

Azerbaijan ‘Not Interested’ In Corridor Through Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A senior Azerbaijani official has said that Baku is no longer interested in a special corridor that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave through Armenia’s strategic Syunik province.



Since the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly demanded such a corridor and implicitly threatened to order his troops to open it forcibly. Armenia has rejected his demands while expressing readiness for conventional transport links between the two South Caucasus states.

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Armenians fleeing Artsakh

TCA Continues Artsakh Refugees Aid

By Gayane Muradyan

YEREVAN — The Artsakh Refugees Aid Program launched by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) is aiding the forcibly displaced Armenians from Artsakh in a transparent and documented manner. In addition to burn victims and their families, TCA is helping families with many members and the social disadvantaged.

Each of the families which left Artsakh faced unique difficulties before reaching the settlement of Kornidzor, which is near the city of Goris in the Syunik province of Armenia. Families that had many children, handi-

capped members, or were economically disadvantaged were in an even more challenging situation than others. The children were perhaps the ones who suffered the most during the wars and fighting, as they bear throughout their lives the imprint of the psychological stress and panics which they endured, perhaps even disrupting their conceptions of good and evil.

Here some examples of the families which received assistance through the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Heghinar Arzumanyan’s family of nine lived in the village of Tumi, Hadrut district, with girls (ages 9, 17, and 19) and boys (ages 6, 8, 12, and 13). They had a big

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Armenia to Offer Refugee Status to Displaced People of Karabakh

By Lilit Shahverdyan

In a cabinet session on October 26, the Armenian government approved the creation of a “temporary protected status” for displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that the new status would facilitate the protection of their rights in the local and international arenas.

The law automatically applies to the over 100,000 ethnic Armenians of Karabakh who fled to Armenia following Azerbaijan’s forceful seizure of the territory on 19-20 September. That offensive - which came after a 9-month blockade that had caused severe shortages of food, fuel, medicine, and other essential supplies - resulted in the disbanding of the local army, the Artsakh Defense Force, on September 21. A few days later, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic itself, which had governed the region for three decades, began the process of formal dissolution.

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Displaced persons from Karabakh in Goris, Armenia, on September 30 (photo by Milena Avetisyan)



Armenian Mirror-Spectator Celebrates 90th Anniversary

WATERTOWN — Over the weekend of October 27 and 28, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* celebrated its 90th anniversary with two outstanding events. On Friday, a panel of journalists — Charles Mahtesian of Politico, filmmaker and former BBC anchor Carla Garapedian, Ken Dilanian of NBC News and Eric Hagopian of CivilNet — spoke before a standing-room-only crowd.

On Saturday, a sold-out gala featuring the sweet sounds of Zulal and Master of Ceremonies Sona Hovsepian concluded the 90th anniversary activities. Full stories and pictures will appear in next week’s issue. The full video of the panel is on www.mirrorspectator.com.

Below, the panelists, from left, Mahtesian, Hacopian, Garapedian and Dilanian speak with *Mirror-Spectator* Managing Editor Aram Arkun. (Ken Martin photo) Above is Sona Hovsepian at the gala. (David Medzorian photo)



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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Conductor Sergey Smbatyan Acquitted

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Sergey Smbatyan, the artistic director and chief conductor of the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra, has been acquitted, his lawyer said on Monday, October 30.

“By the prosecutor’s decision, the prosecution of Sergey Smbatyan has been terminated on the grounds that he did not commit the crime ascribed to him,” lawyer Yervand Varosyan wrote on Facebook.

Sergey Smbatyan and his father Armen Smbatyan, Armenia’s former ambassador to Russia and Israel, were arrested for large-scale fraud in late July.

The conductor was moved to house arrest on August 24.

14 Tortured, 64 Died When Trying to Flee Artsakh

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Fourteen individuals were tortured and 64 died on the move from Karabakh, Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ani Badalyan wrote on X (Twitter) on October 30.

“An investigative committee of Armenia published data on the numbers of killed and wounded, among them civilians, including children, as a result of a large-scale military attack by Azerbaijan against Nagorno Karabakh on September 19,” she wrote.

According to an infographic published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during the aggression of September 19, more than 200 people were killed, 9 of them civilians, including three children, more than 300 people were wounded, including 231 military and 80 civilians, 14 people were tortured by the Azerbaijan forces, while 64 people died on the road from Artsakh to Armenia.

Gyumri Dry Port Construction Could Get Approved Soon

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Dry Port and Industrial Estate project in Gyumri could get approved this year and enter the construction phase in 2024, the Minister of Economy of Armenia Vahan Kerobyan said on October 31.

He said that MTBS, a Dutch company, is currently carrying out a feasibility study of the project and the preliminary report shows sufficient demand to build the industrial estate.

The final report is expected by yearend. Then, the Public Investments Committee must hold another hearing to determine whether or not to continue the project.

Kerobyan said he finds it likely for the committee to greenlight the project.

The Dry Port and Industrial Estate project will likely be carried out by a public-private partnership model.

“We must try to involve a leading operator that will be able to perform a high-level management both in the industrial park and the logistics section,” Kerobyan added during a press briefing when asked by Armenpress on the project.

Armenian PM Sees ‘No Advantage’ in Russian Troop Presence as Ties with Moscow Deteriorate

By Ani Avetisyan

As Armenia seeks Western help in coping with the influx of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, its relations with Russia continue to deteriorate.

Last week Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told the *Wall Street Journal* that he saw “no advantage” in the presence of Russian troops in Armenia. In the same interview, Pashinyan also ruled out any impending withdrawal from the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Despite his previous criticism of Moscow and the CSTO, Pashinyan has maintained a restrained approach when it comes to actual action against these two security allies.

Armenia currently hosts approximately 10,000 Russian troops, of whom around 5,000 are stationed at the 102nd Russian military base in the city of Gyumri, near Turkey. Other Russian forces operate at Zvartnots airport, Erebuni military base, and in the southern and eastern regions of Armenia.

Russian troops are stationed at various points along the border with Azerbaijan, and Russian border guards control Armenia’s borders with Turkey and Iran.

Two thousand Russian peacekeepers were stationed in Nagorno-Karabakh after the 2020 Second Karabakh War. Pashinyan said in October, after Azerbaijan took over the region and its entire Armenian population fled, that the peacekeepers would not be allowed in Armenia if they were to leave Karabakh.

Pashinyan was the subject of an extended hit piece on Russian state TV on 23 October that contained numerous easily disprovable falsehoods. The Armenian Foreign Ministry filed a note of protest with Russia and summoned Ambassador Sergei Koprikin over the anti-Armenian statements and insults against Prime Minister Pashinyan in the program.

Pashinyan has been a frequent target of Russian propaganda in recent months. In October, an unnamed top official cited by the TASS news agency claimed that Pashinyan was emulating the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, and attempting to turn Armenia into ‘another Ukraine’. Former President Dmitry Medvedev, who

is also the deputy head of Russia’s national security council, criticized Pashinyan on social media during Azerbaijan’s September attack on Nagorno-Karabakh. He accused him of “flirting” with the West and sarcastically asked, “Guess what fate awaits him?”

Russian state-owned media and propagandists regularly agitate for a change of Armenia’s government. Pashinyan has repeatedly emphasized that such calls go against the principles of the countries’ alliance. He told *The Wall Street Journal* that “such an approach violates many rules, starting with non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, and diplomatic correctness”.

The recent anti-Pashinyan broadcast on Russian TV has triggered calls for Russian channels to be banned in Armenia. Tigran Hakobyan, head of Armenia’s Television and Radio Commission, said that talk of cutting of Russian channels have been brewing for years but that “political considerations” have prevented such a move. In response to the Armenian Foreign Ministry’s decision, Moscow summoned the Armenian charge d’affaires to discuss what it called an “anti-Russian movement” in Armenia led by the Armenian authorities.

In a move that appears to be aimed at punishing Armenia, the Russian State Duma has decided to postpone consideration of a bill that would recognize Armenian driver’s licenses. Russia reportedly expected Armenia to reciprocate by giving the Russian language a status, just like Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan have. There have been no public discussions in Armenia on according Russian such a status, though both Russian and English are mandatory subjects in Armenian public schools.

In the interview with *WSJ*, Pashinyan said that Russia’s and the CSTO’s failure to uphold their security commitments to Armenia had led Yerevan to seek to “diversify [its] relations in the security sector.”

Indeed, India has already begun selling weapons to Armenia and more ammunition is expected to be dispatched soon. France, too, has agreed to sell Armenia defensive weapons, including in the realm of air defense.

Armenia is receiving extensive help from the West to deal with the crisis that followed the mass flow of Armenian ref-

ugees from Nagorno-Karabakh who fled Azerbaijan’s 9-month blockade and September military assault. A number of Western countries and the EU have already sent millions of dollars to address the needs of those displaced.

While turning its back on Moscow, Yerevan has appeared more eager to conclude peace talks with Azerbaijan through the mediation of the European Union, rejecting Moscow-brokered meetings and expressing a willingness to participate in EU-led ones. Baku, meanwhile, has shown the opposite preference, rejecting several high-level meetings initiated by the EU.

The war of words between Armenia and Russia has been going on for some time, with Armenian officials criticizing Russia’s inaction during escalations in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. And Armenia’s move to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court - which has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin - has further strained the two allies’ relations.

On October 25, the Charge d’Affaires of Armenia in Moscow was summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry over “odious” publications in the Armenian media against Russia, Official Representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maria Zakharova said at a briefing with journalists today.

“On October 25, the Charge D’affaires ad Interim of the Armenian Embassy in Moscow was summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry. His attention was drawn to the most odious publications about the Russian leadership, Russian diplomats and Russian peacekeepers who risk and sacrifice their lives, including for security of the people of Armenia. He was pointed to the unacceptability of an unbridled anti-Russian campaign in the information space of the republic,” the diplomat noted.

On October 24, the Russian Ambassador to Yerevan, Sergei Kopyrkin, was summoned to the Armenian Foreign Ministry over an a program aired on Channel One, which, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said contained “offensive and completely unacceptable statements” about Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Kopyrkin was handed a note of protest.

(This article originally appeared in Eurasianet.org on October 31.)

Prime Minister Pashinyan Hopes for Peace Deal With Azerbaijan ‘in Coming Months’

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan says Yerevan and Baku are working on a peace deal that could be signed “in the coming months.”

Speaking on October 26 at a forum in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, with the prime ministers of Azerbaijan and Georgia in attendance, Pashinyan said the agreement would include the mutual recognition of each other’s territorial integrity and border delimitation talks on the basis of the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration.

“We are currently working on a draft peace and relations settlement agreement with Azerbaijan, and I hope this process will be successfully completed in the coming months,” Pashinyan said.

“We hope to sign a peace and relations agreement with Azerbaijan in the com-

ing months based on these principles,” he added.

Baku and Yerevan were locked in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh for decades. Armenian-backed separatists seized the mainly ethnic Armenian-populated region from Azerbaijan during a war in the early 1990s that killed some 30,000 people.

Diplomatic efforts to settle the conflict brought little progress and the two sides fought another war in 2020 that lasted six weeks and left more than 2,000 soldiers dead on each side before a Russian-brokered cease-fire, resulting in Armenia losing control over parts of the region and seven adjacent districts.

Azerbaijan then staged a lightning offensive in September to regain control of Nagorno-Karabakh, triggering the flight

of more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians — virtually the entire population — to Armenia.

Armenia describes their flight as ethnic cleansing driven by the threat of violence, but Azerbaijan says the Armenian civilians left voluntarily even though they were welcome to stay in Nagorno-Karabakh and be integrated into Azerbaijani society.

Pashinyan reaffirmed Armenia’s readiness to open, reopen, reconstruct, and build regional communications.

“I hope that in the near future there will be developments in the direction of opening the border between Armenia and Turkey for citizens of third countries and holders of diplomatic passports, which will also bring a positive impulse to the entire region,” Pashinyan said in Tbilisi.



ARMENIA

TCA Continues Artsakh Refugees Aid

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house and a garden. The thought of living in Artsakh again is a thing of the past. Now they live in a three-room apartment in the city of Charentsavan in the Kotayk province of Armenia. They have adapted to their new circumstances.

Alla Stepanyan is 39 years old. The number of members in her family is ten. They lived together in Artsakh near Martakert district in Mataghis village. After the war they moved to the city of Stepanakert. Alla's husband was killed in the 44-day war in 2020. Her two sons, Samvel and Arsen, were killed on September 19 this year in local battles.

Now Alla lives with her 62-year-old father, her mother Alvina of the same age, her brother Andranik and his wife Nune, the latter's children: 8-year-old Kamo, 6-year-old Albina, eleven-month-old Ariana, and Alla's sister Anahit, whose husband was killed, and their 12-year-old son Vahe.

In this multi-member family, it is very difficult for the children to adapt to their

Lusine Movsisyan, who is sick and undergoing chemotherapy, lived in Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh, including her husband Hovhannes, 6-year-old autistic son Levon, 2.5-year-old daughter Marie, her husband's sister Khasvard (whose husband died on September 20, 2023 during the Azerbaijani invasion), the latter's son, 5-year-old Hayk, 3-year-old daughter Maria, mother-in-law Alvardi, and 73-year-old father-in-law Vladimir. Now they all live together in the city of Sevan, which is in Gegharkunik Province, Armenia.

Lusine said, "We chose a place that is close to the hospital, because my son and I need to visit the doctor every month. It will be necessary to buy 50,000 drams of medicine every month just for my autistic son, Levon."

The seven-person family of 36-year-old Gegham Bejanyan lived in Artsakh in Stepanakert. Now Gegham, his wife Valentina, daughters 7-year-old Nune, 6-year-old Katarina, 3-year-old Susanna, son 7-year-old Mihran, and his 72-year-old mother live in Aznavdзор village of Lori Province

are safe and calm."

The ten-person family of Avo Paramazyan is from Mushkapar Village of the Martuni district of Artsakh. The family settled in Karbi Village, in Armenia's province of Aragatsotn. Avo's father Ararat is 53 years old, married to his mother Susanna. His grandmother Anzhela is 91. There are his brothers 21-year-old Armo,

to stand up for and take care of the people of Artsakh who have lost their homes, dreams and future, many will leave.

This is where we should unite as a nation and help to overcome the temporary problems and worries of the people of Artsakh. With the help of our compatriots in the diaspora, we must create a suitable environment for them, and provide housing



Alla Stepanyan and her family



Heghinar Arzumanyan and her family

new place of residence. Alla declared, "It is as if people's souls are there [in Artsakh], while the hearts are here. The day we can take back those lands, not one of us will remain here."

The nine-member family of 29-year-old

in a house which is not in good shape. He said, "We left Artsakh with our family and other relatives. We all live in houses close to each other. We will try to adapt and cultivate the land. Of course we don't expect to live like we did before, but at least we

18-year-old Arsen, 17-year-old Arayikk, 15-year-old Aram, and 9-year-old Ashot, along with his father's sister Arega (whose son was killed on September 19 defending positions).

Avo and his large family owned their own house in their village in Artsakh and earned their livelihood through agriculture. Avo said, "Now it is difficult to find work in Armenia. What should we do? We will have to survive until spring so that we can do agricultural work."

These are only some of the heartbreaking accounts we learn about as we interview aid applicants. TCA is attempting to alleviate the sufferings of as many as possible who are in the most dire situations.

Of the roughly 120,000 Armenians from Artsakh who were forced to emigrate from Artsakh to Armenia, facing a diminished fate and unfortunate future, about 3,000 people have left Armenia as of October 20. If the Republic of Armenia is unable

and employment, so that they do not feel like strangers in Mother Armenia.

Assistance programs for Artsakh Armenians continue. Please join in our efforts, as the Armenians of Artsakh need all our help.

