dear compatriots,

The latest developments in Armenia and Artsakh once again demonstrated the importance of forming a pan-Armenian unified vision and action.

As a result of the brutal and persistent policy of ethnic cleansing by Azerbaijan, the entire population of Artsakh was forced to leave its homeland within a few days. Prominent Artsakh statesmen, including former presidents as well as former State Minister and co-founder of the Future Armenian Ruben Vardanyan, were arrested and transferred to Baku. One of the ancient cradles of the Armenian civilization is left without its indigenous population for the first time in 25 centuries.

Today the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Armenia are severely endangered, the fundamental rights of the Artsakh people remain neglected, and, perhaps equally critical, a prevailing sense of apathy within both Armenian society and the diaspora threatens to impede national consolidation. The inability of the current Armenian administration to confront these challenges further exacerbates the situation.

To effectively solve all these and many other critical issues we face, it has become crucial to develop a unified vision for the future, institute responsible management, bridge the existing gap in effective mechanisms for the engagement of able professionals and resources in Armenia and within the diaspora.

We are dedicated to continuing our declared mission of shaping the future together. We emphasize the importance of the coordination of efforts and the deeper and wider engagement of Armenians and our friends worldwide in the collective search for durable solutions.

On Armenia, we stress the urgency of strengthening our collective resilience, mobilizing all available resources, instituting responsible governance, rejecting defeatist and alarmist attitudes, and fostering robust, reliable partnerships.

On Artsakh, we will continue to pursue the solution that enables the right of the people of Artsakh to return to their homes in a safe and dignified manner, and guarantees their national, religious, educational, and cultural rights, including the preservation of the Armenian heritage.

On diaspora, it is vital to harness our collective power and establish a common agenda for global diaspora action, with a primary focus on the security and sovereignty of Armenia and advocating the fundamental rights of the people of Artsakh.

We launched the Future Armenian public Initiative after the devastating war of 2020 to foster a dialogue that would lead to a common framework of understanding and envisioning a brighter future for Armenia and Armenians. More than 110,000 people from 108 countries joined our call. Our objectives were clear from the

outset: overcome polarization, eliminate the prevailing despair, formulate systemic solutions, reactivate society, and cultivate a shared sense of responsibility towards the nation and its future.

Through extensive consultations with local and diaspora organizations and professionals, the Initiative set 15 Goals aimed at addressing the full range of challenges we face and the sustainable development of our global nation.

This past spring we conducted the first-ever Citizens Assembly in the Armenian world — the Convention of the Future Armenian — where participants from the homeland and the diaspora discussed three of those 15 goals (Historic Responsibility, Armenia-Diaspora Unity, and Growing Population) and adopted policy and program recommendations. It was preceded by extensive preparatory work of over a hundred Armenian experts developing possible scenarios and project ideas around those three goals.

We extend our gratitude to our Signatories for their steadfast support during these fateful times.

We, the Armenians, on all levels — personal, societal and national — should rise above despair and division, resist the persistent challenges and hardships facing the nation, and collectively forge a brighter future for all Armenians.

November 20, 2023



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Azeri Paper Attacks Sassounian For Saying Azerbaijan Wastes Billions on Lobbying

Last week, I was asked by Alpha News TV to comment on the US Senate's decision, by a unanimous vote of 100 to 0, to suspend for two years President Joe Biden's authority to waive Section 907 of the United States Freedom Support Act which prohibits providing assistance to Azerbaijan. Should the House of Representatives also approve this bill, it would then go to the president for his signature which would make it a law. Since 1992, all US presidents, including President Biden in the last two years, have waived Section 907, thus providing tens of millions of dollars of aid to Azerbaijan.

The Senate's decision angered Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry which described it as a blow to Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and cancelled its participation in the planned Washington talks between the foreign ministers of the two countries on November 20.

During my interview with Alpha News, I stated that not a single US Senator objected to the anti-Azerbaijan bill, despite Azerbaijan hiring multiple large lobbying firms to defend its interests in Washington. This means that Azerbaijan has wasted tens of millions of dollars in the last two decades paying for these useless lobbying firms. I would like to add that the person directly responsible for overseeing the work of these lobbying firms is Azerbaijan's ambassador to Washington, Khazar Ibrahim. Therefore, any government that becomes aware of the waste of such large amounts of money would immediately fire its ambassador. If President Aliyev does not dismiss Ambassador Ibrahim, then he himself would be just as responsible for the waste of millions of dollars on worthless lobbying firms which have not been able to convince a single Senator out of 100 to vote in favor of Azerbaijan's interests.

