

French PM Warns
Against Russian
‘Punishment’ of
Armenia

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) — French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal has accused Russia of planning to “punish” Armenia, its long-time ally whose government is drifting away from Moscow and seemingly aligning with the West.

Russia “wants to punish Armenia because it chose the path of the fight against impunity by joining the International Criminal Court” and “quite simply, because it chose democracy and the rule of law,” French media quoted him as saying late on Wednesday, March 20, during an annual conference of the CCAF, an umbrella structure representing France’s influential Armenian community.

In his speech, Attal also accused Russia of condoning Azerbaijan’s September 2023 military offensive that restored Azerbaijani control over Nagorno-Karabakh and drove the region’s ethnic Armenian residents out of their homes.

The Armenian government likewise denounced Moscow and Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh last fall for not preventing or stopping the Azerbaijani assault. Russian-Armenian relations have deteriorated further since then, with Yerevan threatening to leave the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and even apply for European Union membership.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned earlier this month that Moscow will seriously “reconsider” those relations if Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government does not change course. Lavrov’s spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said afterwards that Yerevan risks causing “irreparable damage” to bilateral ties.

Zakharova also scoffed at Armenia’s unfolding military cooperation with France underlined by French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu’s February 23 visit to Yerevan.

“It is naive to think that France is ready or capable of ensuring the security of Armenia,” she said on March 13. “If France had such capabilities, it would have used them in other countries where it had contractual obligations.”

She claimed that Paris is only interested in wrecking the Russian-Armenian alliance as part of the West’s “hybrid war” against Russia.

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Armenian Border Villagers Oppose
Land Handover to Azerbaijan

By Karine Simonian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan appears to be facing mounting backlash from residents of villages in Armenia’s northern Tavush province adjacent to contested border areas which he wants to hand over to Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan signaled plans to unilaterally make such concessions before visiting on Monday, March 18, two of those villages, Voskepar and Kirants. He insisted there that the areas, which used to be occupied by four Azerbaijani villages seized by Armenian forces in 1991-1992, are not part of Armenia’s internationally recognized territory. He admitted that Azerbaijan would not reciprocate his concessions by liberating larger swathes of Tavush territory occupied by it at the time.

Many local residents rejected Pashinyan’s plans despite his claims that Azerbaijan will invade Armenia unless he cedes the deserted former villages strategically located along one of the two main Armenian highways leading to Georgia. They argued that they would lose access to their agricultural land, have trouble communicating with the rest of the country and be far more vulnerable to Azerbaijani armed attacks.

Popular resentment seems particularly strong in Voskepar, which would be af-



A resident of the border village of Voskepar talks to RFE/RL, March 22, 2024.



A road sight at the entrance to Voskepar village in Tavush region.

ected by the handover more than any other Tavush community. Following Pashinyan’s trip, several dozen local residents gathered to warn against any Armenian troop withdrawal from the area.

On Thursday, March 21, some villagers took to social media to start collecting signatures in support of their demands for Pashinyan to drop his plans. One of their petitions is addressed to international human rights bodies.

The Voskepar school principal, Harutiun Alaverdyan, pointed out on Friday that the school will be just 100 meters from the nearest Azerbaijani army position if Yerevan does cede the adjacent lands to Baku.

“In this situation, how can we not worry about our school, the rights and security of our children?” Alaverdyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service. “Our students would find themselves in the enemy’s sights. If they shot at us at that time [in the 1990s] who can guarantee that they won’t shoot now?”

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Aronian Wins 2024 American Cup
Without Losing A Single Game

ST. LOUIS, Missouri — GM Levon Aronian won his maiden title at the 2024 American Cup on March 21 at the St. Louis Chess club. He defeated GM Wesley So only in the final rapid game—and with the black pieces. He won \$90,000 in prize money.

Five New Professorships Created
at BU Medical School as Part of
Avedisian, Chobanian Gift

By Doug Fraser

BOSTON — Five faculty at the Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine have been named as the newest recipients of Edward Avedisian Professorships, which are funded out of the transformational \$100 million gift from the late Edward Avedisian (CFA’59, ’61, Hon.’22) and his wife Pamela (Hon.’23) in 2022 that also resulted in the renaming of the school.

From the \$100 million gift, \$25 million was specifically designated to fund professorships. In 2023, Nancy Sullivan, the director of BU’s National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL), and Venetia (Vanna) Zachariou, chair of pharmacology, physiology and biophysics, were installed as the inaugural professorship recipients. The ceremony to honor the second round of professorships was held on March 12.

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia PM meets Chinese Vice Premier

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing in Brussels on Thursday, March 21.

According to a statement from Pashinyan's office, the two discussed issues related to Armenia-China economic cooperation, emphasized the implementation of joint steps to increase the volume of trade turnover.

Efforts to unblock infrastructure in the South Caucasus region were discussed.

Pashinyan also presented the Crossroads of Peace project of the Armenian government.

Flowers Left outside Russian Embassy in Yerevan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — People have been laying flowers at the Russian embassy in Yerevan to honor the memory of the victims of the March 22 deadly terror attack in Moscow, which left at least 115 people killed and 121 wounded.

Video footage from the Crocus City Hall shows the vast complex, which is home to both the music hall and a shopping center, on fire with smoke billowing into the air. State-run RIA Novosti reported the armed individuals “opened fire with automatic weapons” and “threw a grenade or an incendiary bomb, which started a fire.”

Russia's Investigative Committee said four men suspected of carrying out the attack had been taken into custody while trying to cross Russia's border with Ukraine.

Foreign Minister Visits Uruguay as Part of South American Tour

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On March 21, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan held a meeting in Montevideo at the Uruguay Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The meeting was attended by Committee Chairman Jose Carlos Mahia, members of the committee representing various political parties, as well as members of the Armenia-Uruguay Parliamentary Friendship Group.

According to the readout issued by the foreign ministry, a wide range of issues were discussed during the meeting.

Mirzoyan touched upon the process of democratic reforms in Armenia, emphasizing that adherence to democratic principles is aimed not only at strengthening Armenia's sovereignty but also at fostering closer relations with like-minded countries, including Uruguay.

Addressing the regional topics, Mirzoyan detailed the security situation in the South Caucasus and the efforts aimed at regulating relations with neighboring countries to establish lasting stability in the region.

He also presented the key issues currently in the draft agreement

Switzerland Launches 10-year Project in Armenia

YEREVAN (news.am) — The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Observatory for Public Sector Innovation, in collaboration with the Armenian Government, launched the implementation of project “Democratic Institutions and Participatory Policies in Armenia” (DIPPA), the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia reported on March 26.

Werner Thut, deputy head of mission of Switzerland in Armenia, and Claire McEvoy, Lead of the OECD Observatory of Civic Space, representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia, deputy ministers, and other international and Armenian stakeholders participated in the opening ceremony.

In his welcoming speech, Thut recalled the fundamental rationale for the SDC to support the Armenian Government in strengthening democracy: “As a country at the crossroads of three major European cultures and in the past sometimes fundamentally challenged by geopolitical de-

velopments, we have had to learn to deal with diversity and strongly different views among ourselves. To achieve stability and economic success, we have had to establish a system based on consensus and listening to citizens on an almost daily basis. In my view, this is perhaps our country's greatest achievement. With this project, we endeavor to share this experience with Armenia.”

“The Government of Armenia welcomes the project ‘Democratic Institutions and Participation Policy in Armenia’ launched by the Government of Switzerland. We hope that the effective implementation of the project will stimulate the government's efforts to strengthen the principles of democracy and will contribute to the formation and dissemination of a culture of inclusivity in the field of public administration,” said Lilya Afrikyan, Open Government Agenda Coordinator, Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia, on behalf of the Head of the Prime Minister's Office, Arayik Harutyunyan.

The Swiss financial contribution of 9

million Swiss francs, which are about \$10 million, (if the financial situation of the SDC allows it over time) is envisaged for the period 2023-2033 and will set-up partnerships with an array of state institutions, notably the Prime Minister's Office, the National Assembly of Armenia, the Ministry of Finance, various line ministries, and select pilot municipalities. As non-governmental democracy stakeholders, selected specialized civil society organizations and impartial media outlets will be included in the project.

The project is structured around three primary goals:

Support for public institutions to be more inclusive in their tasks of policymaking and budgeting at the national and the local level.

Empowering individuals and citizen groups to engage constructively and innovatively with these institutions towards balanced, broader-based policy solutions.

Strengthening the role of independent media in promoting public awareness and constructive dialogue.

Pashinyan: Highways, Railways, Pipelines, Cables Must Enter Turkey from Azerbaijan via Armenia

YEREVAN (news.am) — The contribution to the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the South Caucasus is a top priority for the Republic of Armenia. In the process of the desired change, Armenia stresses the need to remove the blockade of infrastructure in the region, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated in an interview

with *Kathimerini* newspaper of Greece on March 25.

“The Crossroads of Peace project includes, inter alia, a significant increase in the capacity to transport goods, cars, electricity transmission pipelines, and Internet cables between the Black Sea on the one hand and the Persian Gulf as well as the

Gulf of Oman on the other, passing through the territories of Armenia. The project also envisages the creation of a rail link between the above-mentioned final destinations, which is possible if Armenia-Azerbaijan relations are normalized. It should be remembered that the optimal railway route from Georgia entering Armenia and continuing to the Islamic Republic of Iran passes through Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan, which has existed since the Soviet Union. This is the north-south wing of the Crossroads of Peace, he said.

“Still, there is the east-west wing, which can connect the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, as well as the Turkish Black Sea ports through the territory of Armenia. For this, highways, railways, pipelines,



Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze

Georgian Premier Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress, Public Radio of Armenia) — Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze visited Armenia on March 25 and 26.

Upon his arrival in Yerevan, he visited the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial to pay tribute to the innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire. He laid a wreath at the memorial and flowers at the eternal flame.

During his trip, along with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, he visited the new building of the Georgian Embassy in Armenia.

The two prime ministers toured the territory of the embassy and familiarized themselves with the conditions.

Pashinyan congratulated his Georgian counterpart and the employees of the Georgian Embassy in Armenia on the occasion of the opening of the new building and wished them success in their future activities.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

power transmission lines, and cables must enter Turkey from Azerbaijan through Armenia. And we are ready to provide such solutions,” he said. “So, for the operation of all these infrastructures we have adopted the commonly accepted principles in the Crossroads of Peace project, which are as follows: a) all infrastructures are under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the countries through which they pass; b) each country implements border and customs control on its territory through its state institutions, as well as takes the necessary measures for its security; c) the designated infrastructures can be used for both international and domestic transport; d) finally, all countries use the infrastructure for the transport of goods.”



ARMENIA

Central Bank Puts into Circulation Collector Coins Dedicated to Centennials of Sergey Paradjanov, Paruyr

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — On March 25, the Central Bank of Armenia put into circulation two gold collector coins dedicated to the 100th anniversaries of birth of Sergey Paradjanov and Paruyr Sevak.

Paradjanov (Sarkis Parajaniants, 1924-1990), was a renowned Armenian film director, screenwriter, master of collage, and People's Artist of the Armenian and Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republics (1990). He was born in Tiflis (Tbilisi) and received his secondary education there. In 1969, at the Hayfilm studio, Paradjanov directed "The Color of Pomegranates" ("Sayat-Nova"), which is considered a masterpiece of cinema. In the film, he implements his own innovative ideas, disclosing the unseen and the spiritual through objects, symbols and rituals of his own creation. The authorities of the time disapproved of this and others of Paradjanov's films, forbade him from filming, and imprisoned him. However, Paradjanov did not stop working and instead directed his creative energy toward making drawings, collages, dolls, hats, and other works of art.

Upon having the opportunity to make films again, he directed the internationally recognized "The Legend of Suram Fortress" (1984), and, in 1987, was invited abroad for the first time to participate in the Rotterdam Film Festival in the Netherlands, where the film won first place in the "Most Innovative Film" category.

To this day, Paradjanov's art continues to inspire many artists and filmmakers around the world.

The coin is minted at the Mint of Poland. Its face value is 10,000 drams.

Prominent Armenian poet, literary critic, translator, and public figure Paruyr Sevak (Ghazaryan, 1924-

1971), graduated from the Yerevan State University Faculty of Philology in 1945, then earned a master's degree from the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences M. Abeghyan Institute of Literature (1948), where he worked as a researcher from 1963 to 1971. From 1951 to 1956, he studied at the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow, where he lectured in the Literary Translation department from 1957 through 1959. In 1969, he was awarded a Doctor of Philology degree for his "Sayat-Nova" monograph.

His poems have been published since 1942. *Immortals Command* (1948) was Sevak's inaugural collection. Among his later works, the *With You Again* (1957). The lyrical and philosophical poem "The Unsilencable Belfry" (awarded the Armenian SSR State Prize in 1967) depicts the fate of Komitas, together with the fate of the Armenian people.

Sevak's *Man in a Palm* (1963) and *Let There Be Light* (1971) collections encompass philosophical works revealing the nature of modern man and highlighting human experiences.

In addition, Sevak translated the works of Adam Mickiewicz, Alexander Pushkin, Hristo Botev, Mikhail Lermontov, Yanka Kupala, Rainis, Valery Bryusov, Irakli Abashidze, Eduardas Miezelaitis, and others.

Sevak's poems have been translated into numerous languages.

Streets and schools throughout Armenia have been named after Sevak, as have a neighborhood and a street in Yerevan and a village in Ararat marz. The Paruyr Sevak House-Museum has been operating in the poet's birthplace of Zangakatun village since 1981.

The coin dedicated to him also has a face value of 10,000 drams.



The coins honoring Sergey Paradjanov and Paruyr Sevak

Armenian Border Villagers Oppose Land Handover to Azerbaijan

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Another local man said Voskepar would be effectively cut off from Ijevan, the provincial capital and Pashinyan's hometown, and the rest of the country. He shrugged off the premier's pledge to consider building a tunnel bypass for the community.

"It would take years, not one or two months, to build a tunnel connecting us to Ijevan and Yerevan," argued the man.

Pashinyan's plans also raised serious fears in Voskevan, another border village located nine kilometers north of Voskepar.

"No matter how much we give up, they [the Azerbaijanis] will want more," the head of the village administration, Sergei Grigorian, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "If we give them their so-called villages today, they will demand four others tomorrow and then claim our villages."

Voskevan is home to five families from Nagorno-Karabakh who fled the region following last September's Azerbaijani military offensive. They are now worried about another potential exodus from their homes.

Vitali Harutyunyan, a refugee from the Karabakh town of Askeran, has built a small greenhouse by his house in Voskevan. He said that because of the uncertain security situation in the area he has declined offers to help him expand the greenhouse.

New Report Reveals Azeri Crimes Against Armenian Soldiers, Civilians

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The International and Comparative Law Center NGO, Center for Law and Justice Tatoyan Foundation, Arbane Foundation and Union for the Protection of the Interests and Rights of the Artsakh People NGO published a joint report titled "Azerbaijan's Violations of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment Within the Context of Racial/Ethnic Discrimination Towards Armenians."

On March 18, the report was submitted to the UN Committee against Torture in response to Azerbaijan's 5th periodic report, which was submitted for the Committee's 79th session scheduled to be held from

April 15 to May 10, the Tatoyan Foundation said.

The report focuses on acts of torture committed by Azerbaijan against Armenian military personnel and civilians during 2016-2019.