TCA gratefully acknowledges all who have donated so far, including the generous gifts of John Kostanian (\$20,000) and Paul Ahmaranian (\$5,000) from Canada, and Sarkis Satian (\$10,000) and Michael Norehad (\$10,000, Norehad Charitable Foundation) from the United States.

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

Armenia to Offer Refugee Status to Displaced People of Karabakh

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The Armenian government is only now beginning to grapple with the issue of the displaced persons' status.

Those eligible for the new temporary protected status are persons registered as residents of Nagorno-Karabakh, persons living in Armenia or abroad whose last registered address was in Nagorno-Karabakh, and persons who were not registered in Nagorno-Karabakh but lived there and were registered by the Armenian Migration and Citizenship Service as entering the country after September 19.

Those who hold citizenship of a country other than Armenia are not eligible, as their protection is deemed to be under the jurisdiction of the relevant country.

It's not clear whether the new law applies to the roughly 20,000 displaced persons who resettled in Armenia after Azerbaijan captured territories in the 2020 Second Karabakh War that had previously

been administered by the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. Refugees from Hadrou, Shusha, and other regions have long sought a legal status defining their position but were not granted any after their displacement three years ago.

The other option former Karabakh residents have, [Prime Minister Pashinyan said](#), is to seek Armenian citizenship.

This remark triggered surprise and offense among many Karabakhis, who thought they already were citizens, since they have been issued Armenian passports since 1999.

Artyom Sujyan, an advisor to the minister of justice, [told](#) CivilNet that the passports were issued under an agreement between the ministers of internal affairs of the Republic of Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic as international travel documents.

"The government has asserted its position in numerous cases, even presented

this position in the European Court, that the fact that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh have passports of RA does not mean that they are considered RA citizens," said Sujyan.

Indeed, Karabakh Armenians' passports bear the special code "070," and they have never enjoyed the political rights of citizens of Armenia such as the vote.

The new law allows them to apply to become full-fledged Armenian citizens and gain political rights and social entitlements such as a state pension. But doing so will render them ineligible for the social assistance provided to those registered as refugees.

The new protected status has a term of one year and can be extended through a new decision. The refugee certificates will be issued in January.

According to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951, which Armenia is a signatory to, all persons recognized as refugees

in Armenia will be regarded as such in all other signatory countries as well.

Artyom Sujyan, the advisor to the justice minister, said that refugee status holders get certain benefits and stronger guarantees in other countries and cannot be expelled or deported from states where they seek refuge.

Meanwhile, the Armenian government has allocated one-off financial assistance of 100,000 drams (\$250) to all displaced persons (including children) from Nagorno-Karabakh and 50,000 drams (about \$125) to cover rental prices and utilities. For November and December, a separate program was approved providing additional monthly payments of 40,000 drams (\$100) to all the refugees.

(Lilit Shahverdyan is a journalist formerly based in Stepanakert. This article originally appeared on the website eurasianet.org on October 30.)



ARMENIA

COAF Secures €10 Million Grant to Transform Education in Armenia's Syunik Region

BRUSSELS — The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) has secured a landmark €10 million grant from the European Commission through European Investment Bank (EIB) Global to establish two SMART Centers in the Syunik region. The grant was formalized at the Global Gateway Forum in Brussels on 25 October by EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood, Olivér Várhelyi, and EIB Vice-President, Thomas Österos. The signing ceremony was witnessed by the Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan as well as COAF Global Executive Director Ara Barsam and Managing Director Liana Ghaltaghchyan. This partnership heralds a new era of educational excellence in Armenia's southern Syunik region, bringing world-class after-school education to the children of the region.

This groundbreaking initiative entails the construction of two innovative extra-curricular education and teacher training centers in the cities of Kapan and Goris in the Syunik region of Southern Armenia. These cutting-edge facilities will provide high-quality after-school education and comprehensive services to up to 6,000 children and young adults aged 3 to 18. Students can access a wide range of after-school programs, including foreign languages, entrepreneurship, arts, engineering, athletics. Students will also benefit from the support of social workers, education counselors, study trips, and workshops from international experts.

Following the model of COAF's flagship SMART Center in Armenia's northern Lori region, inaugurated in 2018, this initiative marks a significant step towards enhancing education and development in rural areas. Over the course of its 5-year operation, the Lori SMART Center has served more than 4,000 students from 28 communities and stands as an integral part of a growing network of educational and development facilities, fostering new professional training and employment prospects for rural citizens.

The establishment of two SMART Centers in Syunik is closely aligned with the flagship initiative, "Investing in education, notably in the Syunik region," as part of the European Union's Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership. This initiative is also a pivotal element of the Team Europe Initiative on Resilient Syunik, aimed at bolstering the socio-economic resilience of the Southern region of Armenia, which has been significantly impacted by the 2020 hostilities and the recent mass displacement of Karabakh Armenians.

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood, Olivér Várhelyi, emphasized, "Today's announcement is another proof of the EU's commitment to Armenia's reforms in education, to enhance its quality, modernization and relevance to economy and society. Education is a priority under the Economic and Investment Plan's flagship for Armenia, and I am pleased to see that the construction of two non-formal education centers in the Syunik region will be a reality. This will ensure the quality of rural education and workforce development and prepare young people of Armenia, including vulnerable groups, to find appropriate jobs in a competitive job market. This is part of the EU's comprehensive approach to education in Armenia, to which we committed recently a €2 mil-



The signing of the grant

lion budget support for the implementation of the education strategy."

President of the Republic of Armenia, Vahagn Khachaturyan, expressed his support, stating, "Today an important step was taken towards the realization of the two non-formal education centers to be constructed in the Syunik Region of Armenia and to be operated by the COAF. This can help to further strengthen the links between formal and non-formal education as the latter is an essential auxiliary to the former. Moreover, the construction of these SMART Centers in Syunik will contribute to a bigger goal of developing the southern regions of Armenia."

EIB's President, Werner Hoyer, added, "As the EU Bank, we are committed to support development of human capital, economic resilience and social cohesion in Armenia, in line with the EU priorities in the country. This Team Europe initiative is not only an investment in a better education and future of the Armenian children, but it will also contribute to reducing urban-rural divides and gender gaps in the country."

COAF Global Executive Head, Ara Barsam, emphasized the significance of the initiative, stating, "This is a pivotal investment in Armenia's future. COAF is swiftly working, upholding the highest standards of quality and innovation to ensure that all young Armenians receive the finest education and training possible."

Liana Ghaltaghchyan, COAF Managing Director, stressed the importance of this endeavor for Armenia, emphasizing, "It is especially vital for Armenia to embark on the establishment of our SMART Centers in Syunik during this crucial period."

This initiative reflects the collaborative commitment of the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, and the Children of Armenia Fund to advancing education, economic resilience, and social development in the Syunik region, marking an important milestone in Armenia's progress.

The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) aims at improving the quality of life in rural Armenia, with a particular focus on the projects and needs of children and youth. COAF's target development areas are education, healthcare, as well as social and economic development. COAF launched its programs in 2004, starting in one village

and expanding to more than 82 communities in Armenia and Artsakh with an investment of more than \$70 million, impacting well over 100,000 people across rural Armenia.

EIB Global is the EIB Group's new specialized arm dedicated to increasing the impact of international partnerships and development finance outside of the European Union. EIB Global is designed to foster strong, focused partnership within Team Europe, and as part of the EU's Global Gateway strategy alongside fellow devel-

opment finance institutions, and civil society. EIB Global brings the Group closer to local people, companies and institutions through our offices across the world.

The Global Gateway Forum brings together for the first time an assembly of government representatives from the European Union and across the globe, alongside key stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, thought leaders, financial institutions, and international organizations to promote global investment in transformative infrastructure to deliver on SDGs.

EU Helps Establish Patrol Service, Regional Development in Syunik

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The European Union has extended its support for the establishment of a patrol service throughout Armenia by providing both technical assistance and expertise.

The head of the delegation of the European Union to Armenia, Ambassador Vassilis Maragos, who participated in the event on October 28 dedicated to the start of the work of Syunik division of the Police Patrol Service said: "On behalf of the European Union, I would like to reaffirm our strong commitment and support in the framework of reforms that have been a cornerstone of democratic governance and the effective execution of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement over recent years.

"The rule of law and fundamental rights within the European Union will remain the foundation of our union. As a noteworthy testament to this commitment and the advancements in these reforms, I would like to emphasize the launch and full operation of the patrol service, with the final phase of implementation taking place today in Syunik, and, of course, the creation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in January 2023."

He added that the EU has donated 75 new vehicles for that patrol service.

Maragos emphasized and welcomed the involvement and participation of the

government in all areas of the Ministry of Interior.

"Of course, challenges exist, and I am confident that they will be effectively addressed through enhanced capacity building, ongoing education, heightened transparency, and increased accountability. This way, the new, reformed police service system can better meet the needs of citizens," he said.

Maragos mentioned that Syunik is a symbol of Armenia's resistance and strength.

"I would like to quote the words of the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, during her statement following the meeting in Granada in September: 'The European Union stands by Armenia and is fully committed to supporting the negotiations,'" stated Maragos.

Maragos emphasized that, in addition to this project, the European Union supports the enhancement of resilience in the Syunik region through various other initiatives.

"And one of those initiatives is the 'Team Europe' initiative, within the framework of which more than 100 million euros have already been allocated for the development of the Syunik region. We expect to implement these projects and programs for the residents of this region, together with the government," he concluded.



INTERNATIONAL

Canadian Foreign Minister Joly Inaugurates Embassy in Yerevan, Pledges New Aid Package

By Raffi Elliott

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly was in Armenia on October 25 for the long-awaited official inauguration of her country's diplomatic mission to Yerevan. According to an official communique from her office, her presence was meant to signal "stronger bilateral ties and increased Canadian support to Armenian democracy."

Following a visit to the Armenian Genocide memorial, Joly met with both the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Vahagn Khachaturyan with whom she discussed the strengthening of bilateral relations, as well as the humanitarian situation resulting from the ethnic cleansing of over 100,000 indigenous Armenians from Artsakh following Azerbaijan's September 19 attack on the region.

Accompanied by Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, Joly made her way to the Yerevan Plaza office building where the new Canadian embassy is located. She then helped raise the Canadian flag outside the building, surrounded by a delegation of Canadian-Armenians and incoming Canadian Ambassador Andrew Turner.

"You can continue to believe not only in my support, but also the government's support and that of my country as a whole in this important relationship between Canada and Armenia," Joly told those present at the embassy.

After many years of lobbying from the Canadian-Armenian community, Ottawa finally decided to upgrade its diplomatic relationship with Yerevan following the destructive 2020 Artsakh War, which indirectly caused a scandal in Canada following the revelation that Canadian-developed technology was used by Azerbaijani forces during their attack on Artsakh. The L3 Harris WESCAM CMX-15D optical targeting system,

produced in Burlington, Ontario, was discovered by the Armenian military to have been fitted to Turkish-produced Bayraktar BT-2 attack drones used by Azerbaijani forces to devastating effect. Canada had officially sanctioned Turkish defense contractors the previous year over their use in attacking Kurdish civilian targets in Syria.

This scandal, as well as Canada's shifting priorities in the region following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and the subsequent downgrade in the Canadian embassy in Moscow's responsibilities led to a rethinking of Ottawa's relationship with the only fledgling democracy in the region. These events triggered a commission led by Canada's ambassador to the European

Union Stephane Dion which eventually culminated in the "In support of democracy in Armenia" report which recommended, among other things, the opening of a Canadian embassy in Yerevan. With total bilateral trade totaling some \$25.2 million in 2020, Canada has long been one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment in Armenia, particularly in the mining, high tech and biomedical sectors. The embassy is expected, in part, to continue to explore avenues for mutually beneficial economic cooperation, as well as to support Armenia's fledgling democracy. During her visit, Canada's top diplomat also expressed her country's support for Armenia's territorial integrity and, referring to the threat of sanctions against Azerbaijan, reiterated that "everything is on the table." This sentiment was also supported by Canadian Members of Parliament Lindsay Mathyssen and Stephane Bergeron, who accompanied her on the trip. Both their respective parties, the NDP and the Bloc Quebecois, [have called for sanctions](#)



From left, Canadian Ambassador Andrew Turner, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan inaugurate Canada's embassy in Yerevan, October 25, 2023 (photo Raffi Elliott)

Union Stephane Dion which eventually culminated in the "In support of democracy in Armenia" report which recommended, among other things, the opening of a Canadian embassy in Yerevan.

With total bilateral trade totaling some \$25.2 million in 2020, Canada has long been one of the largest sources of foreign

against Azerbaijan following its invasion of Nagorno Karabakh in mid-September. Melanie also pledged several million dollars in aid for refugees from Artsakh before continuing her visit to the town of Jermuk, lying just 5 kilometers away from the farthest Azerbaijani incursion into Armenia's sovereign territory.

ICRC Visits Former Karabakh Leaders

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Baku Delegation representatives this week visited Nagorno-Karabakh former presidents Arkadi Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan and Arayik Harutyunyan, former minister of state Ruben Vardanyan, former foreign minister David Babayan, former Defense Army commander Levon Mnatzakanyan and former National Assembly speaker Davit Ishkhanyan.

"The visit took place on October 20,



The detained Karabakh leaders, including former Artsakh Foreign Minister Ruben Vardanyan, center (Trend photo)

within the framework of ICRC standard procedures. The detainees were given an opportunity to contact their relatives," Zara Amatuni, Communication and Prevention Program Manager of the ICRC Armenia

office, told Armenpress.

"During October, the ICRC representatives once again visited all previously arrested Armenians in Azerbaijan. Visits will be continuous," added Amatuni.

INTERNATIONAL

New Polish Ambassador Visits Pashinyan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with the newly appointed Ambassador of Poland to Armenia Piotr Skwieciński this week.

Pashinyan congratulated Skwieciński on assuming office and wished him success in his work, the Prime Minister's Office said in a readout.

Pashinyan praised the continuous development of the Armenian-Polish relations in both political and economic spheres. He stressed the importance of utilizing the existing potential for enhancing the trade-economic ties.

The forced displacement of more than 100,000 Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of Azerbaijan's policy of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh and the current humanitarian situation were also discussed.

Skwieciński stressed the willingness of the Polish government to deepen cooperation with Armenia in various directions and added that he will make every effort for the further development of bilateral ties.

Georgian Official Says Goal Is to Establish Peace

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Georgian parliament speaker Shalva Papuashvili said this week that the main goal and task of Georgia is to establish peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"I am glad that there are positive developments in this regard for the signing of a peace agreement. I hope that it will be implemented as soon as possible, as it is in our shared interest to make our region an area of peace and security," Papuashvili said, according to Sputnik Georgia.

Papuashvili said Georgia has always been a country that has given Armenia and Azerbaijan an opportunity to meet for substantive discussions, maintaining neutrality towards both countries.

Former CSTO Chief 'Can't Imagine' Armenia's Future Without Organization

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Former Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Nikolai Bordyuzha believes that Armenia will not leave the organization, TASS reported on October 30.

"We have very good relations with many political forces in Armenia. Therefore, in my opinion, these are temporary phenomena, but in any case, Armenia will remain with Russia, Belarus, and the CSTO," Bordyuzha noted in an interview with the Belarusian TV channel STV.

According to him, he cannot imagine the future of Armenia without the organization.

"I just can't imagine this future, because Armenia is so integrated with Russia, and not only economically, because a huge number of Armenians, several million, live in Russia," said the former CSTO Secretary General.

INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Joins Ukraine-Backed Talks in Malta

VALLETTA, Malta (Azatutyun) — In a move that could add to tensions between Armenia and Russia, a senior Armenian official attended peace talks initiated by Ukraine and met with the chief of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's staff in Malta over the weekend.

Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, was among representatives of more than 60 countries who gathered on the island to discuss Zelenskyy's 10-point plan to end the war with Russia. The plan calls for the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and withdrawal of Russian troops from the country.

