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Major Ethiopian Exhibit Comes to Mass., Includes Armenian Artifacts

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

SALEM, Mass. — Armenians feel close to Ethiopia and Ethiopians due to centuries of relations as well as the fact that Ethiopian Christians share the same theology as the Armenian Church. Some wonder about superficial similarities between the Ethiopic and Armenian alphabets. Yet most Armenians do not know much about Ethiopian culture or history. There is a wonderful exhibit which can help remedy this. “Ethiopia at the Crossroads,” which premiered at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore last December (see Nora Hamerman’s “Armenian and Ethiopian Art Share Spotlight in Baltimore Exhibit” in the *Mirror-Spectator* this January), is now at the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) in Salem, Mass., till July



Gospel book with the Ascension, illuminated by the Armenian artist Petros in 1386 in the Lake Van region, from the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (photo Aram Arkun)

(and then will move to the Toledo Art Museum in Ohio from August to November).

This exhibition places almost two millennia of Ethiopian art in a global context and even includes a number of Armenian illuminated manuscripts and artifacts among the approximately 200 icons, manuscripts, coins, crosses, metal works, carvings, textiles, contemporary artworks and videos on display.

Opening

At the opening of the exhibit for museum members on Friday, April 12, Petra Slinkard, Director of Curatorial Affairs and the Nancy B. Putnam Curator of Fashion and Textiles, noted that PEM co-organized this traveling exhibit together with the Walters and the Toledo Art Museum. She

see EXHIBITION, page 16



From left, James, Isabella and Ana Melikian, and Christine Sciacca (photo Aram Arkun)

Arsonist Strikes Armenian Cemetery Ahead Of Genocide Commemoration

By Bruce Clayton

FRESNO (San Joaquin Valley Sun) — An arsonist struck Fresno’s Ararat Armenian cemetery, at 3 a.m. on Saturday, April 13, singeing nearly a dozen historic Cypress trees that flank its main drive, a little more than a week before the cemetery and the city’s sizable Armenian-American community commemorate the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

The blaze has prompted community members and the cemetery’s managing board of directors to openly question whether the blaze



The scene from the arson attack on Ararat Armenian Cemetery in Fresno

was a deliberate attack ahead of the commemoration of a dark chapter for the local community.

According to cemetery management, eight trees were torched by an arsonist in Saturday’s wee hours.

see ARSON, page 20

Pashinyan Ally Advocates ‘Verification’ Of Armenian Genocide Victims

By Ruzanna Stepanian and Harry Tamrazian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — In remarks denounced by critics as advancement of a Turkish narrative a close ally of Prime Minister Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has pronounced in favor of essentially “verifying” the number of victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey that is widely believed to be 1.5 million.

Andranik Kocharyan, a senior member of Pashinyan’s ruling Civil Contract party and lawmaker who heads the parliament’s defense committee, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service in a TV program aired on Sunday, April 14, that Pashinyan’s goal is to build “real foundations” related to the Genocide and “make the entire list of compatriots subjected to genocide more objective.”

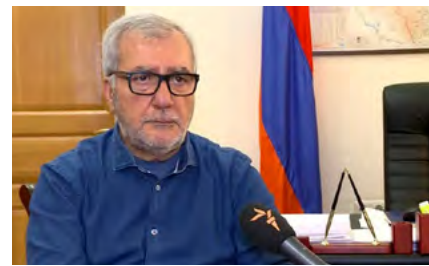
He stressed that it is necessary to have the names of all Armenians subjected to genocide and verify “where, how and under what conditions” they were killed.

Kocharyan reiterated the idea during a press briefing in parliament on Monday, April 15.

“This is a simple goal for us to know the addresses and locations

of each of our 1.5 million compatriots. It is very important for the building of our relations in the future as well,” Kocharyan said.

“[The] April 24 [Genocide Commemoration Day] is approaching. Was it 1.5 million, 2



Pro-government lawmaker Andranik Kocharyan (file photo)

million or less? It should be strictly addressed. But if we don’t record it, the other side can always say that no such thing happened. And until today they have been saying so,” he added.

Genocide expert Suren Manukyan, who formerly served as deputy director of the Genocide Museum in Yerevan, described this latest government initiative as “very dangerous,” reminding that the idea of making lists has been advocated by Turkey since the 1960s.

see VERIFICATION, page 3

Azerbaijan Looks to Italy for Political Backing in Karabakh Peace Process

By Brawley Benson

Italy is emerging as a new player in South Caucasus geopolitics, providing backing for Azerbaijan amid the European Union’s efforts to broker a durable peace

between Baku and Armenia. From Azerbaijan’s perspective, the hope is that a higher Italian profile in the peace process can help mitigate France’s unflinching support for Armenia.

Italian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Edmondo Cirielli has been a particularly vocal supporter of Baku. On April 3, he chided the EU’s approach in trying to broker a peace deal, singling out France for one-sidedness. “Any sudden statement by representatives of third-party institutions with respect to the parties in the field risks exacerbating tensions,” Cirielli said.

Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quick to latch on to Cirielli’s comments. The state news agency Azertac quoted ministry spokesperson Aykhan



Italian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Edmondo Cirielli

see ITALY, page 5

ARMENIA

US to Help Armenia Modernize its Military

Page 2



CALIFORNIA

Yerevan Man Donates Stem Cells To Help Save His Sister’s Life

Page 7



MASSACHUSETTS

Boston Film Festival Celebrates Century Of Cinema and Female Directors

Page 17





NEWS from ARMENIA

Canadian Expert Joins EU Mission in Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Alexander Grushevskiy, the first Canadian expert to join the European Union's civilian mission in Armenia (EUMA) arrived in Armenia, according to a statement on the mission's page on the platform formerly known as Twitter, on April 16.

"Thrilled to welcome the first Canadian Expert Alexander Grushevskiy to EUMA," the message said.

"Canada is the first Third Contributing State supporting the Mission. Thank you for your valuable cooperation."

Armenia Investigating Crash that Killed 4 Soldiers, Injured 20

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Criminal proceedings have been initiated after four Armenian soldiers were killed and 20 others injured when a military vehicle carrying them veered off the road and fell into a ravine on Friday, April 12, a spokesperson for the Investigative Committee reveals.

Armenia's Defense Ministry identified the dead soldiers as Areg Kerobyan, Slavik Vardanyan, Davit Hakobyan and Joseph Azolyan.

According to the information that RFE/RL's Armenian Service has, the crash occurred on the Nrnadzor road in the Meghri district in Armenia's southern Syunik province.

According to preliminary information, one of the injured is in critical condition. Others have injuries ranging in severity, the ministry said.

Abrahamyan said that a criminal probe has been launched.

