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European Union, United States Woo Armenia With Economic Assistance Package

By Ani Avetisyan

The European Union and United States are incentivizing Armenia to maintain its westward geopolitical shift. The growing EU-US role in supporting the country's reform efforts is drawing a predictably hostile reaction from Russia and Azerbaijan.

A meeting April 5 in Brussels involving Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, European Commission President Ursula von Der Leyen, EU Vice President Josep Borrell and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yielded a significant assistance windfall for Armenia. The EU pledged 270 million euros (about \$291 million) over four years and the US added another \$65 million in aid designed to help Armenia recover from its decisive defeat in the Second Karabakh



War and reduce its economic dependence on Russia. (Photo: primeminister.am)

War and reduce its economic dependence on Russia.

In a joint statement, the participants affirmed a commitment to expanding cooperation across multiple political and economic spheres, including "governance, law enforcement, trade, connectivity, agriculture, energy, and technology."

"The European Union and the United States acknowledged the substantial progress Armenia has made since 2018 on democratic and justice reforms and the fight against corruption, and expressed a commitment to continue partnering with and supporting Armenia as it further strengthens its democracy and the rule of law, in line with our shared values and principles", the statement read.

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Baku Attacks Border Again, Blasts US-EU-Armenia Talks

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia accused Azerbaijan on April 6 of stepping up ceasefire violations along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border overnight following Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's talks with top US and European Union officials.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said Azerbaijani forces opened fire at its positions at multiple sections of the border. It reported an "active movement" of Azerbaijani military vehicles in one of those areas.

"It is noteworthy that during the night most of the gunshots fired by the Azerbaijani armed forces were non-targeted and sporadic," the ministry said in a statement.

The statement suggested that they tried to provoke the Armenian side to take "countermeasures" that could be used for substantiating the "recent Azerbaijani disinformation" about Armenian truce violations. Armenian troops "did not take actions contributing to further escalation," it said.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry condemned Azerbaijan's "provocative actions." It insisted that Armenia is "not interested in the escalation of the situation in the region."

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said, meanwhile, that its border troops came under cross-border Armenian fire on Friday night. It did not specify those locations.

Tension on the border began rising after Baku denounced US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen for deciding to hold a trilateral meeting with Pashinyan in Brussels on Friday. It accused the



Armenian soldier on the border with Azerbaijan. (Photo: Tom Videlo/OC Media)

Western powers of siding with Armenia. (See related story on this page.)

Both Blinken and von der Leyen telephoned Azerbaijani President Ilham Ali-

yev ahead of the Brussels talks. Aliyev insisted on Friday that the talks are "directed against Azerbaijan."

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Former NKR Official Nabbed for Espionage

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Armenia has detained a former Nagorno-Karabakh official on espionage charges following his move to Armenia months after the region's surrender.

News of Sargis Galstyan's arrest surfaced on Wednesday, April 3, with Armenia's Investigative Committee announcing the charges.

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FAST leaders and organizers

New York Armenian Community Joins Forces in Support of Armenia's Generation AI Educational Program

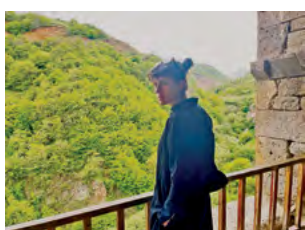
NEW YORK — The Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST) held its 2024 Advance Armenia New York Reception on April 4 at the Harvard Club in Manhattan. Under the slogan of "Nurturing Future AI Innovators," the event gathered the New York Armenian community and science and technology leaders in support of FAST's flagship educational program Generation AI.

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Pashinyan Speaks with German Chancellor

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On April 8, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan spoke with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz about the tensions in the region. In addition, issues related to Armenia-Germany cooperation, further development of Armenia-EU relations were discussed.

Pashinyan noted that Armenia is ready for solutions based on the principles agreed on October 6, 2022 in Prague, May 14 and July 15, 2023 in Brussels, as well as October 5, 2023 in Granada. Nikol Pashinyan described any attempt to distort these principles unacceptable.

Pashinyan thanked Scholz for supporting democratic reforms in Armenia, the development of Armenia-Germany, Armenia-EU relations.

U.S. 'Happy' to Play Role in Armenia-Azerbaijan Dialogue

WASHINGTON (Panorama.am) — The US is “happy” to play whatever role it can to facilitate the dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on April 8.

“We have made very clear that the path forward for resolving this conflict is ultimately at the bargaining table. I don’t want to speak to any upcoming meetings, but we have always made clear that we welcome dialogue,” he said.

“When the Secretary has communicated with the leaders of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, he has made clear that there needs to be dialogue between the two parties. We are happy to play whatever we – role we can to facilitate that dialogue and will continue to do so, but I don’t want to preview any specific upcoming meetings,” Miller added.

Vardanyan Nominated For Nobel Peace Prize

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Ruben Vardanyan, former Minister of State of Artsakh, co-founder of the Aurora humanitarian initiative, has been nominated for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize by a group of public and political figures, including a Nobel Laureate, Ruben Vardanyan’s office said on April 9.

“Ruben Vardanyan was nominated for this high award for the creation and support for around five dozen new and unprecedented educational, charitable, scientific and humanitarian structures not only in Armenia, but also in a number of other countries,” his office said.

The nominators mentioned his activities in besieged Artsakh, where Vardanyan invested a lot of effort.

“The fact that Ruben Vardanyan’s charity covers not only national, but also international levels, and has global influence and significance, was considered valuable. The Aurora humanitarian initiative – one of the major projects he authored, aims to help and reach out to all those who risk their lives to do good in all corners of the world, on all continents,” Vardanyan’s Office said.

Council of Europe General Secretary Visits Armenia

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Marija Pejcinovic Buric, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, pledged continued support of her organization to Armenia as she visited Yerevan on Monday, April 8.

In her post on X (formerly Twitter), Buric described her meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan as “excellent.”

“The Council of Europe will continue to support Armenia in its reform process,” she wrote.

According to Pashinyan’s office, during the meeting the Armenian prime minister, in particular, presented the principles of the Crossroads of Peace, a program of regional connectivity and dialogue with neighboring countries that is being promoted by official Yerevan.

Pashinyan also reportedly emphasized the role of the Council of Europe in addressing the problems of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians and providing relevant international support.

Yerevan says more than 100,000 Armenians were forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh after Azerbaijan carried out a one-day military offensive to establish full control of the region last September.

While in Yerevan, Pejcinovic Buric also met with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan.

Mirzoyan’s office said that cooperation between Armenia and the Council of Europe as well as issues of regional stability were discussed during the meeting.

It said the sides exchanged views on addressing “the mid-term and long-term needs” of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians.

The Armenian minister and the visiting secretary general of the Council of Europe also reportedly touched upon steps aimed at establishing a sustainable and lasting peace in the South Caucasus.

While in Yerevan Pejcinovic Buric also met with Armenian Parliament Speaker Alen Simonian.

Late last year Pejcinovic Buric also visited Baku where she met with Azerbaijan’s president and foreign minister.

During her meeting with President Ilham Aliyev, the secretary general of the Council of Europe welcomed the ongoing dialogue between Baku and Yerevan regarding a peace treaty and the agreement reached between the two governments regarding the

mandating that the Council of Europe take action to get 23 Armenians currently imprisoned in Baku, including former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, released.

Opposition activists are holding a protest as the secretary general of the Council of Europe visits Yerevan, April 8, 2024.

The Armenian opposition also demanded that the Council of Europe put pressure on the leadership in Yerevan to release those it claims to be political prisoners in Armenia.

“The demand is very clear. It must be stat-



Secretary General of Council of Europe Marija Pejcinovic Buric meets Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan.

release of detainees.

As a result of the agreement announced by Azerbaijan and Armenia last December, Baku released 32 Armenian prisoners, while Yerevan handed over two detainees to Azerbaijan.

The visiting Council of Europe official today declined to comment on what the organization is doing in terms of getting the other Armenian detainees held in Baku released.

A group of Armenian opposition members held a protest in Yerevan today, de-

ed that, yes, citizens exercising their right to free speech in the Republic of Armenia are persecuted, and it is a case of political persecution, therefore they are political prisoners,” Aspram Krpeyan, a member of the opposition Hayastan faction in the Armenian parliament, said during the protest in front of the Foreign Ministry building.

The Armenian government says there are no political prisoners in the country. Leading international human rights groups do not confirm the presence of any political prisoners in Armenia either.

Former Karabakh Official Detained for Espionage

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They stated that Galstyan, who previously had held several official positions in Nagorno-Karabakh, was arrested whilst moving from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Armenian media reported Galstyan was arrested in Syunik.

While not divulging their identities, the International Committee of the Red Cross confirmed on Wednesday that they had escorted two people from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia on 29 March. Media in Armenia have speculated that the two were Galstyan and his wife, Margarita Shahnazaryan.

In October of last year, Tatul Hakobyan, a journalist from Armenia, reported that Azerbaijan had appointed Galstyan as Stepanakert’s “commandant.” Hakobyan additionally reported that Galstyan had previously held several positions in Nagorno-Karabakh’s former government — including in its National Security Service — and had enjoyed good relations with former presidents Bako Sahakyan and Samvel Shahramanyan.

Galstyan was also appointed deputy head of the presidential staff by Shahramanyan’s decree in September.

With all but a handful of the region’s Armenian population fleeing to Armenia following Nagorno-Karabakh’s surrender

to Azerbaijan in September of last year, Galstyan and his wife were one of the few Armenians who remained in the region. The territories previously inhabited by over 100,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh have since been largely deserted.

In an interview with RFE/RL, Nagorno-Karabakh’s former Human Rights Defender Gegham Stepanyan stated that the charges brought against Galstyan could be because of his rumored appointment as commandant in Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan, his decision to stay in the region following its surrender, or his posts on social media.

Stepanyan told RFE/RL in December that Baku sponsored content created by the few of the region’s remaining population to influence Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians to return.

He added that Galstyan’s wife had been posting videos from the deserted region stating it was safe.

However, Galstyan’s nephew, Davit Galstyan, the leader of Nagorno-Karabakh’s opposition Ardarutyun faction, has denied that his uncle was appointed as a commandant. He suggested that he stayed in the region to help other Armenians who remained.

(This article originally appeared in OC Media on April 6.)

Baku Attacks Border Again, Blasts US-EU-Armenia Talks

BORDER, from page 1

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Friday denounced the United States and the European Union for holding high-level trilateral negotiations with Armenia, saying that they are “directed against Azerbaijan.”

The Defense Ministry in Yerevan on April 5 described as “disinformation” Baku’s claims that the Armenian army again violated the ceasefire. It said Azerbaijani forces themselves opened fire at Armenian positions at two border sections. Armenian officials and pundits have suggested that the Azerbaijani side is heightening tensions on the border in response to the Brussels talks.

According to the US State Department, Blinken also told Aliyev on April 4 that “there is no justification for increased tension on the border” and warned against “aggressive actions and rhetoric from any side.”



ARMENIA

Bridges of Service Helps Diaspora Armenians Contribute to Homeland Resilience at Critical Time

YEREVAN — The fabric of Armenia's societal and cultural landscape is richly woven with the threads of its diaspora, individuals scattered across the globe yet united by a common heritage and, for many, a deep-seated desire to contribute to the well-being of their homeland. In these pivotal times, as Armenia and the Armenian nation find themselves at a critical juncture, facing numerous challenges that test their resilience and unity, the role of the diaspora becomes ever more crucial.

The Armenian Volunteer Corps (AVC) serves as a vital conduit for this desire, facilitating a bridge back to Armenia for those yearning to reconnect through service. Within this context emerge the stories of three volunteers — Gevorg Martirosyan, Brigitta Davidjants and Linda Haddad. Through their dedication, resilience and sense of duty, these volunteers exemplify the significant role the diaspora plays in shaping Armenia's future, painting a vivid narrative of hope, contribution, and interconnectedness.

Amidst the ongoing humanitarian crises following the ethnic cleansing of Art-

of Regions NGO, stands out as his most cherished accomplishment. Witnessing the demotivation among young men from various regions, particularly concerning their impending military service, struck a chord with him.

"I hoped to open their eyes to the realities and opportunities within Armenia, countering the notion that prospects are invariably better abroad," he reflects.

Brigitta Davidjants, who holds a doctorate in musicology from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, came to Armenia with her partner and three children. She embarked on a unique journey, driven by a dual mission of exploring her heritage and utilizing her academic and journalistic skills to foster understanding and advocate for Armenia's complex socio-political landscape. Her engagement through AVC was a professional endeavor and a personal quest to bridge the gap between her Armenian identity and her life in Estonia. "Like many other diasporan Armenians, coming to Armenia, I wondered if I could be helpful in the current situation," she says.

Placed with CivilNet, a prominent Armenian online television and media platform, Davidjants contributed articles on Armenian-Estonian relations, the Armenian Genocide and the Armenian diaspora in Estonia. Beyond CivilNet, Brigitta's engagement with Rerooted offered her a chance to document the harrowing experiences of refugees who had escaped Baku. This work involved conducting in-depth interviews and transforming these conversations into compelling narratives that shed light on the human cost of conflict.

Her time in Armenia was not without its challenges. Balancing her professional commitments with her role as a mother and partner, she navigated the complexities of living and working in a new environment.

Throughout her stay, Davtjants built a network among local journalists; this network, she believes, will be instrumental in her continued efforts to advocate for Armenia and bring its stories to a broader audience.