Within days of my interview with Alpha News, Azerbaijan's first English language newspaper, AzerNews, published a lengthy article titled, "Bribing congressmen, Armenian lobby poses threat to future of Yerevan," attacking me personally for saying that Azerbaijan has wasted millions of dollars on lobbying. This is what shameless people do when they accuse others of doing

things they are guilty of.

The whole world knows about Azerbaijan's notorious Caviar Diplomacy and Azerbaijani Laundromat, bribing politicians throughout Europe with billions of dollars to cast votes in favor of Azerbaijan in order to whitewash Azerbaijan's severe human rights violations and its fraudulent presidential elections.

Shamelessly, AzerNews falsely states that "Armenia's lobby organizations abroad, pour millions or perhaps billions into the pockets of congressmen, of course, baseless and biased opinions against Azerbaijan will be voiced from the West."

There are several grave errors in the above sentence. First of all, the Armenian government has not hired a single U.S. lobbying firm simply because it does not have the huge amount of petrodollars that Azerbaijan has which it wastes on lobbying firms in Washington, instead of taking care of its poor people at home. Secondly, Armenian-American organizations do not have millions, let alone billions of dollars to "pour into the pockets of congressmen." Armenian-Americans do not need to bribe anyone. When your cause is just, you do not need to pay bribes to convince anyone of the truth. Only when you commit massive crimes, as Azerbaijan and Turkey repeatedly do, you need to spend millions and billions of dollars to cover up your crimes.

AzerNews went on to incriminate Azerbaijan, saying that Baku "is not only interested in participating in this auction of finding partnerships that Armenia is lavishly doing now." Even though the sentence is not grammatically correct, the Azeri writer seems to admit that Azerbaijan is eager to bribe foreign officials. This is a useless statement since Azerbaijan has been bribing foreign officials for years.

Azerbaijan should be the last country in the world to cast aspersions on Armenia or any other country, since Baku is led by a dictator who jails journalists and human rights activists, and his soldiers commit the ugliest war crimes, such as rapes and beheadings. Azerbaijan invaded Artsakh and committed genocide against its Armenian population. Furthermore, Ramil Safarov, an Azeri soldier, during a NATO-sponsored training seminar in Hungary, chopped the head of a sleeping Armenian soldier with an axe. After President Aliyev bribed the Hungarian government to release him from prison, he pardoned him and recognized him as a national hero.

Is BP Financing Armenia's Destruction?

By Michael Rubin

As Hamas partisans continue the calumny that Israel's counterterror operations equate to genocide, real genocide looms in the South Caucasus. In September, Azerbaijani troops seized the entirety of Nagorno-Karabakh, forcing the exodus of its 120,000 indigenous Christians.

Both Azerbaijan and Turkey long used the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute to justify hostility to Armenia. Their actions subsequent to the conquest of the largely Christian region, however, hint that diplomatic dispute was more an excuse for their hostility rather than its true cause.

Driving along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, military fortification in Azerbaijan is obvious. Whereas Armenia builds customs posts and observatories, Azerbaijan constructs helicopter landing pads, airfields, rocket installations, and advanced radar stations. Barracks house dozens of troops at remote locations along the border. Azerbaijani forces have already seized territory within Armenia. President Ilham Aliyev, meanwhile, says that even Armenia's capital Yerevan is Azerbaijani territory. The implication is clear: Azerbaijan prepares for a new war rather than a lasting peace.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan encourages such belligerence. In the wake of the Israel-Hamas war, he declared, "Like Armenia, Israel will fail too." His description of the terror war as a struggle between "crescent and cross" reflects his true mindset. American and British diplomats may see Turkey's army as an important NATO contingent, by Erdogan himself describes it as the "Army of Muhammad." Both Erdogan and Aliyev regularly belittle Armenians, insult rivals by calling them

Armenian, and describe Armenians as dogs or insects.

There are ample reasons why the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has issued a "red flag alert" warning of the possibility of Azerbaijan perpetrating genocide against Armenia and Armenians. The question policymakers should ask is why after 30 years, the frozen Nagorno-Karabakh conflict suddenly erupted and why Aliyev so confidently dismisses diplomacy.