The Russian Foreign Ministry condemned the two-day meeting as a "blatantly anti-Russian event" that has "nothing to do with the search for a peaceful resolution."

Andriy Yermak, the powerful head of Zelenskyy's office, thanked Grigoryan for his participation when they met on the sidelines of the event. A statement by the office said Yermak praised "Armenia's decision to join the group of states supporting the Ukrainian Peace Formula."

"The head of the Office of the President confirmed Ukraine's readiness to strengthen cooperation with Armenia, particularly



Armenian Premier Nikol Pashinyan met with Ukraine leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy

in the context of European integration," added the statement.

Yermak also spoke of "a new context" in

Ukrainian-Armenian relations, pointing to Zelenskyy's first-ever meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held

during the European Union's October 5 summit in Granada.

The two leaders spoke in the Spanish city one month after Pashinyan's wife, Anna Hakobyan, visited Kyiv to attend the annual Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen held there. Hakobyan also delivered Armenia's first humanitarian aid to Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian invasion.

The Russian Foreign Ministry listed Hakobyan's trip among "a series of unfriendly steps" taken by Yerevan against Moscow when it summoned the Armenian ambassador a few days later.

Russian-Armenian relations have deteriorated further since then. Pashinyan last week again accused Russia of not honoring its security commitments to Armenia and defended his efforts to "diversify" his country's foreign and security policies. He made it clear, though, that Yerevan has no plans yet to demand the withdrawal of Russian troops from Armenia.

Incidentally, neither Grigoryan nor his office issued a statement on his meeting with Yermak as of October 30. Instead, Grigoryan posted on his Facebook page readouts of his meetings with other foreign officials attending the Malta talks.

New Cross Stone Dedicated to Artsakh Consecrated in Amsterdam

AMSTERDAM — On October 22, in the yard of the Armenian Apostolic Church Holy Spirit in Amsterdam, a cross-stone consecration ceremony, dedicated to the memory of the casualties of the 44-day war in Artsakh, was held under the presides of the Pontifical Delegate of Western Europe Archbishop Khajag Barsamian.

The ceremony was attended by Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Viktor Biyagov, as well as representatives of various communities in the Netherlands.

The khachkar was installed through a donation by Armen Avanesov, a member of the church. The sculptor of the khachkar is Artak Hambardzumyan from Armenia. It arrived in the Netherlands and was installed in the church yard with the support and patronage of Galust Abrahamyan and Taron Khachatryan.

At the end of the consecration ceremony, Barsamian addressed the audience: "This cross, being blessed and anointed with Holy Myron, became a Holy Cross, a cross before which we must continue to worship, a cross before which we must continue to pray. We

must pray so that those who sacrificed their lives today and in the past for our motherland, for Artsakh, whose lives became a holy life for our motherland, become an opportunity to inspire us. Let's pray together in front of this khachkar for the unity of the homeland, Artsakh and Diaspora. Be sure that in our united prayer, we, the children of the Armenian people, will continue to perform miracles."

In his speech, Ambassador Biyagov emphasized the importance of unity, seeing our strength in unity: "We are united today not only by universal pain, grief, but also by deep pride. This khachkar is proof of the unbreakable will of the Armenian people and exceptional courage to face the challenges of time. Only a strong Armenia and our Church are the guarantors of the security and longevity of the Armenian people. Today's imperative is to unite all of our forces, both in the homeland and in the diaspora, for the sake of building our dream country."

In the artistic part of the event, the students of the Sunday schools of St. Grigor Narekatsi and Heerhugowaard parishes in Amsterdam performed, as well as the musicians of the "Armenia" music center □



Members of the clergy, including Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, second from left, and Ambassador Viktor Biyagov guests at the consecration ceremony

Azerbaijan 'Not Interested' in Corridor through Armenia

CORRIDOR, from page 1

Last month's Azerbaijani military offensive in Karabakh raised more fears in Yerevan that Baku will also attack Armenia to open the extraterritorial "Zangezur corridor." A senior Armenian diplomat claimed on October 8 that an Azerbaijani attack on Syunik may be "a matter of weeks."

Aliyev's top foreign policy aide, Hikmet Hajiyev, denied this in an interview with Politico published late on Wednesday, October 25. He said that the corridor "has lost its attractiveness for us" and that Baku is now planning to "do this with Iran instead."

"Our agenda was only about building transport linkages and connectivity through the framework of bilateral engagement," said Hajiyev. "If this is the case, yes, but if not then OK. It's still on the table but it will

require from the Armenian side to show they're really interested in that."

Earlier this month, Azerbaijani and Iranian officials broke ground on a new road that will link Nakhichevan to mainland Azerbaijan via Iranian territory adjacent to Syunik. Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk, who has mediated numerous Armenian-Azerbaijani talks on transport links, was reported to say on Thursday that Baku and Tehran have also agreed to build a similar rail link bypassing Armenia.

Syunik is the only Armenian province bordering Iran. The latter has repeatedly warned against attempts to strip it of the common border and transport links with Armenia. The Islamic Republic views that as a serious threat to its national security.

"We have repeatedly said that we disagree with the [idea of the] 'Zangezur corridor' and we have made this clear during meetings with various Azerbaijani officials," Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrzad Bazrpash said during a visit to Yerevan on Monday.

Bazrpash spoke as two Iranian companies were formally contracted by the Armenian government to rebuild a 32-kilometer section of Syunik's main highway leading to the Iranian border. The contracts worth \$215 million underlined Tehran's interest in Armenia's continued full control over Syunik.

Meanwhile, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan traveled to Tbilisi on Thursday to attend and address an international conference on reviving the ancient

Silk Road. In his speech, Pashinyan reaffirmed his government's commitment to opening the Armenian-Azerbaijani border to commerce and individual travel.

Pashinyan reaffirmed the official Armenian line that all regional countries must exercise full control over roads and railways passing through their territory. This means, he said, that travelers and cargo cannot be exempt from national border controls. Baku is understood to have sought such exemptions for the "Zangezur corridor."

Aliyev has repeatedly described Syunik and other parts of Armenia as "historical Azerbaijani lands." He said last week that ethnic Azerbaijanis who used to live there in Soviet times will eventually return "not in tanks but in cars."



Community News

‘Apathy Kills,’ Attorney Kerkonian Says about Artsakh And Threats to Armenia

By David Lührssen

MILWAUKEE, Wis. — When international lawyer Karnig Kerkonian was invited to speak at St. John the Baptist Armenian Church, hope remained that Artsakh could survive. But by the time he spoke at the Milwaukee, Wis. church on Sunday, October 15, Artsakh had fallen to Azerbaijan. The Western media, and Western governments, largely averted their eyes from the carnage.

A graduate of Harvard and the University of Chicago, Kerkonian is an authority on international law and its application in U.S. courts. He warned his audience that what he was about to say “will be difficult to hear, difficult to digest and even difficult to believe.” The events of the past months constitute a “second Armenian Genocide.” He holds the U.S. and the European Union as well as Russia, the Armenian Republic and the Diaspora responsible for the tragedy.

In Yerevan, Armenians eagerly anticipated a Snoop Dogg concert while their brothers and sisters in Artsakh were being slaughtered and driven from their homes.

“Armenian women were marketed for rape on social media,” Kerkonian said. People were beheaded and quartered. Children were massacred by the forces of a brutal dictatorship, determined to erase Artsakh’s history as well as its people, he said.

The immediate cause of this tragedy is the racist dogma of Azerbaijan, whose oppressive regime has deemed Armenians subhuman and unworthy of life. For years, Azerbaijan’s president has called Armenians “dogs, cancer, tumors, rats.” Kerkonian asked, “And nobody saw this coming?”

Oil may have been the deciding factor explaining the indifference of the U.S. and E.U. According to Kerkonian, Russia has “laundered” oil, much needed by Western economies, through Azerbaijan to sidestep sanctions. Western leaders allowed Azeri occupation of Artsakh under the fiction that the region’s Armenians would enjoy “protection” and the “rights” of citizenship in Azerbaijan, a solution comparable to handing Jews to Nazi Germany.

The Turkish-Azerbaijani lobby has also been at work, hiring “scholars” to write historical fabrications about Artsakh. “How you tell your story matters, sometimes more than the story itself,” Kerkonian said. He added that in the Republic and the Diaspora, Armenians have squandered too much energy on divisive, partisan arguments or the pursuit of personal happiness when the existence of Armenia hangs in jeopardy. Kerkonian believes that the Armenian Republic is the Azeris next target. “The appalling consequences of what happened in Artsakh are yet to play out,” he said. “It’s just getting started. Indifference is learned. Apathy kills. Who have we become?”



Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan celebrates his first liturgy after his elevation. (Harout Barsoumian photo)

Bishop Parsamyan Celebrates First Divine Liturgy after Elevation

NEW YORK — On Saturday, October 14, newly-ordained Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan returned to St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral to celebrate his first episcopal Divine Liturgy as bishop of the Eastern Diocese.

The Primate, who had been consecrated as a bishop at the Mother See of Holy Eghmiadzin a week earlier by Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, presided over the special badarak before a large gathering of clergy and lay people from near and far.

In a time of heartrending events and hardship thrust upon Armenians around the world, embodied in the tragedies in Artsakh and Armenia, Bishop Mesrop’s message of unwavering faith and optimism for the future of the Armenian Church and its faithful instilled feelings of hope and perseverance in all who heard his message.

As the heavenly strains of *Khorhoort Khoreen* (O Mystery Deep) began the service, Parsamyan, accompanied by a procession of clergy and altar servers, entered the sanctuary and bestowed his blessings among the faithful. A gold processional cross, followed by colorful processional banners featuring images of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, were held by the procession of clergy as they made their way through the cathedral. As they reached the altar, angelic strains of the choir reached a crescendo, further adding to the sacred atmosphere of the event about to unfold.

Blessings on the Faithful

From the altar, with arms outstretched, Bishop Mesrop faced the congregation and chanted the centuries-old Armenian prayers. Multiple cameras placed throughout the sanctuary provided those participating in the service at home with immersive views, including an intimate, front-facing view of Bishop Mesrop praying on the holy altar. Among the clergy and altar servers assisting him throughout the liturgy were Cathedral Vicar Fr. Davit Karamyan, and Diocesan pastors Fr. Armash Bagdasarian (Wynnewood, PA), Fr. Hakob Gevorgyan (Cheltenham, PA), Fr. Martiros Hakobyan (Houston, TX), and Fr. Avedis Kalaydjian (Racine, WI), along with a retinue of deacons from the cathedral and outlying parishes, as well as St. Nersess seminarians and other altar servers.

Members of the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, who play such an essential role in aural aspect of the Divine Liturgy every Sunday, were conducted by Khoren Mekanejian. On this occasion, the ensemble was further complemented by choristers from local parishes around the country, as well as by organist Deacon Ari Terjanian from St. Gregory of Narek Church in Cleveland, OH.

see BISHOP, page 10

WHS Armenian Club Raises Almost \$1,200 In Bake Sale for Artsakh Relief

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Club at Watertown High School organized a highly successful bake sale, raising nearly \$1,200 to support the Armenian Relief Society. The event was co-led by club co-presidents Ishkhan Ishkhanian and Gacia Haserjian, along with their dedicated teacher advisor, Siran Tamakian.

The bake sale, which took place on a sunny Friday after school in front of the school, drew a remarkable turnout from students and faculty. The aroma of freshly baked goods filled the air, and a wide variety of delectable treats were available for purchase, from traditional Armenian pastries to homemade cookies and brownies.

The primary goal of the event was to raise funds for the Armenian Relief Society, which is helping the Armenians who have fled Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), resulting in widespread displacement, suffering and a dire need for humanitarian aid.

Ishkhanian and Haserjian, both passionate about their Armenian heritage and the global Armenian community, took the initiative to lead the bake sale. The duo worked alongside their fellow club members to make the event a resounding success.

Tamakian, the Armenian Club’s teacher advisor, played a pivotal role in guiding and supporting the students throughout the planning and execution of the bake sale. Her dedication and commitment to the cause were evident in the seamless organization of the event.

In addition to the bake sale, the Armenian Club displayed informational posters throughout the school and shared insights on the ongoing hardships in Artsakh. They expressed their gratitude to everyone who donated and supported their mission to provide much-needed relief to those suffering in Artsakh.

Ishkhan shared his thoughts, stating, “We are deeply grateful to our school both students and faculty for their overwhelming support. The funds raised will make a meaningful difference in the lives of Armenians facing the hardships in Artsakh. We are proud to see our WHS community come together to help those in need.”

Haserjian added, “Our bake sale was a display of the force that the WHS community has on the, and it shows that even small efforts can make a significant impact. We want to thank everyone who contributed and expressed our unwavering support for the people of Artsakh.”

The Watertown High School’s Armenian Club has proven that through unity and determination, young individuals can be a force for positive change.

OBITUARIES

Yervant Kotchounian

Armenian Literarian, Translator

LOS ANGELES — Yervant Kotchounian was born on May 20, 1950, in Damascus, Syria. He was the youngest son of Garabed and Tshkhoun (Vanes Kehian) Kotchounian. He came to join his siblings Kalousd and Elmasd.

His mother passed away when Yervant was an infant. In 1958, with the help of his brother Kalousd, Yervant and his sister



Elmasd were accepted into the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School of Anjar, Lebanon, where they spent the next ten years.

In 1968, Yervant moved to the capital city of Beirut where he attended Haigazian College for four years, graduating in 1972 with a degree in English literature. He taught at Shamlan-Tatigian High School in Beirut for two years after completing his degree. Yervant also hosted a radio program called Armenian Hour, which aired in Beirut. He also hosted another radio program that aired in Cyprus.

In 1974, he married Grace Varbedian and together they immigrated to the United States in 1975, where they settled in Los Angeles and where their children — son Todd, and daughter Tara — were born.

For many years, Yervant worked at Blue Cross in an administrative capacity.

At his core, however, Yervant was a man of letters. He loved words and ideas. In all languages. The best living examples of that are his children and their names. Todd is “tahd”—cause, the permanent Armenian call for justice. And his daughter is Tara — terra, land, the resolution that justice would bring. This is how he was in all things: he was true to himself, honest, and very, very

smart. Sometimes even practical.

His true passion was Armenian letters. He was a translator who sought to preserve and extend the essence of Armenian for its rich and expansive vocabulary while creating a bridge for Armenian writers to reach new audiences. He was the translator and editor of a number of scholarly and literary books. Some on commission; most out of love and curiosity. He had translated a series of adventure novels because he wanted them available to Armenian language readers. His writings appeared in all of the local Armenian newspapers, and he was respected as a theater critic.

He served as a jurist for many years for the Hamazkayin Tololyan Prize in Contemporary Literature, awarded to authors of various genres in both English and Armenian whose themes centered around Armenian issues.

Yervant had a passion for music and was always quick to sing or hum along. Especially if it was country music. He of course especially appreciated classical and Armenian music, and was an avid supporter of the Lark Conservatory, and the Dilijan Chamber Music Series.

He loved gathering with friends and family, sharing poetry and telling stories — a smile never far, and his booming laugh often filling the room.

In the past few months, he was in significant pain when he agreed to enter the hospital. On Friday, September 29, he had been in good spirits, laughing and talking. Later that night, he suffered a heart attack that greatly deteriorated his overall condition. After two weeks of treatment in critical care, Yervant died on Saturday, October 14, surrounded by loved ones.

He is remembered by: former wife, Grace Kotchounian; son, Todd Kotchounian; daughter, Tara Kotchounian; brother, Kalousd Kotchounian; sister, Elmasd Kotchounian Miller; niece, Nanor and Elie Tashdjian and family; niece, Houry and Zohrab Ghazarian and family; niece, Hasmig and Kevork Harboyan and family; nephew, Garo and Katie Kotchounian and family; nephew, Greg and Katrina Miller and family; and the entire Kotchounian, Miller and Varbedian families, relatives, friends and colleagues.