Linda Haddad, a management professional originally from Lebanon and now



Brigitta Davidjants discovering Armenia

living in Italy, exemplifies the impact that strategic thinking and a deep commitment to Armenia can have through volunteerism. Her journey with the AVC leveraged her background in project management, strategy, finance, process optimization and marketing to make a tangible difference. "Watching the recent events unfold from afar was nothing short of devastating. Like every Armenian, both within and outside Armenia, I was driven by a deep desire to help in any way I could," Haddad explained.

Upon arriving in Armenia, she immersed herself in various projects. At Arvestaran Creative Development Center, she worked on developing a marketing and business plan for a new product launch. Like Martirosyan, she collaborated with Traveling Doctors, which revealed another dimension of Haddad's impact. There, she provided crucial support in planning projects, developing presentations, and enhancing the organization's social media presence. Her efforts were pivotal in streamlining operations and increasing the organization's outreach, directly affecting its ability to serve communities in need. Linda's strategic insights were also valuable in supporting the Nork Marash Elderly Home, where she witnessed the challenging conditions faced by the elders and took proactive steps to address them.

Her work also extended to the Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ), where she translated and transcribed testimonies related to recent atrocities in Artsakh. Though emotionally taxing, this task was crucial for documenting human rights abuses and seeking justice. "The work with CFTJ was a stark reminder of the ongoing struggles Armenia faces.

Beyond her professional contributions, Linda's volunteer experience was a journey of personal rediscovery and connection. Returning to Armenia after obtaining citizenship and previously volunteering through Birthright Armenia, she found new ways to deepen her ties to the country and its people. Linda reflects on her time in Armenia with a forward-looking perspective, contemplating ways to maintain her connection to Armenia and continue contributing from abroad.

The experiences of the three volunteers underscore the significance of diaspora engagement in Armenia's journey towards a brighter future, especially as Armenia and the Armenian nation stand at a critical juncture, facing challenging times today, reflects AVC's Executive Director Arina Zohrabian. "By leveraging their unique skills, experiences, and perspectives, diaspora volunteers not only contribute to immediate needs but also help lay the groundwork for long-term progress and sustainability," she said.

As these stories of individual commitment and collective impact unfold, they inspire a new generation of diaspora Armenians to explore how they, too, can contribute to Armenia's ongoing story of growth and resilience. AVC stands at the forefront of this movement, facilitating connections that address current challenges and nurture a legacy of cooperation and mutual support between Armenia and the diaspora.

Through this lens, an action emerges as a call to deep, personal involvement: to come and move mountains, one experience at a time. It's an invitation for those looking to make a tangible difference and to be part of a collective effort that shapes the future of Armenia and transforms the individual.

Through their actions, aspirations, and achievements, volunteers illuminate the path for others, demonstrating that the journey of giving back is not just about the impact on the ground—it's also about the personal transformations that occur when one connects deeply with their heritage and contributes to its flourishing.



Gevorg Martirosyan mentoring children in Yeghvard (town in Kotayk Province of Armenia) with Children of Regions NGO

sakh's native Armenian population, American-Armenian Gevorg Martirosyan, 33, who holds a doctorate in pharmacy and an MBA, found himself drawn to Armenia with a purpose that transcended mere assistance. His placement, working with Traveling Doctors, provided immediate relief and helped put down the foundations for enduring healthcare resilience. Martirosyan embarked on this endeavor in late 2023, armed with four suitcases filled with medical supplies which were then meticulously transformed into 100 first aid kits and distributed to families displaced from Artsakh.

The heart of his work, however, was in his role as an educator. Over the span of his stay, he trained more than 140 medical professionals across Yerevan and Gyumri. These sessions were carefully planned and executed to ensure the highest impact, catering to a diverse audience that included ambulance doctors, emergency medicine residents, and pediatric nurses, among others.

Martirosyan's involvement also extended to strategic consultations for Traveling Doctors, where he advised on organizational structure, team expansion, and effective branding.

Personally, for him, his engagement in an International Volunteer Day event, where he mentored youth through the Children



From left to right Linda Haddad, Gevorg Martirosyan and Céline Terzian volunteered for Traveling Doctors.



ARMENIA

The Armenia Project Raises Global Awareness about Country

YEREVAN — The Armenia Project (TAP), a new non-profit focused on journalism, media and communications, announced its official launch on April 4 and unveiled its website, www.armeniaproject.org. This announcement follows a soft launch in 2023 that has already made significant strides in telling Armenia's complex and fascinating story with the broad mission of promoting the country's democratic and economic development.

Based in Armenia with a growing global network, TAP was founded with three core areas of focus: facilitating journalist travel from across the globe to report on Armenia firsthand; impactful storytelling about Armenia's rich culture, heritage and geopolitical realities, in traditional and new media; and investing in young journalists, influencers and media professionals, both in-country and from

kian Foundation collaborating with a small team of global communications professionals working together as volunteers. TAP continues to partner with the Tufenkian Foundation on related projects.

In the months since its soft launch, TAP has spearheaded a series of initiatives that have shed light on regional geopolitical dynamics, Armenia's cultural richness, its growing tech sector and its thriving tourism landscape. These are all in marked contrast to the familiar but oversimplified and incomplete narrative of a small, landlocked former Soviet Republic beset by conflicts with neighbors.

TAP's notable achievements to date include facilitating trips for journalists from diverse backgrounds, countering the relative lack of foreign media presence in Armenia. These visits have begun elevating Armenia's profile on a

cally and impactfully change all that."

TAP's commitment to education and professional development is evident in an ongoing series of workshops, panels and webinars, which have drawn the participation of journalists, academics and thought leaders. Among them was a state-of-journalism webinar in November 2023, "Gaza, Ukraine, and Nagorno-Karabakh: The Challenges of Covering Conflict Today," held in collaboration with the American University of Armenia Media Lab and the Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, and a lecture just last month titled "The Fake-News Quagmire: Why We're in It and How to Get Out." Training sessions have included workshops on how to engage journalists on newsworthy stories, how to develop thoughtful, timely and relevant opinion pieces, how to seed Armenia's story across the burgeoning social media ecosystem, and how local journalists can get published in the international media.

TAP board member Tatiana Der Avedissian, a communications and sustainability expert who volunteers her time to support multiple charitable endeavors, reinforced the importance of bridging the knowledge gap about Armenia through education and storytelling. "Armenia's charm lures you in as soon as you're on the ground. We want to ensure that as many journalists and thought leaders as possible, including the leaders of tomorrow, experience Armenia. The country boasts a remarkable history dating back thousands of years, a fantastic contemporary culture and thriving economy that make it such an appealing place to visit again and again. Only through powerful storytelling and engagement can the world understand the true wonder of Armenia."

TAP's other early achievements include serving as an advisor to international and local organizations operating in the communications space in Armenia, providing strategic and practical guidance from TAP's global network.

It has nurtured the next generation of journalists through TAP's international internship program. To date TAP has hosted interns from prestigious universities and journalism programs, including University of Southern California's Annenberg School, the Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, and King's College London, facilitating valuable hands-on experiences and forging strong partnerships. TAP aims to expand its internship program and welcome four new interns in the summer of 2024.

TAP has placed full-page advertisements in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* during the UN General Assembly and US Senate hearings on Azerbaijan's blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023.

It has established a voice in important discussions through close collaborations with Armenia-based English-language news sites EVN Report and CivilNet and the American University of Armenia's new Media Lab to advise external partners in the communications space as they develop their own Armenia-related projects. It also enhanced the capabilities of communications and public relations professionals striving to elevate global storytelling and strategic communications efforts about Armenia.



TAP Open Lecture by Sohrab Ahmari (photo American University of Armenia)

abroad, through internships, trainings and mentoring.

"Armenia is a nascent democracy that boasts a vibrant economy, spectacular cultural heritage and stunning natural beauty," said Edele Hovnanian, president of the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation, which founded TAP as the first organization of its kind. "Our goal is to seed that inspiring story globally and support journalists, media professionals, researchers and students to learn more about this extraordinarily unique country, and to develop the connections to ensure that Armenia's perspective, along with its regional and geopolitical realities, are covered accurately in the Western media."

The idea behind TAP was incubated shortly after the 2020 War by the H. Hovnanian Foundation and the Tufen-

global stage and fostering a deeper understanding of its challenges and opportunities. TAP has also helped publish op-eds and articles in leading international news outlets and major media; these pieces were further amplified on social media.

"There is much more to Armenia than headlines about conflict and unfair media coverage driven by the misinformation put forth by neighboring aggressors," explained TAP board chair Arda Nazerian, a strategic communications advisor who has long volunteered her professional skills to Armenian causes she's passionate about. "For years, many of us knew that accurate, timely and relevant stories about Armenia weren't being told, for many reasons. TAP is working strategically to patiently, methodically

Armenia Highlights Sticking Points in Peace Talks with Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Yerevan and Baku have reached several mutual agreements as part of their negotiations on a peace treaty, but they remain divided on two main issues, according to Armenia's top diplomat.

"We really have a historic opportunity to establish lasting peace in the South Caucasus. Armenia is committed to the peace agenda and approaches all issues constructively in negotiations. We have already reached a number of mutual agreements in our negotiations on the signing of a peace treaty. Unfortunately, there are two main issues where the visions of the parties are still far from each other," Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan told Armenia's Public Television late (via RFE/RL's Armenian Service) on Saturday, April 6.

He said the first sticking point concerned the mutual recognition of territorial integrity and the further border delimitation process, while the second was the vision of the unblocking of transport links and infrastructure in the region.

"We had agreed several times at the highest level, at least three or four times there were meetings where the parties agreed, reaffirmed the recognition of each other's territorial integrity on the basis of the [1991] Alma-Ata Declaration and agreed that the border delimitation will take place on the basis of the Alma-Ata Declaration.

"It is also strange for me that when we try to reflect this agreement, to refer to this declaration in the context of territorial integrity and border delimitation in the draft treaty, we see reluctance on the part of Azerbaijan," Mirzoyan said.

He expressed hope that in the near future the sides will be able to reach a strong mutual understanding on this issue.

Commenting on the April 5 trilateral

meeting in Brussels between European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Mirzoyan said that no military component was discussed there.

As a result of the meeting, the European Union and the United States unveiled an aid package to Armenia to show support for its efforts to deepen ties with the West.

Von der Leyen and Blinken said the aid will help the South Caucasus nation increase its "resilience" and "diversify" its economy, which is heavily dependent on Russia.

Mirzoyan also stressed that the statement issued by the parties after the meeting referred to no military component.

"However, increasing the resilience of Armenia eventually becomes the resilience of the security sphere, and we plan in the future to interact more closely with

the European Union and deepen our bilateral relations, for which there are corresponding directions," Mirzoyan said.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Friday denounced the United States and the European Union for holding high-level trilateral negotiations with Armenia, saying that they are "directed against Azerbaijan."

Tensions along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan began to grow hours after the Brussels meeting, with both sides accusing each other of violating the ceasefire.

In a statement issued on Saturday, Armenia's Foreign Ministry said that the intention of Azerbaijan's sporadic fire was to goad Armenian units into responsive measures, potentially to validate further escalation. It called on Azerbaijan to desist from actions conducive to such escalation.



INTERNATIONAL



An improvised barricade covered with barbed wire. In the background, the tent of activists from the "Save the Armenian Quarter" (ArQ) association who are guarding the "Cow's Garden" parking lot. (photo: Marinella Bandini)

New Episode Involving Land Dispute Shakes Armenian Community in Jerusalem Again

JERUSALEM (*National Catholic Register*) — In the shadow of the war in Gaza, attacks, abuses, and violations by radical groups and sometimes also by law enforcement are taking place and often take a back seat.

A new episode of violence involving a land dispute has shaken the Armenian community in Jerusalem once again.

According to a communique from the Chancellery of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate of Jerusalem, on April 3 at about 11 a.m. "an unlawful eviction was initiated by Israeli police on the grounds of the Cows' Garden" located within the premises of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The stated purpose of this action was to remove the temporary rooms belonging to guards at the main entrance of the parking lot, but "permits or court orders were not presented."

The area known as Cows' Garden is a property located in the southeast corner of the Old City of Jerusalem and constitutes approximately 25% of the Armenian Quarter's total area. It has long been at the center of a legal dispute after a deal was secretly signed in 2021 between the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the real estate company Xana Gardens, with alleged links to Israeli settler interests, for a 49+49-year lease of the property to build a luxury hotel.

According to the "Save the Armenian Quarter" (ArQ) association — a nonviolent movement created to defend properties of the Armenian Patriarchate and represent the Armenian community — the contract is illegal and jeopardizes the existence of the Armenian community in the Holy Land.

What happened April 3 was a sudden escalation of the conflict due to direct intervention by the police, according to a statement by the ArQ. "Israeli settlers representing Xana Gardens were escorted by

the Israeli Police into the Cows' Garden. ... This action blatantly disregards the ongoing legal processes and undermines the established status quo," the statement said.

After the raid, in which no one was hurt, the Armenian Patriarchate and the Armenian community strongly condemned the police, accusing them of "flagrant violation of legal norms," "aggressive interference," and "trampling on the rights of the Armenian community." Such actions, continues the statement from ArQ, "mark a severe overstep by Israeli law enforcement authorities and an alarming infringement on the property and communal rights of the Armenians."

The Armenian Patriarchate asked for "answers from the Israeli police and the Israeli government for their participation in the event. Today's provocations are an attempt to set a precedent against the Armenian Quarter and its lawful lands."

Since April 2023, several legal actions have been taken both by the Armenian Patriarchate and the ArQ. In particular, two lawsuits were filed before the Jerusalem District Court by the Armenian Patriarchate and by the ArQ to challenge the validity of the agreement.

At a press conference on the evening of the events, Setrag Balian and Hagop Djernazian, the founders of the ArQ, shared some previously unknown details about the two legal proceedings.