Some pundits may cite developments in Turkey or Russia, but they miss the forest for the trees. The reason why beginning three years ago, Azerbaijan rebuffed diplomacy and turned instead to war was a change in the regional balance of power.

The Azerbaijani economy is a one-act show. SOCAR, its state oil company, works in conjunction with BP (formerly British Petroleum) to finance the Azerbaijani government. BP has little interest in the quality of Azerbaijan's government or its descent into a brutal dictatorship. While ordinary Azerbaijanis wallow

over its neighbors, the chance for peace in the region is zero. Military balance matters. While democratic states fund their people more than their militaries, Aliyev does the opposite. In effect, he diverts the revenue BP's decades-old contract provides to finance aggression and perhaps even genocide. BP may not be legally responsible, but it is shortsighted. As Aliyev ignores his own public, the risk of assassination or even revolution increases in the long term. No ex-Soviet dictatorship expects a color revolution until the day it erupts.

Should Aliyev order an outright invasion of Armenia, the resulting disruption will likely end BP's ability to transport its gas from Azerbaijan to Turkey. If Azerbaijan, overconfident in its gas windfall, seeks to end the oldest Christian state completely, BP may shrug its shoulders, but it will be impossible for BP to sidestep its reputational stain. Simply put, its contract enables Azerbaijan to purchase weaponry from Israel and Turkey to pursue genocide against Armenian Christians.

SO LONG AS AZERBAIJAN CAN UNDERTAKE A MILITARY BUILDUP TO GIVE ITSELF BOTH A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE EDGE OVER ITS NEIGHBORS, THE CHANCE FOR PEACE IN THE REGION IS ZERO. MILITARY BALANCE MATTERS.

in poverty, the Aliyevs spend hundreds of millions of dollars on London real estate and billions of dollars on new weaponry.

Azerbaijan imported nearly 70% of its arsenal in recent years from Israel. In one extreme example, an Israeli drone company seeking to win an Azerbaijani contract demonstrated its system by attacking an Armenian military position. Earlier this month, Baku purchased a \$1.2 billion Barak MX air defense system from Israel.

So long as Azerbaijan can undertake a military buildup to give itself both a qualitative and quantitative edge

BP may want to sidestep politics, but Aliyev will not give it the chance. It is time for BP to tell Aliyev: Enough is enough, BP will not be party to any dictator's genocidal ambition.

(This article first appeared in the *Washington Examiner* on November 24, 2023. Michael Rubin (@mrubin1971) is a contributor to the *Washington Examiner's* Beltway Confidential blog. He is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.)



‘We Won’t Leave’: Armenians in Jerusalem Push Back against Armed Settlers

OLD CITY, OCCUPIED EAST JERUSALEM (Al Jazeera) — After learning that settlers had returned to bulldoze in an area of the parking lot near his house in the Armenian Quarter, 80-year-old Garo Nalbandian, a professional photographer, joined a community sit-in in the area known as the Cows’ Garden with, of course, his trusty camera.

“We won’t leave,” a determined Nalbandian said gruffly in between snapping photos of Armenians on one side of the makeshift barricade and Israeli police and hired security on the other.

On October 26, the leader of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem announced it would cancel a once-secret 2021 land lease deal with a real estate company that has alleged links to settler interests.

Since then, representatives from the company, Xana Gardens, have sent contractors, armed settlers and bulldozers to seize the land — which, along with the parking lot, includes Armenian Church property and the homes of Nalbandian and four other families.

The 1,600-year-old Armenian community is concentrated in the confines of the Armenian Quarter, occupying 14 percent of the Old City of Jerusalem at its southwestern corner.

“You know all your neighbors. If I don’t have milk at 1am, I just knock on their door. If I don’t have bread, I call my friend,” said Setrag Balian, 26, one of the leaders of the current movement to reverse the land deal. “We take care of each other’s kids, of our families.”

This Armenian community — the oldest Armenian diaspora in the world — has seen its [population decline](#) from some 27,000 people a century ago to about 1,000 today.

Yet, with each attempted demolition, the community flocks in numbers at a moment’s notice, standing in the way of bulldozers while withstanding threats of arrest and armed intimidation.