The examples discussed in the report reveal a systematic pattern of practices adopted by Azerbaijan that specifically target people of Armenian national and ethnic origin. These documented cases show that the beheadings of Armenian soldiers and civilians is a common method used to cause mental suffering to the directly affected individuals as well as their family members.

Moreover, the failure to pursue and in-

vestigate according to the international legal norms, as well as the failure to punish suspected perpetrators of torture, increases the level of impunity amongst the Azerbaijani military forces and society. Additionally, the report references the praise and accolades given to criminals by high-ranking officials in Azerbaijan. This has promoted hatred towards Armenian citizens and ensured avoidance of criminal responsibility. The document highlights that the complete impunity for the events during that period also led to more severe and widespread crimes against the people of Artsakh and Armenians overall, including instances of torture and forced deportation in the subsequent years.

EU Envoy Deplores Azeri 'Threats Against Armenia'

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A senior European Union diplomat on March 25 denounced what he called "threats against Armenia" made through the Azerbaijani media amid ongoing border disputes between the two countries.

"Threats against Armenia in Azerbaijani media channels are unacceptable," Toivo Klaar, the EU's special envoy to the South Caucasus, tweeted late on Monday. "Genuine negotiations on border delimitation are needed and all territorial disputes must be settled peacefully and as part of an agreed process."

Klaar did not specify those threats or

explicitly blame the Azerbaijani government for them. Virtually all media outlets operating in Azerbaijan are controlled by President Ilham Aliyev's regime in one way or another.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry rejected Klaar's statement on March 26. The ministry spokesman, Aykhan Hajizade, said the EU diplomat ignores Armenian media calls for continuing the "occupation" of Azerbaijani lands and deplores instead "the legitimate discourse about the return of Azerbaijani villages."

In that regard, Hajizade repeated Ba-

ku's demands for unconditional Armenian withdrawal from four ruined and uninhabited border villages that had been controlled by Azerbaijan until 1991-1992. He said they are "not the subject of a territorial dispute."

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan expressed readiness to hand over those areas to Baku without ensuring the liberation of any Armenian territory occupied by Azerbaijani forces in 1991-1992. The move provoked an uproar from residents of nearby Armenian border villages, opposition leaders and other critics of Pashinyan.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Russian Official Bemoans 'Difficult' Relations with Armenia

MOSCOW (news.am) — On March 26, Dmitry Peskov, press secretary of the Russian president, said in an interview with *Argumenty i Fakty* newspaper, “Now we are going through quite a difficult period in our relations with our friendly, brotherly Armenia.”

“It is even more than brotherly, as more Armenians live here [in Russia] than in Armenia itself. And, by the way, the economic activity of the Russian Federation citizen Armenians still makes up a very large percentage of the total budget of Armenia. People transfer money [from Russia to] there; it is about several billion dollars a year,” added Peskov.

According to him, “Unfortunately, the Caucasus region attracts the attention of various extra-regional forces. We are convinced that the participation of these forces should be strictly limited, as it is not able to bring stability and prosperity there. Therefore, we hope that Yerevan will have political will to continue the development of our relations, and we will successfully pass this difficult period.”

Paris Mayor Denounces Azerbaijan, Won't Attend COP29

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) — Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo said on March 21 that she will not attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku to denounce the Azerbaijani regime guilty of the ethnic cleansing of Armenians of Artsakh in September 2023.

She made the statement at the annual dinner of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF) on March 21, Jean-Christophe Buisson, Deputy Director of Le Figaro Magazine said on the platform formerly known as Twitter.

“And yet you know my ecological commitment,” Hidalgo stated.

The CCAF annual dinner was attended by a number of politicians and public figures. Prime Minister Gabriel Attal represented the president at the event.

Karen Khachanov Reflects on Armenian Roots in Interview

MIAMI (panorama.am) — Russian-Armenian tennis star Karen Khachanov on March 25 discussed his challenging match at the Miami Open against Francisco Cerundolo, where he overcame external distractions and mental pressure to fight back.

In an interview with *Tennis Tonight*, he shared his goals of returning to the top 10 rankings and achieving success in major tournaments.

Khachanov also reflected on his Armenian heritage and a charity exhibition match he participated in with Andrei Rublev to raise funds for Armenia. During the event, he



The roundtable at the Belgian Senate

Belgian Senate Hosts Roundtable on Armenia and Artsakh

BRUSSELS (Public Radio of Armenia) — A roundtable discussion titled “The Geopolitical Developments in the South Caucasus: Focus on Armenia and Artsakh” took place at the Belgian Senate. The event, hosted by Senator Mark Demesmaecker (N-VA) in collaboration with the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD), was widely attended by a diverse audience comprising Belgian parliamentarians, diplomats, journalists, and civil society representatives.

The roundtable featured four keynote speakers: Els Van Hoof: Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Belgian Federal Parliament; Paul Meerts: International negotiation analyst and co-founder of Clingendael Institute; Gegham Stepanyan, Ombudsman of Nagorno Karabakh and Benyamin Poghosyan: Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Policy Research Institute of Armenia and regular columnist for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

The primary objective of the conference was a comprehensive analysis of geopolitical developments in the South Caucasus region since September 2020, particularly in light of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The speakers provided insights from various perspectives, including international law, human rights, and the response of the international community. Special emphasis was placed on mediation efforts, with a particular focus on the role of the European Union. Additionally, the panelists elaborated on future prospects, exit strategies, and concrete steps to safeguard the inalienable rights of the Nagorno Karabakh/Artsakh Armenians.

The event commenced with opening remarks delivered by Senator Demesmaecker, the Deputy Head of Mission of Armenia to the EU, Mr Vardan Sargsyan, and the President of the EAFJD, Kaspar Karampetian.

Mark Demesmaecker said, “I’m honored to host this crucial roundtable at the Belgian Senate. We must stay vigilant and prioritize

this evolving situation on our collective agenda. Having visited Nagorno-Karabakh and the border region with Azerbaijan, I’ve seen the conflict’s impact firsthand. Azerbaijan’s aggression and the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, is utterly unacceptable. We need to pressure the EU and the international community to end impunity. Democracies must unite to safeguard human rights and prevent atrocities. It’s vital not to overlook the South Caucasus amidst the focus on the Middle East and Ukraine. We cannot ignore the suffering and instability in this region.”

Van Hoof stated: “The recent demolition of Artsakh’s parliament symbolizes Azerbaijan’s ongoing cultural cleansing. We cannot remain silent on this matter. The EU must reevaluate its relations with Azerbaijan and utilize its available policy tools to halt the violations of the fundamental rights of the Karabakh Armenians. Additionally, the option to impose sanctions should be considered on the European level.”

Meerts delved into the negotiation process, stating: “There has to be a context change before the negotiations can be successful. Strength and negotiation go together. Armenia cannot engage in negotiations from a weakened position; thus, it’s imperative for Armenia to bolster its military capabilities and enhance its position at the negotiation table for stability in the region.”

Stepanyan addressed the ongoing challenges faced by the people of Nagorno Karabakh: “The sufferings of the people of Nagorno Karabakh persisted beyond the forced deportation of September 2023. Upon arrival in Armenia, the people of Artsakh continued to encounter numerous challenges stemming from their refugee status, including social, housing, food, and employment-related issues. The seminar presents a valuable opportunity to address these problems and shed light on the daily struggle faced by the people of Artsakh, as

well as to contribute to the mobilization of the international community in the protection of the humanitarian needs and rights of the people of Nagorno Karabakh.”

Poghosyan focused on the peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan, stating: “There was a fundamentally flawed logic that the appeasement policy towards Azerbaijan and acceptance of the destruction of the self-proclaimed Nagorno Karabakh Republic would pave the way for Armenia-Azerbaijan peace. Instead, it only bolstered Azerbaijan to be more aggressive towards Armenia, and now we face a real threat of new escalation by Azerbaijan with the strategic goal to open the land corridor with Nakhichevan and Turkey by occupying parts of Armenia.”

Karampetian conveyed his gratitude to Senator Demesmaecker, speakers, and attendees for their unwavering commitment to the human rights of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh Armenians.

The president of EAFJD emphasized: This roundtable serves as a crucial platform for fostering dialogue and advancing efforts to defend the inalienable rights of the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh. Furthermore, it is imperative for Belgium and all European Union member states to push for sanctions against Azerbaijan for its ethnic cleansing committed against the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, effectively ending the impunity of Azerbaijan. The international community must put pressure on Azerbaijan to release all Armenian prisoners of war and hostages in Baku. Continued advocacy remains crucial in ensuring peace, justice and stability in the region.

The roundtable concluded with a question-and-answer session during which speakers and politicians deliberated on prospective measures to promote peace in the South Caucasus and uphold the fundamental rights of the Armenian population of Artsakh.



INTERNATIONAL

Baku-Tbilisi Rail Route Gets a Facelift

Azerbaijan's efforts to open a freight rail connection to Europe via Turkey have focused on two proposed routes transiting the Nakhichevan exclave. But there is a third alternative via Georgia that is getting an upgrade.

Improvements to a 114-mile stretch of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will likely be finished by April, Rovshan Rustamov, the chair of Azerbaijan Railways, recently announced. "I am thrilled to share that our modernization project is over 95 percent complete, setting a new benchmark for cargo transportation between Asia and Europe," he wrote on his LinkedIn page.

The modernization, which is costing an estimated \$100 million, is set to boost the railway's capacity five-fold, to 5 million tons annually. Once the upgrade is complete, a joint Georgian and Azerbaijani enterprise will take over management of the rail route.

The work on the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) route has been overshadowed by two other rail projects to connect Azerbaijan to Turkey, taking more southerly routes. Both have their complications. One, known as the Zangezur corridor, would traverse Armenian territory, prompting Baku

to seek extraterritorial rights to operate it. So far, Armenia and Iran have resisted the Zangezur plan.

The other option, known as the Aras corridor, would bypass Armenia via Iran. This route has better prospects. However, while Baku and Tehran currently seem to be getting along, they have a long history



of prickly relations. Both routes would create a strong connection between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave, which is the home territory of the ruling Aliyev family.

In many respects, although it has garnered less attention of late, the BTK route seems to be the most direct freight route be-

tween Azerbaijan and Turkey and beyond.

On March 16, President Ilham Aliyev and Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze issued a joint statement following a meeting in Baku touting BTK's potential, calling it "one of our most noteworthy [bilateral] achievements."

"The operationalization of this railway promises to foster connectivity among numerous nations," the statement read. The two leaders also discussed ways to expand Westward-bound natural gas exports and green energy projects.

The payoff for developing freight rail capacity in the Caucasus will depend heavily on the future of European Union-China trade. Observers say the medium-term prospects for such commerce are dimming, given China's deepening economic woes, the sclerosis of its political system and its inflexible geopolitical outlook.

The BTK route was completed in 2017, but has yet to operate at full capacity. The route received renewed attention after

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which made the northern transit route through Russia unreliable and risky due to sanctions. In a report released last year, the World Bank said that it expects trade volume along all so-called Middle Corridor routes to triple by 2030.

(This article originally appeared in Eurasianet.org on March 22.)

Russian Official Bemoans 'Difficult' Relations with Armenia

MOSCOW (news.am) — On March 26, Dmitry Peskov, press secretary of the Russian president, said in an interview with *Argumenty i Fakty* newspaper, "Now we are going through quite a difficult period in our relations with our friendly, brotherly Armenia."

"It is even more than brotherly, as more Armenians live here [in Russia] than in Armenia itself. And, by the way, the economic activity of the Russian Federation citizen Armenians still makes up a very large percentage of the total budget of Armenia. People transfer money [from Russia to] there; it is about several billion dollars a year," added Peskov.

According to him, "Unfortunately, the Caucasus region attracts the attention of various extra-regional forces. We are convinced that the participation of these forces should be strictly limited, as it is not able to bring stability and prosperity there. Therefore, we hope that Yerevan will have political will to continue the development of our relations, and we will successfully pass this difficult period."

French PM Warns Against Russian 'Punishment' of Armenia

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Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron met with Pashinyan on March 21 on the sidelines of the global Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels. According to the Armenian government's readout of the meeting, the two leaders reaffirmed their "determination to further strengthen multi-sectoral cooperation" between their countries.

Pashinyan has repeatedly said that he wants to "diversify" Armenia's foreign and security policy due to what he calls Russia's failure to honor its security commitments to the South Caucasus nation. His domestic critics maintain that the policy change is reckless in the absence of security guarantees or significant military aid offered by Western powers, including France. They also say that the West cannot ease Armenia's heavy dependence on Russia for trade and energy anytime soon.

Russia accounted last year for 40 percent of Armenian exports worth \$8.4 billion. It is also the main source of multimillion-dollar remittances sent home by Armenian migrant workers and Armenia's main supplier of natural gas. The price of Russian gas for the country has long been set well below international market-based levels.

Two Moscow attack suspects travelled 'freely' as no arrest warrants issued, Turkish official says

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian authorities detained 11 people on March 26 in connection with the March 22 attack, which saw camouflaged gunmen storm into Crocus City Hall, open fire on concert-goers and set the building ablaze, killing at least 139 people.

Two of those, Tajik nationals Rachabalizoda Saidakrami and Shamsidin Fariduni, "were able to travel freely between Russia and Turkey since there was no warrant for their arrest", the official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The two had both spent time in Turkey shortly before the attack and entered Russia together on the same flight from Istanbul, the official said.

The Islamic State group has said they were responsible for the Moscow attack, and IS-affiliated media channels have published graphic videos of the gunmen inside the venue.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday acknowledged for the first time

that "radical Islamists" were behind last week's attack at the concert hall, but suggested they were linked to Ukraine.

Turkish authorities, meanwhile, have rounded up scores of suspects with alleged links to IS extremists in nationwide raids, a government minister said Tuesday.

During simultaneous raids carried out in 30 cities across the country, 147 suspects were detained, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced on social media.

Turkish authorities established that one suspect, Fariduni, entered Turkey on February 20 and returned to Russia via Istanbul airport on March 2.

The suspect checked into a hotel in Istanbul's conservative Fatih neighborhood on February 21 and checked out six days later.

During his initial questioning, he admitted to have travelled to Turkey because his visa in Russia had expired, according to the Turkish official.

Fariduni posted eight times on his social media account on February 23, with

the location set as "Aksaray Istanbul", and the pictures apparently showing the Fatih Mosque, the official said.

The other suspect, Saidakrami, arrived in Istanbul on January 5. He checked into a hotel in Fatih the same day and checked out on January 21.

He then returned to Moscow on March 2 on the same flight as Fariduni, according to the Turkish official.

"We assess that both individuals became radicalised in Russia given the short amount of time they spent in Turkey," he told AFP.

The official said Turkey would continue to fight all terror groups including IS, "without interruption."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the deadly Moscow attack in a phone call with Putin last weekend, with whom he has forged close ties.

Erdogan told Putin Turkey was ready to cooperate with Moscow in the fight against terror, according to his office.

One Armenian Among Victims Of Moscow Concert Hall Attack

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — An Armenian national is among at least 137 people killed in the terrorist attack on a concert hall outside Moscow, Armenia's Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

The ministry did not identify that person. It said earlier that it is "in constant contact with the relevant structures of Russia regarding the presence of citizens of the Republic of Armenia and ethnic Armenians among the victims of the terrorist attack." It said it is also monitoring relevant "information disseminated through unofficial sources."