Former Pashinyan Envoy Urges End to Genocide Speculation

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Former ambassador-at-large Edmon Marukyan on April 16 urged authorities in Armenia stop discussions about "verifying" the names of 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide.

In remarks denounced by critics as advancement of a Turkish narrative, a close ally of Prime Minister Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan promoted "verifying" the number of victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey that is widely believed to be 1.5 million.

Andranik Kocharyan, a senior member of Pashinyan's ruling Civil Contract party and lawmaker who heads the parliament's defense committee, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service in a TV program aired on Sunday that Pashinyan's goal is to build "real foundations" related to the Genocide and "make the entire list of compatriots subjected to genocide more objective."

After Kocharyan's interview was broadcast, Marukyan said the discourse is a "trap" and that it's Turkey that wants to make the matter a subject of discussion.



Armenian and American servicemen speak during the joint Eagle Partner peacekeeping exercise in Armenia in September 2023. (Photo: Fort Drum & 10th Mountain Division, t.ly/u6gas, public domain)

US to Help Armenia Modernize Its Military

By Ani Avetisyan

Only a few years ago, the idea seemed unimaginable: the United States is planning to give considerable military assistance to Armenia, Russia's not-so-long-ago strategic partner. But times have changed, and Washington is treading cautiously as it works to erase a geopolitical red line in the Caucasus.

The Armenian government started distancing itself politically and economically from Russia after experiencing a crushing defeat at the hands of the Azerbaijani military in Nagorno-Karabakh. The widespread feeling in Yerevan was that the Kremlin failed to fulfill its security commitments to Armenia. The European Union and the United States have been quick to respond to Armenian feelers for closer security and economic ties. In early April, the EU and US came up with a combined assistance offering of over \$350 million for Yerevan.

Following up on that meeting, US Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien provided an overview of rapidly expanding US-Armenian relations in an April 10 interview with the Armenian Service of RFE/

RL, saying that Washington's contacts with Yerevan "in just about every sector have expanded and deepened" over the past year.

That includes military cooperation. "We've had significant expansion on this theme in the last year," Kvien noted, pointing to the joint US-Armenian military exercises in early September in Armenia. The envoy also said an American military "advisor" would soon work with the Armenian Defense Ministry to implement capacity-building reforms promoting "modern standards" in planning and operations.

"Armenia is interested in expanding its participation in things like peacekeeping and other peaceful endeavors," Kvien said. "We're talking about all sorts of different things, and we're trying to see where we can be helpful to Armenia in terms of its defense."

Many aspects of US-Armenian military cooperation remain to be finalized. But Kvien said the two countries "have already agreed on a couple things." One that she revealed was that the United States has agreed to an Armenian request to supply armored ambulances. The two sides are currently discussing a delivery timetable.

Russia and Azerbaijan responded vituperatively to the April 5 announcement of the EU-US aid package to Armenia. Speaking recently in the Armenian parliament, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sought to assuage Russia, stating that enhanced economic and security cooperation with the West should not be interpreted as being targeted against Armenia's "regional relations in any way."

Kvien sought to amplify that reassuring message. The price of US help does not include a requirement that Armenia sever all connections with Russia, the ambassador indicated.

"Our view is... that the more friends, partners, allies you have, the more trade partners you have, the more export markets you have, the stronger you are, because that means no single country can hold you hostage to those relationships," Kvien said. "So what we're trying to do is work with Armenia in areas that Armenia has identified to help it diversify its contacts, not cut off one or the other, but diversify."

(This article originally appeared on www.eurasianet.org on April 16.)

Armenia to Commemorate Yazidi Genocide on August 3

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Armenian Parliament voted on April 16 to designate August 3 as the official commemoration day for the victims of Yazidi Genocide.

The bill, submitted by ethnic Yazidi MP Rustam Bakoyan from the Ruling Civil Contract Party, passed the first reading with 88 votes in favor, and is expected to pass the second reading to be held within 24 hours. Armenia will thus become the first country after Iraq to enshrine this in a law.

"Genocide is a crime against humanity, and it is the biggest crime. This is a direct result and a direct consequence of incorrect and improper condemnation of the Armenian Genocide in 1915.

The destinies of Armenians and Yazidis are quite similar, and our destinies have always crossed paths. We have often found ourselves in the same situations in different stages of history," Bakoyan said as he presented the bill.

"The Republic of Armenia, adhering to the policy and priority it adopted in the process of prevention and condemnation of genocides, in 2014 condemned the genocide of Yazidis in Iraq from the high podium of the United Nations. In 2015, the Yazidi genocide in Iraq was condemned by the Armenian National Assembly factions, and in 2018 by the National Assembly," the MP said.

"The prevention of genocide and crimes against humanity is one of the

priorities of Armenia's foreign policy," Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyan said, adding that Armenia actively supports the measures aimed at the prevention and condemnation of the mentioned crimes.

According to Armenpress, French Ambassador to Armenia Olivier Decotignies, in a post on the platform formerly known as Twitter, praised the move. "The National Assembly of Armenia has included the Day of Remembrance of the Yazidi Genocide in its national calendar," he wrote, adding that he is proud to have represented France in the National Assembly of Armenia on this historic day.



ARMENIA

US, Armenia Have ‘Very Active’ Discussions on Security, Defense

By Heggine Buniatian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The United States and Armenia have “very active and robust” discussions about security and defense, US Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien said in an interview with RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on April 11.

“That is also an ongoing topic, and I think that we’ve made significant expansion in that topic in the past year,” she said.

Kvien cited several examples of defense cooperation between the United States and Armenia, including their first joint military exercise since 2008 that took place last year.

“I think that’s a very important signal that the US and Armenia can work together in the defense field. And we’re looking for further ways that we can continue that work together. We’re also going to have an advisor who can come and sit with Armenia’s Ministry of Defense to help build capacity, particularly because Armenia is interested in expanding its participation in things like peacekeeping and other peaceful endeavors. And we want to be helpful to do that. So we’re going to work with them on both reforming internally, how to get your Ministry of Defense up to modern standards, and then also how to do more in the peacekeeping area,” she said.

Kvien also said that Washington and Yerevan have an “ongoing discussion about what Armenia might need in the military sector.”

“We have already agreed on a couple of things, but we are continuing to have that discussion. One thing I can highlight in terms of what we’ve agreed to is that Armenia had asked for ambulances that are armored. And that way they can go into any potential conflict area and people will be protected. So that’s something that we’ve already agreed to go forward with. We are working on the modalities now so we can deliver that assistance. And, as I said, we’re talking about all sorts of different things, and we’re trying to see where we can be helpful to Armenia in terms of its defense,” Kvien added.