On December 26, 2023, the Armenian Patriarchate officially took legal action against Xana Garden, submitting a lawsuit. Even more significant is the legal case initiated by the ArQ on Feb. 18. One of the group's arguments, Balian highlighted, is that "this land is a 'waqf'; this land is a trust, this land is an endowment."

A waqf in Islamic law is a charitable endowment held in trust in which a person donates property or assets for charitable

or benevolent purposes. The act of donation is often considered legally irrevocable because it implies the complete transfer of ownership rights from the hands of the donor to the hands of God: The property can't be sold, bought, inherited, gifted, mortgaged, or transferred. The only exception allowed is if the property ceases to serve the purpose for which it was intended.

Regarding the Cows' Garden, Balian said that "this trust was established in 1575 by the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Antreas, who bought this land with his own funds and made a waqf for the interest and benefit of the Armenian Christian community in Jerusalem." Balian considers this a strong argument, because "the trust, legally cannot be sold or leased."

"We will not accept any future encroachment on this land and we expect Israeli authorities and Israeli police to respect the two lawsuits pending in the Jerusalem District Court," Djernazian added. "You cannot come out of nowhere and just change the status quo on the ground. You cannot use the current situation and the war to change facts on the ground. This is unacceptable."

In the shadow of the war in Gaza, in fact, attacks, abuses, and violations by radical groups and sometimes also by law enforcement are taking place and often take a back seat.

That's why both the Patriarchate and the Armenian community have renewed the appeal not only to the Heads of Churches and all the Christians around the world but also to diplomatic representatives and the international community to stand with the Jerusalemite Armenian community in these difficult times.

"Losing this land," Djernazian said, "puts in danger the entire Christian community and entire Christian presence in Jerusalem."

INTERNATIONAL

Former Turkish FM Says Country Stands With Azerbaijan

ANKARA (news.am) — Former Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on April 8 spoke about the results of the Armenia-EU-US meeting last week in Brussels.

He claimed that if the West is inciting war by strengthening Armenia again, then Turkey is on Azerbaijan's side.

He emphasized that if the West gives one, Turkey will give Azerbaijan three.

According to Cavusoglu, Azerbaijan has not set its sights on the lands of Armenia, it needed its own land, which it brought back.

Artsakh Defense Committee Decries Judicial Appointments

YEREVAN (news.am) — On March 8, 2024, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan signed a decree appointing a judge and president for the city court in Stepanakert, the capital of the occupied Artsakh Republic. We believe that these appointments harbor far-reaching, sinister intentions aimed at initiating the illegal process of property confiscation and the prosecution of individuals. The Committee for the Defense of the Fundamental Rights of the People of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) noted this in a statement it issued Tuesday. The statement continues as follows:

"Any political appointment within any city or region of occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, particularly in the absence of a population forcibly expelled from their homes under the threat of ethnic cleansing and genocide, is both illegal and condemnable.

In addition, we denounce other political appointments made by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, which further illustrate a systematic disregard for the democratic will and rights of the indigenous Nagorno-Karabakh people. These actions by Azerbaijan not only contravene the principles of self-determination and democratic governance but also starkly illustrate the absence of genuine efforts to reflect the will of the Nagorno-Karabakh people in the region's political and administrative processes.

We are also deeply disappointed with the withdrawal of the Mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross from Nagorno-Karabakh. Without the ICRC, the only international presence on site, Azerbaijan's hands will be completely free to do what it wishes to, something it was aiming at for a long time.

While the current situation in Nagorno-Karabakh does not favor a safe return, international law protects the right of forcibly displaced people to their territory of origin. This right is recognized as a customary norm of international law, human rights law, and international humanitarian law, and it is protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and numerous other international conventions and declarations.



INTERNATIONAL

Lemkin Institute Calls for Protection of Armenian Lands and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem

The Lemkin Institute said in a statement on April 9 it is dismayed by the recent assault on and incursion into the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem by Israeli police and settlers.

In January 2024, the Lemkin Institute published a statement condemning the attack on the Armenian Quarter in East Jerusalem by armed mobs associated with

an Israeli-Australian businessman, Danny Rubenstein.

“This recent assault follows the Israeli state’s repeated attempts to evict indigenous Armenians from the Quarter. Amid the ongoing provocations by Azerbaijan against the Republic of Armenia in the South Caucasus, this attack represents another effort to compromise Armenian autonomy and sovereignty. The disturbing level of Armenophobia present in genocidal regimes from Azerbaijan to Israel is alarming and places Armenians in a state of constant peril,” the Lemkin Institute said.

“The Armenian community in Jerusalem, specifically the Patriarchate, acts as a crucial custodian of Christian holy sites in the city, representing both Christian and Armenian culture in Jerusalem. Attempts to buy land at the heart of the Quarter mirror a past scandal involving the Greek Orthodox Church, in which the Church sold two Palestinian-run hotels to foreign companies acting as a front for Jewish settlers. The sale generated uproar and concern around the globe, resulting in the ousting of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Irenaios I,” it added.

The Institute highlights that the 1,600-year-old Armenian community residing in the historic Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem has been embroiled in a tense standoff against armed settlers since last summer. The conflict escalated following the revelation that the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem had struck a previously undisclosed land lease deal with Xana Gardens, a real estate company allegedly associated with settler interests, to develop a luxury hotel in the “Cows’ Garden” area, which encompasses crucial parts of

the Armenian Quarter. The community, already grappling with a significant decline in population over the years, reacted with outrage upon learning about the details of the deal.

“On October 26, 2023, the leader of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem announced the cancellation of the land lease deal. Yet, tensions at the Cows’ Garden continue to remain high. Representatives from Xana Gardens have sent contractors, armed settlers, and bulldozers to seize the land – which, along with the parking lot, includes Armenian Church property and the homes of the Nalbandian family as well as four others. These provocations have led to numerous confrontations, including altercations between armed settlers and Armenian residents. For months, Armenian community members in Jerusalem have peacefully camped in the Cows’ Garden to protect the Armenian Quarter from settler incursions. The peaceful protestors have often been met with violent force by Israeli settlers and police, with Armenians frequently being injured or arrested. In February, the Armenian community of Jerusalem officially launched a lawsuit to invalidate the real estate deal negotiated by the Patriarch.

“The attack on Wednesday, April 3, took place at 11am with an incursion by Israeli police and settlers into the Cows’ Garden. No permits or court orders were shown. Subsequently, there were illegal evictions and damage inflicted on Armenian Patriarchate assets, as well as attacks targeting religious figures and native Armenians. Assaf Harel was the commanding officer overseeing the eviction.

“The Armenian community, deeply rooted in the Old City for centuries, sees the

attempted land takeover as an existential threat to its cultural heritage and identity. Residents fear that losing control over the Cows’ Garden area would jeopardize their homes and undermine the historical significance of the Armenian Quarter, which has served as a refuge for Armenians for centuries.

“The Armenian community’s determination to safeguard its land and heritage has garnered widespread local and international support. In response to ongoing demolition attempts and intimidation tactics by Xana Gardens and its associates, the Armenian residents have demonstrated remarkable resilience and solidarity while organizing protests, maintaining a constant presence in the disputed area, and refusing to back down despite facing arrests and threats from Israeli authorities and settlers.

“The Lemkin Institute calls for the protection of historically and culturally Armenian land and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. “The continued effort to dispossess the Armenian community from their ancestral and historic lands in Jerusalem is fueled by the same eliminationist and settler-colonial process we see throughout the West Bank. The Lemkin Institute calls on Israeli courts to immediately invalidate any deal between the Armenian Patriarchate and Xana Gardens. Further, we demand the Israeli authorities respect the minority rights of Armenians and Christians throughout Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Israel. Whether the targets are Palestinian Muslims or Armenian Christians, Israel must cease all efforts to expand Jewish settlements at the expense of non-Jews and commit to the protection of all peoples and faiths throughout the region.”

Turkey Strives to Cement Position as Key Cog in East-West trade

Turkey is pressing ahead with a tripartite agreement with Georgia and Azerbaijan, aiming to speed freight rail traffic along a Middle Corridor trade route connecting China and Europe via the Caspian Sea.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed a memorandum of understanding on April 7 that aims to simplify customs procedures along the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, one of the rail routes that carry goods from Azerbaijani ports on the Caspian to markets in Europe. Erdogan did not release a statement about the signing, but speaking at the railroad’s opening ceremony in 2017, he said the route can promote “political peace, security and stability, and social prosperity.”

Turkey is seeking to solidify its role as a mainstay in the Middle Corridor web of trade routes. An alternate route traverses the Black Sea between Georgia and Romania, but it is unappealing at the moment due to the war in Ukraine. Georgia, for its part, is betting on a big increase in demand over both routes, signing onto initiatives like the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars customs agreement, while also building a deepwater port.

The goal for Erdogan is to maintain Turkey’s historic role as a nexus of East-West trade. Last year, Erdogan felt he was snubbed by the Western leaders after a handful of countries signed plans for a trade corridor bypassing Turkey at the G20 meeting in September. Speaking to reporters after the summit on September 11, he insisted East-West trade needs Turkey to thrive. “Türkiye is an important production and trade base,” he said. “The most convenient line for east-to-west traffic has to pass through Türkiye.”

The MoU that Erdogan signed includes specifications to coordinate customs inspection across the three countries, implementation of which will be overseen by a new commission. If all goes according to plan, this streamlining will help Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan reap the benefits of an expected tripling in Middle Corridor trade volume by 2030.

Azerbaijan and Georgia recently completed upgrades on the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars route to handle expanded traffic. By signing the MoU, Erdogan is putting the Middle Corridor on Turkey’s front burner. The agreement plugs important gaps hindering the rail route’s utility: the lack of standard customs procedures to date has hindered traffic. According to a World Bank report from 2023, the sheer number of state operating agencies among countries along the route constituted a “source of friction, adding to costs and poor reliability.”

(This article originally appeared in www.eurasianet.org on April 9.)

European Union, U.S. Woo Armenia With Economic Package

ASSISTANCE, from page 1

Describing EU-Armenian relations as “increasingly aligned,” Van der Leyen also praised Armenia’s efforts to combat sanctions-busting trade that helps the Kremlin prosecute its war against Ukraine. Pashinyan and other Armenian leaders in recent months have expressed interest in exploring EU accession.

US assistance, it appears, will focus on building Armenian “resilience” following the loss of Karabakh. Specifically, Washington’s assistance will help Armenia cope with a refugee surge and withstand expected Russian pressure to prevent Armenia’s geopolitical realignment. USAID Administrator Samantha Power also attended the April 5 gathering in Brussels.

“The United States will work with Armenia to ... increase cybersecurity cooperation, and expand technology infrastructure,” the joint statement noted, adding that the US is “committed to Armenia’s safe, reliable, and secure energy future and is working to support energy diversification and explore the feasibility of new civil nuclear power options.”

Armenia was a key Russian ally until 2018, when Pashinyan rose to power amid a popular uprising and proceeded to engage the EU and US as part of a reform effort to make his government more efficient and less corrupt. A turning point occurred in 2022, when, amid Azerbaijan’s push to retake Karabakh, Russia, in the eyes of many Armenians, failed to live up to security guarantees it had given Yerevan. Since

then, Pashinyan has steered the country on a steady Western course.

To no one’s surprise, news of the EU-US aid package received a chilly reception in Moscow and Baku. Russia’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement characterizing the meeting as another attempt by the “collective West” to ratchet up tension in the South Caucasus, which the Kremlin has long considered to be its geopolitical backyard. It described the aid package as “irresponsible and destructive” while cautioning that pressing ahead with helping Armenia implement reforms could have “negative consequences.”

Azerbaijan, meanwhile, voiced concern that EU assistance for Armenia threatened to compromise Brussels’ ability to mediate a lasting peace settlement between Baku and Yerevan.

Against the backdrop of the Armenia-EU-US meeting on April 5, building pressure burst along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Both sides accused the other of ceasefire violations, with sporadic gunfire reported at multiple sections of the heavily militarized frontier.

The Armenian Defense Ministry condemned Azerbaijan’s provocative actions, alleging cross-border firing targeted at Armenian positions and civilian infrastructure.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process is currently snagged on a dispute over possession of villages in disputed areas of the border. Hoping to break the deadlock, Pashinyan announced unilateral concessions to Azerbaijan, agreeing to hand over

abandoned Azerbaijani villages controlled by Yerevan since the 1990s without demanding an exchange for similar Armenian areas controlled by Azerbaijan. The transfer has the potential to disrupt the ability of Armenians to travel on a highway linking Armenia to Georgia. Pipelines carrying Russian natural gas to Armenia are also located near the soon-to-be-retained villages. Pashinyan’s proposal has, accordingly, generated lots of domestic pushback from various constituencies.

With Baku unhappy about the pace of the handover, both sides now appear to be massing troops on the border. On April 6, the EU’s civilian monitoring mission in Armenia reported that the situation was “stable and calm.” (See related story on page 1.)

Back in Brussels, some influential policy voices are urging the EU to pick up the pace of its efforts to support Armenia’s reorientation. “This reorientation takes time, but it also requires the European Union to adopt a more ambitious strategy towards Armenia’s democracy,” wrote former NATO Secretary-General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in a commentary published by the French daily *Le Monde*.

“Europe should play a role in mediating negotiations towards a lasting peace agreement. But its approach must reflect the reality that Armenia has chosen the community of European democracies, while Azerbaijan sits in the camp of aggressive autocracies,” Rasmussen said.

(This article originally appeared in [eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org) on April 8.)