(According to an item in Reddit, an Armenian woman, Lilit Israelyan, and her husband, Vugar Huseynov, an Azerbaijani citizen, were among the dead.)

Four men burst into the Crocus City Hall

on the night of March 22, spraying people with bullets during a concert by the Soviet-era rock group Picnic. The presumed attackers, at least one of them a Tajik, were caught and remanded in custody on terrorism charges over the weekend.

In a message to Russian President Vladimir Putin sent on Saturday, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan joined the chorus of international condemnation of what was the deadliest attack inside Russia in two decades.

"Armenia strongly condemns this inhumane crime against civilians," Pashinyan wrote. "I express my deepest condolences to you. We mourn together with the people of Russia and extend our sympathy and support to the families and relatives of the victims who have suffered an irreparable

loss."

His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, has extended condolences to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia over the deadly terrorist attack at the Crocus City Hall near Moscow which killed at least 115 people.

"Strongly condemning the heinous crime, the Catholicos of All Armenians, on behalf of the Supreme Spiritual Council, the clergy and the faithful Armenian people, expressed deep condolences to the Russian president, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church and all people of Russia," the Armenian Church press office reported on Saturday.

(Azatutyun and Panorama.am contributed to this story.)

Community News

ARF Sardarabad Gomideh Co-Host Event Dedicated to Genocide Commemoration

ARLINGTON, Mass. — The ARF Sardarabad Gomideh, the Leola Sassouni and Shushi chapters of the Armenian Relief Society, the Nejdeh AYYF chapter, the Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society of Boston, and the Armenian General Athletic Union (Homenetmen) of Boston are co-hosting a commemorative event entitled “1915-2024: What Has Changed?” The event will be held at the Armenian Cultural Foundation (441 Mystic St., Arlington) on Thursday, April 11, at 7 p.m. The event will be in English and free and open to the public.

The commemoration will feature Raffi Hamparian, the chairman of the Armenian National Committee



Raffi Hamparian

of America, as a keynote speaker. It will also include a presentation of the flags by the Homenetmen Scouts and a cultural performance

by the Zanger Children's Chorus under the directorship of conductor Artur Veranian.

From the killing fields of 1915, the recent genocidal campaign against Artsakh, to the current attacks on Armenia - the Armenian nation has long faced existential crises. The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) has and continues to relentlessly work to ensure that Armenia and Artsakh's place at the table of nations is not erased. ANCA Chairman Raffi Hamparian will explore the historical and modern parallels of the forces seeking to destroy Armenia and discuss how activists across America can continue to serve as the second army of the Armenian Nation.

Hamparian was born in New York City and raised in New Jersey. He graduated from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, earning a master's in international relations. He has worked for several members of the U.S. Congress. He is the deputy executive officer for Federal Affairs at the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, one of the nation's largest transportation agencies.

Zanger Children's Chorus of Boston, a project of the Armenian Cultural Connection, is dedicated to providing Armenian children and youth with opportunities to learn and perform various musical styles and songs from Armenia and other countries. Led by Dr. Artur Veranian, a distinguished choral conductor and music educator, its young singers showcase the beauty of Armenian melodies and vocal art, captivating audiences in live performances. Veranian has served as a judge on prestigious international vocal festivals, and many of his former students are professional vocalists worldwide today.



Foeng Yang Ming

Foeng Yang Ming

‘The most important thing for Armenia today is to have a strong government’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Foeng Yang Ming, a Chinese student at Yerevan State University, has gained recognition among many people in Armenia for his fluency in Armenian, interviews, and roles as a presenter and actor on Public Television of Armenia. Originally from Guangzhou, China, Foeng pursued his undergraduate studies for six years at Ahmad Dahlan University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Indonesian-Malay languages and literature. In 2018, Foeng enrolled in the Department of Armenian Language and Literature at Yerevan State University while simultaneously engaging in various professional endeavors. He served as the host of the “Aravot Luso” (Morning Light) TV program on the RA Public TV Company and acted in the comedy “Our Yard: 25 Years Later” (2021) and television series. Additionally, he volunteered with refugees of the Artsakh war. Currently, Foeng holds teaching positions at the Gazprom Armenia educational and sports complex, and serves as the head of the Chinese language department at the Yerevan Smart Academy.

Dear Foeng, you are from Guangzhou, formerly Canton. Did you know that Armenians lived there in the Middle Ages and even had a church?

I did not know about the Armenians of Guangzhou. When I was very young, I read an English book about Armenian history, from which I learned about the Armenians of South China, Singapore and Indonesia. Since I have a little Indonesian blood, I went to study in Indonesia and encountered remnants of Armenian influence, such as the “Raffles” hotel in Surabaya. You can find Armenians in different places: China, Indonesia, Japan. When I was little, I really wanted to go to Brazil, discover the Amazon, it is an interesting country, and I was very surprised to learn that right there, in the city of Manaus, there is a stadium called Petrosyan. What business does a man of the people living in the mountains have in the middle of the Brazilian forest? Also, Armenians and Chinese share some similarities. Both our histories have elements of bitterness and sadness, which have led us to disperse to different corners of the world, whether those regions are by the seashore or in the mountains. Wherever I go, I am certain to encounter people of both nationalities: Chinese and Armenian.

Did you come to Armenia just to learn Armenian? Becoming an Armenologist cannot get you a good job, right?

Yes, knowing Armenian in China does not necessarily provide any advantage. My aim was simply to explore various corners of the world, whether they were familiar or unfamiliar. However, not everything revolves around money and work for us.

see MING, page ?

Week of Genocide Commemoration Events Planned in RI

PROVIDENCE — On Tuesday, April 16, the Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee is sponsoring its 24th Annual Armenian Youth Day at the Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence for children ages 7-14. The day will begin at 8:30am for registration and the program will begin at 9 a.m. It will be an educational and fun day with crafts, baking, and much more. This year will also include a visit to the Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island (AHARI) museum. To register, email Jayne Zorian at jayneech@aol.com or Shakay Kizirian at shakay28@cox.net. Register by April 12. Lunch is provided and there is no charge for the day.

On Friday, April 26, the Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee and Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church Cultural Committee are co-sponsoring a performance of “Mercedes & Zaruhi” by playwright Anush Aslibekyan at Egavian Cultural Center beginning at 7:30pm. Nora Armani will perform as Zaruhi and the play will be in English. Donation \$20 (\$10 for students) - tickets available at the door.

On Sunday, April 28, the 109th Anniversary of the 1915 Armenian Genocide at the Martyrs' Monument, North Burial Ground, Providence starting at 12:15pm. A service in remembrance of the Holy Martyrs will be held with the participation of clergy and deacons from Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church and the Armenian Evangelical Church.

Guest speaker will be Alin K. Gregorian, editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

In the event of inclement weather, the commemoration will be held in the sanctuary of the Armenian Evangelical Church located at 180 Oaklawn Avenue in Cranston, Rhode Island.



Marking First Year Since Passing of Edmond Y. Azadian

March 25 marks the one-year anniversary of the passing of our senior editorial columnist, Edmond Y. Azadian. He was an active figure in Armenian cultural, political and social life on a global level for many decades. His absence in the pages of this newspaper is palpable; his first-rate geopolitical analysis was an indispensable part of our pages. Of course, his influence extended way beyond this and our Armenian-language sister newspaper, *Baikar*.

The Mirror-Spectator staff extends their sympathy to all his family, friends and readers on this occasion.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Zoryan Institute Brings Armenian Narratives to Genocide Awareness Week in Arizona

TORONTO — The Zoryan Institute is pleased to announce its return for the second consecutive year to Genocide Awareness Week, an event hosted at Arizona State University (ASU) from April 15-19, 2024.

The 12th Rosenbluth Family Charitable Foundation Genocide Awareness Week brings together a series of lectures, exhibits and storytelling by distinguished survivors, scholars, politicians, activists, artists, humanitarians and members of law enforcement, seeking to address how we, as a global society, confront violent actions and current and ongoing threats of genocide in the United States dedicated to genocide education and awareness.

At the heart of the Institute’s participation lies a commitment to showcase Armenian stories, while understanding genocide as a universal human experience.

This year’s conference theme of nationalism, state violence and genocide revolves around the role of the state in facilitating and shaping the perpetration of genocidal violence. By focusing on the genocidal state, Genocide Awareness Week 2024 seeks to explore and examine different forms of authoritarian and exclusionary al erasure; religious nationalism, and how mass violence is engineered and facilitated by genocidal states using technology and propaganda and other related topics.

On Thursday, the Zoryan Institute will host two panels, the first centered on a groundbreaking book commissioned by the Institute in 2020 titled *Collective and State Violence in Turkey*. This work delves into the creation of a Turkish national identity and the treatment of minority groups including Alevis, Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Greeks, Kurds, and Yazidis, as “internal enemies.” It is the first of its kind to

authors of this book, Dr. Ayşenur Korkmaz, Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Amsterdam (NIAS), Dr. David Gaunt, University of Calgary, and Dr. Hamit Bozarslan, Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), each representing a different case study and or theme that was presented in the book, and will be moderated by Dr. Barlow Der Mugerdechian.

The second panel, “The Erasure and Revitalization of Indigenous Cultures and Languages,” is a comparative analysis bringing a diverse group of scholars. Panelists Lorena Fontaine, University of Winnipeg, Lori Khatchadourian, Cornell University, and Talar Chahinian, UC Irvine, will offer perspectives on Indigenous communities in Canada, the United States, Western Armenia, and the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). This panel, moderated by Karen Jaratt Snider, seeks to foster dialogue and understanding across Indigenous experiences.

In addition to these panels, the Zoryan Institute will continue its commitment to education in high school classrooms, through the “Promoting Equity, Tolerance, Reconciliation, and Awareness Through Genocide Education Program.” Led by Vicechair of Zoryan Institute’s Academic Board, Prof. Alex Alvarez, this initiative empowers secondary school students in grades 10-12 with a foundational understanding of crimes against humanity and genocide through engaging activities, classroom discussions, and films.



From left, Lorena Fontaine, Lori Khatchadourian, Talar Chahinian and Karen Jaratt Snider



From left, Dr. Ayşenur Korkmaz, Dr. David Gaunt, Dr. Hamit Bozarslan and Dr. Barlow Der Mugerdechian

throughout the world, while also looking to the past for guidance and to honor those affected by genocide. It is the largest event forms of nationalism; how extremist forms of national identity are constructed and maintained; race and racial science; culture explore a variety of case studies and the actions and impunity of the Turkish state. The panel will feature 3 of the 16 contributing



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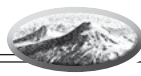
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Five New Professorships Created at BU as Part of Avedisian, Chobanian Gift

GIFT, from page 1

"We're abidingly grateful to Ed and to Pamela Avedisian for their generosity and the recognition that a great medical school is a precious renewable resource for our society and for the world," said Boston University President ad interim Kenneth Freeman in a statement.

Toby Chai, a professor and chair of urology, was named the inaugural Richard K. Babayan, MD, Professor of Urology. Babayan, a professor emeritus and former chair of urology, retired in 2022 after 43 years at the school. A recipient of numerous awards, he was the first in Boston to do a robot-assisted radical prostatectomy in 2005.

"I'm humbled by this experience and very grateful," said Babayan, who introduced Chai, the urologist in chief at Boston Medical Center and president of Boston University Medical Center Urologists, Inc., at the ceremony. Chai held the John D. Young Professorship in Urology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and was vice chair of research in urology at Yale University School of Medicine.

Before the March 12 event, Babayan expressed his gratitude for the honor and fondly recalled his time at BU as well as connection to Dr. Chobanian.

"I spent my entire academic career at BU and first met Aram Chobanian in 1977 when I started my urology residency. We became close friends over the years as he ascended to dean and then president of BU. After residency, I joined the BU Urology Faculty in 1980 and rose to the rank of professor and then became Chairman of the Department of Urology from 2000 until 2019. I became the first Armenian to be elected President of the American Urological Association in 2017," he said.

He added, "Dr. Chobanian was a role model for me, and we became close friends and colleagues at BU and for many years worked together on various Armenian medical outreach initiatives such as the BU - Armenia Medical Partnership program."

He also had warm words for the late Avedisian.

"Ed Avedisian, a distinguished musician, noted for his philanthropic work in Armenia, called me two weeks prior to the announcement of his \$100 million donation to rename the School of Medicine. Ed wished to make me aware of his plan to rename the medical school in honor of Dr. Chobanian, his childhood friend and neighbor. He also informed me that he intended to establish a professorship in my name, for my accomplishments in Urology as well as my medical outreach for Armenia. Although I retired on December 31, 2023 after a 43-year career as a urological surgeon, shortly after the renaming of the medical school, I am most proud and grateful for my relationship with these two extraordinary luminaries and am honored by this recognition which Ed Avedisian has so generously bestowed upon me at the Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine," he concluded.

Chai, who titled his remarks, "Gratitude with a Purpose," said the professorship was about more than one person. "It really is to help our department continue our academic mission to make it the best that it can be," he said.

Rachel Fearn, chair of virology, immunology, and microbiology, was named the Ernest Barsamian, MD, Professor. Barsamian grew up poor in Syria, became a professor of surgery and faculty dean at Harvard Medical School, invented one of the early heart-lung machines, and was the chair of cardiac and thoracic surgery, chair of surgical services and chief of staff at the Boston VA Medical Center.

"From the earliest days of his medical career, our father worked tirelessly to balance leading edge prowess in medicine, particularly surgery, with the compassion and humanity that marks the successful physician," said his son, Peter Barsamian.

From the UK, Fearn holds a PhD from the University of St. Andrews. Her research focuses on the transcription and replication of RNA viruses, like respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and emerging pathogens like the Marburg, Ebola, and Nipah viruses. Fearn frequently works with the pharmaceutical industry on small molecule poly-

ly) and Dr. Aram Chobanian, who was a close friend and mentor," she said.

"I first met Aram in the early 1970s when I was 32 years old and he was a faculty member at BU. I had heard about an Armenian doctor at BU who might be able to advise me on whether to pursue a career in medicine. He was gracious enough to take time from his busy schedule to meet with me. We talked nearly an hour. I asked if someone like myself, with a degree in music and a varied work background, should even dream about becoming a physician. He gave me an unequivocal yes and so I

shortage of primary care physicians and other nonsurgical specialties, and is a recipient of the BU medical school's Distinguished Alumnus Award for Service to the School. The 2022 Avedisian gift included \$50 million for student scholarships, and Kechejian said the scholarship fund has grown from \$5 million in 1996 to \$150 million today.

Speaking before the event, Kechejian said that his connection to Avedisian and Chobanian went back 60 years. He recalled that he met Chobanian when the latter was a research fellow in hypertension, and Avedisian was studying for a master's in fine arts from BU.

"Aram was a mentor and lifelong friend," he said, as was Avedisian.

He added that Avedisian called him two years before his massive donation to the School of Medicine in his friend's name was announced. "He told me he wanted to honor his lifelong friend Aram

The Edgar Minas Housepian, MD, Professorship went to David A. Harris, chair of biochemistry and cell biology since 2009. He studies molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying human neurodegenerative diseases. His work on infectious prion diseases like mad cow disease, where brain proteins fold and can result in neurodegenerative effects, has helped research into other neurodegenerative diseases, like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Huntington's.

"What I want to highlight here is the incredible foresight to use that endowment (\$25 million of the Avedisian endowment is dedicated to research and teaching) to support basic research, which is...always at the root of great medical discoveries," said Harris. "I am honored to be associated with a legacy that values the pursuit of knowledge and scientific excellence."