Commenting on the April 5 meeting in Brussels between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan that

the parties said was focused on increasing Armenia’s resilience and diversifying its economy that remains heavily dependent on Russia, Kvien said that what was

South Caucasus region.

Outlining ways in which the United States is trying to help Armenia get stronger and more independent in terms of its

lations, very aggressive rhetoric, or whether it is disinformation that is put out into the information sphere, all of those things are unhelpful to the peace process. Our fo-



U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien (R) gives an interview to RFE/RL’s Armenian Service, April 10, 2024.

highlighted during that high-level meeting showed the progress the parties have made in their relations in the last few years.

“I’ll speak to the United States more than the EU, obviously, because that’s what I cover. But I can say that since I arrived about a year ago, all of our relations with Armenia in just about every sector have expanded and deepened. I’m proud that we’ve made that much progress, and I think we’ll continue to do that,” she said.

At the meeting in Brussels, the European Union and the United States promised 270 million euros (about \$290 million) and \$65 million, respectively, in fresh assistance to Armenia.

The high-level meeting between the West and Armenia was watched anxiously from Moscow that has accused Western powers of seeking to east Russia from the

economy, Kvien said that cutting off all relations with any country was not what the United States was advising Armenia.

“Our view is... that the more friends, partners, allies you have, the more trade partners you have, the more export markets you have, the stronger you are, because that means no single country can hold you hostage to those relationships. So what we’re trying to do is work with Armenia in areas that Armenia has identified to help it diversify its contacts, not cut off one or the other, but diversify,” she said.

Speaking about the current tensions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, Kvien stressed that Washington has made it very clear that “there can be no military solution to any current disagreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

“We consider whether it is ceasefire vio-

cus right now is trying to advance the peace process,” Kvien said.

The diplomat reminded that the United States had facilitated a number of meetings between Armenian and Azerbaijani representatives last year and said Washington remained open to further facilitation.

“Lately the progress [in Armenia-Azerbaijani peace talks] has been slower, and we’re hoping that it can get back on track to move more quickly ahead. It can be either under U.S. facilitation, we’re very happy to do that. But if both parties are comfortable with other facilitators, we’re also happy to support that. What we really want to see is the agreement on all of the various details of a peace process moving forward, and we’re willing to support it in any way that the two parties feel is okay to go forward in,” the ambassador said.

Pashinyan Ally Advocates ‘Verification’ of Armenian Genocide Victims

VERIFICATION, from page 1

About three dozen countries, including the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Canada and others, have recognized the Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey. Switzerland has also criminalized the denial of the Armenian genocide.

US President Joe Biden has characterized the Ottoman-era killings of Armenians as genocide in his statements issued annually on Armenian Remembrance Day on April 24 since he assumed office in 2021.

Manukyan said that one of the earliest narratives advanced by Ankara in denying the Armenian Genocide was that the number of 1.5 million Armenian victims was a lie. “They have said that nothing like that happened, and if Armenians are ly-

ing about the number, then they are lying about the whole thing. And they demanded to be given a list,” he said.

Manukyan and other genocide specialists acknowledge that retrieving full records of victims would be an impossible task considering that the Ottoman Empire often kept no records related to its ethnic minorities.

“Consequently, our only source that we can cite are the memories of survivors, most of whom were children who often did not remember even their own family names let alone the names of other victims,” Manukyan said.

At the same time, the genocide expert said that Yerevan has always countered the Turkish demand for compiling a list of victims by saying that it is not important

how many people were killed, “because genocide is not about the numbers, but it is about being an act intended to destroy a group of people and it doesn’t matter how many people were in that group.”

The expert cited the example of the Bosnian genocide, during which some 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were killed in the Srebrenica events in 1995, which were recognized as genocide by an international court.

“Numbers are not important at all in terms of whether what happened was genocide or not,” Manukyan said.

The expert said that no one but Turkey has questioned the fact that 1.5 million Armenians were killed in the 1915 genocide. He said that with this latest initiative

the Armenian government also does this.

Meanwhile, Eduard Sharmazanov, a Pashinyan critic representing the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia, has accused the Pashinyan government of “following orders” from Turkey “to consign the Armenian genocide to history” ahead of the commemoration day.

“How will Pashinyan justify it before the Armenian people that he does not turn April 24 into a major foreign-policy factor?” He will say that it is a threat posed by historical Armenia,” Sharmazanov told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

The Armenian Apostolic Church canonized 1.5 million victims of the Armenian genocide, collectively declaring them to be saints, when the centennial of the Armenian genocide was marked in 2015.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan, Jordan Sign Defense Cooperation Deal

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan and Jordan signed a defense agreement, according to an official statement from Baku, on April 16.

Defense Minister of Azerbaijan Colonel-General Zakir Hasanov paid an official visit to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Azerbaijani media report reports, citing the country's Defense Ministry.

During the trip, Hasanov met with Major-General Yusif Ahmed Al-Hnaiti, Chairman of the Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordanian Armed Forces.

Armenia Calls for Dialogue amid Middle East Tensions

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Armenian Foreign Ministry has called for dialogue amid escalating tensions in the Middle East.

"Escalating tensions in the Middle East are cause for grave concern," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement on the platform formerly known as Twitter on April 14.

"We urge to prioritize dialogue. Further confrontation must be avoided."

Azerbaijan Holding Anti-Armenian School Olympiad

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Azerbaijani media recently reported that on April 27, a school Olympiad titled "Return to Western Azerbaijan" will take place, Geghard Scientific Analytical Foundation reported.

The term "Western Azerbaijan" refers to an irredentist project claiming the territory of Armenia.

The event has been organized by the Ministry of Science and Education of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Education of Nakhijevan, the Institute of Education of Azerbaijan, Nakhijevan State University, and the so-called "Western Azerbaijan Community" organization.

According to the organizers, the aim of the Olympiad is to "increase school children's knowledge of the history, geography, culture, literature, prominent historical figures, place names, and folklore" of "Western Azerbaijan."

"This event is one of the manifestations of Azerbaijan's occupation policy. The Azerbaijani leadership does not disguise the character of its policy and has claimed on numerous occasions that 'the territory of the Republic of Armenia is the 'historical homeland' of Azerbaijanis, asserting that they must return there," the Geghard statement added.

"Ilham Aliyev reinstated this claim in 2022 during his visit to the administrative building of the 'Western Azerbaijan Community.' The organization's activities are sponsored by the state and are directed towards elaborating and spreading these false theses.

Armenia Asks World Court to Pursue Ethnic Cleansing Case against Azerbaijan

THE HAGUE (Public Radio of Armenia/Panorama.am) — Armenia on April 16 urged the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to hold Azerbaijan responsible for ethnic cleansing of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.