Nalbandian’s family risks losing the home they’ve lived in since 1969, under the deal. Garo’s wife, Hrout, whose family has been in Jerusalem as far back as the 8th or 9th century, describes her sweet memories of the decades of getting engaged, married and raising kids in their modest one-story home.

“Wherever we walk, it’s like we are in Armenia,” she said. “We have like a big family for the Armenians. After so many years ... to become homeless, this is very hard.”

Garo’s studio in Wadi al-Joz is adorned with breathtaking photos he has taken of streets and cities around the world, from Athens to Alexandria. “But our beautiful Armenian Quarter is like nowhere else,” Garo remarked. “We must protect it.”

A controversial deal

The community’s suspicions of Israeli settler aspirations in the Cows’ Garden started in 2019 when an Israeli company began construction on that same parking lot. At the time, the patriarchate told the community the aim was to renovate the lot, nothing more, but the parking lot’s April 2021 inauguration was curiously attended by Moshe Lion, the mayor of Jerusalem, and bedecked with enough Israeli flags to raise eyebrows.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem — the community’s spiritual leadership, biggest employer and de facto landlord — struck a deal in July that year with Xana Gardens, a company incorporated that same month and led by the Australian Israeli investor Danny Rothman.

For two years, church leaders kept the community in the dark about the terms or even existence of the deal, despite persistent rumors. On April 1 this year, witnesses say, Rothman — also known in documents as Danny Rubenstein and Danny Kaufman — came to the Cows’ Garden parking lot with

security, breaking security cameras and dismissing patriarchate guards, claiming he was taking over.

As years of rumors and suspicions about the deal spilled into the open, Setrag Balian and Hagop Djernazian, 23, led the younger generation of Armenians in fighting the land takeover. Balian, who works for his family’s ceramics business, joined Djernazian, a student at Hebrew University, for months of protests near Armenian Patriarch Nourhan Manougian’s offices.

“I see myself creating my future here,” said Djernazian, who also leads the Armenian Scouts. “I study here, I work here, I live here. And this is my plan to continue living here. The deal threatens our continued existence here.”

A report in July this year by an international team of Armenian lawyers finally exposed the deal publicly.

In it, the patriarchate agreed to give Xana Gardens a 49-year lease — with an option to

had not been consulted. The PA, Jordan and Israel are the three political authorities that endow recognition to the patriarchs in Jerusalem. The patriarchate did not respond to a request for comments.

“A lot of the younger generation had to learn through this ordeal why it’s important to stay in Jerusalem and why presence matters,” said Kegham Balian, Setrag’s brother and a Jerusalemite Armenian who has written and reported on the issue for Armenian news outlets such as 301.

Manougian’s decision to cancel the deal on October 26 put to rest the Armenian community’s internal divide on the issue. Later that same day, however, Israeli heavy machinery arrived at the disputed site to try to begin demolition.

Armenians rushed to the Cows’ Garden, standing in front of machinery that was tearing up a pavement and a wall separating the patriarchate parking lot from the community parking lot.



Armenian protestors in Jerusalem’s Armenian Quarter (Al Jazeera photo)

renew another 49 — of the Cows’ Garden to build a luxury hotel.

Only Xana Gardens could cancel the agreement, which was for at least 11,500 square meters (123,785 square feet), but Xana could include “adjacent properties in the project”.

A plan submitted by Danny Rothman to the Jerusalem Municipality in May sought 14,500sq meters — not 11,500 — for the hotel, with a “target area” of 16,000sq meters (172,222sq feet), according to the report on the deal. Such an area would encompass 13 percent of the entire Armenian Quarter.

For this large swath of prized land on contested Mount Zion, Xana Gardens would pay only \$300,000 in yearly rent.

Miran Krikorian, 40, a restaurant owner born and raised in the Armenian Quarter, says he pays nearly a quarter of that amount for only 30 square meters (323 square feet) he rents nearby for his small restaurant in the Christian Quarter.

“Either somebody got money under the table to pass this deal, or it’s just our people are so dumb that they don’t know the prices in this country,” said Krikorian.

Growing pressure, growing threats

For months, newly installed security guards from Xana Gardens threatened to ban community members from using the parking lot if they attended the protests, adding to threats church officials allegedly made towards individuals who protested. But the community refused to relent.