A celebration of life was held on October 28 at Phoenicia Restaurant (343 N Central Ave, Glendale). In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that remembrances be made by supporting Abril Bookstore, or by donating to an Armenian literary cause in Yervant’s name.

Helen Ann (Garabedian) Serijan

Former Teacher

Helen Ann (Garabedian) Serijan, passed away on Tuesday, October 24, 2023, with her loved ones by her side after a very long battle with Alzheimer’s.

Born in Boston, Helen grew up in Watertown. Having graduated from Watertown High School, she then completed her bachelor’s degree at Boston State College. She taught elementary school until she had children and moved to Yarmouth on Cape Cod.

A loving mother to Michael (Cheryl) and Valerie, she was predeceased by her parents Charles Garabedian Sr. and Anoush (Balekjian) Garabedian and her brother Dr. Charles Garabedian Jr. In addition to her two children, Helen is survived by her aunt, Anne Garabedian, and grandsons Brandon, Christian and Alec Pavlakis.

The family would like to thank the directors, nurses, and staff at Maplewood at Brewster and later Continuum Hospice.

Funeral arrangements were private.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Helen’s name to the Alzheimer’s



Family Support Center of Cape Cod, who help support families and caregivers through the complexities of navigating Alzheimer’s and dementia, or to the charity of your choice.

Marie (Haikian) DerTorossian

WATERTOWN — Marie (Haikian) DerTorossian of Watertown died on October 18, 2023.

He was the wife of the late Manuel Der Torossian. She leaves her children Vatché Der Torossian and his wife Maral of Waltham and Raffi Der Torossian of Watertown; and grandchildren Shant and Shahé Der Torossian of Waltham. She was the sister of the late Never Gulekjian, Araxie Hekimian and Eugenie Bastermadjian. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

The funeral service was at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Belmont, on October 24. Interment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made in her memory to Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 200 Lexington Street, or Armenian Relief Society of Eastern USA Artsakh Relief Fund, 80 Bigelow Ave, Suite 200, Watertown, MA 02472 ar-seastusa.org/Artsakh



Sevan Toutounjian

BELLINGHAM, Mass. — Sevan Toutounjian of Bellingham died on October 26, 2023. He was 48.

He was the son of Damo Belian and the late Parsegh Toutounjian; brother of Sona and Krikor Toutounjian and uncle of Alexander and Raphael de Jong.

Funeral services were held at Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown, on November 1.

Interment followed at Newton Cemetery.

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



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Legacy of Edward Avedisian Honored at AMAA Annual Meeting

By Joy Shiragian

PARAMUS, N.J. — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), the missionary arm of the Armenian Evangelical Church, held its 104th annual meeting at the Cavalry Armenian Congregational Church (CACC) in San Francisco, October 20-22. A key highlight of the meeting was the banquet held on October 21 at the San Francisco Airport Marriott in nearby Burlingame.

After meetings on Friday and Saturday for the AMAA-affiliated Armenian Evangelical World Council, the AMAA Board of Directors, and the AMAA membership, Saturday evening's banquet provided an opportunity to commune together and celebrate Armenian Evangelical Education. The motto chosen for the Banquet theme was "And I go to the source of the light..." from Daniel Varoujan's poem "The Light."

After the guests enjoyed dinner with Armenian wines from the Alexandria Winery, they were serenaded by the beautiful, powerful voices of tenor Berj Karazian and soprano Armine Vardanyan, accompanied by the talented Ripsime Rshtuni. Musical selections from Armenian composers Khachaturyan and Spendiaryan were featured, followed by Babajanyan's spirited *Azg Parapandz* that had the entire room clapping.

The performance was followed by a touching video tribute to the late Edward Avedisian, benefactor of the Khoren and Shoushanig Avedisian School in Yerevan. Guests learned of Avedisian's musical talents as a clarinetist and his lifelong commitment to education with a history of philanthropy that included support for the American University of Armenia, the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, the National Association of Armenian



Honoree Melanya Geghamyan, Avedisian School Principal

The evening began with a cocktail hour where guests had a chance to mingle. Once seated in the main ballroom, attendees were warmly welcomed by event co-chairs Vana Khanjian Vartanian and Roushig Kalebjian and greeted by Master of Ceremonies and local television news anchor, Gasia Mikaelian. This was followed by the invocation, given by CACC pastor Rev. Calvin Sagherian, and an address by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese.

Studies, and his most significant, Boston University's medical school.

Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, President of the AMAA, and Zaven Khanjian, Executive Director/CEO, then invited Avedisian's wife, Pamela Wood Avedisian, to come forward. They acknowledged her recent \$1 million donation, praised her and her husband's philanthropy, and presented her with a gift of appreciation. Her remarks to the assembled guests were particularly touching as she mentioned how thankful



Pamela Wood Avedisian

she was to have had the opportunity to share her life with her talented and generous husband. Karazian and Vardanyan returned with another vocal performance after which Mr. Khanjian acknowledged additional donors including Mary Bedomian for her \$1 million gift from the estate of her late brother Harry in support of Artsakh.

The program then turned to the long history of Armenian Evangelical leadership in empowering future generations through education. AMAA Field Representative Harout Nercessian shared an engaging video that brought to life the many schools and funding programs established over the years that were born of a belief that "faith and education are inseparable". Guests learned of the many institutions with academic and after-school programs that are currently operated by the AMAA.

Khanjian then came forward and summoned Avedisian School Principal Melanya Geghamyan and husband Andranik Mardoyan to the stage. He celebrated Geghamyan's exceptional career as an educator and presented her with an ornately framed written definition of a school principal. Her husband, often serving as photographer at events, was presented with a camera belt and a camera-shaped trophy.

The couple each shared remarks of heartfelt appreciation.

While much of the evening was dedicated to celebrating philanthropy directed to the AMAA and its mission, the audience was surprised by the announcement of a \$60,000 gift from the AMAA to San Francisco's Mt. Davidson cross. The immense cross, perched atop San Francisco's highest peak, was purchased by the Council of Armenian-American Organizations of Northern California in 1997 as a memorial to the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide. Armenians visit the cross annually on Easter Sunday and to commemorate Armenian Martyrs Day.

Khanjian then stood before the room to deliver his own poignant remarks that resonated deeply with the crowd. He thanked banquet committee co-chairs Vartanian and Kalebjian and Master of Ceremonies Mikaelian. He thanked Sagherian and CACC members, led by Dr. Nora Balabanian, for their warm welcome as hosts of the weekend's events. He also thanked AMAA staff in Paramus, Glendale, Yerevan and Artsakh for their diligence. And he thanked the guests who travelled far and wide, bringing a "boundless spirit of love, care, and attention" in support of the AMAA's mission.

His remarks went on to discuss the sobering conditions that the Armenian community faces today, from the heartbreaking loss of Artsakh, "the most piercing national tragedy faced by the nation since the genocide", to the menacing existential threat of invasion in the motherland. He went further to assert that recent events had laid bare the reality that Armenia's destiny is in the hands of Armenians alone.

But his was not a message of despair. In fact, Khanjian described his outlook as positive, drawing strength from a faith in God to fuel the work that lies ahead, the work of sustaining educational, spiritual, humanitarian, and youth programs worldwide, and the new challenge of caring for the displaced from Artsakh.

To close the evening, Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian gave a closing prayer and benediction which was followed by the singing of *Park Yev Badiv* by all.



A scene from the Banquet



COMMUNITY NEWS

(HAROUT BARSOUMIAN PHOTO)



Bishop Parsamyan Celebrates First Divine Liturgy after Elevation

BISHOP, from page 7

Among the dignitaries seated in the chancel at the foot of the altar, and in the front of the congregation, were Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, as well as representatives of various sister churches and the diplomatic corps, clergy from throughout the Eastern Diocese, leaders of Armenian organizations, and members of the Diocesan Council.

A Homily from the Heart

Following the blessing and distribution of the Holy Eucharist, Bishop Mesrop delivered a heartfelt and uplifting homily. “Today, I am overcome with a spirit of thanks to the Lord, who took my life in His hands, shaped my soul, inspired my heart, rescued me from the shadow of death and guided me step by step to this ministry in His service,” he said.

Bishop Mesrop continued by acknowledging the pivotal role his family, friends and colleagues have collectively played in nourishing his spiritual development throughout his life’s journey. “Thank you to my clergy brothers and all our faithful

who placed their trust in me, honored me, stood by me in my time of injury and triumph, and shared your strength and love with me,” he said.

He expressed special gratitude to Catholicos Karekin II, who the Primate said has encouraged and guided him throughout his ministry. And he thanked Berge Setrakian, the distinguished longtime president of AGBU, who stood as his godfather during his ordination.

Parsamyan then directed attention to the tragic situation that befell Artsakh, likening his role to that of a father entrusted with consoling his family experiencing unfathomable loss. “While suffering can sow the seeds of bitterness and resentment, that is not how a Christian should respond to it,” he explained. “God understands our pain and suffering, for He experienced it Himself through the sacrifice of His Son. We must trust that God is always with us, right beside us,” he said, adding, “God will see His justice done.”

Bishop Mesrop then looked toward the future and the challenging work ahead, imploring the faithful to assist our brethren

fleeing Artsakh and to work together to strengthen our Diocese. Securing a bright future for the Armenian Church will enable future generations to know our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Primate then delineated his vision of



Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan gets ready for his first episcopal Divine Liturgy. (Harout Barsoumian photo)

three tasks, or “gifts,” that would be his focus for our Diocese: Evangelization (being a witness to the truth of the Holy Gospel);

Spirituality (translating the invisible inner reality of the Spirit into the visible); and Love (our relationship with one another and the Heavenly Father). “When I stepped up to the altar today, I was overwhelmed by the feeling of love,” he revealed. “I will rely on your prayers, my beautiful and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.”

The viewing audience for the special Divine Liturgy included thousands of people from across the Diocese and around the world, sharing in the service as it was broadcast over the Internet. The small, dedicated production team included Yervant Keshishian, who directed the program, Artur Petrosyan on the mobile floor camera, and narrator Christopher Zakian.

Following the splendid *badarak*, worshippers adjourned to a bounteous reception in the Diocesan Center’s Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium, lovingly sponsored by Berge and Vera Setrakian. The occasion was a welcome opportunity for the large crowd of faithful to congratulate their new bishop, receive his blessing, and wish him well in his leadership of the Eastern Diocese.

Armenian Delegation Presses Humanitarian Issues with Local Leaders in Cambridge

By Jesus Marrero Suarez

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (*Boston Globe*) — A delegation of five female leaders from Armenia came to Cambridge last week to press their concerns with local leaders on the refugee crisis and border security issues facing Armenians.

The delegation was sent by the Congressional Office for International Leadership and hosted by the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association. Cambridge and Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, have been sister cities for more than 35 years.

More than 100,000 Armenians were forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian region in Azerbaijan, said Lilit Hajatyan, one of the delegates and member of the Community Council of the Artik Consolidated Community.

The refugee crisis and Armenia’s border security were among the main topics of discussion throughout the week.

“The biggest challenge Armenia is facing now is the issue of security,” Hajatyan said through an interpreter.

Hajatyan said the delegation raised it in every meeting with local and state repre-

sentatives. Officials listened to their issues, but Hajatyan said what’s needed is a clear plan of action.

“I would like to see the US government step up and actually do some steps beyond just expressing concerns,” she said.

The country has already received some humanitarian aid from the United States and other countries. “But I don’t think that this is enough to resolve this issue once and for all,” Hajatyan said. “We are going to need more assistance.”

The delegation discussed best practices for governance with local leaders in Cambridge, Lancaster, and Fitchburg: state legislators, educators, and nonprofit leaders.

Hajatyan said they were able to learn about the challenges of women involved at different levels of government, as well as different tools and strategies to tackle issues such as domestic violence and the integration of refugees into Armenian society.

Hajatyan said she will take what she learned back to their homes and use it in her everyday life and work.

“I have a list of things that we can do in Armenia when I get back,” she said.



The all-female delegation arriving in Boston on October 14 and their hosts, are, Lilit Hajatyan, Arusyak Avetisyan, CYSCA Board Member Isabelle Hamel, Lilit Haroyan, Lilit Antonyan (Facilitator), Shushanik Danielyan, Meri Harutyunyan, and Jonathan Hecht (CYSCA Board Member).



COMMUNITY NEWS

UCLA Law Launches Institute for Human Rights in The Hague

LOS ANGELES — UCLA Law's Promise Europe in The Hague furthers the groundbreaking work of the school's Promise Institute for Human Rights, broadening the international platform for UCLA's research, teaching and advocacy.

The institute will collaborate with policymakers, practitioners and academics in the international human rights community and offer new and unique opportunities for students in the field.

Promise Europe will be led by UCLA Law's Kate Mackintosh, an international lawyer and human rights activist.

UCLA School of Law has launched Promise Europe, an institute dedicated to advancing the study, teaching and advocacy of international human rights policy and law at a time when the world needs it most. Located in The Hague, Netherlands, long the home of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, Promise Europe is the next step in the global growth of the 5-year-old Promise Insti-

tute for Human Rights at UCLA Law.

Promise Europe is led by executive director Kate Mackintosh, a veteran human rights activist and international lawyer who served as the inaugural executive director of the Promise Institute for Human Rights from August 2018 to July 2023. Under her leadership, the institute rapidly earned a global reputation for engaging in groundbreaking work at the intersection of human rights and accountability, the environment, technology, migration, and race and indigeneity.

"Promise Europe will further the Promise Institute for Human Rights' mission and impact around research, teaching and advocacy, bringing our work to a hub of international human rights policy and law," Mackintosh said. "We will continue in our established approach, being both critical and ambitious through the human rights frame, with a focus on urgent contemporary issues.

"Now more than ever, we must claim the authority of international law to protect civilians and remedy injustice, redoubling our

efforts to train the advocates and generate solutions to human rights crises around the globe."

Promise Europe will provide training opportunities for UCLA students interested in international law, advance collaborations on the international stage as a leader in emerging fields and play an important role as a global convenor of academics, policymakers and practitioners. Through these activities, Promise Europe will meaningfully build upon the impact of the Promise Institute for Human Rights and broaden the global reputation of UCLA Law as a leading voice in human rights law and policy.

"We are excited about the founding of Promise Europe," said Michael Waterstone, dean of UCLA School of Law. "The Promise Institute for Human Rights is a preeminent voice in the field of human rights law and policy. So, this next step is a natural expansion of our efforts, and I cannot wait to see the positive impact that we will make from this new base in the inter-

national human rights community."

Promise Europe launches with the support of Dr. Eric Esrailian, the philanthropist, UCLA faculty member and lead producer of the movie "The Promise," who led the effort to establish the Promise Institute at UCLA Law in 2017.

"As one of the top universities in the world, UCLA truly has a global impact even beyond the teaching and research across so many of our schools, and the School of Law is the perfect platform for such an international presence," Esrailian said. "The Promise Institute was founded in the memory of the genocide against the Armenian people to contribute to a world in which those horrors would not be repeated. Given what is happening across the globe — including what has happened to Armenians in Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh over the last few years — it is clear what we risk when the perpetrators of human rights violations feel emboldened by the lack of consequences.

"This Institute is needed now more than ever. Promise Europe will build on the success of the Promise Institute for Human Rights, and UCLA students will now have the benefit of having even more unique opportunities in the field."

UCLA Chancellor Block welcomed the opportunities the institute's international expansion presents.

"Promise Institute scholars have contributed a great deal to the advancement of peace, justice, equality and basic freedoms throughout our global society," Block said. "With the launch of Promise Europe, we are building on a strong record of human rights scholarship and expanding the reach of this crucial work."