Housepian was a renowned neurosurgeon at New York-Presbyterian Hospital and professor of neurology at Columbia University's medical school, where he taught for 44 years.

"He was a very creative person with a long-range vision," said his daughter, Jean Housepian. Even with a career that began in labs, then surgery, education remained his key concern, and in his retirement years, he remained an advocate for international educational affiliations for medical students.

In comments before the event, Jean Housepian said she was "flabbergasted" to hear of the professorship.

"My father was born, raised and educated in New York City. His parents were survivors of the genocide. His father Moses M Housepian was an American-trained physician who returned to Armenia in 1916 to minister aid during the height of the genocide to refugees as they were marched through the desert to nowhere. His mother was on the Board of the AGBU in New York for 30 years. He spent his entire 60+ year medical career at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center's (CPMC) Neurological Institute. But he had a very broad world view and made friends easily with people and colleagues around the globe. At CPMC he created and ran a well-attended continuing education neuroscience board review course for over 30 years. He made sure it was affordable for any doctor who signed up. He became well known in the local Armenian community as genuine, kind, and caring spirit. He was an excellent listener," she noted.

In the immediate aftermath of the devastating 1988 earthquake in Armenia, he, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian from the Eastern Diocese and the developer Kevork Hovnanian, flew to Armenia to assess the situation. They ended up starting the Fund

continued on next page



Four of the newly named Avedisian professors (standing, from left): David Harris, Andrew Taylor, [Karen Antman, BU medical school dean], Toby Chai, and Rachel Fearn (missing from photo is Hee-Young Park); representing named professorships (seated, from left): Housepian spokesperson Jean Housepian, Sarkis Kechejian, donor Pamela Avedisian, Richard Babayan, and Carolann Najarian. Photo courtesy of the Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School

merase inhibitors that help fight diseases by inhibiting their functionality. "It's such an honor to be the inaugural Barsamian chair. I'm excited to take this on," said Fearn. "My parents are educators and they imbued in me the sense that education (allows) you to make choices in life." She thanked her mentors, including Ronald Corley, recently retired as chair of virology, immunology, and microbiology, who, she said, "built a wonderful department here," and the department faculty who have helped to mentor her students and elevate her science.

Hee-Young Park, a professor and chair of medical sciences and education, professor of dermatology, and associate dean for faculty affairs, was named the Carolann S. Najarian, MD, Professor. Najarian (CAMED'80) worked most of her career in private practice. In response to the devastating 1988 Armenian earthquake, she established the Armenian Health Alliance, delivering medicine and medical supplies, established a primary care center and a center for expectant women. She was assistant medical director at Middlesex County Hospital and an instructor in clinical medicine at Harvard Medical School.

"I know this chair will add significantly to the education of students here, enriching their medical education and preparing them to go out into a culturally diverse world to care for patients," Najarian said.

In comments before the event, Najarian said the news of the professorship was unexpected. "I was shocked upon reading the email I received from Laurie Onanian informing me that my name would bear one of the five professorships endowed through the major gift made by the late Edward Avedisian and his wife, Pamela, to the then BU School of Medicine. I was of course thrilled by this news and greatly honored. I knew both Edward (whom I admired great-

continued my studies and application process. We became good friends over the years and after the earthquake in Armenia his remarkable wife, Jasmine, was at my house everyday manning the phones helping to coordinate the relief effort. I couldn't be more proud than to have this honor in both these great men," she concluded.

Park said it took a global community to raise her and get her to where she is today. Born in Korea, she credited her father with believing that education was for all, including women. Arriving in Arkansas at age 15, by herself, to pursue science education, Park said she was grateful to the Blyholder family in Fayetteville, Ark., who sponsored and hosted her.

"Today would not be possible without friends, families, and colleagues," said Park.

Andrew Taylor, associate dean of research and a professor and vice chair of research in ophthalmology, was named the Sarkis J. Kechejian, MD, Professor. He is an internationally known researcher in ocular immune privilege, ocular autoimmune disease, and the role of melanocortin pathways in regulating inflammation and immunity. He thanked the Avedisian family, his family, students, colleagues, and research collaborators, and gave a tribute to his mentors, J. Wayne Streilein and Joan Stein-Streilein.

Kechejian (CAMED'63) is the president of K Clinics in Texas, CEO and chairman of Alliance Health, and president of the Kechejian Foundation. He said his mother taught him "the necessity of being involved in the community... and instilled in me the concern for helping others."

He has been a longtime advocate for increased scholarships for BU medical students, especially to ease the financial considerations that exacerbated a chronic



COMMUNITY NEWS



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian with representatives of ABMDR on March 17, at the Western Diocese.

Archbishop Derderian Praises Work of Bone Marrow Donor Registry

LOS ANGELES — On Sunday, March 17, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate, blessed the work of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) and offered prayers for ABMDR patients and families.

Derderian delivered his sermon during the Divine Liturgy at Saint Leon Cathedral of the Western Diocese, in Burbank, on the occasion of Advent Sunday (the sixth Sunday of Lent).

Derderian spoke about the life-saving mission of ABMDR as he welcomed volunteers and members of the Board of the organization. The Primate told congregants that the work of ABMDR is as much a God-pleasing mission as a genuinely pan-national cause.

He also prayed for the speedy recovery of ABMDR patients, as well as fortitude and forbearance for their families. For a chance to survive their life-threatening illnesses, the Primate said, these patients urgently need to undergo bone marrow stem cell transplantation, which would be possible only if they are matched with bone marrow donors. Given the unique genetic makeup of ethnic Armenians, the Primate explained, having a robust global registry of Armenian donors presents the best chance of finding a match.

Derderian praised the dedication of ABMDR's volunteers and donors, and reaffirmed the Western Diocese's strong support of ABMDR's efforts worldwide. He urged congregants to likewise support the registry, particularly by joining its ranks as potential bone marrow donors.

Following the Mass, Dr. Frieda Jordan said, "My colleagues and I convey our deep gratitude to Archbishop Derderian for his great leadership in facilitating our outreach efforts, and for his steadfast support of our mission as a whole."

For more information, visit abmdr.am.

Two New Members Join the Armenian Assembly Board

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America recently welcomed two new Board of Trustees Members, Armine Afeyan and Seta Kiremidjian, who join the following Board Members re-elected for another term: Anthony J. Barsamian, Lisa Kalustian, Van Z. Krikorian, Ani Yeremyan Speirs and Talin Yacoubian.

Afeyan, who resides in Washington, DC, serves as the executive director of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, while Kiremidjian, who lives in Miami, is the managing director for Bank of America Merrill Lynch, and also serves on the Assembly's Endowment Committee.

During its February Board meeting, held in conjunction with a special weekend gathering of Assembly Trustees, supporters, and friends, the Board approved the following officers for 2024: Anthony Barsamian, Co-Chair; Van Krikorian, Co-Chair; Carolyn Mugar, President; Oscar Tatosian, Co-Chair elect; Talin Yacoubian, Co-Chair elect; Bianka Kadian-Dodov, Treasurer; and Lisa Kalustian, Secretary. The Co-Chairs elect will begin their terms in 2025, with 2024 serving as a transition year.

Tatosian, President of Oscar Isberian Rugs, and Yacoubian, a partner and founding member of Yacoubian & Power LLP, together, have been involved with the Assembly for decades.

The Board of Trustees Members elected in 2022 continue their four-year term:

Valina Agbabian, Bianka Kadian-Dodov, Aram Gavoor, Alex Karapetian, Peter Mirijanian, Carolyn Mugar, Lu Ann Ohanian, David Onanian, Herman Purutyan, Oscar Tatosian, Ani Yeremyan Speirs and Annie Simonian Totah, along with emeritus members Robert A. Kaloosdian and Joyce Philipbosian Stein.

"We are pleased to welcome our newest Board Members, Armine and Seta, and congratulate our Co-Chairs elect Oscar and Talin," said Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian. "As we expand our advocacy efforts and



Armine Afeyan, left, and Seta Kiremidjian

programs, and champion key issues on Capitol Hill, we look forward to a new generation joining the Assembly leadership."

The co-chairs added: "During this critically important time facing the Armenian people, including the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh Armenians, we strongly urge everyone to attend the Assembly's Spring 2024 Advocacy Summit to prevent and reverse genocide and help ensure greater U.S. assistance for Armenia's security and democracy."

Five New Professorships Created at BU

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for Armenian Relief (FAR), which continues to operate today.

In addition, she said, her father "helped create 'fellowships' for Armenian physicians and nurses to come to America for an average of 3 months and upgrade their skills and knowledge with one-on-one training with their American counterparts. Over a two-year period, more than 90 doctors enjoyed this FAR-sponsored fellowship program and returned to Armenia to share their new knowledge with their Armenian colleagues. Several of them later became Ministers of Health and Directors of major hospitals in Armenia. This program has had a lasting impact on improving the delivery of quality healthcare in Armenia."

It was around this time that her father first met Dr. Chobanian. "As the Dean of the Medical School at BU, Dr. Chobanian was able to facilitate placement of physicians and nurses at BU for FAR sponsored fellowship training. Through this introduction, Dr. Chobanian and my father became the closest of friends," she added.

In 2010 Dr. Housepian and Dr. Chobanian created the landmark "Combating Childhood Malnutrition" for FAR.

She concluded, "Dr. Chobanian and my father were both brilliant, creative, broad-minded physicians, humanitarians and visionaries. Together they formed a powerful and positive presence on the Board of FAR through which they created

programs that have transformed the lives of Armenians and will continue to have a positive impact on generations to come."

Freeman noted that the five endowed chairs did not bear the Avedisian name, but had been selected to honor others.

"We chose to name these professorships to honor individuals who not only achieved great success in their medical careers, but [also] have continually used that success to help others," said Pamela Avedisian. "We want them to inspire the current and future generations of medical students."

In her comments, she noted how Avedisian had grown up in a family that while not well off, saw service to others as their obligation and that this donation was another extension of that generosity. The trappings of wealth never interested him, she added, joking, "He used to embarrass me when he would wear pants with holes or shirts that were falling apart."

She also paid tribute to Chobanian, noting that like her late husband, the former dean "grew up in a loving Armenian family."

"In medicine, we often say that we stand on the shoulders of giants," said Karen Antman, dean of BU's medical school and provost of the Medical Campus, who chaired the installation ceremony.

(Doug Fraser is a School of Medicine public relations associate. Alin K. Gregorian contributed to this story.)

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Foeng Yang Ming: ‘The most important thing for Armenia today is to have a strong government’

MING, from page ?

Having a richer life experience holds more significance than simply getting rich. I arrived in Armenia through the student exchange program between Yerevan State University and Beijing University of Foreign Studies. Consequently, there are now other Chinese students in the Armenian Faculty of Philology.

And now you also have students here.

Before my arrival, I was unaware of the significant number of Chinese learners in Armenia. Chinese is an intriguing language; like Armenian, it boasts unique characters — hieroglyphs. I am deeply inclined to assist my beloved students, as their motivation is intense. I can sense their genuine affection for the Chinese language through their eyes and the passion with which they speak.

With your proficient knowledge of Armenian, do you have a clear vision for your future?

I remain committed to the exploration of new cultures and languages. As Armenian proverb says, the more languages you know, the more human being you are. Having lived in diverse countries, I have absorbed the finest elements of their cultures, customs, and traditions, cherishing them deeply. For instance, during my time in Indonesia, I admired their profound respect for one another, even a bit exaggerated. My life in Armenia has been equally enlightening, offering lessons both positive and negative.

Really? What negative thing did you learn here?

Drinking (*laughs*). Actually, I’m joking; I drink in moderation, recognizing its potential harm. However, I appreciate the societal emphasis on family values here. Regardless of age, whether they are elders or youngsters, the first question often revolves around family — where my mother works, if I have siblings, and so on. In contrast, in Chinese culture, conversations typically veer towards topics like work, school, or university. Interacting with Armenians has prompted me to ponder my familial responsibilities. Living in foreign countries, I had distanced myself from my family a bit, but now interacting with Armenians, their way of thinking has influenced me.

And do you have favorite Armenian authors?

Living in Armenia is indeed challenging; I often find myself working tirelessly, leaving little time for leisurely activities like reading. Nonetheless, I make a point to in-

dulge in the poetry of Hamo Sahyan, albeit knowing only fragments by heart. Additionally, I hold a deep appreciation for the works of Hovhannes Tumanyan; visiting his house-museum in Lori was a memorable experience. I have also immersed myself in the writings of Silva Kaputikyan. In Armenian society, men traditionally held many prominent positions and occupied important professions.



Foeng Yang Ming

However, it is essential to acknowledge the significant role women played. They contributed to literature and art, offering their unique perspectives. I hold great respect for such a society.

Foeng, please name some more of your favorite things in Armenia. The places, the artists, the song, the food...

My favorite place in Armenia is Lori. Firstly, for its breathtaking nature. I have encountered some of the most stunning landscapes in Lori with its green mountains and the distinct taste of water. Secondly, it’s the people. De-

spite common misconceptions labeling the people of Lori as naive, I have found them to be incredibly kind, friendly, and hospitable. They exude warmth and openness, always willing to lend a helping hand to friends. I feel a special bond with my friends from Lori. While I do not intend to discredit the people of other regions in Armenia, I wish to highlight the distinctiveness of Lori and its people. Regardless of where my future takes me, I will forever cherish memories of the Armenians, the splendid nature, and the wonderful people of Lori Marz.

My favorite spot in Yerevan is the botanical garden, and you know what drew me there? The squirrels! I visit there every week, and the squirrels often come quite close to me...

As for my favorite Armenian artist, it is Charles Aznavour. You might have noticed my fondness for classics — I don’t like *rabiz* at all!


When it comes to songs, my top pick is Ruben Hakhverdyan’s *Autumn of our Love*. It was the first Armenian song I ever heard, and as they say, first love is always unforgettable.

Regarding Armenian cuisine, while barbecue is a favorite for many, especially for men, for me, it is the salad of *aveluk*, made with walnuts, a hint of garlic, and a sprinkle of pomegranate seeds!


What do you think Armenia needs most today?

I prefer not to talk about politics, as it is not my area of expertise, but we must face reality. It appears that having a strong government is crucial for Armenia at this stage. We all know what happened in the country. Looking at the map and comparing the old and new Armenia, it is evident that the neighbors have seized significant portions of the territory, resulting in a considerable reduction in size. It is regrettable. Reclaiming lost land is an arduous task. Therefore, strong leadership is essential to save what remains.

I have always held a keen interest in cuneiform inscriptions, relics that now reside only in museums. I hope Armenia’s fate does not mirror that of an artifact confined to a museum. The Armenian nation boasts a rich culture, vibrant traditions, and a storied history that must be preserved. Hence, it is imperative to contemplate the future trajectory of Armenia just now.



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COMMUNITY NEWS



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Arts & Culture

Musical Armenia Performers Dazzle At Carnegie Hall

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — It was a concert not to be missed. Two very young and very talented musicians wowed a sold-out audience at the Weill Recital Hall of Carnegie Hall with their musical gifts on Sunday, March 3: 20-year-old pianist Tigran Mardanyan, and 19-year-old composer and pianist Grigori Balasanyan, along with the Burbank String Quartet and trumpeter Tony Donatello.

Since the inception of the Musical Armenia series 42 years ago by the Eastern Prelacy, by then Prelate Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, these creative and professional annual concerts have introduced many talented musicians, several of whom have advanced to international careers.