"After threatening to do so for years, Azerbaijan has completed the ethnic cleansing of the region and is now systematically erasing all traces of ethnic Armenians' presence," Armenia's representative, Yeghishe Kirakosyan, said on the second day of hearings at the UN's top court. (See the entirety of his comments on page 18.)

"There is no better example of racial discrimination, upsetting peace and security than Azerbaijan's recent armed aggressions, which resulted in ethnic cleansing of all of Nagorno Karabakh," he said.



Yeghishe Kirakosyan

"To the great regret of Armenia and the international community, not even this Court was able to stop Azerbaijan's race of ethnic cleansing. In September 2023, after starving the ethnic Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh for nine months by blocking the Lachin corridor, in flagrant violation of the Court's two orders on provisional measures, Azerbaijan launched an unprovoked attack killing hundreds and forcing over 100,000 ethnic Armenians to flee their ancestral homes," Kirakosyan stated.

On Monday, April 15, Azerbaijan told the court that most of Armenia's complaints related to the armed conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh did not fall within the scope of the UN treaty.

It also accused Armenia of not genuine-

ly engaging in negotiations before bringing the case to the ICJ. Kirakosyan rejected these claims.

"Armenia negotiated with Azerbaijan in good faith and pursued discussions far beyond the point of utility," he said.

"Armenia has no claims on Azerbaijani territory and is committed to establishing conditions for genuine and enduring peace," Kirakosyan said.

"History has taught us that genuine peace is built on justice, accountability, truth and reconciliation," Armenia's representative stated.

International law professor Pierre d'Argent representing Armenia on April 16 responded to the preliminary objections raised by Azerbaijan.

"Azerbaijan's second preliminary objection seeks to exclude from the debate



Pierre d'Argent

on the merits only certain allegations of violation of the Convention made by Armenia, namely allegations of arbitrary detentions of ethnic Armenians, allegations of enforced disappearances of ethnic Armenians, lastly, Armenia's claims relating to various acts of violence committed against ethnic Armenians," d'Argent said.

"As you know, Azerbaijan's position has apparently changed in the course of the proceedings. The question is, however, whether it has really evolved, as it is difficult to know what has changed. The distinctions Azerbaijan is making are irrelevant and meaningless under the Convention, and all the more so because there is no doubt that the conflict between Azerbaijan and the ethnic Armenians when they lived

in Nagorno-Karabakh had very marked ethnic origins and dimensions. Azerbaijan yesterday acknowledged that the conflict before the Court is an "ethnic conflict."

He continued, "Thus, this conflict is not an ordinary inter-state war, contrary to what, in a perfectly contradictory and decontextualised manner, Azerbaijan is trying to convince you by claiming that within this conflict there are particularly cruel and shocking acts of violence which have nothing to do with the ethnic origin of their victims.

"This conflict is an ethnic conflict because for three decades, under the pretext of territorial integrity, Azerbaijan refused to accept the self-determination of the Armenians living on their ancestral lands in Nagorno-Karabakh. This conflict was-and still is-ethnically motivated and discriminatory, just as Azerbaijan's decision to put an end to this self-determination through its military operations in 2020 and, ultimately, in September 2023, was ethnically motivated and discriminatory. What Azerbaijan, through the voice of its President, calls its 'war of liberation,' or its 'patriotic war,' involved numerous discriminatory violations of the fundamental rights of ethnic Armenians, including when they took part in the hostilities. Moreover, this war resulted in the complete ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh in defiance of the court's orders, which were intended to protect plausible Convention rights that were under serious threat.

"According to its own national narrative, Azerbaijan thus 'liberated' itself by waging war at the end of 2020, and then — after a complete ceasefire — by pursuing its objectives through the gradual strangulation of Nagorno-Karabakh, right up to the final coup de force in September 2023 by which the ethnic Armenian inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh were driven out. Thus, for Azerbaijan, its 'liberation' involved the rejection of any autonomy for ethnic Armenians and, ultimately, their forced exclusion from their ancestral lands, which is consolidated by the denial, destruction or alteration of any trace of the centuries-old Armenian presence in this territory. This, ladies and gentlemen of the court, is the objective and the fruit of Azerbaijan's 'patriotic war:' a homeland without ethnic Armenians," the law professor remarked.

Experts Say Turkey Becoming a Drug Transit Hub

ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkish police have seized the third largest haul of cocaine in the country's history, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced Thursday, April 11, as groups monitoring organized crime warned that the country was becoming an entry point for drugs reaching Europe.

Some 608 kilograms of cocaine, most of it in liquid form, were confiscated in an operation across three provinces, Yerlikaya posted on the social media platform formerly known as Twitter. Nearly 830 kilograms of precursor chemicals used to process the drug were also seized.

Yerlikaya said the police operation targeted an international gang allegedly led by a Lebanese-Venezuelan national, who was among four foreign members of the "organized crime group" detained, along with nine Turks.

"The amount of cocaine seized in the ... operation was the third-largest amount of

cocaine seized at one time in Turkey," the minister added.

Groups monitoring organized crime say Turkey is growing as a transit hub for cocaine coming from South America to Europe as security at ports such as Rotterdam in the Netherlands becomes tighter.

In a report dated October last year, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime said a 44% rise in cocaine seizures in Turkey between 2021 and 2022 was not reflected in data on domestic consumption, "suggesting that the country is likely to serve as a drug corridor."

Officials made Turkey's largest seizure — 1.1 tons of cocaine hidden in a consignment of bananas from Ecuador — at the Mediterranean port of Mersin in 2021.

Since coming to office in June last year, Yerlikaya has overseen a clampdown on organized crime in Turkey to counter claims the country has become a haven for foreign

gangsters.

He regularly posts details of the latest police operation to target drug traffickers, fraudsters and other criminals.

Thursday's social media post included a video, overlaid with dramatic music, showing apparent surveillance footage, large plastic containers and a pressing machine.

The operation was led by anti-narcotics officers based in Kocaeli, which lies southeast of Istanbul, but also included investigations in Tekirdag to Istanbul's northwest and in the Mediterranean province of Antalya.

The gang used vineyards in Tekirdag and Antalya to store chemicals and process the cocaine, which had been disguised in fertilizer, according to Yerlikaya. A shotgun was also recovered by police, he added.

"We will not tolerate poison traffickers, organized crime groups and gangs, whether national or international," the minister wrote.



INTERNATIONAL

Swedish MP Hopes Europe Will View Armenia as Part of European Civilization in the Future

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Member of the Swedish Parliament, Erik Hellsborn, on April 15 expressed hope that Europe would consider Armenia as a part of the European cultural family and Western democratic civilization in the future. In this context he emphasized the significance of the high-level Armenia-EU-US meeting held in Brussels on April 5.