Promise Europe will launch a series of programs that will continue UCLA's work in the international human rights community. UCLA Law has concluded an agreement for academic collaboration with the University of Amsterdam, which also provides classroom space for UCLA Law students at its Asser Institute in The Hague. Through Promise Europe, students have already secured externships at a number of organizations, such as the International Court of Justice, the International Development Law Organization and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. Each semester, students will be placed in full-time positions in an expanding group of organizations, and will participate in coursework and organized events, including a field trip to Geneva.

Other initiatives include:

Partnership with the Ukrainian prosecutor's office on accountability for environmental damage caused by war and conflict, and expansion of the reach and impact of Promise Europe's Ecocide Project.

Collaboration with the U.N. high commissioner for human rights and input on the agenda-setting events in Geneva to mark 75 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December.

Signature events, including an annual conference in Europe on a timely human rights law subject and a regular speaker series offered both in-person and remotely.

Unique curricular opportunities for students that will include a January-term class in either The Hague or at UCLA.

The Promise Institute for Human Rights is now led by executive director and professor from practice Hannah R. Garry, who has been teaching, researching and practicing human rights law for two decades in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

Máximo Langer, UCLA's David G. Price and Dallas P. Price Professor of Law, is the faculty director for both institutes. The sister institutes offer opportunities to partner on cutting-edge projects and amplify each other's work.

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A benefit concert for the refugee crisis in Armenia supported by the Pan Armenian Council of New England & YerazArt Foundation in partnership with Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Relief Society, Friends of Armenian Culture Society, & Tekeyan Cultural Association together with our parishes & organizations.

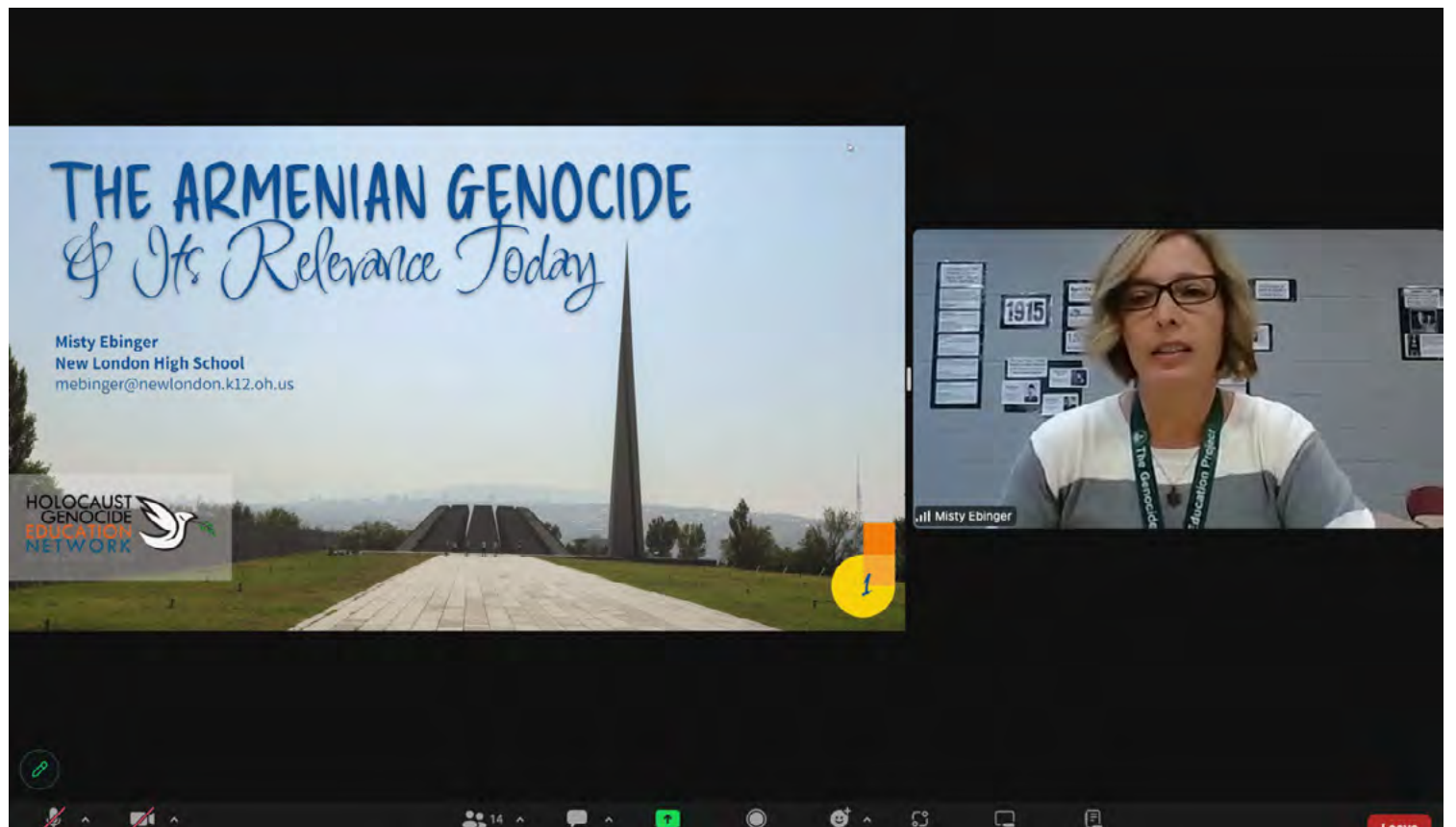


COMMUNITY NEWS

GenEd Staff and Teacher Fellows Providing Workshops Across the U.S.

The 2023 GenEd Teacher Fellows, representing 14 U.S. states, returned from the 10-day intensive training program in Armenia prepared to share their knowledge about the Armenian Genocide, including the recent genocide in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh), with their students and colleagues. Having received foundational education about Artsakh and meeting Armenians directly affected by the crisis during their summer 2023 trip to Armenia, the GenEd Teacher Fellows have been following the recent news and finding ways to incorporate it into their curriculum and workshop presentations. GenEd has been in frequent contact with both the 2023 and the inaugural 2022 program fellows over recent weeks, providing context and clarification and discussing strategies for highlighting these events in their coursework and upcoming workshops.

The GenEd Teacher Fellows have been creating new lesson plans, and they've been providing and plan-



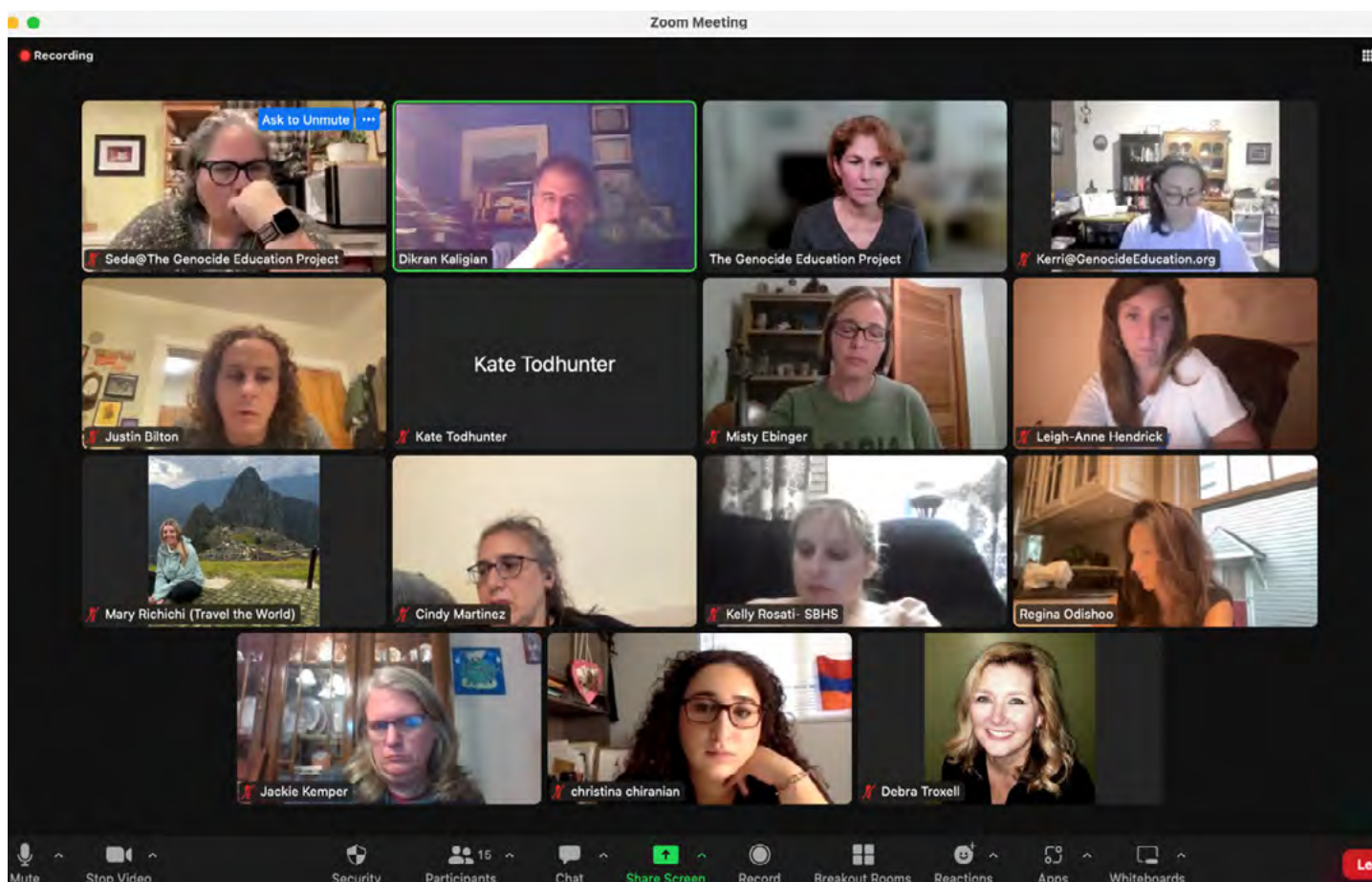
Misty Ebinger, GenEd Teacher Fellow from Ohio, leads a workshop hosted by the Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Education Network



Teacher Fellow Justin Bilton returned to Armenia in 2023 to produce interviews with Artsakh war survivors to use with his lessons (to be shared at a later date)



GenEd Teacher Fellow David Green, from Massachusetts, presents a talk to the local community on teaching about the Armenian Genocide



GenEd Teacher Fellows meet with board and staff members to discuss Artsakh

ning professional development presentations in various settings—in their schools' social studies departments, to genocide education organizations, graduate schools of education, community gatherings, and at social studies and geography teacher conferences in Michigan, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee, and California.

On October 27 and 28, GenEd participated in the Texas Conference for the Social Studies in Houston, Texas. Education Director Kerri Flynn, as well as GenEd's Texas partner, Beth Hudson, will meet with teachers at GenEd's exhibit booth, offering free resources and consultation, news about GenEd's upcoming Dallas workshop, and other professional development services.

From November 30 to December 30, the group will lead a half-day workshop at this year's National Council for the Social Studies conference, titled "Learning how Armenian Genocide denial shapes geopolitical relationships today." Participants will learn interactive strategies for teaching the Stages of Genocide, the Armenian Genocide, and the continuing impact of genocide denial on the Armenian nation and geopolitical relationships in the region.



Arts & Culture

Adamyán Dazzles on Stage in Pasadena

By Kevork Keushkerian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PASADENA, Calif. — The Pasadena Symphony opened its 2023-2024 season on Saturday, October 21, with a classical concert that awed the audience. It was held at the Ambassador Auditorium under the baton of Conductor Brett Mitchell. The concert featured as a soloist violinist Diana Adamyán, 23.

The carefully selected program consisted of the following compositions: *Garages of the Valley* by Mason Bates, *Violin Concerto No. 2 in E Minor* by Felix Mendelssohn and *Symphony No. 4 in F Minor* by Pyotr Tchaikovsky.

Adamyán is quickly gaining an international reputation as one of

her generation's most outstanding violinist after winning First Prize at the 2018 Yehudi Menuhin International Competition and First



Prize in the 2020 Khachaturian Violin Competition.

She first attended Komitas State Conservatory in Yerevan and then the Tchaikovsky School of Music in Yerevan. Currently she studies at the Munich University of Performing Arts.

Diana appeared as a soloist in Gala Concert of Ottawa's National Arts Center, alongside Maestro Pinchas Zukerman and Itzhak Perlman.

At the end of her flawless presentation and upon the audience's repeated standing ovations, she returned to the stage and performed Gomidas Vartabed's *Groong* (Crane). I think she was being true to her national identity and I admired her for that honest feeling.

Mason Bates is a Bay Area composer that wrote this piece in 2014. It is a tribute to the Silicon Valley's great inventions of our time; such as Apple, Intel and Google. These visionaries he says, "Conjured new worlds within the bright Valley's dark garages."

Mendelssohn took 6 years to finish this concerto, which was written for his friend, the famed violinist Ferdinand David, concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig. David premiered it in Leipzig in 1845, but Mendelssohn was ill and unable to attend.

Tchaikovsky composed this symphony in 1877. He was strongly influenced by the events in his life that year. He dedicated the work to Mme. von Meck, expressing his confidence in the new work: "I feel in my heart that this work is the best I have ever written."



Antranig Kzirian, left, with John Berberian embrace after the concert.

Oudflections Concert Duet Performance in Hollywood

HOLLYWOOD — More than 250 concertgoers gathered at the Barnsdall Theater in Hollywood to enjoy the oud artistry of the legendary John Berberian and innovative next generation Antranig Kzirian on October 8.

The evening presented guests with a unique concept of art music, classical compositions, stories and traditions of Armenian folk, interpreted on the oud with the added seasoning of generational transfer between Berberian and Kzirian.

The concert's program consisted of performance pieces accompanied by artists' remarks which symbolized the elements of oral tradition imbued in the Armenian interpretation of oud and the American Armenian experience. Given the ongoing crisis in Artsakh, the concert also supported the ongoing relief efforts being coordinated by the Armenian Relief Society.

"On October 8 I had the pleasure of performing in concert with Antranig Kzirian. This was a duo-oud performance presented in L.A. to a capacity audience of music enthusiasts. An 'East meets West' production that was received with overwhelming enthusiasm and applause," stated Berberian. "It was also a joy to see my longtime friends and music colleagues not to mention the warm reception and generous hospitality of my hosts, Lianna and Antranig Kzirian. All and all a fun filled and memorable weekend. Thank you to all for coming out to hear our music. Perhaps we can do it again sometime soon."

Berberian and Kzirian performed together once before many years ago on November 11, 2006, at a Philadelphia AYF Anniversary dance, where Kzirian slid over to guitar, which was his first instrument, in honor of Berberian's presence on the oud with Kzirian's kef band "Aravod." After their early collaboration, Kzirian and Berberian stayed in touch, culminating in Kzirian visiting Berberian in 2019 for an extended period of intensive oud study.

"When we spent time together back in 2019, eventually manifesting in a concert together as an oud duet always felt like the organic next step. It was such a pleasure to perform with John — he's one of the most influential and pioneering oud players," stated Kzirian. "To be able to share the stage with such a luminary and one of our true links to Oudi Hrant Kenkulian was extraordinarily special."