On March 3, Prelate Archbishop Anoushavan with the Musical Armenia Committee presented the 39th Musical Armenia concert with the prophetic words “music is in the immortal words of Vahan Tekeyan, ‘the earth from which the Armenian Church was raised stone-by-stone.’”

As pianist Tigran Mardanyan strode onto the stage, the capacity crowd greeted him with thunderous applause. He quietly paused for a minute in silence, then confidently presented Mozart’s three-movement *Sonata No.4 in E-flat minor*, a melodically beautiful and captivating classical composition.

He then followed it with Australian composer Carl Vine’s *Five Bagatelles*, a lyrical, somewhat jazzy, and intellectually engaging modern presentation, played with thoughtfulness.

Cesar Franck’s three-movement *Prelude, Chorale et Fugue*, a lyrically romantic and emotional masterpiece was performed with all the splendor and gusto it deserved.

The strength of this pianist is in his thoughtful understanding of the music and interpreting it as it was intended, not moving his body back and forth with his emotions, as many performers are prone to do. His keyboard mastery was rewarded with a long standing ovation.

After intermission, the Burbank String Quartet with violinists Gaia Sbeghen and Celeste Di Men, violist Victoria Skinner and cellist Ricardo Sardiñas, master students at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, presented the world premiere of Grigori Balasanyan’s *Transcendence in Turmoil: String Quartet No. 2*.

Balasanyan has called the three-movement composition an “attempt to capture the emotional ups and downs I went through while living in America as my homeland Armenia went through a time of war and suffering.”

The string quartet, he said, “is a musical exploration of the nuanced and powerful feelings that flooded my heart.” It depicts “the feelings of anxiety, sadness and anger.”

This very personal tribute to his homeland with its very Armenian musical feelings reflected the e
see PERFORMANCE, page ?



Katia Guiragossian

Katia Guiragossian Has Dedicated Herself to Honoring Missak and Mélinée Manouchian’s Legacy

By Mélanie Tuysuzian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — Katia Guiragossian is the great-niece of Missak and Mélinée Manouchian, mythical figures of the French Resistance. Both were survivors of the Armenian Genocide and after fleeing to France, fought for France’s liberation during the Nazi occupation in 1944, as part of the legendary French Resistance. For years, she has worked to preserve their memory. She played a key role in keeping their legacy alive, resulting in the transfer of their remains to the Panthéon, where France’s most important historical figures rest, on February 21. To capture their story, Katia Guiragossian directed the documentary “Missak and Mélinée Manouchian” and wrote the preface for the book, *Manouchian*, written by Mélinée Manouchian.

The following is an interview conducted with her earlier this month.
How do you feel today, almost three weeks after they entered the Panthéon? Are you now seeing the recognition of Missak and Mélinée actions more widely?

K: I have been working on preserving their memory for 30 years, so I have been immersed in this memory since ever. It has been a long process, but I always truly hoped that Missak and Mélinée Manouchian would enter the Panthéon, as a symbol of all their comrades and more broadly of all freedom fighters.

When was the issue of their interment in the Panthéon first considered and how was the path to its successful conclusion?

K: It was discussed starting in 2014, when four French resistance fighters were already interred in the Panthéon. We were a bit disappointed because we thought Missak Manouchian would be among them. But we finally managed it, thanks to the Élysée Palace committee that worked on the pantheonization of Missak and Mélinée. I am part of this committee and I have been working on this project for
see LEGACY, page ?



Missak and Mélinée Manouchian

Armenian American Museum Gala to Honor Actor Michael Goorjian

GLENDALE — The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California has announced that Amerikatsi director, writer, and actor Michael A. Goorjian will be honored at the Horizon Gala at the InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown on Saturday, May 11, 2024.

“Michael A. Goorjian has beautifully captured the spirit of the Armenian people and homeland in Amerikatsi and helped the community reach new heights through his contributions in film and television,” stated Executive Chairman Berdj Karapetian. “We look forward to honoring Michael A. Goorjian with the Horizon Award at the Armenian American Museum Gala.”

Goorjian is an accomplished Armenian American director, writer, and actor. Born in the San Francisco Bay Area, he began his acting career at the early age of 14. He has starred



Michael A. Goorjian

in many films and television series with notable roles in Leaving Las Vegas, SLC Punk, Party of Five, Illusion, and more. He won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Miniseries or Special for the TV movie “David’s Mother.”

Most recently, Goorjian earned widespread acclaim as the director, writer, and lead actor of “Amerikatsi.” A film of tremendous spirit and hope, “Amerikatsi” follows Charlie as he returns to his Armenian homeland and finds a country under Soviet rule. After being unjustly imprisoned, he soon discovers he can see into a nearby apartment from his cell window. As his life becomes entwined with the prison guard who lives there, Charlie begins to see that the spirit of his homeland is alive and well. In a historic first for Armenia, “Amerikatsi” was recognized on the Oscars shortlist for Best International Film as the country’s official selection to the Academy Awards.

The signature event of the year will be celebrating an exciting milestone as the highly anticipated cultural and educational center currently under construction is elevated to the horizon and the community reaches new heights.

Horizon Gala sponsorship, program book ads, and ticket reservations are due by April 30, 2024.

ARTS & CULTURE

Musical Armenia Performers Dazzle At Carnegie Hall

PERFORMANCE, from page ? motions of many in the audience who may have been in similar circumstances.

Balasanyan then entered the stage to play his composition on the piano with trumpeter Tony Donatelle. *Farewell Yerevan* is an emotion-filled remembrance with personal memories of the beloved city he left behind. “The composition draws inspiration from the rich tapestry of Armenian folklore, ancient melodies, with their timeless beauty, as a poignant thread connecting the past with the present, resonating with the sound of Yerevan. The flugelhorn emerges as a poignant voice representing the personal connection between the composer and Yerevan,” he wrote for the piece.

The two-movement *Armenian Rhapsody* with Balasanyan playing solo piano reflected the composer’s powerful feelings and memories of Armenia’s lofty mountains, cultural monuments and masterpieces, and unique nature. As Balasanyan ended his composition, he sat quietly panting heavily, demonstrating the immense trauma that his departure from his beloved homeland had caused. He then rose to a thunderous ovation.

The often performed *Toccata* by Aram Khachaturian, well-known to music lovers, has strong elements of Armenian folklore, baroque influences, and melodic beauty. It displayed Balasanyan’s technical prowess and virtuosity, and brought on another ovation.

The concert concluded with an encore performed by Tigran Mardanyan, the lyrically beautiful *Elegy* by the eminent Armenian composer Arno Babajanyan. Mardanyan played this much loved and often performed piece with all the pathos, passion, and longing it deserved, the music again displaying the heartbreaking departure from their beloved homeland for the two young artists.



The performers receive flowers after the concert.

Following a long ovation for Mardanyan, all the evening’s performers lined up on stage for a standing thunderous ovation lasting several minutes, at which time Musical Armenia committee members presented beautiful flower bouquets to each artist.

A decades-long acclaimed and famed concert pianist and composer, Sahar Arzruni, who attended this outstanding concert, commented that both Tigran Mardanyan and Grigori Balasanyan showed “much potential.”

“They did a great job!,” Arzruni added.

Reception at Prelacy Headquarters

In welcoming the artists to the Prelacy reception, Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian called the concert “transforming, one of the absolutely best Musical Armenia Concerts.”

“It was a power of light and hope within darkness,” the Prelate said. Addressing the

artists directly, he added, “We were proud to have you at Carnegie Hall in your serious search for your career. May God always lead you. Let us celebrate the powerful spirit of music and art.”

During the reception, replete with delicious Armenian delicacies, the two young artists expressed their feelings. Tigran Mardanyan called it “a huge responsibility.” He admitted feeling a little nervous before the concert, but once he started playing, he said, “My heart and mind were on the music.”

Grigori Balasanyan voiced that though he was “very nervous with this big honor at Carnegie Hall,” he said he was also thinking of his family and his homeland. “Everything I do is dedicated to my country, Armenia, my motherland, our history, our culture,” he said quietly yet visibly moved.

Two Outstanding Artists

Grigori Balasanyan, born 2004 in Yerevan, began composing music at age eight, and has been playing the piano since age five. He has a diploma in composition and piano studies from Yerevan’s Alexander Spendiaryan Specialized Music School. His performing repertoire includes his Ar-

bums, multiple multimedia collaborations, and has composed several short film scores.

Currently, Grigori Balasanyan is a sophomore scholarship student at Boston Conservatory at Berklee. He is working on his first flute concerto. His first operatic chamber composition, *Silent Tears*, was premiered by the Horizon Ensemble in October 2023 in Boston’s Church of the Covenant.

Tigran Mardanyan, born in 2003 in Yerevan, studied at the Alexander Spendiaryan Specialized Music School and is the winner of several international competitions, including first prize in the international piano competitions in Spain, Italy, South Korea, and second prizes in France, Belgium, Poland, Russia.

His first prize was garnered at age 11 when he won the first prize in Yerevan in 2014, followed by another in 2017, and the Grand Prix in 2019. In the U.S., he won first prize at the “Viva Music” in 2020.

As the winner of the Boston Conservatory at Berklee 2021-2022 Concerto Competition, Mardanyan had the opportunity to perform Rachmaninoff’s *First Piano Concerto* with the Boston Conservatory at Worcester’s Mechanics Hall.

He also has had solo performances in

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Reception after the Musical Armenia concert

menian musical heritage and portrays modern issues of the world.

One of his most important projects was his first ballet, “The Hairless Porcupine,” based on a fairy tale written by Nouneh Sarkissian, which was recorded in 2019 by the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sergey Smbatyan. It was the first children’s ballet in Armenian music history albums.

Winner of many international and local composer competitions, he has two CD al-

New York City at the COAF Gala, at the World Bank and the U.S. Congress in Washington in 2017, in France in 2018 and 2019, in Moscow 2018 and in Beirut in 2018. He has given solo performances in Bad-Hersfeld in Germany, 2017.

The Musical Armenia Committee includes Julie Kedersha, Sophie Khachatryan, Annita Nerses, Varsenne Sarkissian, and Levon Tatevossian. Gregory Dosttur directed the art and design of the concert poster and flyer.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Wafa Shami: Rummaniyeh Lentil Eggplant Stew

“Palestinian culture revolves around food, from day to day life to weddings and celebrations, food comes into every aspect. It’s about spending time with one’s family and friends and making an event out of the ordinary,” says Palestinian author, photographer and food blogger Wafa Shami. “My blog, Palestine in a Dish, is about my mother’s authentic Palestinian recipes that I grew up eating in our home. When I moved to the United States, I often cooked for myself while receiving instructions from my mother over the phone. The food of Palestine is an array of vibrant, appetizing dishes, sharing culinary traits with Middle Eastern and East Mediterranean regions. Food is important since we often come from large families and enjoy eating together with or without special occasions,” she adds.

“Cooking styles vary, and types of cooking styles and ingredients used are generally based on the climate and location of the particular region and on traditions. Rice and variations of kibbee are common in the Galilee. The West Bank engages primarily in heavier meals involving the use of taboon bread, rice and meat, and coastal plain inhabitants frequent fish, other seafood, and lentils. Palestine in a Dish is about Palestinian foods and traditional Palestinian recipes. Most of my recipes I learned from my mother and some were shared by my family members. Because I love to cook and enjoy delicious food, you’ll find recipes inspired by Palestinian history and culture,” she adds.

“Here is a traditional Palestinian dish that is vegan, healthy, and packed with flavor. It’s a Middle Eastern lentil eggplant stew with pomegranate molasses that can be eaten alone or with flatbread (khubez) or a side of salad. Perfect for an exotic dish that doesn’t require too much effort. Ruman is the Arabic meaning of



Wafa Shami

pomegranate and habet is a seed of pomegranate. In the Middle East, there are two types of pomegranates, one is sweet, and the other is sour. The juice of the sour fruit is the one used in this recipe. The origin of this dish comes from the coastal areas in historical Palestine, Lid, Ramleh, and Yaffa where my parents are originally from. Pomegranates are important to Palestinians and are regarded across the Middle East as a symbol of abundance and prosperity. During the season you’ll find street carts filled with fresh pomegranates that offer freshly squeezed juice.”

“Every fall my mother makes this dish using fresh pomegranates which are only available during this time of the year. This dish is so popular at our house, my mother feeds the entire family and shares it with her friends and neighbors. Made on a stove-top, it’s filled with flavor from the pomegranate and lemon juice, and the fried garlic is all soaked up in the cooked eggplant and lentils,” adds Shami.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup brown or green lentils
- 4 cups of water
- 1 large-size eggplant (peeled and cut into cubes)
- 3/4 cup lemon juice or pomegranate juice
- 2 tablespoons sour pomegranate molasses
- 4-5 garlic cloves (crushed)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon flour (or corn starch as a gluten-free option)
- 2 teaspoons cumin powder
- Jalapenos (optional)
- Salt

PREPARATION:

Place the lentils with water in a saucepan, bring to a boil, cover, and continue to boil for about 10-15 minutes, stirring, until lentils are softened.

Add the eggplant over lentils, salt and cumin, cover the pot and lower the heat to medium. Let it simmer for another 25 minutes. Mix flour with the lemon juice and pomegranate molasses and pour over the pot, mix well and let it cook for another 5 minutes.

In a separate skillet heat the olive oil, add the crushed garlic and jalapeno peppers (optional), keep stirring until golden brown, then pour over the pot. Place in serving bowls, garnish with pomegranate seeds, parsley and a drizzle of olive oil. Serve at room temperature with a side of salad and/or flatbread.

This recipe for habet rummaneh shouldn’t take longer than 20 minutes to prepare. It can be served at room temperature, and either eaten alone or with flat bread (khubez).

Additional tips:

- * Turn this recipe gluten-free by replacing the flour with cornstarch.
 - * This recipe can be made all year long, using lemon juice and pomegranate molasses.
 - * If you happen to have sour pomegranate juice, use one cup and also add 1/2 cup of fresh lemon juice. No need to add any pomegranate molasses in this case.
 - * This dish is full of nutrients and flavor that suits the entire family even little kids.
- For this recipe, go to: <https://palestineinadish.com/recipes/rumaniyeh-lentil-eggplant-stew/>

For more recipes and videos, go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI6XpU1sovD2IB2o-WbQulw/videos>
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While Shami grew up in Ramallah, her parents are 1948 refugees from the Sahel area of al-Lydd, Yafa, and al-Ramla, which heavily influenced their cooking. One of the native dishes from that area that she has up on the blog is “Rishtayet al-adas,” made with red lentils. As for Ramallah, some of her favorite places to eat include Rukab’s ice cream, Abu Iskandar shawarma on Main Street, and a new kunafa spot called Iker, which got Wafa’s special seal of approval: “Oh my God, nothing else satisfies me,” she proclaimed.

She moved to the United States to pursue higher education and graduated with a Master’s degree in International Studies. Since moving to the United States, she has maintained her engagement in Middle Eastern issues as a volunteer. After her son was born she was inspired to write children’s storybooks based on her childhood memories. Visit her blog at www.palestineinadish.com and follow her on social media @palestineinadish for delicious recipes.