Hellsborn addressed the aforementioned topics in an interview with Armenpress, speaking about the strengthening ties between Armenia and the European Union, as well as the EU's role in the security and prosperity of the South Caucasus, the Swedish MP highlighted the importance of deeper relations between Armenia and the EU.

Hellsborn, discussing Azerbaijan's ongoing aggressive statements against Arme-

nia, its occupation of Armenian territories, and the potential enforcement of sanctions by the European Union on Azerbaijan as a consequence of these actions, stressed that there are individuals within the union who are unwilling to confront the Aliyev regime due to economic reasons. The Member of the Swedish Parliament noted that he is not among them.

The Swedish MP said that in February of the current year, in a letter addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden Tobias Billström, he proposed to discuss the issue of imposing sanctions on Azerbaijan in the event of continued Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia.

In the mentioned letter addressed to the Swedish Foreign Minister, Hellsborn specifically noted: "In the early morning of Feb-

ruary 13, the Azerbaijani military opened fire on the border with Armenia, resulting in the deaths of four Armenian servicemen. On February 13, 2023, Azerbaijan fired for several hours at Armenian positions located in the area of the Nerkin Hand settlement in the Syunik region, leading to the loss of four soldiers from the Armenian Armed Forces. The hopes that Azerbaijan would adopt a more restrained stance after gaining control of the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region last autumn are seen as 'disgraceful'. Azerbaijani President Aliyev has stated that Armenia should not exist as an independent country and referred to its territory as "Western Azerbaijan".

Border aggression must be understood in this context. It would be extremely unfortunate if the situation escalated into further

violence or even a new war. Such escalation would result in immense human suffering and must be prevented. The international community, including Sweden, must condemn Azerbaijan's imperialist rhetoric and military aggression, for instance, by summoning the country's ambassador for negotiations. If there is no improvement, discussions about imposing sanctions on the country should be considered.

Referring to the activities of the EU observer mission operating in Armenia, Hell-



Swedish Member of Parliament Erik Hellsborn

born praised the work of the EU observer mission and added that the mission should continue its good work.

"The EU mission in Armenia should continue the good work that they do; it is positive that the mission is now growing. Western media, human rights groups and politicians such as myself must continue to bring attention to any acts of aggression, and make sure that world is aware of what is happening. But perhaps most important of all: Closer economic cooperation and cultural ties between the democratic West and Armenia.

I believe this to be the most important aspect in a longer perspective. My hope is that in the future both Europe and Armenia itself will view Armenia as a part of the European cultural family and the democratic Western civilization. Any would be aggressor would be more hesitant to attack a country which the collective West view as "one of us," Swedish MP said.

EU Wants to See 'Substantial Negotiations' Between Armenia, Azerbaijan

By Anush Mkrtchian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The European Union wants to see "genuine, substantial negotiations" between Armenia and Azerbaijan leading to a peace treaty, agreements on border delimitation and opening of transport links, the 27-nation bloc's diplomat said on April 11.

"It is clear that any reports about the shooting on the border are worrying... I do hope that this does actually focus everybody's minds that we have to get back to the negotiating process in greater substance," Toivo Klaar, the EU's Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service, commenting on recent tensions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

Klaar acknowledged that Armenia and Azerbaijan could move forward in the peace process faster "if the political will is there."

"I believe it should not take that long to arrive at a positive outcome if the political will is there, if the commitment is there. And that is what we want to work for together with Armenia, together with Azerbaijan, that indeed we get from the point where we are to a positive outcome. Be-

cause I believe that it should not take that long if the political commitment is there from both sides," he said.

Speaking about Turkey-Armenia normalization, Klaar stressed that Brussels supports this process. He said he hoped that the special envoys for normalization talks designated by Yerevan and Ankara would meet soon.

"My hope would be that in the near future this process would indeed move forward and show results for the sake of Armenia, for the sake of Turkey, for the sake of the region," the EU diplomat said.

As for Armenia's possible membership in the EU in the future, Klaar said that "it depends on political decisions made in Yerevan, Brussels, and the member states."

"I think there are so many elements related to this. I think certainly what we are seeing right now is a strengthening of relations between the European Union and Armenia, which corresponds to the interests of the European Union, which corresponds to the interests of Armenia. How this relationship will evolve, we will have to see," he said.

"Again, I think that compared to only a few years ago, the relationship between the EU and Armenia has evolved significantly. But where we will end up in our relation-

ship, I think that is too early to say. It depends on political decisions made in Yerevan. It depends on political decisions made in Brussels, in the member states. And all of this is a process where Armenia is only now starting to catch up on some of the elements where we could have been a bit further along already 10 years ago, but then, of course, Armenia decided differently. And so we are catching up on maybe lost time that we have had in our relationship," the diplomat added.

Asked whether Armenia's membership in Russia-led organizations like the Collective Security Treaty Organization was an obstacle to the country's further integration with the EU, Klaar said. "I think right now we have to look at what the Armenian government and what the Armenian people want to do, where they want to go and how they see best the development of our relations. And again, I think what is good is that we are seeing also with the meeting last week a real strengthening of EU-Armenia relations. And the United States is there to help support the resilience of Armenia. And that was a very important message that I believe [European Commission] President [Ursula] von der Leyen gave to Prime Minister [Nikol] Pashinyan."

Azerbaijan Looks to Italy for Political Backing in Karabakh Peace Process

ITALY, from page 1

Hajizada as saying, "We believe Italy's policy should set an example for some other European countries, particularly France."

Carlo Frappi, a research fellow at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, said in an interview with Eurasianet that Italy has pursued a balanced or "low profile" policy on Karabakh both before and after last year's complete takeover of the territory. This does not necessarily threaten France's position, but it can complicate things if their officials' public statements continue to contradict each other.

Frappi said that Italy, along with other EU states, is supportive of efforts to promote Armenia's "socio-economic resilience" following its decisive defeat in Karabakh, which resulted in the influx of over 100,000 refugees. At the same time, Rome is not necessarily in alignment with Brussels' position in peace negotiations. "The former doesn't necessarily affect the latter," he said, adding that he sees Cirielli's views — while not uncommon in Rome — as political posturing. "I would say it

is more the expression of an individual rather than an institutional thought."

Facing criticism over human rights abuses, Baku has few allies in Brussels. For Italy, however, economic interests appear to be overriding concerns about Azerbaijan's authoritarian political practices. For years, Italy has been Azerbaijan's largest export destination, accounting for 44 percent of the country's exports in 2023. The country was also the largest importer of Azerbaijani oil during the same year. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev noted last June that Italian companies were actively involved "in ongoing reconstruction and restoration works in Azerbaijan, in particular, [in] liberated lands."