Following the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian tradition of oud mastery during the Ottoman period not only survived but thrived in the Eastern United States and Fresno areas during the 20th century. Berberian and Kzirian are members of a sacred

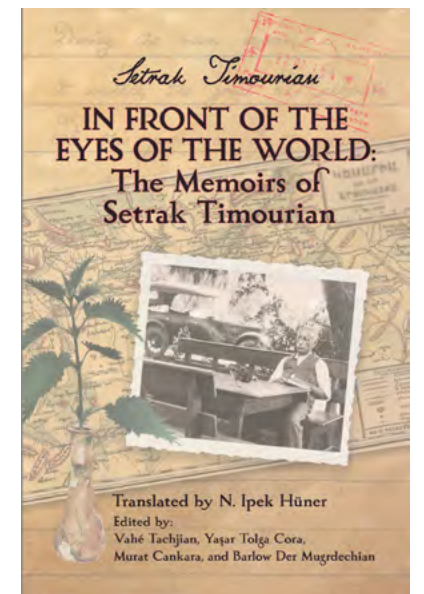
see OUD, page 16

Panel to Discuss *In Front of the Eyes of the World: The Memoirs of Setrak Timourian*

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program is presenting a virtual panel discussion on *In Front of the Eyes of the World: The Memoirs of Setrak Timourian* at 11 a.m. (Pacific time)/2 p.m. (New York time) on Saturday, November 11. The panel will discuss the significance of this new book, Volume 19 in the Armenian Series of the Press at California State University, Fresno. Zoom registration is required for the panel: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiestimourianmemoir>.

The panel will consist of the book's editors: Vahé Tachjian (Houshamadyan Project); Yaşar Tolga Cora (Boğaziçi University); Barlow Der Mugrdechian (Fresno State); and Maggie Mangasarian-Goshin (Ararat-Ekijian Museum).

In Front of the Eyes of the World: The Memoirs of Setrak Timourian gives the reader a fascinating and detailed story of the life of Setrak Timourian, who was born in 1860 in Kayseri. He documented in a thorough manner, his life, the life of his



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

The memoirs cover Timourian's life from the 1860s to the 1930s, and stretches from Kayseri, to Istanbul, and Fresno, including his sojourns in Europe, in London and short stays in New York. His travels to Constantinople and then later to the United States chronicle his life as a carpet merchant and the many challenges that he faced. He also recorded his own views on the important events of the day. *In Front of the Eyes of the World* is an invaluable record of one man's indomitable spirit and enthralling life story.

For more information about the lecture, contact the Armenian Studies Program, or visit www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.



Armenians in Frankfurt Assert the Power of Literature

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

FRANKFURT — Despite crises at home and abroad, several representatives of Armenia's rich literary culture and publishing enterprises travelled to Frankfurt for this year's book fair, which took place from October 18 to 27. Receiving visitors at the large Armenian stand were Arevik Ashkharoyan, founder of ARI Literary and Talent Agency, Zara Hakobyan, from the National Library of Armenia, and Ani Musheghyan, researcher and librarian from the Komitas Museum-Institute. And featured in the Armenian presence were two authors, both women: Lusine Kharatyan and Susanna Harutyunyan.

The Armenian stand displayed several new publications, including an anthology presenting 13 emerging authors from as many European countries, with excerpts from their works, in the original language and English translation. The European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL) was established in 2009 by the "Creative Europe programme" of the European Union, which issued the anthology. The aim is to support the book sector in Europe, in its diversity and competitiveness, devoting special attention to up-and-coming authors from countries and language cultures one finds less frequently in bookstores.

Thirteen authors of fiction were nominated for the prize by literary associations in their respective nations, among them Lusine Kharatyan, for *A Syrian Affair*. Her first novel was *An Oblique Book* (2017),

which was followed by a collection of short stories, *A Dead End Forget-me-not*, short-listed for the EUPL in 2021. For her second novel, featured here, she received a grant from the Armenian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport. A cultural anthropologist and translator, Kharatyan has received degrees in public policy, demography and history/sociocultural anthropology from Minnesota University, Cairo Demographic Center, and Yerevan State University, respectively.

Her newest novel presents the story of three Armenian women recruited by an American group to conduct research on the Armenian communities in Syria and Lebanon. The narrative explores the accounts provided by Armenians they interviewed in both countries, while all the time the trio are followed by Syrian intelligence (Mukhabarat) who think they might be American or Israeli agents. In its report, PEN Armenia praised the novel for its literary excellence, as well as its insights into pre-crisis Syria, and the depiction of cultural-political diversity of the diaspora communities, the role of women in the post-Soviet context, and the challenges facing women researchers in patriarchal societies. It is also a thriller, full

of suspense until the end. The chapter excerpted is titled, *The Emplaced*, translated by Nazareth Saferian, it presents the three women, Shushan, Ester, and Astghik, in their first encounter with Armenian representatives in Damascus.

Susanna Harutyunyan, who was personally present in Germany, is already a well-known author. Her ninth novel, *Ravens before Noah*, published in the centenary year of the genocide, won the Presi-



Christian Mkhitarian and Ani Kanayan

dential Prize for Literature in 2016, and is familiar to readers of the Mirror-Spectator (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/05/20/harutyunyan-ravens-before-noah-towards-an-armenian-baroque/>). Now the celebrated novel has appeared in a German translation. Harutyunyan was a featured author on October 21 at the book fair, where she read passages in Armenian,

which translator Susanna Yeghoyan read in German. A day earlier she had been the guest of the Armenians in Munich; introduced by Board member Sona Krüger, she presented her novel, again in the original and translation.

Following the book fair, Harutyunyan travelled to Berlin, where a large audience welcomed her at the Literary Salon of Ekke Maass, who runs the German Caucasian Society. The event was dedicated to Armenia. Dr. Tessa Hofmann delivered a report on the situation in Artsakh, then introduced Harutyunyan. German-Armenian actress Bea Ehlers-Kerbekian delivered readings from the newly translated novel. In a review of the book, Hofmann compared Harutyunyan's treatment of the Ottoman genocide to the prose of authors from the diaspora in America and Europe, defining her innovation in depicting the genocide of Western Armenians as double victimization, that is, including the guilt of Soviet Armenian lawyers and police officers. This refers to crimes committed during the Stalin era, against members of the clergy and their families, and against intellectuals who sought refuge in the South Caucasus. She also stressed the author's intimate knowledge of the history, myths, and customs of her home country.

The narrative explores the origin and fate of a mountain village in Harutyunyan's home region on Lake Sevan. There the story of Pertch unfolds, a refugee from the 1890s Ottoman Empire, and his little nephew Haruth, who find shelter in a deserted

continued on next page

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ARTS & CULTURE



Armenian stand at the Frankfurt Book Fair

from previous page

village, where he brings further refugees in the years thereafter, including those from 1915. The narrative continues through the next great world war, and the Soviet chapter introduces new forms of persecution. Hofmann's conclusion: "An inventory of contemporary Armenian history told without sentimentality or glossing over, using the example of individual fates."

Threats to Artsakh, Memories Of 1915

The annual literary event in Frankfurt takes place not only in its enormous fairgrounds, with numerous pavilions and halls, hundreds of publishers' stands and thousands of exhibitors, visited by hundreds of thousands of book lovers. Events



Bea Ehlers-Kerbekian and Susanna Harutyunyan (Photo courtesy of Ekke Haass)

also take place in other local venues, theaters, and bookstores, as well as community organizations. One such is the Armenian Cultural Society in Hessen, which hosted a gathering on October 21 to discuss two books on Armenian themes. Shushan Tumanyan, vice chair of the organization, welcomed Christian Mkhitarian, Board member of the German Armenian Jurists Association, and Ani Kanayan, also a member of the DAJ. Mkhitarian presented a book edited by DAJ Board Chairman Dr. Gurgen Petrossian, together with Dr.

Sarah Babaian, and Dr. Arlette Zakarian, also lawyers. The book, entitled, *Analysis of the Artsakh Conflict from the Standpoint of International Law* (Nomos 2022), is an impressive volume containing articles by the three editors and by Mariana Amoyan, Araksya Arakelyan, Max Friedrich Bergmann, Marina Carlsen, Anita Grigoryan, Goharik Mnatsakanyan, Elinar Oganezova, Ani Rshtunyan, Erik Torosyan, Angela Tovmasyan, and Lilit Weber.

The three parts of the book deal with 1) the historical development of the conflict and the legal status of Nagorno Karabakh up to 2020, with respect to cultural claims, diplomatic negotiations, self-determination, the 1993 UN Security Council resolutions, and the legal status after the third war; 2) developments leading to war, arms deliveries and the role of the German arms industry, hate speech as state policy, violations of humanitarian rights and war crimes; and, 3) international law consequences, as exemplified in proceedings of the European Human Rights Court. The work is based not on Armenian sources but international sources and is a scientific study.

Ani Kanayan read excerpts from the book, after which discussion centered on several urgent concerns: the threat of aggression against the sovereign Republic of Armenia, the project for a Zangezur corridor, which would constitute a violation of sovereignty, as "international," though unforeseen in the 2020 agreements; Azerbaijani plans to "de-Armenianize" the Republic of Armenia; the legality or illegality of Soviet-era transfer of Artsakh; and, the legality or illegality of the 2023 "dissolution" of Artsakh without referendum. The political importance of the role played by the Armenian government was discussed, especially the problem of its recognition of Azerbaijan sovereignty over Artsakh. Mkhitarian explained that from a juridical point of view, since the then-president of Artsakh made the declaration of dissolution under coercion, it was illegal, and the Armenian government should state as much.

Turning from consideration of the current crisis to the historical background, Shushan Tumanyan introduced the panel on a second book, led by Heide Rieck, po-

etess, author, and editor, together with Azat Ordukhanyan, of an anthology, *Roots in the Air: Genocide and Traces of Life* (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/10/07/new-anthology-in-german-looks-at-genocide-aftermath/>). It is a collection of writings by 25 descendants of Ottoman genocide survivors, from various ethnic and religious communities. On hand was Selay Ertem, widow of one contributor to the volume, Ali Ertem, who had dedicated his efforts to achieving recognition of the Armenian genocide. It was in fact two years ago that Ali Ertem and his close collaborator and

author Dogan Akhanlı passed away. As selections from the anthology, including by this author, were read, one could sense an atmosphere clouded by sorrow and mourning, reflecting not only memories of the past but also profound concern about the current crisis and future destiny awaiting Armenians in Artsakh as well as the Republic of Armenia. Shushan Tumanyan, who has organized several demonstrations in defense of Artsakh, concluded with a confident plea to participants to maintain hope, and to continue to strive for peace and justice.

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William Shakespeare's
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
ԲԱՅՈՒՄ ԱՂՄՈՒԿ ԿԱՍՆ Ո՞՞ՅԻՆԻ

A MUSICAL COMEDY
DIRECTED BY *Gerald Papavian* PRODUCED BY *Harout Chatmajian*
MUSIC BY *Harout Barsoumian*

* PERFORMED IN ARMENIAN WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES *

Saturday, November 04, 2023 - 7:30 p.m.

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



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



The Good Hearted Woman's Armenian Eggplant & Carrot Salad

This Armenian Eggplant and Carrot Salad combines simple ingredients to create a supremely satisfying salad. Perfect for everything from a light spring lunch to an autumn potluck.

Renee, the creative recipe developer at The Good Hearted Woman (GHW) food blog says that it was “founded on the concept of commensality – the experience of people coming together over food. The meals we share around our tables nourish, comfort, preserve, and promote an essential facet of family, community, and global culture. In this spirit, one of the most enduring ways we can serve our community is by creating and sharing recipes and meals.”

“The recipes we share at GHW are rooted in happy memories: holiday and cultural celebrations, camping trips, birthday parties, picnic lunches, potluck suppers,

Sunday nights with grandparents, and countless nightly family dinners. While the lion's share of our content is food-related (i.e., mostly recipes), about 20 percent relates to small town travel and cozy ideas for home and garden — because good comfort food and cozy living are made for each other,” she adds.

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Servings: 8 servings

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups grated carrots, about 1 pound
1/2 bunch cilantro or parsley, chopped
1/2 cup shelled edamame, optional (add these to the mix for extra crunch)*
1/2 cup green, red or white onions, chopped
1/3 cup walnuts, finely chopped, to taste
2 cloves garlic, minced
3/4 cup sour cream, or more**

3/4 teaspoons kosher salt; pepper and paprika to taste

1 large eggplant roasted, cooled and chopped into 1/2-inch cubes

*Edamame is a Japanese dish prepared with immature soybeans in the pod. The pods are boiled or steamed and may be served with salt or other condiments.

**Vegan: You can easily make this carrot salad recipe vegan-friendly by substituting a vegan sour cream.

PREPARATION:

Roast Eggplant.

Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat.

Peel and cut eggplant into 1/2-inch cubes.

Toss cubed eggplant in 2 tablespoons of oil. Distribute evenly over the lined baking sheet.

Place in oven and bake for 15 minutes; until eggplant is cooked. Remove eggplant from the oven and allow to cool completely.

Mix Salad:

Mix together all of the ingredients except eggplant, using only enough sour cream to moisten the mixture. Gently fold in roasted eggplant cubes.

Refrigerate for at least 1 hour (or longer) before serving. To serve, garnish with additional chopped cilantro or parsley.

For the best results, make this dish a day ahead of time, and refrigerate overnight.

Go to: <https://thegoodheartedwoman.com/armenian-eggplant-carrot-salad/>

For Armenian Lentil Stew with Eggplant, see:

<https://thegoodheartedwoman.com/armenian-lentil-stew/>

For Muhammara, or Roasted Red Pepper & Walnut Dip, see: <https://thegoodheartedwoman.com/muhammara-red-pepper-walnut-dip/>

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Oudflections Concert Takes Place in Hollywood

LOUD, from page 13

network of passionate musicians committed to staving off further endangerment of Armenian oud playing. Their lifelong objective has been to continue to breathe new life into the instrument and further its horizons.

“I think that John and I share a similar vigor for innovation and experimentation,” noted Kzirian. “That way, the instrument continues to expand its boundaries — although we are simply expressing the notes and melodies which are already there in the musical ether, we are, quite importantly, adding our voices and emotion and thus recreating and reimagining the music in new ways — and this is critical to the growth of Armenian oud playing into the future.”

Though over a generation apart, Berberian and Kzirian locked in unison for an exciting and educational journey of Armenian oud which left attendees chanting for repeated encores. As fate would have it, the date of the concert was on 10/8, which happens to be one of the unique time signatures as a rhythm of traditional Armenian music, and the performers fittingly included a composition in 10/8 meter to mark the occasion.

The visual of the stage was enhanced by noted rug collector and enthusiast Hrach Kozibeyokian, featuring majestic rugs dat-

ing back to 1890 (Marash) and 1909 (Artsakh). The mood and atmosphere of the visual perfectly matched the tone and sonic sensory experience provided by the master oud players. Guests were also treated to thoroughly detailed program descriptions explaining composer and song histories and narratives, which helped inform the audience of the important contributions of

Armenian composers of the Ottoman era. The program uniquely included the epochal contributions of music titans Kemani Tatyos Ekserciyan and Kemani Sebuhi Simonyan, among various others, and also demonstrated the cultural complexity of the Armenian oud school.

Berberian is acclaimed as one of this generation's most treasured Armenian folk

musicians. His inimitable style has brought him fame and popularity and a well-deserved title of legendary oud master. He exploded into the ethnic music world in his early 20s as the featured artist in a series of highly successful recordings, with such major companies as MGM, RCA Roulette, Verve and Mainstream records. John, a graduate of Columbia University, has been awarded several prestigious Master/Apprentice grants to teach and mentor aspiring Armenian oud students.

Kzirian is a foremost practitioner of the ancient instrument which has been critical to the development and identity of Armenian music. As a versatile performer interpreting and creating music in various styles, Antranig blends rock, classical, jazz, and folk idioms for breathtaking reimaginings of vintage works, while providing unique and extravagant soundscapes as a songwriter, featured in his projects VIxZA, String Harmonies and Kef Time LA. Antranig studied oud with distinguished musicians Ara DerMarderosian, Ara Dinkjian, John Bilezikjian and John Berberian. Antranig's performance and recording credits extend to Rosa Linn, Serj Tankian of System of a Down, Capital Cities and numerous others, including working directly with producers/songwriters Warren Huart and Rick Nowels.