Community News

Noted Australian Scholar to Be Keynote Speaker at Conn. Commemoration

HARTFORD, Conn. — The Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee will observe the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on Saturday April 27, at 10 a.m. at the Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Ave.

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Melanie O'Brien, President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, Associate Professor of international law at the University of Western Australia, Perth. She will speak on "Human Rights Violations in the Armenian Genocide."

O'Brien is Visiting Professor at the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota. Her most recent book is *From Discrimination to Death: Genocide Process through a Human Rights Lens*, and includes extensive research on the Armenian Genocide conducted in Armenia and Turkey.

Her work on forced marriage has been cited by the International Criminal Court, she has appeared before the ICC as an amica curia and been



Dr. Melanie O'Brien

an expert consultant for several UN bodies. She received a 10-year service medal for volunteering with the Australian Red Cross, and was awarded the Filon Ktenidis Award for her work on justice and recognition for victims of genocide. O'Brien has conducted research across six continents, and was recently a Research Fellow at the Sydney Jewish Museum and a Visiting Fellow at the University of Loughborough.

Melanie Kevorkian Brown, chairperson of the committee, stated that the committee is pleased to have someone with O'Brien's credentials and breadth of knowledge and understanding of the Armenian Genocide join us this year.

The mission of the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut, in addition to honoring the memory of the one and a half million victims and as well as survivors of the Armenian Genocide begun by the Ottoman government in 1915, is to support programs and events, itself or with other organizations, to inform the public and see CONNECTICUT, page 8



Professor Gottfried Hagen and undergraduate student David Ameriguan displaying Ottoman-era poster

University of Michigan to Host Second Annual Genocide Commemoration Community Gathering

By Vicken Mouradian

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — On April 24, from 3 to 5 p.m., campus students, faculty and community friends across Michigan are invited to participate in the University of Michigan's 2nd Annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration event. Organized by the Center for Armenian Studies (CAS), the event titled, "Shared Memories: The Armenian Experience through Objects and Stories," encourages community members to bring objects and stories that speaks to or connects them with their Armenian identity, all while enjoying a bounty of familiar foods!

Treasured items and narratives possess the ability to recount stories intertwined with the Armenian journey, the Armenian Genocide, and the unique experience of the Michigan-Armenian diaspora. They offer a poignant glimpse into the experiences and challenges faced by Armenians, whether in the Republic or dispersed across the globe. Each heirloom and story contributes to enriching the collective memory of the Armenian community, adding layers of depth to their shared history. see UMICHIGAN, page 9



Professor Michael Pifer presenting his family's story of a rug passed down to him

Dr. Elyse Semerdjian To Discuss New Book on Tattooed Women and Children Survivors of Genocide

FRESNO — Dr. Elyse Semerdjian will present a lecture on her latest book, *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide*, on Thursday, April 25, at 7 p.m., in the Smittcamp Alumni House on the Fresno State campus. The presentation is part of the Spring 2024 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program.

This exploration of the Armenian Genocide is told through the traces left in the memories and on the bodies of its women survivors. Foremost among the images of the Armenian Genocide is the specter of tattooed Islamized Armenian women. Blue tribal tattoos that covered face and body signified assimilation into Muslim Bedouin and Kurdish households. Among Armenians, the tattooed survivor was seen as a living ethno-martyr or, alternatively, a national stain, and the bodies of women and children figured centrally within the Armenian communal memory



Dr. Elyse Semerdjian

and humanitarian imaginary. In *Remnants*, these tattooed and scar-bearing bodies reveal a larger history, as the lived trauma of genocide is understood through bodies, skin, and — in what remains of those lives a century afterward — bones.

Semerdjian is Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. She is a social historian of the Ottoman Empire whose research focuses on the experiences of women and the empire's Armenian subjects. She is the author of "Off the Straight Path": *Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (Syracuse University Press, 2008) and *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide* (Stanford University Press, 2023) as well as several articles on gender, Ottoman Armenians, urban history, and law in the Ottoman Empire.

The lecture is free and open to the public. The Smittcamp Alumni House is located at 2625 E. Matoian Way.

The lecture will also be streamed on the Armenian Studies YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/armenian-studiesyoutube>.

Support for the presentation is provided by the Ralph Shabazian Armenian Memorial Fund.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Suspect Shant Soghomonian Arrested in Arson Attack on Bernie Sanders' Vermont office

By Edward Helmore

BURLINGTON, Vt. (*Guardian*) — Authorities say they have arrested an alleged arsonist accused of setting the US senator Bernie Sanders' Burlington, Vermont, office on fire while staff worked inside — but investigators have yet to release details about a possible a motive.

A Justice Department notification published on Sunday, April 7, said Shant Soghomonian, 35, had been charged with using fire to damage the building but did not include any reason for his alleged actions.

Soghomonian, who has also gone by the first name Michael, was listed as being from Northridge, Calif. He allegedly entered the building on Friday, April 5, went to the third floor where Sanders' offices are situated, and sprayed the entry door with an accelerant.

He then set fire to the door with a handheld lighter — all in view of a security camera that was recording video, the Justice Department said.

Soghomonian then left through a stair-

case as the fire spread, damaging the door and triggering the sprinkler system. Several employees were in the progressive senator's office at the time, though no injuries were reported.

The Burlington police department said the fire engulfing the door and part of the vestibule had impeded "staff members who were working in the office" from exiting, which endangered their lives.

In a statement to CNN, Sanders said: "I am deeply grateful to the swift, professional, coordinated efforts of local, state, and federal law enforcement in response to the fire at my Vermont office." The independent senator who votes in line with Democrats added that he was grateful none of his staff had been injured while describing his office's commitment to serve those in his home state of Vermont "during these challenging times".

If convicted, Soghomonian could face between five and 20 years in prison as well as up to a \$250,000 fine, according to the justice department.

While no motive has been advanced for

Soghomonian's alleged actions, the arson attack comes as implied threats of political violence are becoming a feature of the 2024 presidential and congressional elections.

Politicians on both sides of the aisle have in recent months been subjected to anonymous calls to law enforcement that invite an armed, potentially forceful emergency response.

In early January, it was reported that at least three members of Congress had reported "swatting" incidents over the previous week, including Representative Brandon Williams of New York, Senator Rick Scott of Florida, and Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, all Republicans.

Maine's Democratic secretary of state, Shenna Bellows, who ruled that Donald Trump should be ineligible to appear on the state's 2024 primary ballot after the former president's supporters attacked Congress on 6 January 2021, was also the target of a swatting call.

The US supreme court later forced Bellows to reverse her decision.



Shant Soghomonian

UCLA Armenian Music Program to Host Concert Commemorating Genocide

LOS ANGELES — In remembrance of the 1.5 million lives lost during the Armenian Genocide of 1915, the UCLA Armenian Music Program will present its annual musical performance at the Hammer Museum on Wednesday, April 17, at 7:30 p.m. The concert is co-presented by the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music and features works by Armenian classical composers from the late 19th century Ottoman period to the present.

The concert, titled "Intersections: Armenian Classical Composers," marks the tenth annual performance commemorating

the Genocide at the Hammer Museum. The program highlights the diversity of ethnic Armenian music spanning from the Ottoman Empire, Western Armenia, Soviet Armenia and the diaspora across the Levant and United States.

Featured performances include the UCLA VEM Ensemble and oudist Antranig Kzirian. The VEM Ensemble, the cornerstone of the established Armenian Music Program, was founded by UCLA Distinguished Professor of Violin Movses Pogossian.

The concert will feature music by Komi-

tas, Kemani Sebulh Simonyan, Kemani Tatyos Ekserciyan, Koharik Gazarossian, Tigran Mansurian and others.

The Armenian Music Program (AMP) at UCLA is directed by Prof. Melissa Bilal, the inaugural holder of the Promise Chair

in Armenian Music, Arts, and Culture.

The program is free and open to the public. For more information, visit the websites of the Hammer Museum at UCLA or the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music.

-Levon Karamanoukian



Oudist Antranig Kzirian

Noted Australian Scholar to Be Keynote Speaker at Connecticut Commemoration

CONNECTICUT, from page 7 remember the Genocide. It is in the process of establishing a suitable permanent Genocide Memorial. The committee also assists in the legislative mandate to provide Genocide related curricula in the public schools. Additionally, the committee seeks to present information about developments in the Diaspora and in Armenia.

Attorney Harry N .Mazadoorian of Kensington, a longtime member of the committee, pointed out that this year's commemoration will be particularly poignant because of continuing and escalated aggressions committed by the government of Azerbaijan in Artsakh where 120,000 ethnic Armenians have been displaced and where a brutal ethnic cleansing is underway. "The current situation in the region of Artsakh is essentially a continuation of the Genocide as physical aggressions, human rights violations and cultural desecration against ethnic Armenian continue. To make matters even worse, if that is pos-


sible, Azerbaijan continues to issue threats against the Republic of Armenia itself."

John C. Geragosian of New Britain, Connecticut State Auditor and a member of the committee, will serve as Master of Ceremonies at the commemoration. He stated that " while the commemoration remembers atrocities of the past, it also involves condemning genocidal acts of today and averting such actions in the future."

The program will conclude with the Martyrs' Service which was created in 2015 on the occasion of 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.

O'Brien is also scheduled to participate in a program sponsored by the Yale University Program on Genocide Studies on The Genocide Convention in International Courts, in New Haven on April 26.




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Tekeyan Cultural Association
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DAVID KARAMIAN
Keynote speaker, author and photographer



ARMENIA - THE LONE STONE
INVINCIBLE THROUGH THE AGES



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COMMUNITY NEWS



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ARTHUR ABOUSEFIAN

University of Michigan to Host Second Annual Genocide Commemoration Gathering

UMICHIGAN, from page 7

This is CAS's second year of commemorating the Genocide in this community forum. Piloting this new tradition in 2023, the gathering brought together a larger-than-expected audience. In addition to the familiar campus affiliates of students and faculty, community members from Ann Arbor and Metro-Detroit came to share old forgotten heirlooms, photos, books and stories passed down to them through generations. It was a touching gathering that reconnected many to their Armenian heritage and fostered a sense of appreciation for the Armenian Story.

When asked of the motivations behind organizing an event like this in lieu of a lecture or vigil, CAS director Gottfried Hagen responded, "For so many Armenians in this country, and here in Michigan, the Armenian Genocide is part of their identity and family story. These personal stories are inevitably submerged in the greater narratives that historians construct of these events. With this format we wanted to signal to all the members in the community that their own personal stories matter, and that there are others who want to hear them. We invite students, staff, and faculty, campus and community, to share their stories. Objects, documents, family heirlooms, often make it easier to get a start, and we were very pleased last year how many doors and hearts were opened."

After reading a passage in a Western Armenian text, Arakel Minassian, a PhD student in the Department of Comparative Literature expressed, "It was really nice

to gather as a community and remember what's been lost at the same time as we fostered a sense of living on in the present and future. I presented on the Armenian book that got me interested in studying Armenian literature in a PhD, and that way, I was trying to talk about some of the ways cultural survival manifests in our present."

This year's event, with more food, music and ultimately more stories, will be held on April 24, 3-5 p.m. at Weiser Hall Room 1010 on 500 Church St, Ann Arbor.



PhD student Arakel Minassian reading a passage from Western Armenian text

For more information visit the Center for Armenian Studies website at <https://ii.umich.edu/armenian> or email armenian-studies@umich.edu.

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ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR

New York Armenian Community Joins Forces in Support of Armenia's Generation AI Educational Program

FAST, from page 1

FAST launched Generation AI in September 2023 as a multi-layer educational and career pipeline for AI researchers and innovators starting at the high school level, currently piloting in 16 high schools across 7 regions of Armenia. Almost 400 tenth graders are studying advanced math, Python programming, and soon the foundations of artificial intelligence, preparing for future research and innovation careers and marking a significant step in strengthening Armenia's scientific and technological ca-



Dr. Garo Armen

capacity. Implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, the program aims to scale nationwide following its pilot phase.

Many leading figures in finance, education, science and tech were among the 200 guests in attendance, including members



Astghik Martirosyan sings.

of the FAST Board of Advisors Dr. Mary Papazian, Dr. Avak Kahvejian, and Ari Libarikian. The emcee of the evening, host of Nasdaq's Live From Marketsite and Miss Universe Armenia 2023 Ms. Kristina Ayanian, led an inspiring program, which included blessings from Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, discussions moderated by FAST's Vice President Suzanna Shamakhyan, remarks from the reception Host Committee co-chairs Roza Grigoryan Baroody and Elena Ratevossian, and musical performances from the Astghikner Vocal Ensemble of St. Gregory the Illuminator Mission Parish of Brooklyn and NY-based vocalist, composer, and pianist Astghik Martirosyan.

The founding CEO of FAST, Dr. Armen Orujyan, spoke on the foundation's vision and the importance of nurturing a new generation of AI specialists in Armenia. The co-founder and chairman of Moderna and the founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering, Dr. Noubar Afeyan, who is also the co-founder of FAST, emphasized this moment in time, "We can give our Armenian students the capabilities and the courage to play in artificial intelligence. That's within our power in the diaspora. What we can do is to enable the next generation to compete globally, and AI is a great place to do that. In human existence there has not been a tool that has helped us create, use, and amplify knowledge quite like artificial intelligence. This is why this moment matters."