The countries' strong economic cooperation is not particularly new; the bilateral relationship dates back to at least the mid-2000s, when Italy invested in multiple pipelines to import energy from Azerbaijan that became known as the Southern Gas Corridor. The last link of this corridor, which connects Albania and Italy, came online in 2020.

What is noteworthy is that economic relations show no signs of slowing down, even as Azerbaijan drifts farther from Europe. On April 10, Cirielli met with his counterpart, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Fariz Rzayev, for talks in Rome aimed at "solidifying relations" in trade and energy cooperation. Few details have emerged about the talks, but it could end up being something consequential; just last year, similar meetings resulted in a \$171-million energy deal.

Frappi said strong bilateral ties are not strictly based on energy security, adding that many decision-makers in Italy still desire to strengthen the country's relationship with China even though Rome pulled out of a memorandum of understanding regarding the Belt and Road initiative in 2023. Azerbaijan is a lynchpin in emerging East-West trade routes and could be an outpost for Italian influence in the Belt and Road and the Middle Corridor projects. The two countries have also strengthened cultural and academic ties, including by establishing the Italy-Azerbaijan University in 2022.

For the foreseeable future, the peace process will dominate the EU's engagement with Azerbaijan and Armenia, and if tensions escalate, as many fear, Italy's "balanced position" will have to tip one way or the other.

"There is a clear need to revive international mediation efforts," said Frappi. "Brussels still holds the bargaining strength and chips to de-escalate tensions and facilitate the conclusion of a peace agreement protecting the interests of both parties, along with EU regional interests themselves."

"Italy cannot but support that and, in a phase of latent tensions between Azerbaijan and the EU, its traditionally balanced position could also prove helpful," Frappi added.

(Brawley Benson is a U.S.-based reporter and recent graduate of the Columbia Journalism School who writes about Russia and the countries around it. Follow him on X at @BrawleyEric. This article originally appeared on www.eurasianet.org on April 15.)

Kazakhstan's President Tokayev Visits Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The official welcoming ceremony of President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who arrived in Armenia was held at the Presidential Palace on April 15

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan welcomed Tokayev, who later held meetings with President Vahagn Khachaturyan, and National Assembly Speaker Alen Simonyan.

Among the agreements the two leaders reached was a declaration that Yerevan and Astana are sister cities, signed by Yerevan Mayor Tigran Avinyan and Astana Mayor Zhenis Kassymbek.

"Armenia is an essential and dependable partner for Kazakhstan in the South Caucasus region," Tokayev said, following his meeting with Pashinyan.

"We hold profound reverence for Armenia's ancient history, rich culture, and traditions. Armenia is an essential and dependable partner for Kazakhstan in the South Caucasus region. Our relations are founded on an enduring friendship and mutual support. Our shared objective is to enhance bilateral relations. Our aims and interests align in promoting regional and international peace and security. We are keen on advancing our comprehensive partnership with Armenia, and hence, today's visit holds special significance for me," stated Tokayev.

He emphasized that the discussions with Pashinyan underscored a mutual commitment to maintaining the partnership at the highest level.



President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan shake hands.

Tokayev noted that they discussed various current agenda issues with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and reached concrete agreements.

"We paid special attention to expand-

ing cooperation in trade-economic, and investment spheres. Over the last 5 years, bilateral trade volume has steadily increased, but the full potential has not been fully used. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to accelerate exchanges and explore new directions to boost trade turnover. Concrete measures must be taken to expand the list of export and import goods, making the most efficient use of existing opportunities. Kazakhstan is prepared to increase exports to Armenia to \$350 million," he stated.

He emphasized the need to activate relations in industry, finance, innovation, tourism, agriculture, and other sectors. "I proposed to Armenia to undertake several joint investment projects, especially pertinent in today's challenging geopolitical environment. The focus of the intergovernmental commission is directed towards advancing efforts in this direction," he added.

Tokayev also emphasized that it is necessary to activate contacts between the business circles of the two countries, which will allow improving investment relations.

Kazakhstan welcomes the Crossroads of Peace project presented by the Armenian Government, Tokayev added.

"The transport logistics sector is also of great importance for strengthening bilateral beneficial cooperation. We highly appreciate Armenia's aspiration to restore transport links in the South Caucasus. In that sense, we welcome the initiative of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, which is called 'Crossroads of Peace,'" Tokayev said.

Tokayev invited Pashinyan, to Kazakhstan on an official visit.

Following the meeting with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, President Tokayev said: "I would like to take this opportunity to invite the Honorable Prime Minister for an official visit to Kazakhstan. I am confident that such positive steps will bring our peoples closer together and deepen our cooperation."

Kazakh President added that the negotiations in Yerevan were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust, which will provide a new impetus to the relations between Armenia and Kazakhstan.



President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

Britain Said to Have Entered Talks to Deport Migrants to Armenia

LONDON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Britain has entered talks to replicate the Rwanda migrant deportation scheme with Armenia, Ivory Coast, Costa Rica and Botswana, according to leaked documents that reveal the government's extensive search for another third-country deal, according to the [Times](#).

Several South American countries including Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Brazil and Colombia have also been approached but were viewed as less likely to be interested in what the government describes as a "third-country asylum processing deal."

A list of African countries including Cape Verde, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Angola and Sierra Leone were put on a reserve list that would be approached if other targets failed.

Other African countries including Morocco, Tunisia, Namibia and the Gambia "explicitly declined" to enter technical discussions.

According to reports, concerns were expressed that issues with the Rwanda Bill could put potential candidates off, with Armenia for example said to be awaiting the outcome of the policy, which is set to cost at least £290 million.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has signed up to pay £370 million (\$460 million) over five years to Rwanda even if no migrant is deported, according to the NAO.



President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev was received with pomp and circumstance in Yerevan.



Community News

Michael Rubin, Asya Darbinyan To Headline Times Square Genocide Commemoration

NEW YORK — The 109th anniversary commemoration of the Armenian Genocide will take place in Times Square on Sunday, April 21, 2024 at 2:00 pm, featuring headline speakers Dr. Michael Rubin, senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and Dr. Asya Darbinyan, Executive Director of the Center for Holocaust, Human Rights, and Genocide Education at Brookdale Community College, and including a performance by Canada-based musician Harout Bedrossian, in a program led by Masters of Ceremonies David Ojakian (Armenian Assembly of America), Chantelle Nasri (Armenian National Committee of America), and Nanor Hartounian (UCLA's The Promise Armenian Institute).

Sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, the noteworthy event, which is now in its 39th year, will welcome elected officials to share remarks relating to the Arme-



Dr. Michael Rubin



Dr. Asya Darbinyan

nian Genocide commemoration and support of pro-Armenian issues on Capitol Hill.

“As a community we’re proud to commemorate the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in such a momentous location as we continue to remember, honor, and educate the world about the first genocide of the 20th century,” said co-chairs Haig Gulian and Christopher Artun. “We strive towards global recognition, particularly from Turkey, and commemorations like this show the world that we will not give up our fight.”

see **COMMEMORATION**, page 9



The stem cell donor during the harvesting procedure, pictured with Arevik, an ABMDR nurse.

Yerevan Man Donates Stem Cells to Help Save His Sister's Life

LOS ANGELES — On April 10, a young Yerevan resident, Garik Petrosyan, donated bone marrow stem cells for an urgent transplant that might help her sister survive a life-threatening blood-related illness.

The harvesting of the donated stem cells is the 42nd such procedure to be performed by the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR). The painless, non-invasive harvesting took place at ABMDR's Stem Cell Harvesting Center, in the Armenian capital.

Petrosyan said that from the very first day that a donor match was being sought for her sister, who lives in Germany, he had a feeling he would end up being identified as a match, for a chance to save her life. As soon as Petrosyan was notified that he was in fact identified as a matched donor for his sister, he eagerly reported to the ABMDR headquarters, where he underwent the preliminary phase of the stem cell harvesting and subsequently the harvesting itself.

The procedure was performed by Dr. Andranik Mshetsyan, the Stem Cell Harvesting Center's resident physician. Also present were ABMDR Executive Director Dr. Sevak Avagyan, Medical Director Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan, and other lab personnel. Within mere hours of the procedure, the harvested stem cells arrived in Germany, personally delivered by a specially-licensed international courier.

As stated by ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan, “Every transplant is a challenge, involving the work of many specialists. But once the process is set in motion, everyone involved focuses on a single goal, which is to get the donated stem cells to the patient as quickly as possible for helping them survive a potentially fatal illness.”

Anyone in good health between the ages of 18 and 50 can register with ABMDR as a potential bone marrow stem cell donor, for a chance to save someone's life. Given the unique genetic makeup of ethnic Armenians, ABMDR needs to maintain a robust global registry of Armenian donors.

For more information, visit abmdr.am.



The stem cell donor (fourth from left) with ABMDR staff, including Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan (far left) and Dr. Sevak Avagyan (far right), and the international courier who personally delivered the donated stem cells to Germany.

LA Board of Supervisors Declares April Armenian History Month

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles County Fifth District Supervisor Kathryn Barger introduced two motions at the April 9 Board of Supervisors' meeting. The first one was to commemorate Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. This motion was co-authored by First District Supervisor Hilda Solis. In addition, Barger proposed the declaration of April as Armenian History Month, highlighting the rich cultural heritage and contributions of the Armenian Community. The Board has made this declaration annually starting in 2017. The two motions passed unanimously. “I believe it's important to reflect and learn from the past,” said Supervisor Kathryn Barger. “Remembering the Armenian Genocide gives our diverse communities an opportunity to collectively acknowledge and mourn the loss of over 1.5 million innocent lives. The district I represent is home to the largest concentration of Armenians and Armenian-Americans in the county, so declaring this day of remembrance is also about honoring



From left, Father Manoug Markarian, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian (Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America) and Supervisor Kathryn Barger (photo courtesy Los Angeles County) at the April 9 meeting

them. They are resilient people – determined, focused, and dedicated to persevering.”

“As we solemnly remember the many lives that were lost, we also honor the resiliency of the Armenian people who rebuilt their lives from nothing—including those here in Los Angeles County,” said Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. “The First District is home to the communities of Little Armenia in East Hollywood and Montebello which is home to the Armenian Holy Cross Cathedral which is over 100 years old. I am proud to represent these vibrant and resilient communities. Let us recommit ourselves to making certain that we never forget the Armenian Genocide, and that we always speak out against hatred and atrocities anywhere they occur.”

Supervisor Barger also prepared a video message about Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.

Mirror-Spectator correspondent and former Tekeyan Cultural Association leader Kevork Keushkerian was among those addressing the Board meeting via telephone in support of the two motions.



OBITUARY

Dr. Henry Dikran Astarjian

Baghdad-Born Physician, Artist

HOLLIS, N.H. — Dr. Henry Dikran Astarjian, longtime resident of Hollis, NH passed away peacefully on April 4, 2024 at the age of 90. Henry was born in Kirkuk, Iraq on January 1, 1934 to the late Dikran and Zarouhi (Esmerian) Astarjian. He grew up in Kirkuk and attended medical school at the University of Baghdad.

After medical school, Dr. Astarjian worked as a general practitioner and served as a medical officer in Iraq, serving families in the northern villages. He met and married Anahid Ashjian while living in Iraq and the couple was blessed with 2 children; Vaché and Hratch. The family later moved to the United Kingdom where Dr. Astarjian did medical internships in both England and Scotland. They later immigrated to Canada and eventually to the United States to the New York/New Jersey area where Henry worked as a neurologist at St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan.

After several years in New York, Henry moved to New Hampshire with his second wife and their daughter, Jennifer. It was there that he founded the Nashua Neurological Center. He spent over 30-years in Nashua working as a neurologist. In 1979 Dr. Astarjian opened the first CT scan facility in the state of New Hampshire.

Dr. Astarjian was an accomplished painter whose subjects ranged from landscapes, to seascapes, to portraits. He also enjoyed writing, and often wrote for the *Armenian Weekly*. He wrote the book *The Struggle for Kirkuk*, which has been used by scholars as a source book on the history of that region. He was keenly interested in Armenian politics and kept up with international news especially in Armenia. He was a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). He was a delegate from New Hampshire at the 1990 Republican Nation-



al Convention.

Henry is survived by his wife of 25 years Arev (Hagopian) Astarjian. He was the father of Vaché Astarjian and his wife Zela, Hratch Astarjian and his wife Nina, and Jennifer Fournier and her husband Michael. He was the loving grandfather of Anais, Lena, and Lea Astarjian, Emma Mastropietro, and Christian Fournier. He was the dear brother of Teny Serengulian, Ankeen Merzikian, and the late Norair Astarjian. He was the uncle of Salpi Derstepanian and her husband Edmond, Tania Chamlian and her husband Vatché, Norair Serengulian and his wife Zovig, and Hreir Serengulian and his wife Zovik. He is survived by many other extended family members and friends.