Antranig Kzirian, left, with John Berberian



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 6 — St. James Men's Club Monthly Dinner & Fellowship. Guest speaker will be Scott Kerman, Humor Columnist and host of the long-running Boston Sports Talks show, "The Grandstanders Live!" Kerman was a stand-up comedian for over 20 years with appearances on HBO & Comedy Central. His recent released book is titled *The World According to Scott*. The son of Shirley Bagdoian and Norman Kerman, Scott grew up in Methuen and graduated from American University in Washington, D.C. Social Hour [mezza] 6:15 p.m. Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner 7 p.m. \$20 per person Ladies Welcome

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

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

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

THE ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK PROGRAMS

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

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. 4.30 p.m.

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

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

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

NEW JERSEY

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

RHODE ISLAND

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

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

ReAnimania Festival Concludes in Yerevan

YEREVAN — The 15th annual ReAnimania International Animation Film & Comics Art Festival of Yerevan just concluded.

The festival was dedicated to the 85th anniversary of Armenian Animation and the 100th anniversary of Armenian Cinema.

On October 22, the ReAnimania festival opened with the thought-provoking "The Siren" by Sepideh Farsi, preparing the audience for a captivating and unforgettable festival experience.

On October 28, at the Cinema House, the closing ceremony of the festival commenced with an animated short film created by displaced children from Artsakh. They had worked on this film during a workshop conducted in the framework of the festival.

From the Market of Animation to the National Comics Competition: after a hiatus of about two years, the 15th-anniversary edition of "ReAnimania" returned with a rebranding, offering a more comprehensive program, new projects, and initiatives.

"In 2006-2007, when the festival was being conceived, I was still uncertain about its name and logo. However, there was one crucial principle in my mind—to choose a name and logo that would resonate with 'Armenia' at first glance. Thus, 'ReAnimania' was born, and for many years, international guests and participants instantly associated it with Armenia. Yet, this year, in our jubilee edition, after a two-year hiatus, we decided to come back once more, rebranding the festival as 'ReA Festival.' It encapsulates several im-

portant contents and concepts: the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Artsakh, and the Republic of Animation," in his speech emphasized Vrej Kassouny, the founder of the festival.

The "ReA" festival featured around 300 films, including shorts, feature-length, and graduation films. The program encompassed 7 competition feature films and 3 special screening films in competition.

"Chicken for Linda," directed by Sébastien Laudenbach, Chiara Malta, won the "Best Feature Film" award.

"The Siren" by Sepideh Farsirece received the "Jury Special Mention" award presented by jury member Anush Kocharyan.

"Sirocco and the Kingdom of the Winds," directed by Benoît Chieux, was honored with the "Valentin Podpomogov Award" for the best fictional concept of an animated feature film, presented by Levon Hovhannisyán, the Deputy Mayor of Yerevan.

As a result of screenings and evaluations of short films, the first prize went to "Letter to a Pig" (Director: Tal Kantor), a compelling story of revenge and redemption.

Jalal Maghout's "Have a Nice Dog!" received a "Jury Special Mention" with an additional special mention for its animation.

The second special mention was given to "Dog-Apartment," directed by Priit Tender.

The film "Back to Rock," directed by Gor Yengoyan, claimed the "Lev Atamanov Prize" for the best Armenian short animated film, commended by the jury for its energy

and creativity.

"Migrants" was announced as the best complete animated film, directed by Hugo Caby, Antoine Dupriez, Aubin Kubiak, Lucas Lermytte, and Zoé Devise. The "Jury Special Prize" was awarded to "The Last Bar," directed by Arne Hain. The prizes were presented by jury member Julia Revolva.

This year, the festival introduced the "National Comics Projects Competition," wherein Armenian creators were required to present comic projects with predetermined themes to vie for support prizes for their realization.

The first support prize was awarded to "Sasuntsi Davit" comics (creative team: Tigran Mangasaryan-painter, Ani Yeghiazaryan-scriptwriter, Mariam Malkhasyan-book designer, Gohar Gasparyan-project director, Narek Van Ashughatoyan-producer).

Gohar Smoyan received the second-place support award for her "Women of Gyumri" comics, attracting the jury with the relevance, the social aspect of the topic, as well as the alternative and creative application of graphic design.

In third place was the comic "The Guardian of the Misguided," created by Sona Hovhannisyán. The jury supported a project having the courage to speak up on the pressing issue of drug use among young people in Armenian society.

The awards were presented by Daniel Danielyan, Deputy Minister of RA MESC.

Mariam Nikolyan's "The Guardian of Ani" and Gohar Nazaryan's "The Human Come-

dy" were awarded "Jury Special Mention". The awards were presented to the devotees of Armenian Animation by Vrej Kassouny, the founder of the "ReA" festival.

The founder of the "ReA" festival, Vrej Kassouny, presented awards to the devotees of Armenian Animation including operator Alisa Kurdiyan, animator-director Stepan Galstyan, animator Vladimir Mayilyan, and puppet animator Gayane Martirosyan. The festival's constant supporter, French producer Jean-Paul Commin, received the "Robert Sahakyants" award.

The "ReA" festival in Armenia hosted approximately 30 professionals from 40 countries, including leading figures, animators, producers, directors, and other industry experts. The festival featured panel discussions, individual speeches, workshops, and masterclasses led by both international and Armenian professionals, which took place at the TUMO center.

Notable presenters included painter and director Dave Bossert from Disney, author and lecturer Ed Hooks on acting in animation, director and animator Javier de la Chica discussing AI Animation, Tigran Arakelyan from OnOff Studio, and 3D artist Aghvan Khachatryan from POPOK Studio offering insights into the development of Armenian animation in the global animation landscape. Sean M. Bobbitt, the producer of the film "The Peasants," and painter Piotr Dominiak presented their films and filmmaking techniques.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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The Fall of Artsakh: Darkness Made Visible

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

Resorting to falsifications and to distortions seems to have become standard behavior for the Turkish government. Despite overwhelming documentation, Turkey continues to deny the 1915-1919 Genocide of Armenians perpetrated at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. An estimated one and a half million Armenians were forcibly removed from their homes and marched into the desert to starve or to be slaughtered at destination. “Armenians should have learned their lesson,” Turkish leaders affirm. Yet, as the late Edmond Yervant Azadian so poignantly points out in his editorial in the April 24, 2021 issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, how could Armenians “have learned their lesson” when the Turkish government claims that “we committed no genocide?”

The threats of new genocides continue, with even more arrogance. On September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan, with the backing of Turkey, launched a military offensive against the territories of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). 120,000 indigenous Armenians were expelled from the land they have been living on for millennia. The lightning attack followed a nine-month blockade of the Lachin corridor, the only passageway connecting the Republic of Artsakh to the Republic of Armenia. Water supplies and electricity were cut. Trucks loaded with

Indeed, emboldened by their recent victory and the dissolution of the Republic of Artsakh, the Azeris have been carrying on the barbarity and the vandalism with more disrespect than ever. Former and current Karabakh officials are arrested. The egregious lie that the inscriptions on the 13th century monasteries of Dadivank and Gandzasar, quintessential symbols of our architecture and of our identity as Armenians, have been “restored to their original appearance” is downright nauseating.

In 2015, it was “rebirth from ashes.” “The Centennial of the Armenian Genocide validates the human species. It is evidence of the possibility of survival for all of humanity,” I reflected in a Commentary piece. Six years later, in 2021, despite the deep shock of Armenia’s humiliating defeat in the 2020 44-day Artsakh war, I could still write: “The recent Artsakh war came to reaffirm our identity as Armenians.” Today, we face threats to Armenia’s territorial integrity. With the ongoing military operations, the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population of Artsakh, and the growing power of Turkey, who openly supported the Lachin corridor blockade, Armenians face a real existential threat. With the news getting direr every day, globally, our plight could be even more marginalized. The almost exclusive focus of the world on the evolving Hamas-Israeli conflict leaves the evil-doers unattended, free to carry out their fiendish acts.

Nonetheless, it is heartening to see the conversation shift to

“WITH THE NEWS GETTING DIRER EVERY DAY, GLOBALLY, OUR PLIGHT COULD BE EVEN MORE MARGINALIZED. THE ALMOST EXCLUSIVE FOCUS OF THE WORLD ON THE EVOLVING HAMAS-ISRAELI CONFLICT LEAVES THE EVIL-DOERS UNATTENDED, FREE TO CARRY OUT THEIR FIENDISH ACTS.”

food, medicine and other basic necessities were denied access. The blockade was clearly an attempt at death by starvation and suffocation.

In just three days an entire population had been ethnically cleansed, while the world watched in indifference. There were some warnings, to be sure, but no action was taken. More shocking than the horrendous act — Genocide is a criminal offense as defined by the International Court of Human Rights — and the indifference of the world is the one-sidedness of the powers that could have intervened in the name of “human dignity” and prevented this second genocide of the Armenian people. Referring to the return home of the more than two million Syrians who were displaced as a result of the over-a-decade long civil war in Syria and had found refuge in Lebanon, a U. S. State Department Spokesperson affirms: “We are opposed to any imposed repatriation that does not take into consideration the human dignity of the citizens” (italics mine). Nevertheless, without the least “consideration [of their] human dignity,” 120,000 indigenous Armenians were uprooted from their ancestral lands and forced to relocate.

Much has been written, and rightly so, about the Armenian government needing to take responsibility for being unprepared militarily, our leaders being more preoccupied with their careers and self-interest than the good of their country. That fact, however, does in no way condone the inaction of the world that enabled the mass exodus of an entire population that was forced to flee leaving behind houses, gardens, livestock, and so much more. The vision of the shepherd who, one afternoon in the summer of 2014, gently waved his rod to stop the car traffic on a village road in Artsakh, so his flock of sheep could cross to safety, will never cease to haunt me.

Oppressing, dominating, occupying seems to have become an obsession with those in power. Brutal force is flaunted shamelessly while ethical and moral values are derided. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has signaled that Baku would use force to seize the Zangezur corridor to link Azerbaijan and Turkey, “whether Armenia wants it or not.” The arrogance and the impudence of his words recall Talaat Pasha’s infamous, “We will leave behind one Armenian, and that in a museum.”

peace even if, given Azerbaijan’s bragging and endless military threats, the concept of peace appears to be quixotic. “We need a short-term peace deal to secure our borders,” avers internationally acclaimed human rights advocate and former Turkish Parliament member, Garo Paylan. “Peace would be the beginning of the end for the Aliyev regime,” assures Paylan. Much in the same spirit, journalist Tigrane Yegavian, author of the 2022 *Geopolitique de L’Arménie*, contrasts the confusion and the “discomfort Azerbaijanis feel in forging their identity” with the Armenian civilization being “deeply rooted in its language, its faith and its alphabet.” “The only unifying Azerbaijani narrative is based on hatred of Armenians,” avers Yegavian. “Azerbaijanis are benefiting from this hatred,” confirms Paylan. “Peace is a necessity for Armenia, not a necessity for the Azerbaijanis,” he adds.

The genocides, the wars and the barbarism evoke the “sights of woe,/ Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace/And rest can never dwell, hope never comes,” of the Hell the devil wakes up in, in sixteenth century English poet John Milton’s epic poem, “Paradise Lost.” “One great Furnace flam’d, yet from the flames/No light, but rather darkness visible,” writes the poet. It seems that we too have fallen from grace and have handed over the reins to the devil. The notion of the “happy fall” is almost irrelevant. Our very humanity is at stake.

In “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” the American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., imprisoned for participating in demonstrations protesting the injustice of the laws of segregation, writes: “The wound . . . must be opened with all its ugliness . . . before it can be cured.” One hopes (against all hope?) that the ongoing barbarities will expose the wound “with all its ugliness,” and that the heart-rending suffering of humanity will shame the world into putting an end to the vicious circle of trying to solve through brutal force.

“Long is the way and hard, that out of Hell leads up to light,” writes Milton. At the moment, we seem to be stuck on that “long . . . hard” road. Can we reverse course?

(Arpi Sarafian is a retired lecturer at California State University, Los Angeles, and a regular book reviewer for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Azerbaijani Gaza Hostage Wrongly Added In Letter to Biden Signed by Celebrities

We are all following the heartbreaking events that are taking place in Israel and Gaza where thousands of innocent people are killed, and hundreds have been taken hostage by Hamas. I condemn all loss of life and hostage-taking regardless of nationality, race or religion.

Throughout history, as victims of mass murders and Genocide, Armenians understand well the tragic effects of large-scale killings. Before, during and after the 2020 Artsakh war, the most gruesome crimes were committed against thousands of Armenian soldiers and civilians by Azeris.

At the end of the war, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia signed an agreement that called for the exchange of all Prisoners of War. Armenia kept its end of the bargain by freeing all Azeri prisoners immediately, while Azerbaijan is still holding dozens of Armenians in captivity three years later. No one knows their exact number. These detainees have been wrongly tried and sentenced to long prison terms not only in violation of the 2020 agreement, but also the Geneva Convention. Armenian prisoners have been tortured while in Azeri custody and an unknown number have been killed.

To make matters worse, after occupying Artsakh last month, Azerbaijan captured eight high-ranking Artsakh government officials, including three former presidents, the former State, Defense, and Foreign ministers, deputy army commander, and Chairman of the Artsakh Parliament. They are all held as hostages with no hope that they will be released anytime soon.

Turning to the tragic predicament of the over 200 hostages captured by Hamas in Israel on October 7, 2023, I support all efforts to have these hostages released as soon as possible. Several hundred Hollywood celebrities, including Madonna, Chris Rock, Justin Timberlake, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jerry Seinfeld, and Tyler Perry, signed a joint letter to President Joe Biden urging him to “not rest until all hostages are released.”

Last week, an article appeared in various entertainment magazines and websites that publicized the letter signed by the celebrities to Biden. The press release about the letter was distributed to the media by Melissa Zukerman, the managing partner at Principal Communications Group, a PR agency in Los Angeles. Despite the good intentions of the initiators of the campaign, a regrettable mistake detracted from the commendable effort.

The letter included a paragraph that said: “We urge everyone to not rest until all hostages are released. No hostage can be left behind. Whether American, Argentinian, Australian, Azerbaijani, Brazilian, British, Canadian,

Chilean, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, Eritrean, Filipino, French, German, Indian, Israeli, Italian, Kazakh, Mexican, Panamanian, Paraguayan, Peruvian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, South African, Spanish, Sri Lankan, Thai, Ukrainian, Uzbekistani or otherwise, we need to bring them home.”

I commend the celebrities, Ms. Zukerman and everyone else who had a hand in preparing the letter to President Biden. However, I was surprised to see in the list of captured nationalities a reference to “Azerbaijani” hostages. As I had not heard that any Azerbaijani was kidnapped by Hamas from Israel, I wondered if that information was accurate. So, I sent Ms. Zukerman an email asking about the veracity of the reference to an Azerbaijani hostage. She did not reply to my email. She also ignored my follow-up email as well as a phone message I left for her.

Having done further research, I discovered that there were no reports about an Azerbaijani hostage, except for eight Azerbaijanis, of which two were dual Azerbaijani-Israeli citizens, who were regrettably killed by Hamas during the attack.

I then contacted the agent of one of the celebrities who had signed the letter and asked her if she knew anything about an Azerbaijani who was taken hostage by Hamas. The celebrity’s agent told me that in the version of the letter that her client had signed there was no mention of Azerbaijan or any other nationality. When I sent her the copy of the letter publicized in the media, she was shocked to learn that Ms. Zukerman’s office had asked the celebrities to sign a version of the letter that did not include the names of the 33 nationalities; Ms. Zukerman’s office must have then sent the altered version of the letter to President Biden without informing the celebrities that what they had signed is not what was sent to the White House. Appallingly, these celebrities were not informed of the change in the letter either before or after signing it. This is highly unprofessional and unethical.