In his keynote address, the renowned scientist, entrepreneur, and founder of the Children of Armenia Fund, Dr. Garo H. Armen, noted how Armenia can stand as a shining example of what is possible when a people unite behind a common cause, "Today we have a tremendous opportunity to create something extraordinary. But we can only do this when we work together and collaboratively. There is tremendous potential in Armenia. I'm confident that FAST programs will help unlock and propel the poten-



Members of the FAST Board of Advisors, from left, Dr. Mary Papazian, Dr. Avak Kahvejian, and Ari Libarikian at a discussion moderated by FAST's Vice President Suzanna Shamakhyan



Dr. Noubar Afeyan

tial of countless young Armenians to new heights. Let us work hand in hand, side by side, to create a future for every Armenian child where they have the opportunity to thrive and where innovation and education are the driving forces of our success."

More than \$350,000 was raised in support of the Generation AI program. The contributions will support 70 students on their 3-year educational journey by funding curriculum development, teacher training, and essential equipment for the study of artificial intelligence.

The New York reception was FAST's first in New York and part of the Advance Armenia Global Campaign attracting financial, intellectual and network resources in support of science and technology programs in Armenia. Previously holding events in Boston and Los Angeles, the campaign gives supporters in the worldwide Armenian Diaspora an opportunity to contribute to initiatives critical for the long-term sustainability of Armenia's scientific and technological ecosystem.



FAST founding CEO Dr. Armen Orujyan, left, with Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, the Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern

St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School Announces Summer Camp for 2024

WATERTOWN — St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School (SSAES) announced this week its Summer Camp program, which is scheduled to take place from July 1 to 26. The camp is designed to provide students with enriching experiences, educational opportunities, and memorable adventures during the summer break.

Intended for children ages 2.9 years through first grade students as of 2023-2024 school year, the SSAES Summer Camp weaves Armenian language through the day to reinforce and practice language skills. The SSAES Summer Camp offers a range of activities including science experiments, arts & crafts, music & movement, indoor and outdoor activities, story time, water play, and more! Parents can enroll their child(ren) for one week or more. The goal of the SSAES Summer Camp is to inspire curiosity, foster creativity, and promote per-

sonal growth among participants with fun experiences.

"We are excited to offer another enriching and engaging Summer Camp that combines academic enrichment with fun and memorable experiences for our students," said Dr. Garine Palandjian, principal of SSAES. "Our goal is to create a stimulating and supportive environment where students can learn, grow, and make lasting memories during the summer months." And SSAES Preschool Director Maral Orchanian reflects on previous participants' experiences, "Over the years, we've seen children who initially sign up for one week have so much fun that they end up signing up for additional weeks, if space is available."

Registration for the St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School (www.ssaes.org) Summer Program is now open. Interested parents and guardians are encouraged to contact the school.



Students enjoy recreation at last year's St. Stephen's summer camp.



TURKS AND AZERIS GUILTY OF Ethnic Cleansing



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2023



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COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU Pays Tribute to Panos Titizian's Lifetime Of Leadership in Armenian Affairs

GLENDALÉ — Community members and friends of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Western Region set aside an evening to honor Panos Titizian, a long-time champion of Armenian causes and interests. On March 22, more than 200 guests gathered at the Hilton Glendale, including AGBU leaders, clergy, relatives, friends, and colleagues who came to know and work with Titizian in various chapters of his life — in his native Beirut or his adopted country — the United States.

Born and raised in Kessab, Syria, and Lebanon, Titizian earned his professional degree in pharmacology from the American University of Beirut. He is also an alumnus of the AGBU Melkonian Educational Institute in Cyprus, an Armenian boarding school known, during its tenure, for its faculty of luminary intellectuals and its high academic credentials. After immigrating to the US and establishing residence in California, where at an advanced age he took the state pharmacology exam to be licensed, while continuing to be engaged in the community. Among numerous other involvements he served as a member of the Board of Armenian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles for many years.

Throughout the dinner and program, Titizian was described as someone with a subtle demeanor that belied his strong sense of intention and purpose. He was commended for his special way of working behind the scenes to build bridges among statesmen, inter-community organizations, and leaders of diverse political parties, particularly during the Lebanese civil war. He was also cited for helping to resolve internal crises within Armenian institutions, including the Church.

Key members of the AGBU leadership were present to show their respect for Titizian's keen political acumen and leadership in service to the Armenian homeland, church, and broader community, along with his vast network of connections in and out of the community.

AGBU President Berge Setrakian delivered thoughtful remarks, as did AGBU Board Member Yervant Demirjian, who also served as the evening's master of ceremonies.

"I will share my thoughts of Panos as a dear friend, rather than formally as an honoree, said President Setrakian. "The life-long path of almost a century of service to the nation, that Panos has travelled, from his native Kessab to the AGBU Melkonian Institute, the American University of



From left, Hrant Vartzbedian, Yervant Demirjian, Sinan Sinanian, Berge Setrakian, Panos Titizian, Sam Simonian, Nelly Kazman, Kevork Zoryan, Gohar Stambolyan

Beirut in Lebanon, then establishing the largest pharmacy in Haret el Hereik, and later moving to Los Angeles, is a testament of his extraordinary personality and resilience...could you imagine that more than fifty years ago, when the Armenian community in Lebanon lived a self-contained and Ghetto-like life, Panos stood out as an individual who reached out to the Lebanese community at large, establishing close relationships with highest ranking political figures and intimate friendships with officials among whom a colonel who then became president, as well as officers of the US embassy in Lebanon. I came in contact with Panos through my uncle Hrachya Setrakian with whom he served in various committees through their tenure in public service. We were close both through shared organizational roles and through family. As a then young law student, I was impressed by Panos's library which at that time had every single issue of the *Foreign Affairs* magazine, the articles of which he read and analyzed to the last detail. He possessed an extraordinary outlook and outstanding

wide horizon. He has been to me a most trusted advisor for many years, whereby, looking back, I can truly appreciate his wisdom and foresight." Setrakian concluded his remarks by wishing Titizian a long and healthy life, also recognizing Anahid, Panos's wife, who had stood next to him all throughout his difficult life and career.

Other distinguished guests made con-

toire ranged from Mozart and Komitas to Gardel and Khachaturian. Rounding out the program was Titizian's granddaughter Michelle Kazman, who shared fond childhood memories of her grandfather and concluded with a moving recitation of a poem dedicated to the Armenian language by Sylvia Kaputikian.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate



AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School Dance Group



Heritage Quartet: Angela Amirian (first violin); Davit Sargsyan (second violin); Artashes Asatryan (viola); Garik Terzian (cello)

gratulatory statements including Garo Ghazarian, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Artoun Hamalian, Nora Titizian, and Hratch Sepetjian, who presented the newly published book of memoirs by Titizian. Finally, Titizian publicly thanked everyone for the touching tribute, expressing himself with his signature mixture of Armenian pride and quiet humility.

The evening's entertainment featured benefit performances by the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School Dance Group and the Heritage Quartet, featuring Angela Amirian (first violin); Davit Sargsyan (second violin); Artashes Asatryan (viola); and Garik Terzian (cello). The musical reper-

of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, gave the invocation and Reverend Serop Megerditchian made the closing benediction, prior to which he read a congratulatory letter sent by President of the Armenian Evangelical World Council Dr. Vahan Tootikian.

The evening was made possible largely through a donation by Sam and Sylvia Simonian of Texas. Sam Simonian, a long time AGBU board member, was recently named successor to current president Berge Setrakian, who, in accordance with AGBU governing by-laws, is set to retire this fall after nearly 50 years of service to AGBU with 22 of them as its president.



Arts & Culture

‘Amerikatsi’ to be Screened at Fresno State with director Michael Goorjian

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program and CineCulture present the screening of “Amerikatsi” at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, April 26, in the Leon S. and Pete P. Peters Educational Center Auditorium (west end of the SaveMart Center), 5010 N. Woodrow Ave., on the Fresno State campus. Following the screening, which is part of the Armenian Studies Program Spring 2024 Lecture Series, the audience will have the opportunity to discuss the film with director Michael Goorjian.

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.

Goorjian, a native of the San Francisco Bay Area, is a versatile American talent, excelling as an actor, filmmaker and writer. His acting prowess earned him an Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Miniseries or a Special for his compelling portrayal in “David’s Mother” (1994) alongside Kirstie Alley. He is also well known for his role as Justin, the love interest



of Neve Campbell’s character, in the acclaimed series “Party of Five” (1994), and for his portrayal of Hero in Bob in “SLC Punk!” (1998). Transitioning behind the camera, Michael garnered acclaim for his directorial debut, “Illusion” (2004), a poignant film he wrote, directed, and starred in, sharing the screen with Hollywood icon Kirk Douglas. He wrote, directed, and starred in the critically acclaimed “Amerikatsi” (2022). “Amerikatsi” marks a historic milestone for Armenia Cinema, as the first film submitted by Armenia to the Academy Awards® to make the Oscar Shortlist® for the category of Best International Feature.

Admission for the April 26 film screening and discussion is free and free parking is available near the west entrance of the SaveMart Center. A parking pass is not required after 4PM for the Friday evening screening.



Joan Agajanian Quinn on the On the Edge Panel at the Laguna Art Museum (photo by Reza Allahbakhshi)

‘On the Edge’ at Laguna Museum

Los Angeles Art from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection

LAGUNA BEACH, Calif.) — Laguna Art Museum has announced the highly anticipated exhibition, “On the Edge: Los Angeles Art from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection,” through September 2, 2024.

This exhibition, previously showcased at the Bakersfield Museum of Art in 2021, now takes center stage at Laguna Art Museum, offering a unique and enhanced experience.

The Laguna Art Museum exhibition will present earlier works from the 1960s, bringing a historical perspective to the evolution of Los Angeles art, including works from artists Daniel LaRue Johnson, Dora De Larios, Charles Garabedian, Vija Celmins, Tony Berlant and others.

The exhibition introduces additional artists, including John McCracken and Bruce Conner, enriching the narrative of this pivotal period in art history. Distinctive pieces from Billy Al Bengston and James Hayward were also added to the exhibition to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Los Angeles’ artistic evolution.

Notably, “On the Edge” at Laguna Art Museum unveils never-before-exhibited works from Lita Albuquerque, Ken Price, Lynda Benglis and Ed Ruscha, providing visitors with an exclusive glimpse into the artistic journey of these influential figures.

see ON EDGE, page 14



Amanda Quinn Olivar and Joan Agajanian Quinn celebrating the On the Edge opening and Joan’s birthday at the Laguna Art Museum (photo Jim McHugh)

IALA Mentorship Program and Annual Grants for Creative Writing And Translation Announced

LOS ANGELES — The International Armenian Literary Alliance’s fourth annual mentorship program will run from July 1 through August 31, 2024, with mentorships for writers of the novel, memoir, creative nonfiction, short story, poetry as well as literary translation from Eastern or Western Armenian into English. Mentors will read and provide feedback on their mentee’s writing and speak virtually with their mentee throughout the program to discuss the writing life, the mentee’s work and how to navigate the publishing industry. At the end of the program, IALA will host an Emerging Writers Showcase to feature the mentees’ work. Applications are now open through April 14.

IALA also announced its three new annual grants for one writer and two translators whose work-in-progress show exceptional literary and creative ability. Application opens on September 1st until September 30th, 2024, and winners will be announced in December 2024. Its Creative Writing Grant will award \$2,500 annually to one Armenian writer whose work-in-progress shows exceptional literary and creative ability. After awarding poets and fiction writers in previous years, the grant will be awarded in 2024 for a work of creative nonfiction.

IALA’s Creative Writing Grant, made possible by a donation from the Armenian Allied Arts Association, is meant to foster the development of contemporary Armenian literature in English through an annual monetary award, and support Armenian writers who have historically lacked resources in the publishing world.

The Israelyan English Translation Grant from IALA will award \$3,000 to one translator working from Armenian (either Western or Eastern) source texts into English, whose work-in-progress shows exceptional literary and creative ability. In 2024, the grant will be awarded for a work of literature (in any literary genre) written in Armenian and published any time after 1900.

The Israelyan Armenian Translation Grant from the International Armenian Literary Alliance will award \$3,000 to one translator working from English source text into Eastern Armenian, whose work-in-progress shows exceptional literary and creative ability. In 2024, the grant will be awarded for a work of contemporary literature written by an Armenian in English.

For more details, full eligibility criteria, and more information on past grant recipients, visit IALA’s website, www.armenianliterary.org, or contact Hovsep Markarian, IALA’s executive director, at admin@armenianliterary.org.



ARTS & CULTURE

Laguna Art Museum Unveils ‘On the Edge’

ON EDGE, from page 13

“Our anticipation for the opening of ‘On the Edge: Los Angeles Art from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection’ grows stronger each day as we prepare for a truly epic and extraordinary gathering of artworks and artists here on the Southern California coast, a place that has informed so much of the artwork in the exhibition,” said Julie Perlin Lee, executive director, Laguna Art Museum. “We are grateful to the Quinn family for being open to the incorporation of artists like, Jose PRIME Reza and Joey Terrill, alongside others not featured in previous iterations of the exhibition and for allowing us to display artworks by Frank Gehry, Andy Warhol and Laddie John Dill, among others that have never been exhibited publicly. By incorporating artists and artworks that align with the museum’s permanent art collection and carefully selecting works from the earlier decade of the 1960s and work created less than a year ago, we have created a fresh experience for visitors.”

Joan Agajanian met Jack Quinn at the University of Southern California where she was studying to be a teacher, and he was a law student. They were a happily married couple for 56 years until Jack’s passing in 2017. Together, they raised identical twin daughters, Amanda and Jennifer.