- Recent books:
- * <<https://wafashami.com/a-is-for-arab/>> A is for Arab - June 6, 2023
 - * <<https://wafashami.com/when-zaatar-met-zeit/>> When Za’atar Met Zeit - October 28, 2021
 - * <<https://wafashami.com/olive-harvest-in-palestine/>> Olive Harvest in Palestine - October 28, 2021
 - * <<https://wafashami.com/easter-in-ramallah/>> Easter in Ramallah -October 28, 2021

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ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 27 — The Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee will observe the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on Saturday, 10 a.m., at the historic Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Melanie O'Brien, President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, Associate Professor of international law at UWA law school at the University of Western Australia, Perth, currently visiting at the University of Minnesota. The program will include the Martyrs' Service which was created on the centennial of the Genocide and the canonization of the Martyrs. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service. A reception will follow the commemoration. For questions call Melanie at 860-651-0629.

MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 6 — Concert by Vahan Artsruni (guitar) and Nelly Manukyan (flute). Premiere performance of works inspired by the poetry of Komitas, complemented by arrangements of Sharakans by Mesrop Mashtots, original songs based on the works of renowned poet Razmik Davoyan (1940-2022). Saturday, 4 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington. Co-sponsored by The Armenian Music Festival of Rhode Island, Amaras Art Alliance. Donation: \$30 through ACF office (781-646-3090) or by visiting amarasonline.com

APRIL 8 — Saint James Monthly Dinner & Fellowship, Monday, Father and Son Night, with the Knights of Vartan, Guest Speaker, Watertown Chief of Police, Chief Justin Hanrahan, Losh Kebab and Kheyima Dinner, Social hour [mezza] 6:15, Dinner 7:00 p.m. \$20.00 per person 465 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown.

APRIL 11 — LET'S PARTY FOR THE PARK! InterContinental Hotel, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Meet & Greet. Enjoy Chef Didier Montarou's Luscious Signature Plates. Tutunjian Family Vineyard Wines & Curated Silent Auction, all whole supporting the Park's care. Advance Reservations only. For link to register, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar

APRIL 19 — SAVE THE DATE: The 109th anniversary commemoration of the Armenian Genocide at the State House in Boston will take place on Friday, April 19, beginning at 10:30 a.m., organized by the greater Boston community's Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee.

APRIL 21 — SAVE THE DATE: The 109th anniversary commemoration of the Armenian Genocide at Boston's Armenian Heritage Park will take place on Sunday, April 21, starting at 4:00 p.m., organized by the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Greater Boston.

APRIL 28 — Nora Armani performs in "Mercedes and Zarouhi" play translated into English, cosponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter, Armenian Women's Welfare Association, and Armenian International Women's Association, with the Armenian Cultural Foundation, at 441 Mystic St., Arlington. Tickets \$15 through ACF office (781-646-3090) or email armeniancultural.fdn@gmail.com.

APRIL 28 — Remembrance of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide. Divine Liturgy, Reception, and Youth Cultural Program with the participation of the Armenian Churches of the Merrimack Valley. Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Rd., Haverhill. Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:00 a.m. Special Sunday School Program for the Youth.

JUNE 5 — Armenian Night at the Pops with pianist Marta Aznavoorian and Boston Pops Orchestra, Keith Lockhart, conductor, Wednesday, 7.30 p.m., Symphony Hall, Boston. Presented by Friends of Armenian Culture Society.

JUNE 16 — Boston Tekeyan Cultural Association is hosting a Father's Day Bar-B-Q. Sunday, 2 p.m. at the Baika Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown (Use Norseman Street side door). \$40 per person. Khorovadz, pilaf, salad and more. Special raffle. RSVP bostontca@gmail.com or call Sossy at 617-281-1647.

NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School will celebrate with a 40th Anniversary Gala. Saturday, 6.30 p.m., Hyatt Regency Cambridge. Details to follow

RHODE ISLAND

APRIL 5 — Commemorating the 155th Anniversary of the Birth of Gomidas Vartabed. Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Cultural Committee, the Armenian Music Festival of RI, Amaras Art Alliance and the Urartu Armenian Association of RI present "Music of Poetry," with singer-songwriter Vahan Artsruni Duo with Nelly Manukyan, on flute. Program to feature St. Mashtots Sharagans Melodies, Songs based on Gomidas Poetry and others. Friday, 7 p.m. Egavian Cultural Center. 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Donation \$20 (\$10 for students). Refreshments

APRIL 16 — The Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee is sponsoring its 24th Annual Armenian Youth Day at the Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence for children ages 7-14. The day will begin at 8:30am for registration and the program will begin at 9 a.m. It will be an educational and fun day with crafts, baking, and much more. This year will also include a visit to the Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island (AHARI) museum. To register, email Jayne Zorian at jayneech@aol.com or Shakay Kizirian at shakay28@cox.net. Register by April 12. Lunch is provided and there is no charge for the day.

APRIL 26 — The Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee and Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church Cultural Committee are co-sponsoring a performance of "Mercedes & Zaruhi" by playwright Anush Aslibekyan at Egavian Cultural Center beginning at 7:30pm. Nora Armani will perform as Zaruhi and the play will be in English. Donation \$20 (\$10 for students) - tickets available at the door.

APRIL 28 — Sunday, the 109th Anniversary of the 1915 Armenian Genocide at the Martyrs' Monument, North Burial Ground, Providence starting at 12:15pm. A service in remembrance of the Holy Martyrs will be held with the participation of clergy and deacons from Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church and the Armenian Evangelical Church. Guest speaker will be Alin K. Gregorian, editor of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. In the event of inclement weather, the commemoration will be held in the sanctuary of the Armenian Evangelical Church located at 180 Oaklawn Avenue in Cranston, Rhode Island.

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.

Dedicated to Honoring Missak and Mélinée Manouchian's Legacy

LEGACY, from page ?

years with Jean-Pierre Sakoun, the president of the association Unité Laïque, deputy Pierre Ouzoulis, as well as the mayor of Valence Nicolas Daragon, and the historian Denis Peschanski. It was a real team effort.

You wrote the preface for the book *Manouchian*. Why was it important for you to do that?

K: It was very important to do it because few people know the story of Missak and Mélinée Manouchian. In France, it's something within the collective memory; we study it in school; we talk about "The Red Poster." But still, few people know their personal stories.

Why did you choose to make the documentary "Missak and Mélinée Manouchian"?

K: I have a degree in literature, cinema, and a journalism diploma: this project suited me perfectly. I always wanted to make a documentary, but it was complicated, especially to finance it. Therefore, with the pantheonization, I told myself it was now or never, that there was a meeting I couldn't miss. I want the Armenian diaspora to discover their story. Because

it's a tragic story, but a very beautiful story of love and commitment. They are role models, not fueled by hatred. That's what transpires in Missak Manouchian's last letter: "I have no hatred for the German people," just an hour before being executed by Germans; it's very powerful.

What will we discover in this documentary?

K: I worked on it with Gilles Pérez and Cyrille Pérez from 13 Prod (a French production company). We are telling the story of Missak and Mélinée, through a voice-over narrative, documented by old notebooks I found in Yerevan, where Mélinée lived for 14 years after Missak's death. We premiered it in Marseille, and it was very well received; it is now available on French channels. However, we aim to promote it internationally. I would like it to be presented in Armenia for the Golden Apricot International Film Festival. I also want to have a screening in Bourj Hamoud, Lebanon. It's very important to me because it's where Missak and Mélinée escaped after the Genocide. Also, I would like to have a screening in the United States. I am looking to have it translated into English.

What did you think of the Pantheon ceremony?

K: It was extraordinary because it was dark and grandiose, just like them. The speech by the President of the Republic was perfect, in a way that I found very sincere. I found him genuinely moved. Everything was perfectly fitting, and I was truly thankful. It sends a message of hope and unity at a time when we really need it.

Do you think Mélinée is as recognized as Missak?

K: Mélinée is maybe a bit less known than Missak, but everyone knows her name because of the letter Missak dedicates to her. She embodies the essence of that letter. Initially, it was not planned for her to enter the Panthéon. I am very proud because I fought for it. At my first meeting at the Élysée, as Missak's family by marriage, I was asked if I had a condition. I said, "Yes." If Missak enters the Panthéon, then he must be accompanied by Mélinée; you don't separate a legendary couple. Especially since Mélinée herself was a resistance fighter and dedicated her life to the memory of her husband Missak and all the other fighters. It's also a tribute to all these invisible and resilient women.

To what extent does this story inspire you, potentially shaping your heritage?

K: I carried this story within me completely, especially because I spent a lot of time with my grandmother Armen, who was Mélinée's sister. She told me a lot about Missak and Mélinée. She was a true storyteller. I interviewed her in 1997, I kept that interview and used it in my documentary. You can understand how much I was marked by this story if you see her. She is funny, touching, and radiant. We go from laughter to tears in a split second.

What are your future projects?

K: I go to Armenia a lot — two to three times a year. There, and everywhere in the diaspora, I would love to create a "Manouchian House." That's my goal. I would like to create the house of their dreams. With the library of their dreams. And also, have artist residencies with exchanges between poets, musicians, screenwriters, actors. Then have screenings, exhibitions. For now, it's not real because I would need patrons to achieve it, but it's a project that is close to my heart and that I want to fulfill in the future.

(The book *Manouchian* is available on Amazon.)



THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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COMMENTARY

Is Armenia Welcomed in the West?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Two articles recently published by leading Western institutions became the topic of active discussion within the political and public circles in Armenia this week. The first one was published by the Rand Corporation and was called “The U.S. Can’t Guarantee Armenia’s Security, Despite Azerbaijan’s Threats, but It Can Help,” and the second, Politico’s reference to Armenia, was called “Armenia’s EU Dream Faces a Big Obstacle: The Russian Army.”

The Rand Corporation is one of the leading American think tanks, preparing recommendations and analyses on policy for such institutions as the White House, Department of State, Pentagon, US Congress, etc. The article published by the Rand Corporation contains two main points: “The United States should provide Armenia with the capabilities to defend itself while setting clear expectations about the limits of its commitments,” and “Armenia’s national interests will be best served by protecting its security. Relations with Russia without unnecessarily alienating Moscow, giving it up altogether.” As a leading research center, the Rand Corporation undoubtedly offers such recommendations to political decision-makers in Washington, D.C.

In its turn, Politico suggests that even if Armenia decides to move to the West, it will be very difficult to finalize this path: “Armenia’s previous government left in 2013 to join the Russian-led Eurasian Customs Union; part of that calculation was how a close alliance with Russia could prevent disaster in Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian enclave entirely within Azerbaijan’s borders.” It concludes: “Full integration into the bloc while Moscow’s troops are present opens up a host of practical, security, and legal issues, even if aspiring members are able to deliver on rule-of-law and anti-corruption reforms.”

In recent months, discussions have intensified in Armenia about Yerevan looking towards the EU, but at the same time, there have been no clear actions taken by Armenia to leave the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) or the Collective Security Treaty Organiza-

tion (CSTO). If a member state has the intention to terminate its membership, it must officially submit a memorandum to the CSTO six months in advance. As for the EAEU, the period is one year, according to the treaty.

On my Facebook page back on March 11, I shared inside information about the visit of the Secretary General of NATO to Armenia, yet officially, it was announced only on March 16. Notably, before the visit of NATO’s chief envoy, Western research and media centers such as those mentioned above tried to clarify the situation and not create high expectations in Armenia. They actually present their reservations about Armenia’s possible membership in the EU and NATO, explaining that they can help but cannot provide Armenia’s security guarantees against possible Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression.

Of course, the Secretary General’s visit is regional, but it is obvious that NATO does not have a particular agenda with Baku because Azerbaijan never spoke about any intentions for joining NATO at any level, unlike, let’s say, Georgia, which has been trying to become a member state of NATO and the EU for decades. Moreover, there is an impression that the visit to Baku was made purely to ensure the balance with Armenia. As for Armenia, the situation is different. In recent months, there have been active discussions about the prospects for Armenia to leave the CSTO, and Yerevan is looking towards the EU to boost its economy and gain a security umbrella.

According to the official information provided, it seems that the issue of Armenia’s possible membership in NATO was not discussed during the meeting, but some mechanisms of unique cooperation between Armenia and NATO were discussed. It cannot be ruled out that Armenia discussed status as a major non-NATO ally.

(Suren Sargsyan is an expert on US foreign policy, researcher and author. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University, American University of Armenia and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Suren Sargsyan is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan.)

Armenian Americans Should Demand Qualitative Military Edge

By Michael Rubin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On July 26, 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal. For France and the United Kingdom, who were owners of the canal, as well as Israel, which depended upon trans-Suez traffic for trade, it was a *casus belli*. Paratroopers dropped to secure the Canal, as Israeli forces pushed across the Sinai. President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s decision to side with Egypt over three American allies almost destroyed NATO. The president, though, justified his action in realism. In 1956, there was one Jewish state but ten independent Arab states dedicated to its destruction. Eisenhower believed that by siding with Egypt over Israel, he could sway the broader Arab world to his side in the Cold War. By the Lebanon crisis two years later, he realized he was wrong: Because of its democracy, Western orientation, and culture, Israel was simply a better ally. There followed a de facto alliance that, despite occasional crises during the Reagan, Obama, and Biden administrations, continues to the present day.

From a military standpoint, President Lyndon Johnson institutionalized the informal alliance between the United States and Israel with the Qualitative Military Edge (QME) approach. The concept was simple: Arabs would always hold the edge in both population and amount of military equipment compared to Israel, so the United States would demonstrate its commitment by guaranteeing that Israel would always have more technologically advanced weaponry than its adversaries. Weapons sales involve various US agencies, and debates about capabilities are commonplace. In practice, the State Department considers inputs from the intelligence community to determine the QME. Historically, if weapons were too technologically advanced, the process made them off-limits to Egypt,

Saudi Arabia, or other potential Israel adversaries.

Perhaps Israel’s decades-long QME should be the model for Armenia. Like Israel at the height of Nasser’s Pan-Arabism, Armenia faces an existential threat at the hands of irredentist Pan-Turkic forces. Whereas Hamas and Hezbollah justify Israel’s extinction in religious prerogatives, the Azerbaijani regime both sandblasts thousand-year-old churches and destroys graveyards while sponsoring Islamist mercenaries to torture and behead Christians.

Compared to Turkey with 86 million people and Azerbaijan with another ten million, however, Armenia’s 2.8 million people will never be able to field an infantry comparable to its neighbors.

Armenia traditionally depended upon Russia for protection but no longer can stomach President Vladimir Putin’s hypocrisy. Putin’s cynical citation of the 1991 Alma Ata Declaration to justify Russian refusal to enforce the Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire while Russia simultaneously ignored it when Azerbaijan troops occupied portions of Syunik or violated it itself when Russia invaded Ukraine demonstrate how dangerous dependency on Moscow to protect Armenia from external aggression can be.

For decades, a top priority of Armenian groups was Armenian Genocide recognition. President Biden fulfilled that goal, though tying it to undeserved and illegal Section 907 waivers enabled the Azerbaijani regime to fulfill its ambition to expel Nagorno-Karabakh’s indigenous Armenian population. President Ilham Aliyev may whisper sweet nothings to Secretary of State Antony Blinken but in Azerbaijani, Aliyev hints at conquest of Armenia proper.

Whether or not the White House brokers a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, it will be essential to ensure Armenia’s defense against aggression. Accordingly, it is time Armenian Americans demand a QME for Armenia.