So, this is how Azerbaijan was included wrongly in a letter to President Biden, making one of its citizens a victim of hostage-taking, while in reality, Azerbaijan is the one that is guilty of taking Armenian hostages. Regrettably, Ms. Zukerman ignored all of my attempts to find out from her how such a mistake could have happened, and why no effort was made to correct it or at least provide a proper explanation? As far as I know, there are no Azerbaijani hostages in Gaza or anywhere else in the world. If I am wrong, Ms. Zukerman had plenty of chances to correct my information but refused to do so.

Lastly, the letter stated, “No hostage can be left behind” (www.NoHostageLeftBehind.com), which implies that all hostages in the world, no matter who had captured them and wherever they are, should be released. Such an all-inclusive plea should have also referred to the dozens of Armenian hostages held in Azerbaijan.

Only when we care about all hostages without any distinction, we can claim that we are true humanitarians.

Lemkin Institute Decries UN Mission Visit to Armenia, Artsakh

The Lemkin Institute of Genocide Prevention on October 28 issued the following statement:

The Lemkin Institute of Genocide Prevention is disappointed with the outcome of the UN mission’s visit to Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) on October 1, which took place after the entire Armenian population of Artsakh had already fled due to forcible displacement following the recent Azerbaijani invasion. It is difficult to understand what the purpose of such a mission was and why there was never more pressure for Azerbaijan to allow a mission into Artsakh during Azerbaijan’s 9-month blockade of the region that led up to the invasion. The Lemkin Institute calls on the UN to prepare a proper mission to the Republic of Artsakh, one that is inclusive of international team members from countries neutral to the conflict to conduct a thorough analysis of the current situation on the ground. In order to ensure the rights of the Armenians in Artsakh, the UN must act with professionalism, impartiality, and commitment to the values presented in the UN Charter.

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According to the UN, “the mission aimed to assess the situation on the ground and identify the humanitarian needs of both the people remaining and those who are on the move”. Despite the complex purpose of this visit by the mission, the assessment itself and the statement on the outcome of that assessment were completed within one day, begging the question of just how seriously the UN mission could have taken the task of an assessment on the ground. It is worth mentioning that this was the first UN visit to the region in 30 years.

Prior to this visit, concerns about the consistent political insecurity of Armenians in Artsakh and threats to the Armenian population within the region had been raised several times within UN bodies. Two UN Security Council meetings were convened on the topic of ongoing threats to the Armenians of Artsakh (on August 16, regarding the full blockade imposed on the Republic of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, and on September 21, regarding the Azerbaijani military attack on the Armenian population in Artsakh). In both meetings, the majority of the Security Council’s member states condemned Azerbaijan’s actions, stating that they posed a threat to the security and well-being of the region’s Armenians and discouraged any peacemaking efforts in the region. In addition to these condemnations, the International Court of Justice has ordered Azerbaijan on two separate occasions (on February 22 and July 6, 2023) to reopen the Lachin Corridor — the humanitarian route connecting the Republic of Artsakh with Armenia. All statements and ICJ orders have been ignored by Azerbaijan.

The Lemkin Institute has issued multiple Red Flag Alerts for Azerbaijan since the Lachin Corridor was blockaded in December 2022, as well as an Active Genocide Alert and SOS alerts indicating an extremely high risk of genocide for the Armenians in Artsakh. Given the UN representatives’ clear knowledge of the risks to the Armenian population in Artsakh (as demonstrated by the convening of two Security Council meetings on the topic), it is very surprising to us that the mission would visit this region only after the end of the Azerbaijani offensive and after the exodus of more than 100,000 Armenians from the former Republic. The fact that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev donated USD \$1 million to the UN Human Settlements Program on September 30 — just one day prior to the mission’s deployment to Nagorno-Karabakh — only increases our concerns regarding the honesty and transparency of the mission.

In examining the mission’s operation and statement, we found numerous controversial points. First, the mission arrived in the region only after the end of the bloodshed and exodus of the Armenians, and it only lasted only one day. In the briefing by Stephanie Dujarric, spokesperson for Secre-

tary-General Antonio Guterres, it was stated that “they [the members of the mission] got to see quite a bit”. However, in the context of a full-blockade, followed by military invasion and ethnic cleansing, 24 hours alone is certainly not sufficient to adequately assess the situation on the ground. Second, the information on the number of Armenians remaining in Artsakh (from 50 to 1,000) contradicts the numbers given by the former Ombudsman of Artsakh, Artak Beglaryan, who has argued that there are not more than 40 people remaining in the region at the moment. And third, as for the text of the statement itself, the UN visited certain unspecified parts of the city of Stepanakert, where it “saw no damage to civilian public infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and housing, or to cultural and religious structures”. However, there is verifiable photographic evidence of the destruction of civilian infrastructure in the city of Stepanakert, as it was bombed by Azerbaijan during its military offensive. In addition to this limited access to Stepanakert, the team visited Agdam City — which was under Azerbaijani control and uninhabited by Armenians, and therefore not crucial for the agenda — and the Lachin Corridor, which was surveyed after the entire population had been forced to flee. It is notable that the UN mission failed to include any representatives from the Armenian mission to the UN, and it did not visit the Syunik region to speak with Armenian refugees who were forced to leave Artsakh. The concluding statement is extremely vague and uninformative.

With all of this said, the Lemkin Institute considers the operation of the mission to be unsuccessful, as it failed to accurately present or assess the reality of the situation in the Republic of Artsakh. We strongly believe that undertaking the “mission for the sake of a mission” and making a “statement for the sake of a statement” are not adequate responses to situations as serious and as dangerous as what has unfolded in the South Caucasus. We question the scruples and integrity of this mission. The vague operating principles and assessments of the UN mission, which lacked any specific goals, methodology, or recommendations, severely risks undermining the trust that the international community



COMMENTARY

As the Post-Soviet Order Collapses, Armenia Feels Threatened

By Avedis Hadjian

Weeks after the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, a region formally part of Azerbaijan, was emptied of its remaining 120,000 residents, Armenia is following Azerbaijan's military build-up along its southern border with growing concern. After the crushing defeat it suffered in the 44-day war of 2020, Armenia fears it may now face an existential struggle with its long-time enemy.

On 19 September, after a nine-month blockade during which Baku restricted food, electricity, gas and internet access to the enclave, Azerbaijan took over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh in a 24-hour operation. The capture drove out an Armenian population who had, for centuries, mostly enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, until the Soviet Union detached the region from Armenia proper in 1921 and annexed it to the newly proclaimed Socialist Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

With up to 3000 troops taking part in Azerbaijan's joint military drills with Turkey at Armenia's border, Armenians fear the same could happen to the population of the southern province of Syunik. Indeed, if Azerbaijani forces cut through that strip of land — only 18 miles wide at its narrowest stretch — Syunik would be cut off from the rest of Armenia and the capital, Yerevan. For Azerbaijan, this would create a corridor that would link up the mainland with an Azeri exclave called Nakhichevan. 'Azerbaijan's threats against Syunik have never been a secret,' a retired senior officer in the Armenian army told me. 'Their president does it openly, falsifying history, labelling Syunik too as a "historical Azerbaijani territory"', the same claim they made about Nagorno-Karabakh.' This officer, who requested anonymity, said that the 2021 and 2022 attacks by Azerbaijan against Armenia proper were eloquent testimonies of their intentions. 'I don't think the Azerbaijani threat against Syunik has currently subsided.'

Without pressure from the international community — Armenians look particularly to the United States and France, as well as to Iran — and the active efforts of the Armenian diplomacy to prevent a new escalation, an Azerbaijani attack is a permanent possibility. 'We are always expecting their aggression.'

On a visit to the southern Armenian province, Ara Zargaryan, a literature scholar and army veteran who fought in the 44-day war, showed me constructions that resemble mushroom caps, and are not always visible to the naked eye. These fortified trenches, called *gmbet* (dome in Armenian), can withstand drone attacks and have multiplied by the thousand across the probable theatre of war.

If Azerbaijan's forces succeed in creating a corridor, southern Armenia, with its population of 140,000, will find itself trapped by Azerbaijani forces to the north and flanked by Azerbaijani territory. Only a road connecting Armenia to Iran could ensure a measure of security for evacuating refugees. After that, we could see a similar scenario to the one that unfolded for nine months in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Public proclamations by Azeri officials recognizing Armenia's territorial integrity may be misleading, according to [Benyam-in Poghosyan](#), a senior fellow on foreign policy at the Applied Policy Research Institute of Armenia, an independent think

tank in Yerevan. "While publicly recognizing Armenia's sovereignty over Syunik, and dropping demands for extraterritorial corridor, Azerbaijan continues to claim that Armenia should provide special conditions to ensure the security of Azerbaijani persons and cargo, travelling via Syunik," he said. "The wording is quite vague and may provide Azerbaijan opportunities to demand restricted Armenian sovereignty over Syunik."

Deteriorating Relations with Russia

Armenia's dire strategic situation is compounded by the deteriorating relations with Russia, the Caucasian republic's strategic ally and guarantor. Russia passively looked on as Azerbaijan kept up the pressure on Armenia even after it attained its proclaimed military goals and reconquered Nagorno-Karabakh, which used to be an autonomous region within Soviet Azerbaijan and declared its independence in a referendum in 1991, as the Soviet Union was collapsing.

Since coming to power in the so-called Velvet Revolution of 2018, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has pursued a policy of democratization, which has involved fighting the corruption of an old guard closely associated with the Kremlin and seeking closer relations with the West. Indeed, many believe that Russian passivity in the short yet brutal 44-day war may have been punishment for the Pashinyan government's efforts to consolidate a democratic system in a region where autocracies prevail, Azerbaijan being a case in point. Remarkably, it is a hereditary dictatorship in all but name that has been run almost continuously by an Aliyev since 1969: Heydar (only briefly out of power between 1987 and 1993), and Ilham, who took over from his father upon his death in 2003, and has been in power since. Armenia took a different path in 1991 after gaining independence from a collapsing Soviet Union by installing a fully functioning democracy, a pattern that also defined the three decades of independent life in Nagorno-Karabakh, which held regular presidential and parliamentary elections.

This former officer I spoke to did not mention Russia among Armenia's partners helping to deter a possible Azerbaijani attack. In a conversation at a military border outpost in Syunik, a lieutenant colonel and other officers also failed to list Russia among possible allies, and made clear that Armenia is relying on its own resources to repel any possible Azeri attack. When asked about Russia, they pointed to a nearby aerial surveillance base that the Russians had vacated a year or so before, moving some of its operations elsewhere along Armenia's borders with Azerbaijan.

Armenia's security challenges are exacerbated not only by its own worsening relations with Russia, but also by the Kremlin's growing dependence on Azerbaijan and Turkey as alternative trade and political partners, while it suffers the crippling sanctions of the European Union and the United States. In a piece written a week after the fall of Nagorno-Karabakh, Thomas de Waal, senior fellow at Carnegie Europe, wrote: "Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey all have a shared interest in imposing their own version of what the latter two call the Zangezur Corridor with as little Armenian control of the route as possible — and perhaps by force." According to Aura Sabadus, senior fellow at the Center for Euro-

pean Policy Analysis, Russia, Azerbaijan and its military ally, Turkey, have a common interest in gas supplies. "Azerbaijan and Turkey could provide a convenient and covert backdoor for Russian gas, potentially bringing widespread corruption amid opaque dealings with Europe and denting the EU's ability to confront authoritarian regimes."

Realigned Alliances

In view of this realignment of alliances, Poghosyan predicts further Armenian resistance to Russian involvement in any potential trade routes. 'Armenia seeks to reject the role for the Russian border troops in the functioning of the routes, which creates tensions between Armenia and Russia,' he said. 'All external actors, Russia, the EU and the US, are interested in restoration of communications including establishment of routes from Azerbaijan to Nakhijevan via Armenia.' The US and the EU do not want to see any Russian role in the functioning of these routes. 'In the current circumstances, Armenia should take steps to avoid becoming another battlefield between Russia and the West or "democracy vs authoritarianism", and take steps to increase defense capacities and capabilities, as well as economic development of Syunik region.'

The main geopolitical and economic goal of the so-called "Zangezur Corridor," says Arpi Topchyan, a defense analyst at Berd, an NGO in Armenia, "is to provide a reliable land connection, an umbilical cord for the Russian-Turkish strategic alliance, which will increase the Russian-Turkish economic cooperation on several levels: to formulate far-reaching geopolitical goals," she said. "The launch of the 'Zangezur Corridor' casts great doubt on the economic and geopolitical expediency of the North-South Road: it crosses the path of an alternative route from the Persian Gulf through Armenia to Europe."

It would also compromise Iran's geopolitical position, Topchyan believes. "Another goal of the 'Zangezur Corridor' is to take Iran into a reliable straitjacket, which can be desirable for other foreign players," she said. "The main question currently being discussed is who will control the operation of the corridor, who will have the key: the main beneficiary and candidate is the Russian Federation, which has taken on the task of imposing the corridor on Armenia."

According to Topchyan, the "Zangezur Corridor" is vital for Russia as it ensures its continued presence in the South Caucasus. It would also lessen Armenia's geopolitical significance. "Azerbaijan's threats and possible attack are the instruments of coercion in the hands of Russia," she said. "With the opening of the 'Zangezur Cor-

ridor,' Armenia practically loses control over Syunik and becomes uninteresting to everyone, and thus Russia neutralizes the last fragments of Armenia's sovereignty."

The rising tensions in the Middle East could compromise Armenia's security even further. The Israeli-Palestinian war raging since Hamas' attack on 7 October could inflame the region. With Armenia lacking practically any strategic depth, any wider war that aligned Azerbaijani forces — supported by allies Turkey and Israel — against Iran would inevitably threaten Armenia, especially if Russia failed to intervene.

As the distance between Russia and Armenia grows, Armenia is turning to the West. In September, Armenian forces held a minor military exercise with US troops. Operation Eagle Partner involves 87 American soldiers who trained their Armenian peers for peacekeeping missions. Predictably, it provoked a warning by the Kremlin's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov. Armenia has also declared its intention to sign the Rome Statute, which would expose Putin to extradition should he visit the country.

Hostile Neighbors

The post-Soviet security architecture is collapsing in the South Caucasus, with a weakening Russia now mired in the Ukraine war. In a complex geopolitical context, where any move could upset some of the major regional powers, Armenia must juggle its interests with those of much more powerful and mostly hostile neighbors — including Turkey, which exterminated almost its entire Armenian population in 1915. Not only does Turkey vehemently deny the genocide — it is also the main ally and supporter of Azerbaijan, another Turkic country. After the 44-day war — in which the Turkish army took part and its Bayraktar drones were decisive in Azerbaijan's victory — Turkey returned to the Caucasus for the first time in a century, since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Today only a fraction of what it used to be before the Turkic invasions of the 11th century, Armenia finds itself flanked by a victorious, increasingly bellicose Azerbaijan, armed and supported by Turkey. Any new war in Armenia — a country barely half the size of Ireland, with negative demographic growth and a population of less than 3 million people — could be decisive.

(Avedis Hadjian is a journalist and the author of *Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey*. His work as a correspondent has taken him to Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, China, the Caucasus, Turkey, and Latin America. This commentary originally appeared in the online version of *Le Monde Diplomatique* on October 25.)

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collectively places in the work of the United Nations.

The Lemkin Institute calls on the UN to prepare a proper mission to the Republic of Artsakh, one that is inclusive of international team members from countries neutral to the conflict to conduct a thorough analysis of the current situation on the ground. This reality, which is the result of a conflict that has endured for three decades, cannot be assessed in one day. In order to ensure the rights of the Armenians in Artsakh, the UN must act with professionalism, impartiality, and commitment to the values presented in the UN Charter.