Collectively, the family has amassed artworks by Los Angeles’ most prominent artists that document the development of contemporary art in Los Angeles, and uniquely, the family itself. In the early ‘50s, a 17-year-old Joan met the brash



Back row) Artists: Bradford Salamon, Laddie John Dill, Julie Perlin Lee, Astrid Preston, Prime, Yolanda Gonzalez, Joe Fay, Lita Albuquerque, Amanda Quinn Govey, Andy Moses, Joey Terrill, Jim McHugh (Front row) Moderator Sonja Moro, Joan Agajanian Quinn, James Hayward, Gregory Wiley Edwards at the opening celebrations of On the Edge at Laguna Art Museum (photo by Reza Allahbakhshi)

young Billy Al Bengston while both were working at Desmond’s department store on Crenshaw Boulevard. Bengston was Joan’s initial connection to Ed Kienholz, Ed Moses, Ken Price and others. Those artists were a close-knit group affiliated with the Ferus Gallery and they were making an impact in Los Angeles. The Quinns’ home became a meeting place for their diverse group of friends ranging from the arts, the

social set and the legal community. Joan, who notoriously had a camera in tow, documented these gatherings where friendships were deeply established, and patronage of the arts was encouraged.

In 1978, Andy Warhol asked Joan Quinn to join his *Interview* magazine as its West Coast editor. She soon also became the *LA Herald Examiner* society editor known as “Culture Cween” and wrote for national

and international publications. That path along with her appointment to the California Arts Council allowed her to promote the work of the growing circle of Southern California creatives while Jack actively championed their circle of artists by connecting them with the legal community. He was the first to transform the walls of his three-story law firm into a captivating art space, akin to a museum. Artist Joe Goode once said the Quinns were a “primary support system for artists in L.A. at a time when you could count the city’s art dealers on one hand.”

Joan, called one of the most painted, sketched and sculpted women alive by *W Magazine*, has been a subject for artists such as David Hockney, Shepard Fairey, Claire Falkenstein, Steven Arnold, George Hurrell, Yolanda Gonzalez, Robert Mapplethorpe, Helmut Newton, Robert Graham, Matthew Rolston to name a few.

The exhibition includes over 25 portraits of Joan and the Quinn family, a poignant representation of friendship, appreciation and respect.

The exhibit is sponsored by Bank of America, Christie’s and JHM Foundation. The exhibition not only showcases the Quinn family’s pivotal role in shaping the Los Angeles art scene but also emphasizes the dynamic evolution of artistic styles over the decades.

For more information about “On the Edge: Los Angeles Art from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection,” visit lagu-naartmuseum.org.




Tekeyan Cultural Association

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia

Since its inception in 2001, the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Sponsor a Teacher Program has raised 838,700 dollars and reached out to 7,386 teachers and school staff in Armenia and Artsakh. This year the program continues to support school teachers in Tekeyan Schools in Armenia, as well as teachers who had to flee Artsakh but continue teaching in Armenia’s schools, as they educate new generations of children, our future leaders.







YES, I would like to sponsor TCA school teacher(s) in Armenia, as well as teachers who fled Artsakh and continue teaching in Armenia schools, in order to continue helping them work and educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the sponsored teacher/s’ name(s) and address(es).

\$240 \$480 \$700 other _____

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



ARMENIAN EECH
A SPICIER VERSION OF TABBOULEH
TheGutsyGourmet.net©

The Gusty Gourmet: Armenian Eech

FRESNO — This recipe is from the late Dr. Harold H. “Buzz” Baxter’s essential international food and history website, The Gutsy Gourmet. Dr. Baxter’s website is dedicated to his beloved mother, Gladys Bertha Baxter, who was born in Fresno on July 1, 1908. “At The Gutsy Gourmet, it is my sole purpose to introduce you to some of the best recipes from around the world, and to share some of my own personally developed recipes and those of my mother who taught me how to cook from the very beginning,” he said.

“My mother’s family were Armenian immigrants from the Bitlis area of Turkey. She was the youngest of eight children, and had five older sisters who were excellent cooks, as was her mother. She naturally learned from all of them, and became one of the most respected Armenian cooks in Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley. She had no difficulty in cooking for two or two hundred people. She seldom consulted a cookbook and measuring devices were seldom used in her cooking. A pinch of this and a scoop of that was all that was needed to perform magic in her kitchen, and many unforgettable family meals and celebrations. In 1930, she married my father, Avedis Baxter, an auto mechanic from Fowler. They had two sons to whom she taught her culinary and domestic skills. Ironically, my mother spent her last few years with Alzheimer’s disease that caused her to forget her amazing skills in Armenian cooking. In her memory, I felt it incumbent upon me to celebrate her love of cooking and food by sharing her recipes and our family’s history and traditions,” said Dr. Baxter.

“Growing up in Fresno, Buzz began his interest in cooking at an early age. During his preschool years he was tied to his mother’s apron strings, watching every move she made in the family kitchen. Not only was his mother a fabulous cook, he remembered that she almost never used a cookbook. ‘If you think it will make it taste good, do it,’ said his mother. By the time Buzz was in high school he could cook almost anything he liked to eat. If he didn’t like it, he wouldn’t cook it. He left home and went to college at the age of 16, and was capable enough to take care of himself and his roommate in school.”

“In 1949, he entered Reedley College as a freshman to major in Business Administration and to play football. He had not yet attained the maturity to buckle down to college studies, so he left Reedley College and went to work for an uncle who owned a famous resort called California Hot Springs. The California Hot Springs Resort is located within the Sequoia National Monument in the central southern Sierra Nevada mountains. There he acted as life guard at the resort’s pool, and did a variety of maintenance jobs.”

“Buzz attended San Francisco State College in 1950, and played football for one semester before enlisting in the United States Coast Guard for a 3-year enlistment. To help pay for his schooling, he worked for Campbell Bros. & Sunbeam Toastmaster in the shipping department. At college, he became acquainted with a couple of Italian boys whose families had restaurants in San Francisco. They worked in the restaurant kitchens, and many of their Italian recipes rubbed off on the Armenian kid from Fresno.”

“Many of the recipes at The Gutsy Gourmet are not normally found in your basic cookbooks. They are a collection of recipes I’ve gathered from around the world that I love to make, and that my friends have always raved about. They may seem difficult at first, but they are really quite simple. They do, in large part,

take a little time to prepare. They are not all what you would call low-fat, but many are healthy and nutritious,” said Buzz.

“Cooking has been a passion of mine for over 65 years. I’ve traveled extensively throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and I’ve enjoyed preparing recipes from all ethnic cuisines and cultures. These recipes are not always intended for daily menus, but are intended for those special occasions when you want to look and feel like the best damn cook that ever was. They are for impressing your friends and family with your culinary mastery. Many recipes have been sent to me from around the world that I hope you enjoy soon,” he added.

“Armenians often use bulgur in their recipes. This dish is similar to tabbouleh except that it has more spices added, especially Aleppo pepper. I like to use sriracha sauce or sambal oelek in place of the Aleppo pepper,” said Buzz. “Sambal oelek is a spicy Indonesian chili paste made with hot red peppers. It’s typically made with hot red chile peppers, salt and vinegar. Some variations can contain onion, lemon, sugar, etc. Although the sauce originated in Indonesia, many countries (like the U.S.) have recognized its greatness and made their own versions.”

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup fine bulgur (Buzz preferred medium #2 or coarse #3)
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1 large tomato, diced
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon hot pepper paste
- 1/4 teaspoon ground all-spice
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 large bunch Italian flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped (more to taste)
- 3-4 green onions, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper or Aleppo pepper
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice, more to taste
- 1/4 cup olive oil, more to taste
- Salt to taste
- Serves 4

PREPARATION:

Sauté the chopped onion in olive oil until it’s translucent. Add the dry spices, tomato paste and hot pepper paste. Stir well to blend. Add the diced tomato and lemon juice, and bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat, stir in the bulgur, and mix to combine. Cover the pan and let sit for 20 to 30 minutes (or longer). You can add 1/4 cup(s) of water at this point if the mixture seems too dry. When completely cooled, add the chopped parsley and green onions, and stir until well combined. Check seasonings.

Serve with fresh grape leaves, romaine lettuce or iceberg lettuce, and plenty of chopped parsley, onions, and tomatoes. You can serve this dish warm or refrigerate overnight for best results.

For this recipe, go to: <http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/arm-eech.html>

Some family history from the late Dr. Baxter

“I am of Armenian ancestry, and my paternal family’s roots are in Eastern Anatolia, Turkey. My paternal family, the Baghdasarians, were from the Province of Kharpert, near the city of Harput and from the village of Khokh. My maternal family roots are from the city of Bitlis near the Eastern most boundaries of Eastern Anatolia, Turkey, and near the border of the present country of Armenia. My family probably lived in Eastern Anatolia for at least 3 millennia before the beginnings of the Turkish genocide. Let us call it what it was, an uprooting of an indigenous people, and their brutal elimination by Muslim ‘jihadists.’ I am sure that this scenario is one that seems very similar to the Muslim jihadists who are stirring the pot of hate and intimidation today in the 21st century. In the early 1890s, before the massive genocide of the Armenians of Eastern Anatolia, slayings of Armenian villagers, raping of Armenian women and children was already taking place, and those in the Baghdasarian family in Khokh village who had survived the wonton rape, beatings, and killings by the Turks and Kurds of the area decided they must uproot their family and find a safe haven in a different land. Thus began the unknown migration of the Baghdasarians from their village of Khokh, to the neighboring country of Syria and to the Mediterranean Sea. Here they boarded ships with only the belongings they could carry, and made the long voyage to the Americas. Most of the Baghdasarian families embarked on Scottish vessels and arrived in Canada.

For Armenian recipes, see: <http://thegutsygourmet.net/armenian.html>

For the history of the Baxter and Paul families, see: <http://thegutsygourmet.net/baxter-family-history.html>

For Buzz’s history and resume, see: <http://thegutsygourmet.net/resume.html>

For world recipes, see: <http://thegutsygourmet.net/#world%20recipes>

For a glossary of Armenian terms, see: <http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/glossary.html>

For Gladys Baxter’s family dolma recipe, see: <http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/dolma.html>

See: “Armenian Mixed Vegetable Dolma – a recipe from The Gutsy Gourmet” at: <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/armenian-mixed-vegetable-dolma-recipe/>

See: “Recipe Corner: Auntie Zee’s World-Famous Apricot Jam from Fresno” at: <https://mirrorspectator.com/2019/08/14/recipe-corner-auntie-zees-world-famous-apricot-jam-from-fresno/>

Also:

*David Seville was originally the stage name of Ross Bagdasarian, Sr. “David Seville” then became the name of a fictional character, played by Bagdasarian, featuring as the producer and manager of the animated singing group Alvin and The Chipmunks. Bagdasarian’s son reprised the character in the 1980s.

<http://thegutsygourmet.net/>

Books

Siran Seza's *Book of Genesis*: A Treasure Recovered

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Book of Genesis (Yearbook, Inc. 2014) by Siran Seza is the story of Astine, the daughter of an upper middle-class Armenian family living in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), a cosmopolitan city at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, in the early 1900s. With its splendor and its vibrant cultural life — lectures, concerts, theatrical offerings every night — the metropolis provides the perfect environment for the precocious child, a lover of the arts and an avid reader, to become the “famous writer and poet” that the noted painter and poet Diran Chrakian, a family friend, predicted she would be. The gifted young girl grows up surrounded by the literary giants who have become household names for us all. On her way to school, she runs into Si-amanto and Gomidas. Zabel Yessayan lives next door. Zabel Asadour is a family friend.

It was late in life that Seza decided to write a novel based on her life experiences and her memories of the people and the events of the city she lived in until her early 20s. Making direct connections between the spirited and fearless protagonist and the outspoken and defiant author, whose name has become synonymous with the advocacy for the Armenian woman's rights, should not be difficult. Indeed, Seza sometimes used the pen name Astine to sign her articles in *The Young Armenian Woman*, the pioneering literary journal she started publishing in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1932,

dedicated to expanding opportunities for women, both Armenian and Arab. Astine's father, nicknamed Zarif Diran, evokes Siran Seza's birth name, Siranush Zarifian. There are numerous parallels, yet Astine does not stand directly for the author. She is a created persona.

Nonetheless, *Book of Genesis* depicts a world rooted in truth. With her painstakingly detailed descriptions Seza creates a vivid picture of the streets and the neighborhoods of Scutari, the suburb thriving with Armenian life where Astine was born. She describes the windy roads that lead to the red benches on the shores of the Marmara where the adolescent girl would sit with Armen, the student she truly cared for. Nature is ever-present. Astine loves lilacs and roses and the aroma of strawberries.

“The beauty of nature nourished her soul,” writes Seza. When Armen breaks up with her, Astine sits at the water's edge watching the “hopeless waves.” Nature is sympathetic, always soothing,

With her details and her images Seza makes the horrors of the breaking war palpable. Astine's dread of the pointed whiskers of the Turkish officer who visits her school, or her panic when the Turk sitting next to her in the train places his hand on her lap, corroborate the news of the indescribable horrors being committed in the inner villages. “Why are the Turks a proud race,” when they are “filthy,” “hateful,” “beastlike” and “full of animal instincts,” asks the frightened girl. When Sultan Hamid is dethroned and she witnesses the splendor and the extrav-



agance of the Yildiz Palace, now opened to the public, “Why is a magnanimous Sultan with such an exquisite taste such a bloodthirsty beast,” she wonders. Indeed, Astine's endless questioning and brooding over the “fate of the Armenian people” foreshadow the ongoing massacres and displacements of the Armenian people. They give immediacy to the young girl's insights into the unprecedented fears of the Armenians and the Greeks who had been subjects of an oppressive regime for centuries. Her, “Can one trust an oppressor's promises?” has an eerie relevance.