Traditional US excuses to avoid supporting Armenian defense are no longer valid. Armenia is democratic. It actively seeks to pivot away from Russia as Putin embraces Azerbaijan and Turkey as key nodes in his efforts to evade sanctions. Nor is the Russian base in Gyumri reason not to invest in Armenia’s defense. After all, both the United States and Russia have bases in Syria, and the United States and Chinese bases in Djibouti are just miles apart.

Concern about leakage of American technology to Russia is also overblown. France provides state-of-the-art weaponry, but deploys advisors to monitor it; the Pentagon could do the same. Likewise, India receives both Russian and American weaponry without any allegation of technology leakage.

While the State Department is slow to change policy, their agreement is irrelevant. Every president since Johnson endorsed the Israel QME. Biden could just as easily demand an Armenia QME. Likewise, Congress could enshrine a QME in law, defining a committee to report on US strategy to ensure Armenia has a qualitative edge over Turkey and Azerbaijan for its own defense. At a minimum, that could mean high-end drones and technology to down Turkish drones and jam F-16s and reason to ensure Turkey never again receive weaponry that it would more likely use against Armenians than Russians.

The United States and the world will once again mark Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day on April 24, 2024. Armenians, however, do not need insincere virtue signaling. This April 24, the White House should not only remember the tragedy of the past Genocide but also embrace new strategies to prevent its sequel.

(Michael Rubin is director of policy analysis at the Middle East Forum and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.)



COMMENTARY

Azerbaijan Preparing Groundwork for Another Large-Scale Escalation, Employing Disinformation

By Johnny Melikyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The process of establishing a multipolar world, which marked the end of the Cold War, has created both new opportunities and risks. Among them is the revision of previously established rules and principles, which has led to a new conflict in the heart of Europe. The Russia-West confrontation, entering a new phase since 2014, has resulted in certain changes also in the South Caucasus.

The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in autumn 2020 changed the status quo, which was formed in the mid-90s, just after the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. Later, in 2021-2022, on the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border and in September 2023 in Nagorno-Karabakh, we saw more blood and suffering. As a result of the two-day large-scale aggression against the democracy of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian side had more than two hundred deaths, including civilian population, women and children. As a result of this ethnic cleansing, more than 100 thousand people became forcibly displaced.

After the 2020 war, official Baku started to use the term “Zangezur corridor” as a component of their information warfare strategy, demanding from Armenia to provide an extraterritorial corridor to its exclave — Nakhichevan (and Turkiye). In parallel, from August 2022, official Baku started to use other narratives, such as “Western Azerbaijan,” laying claim to the entire territories of the Republic of Armenia and referring to the internationally recognized Armenia-Azerbaijan state border as a “conditional border.” This policy became increasingly apparent following the large-scale military aggression and occupation of over 200 square kilometers of Armenian territory in September 2022.

With Azerbaijan set to host the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (29th Conference of the Parties, COP29) by the end of this year, which will be the most significant international event it has held in its decades of independence, its aggressive tactics are transforming. Recognizing that amidst the preparations for this conference, the previously employed tactic of applying pressure on official Yerevan on the ground could lead to serious political consequences, potentially even the cancellation of the event itself, Azerbaijan is effectively laying the groundwork for further aggressive actions by accusing Armenia of attempting to escalate and instigate hostilities in the Syunik region, which is located in the southern part of the country.

In line with this strategy, official Baku is employing a disinformation campaign, which includes the involvement of pro-government Turkish media outlets. They are “alarming” the public by claiming that France and Iran are “preparing sabotage” in the Armenian Syunik region, purportedly using thousands of so-called “terrorists.” This tactic mirrors Azerbaijan’s previous use of Syrian mercenaries during the aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, and is an attempt to smear Armenia with similar accusations. The primary objective behind these actions is to justify the occupation of Armenian territory and establish the so-called “Zangezur corridor.” Baku is laying the groundwork for a potential invasion into Armenian territories. However, unlike the provocations seen in 2021-2022, they

are aiming to fabricate an information pretext for their future provocations.

Countering the aggressive and confrontational policy of Baku, the steps by the government of the Republic of Armenia to modernize Armenian armed forces and rearm them with purely defensive weapons and military equipment seem quite pragmatic. Restoring the military-technical and military-political balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan is the only guarantee of maintaining the current status quo and stability in the region. This, in turn, can lead to the long-awaited peace. However, attempts to present these reforms and

members hail from EU Member States and include EU experts and monitors.

The deployment of EUMA is advantageous for Armenia and poses challenges for Azerbaijan. Tasked with monitoring the Armenia-Azerbaijan borders, the civilian mission goes beyond mere surveillance, actively documenting each provocation and development in the region. This comprehensive approach enhances transparency and accountability, ultimately fostering stability and peace in the area.

However, attempts at all negotiation formats and meetings with or without mediators suggest that official Baku, supported

its commitment to signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan based on the principles of international law, with mutual recognition of territorial integrity and sovereignty. Also, Armenia reaffirms its readiness to take part of responsibility and contribute to achieving long-term peace and stability in the region.

As the practical implementation of this idea, official Yerevan developed and proposed the Armenian Crossroads initiative, which later evolved into the Crossroads of Peace project. This initiative, serving as a practical implementation of the Armenian peace agenda, requires the further devel-

RESTORING THE MILITARY-TECHNICAL AND MILITARY-POLITICAL BALANCE BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN IS THE ONLY GUARANTEE OF MAINTAINING THE CURRENT STATUS QUO AND STABILITY IN THE REGION. THIS, IN TURN, CAN LEAD TO THE LONG-AWAITED PEACE.

the process of rearmament of a sovereign state as an “attempt at aggression” are further proof that the authorities in Baku have no desire to achieve peace and stability.

A significant positive development occurred with the decision of EU member states to establish the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA), granting the region an international presence. On February 20, 2023, Brussels, under the EU Common Security and Defense Policy, initiated the deployment of the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA). This civilian mission operates within the territory of the Republic of Armenia under a two-year mandate and currently comprises 103 international staff, with plans for expansion in the coming months. These staff

by Turkey, lacks the willingness to pursue peace with Armenia. The recent escalation on the border with Azerbaijan on February 12-13, 2024, resulting in the deaths of four Armenian soldiers, shows that Armenia is under threat of a new large-scale aggression. Following the occupation of over 200 square kilometers of Armenian territories in 2021-2022, Azerbaijan is now attempting to capitalize on the momentum by seizing more sovereign territories of the Republic of Armenia. It is unwilling to return to the negotiation table with a positive agenda.

On the other hand, despite the above-mentioned challenges that the Republic of Armenia has been facing since 2020, official Yerevan has repeatedly confirmed

opment of communications between all countries of the region by means of renovating, building, and operating roads, railways, pipelines, cables, and electricity lines. It is based on four main principles: the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the countries, as well as reciprocity and equality. I strongly believe that if Azerbaijan will reject an aggressive agenda, this project will be beneficial to all the people that live in our region and can become one of the pillars of regional stability and further development.

(Johnny Melikyan is a Senior Research Fellow at the Yerevan-based Orbeli Research Center.)

Time to Counter Azerbaijani Propaganda

By Hagop Avedikyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Azerbaijani anti-Armenian propaganda is working furiously on various international platforms, often in connection with reputable media such as BBC and CNN. No opportunity is missed to depict Azerbaijanis positively while presenting Armenians as occupiers and terrorists.

In a very aggressive manner and without any shame, they describe their country as the homeland of the pomegranate and the Persian Nizami as an Azerbaijani poet and thinker, not to mention Ferdowsi. They write about their “inimitable” architecture, which has been stolen from the Armenians, and their tolerance, generosity and hospitality.

Recently, through one of their dozens of propaganda platforms called AzerNews, they organized a magnificent ceremony at the initiative of the Mugham Development and Popularization Organi-

zation, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of a certain singer named Akhundova, during which they introduced this presumably good singer as the first female composer in the world. We don’t know if they received any critical reaction from Germany, Italy or Greece for that lie spread on CNN’s website. These are all countries that have always had female composers, not to mention the female musicians Armenians had in the early Middle Ages, who composed songs and hymns in different regions of Armenia.

Azerbaijanis continue to spread direct insults against Armenians, calling them a deceitful, talentless, treacherous, and terrorist nation. Among such materials, a few days ago I came across an “intimidating” message presented in a very serious tone, which was distributed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan. According to that report, the police managed to find a secret hiding place of Armenians in Stepanakert (they

gave this city a different name), full of weapons and ammunition. In this hiding place, the police found, according to the same report, many automatic rifles, one machine gun, 33 grenades, 832 bullets, bullet holders and ... 6 bayonets.

Fortunately, they published one photo with the message, which we include with this article. Look at the table, on which you will see that terrible arsenal: 3 hunting rifles and only 1 machine gun, which was probably put on the table by one of the policemen at the last moment, so that the table would look “luxurious.”

We must face this challenge, using the connections of each one of us, especially the possibilities of the Diaspora. Our responses should be factual in content and satirical and destructive in form. However, our main target should be the international media, questioning its impartiality, reliability and authority.

(Translated from the Armenian original in the Yerevan newspaper Azg.)



COMMENTARY

France Casts Itself as Armenia's Savior, But Is it One?

By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Whatever the grievances against Russia — some justified, others questionable — it is not in Armenia's interest to break off its strategic relations with Moscow and even less to accept the role of a pawn on a chessboard that will be swallowed in any scenario.

The Armenian government, the ruling party and part of the diaspora, in believing they are attracting the protection of the West, are unwitting instruments of war games and propaganda, as well as disinformation campaigns beyond their control.

The country is already a nest of spies, including from hostile countries. Furthermore, the European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) — officially a civilian operation under the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy — is composed of military and police personnel from many countries, whose objective is officially to stabilize the borders. This objective is proving to be a failure since the mission is still absent from the border areas where Azerbaijani troops are violating Armenian territory almost daily. This is not surprising, though, since the EUMA communicates its movements along the border to Azerbaijan in advance so it will not be fired upon by Azerbaijani border guards. Hence, one must wonder if the real mission would not be to keep an eye on Russia and Iran.

With the Armenian government gutting all the intelligence services and the general staff of the armies as soon as it came to power in May 2018 by the "Velvet Revolution" — including in the middle of the war from September to November 2020 — the country has been subjected to a takeover of its destiny by shadowy services and advisors. The request to regain control of the border police at Zvartnots airport should be seen in this context. This step to regain sovereignty looks futile when considering that Azerbaijan occupies 170 square kilometers of its territory. The move is clearly anti-Russian and likely to be dictated by Western partners. Without Russian border guards, Western and Israeli spies will be able to enter Armenia without the knowledge of Russian and Iranian intelligence.

Armenia seems to be controlled — consciously or unconsciously — by Western strategists who are using it to first weaken and then eliminate any Russian presence in the South Caucasus, at the risk of leading the former to its ruin.

A sensible person could hardly imagine that Western countries would protect Armenia militarily in the event of Azerbaijani aggression. The example of Ukraine, a large country with vast agricultural resources in which Western economic interests, particularly American, are significant, speaks for itself. After two years of war, some Europeans, led by France, are taking the initiative because Ukraine is on the brink of military collapse and the United States might pause its military aid. In other words, one may imagine how Armenia will be treated in case of Azerbaijani aggression, since it has little economic and strategic interest compared to Ukraine.

But why is France engaging in this anti-Russian campaign? Is it sincere and does it have the means to totally support Armenia? Is it ready to provide the weapons that Armenia would need to protect itself? Would France be supported by its European and American allies?

France's Anti-Russian Motivations

In a previous column, I was wondering about France's motivations for its commitment to Armenia. The answer came by recent President Emmanuel Macron's controversial and contested [remarks](#) in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict: this support is part of a personal battle against Russia. It is a way of straddling a fine line both domestically and internationally. We need to analyze France's discourse and actions and look at President Macron's political situation in France and at diplomatic and military realities on the international level.

Macron is a weakened leader on the domestic front. His major proposed reforms have either been abandoned or are half-successes; his popularity is very low. He is above all a communicator with populist overtones with a very ego-centric conception of power. Abroad, France is in retreat on both diplomatic and military fronts. France, one the second largest diplomatic networks after the United States, is now ranked fifth (Global Diplomacy Index, 2023), overtaken by Turkey and Japan. France is trying to take revenge for the ousting or unpopularity of the presence of its army in the countries of French-speaking Africa, its former colonial glory, "Françafrique." At the same time, Russia has established itself as the new military partner of several post-colonial African states. Now diminished,

only the status of being a nuclear power counts as France's military-strategic asset in the world.

The recent campaign aims to convince the world that the Russians present a threat to Europeans and to the French people and that it is therefore necessary to consider all war scenarios, including having boots on the ground in Ukraine. By using this strategy of threatening Russia, President Macron is trying to create an image of a war leader with strong words, whereas all military specialists and geopoliticians know that it is time to negotiate in Ukraine and that France does not have sufficient military capabilities to engage in a large-scale conflict.

Dominique de Villepin, former prime minister and a highly respected strategist in international affairs, denounced Macron's "strategic excitement," which exposes the international community to the risk of an exponential escalation of the war.

Moreover, this communication strategy backfired on President Macron recently. The United States, the Europeans — in particular the Germans — have officially denied that such scenarios are on the table or have been discussed collectively. The British and the Americans have declared that there is no question of them sending troops to Ukraine. These reactions are meanwhile open to criticism given that these countries are physically present on the Ukrainian ground with many military advisors and trainers, not to mention all the intelligence agents and members of special forces. Another element of hypocrisy is that the West is struggling to supply ammunition, but welcomes the Czech Republic's initiative to call on international arms dealers ("lords of war") to supply it. The biggest slap in the face came from Ukraine: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy replied to Macron that he needed weapons, not foreign troops on its soil.

France's Support for Armenia

France's sympathy for the Armenians is not in question. The latter are a model of successful integration. They suffered a genocide and they are Christians. The conservatives and Christian right in the country have been politically mobilized since the last Karabakh war. Thanks to the efforts of the Armenian community and the Armenian Embassy in France, the French Parliament has taken positions that are unique in the world on the right to self-determination of Karabakh Armenians and the condemnation of ethnic cleansing. President Macron himself has certainly displeased the Ministry for Foreign Affairs by taking such a clear-cut position in favor of Armenia. This has not always been the case.

Indeed, it should be remembered that France was one of the three mediators of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, along with the US and Russia, tasked with reaching a settlement of the Karabakh question. Hence, it was supposed to be neutral to ensure dialogue between the parties in the conflict. Russia's aggression against Ukraine completely changed the situation and the Minsk Group no longer operates. Starting in February 2022, the French, the Europeans and the Americans wanted to control the peace process to the detriment of the Russians. The Karabakh question was exploited and the surrender of Karabakh was blamed solely on the Russians alone. This is again a hypocritical posture, since all three mediators had agreed that Karabakh should be returned to Azerbaijan based on the concept of respecting territorial integrity, leaving the official status of Karabakh to a later stage. It is clear that in the current war for influence in the South Caucasus the right to self-determination of the Armenians of Karabakh and the protection of Armenia's territorial integrity are no longer at stake. The West wants total political and military control of the region.

President Macron's actions within international institutions cast doubt on the sincerity of his support for Armenia. France, very aggressive in demanding more sanctions against Russia, is still not demanding any against Azerbaijan. Members of Macron's political party in the European Parliament (belonging to the RENEW European party) failed to vote in favor of an amendment which called for immediate sanctions against Baku. These MEPs argued that it was necessary to leave a window for negotiations and that sanctions should be reserved in case of a new aggression. Are the ethnic cleansing of Karabakh and the occupation of 170 square kilometers of Armenian territory not sufficient to justify sanctions? Should we conclude that these sanctions will only be called for once the invasion of southern Armenia has been completed?