Pressure on the church to cancel the deal increased when Jordan and the Palestinian Authority withdrew their recognition of Patriarch Manougian in May, as they saw the deal threatening the status quo in the Old City, and amid concerns that stakeholders

Ten days later, on November 5, representatives from Xana Gardens, including Rothman, returned. This time, they brought about 15 settlers with them, several of them armed and leading leashed dogs.

“This is our land,” they reportedly told local Armenians. “Leave now.”

But the Armenians refused to leave. A tense standoff ensued for hours, with more settlers arriving and yet more Armenians joining, eventually overwhelming the armed settlers.

Some of the settlers attempted to provoke community members, residents said. “You’re all goys, and when the Messiah comes, you will die,” one of them told them.

“I will get you, one by one!” George Warwar, a Christian Arab from Jaffa who had been the face of Xana Gardens on the ground in the months leading up to the encounter, reportedly shouted.

This was the first time most in the community had encountered Rothman, who, when approached by journalists, has refused to speak to the media. According to Setrag Balian, Rothman, who normally lives overseas, told police during the standoff the community wanted to cancel the deal because he is Jewish.

“It’s because now you’re bringing armed settlers and showing the true face of your company,” Setrag Balian recalled telling Rothman that day. “It’s because this deal is not a good deal for the patriarchate.

“We’ve lived with our Jewish Quarter neighbors for 50 years without any major incidents,” he continued.

The act of peaceful defiance forced Rothman and his group to withdraw after several hours.

“Just by the look on Danny Rothman’s

face,” said Kegham Balian, “you could tell he wasn’t expecting the events to unfold like they did that day.”

‘It Did not Scare Us — It Empowered Us’

Negotiations are under way for the church to provide greater transparency regarding the administration of community lands and affairs, a key demand from protesters.

With the internal divide on the land agreement now set aside — and the war in Gaza drawing the world’s attention — Armenian residents say Xana Gardens’ tactics are shifting to outright armed confrontation.

“They thought it would scare us,” said Setrag Balian of the armed threats. “But it didn’t scare us — it empowered us. We are more united than ever.”

Manougian, often criticized by Armenians for an absence in leadership, has been present during standoffs this month. A November 16 communique by the Armenian Patriarchate described the situation as “possibly the greatest existential threat of its 16-century history”, condemning the 2021 contract as “tainted with false representation, undue influence, and unlawful benefits”.

Armenians fear their small, tight-knit community won’t survive if they lose the Cows’ Garden, which comprises much of the Armenian Quarter outside the Armenian Convent — a private area originally intended for clergy, but now housing many Armenians who moved there about a century ago in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide.

The prized land is seen as pivotal to Israeli settler plans, as a long-term lease would complete a path for Jewish worshippers to cross the Old City from Jaffa Gate to the Jewish Quarter without crossing Christian properties, following [previous purchases](#) of the New Imperial Hotel and Petra Hotel along that route.

Since the first armed confrontation by Rothman and settlers, Armenians have been taking shifts at the Cows’ Garden, where two bulldozers are parked.

Contractors hired by Xana Gardens attempted to bulldoze the area early in the morning on November 12 and 13. Both times, the community sprang into action, putting up a metal barricade on the 12 and, on the 13, standing in a bulldozer’s path.

The community has remained nonviolent throughout the confrontations, at the behest of movement leaders like Balian and Djernazian.

As demolition attempts by the company continue — including an incident on November 15 in which Palestinians hired by Xana Gardens to dismantle the barricade left when they realized they had been hired by settlers — the community remains resolute.

During the standoffs, police threatened to arrest Armenians, and several have been arrested for transgressions like shouting, according to community members. They were released the same day, but banned by police from returning to the area.

Police have attempted to enforce the bulldozing efforts — although they have failed so far with Xana Gardens unable to present the required permits — before the land deal finds its way to court to be adjudicated, as stakeholders expect to happen.

A rotating group of Armenians now sleeps in the Cows’ Garden at night, and community members provide volunteers with food, tea, couches and even a tent for 24/7 surveillance.

“This has to do with the future of my kid,” said Krikorian of his four-year-old boy, his eyes welling with tears.

“If I think about all those things that my kid is going to lose, like this community, like being with his friends ... I grew up in that, and I want him to have the same experiences.

“If I don’t do anything now, I’m going to lose it for him in the future.”