The events of the novel unfold as “Hani would tell” them, or as Astine recalls them as “told to her by her mother.” Grandmother Hani and her mother are, in fact, the child's favorite people. The delicate fragile daughter prone to frequent headaches comes from a lineage of powerful women who comfort and reassure when others distress and anger. When she is upset and goes straight to her room, skipping dinner, the older women understand. And while there is no direct advocacy in the novel of the crucial role a woman can play in improving the life of her community, having a female protagonist of unusual self-confidence and sensitivity can be very empowering for “the female sex” to whom the novel is dedicated.

Hani's belief that “The more girls we educate, the nobler we will be as a nation,” evokes the novel's dedication “to the female sex and her enlightenment.” When the father promises Astine in marriage to Alex, a young man studying to become a doctor, when she was in love with Armen, because he could not let his daughter marry a teacher, Astine wonders why young girls do not have a say in marriage. Implicit in her questioning is the condemnation of the rigid authoritarian world of a father who would not allow her older sister to divorce an abusive husband.

When things get too challenging, Astine escapes into her reading and her dreams. The child's dreams, as grandmother Hani well knows, may be impossible dreams, yet the purity and the innocence of a girl who believes in fairy tales, hates narrow-minded teachers, and envies the freedom of the birds, create much sympathy for a protagonist who, perhaps too early in life, learns that life “imposes separation.” When, to her horror, Armen breaks up with her, confusion, despair and hopelessness engulf her.

Indeed, a mood of sadness and of melancholy pervades the novel. As a little girl, Astine loved listening to the mournful song of the nightingale hiding in the rose bushes. Her “sad eyes” are repeatedly invoked. “Why are you always sad?” inquires her French teacher. Her brother Drtad (the future poet Mateos Zarifian) is described as “melancholic, even in his happiest moments.” Sunsets in the East have “a strange sadness,” for Astine. And, perhaps a trifle too melodramatically, “Musset est mort et moi avec” (Musset has died with me) writes Armen to Astine when he breaks up with her. The reference is to the French poet Alfred de Musset, a favorite for both.

The novel ends with Astine leaving Constantinople. Years later, the real-life Seza travels to New York City and receives a master's degree in literature and journalism from Columbia University, an unusually daring move for a young Armenian woman of her times.

Book of Genesis is the first in a series of publications aiming to bring out Seza's rich literary legacy, still in manuscript form. To talk about the shortcomings of a work written in a hurry, late in life, would be useless. The book has its literary merits and is very enjoyable to read.

Also in progress is the publication of Seza's letters. Volume One of the projected five volumes has just come out.

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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 19 — The 109th Anniversary Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide will take place at the Massachusetts State House in Boston starting at 10:30 a.m. Keynote address will be delivered by the recently confirmed Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Justice Gabrielle Wolohojian.

APRIL 20 — Armenian Trauma and Healing in Contemporary Fiction, Saturday, 2:30 p.m., Watertown Free Public Library, 123 Main Street, Watertown. Aida Zilelian, author of *All the Ways We Lied*, and Nancy Agabian, author of *The Fear of Large and Small Nations*, will read from and discuss their new novels that center on Armenian American intimacies concerning family, relationships, and immigration. Both novels deal with intergenerational trauma through echoes of the 1915 Armenian Genocide; to commemorate April 24 (Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day), the authors will also discuss how and why their fiction facilitates healing. Registration is required and free: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/armenian-trauma-and-healing-in-contemporary-fiction-tickets-825743901237?aff=oddtcreator>

APRIL 21 — The 109th Anniversary Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide will take place at the Armenian Heritage Park in Boston, starting at 4 p.m. The commemoration will include a musical performance by Angelina Nazarian.

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 Baikar 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.

OCTOBER 25-27 — Save the date! Sanctuary consecration of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe. Presided over by Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill. Details to follow. **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

NEW YORK

APRIL 27 — Genocide Prevention, upholding United Nations' Human Rights Declaration, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Fordham University at Lincoln Center, SL-11. Speakers will include Alison Dobrick, director, William Paterson University Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies; Aida Zilelian-Silak, author; Dr. Ani Kalayjian, president, ATOP Meaningful World; Prof. Takooshian, Fordham University and Ayda Erbal, New York University. Cosponsored by Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP) Meaningful world, ACRPC and AGBU.

RHODE ISLAND

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 Zobian 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. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication. There is no fee for calendar entries.

Balakian Reads at Historic Jack Kerouac House

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Peter Balakian gave a reading on March 24 at the Jack Kerouac House here. The legendary novelist, who wrote *On the Road*, *Dharma Bums* and

Desolation Angels, was the founder of the Beat Movement, along with poet Allen Ginsberg. He had purchased the house in 1967 and was living there with his mother, Gabrielle, and third wife, Stella Sampas,



Peter Balakian approaching the Kerouac house



Peter Balakian reading at Jack Kerouac's house

when he died in 1969 at the age of 47.

Balakian was hosted there by the new owners of the house, Ken and Gina Birchena, and the director of a new reading series, poet Larry Jaffe. While much of the house was intact, the Burchenals have restored the house to its original form and have turned it into a cultural center where visitors and literary events are now part of its revival.

To a packed room Balakian read his poems as well as an excerpt from a prose work about his conversations about Ker-

ouac with his aunt Nona, then an editor at the *New York Times Book Review*. Balakian remarked that "it was special to be in that space where Kerouac lived and worked. The house is a simple ranch and very mid-century modern, which made me feel the period of the '60s in which I grew up."

Balakian added that "Kerouac was a great admirer of [William] Saroyan and even notes him in *On the Road*." After the reading, Balakian signed books and slept overnight in the house, taking in the vibes.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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Meetings in Brussels Leave Armenia in More Difficult Situation

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

My recent articles, including those published by the *Armenian Mirror Spectator*, have focused on whether Armenia is shifting towards the West and if the West is willing to embrace Armenia. Prior to the NATO Secretary General's visit, I noted that Armenia lacks a clear agenda for NATO membership and may only participate in individual programs. The same applies to the European Union. Armenia desires closer ties but appears hesitant to break away from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in favor of joining the EU and NATO. It seems that both the EU and NATO are reluctant to welcome Armenia into their fold, or at least they refrain from openly stating so to avoid jeopardizing Armenia's security.

Lately, the primary topic of discussion in Armenia has been the country's relations with the EU and the potential integration with the European bloc. This discussion intensified following news of a meeting between President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Initially, pro-Western factions in Armenia held high hopes for the meeting, but as it became clear that public expectations would not be met, a shift occurred to downplay the significance of the West as a security guarantor for Armenia. While the EU may offer certain types of non-lethal military support, it cannot ensure Armenia's security. As I have previously mentioned, the West is unable to provide security guarantees to Armenia and can only offer assistance. The reasons vary, including Armenia's membership in CSTO, Russian-Armenian strategic relations (at least legally), as well as logistical support to provide such assistance.

After the meeting in Brussels, it became evident that those who believed having high expectations was unwarranted were more

accurate in their assessment. Serious political agreements and achievements were absent. There was a lack of statements indicating Armenia's progress in European integration. Instead, the USA offered \$65 million in financial support to Armenia, while the European Union pledged a grant of 270 million euros. It was apparent that the West lacks a clear strategy concerning Armenia. The main message conveyed was that while the West is willing to assist Armenia, it cannot guarantee Armenia's security. Therefore, Armenia must work on improving relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan to prevent future attacks.

In fact, after this meeting, Armenia found itself in a more difficult situation. The West clarified its position towards Armenia and clearly presented the arrangement of things. Emphasizing this reality significantly complicates the internal political and security situation of Armenia. If the West could be a certain strait-jacket for Azerbaijan before this meeting, now those restraint mechanisms are weaker and more fragile. The recent attacks on Armenian borders by Azerbaijani armed forces following the Brussels meeting further prove this point. Of course, this does not mean that Armenia should not continue its work in terms of developing and deepening relations with Western partners, but Armenia should clearly understand where the West can be useful and where it cannot provide support. In other words, Armenia should not form high expectations and then be disappointed because of those expectations. As I have mentioned many times, Armenia needs a pragmatic rather than emotional foreign policy. Armenia lacks this, especially after the 2020 war.

(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.)

What Is at Stake in the Tavush Region?

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Since Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's March 18 visit to Voskepar and Kiranc villages in the Tavush region, discussions and debates have been underway in Armenia on the situation along the Armenia – Azerbaijan border in that region. The visit took place after the statement of the office of Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, demanding the immediate return of "four non-enclave Azerbaijani villages" located in Tavush along the Armenia – Azerbaijan border to Azerbaijan which were in principle covered in the demarcation and delimitation negotiations. During his meetings with villagers, the Armenian prime minister stated that "the process of delimitation and demarcation between Armenia and Azerbaijan was entering the practical stage." Despite acknowledging that there were no agreements on maps and principles of the process and that Azerbaijan would not leave the Armenian territories currently under its control, the prime minister argued for withdrawing from those villages to avoid a new war. After these meetings, some representatives of the Armenian leadership, including the speaker of the National Assembly, started to state that those territories were not part of Armenia and should be returned to Azerbaijan.

What are the implications should the Armenian government unilaterally concede to these Azerbaijani demands? The consequences can be divided into three categories: logistical, military, and geopolitical.

Part of the Yerevan–Dilijan–Ijevan–Noyemberyan highway, one of the two main highways connecting Yerevan with the Bagratashen border crossing point

located on the Armenia–Georgia border, passes through this area. It is most likely that this highway section will be closed the same way as Azerbaijan closed the Goris–Kapan highway in late 2021. Armenia has three border crossing points with Georgia – Bavra, Gogavan, and Bagratashen, with Bagratashen being the primary one, located only 70 kilometers away from the capital Tbilisi. The closure of this highway will not cut Armenia completely off from Georgia, as it remains possible to reach the Bagratashen crossing point via the Yerevan–Vanadzor–Alaverdi highway, plus Armenia may construct an alternative road to circumvent the areas to be given to Azerbaijan. However, all options will significantly impact Armenia–Georgia traffic and put additional pressure on the Armenian economy. According to the Armenian Statistical Committee, in recent years at least 70 percent of Armenia's trade turnover passes via Georgia, and Bagratashen is the primary point here. In 2023, 2,855,821 persons passed through Bagratashen crossing point, while only 695,427 crossed Bavra and 166,173 the Gogavan crossing point.

Further, the Russia–Georgia–Armenia gas pipeline passes through the area, which Azerbaijan demands. In light of the Azerbaijani precedent of cutting the gas supply to Nagorno-Karabakh as soon as Azerbaijan took control of part of the Armenia – Nagorno Karabakh gas pipeline in the summer of 2022, chances are high that Azerbaijan will use the same tactics as leverage to put additional pressure on Armenia for further concessions. Technically, it is possible to construct a new section of gas pipeline, circumventing those areas, but again, it will require time and resources from Armenia.

Several Armenian-inhabited villages

around the area — Voskepar, Baghanis and Berqaber — will be partially circled by Azerbaijani territory and its inhabitants forced to make detours to travel in and out. In case Azerbaijan deploys troops to these territories, many Armenian houses as well as administrative and educational buildings will be located only a few meters from Azerbaijani military positions, putting additional pressure and suffering on the population living there and triggering a potential migration.

According to several Armenian military experts, the Tavush region has Armenia's most advanced and well-constructed defense positions. Any territorial changes in that area will undermine Armenia's defense and give Azerbaijan favorable positions for further advances in Tavush and the Lori region. In this case, Armenia should spend significant resources to construct new positions and relocate new forces to the area to increase its defense capacities.

The above-mentioned points outline the severe weakening of Armenia, explaining the acute risks of giving these areas to Azerbaijan unless the decision is part of a comprehensive deal, which should cover all outstanding issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

There is still one argument about why Armenia should not give these territories to Azerbaijan.

There could be no negotiation process without agreements on maps and agreements on principles of delimitation and demarcation. What Azerbaijan demands has nothing to do with the delimitation and demarcation process; it is a land grab by use or threat of use of force. It undermines the rules-based international order and sets a dangerous precedent, with far-reaching

continued on next page



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan is a Greater Threat To Armenia's Security Than Artsakh's Government-in-Exile

We all know the disasters that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan brought upon Armenia in addition to losing

Artsakh due to his incompetence.

We can cite Pashinyan's many misguided actions and contradictory statements. Following his complete mismanagement of the military as Commander-in-Chief during the 2020 war, Pashinyan is now making sure that Armenians forget about the loss of Artsakh by wiping out its name from people's memory.

Pashinyan took no action to protect Artsakh Armenians' right to live peacefully in their millennia-old homeland. He also made no advance preparations to house the over 100,000 refugees from Artsakh, even though he knew that after the 2020 war Artsakh Armenians would eventually flee to Armenia.

To make matters worse, knowing that in future elections Artsakh Armenians will not vote for his political party, Pashinyan declared that they are not citizens of Armenia. These people for decades have had passports of the Republic of Armenia which were recognized not only by Armenia but also by foreign countries when they travelled overseas. Regrettably, thousands of Artsakh Armenians have since left Armenia for Russia to find shelter and work to be able to feed their families.

Furthermore, Pashinyan refuses to meet with any Artsakh official and opposes Artsakh Armenians holding protests in Yerevan to complain about their dire conditions in Armenia.

Here is the latest example of Pashinyan's anti-Artsakh actions. Last week, the President of Artsakh Samvel Shahramanyan gave an interview to the French *Le Figaro* newspaper in which he said that the Republic of Artsakh continues to exist despite its occupation by Azerbaijan. He also stated that there is an Artsakh government-in-exile in Yerevan where his offices are located.