Furthermore, economic relations between France and Azerbaijan remain strong despite the tense communications between the two states: Azerbaijani [exports to France](#) increased 57-fold in 2023.

The perception of France in Armenia does not seem affected by these realities. In Armenia, as in part of the diaspora, people still believe in a foreign providential savior, a belief for which Armenians have paid a high price in their history. A [survey](#) financed by American institutions designed to show that Armenians are turning away from Russia reveals that 69% of them consider France to be their most important political partner, far surpassing all other countries. When it comes to (military) security, 50% view France as the safest partner. Iran and the United States are tied at second with 46% and Russia is fourth with 31%. India does not appear in this survey despite its growing economic and [military](#) importance. The Indian community in Armenia is second only to the Russians with a population of around 15,000. The respondents recognize that, in economic terms, the most important partners are Iran (49%), Russia (48%), and China (40%). France only comes in at the fourth position with 34%. According to the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs latest figures, from October 2023, France is actually only Armenia's 13th supplier and 28th customer.

France's communication around its arms deliveries or its new military cooperation agreements with Armenia, supported by a visit from Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu in February 2024, makes some noise, but is the reality up to Armenia's defense challenges? Let's have a comparative look at what France supplies to Ukraine.

As a reminder, the weapons supplied to Ukraine are light armored vehicles, Caesar cannons and ammunition, and there is now talk of delivering SCALP missiles (Franco-British manufactured). The SCALP-EG is a conventional strategic weapon capable of striking high-value targets, far from the line of front (400 to 500 kilometers). The Germans and Americans officially refuse to supply Ukraine with long-range missiles. In the Ukrainian air fleet, only the Su-24 has been adapted to carry SCALP missiles, potentially 14 aircraft (end December 2023). A priori, the American F-16, on which Ukrainian pilots are currently training, is not suitable for SCALP.

The official policy of the French Defense Ministry is to supply equipment and materials adapted to the context of engagement of the Ukrainian armed forces. These deliveries must meet three criteria: deliver complete capabilities (equipment with ammunition, training and equipment maintenance), not weaken the French army and control military escalation.

In October 2023, France and Armenia signed a letter of intent on air defense which includes a contract for the acquisition of three Ground Master (GM200) radars from Thales capable of detecting enemy aircraft at a distance of 250 kilometers. There is also a contract for the supply of very short-range ground-to-air weapon systems (Mistral) designed to complete the ground-air coverage of the armored and mechanized corps. It provides isolated units with their own anti-aircraft defense. The Mistral is used in conjunction with warning radars. Incidentally, France and Armenia concluded a contract for the supply of night vision binoculars, manufactured by Safran, and 50 Bastion light armored personnel carriers.

This exclusively defensive equipment is used to detect threats or protect ground troops, but what about deterrent weapons? What weapons would Armenia need to counter a large-scale Azerbaijani aggression? The configuration of the South Caucasus, the small size of the territories, the imbalance of arsenals and troops — largely in favor of Azerbaijan — make the possibility of a long conventional war like the one taking place in Ukraine doubtful.

Armenia would need stealthy surface-to-surface missiles for conventional deterrence and surface-to-air missiles for defense. Long-range strategic missiles are weapons of destruction, but their possession is above all a powerful means of deterrence for the countries that possess them. Is France willing to supply Armenia with such weapons without delay?

The answer to this question will determine the sincerity of Paris. These conventional deterrent weapons are the only immediate solution to prevent any military aggression by Azerbaijan. They could be used to destroy strategic targets deep inside Azerbaijani territory, paralyze the Azerbaijani economy and, in addition, destroy its strategic weapons stockpiles.

The European Union and the United States have signed strategic cooperation agreements with Azerbaijan for the supply of fossil fuels, so it is unlikely that France would be authorized to supply such conventional weapons that may endanger this supply. Nor would Russia, in the current tense political situation with the Armenian government,

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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Denialists Erdogan and Netanyahu Shamefully Exploit the Term Genocide to Bash Each Other

However, over the years, their relationship soured due to their opposing positions on the Palestinian issues. On several occasions, Israel and Turkey withdrew their ambassadors from each other's capitals due to such conflicts, only to reinstate them again. In other words, they kissed and made up repeatedly.

We all know the expression, “politics makes strange bedfellows.” Israel and Turkey are one of those political odd couples. Initially, there was some basis in their partnership, more aptly described as mutual exploitation. Israel, surrounded by a large number of hostile Arab nations, needed Turkey as its political and economic ally, an Islamic nation that had established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1949. Meanwhile, Turkey needed Israel for various reasons, including political support from the West, the purchase of advanced weapons and billions of dollars of trade.

The other aspect of this unholy union was that both countries denied the Armenian Genocide. Turkey used its relations with Israel to convince the powerful Jewish lobby in the United States to block the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the U.S. Congress. Turkey pressured Israel to block the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide in Tel Aviv in 1982, prevent the broadcast of a documentary on the Armenian Genocide and its recognition by the Knesset. Turkey went as far as threatening its domestic Jewish community and demanded that the Chief Rabbi of Istanbul to lobby American Jewish organizations on behalf of Turkey.

In 2009, Erdogan told the Israeli President Shimon Peres during a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in front of the assembled world leaders: “When it comes to killing you know very well how to kill. I know very well how you killed children on the beaches [of Gaza].”

Then the Mavi Marmara incident occurred in 2010, when the Israeli military attacked six Turkish civilian ships in the Mediterranean Sea trying to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, killing nine Turkish passengers. The raid seriously deteriorated Israeli-Turkish relations. Turkey recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv and expelled Israel's ambassador from Ankara. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apologized to Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and offered \$20 million in compensation for the raid.

Shortly before Hamas attacked Israel in October 2023, Israeli customs officials intercepted 16 tons of explosive materials for making missiles hidden

in a Turkish shipment of construction supplies for Gaza. Surprisingly, Israel took no action against Turkey. This was yet another example of Israel appeasing Turkey's anti-Israeli actions. Rather than designating Turkey as a state sponsor of terrorism, Israeli leaders embraced Erdogan, encouraging him to continue his misdeeds.

Following the recent Hamas attack on Israel, Erdogan called Hamas “freedom fighters,” and likened Netanyahu to “Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, today's Nazis.”

In January 2024, Israel's Foreign Minister tweeted: “The President of Turkey Erdogan, from a country with the Armenian Genocide in its past, now boasts of targeting Israel with unfounded claims. We remember the Armenians, the Kurds. Your history speaks for itself. Israel stands in defense, not destruction, against your barbarian allies.”

Last week, Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz summoned the Turkish envoy, Shakir Ozkan Torunlar, to complain about Erdogan's statement that he will “send Netanyahu to Allah to take care of him, make him miserable and curse him.” Katz replied on X/Twitter: “You [Erdogan] who support the burning of babies, murderers, rapists and the mutilation of corpses by Hamas criminals, [are] the last one who can speak about God. There is no God who will listen to those who support the atrocities and crimes against humanity committed by your barbaric Hamas friends.” Katz then admonished Erdogan: “Be quiet and shame on you!”

The Turkish foreign ministry replied to Katz: Israel has been built upon ‘occupied’ Palestinian land since its creation. “Since the first day they occupied Palestinian lands, the Israeli authorities have made a great effort to keep the serious crimes they committed against the Palestinians secret, and have tried to create an armor of immunity for themselves. They have targeted our President, who screams the truth.”

The Turkish Foreign Ministry then accused Israel of committing ‘genocide,’ stating that the “entire world public opinion is eagerly awaiting the day when Israeli officials who committed crimes will be brought to justice.”

Earlier, Netanyahu, who himself does not recognize the Armenian Genocide, criticized Erdogan for denying the Genocide. Netanyahu tweeted: “Israel, which adheres to the laws of war, will not accept moral preaching from Erdogan, who supports murderers and rapists of the terrorist organization Hamas, denies the Armenian Holocaust, massacres Kurds in his own country and eliminates regime opponents and journalists.” However, Netanyahu keeps arming Turkey's ally, Azerbaijan, with sophisticated weapons which were used to commit a new genocide against Armenians in Artsakh.

In conclusion, both Erdogan and Netanyahu should be ashamed of using the Armenian Genocide and Holocaust as a bargaining chip in their dispute.

Rather than using the term genocide as a cudgel to bash each other, both Israel and Turkey should have recognized the Armenian Genocide long ago, in order to be classified among the ranks of civilized nations!

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look kindly on the arrival of such weapons, which could threaten the flow of its sales of its fossil energy throughout Azerbaijan.

Stance of Western Allies Weakens France's Position

The European Parliament [resolution](#) adopted on March 13 is an anti-Russian provocation. It expresses some good wishes, but contains no firm guarantees to protect Armenia. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) recognizes that Armenia is economically dependent on Russia and believes “that the European Union must be ready to provide rapid assistance to Armenia to mitigate the negative consequences.” The European Assembly recognizes the urgent need to strengthen cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Armenia in the field of security and defense as Armenia reconsiders its membership in the Russia-centered Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and suggests that the EU “should be ready to impose sanctions on any person or entity that threatens the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Armenia.” Above all, this resolution seems opportunely anti-Russian and the wishes expressed seem far-fetched. If the idea for Armenia one day joining the EU — if such an entity exists and will exist politically — is desirable, Armenia must not delude itself about European help in the event of an imminent threat. Just look at the reaction time in the Ukrainian theater of war. Armenia cannot fend off its enemy for two years.

Armenian media [alleged](#) in March that British Defense Minister promised military protection of Armenia. If verified (the original source is the Russian media RT), the communication is ambiguous except for one point: it encourages Armenia to break away from the CSTO without offering any concrete security guarantees in return. The anti-Russian objective is clearly expressed, but what about the threats from Azerbaijan? What would “perfidious Albion” do in such a case? It should be remembered that for more than 30 years, Great Britain has invested massively in the fossil fuel economy of Azerbaijan (84 billion USD since 1995). Recently, the British derailed — as did the Russians — the attempts of Armenia and France to have

the United Nations Security Council adopt a resolution condemning the blockade of Karabakh, as well as another aiming at the condemnation of the ethnic cleansing of Karabakh and the right of return of the Armenian populations. Great Britain is Russia's oldest, most aggressive and most discreet enemy. From the very first days of Moscow's offensive in Ukraine, it took matters into its own hands. In the South Caucasus, it has found another front to weaken Russia. It turns out that the protection of its economic interests is compatible with its geopolitical game. In this game, Armenia would be sacrificed without hesitation.

Unexpectedly, the most clear-sighted, and therefore the friendliest, discourse in this matter came from the United States. The Rand Corporation (one of the think tanks that steer the political and economic decisions of the US government, financed by the latter) has published an [analysis](#) of the security situation in Armenia and how the US Government may help or not. The title should give the Armenian government pause for thought: “The United States cannot guarantee Armenia's security, despite Azerbaijan's threats, but it can help.” They consider that the United States could help strengthen Armenia's deterrence capabilities, but they only mention short-range air defense systems such as MANPADS, as well as Trophy countermeasure systems designed to strengthen the defense of armored capabilities. Supplies could also include anti-drone systems. However, the analysts elliptically recommend that Armenia not break with Russia: “But in the immediate term and with the prospect of a possible invasion, the limits of partnership should be made clear. Neither the United States nor its allies are willing to offer Armenia security guarantees, let alone a formal military alliance, given the risks that might entail if Armenia has to call on such assurances. With clarity, Armenia can take that into account in its own strategic calculations vis-à-vis both Azerbaijan and Russia.” They add: “Should Armenia leave the [CSTO] alliance altogether or move explicitly toward the West, it should think carefully given the dangers of a violent reaction from Russia.”

The Armenian government bears a historic responsibility at this critical moment. It has an obligation to inform

the people of Armenia of all the risks associated with the current pro-Western but anti-Russian postures. Khosrov Harutyunyan, former prime minister, recently said that the rebalancing of relations between the Western bloc and the Russian bloc must not transform Russia into an enemy. The people of Armenia must be aware of this in total transparency.

The doctrine of [positive neutrality](#) between the two blocs is more valid than ever, especially if American semi-governmental circles recommend that Armenia not attempt to break with Moscow. Positive neutrality is not constitutional or functional neutrality, but opportune neutrality. Some European states abandoned their functional neutrality during the conflict in Ukraine (Finland and Sweden). For Armenia, positive neutrality consists of staying away from antagonism between great powers and not becoming a territory where this antagonism would turn into a proxy war like in Ukraine. Positive neutrality does not offer sufficient protection, but in the current circumstances it is the only doctrine that could avert catastrophe. The vast majority of political parties and analysts in Armenia are warning the Armenian government.

It is surprising that the government has given itself over wholeheartedly to this Western game, when its “crossroads of peace” project is based on two axes of communication: the east-west and the south-north ones. The latter is unthinkable without the participation of Russia and Iran. By persisting, the Armenian government becomes a thorn in the side of Moscow and Tehran. The “crossroads of peace” could quickly transform into a “crossroads of internationalized war.”

Finally, positive neutrality requires having a stronger defense. Acquiring conventional deterrent weapons should be a priority for the Armenian government. It is doubtful that France and its allies will provide them.

(Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, based in Paris, is a lawyer, lecturer in international law and a former secretary general of FIDH (International Federation of Human Rights), who has earned a PhD in international law. He is a regular columnist for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.)



Nick Akgulian, left, with a village nurse after seeing patients together outside a clinic in Taghavard village in Nagorno Karabakh that was the site of occasional attacks. The village was surrounded on three sides after the 2020 war and territory captured by Azerbaijanis is visible in the background. (photo courtesy Nick Akgulian)

Akgulian Letter to NYT Compares US Ambassador on Sudan and Artsakh Crises

Editorial Note: The *New York Times* published an article by US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield on March 18 titled “The Unforgiveable Silence on Sudan,” in which she decries global inaction and silence concerning the civil war in Sudan and calls for intervention. Dr. Nick Akgulian, a doctor living in Wisconsin, responded with the following note concerning Artsakh published in the comments section of the article online. Dr. Akgulian worked in Artsakh several months late in 2022 on a healthcare project.

“The world’s silence and inaction need to end, and end now.” Where was such a decree by the Ambassador during

the 10-month total blockade of the 120,000 people living in Nagorno-Karabakh between Dec. 2022 and Sept. 2023? Instead, eight months into the starvation of this population, she could only muster “we urge the government of Azerbaijan to restore free movement.” There was no call for the security council to “consider all tools at its disposal” to alleviate the suffering of these people. Likewise, she now states: “The international community must also demand the protection of civilians and pursue justice for victims of war crimes.” The world community, including the United States, failed to intervene during the 10-month blockade imposed by Azerbaijan which ultimately led to the Sep-

tember 2023 ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population from its ancestral homeland. No sanctions have been imposed on the leaders of Azerbaijan and, in fact, the current US administration has proposed additional aid to the perpetrators as part of the FY2025 U.S. foreign assistance budget. The 2023 Elie Wiesel Act Report, issued by the State Department and cited by the Ambassador, neglects to even mention Azerbaijan. While the Ambassador is right to bring attention and issue a call for action to the horrendous situation in Sudan, the moral authority of the US will only be respected if it is consistently applied whenever and wherever it is called for. Nick Racine, WI



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