Shahramanyan's words angered Pashinyan who immediately lashed back and warned that legal action will be taken against all those who talk about an Artsakh government-in-exile. Without any evidence, Pashinyan accused the Artsakh leaders of threatening Armenia's national security. Not understanding the meaning of the term 'government-in-exile,' Pashinyan said that there is only one government in Armenia and there cannot be a second govern-

ment, even though nobody was talking about creating a second government. If Pashinyan had any knowledgeable advisers, they would have informed him that there are in many countries dozens of 'governments-in-exile' which are universally accepted under international law.

In reality, the only person in Armenia who is threatening the security of Armenia is Pashinyan himself. Not only he has not defended the rights of Artsakh Armenians who are citizens of Armenia, but has also allowed Azerbaijan's military to cross Armenia's borders in 2021 and 2022. In addition, when Pres. Aliyev demanded that Armenia hand over to Azerbaijan four Armenian villages, Pashinyan warned their inhabitants that otherwise Azerbaijan will start a new war.

In his harsh reply to Shahramanyan, Pashinyan also threatened to take appropriate measures so that "foreign forces do not use certain [Artsakh] circles as a threat to the security of Armenia." It is regrettable that Pashinyan is falsely accusing Artsakh Armenians of being manipulated by foreigners.

Pashinyan's real problem is not Artsakh's government-in-exile, but the fact that Artsakh Armenians are taking steps to keep the memory of Artsakh alive, which is highly embarrassing for him, since he is the one who gave it away. We have lost Artsakh to the enemy, but we should not erase it from our memory. We have an obligation not only to remember Artsakh, but transmit the dream of returning to Artsakh to the next generation. This is critical because if future generations do not know that Artsakh is an Armenian land, when the opportunity presents itself for its liberation, they will not take advantage of it, thus losing Artsakh forever, not because of what the enemy has done, but because of our own inaction.

In the meantime, we can only regret that Armenia's Prime Minister, wittingly or unwittingly, is doing Pres. Aliyev's bidding by trying to suppress even the memory and dream of Artsakh. Furthermore, it will be shameful if Pashinyan, acting on his threats, were to order the arrest of Artsakh leaders in Armenia, thus joining Baku in holding Artsakh leaders as captives.

With each passing day, Pashinyan is intensifying his anti-Armenian actions. How long will Armenians in Armenia and the Diaspora remain silent in the face of such self-defeating actions? When will Armenians wake up from their slumber, say 'enough is enough' and find a new competent leader to lead the nation out of this quagmire? Contrary to Pashinyan's contention, Artsakh is not a closed issue. Armenians should not continue to sit with their arms folded and watch Armenia gradually disappear because of the misdeeds of one man!

Finally, it would be shameful if Shahramanyan and other Artsakh officials were to be forced by Pashinyan to leave Armenia and relocate their government-in-exile to a foreign country.

What Is at Stake in the Tavush Region?

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repercussions in our region and elsewhere. In this context, it is perilous to legitimize land grab describing it as the start of the legitimate delimitation and demarcation process.

Instead of submitting to Azerbaijan's bullying methods with public statements that those territories are not part of Armenia and Armenia should give them to Azerbaijan, the Armenian government should apply to all international organizations and to all states that have a presence and peace interests in the South Caucasus (the UN, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE], the EU, Russia, Iran, US, EU member states, and India), stating that Azerbaijan attempts to implement a land grab either by threat of use of force or actual force and that those steps are undermining international law.

Indeed, even if Armenia agrees to give these territories to Azerbaijan, it will be a violation of international law and will allow Armenia to add additional pressure on Azerbaijan in the international arena. Otherwise, if Armenia agrees to give these territories to Azerbaijan, stating that it was done as a part of the delimitation and demarcation process, it will legitimize the land grab. Even more dangerous, statements that these territories are part of Azerbaijan may justify the use of force by Azerbaijan to take these territories. Azerbaijan would argue that it had no alternative, as Armenia, while recognizing these areas as Azerbaijani territories, rejected to withdraw from them.

Thus, what is at stake in the Tavush region does not relate only to Armenia's security. Suppose Azerbaijan succeeds in making a blatant land grab under threat or actual use of force. In that case, it will be another blow to the rules-based international order within Europe's borders, which may have far-reaching ramifications well beyond the South Caucasus.

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

A History of Azerbaijani Massacres Of Armenians from 1905 to 1921

By Gayane Barseghyan

Between 1905 and 1921 horrific massacres were committed against Armenians by Azeris (Tatars) in the Armenian Highland and Transcaucasia.

The internationally recognized term "Armenian Highland" was introduced by Otto Wilhelm Herman von Abich, a German mineralogist and geologist, in his three-volume book *Geologische Forschungen in den Kaukasischen Landern* (3 vols, Vienna, 1878, 1882, 1887). According to Encyclopedia Britannica Armenian highland is a "mountainous region of western Asia. It lies mainly in Turkey, occupies all of Armenia, and includes southern Georgia, western Azerbaijan, and northwestern Iran. The highland covers almost 154,400 square miles (400,000 square km)." <https://www.britannica.com/place/Armenian-Highland>

The Institute for Armenian Studies of Yerevan State University states that "Armenian highland is situated in the northern borderline of Western Asia between Asia Minor and Iranian plateaus, Black Sea and Mesopotamian plains." http://www.armin.am/en/Encyclopedia_Armeny_Haykakan_lernashxarh

Armenia has been under constant threat ever since the Turkic tribes from Middle Asia set foot on the Armenian Highland in the 11th century. In addition to the 1915 Armenian Genocide committed by Ottoman Turkey, Tatars (as Azeris were known then) executed a number of massacres against the Armenian race in the 20th century.

From 1905 to 1921, approximately 270 US press reports from the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Los Angeles Times* covered the alarming news of the massacres against Armenians. Those massacres threatened to trigger annihilation and extinction of the whole race.

A book titled *Azeri Aggression against Armenians in Transcaucasia (1905-1921)*, edited by Ara Ketibian (2020), an Australian-Armenian researcher and co-editor of the multi-volume publication *The Armenian Genocide: Prelude and Aftermath*, lists the US press reports, published namely in the years 1905 (94 reports), 1906

(19 reports), 1910 (2 reports), 1911 (1 reports), 1916 (2 reports), 1918 (46 reports), 1919 (44 reports), 1920 (53 reports) and 1921 (9 reports). The book is an all-inclusive invaluable resource for researchers and historians to dig up facts on massacres committed against Armenians in the 20th century.

"Over the period from 1905 until 1921, there have been continuous flare ups of aggression, murders and wholesale massacres of Armenians by Tatars (as Azeris were known then). In some cases, this aggression simply took the form of general localized conflicts between the two communities in many cities, towns and even villages," the Preface of the afore-mentioned book maintains.

On visiting the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute on February 19, 2023 Ara Ketibian stated that "although the means of physical hostility against the Armenian people have changed over time and have become more lethal, Turkey's Pan-Turanian plan, at the expense of the Armenian people, has remained unchanged over the last 100 years."

It is worth stating at this point that massacres against Armenians were committed by Azeris not only in the period of 1905-1921, but also from 1988 to 1994, namely Baku massacres (1905, 1918, 1990), Shushi massacres (1905, 1920), Agulis massacres (1919, 1920), Sumgait massacre (1988), Getashen massacre (1991), Shahumyan massacre (1992), Maragha Massacre (1992) and others.

On September 6, 1905, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* printed an article headlined "Tartars Murder, Burn and Pillage." The article starts by reporting about Shushi, Baku and other places plunged into chaos. "Tartars are terrorizing the whole of southeast Caucasus. Bands are scouring in the country, murdering and pillaging. The country is in panic and houses and farms are being abandoned. Famine in many sections renders the situation more terrible" the paper reports.

Two days later, on September 8, 1905, another article appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* headlined "Tartars Massacre 1,500 Armenians." It starts by informing see HISTORY, page 20



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readers about the massacre, pillage and incendiary in Baku, providing a detailed account of the evidence obtained by cable.

“The butchery began with the slaughter of 1,500 Armenians while the police looked on as if it were a theatrical display. Women were shockingly mutilated, children were lashed to pieces before their mothers’ eyes. Men either were cut to pieces instantly or mutilated in an indescribable fashion before they were put to death,” the report notes.

Armenians were persuaded to come out, following which the Tatar soldiers ambushed and murdered them.

On September 7, 1905 the *Chicago Daily Tribune* article titled “Caucasia Swept by Tartar Horde” reports about the massacre of the entire Armenian village Hak (spelled Mankend in the report). “A dispatch from Elizabethpol says that all of the inhabitants of the Armenian village of Mankend in the district of Zangezursk [sic. Zangezur] have been massacred by Tartar nomads.”

It is notable that the article refers to “Tartar nomads,” thus noting that they were not indigenous in the geographic areas. Moreover, from linguistic point of view, the word “Tatar” literally means “a nomad.”

On September 13, 1905 both the *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* had reports on 300 Armenians killed in one village, providing horrific details of the crimes committed by Tartars.

“Tartar Hordes Massacring the Armenians; Children Thrown to Dogs [...] A holy war has been proclaimed in the Caucasus districts of Zangezur and Jebrail, where Tartars are massacring the Armenians without distinction of sex or age. The country is swarming with bands of Tartars under the leadership of their chiefs. Many thou-

sands of Tartar horseman have crossed the Perso-Russian frontier and joined the insurgents in destroying Armenian villages” the *Washington Post* reports in an article titled “Holy War Proclaimed.”

“Tartars raise the Green Flag as Signal for Armenian Massacres; Kill old and young; Russian Troops Too Busy in Fighting Social Democrats to Protect Christians,” reports the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in an article titled “Begin Holy War in the Caucasus.”

It is essential to note that Tartars (or Tartars as Azeris were known then) attacked and ravaged not only civilians, but also Armenian monks and holy sites. On July 13, 1906 the *Chicago Daily Tribune* printed an article titled “Tartars Attack Monks; Furious Onslaught on Armenian Monastery.” It informs about the attack on Echmiadzin monastery and the residence of the Armenian patriarch, on one village in Zangezur and the city Van.

Having concealed in the surrounding hills, Tartars had ambushed Armenian monks and opened fire after nightfall. Moreover, in Zangezur Tartars had attacked an Armenian village. “In the Zangisur [sic. Zangezur] district today 300 Tartars attacked one Armenian village. A detachment of police arrived and tried to restore peace, but the Tartars killed the police captain,” the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reports.

On July 31, 1919 both the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *Washington Post* reported about Turkey-backed Tatar attack on Armenians from three sides, cutting off the relief supplies.

On December 9, 1919, the *Los Angeles Times* issued another article titled “Armenia Again is Involved in War: Azerbaijan Headed by Turkish Officers, Attack on Three Sides.” It reports about triple attack on 12,000 Armenians from three sides – Meghri, Nakhiche-

van and Stepanakert. It goes without saying that trying to plunge the country into chaos and turning it into a war-torn country, Azerbaijan clearly aimed at territorial gain.

Of special significance is the *Christian Science Monitor* article issued on August 28, 1919, titled “Tartars and Kurds Slay Armenians.” It reports about the 600 civilian casualties (men, women, children) in Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh and the destruction of six Armenian villages. This report poses a paramount importance in terms of demographic data of Artsakh population where Armenians made up the majority in 1919 as well.

“According to the pre-war statistics of the Russian Government, Armenian Karabakh (the occidental half of the administration of Cantzak) numbered a total population of 526,000 inhabitants, of whom 376,000 were Armenians, 138,000 Tartars, 9000 Russians, Georgians, etc., and 3000 Turks” the *Christian Science Monitor* reports.

Furthermore, the *Christian Science Monitor* report clarifies the reasons behind the massacre of Armenians. “The cause of the trouble is said to be apparently political due to the desire of the Tartars to annex the Armenian Province of Karabakh to the Tartar Republic of Azerbaijan.”

On March 26, 1920 the *New York Times* printed a press report headlined “17,000 Armenians Massacred by Tartars, Declares Prelate on Mission to Allies.” Similarly, another report appeared in the *Boston Globe*, headlined “Reports 17,000 Armenians Slain by Tartars Recently.” Both reports cited the data obtained from Armenian Archbishop Khoren, who had arrived in London from Yerevan.

On April 22, 1921 the *Christian Science Monitor* issued an all-inclusive article titled “Fierce Attacks on Armenians,” reporting about the “slaughter and devastation charged

to Tartars and Bolsheviki in Near East Dispatches.” It provides a detailed account of the fifth time invasion by Bolsheviks and Tatar devastation. The report reveals that Bolsheviks fiercely attacked Armenians in Spitak and surrounding villages. In Dilijan and Vanadzor Armenian intellectuals and household names were executed, namely Nerses Avakian, deputy Allabekian, president of Zemstvo and others. It should be noted that some Armenian place names were spelled differently in the report, utilizing the place names in use at that period of time.

The *Christian Science Monitor* report of April 22, 1921 indicates the predominance of Bolsheviks in the actions against Armenians.

“Bolsheviki are exciting the Tartars against the Armenians for the purpose of starting armed conflict between the two populations. Armenian peasants are defending themselves heroically, but Russian soldiers continue to aid Bolsheviki bands. Annihilation of Armenian people seems inevitable” the *Christian Science Monitor* reports.

On November 22, 1921 an article in the *New York Times* titled “New State of Nakhichevan” reports about the unfortunate treaty signed in Kars on October 13, which resulted in territorial gains for Turkey and Azerbaijan.

“The treaty creates within Armenian territory the small autonomous State of Nakhichevan, under the protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan. About half of Caucasian Armenia is given to the Turks as well as large tracts of territory in Georgia. The preamble of the treaty recognizes the rights of peoples to self-determination” the *New York Times* reports.

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