Funeral Services were held at St. Stephen's Armenian Church, Watertown, on April 11. Interment was in Newton Cemetery in Newton. Memorial donations may be made in his memory to St. Stephen's Armenian Church or Hairenik Association (*The Armenian Weekly*), 80 Bigelow Ave., Watertown, MA 02472.

Gloria B. Kassabian

Dedicated to Family, Full of Spirit

ANNANDALE, Va. — Gloria Beatrice Kassabian passed away on March 19, 2024, just days after her 98th birthday celebration.

Born in Richmond, VA, on March 11, 1926, Gloria was the only daughter of Ohannes and Araxy (Hindigian) Kassabian, Armenian immigrants from Tokat. She was named after her mother's sister Be-



atrice, who, like countless others, did not survive the Armenian Genocide.

Gloria grew up on Caton Avenue in Brooklyn, NY. After her divorce from Thomas DeGeorge in 1965, she lived independently but occupied a central place in a lovingly chaotic extended family. She was devoted to her two brothers, Albert I. Kassabian and Arnold B. Kassabian, both of whom predeceased her. When her sister-in-law Dr. Alice Kassabian died,

Gloria vowed to look after Albert, a promise she kept despite her advancing years. Affectionately dubbed Aunt Glo by her niece and nephews, she was also a great-aunt and friend to the younger generation. Stylish and sophisticated, she attended the innumerable gatherings of her large family and had already chosen a crimson dress to wear to the upcoming weddings of her two great-nieces.

Deeply rooted in family life, Gloria never forgot those who came before her and often passed down their stories. She worked until she was 80 years old, commuting to Washington, DC. She loved to travel and once boarded a helicopter in Alaska at an age when most would opt for terra firma. To her last days, Gloria's spirited approach to life astonished those who met her.

Always a phone call away, as she put it, Gloria will be greatly missed by her sister-in-law Naomi Kassabian; her nephews and niece Dr. Keith Kassabian (Amy), Lynne Kassabian (David Hick), the Honorable Brett Kassabian (Jacqueline), Clay Kassabian (Inge), the Honorable John Kassabian, and Robert Kassabian (Vanessa); her great-nephews and great-nieces Peter, Rachel (Alex), Rebecca, Hannah (Austin), Joshua, Ani, Sarah, and Carson; and her great-great-nephew Arthur.

In accordance with Gloria's wishes, her funeral was a private service. Her final message to her family was "Genats-t"—"To your life."

Donations in her memory may be made to St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, 4125 Fessenden St. NW, Washington, DC 20016.

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ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR



OBITUARY

Emmik 'Meda' Abrahamian

Immigrant from Iran Educated in Britain

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Emmik "Meda" Abrahamian, lovingly nicknamed Tootooi by her grandson, Eric, passed away peacefully on April 1, 2024, at the age of 93, surrounded by her family at her home in Lexington.

She was born in Isfahan, Iran, and was the youngest daughter of Elizabeth and Aram Abrahamian. After graduating from Noor Bakhsh High School in Iran, she attended university in London, majoring in chemistry.



While at university, she met Razmik Der-Sirakian, married, and had two sons, Aram and Edward (Teddy), before returning to Iran.

She often recalled her youthful years in London with great pleasure and therefore had a keen appreciation for all things British. One of her fondest memories was witnessing Queen Elizabeth's coronation, for which she camped-out overnight to secure a spot on the path of the inaugural procession.

Upon their return to Iran, Meda and Razmik made a home for their young family and were surrounded by extended family and friends. Meda had a vast and much-loved social circle, was an active member of the parents' organization at her children's

school and spent countless hours volunteering her time and effort within the school community.

Unfortunately, their life in Iran was abruptly interrupted by the 1979 revolution, and her family, like that of so many others, was scattered throughout the world. She was able to reunite with her sons and their families in the 1990s when she had the opportunity to relocate to the Boston area. She devoted her time and energy to her new role as a grandmother, a role in which she took immense pride. She adored her grandsons and became an integral part of their lives. She was also a voracious reader, loved to travel, and remained an undefeated Scrabble player well into her golden years.

Meda is predeceased by her husband Razmik Der-Sirakian and leaves behind her two sons, Aram Sirakian and Edward Der-Sirakian and their wives, Asteghik Hacobian and Yvette Yegumians, respectively; grandsons Eric Sirakian and Alec Der-Sirakian; niece Peggy (Hovanessian) Ghazarian and her family; cousin Yervand Abrahamian and his family, along with a host of extended family and friends.

Funeral services are being arranged by Giragosian Funeral Home and will be led by Fr. Antranig Baljian at 10:00 AM on Saturday, April 20, 2024 at St Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown, Massachusetts, followed by interment at Westview Cemetery in Lexington.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to one of the following organizations:

- Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR), 26 Walnut Street, Watertown, MA 02472

- ABMDR Memorial Donation Link

- Hand In Hand (Nonprofit Dental Service Organization serving Armenia) 1842 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA 02445

- Saint Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, 38 Elton Avenue, Watertown, MA 02472

Berge 'Bob' Der Matoian

Active Members of the Knights of Vartan

FRESNO — Berge "Bob" Der Matoian of Fresno passed away on April 11, 2024. He was 91.

He was born in Waukegan, Ill. on July 06, 1933, to parents Mesrob and Peggy Der Matoian (née Terjanian).

The family moved to Chicago in 1934, where his sister Barbara was born. In 1944 the family moved to Fresno. He attended Emerson Elementary School, Longfellow Junior High, and Roosevelt High School.

He attended Fresno State University until drafted into the Army in January 1954. Following his Honorable Discharge in 1956, he went to work at the Valley Radiator Co. where he went from employee to partner to owner; and remained there until his retirement on December 31, 1992. He was also the central valley distributor for Liberty Radiator.

Bob joined the St. Paul Armenian Church Armenian Church Youth Organization (ACYO) in 1951. In 1956, he joined St. Paul Armenian Church as a dues paying member.

Bob married Sara Mae Krikorian of Oakland at St. Paul on January 18, 1958 and they went on to have three children: Paula Der Matoian and her husband Richie Attoian of Fresno, Mark Der Matoian and his wife Sue of Clovis, and Brian Der Matoian and his wife Cindy of Foothill Ranch.

Bob was fiercely proud of his three grandsons, Alec of Santa Maria, Ben of San Diego, and Michael of Clovis.

He was an active member of The Knights of Vartan, joining in 1968. He has served as Commander of the Yeprad Lodge in Fresno and as the Grand Commander from 2006-2008.

As a member of St. Paul, he served on the Parish Council, and the annual Parish Assembly as Assembly Secretary, Vice-Chairman and Chairman. He served as a Diocesan Assembly Delegate and as the English Secretary at the Diocesan Assembly.

Bob joined the St. Paul Men's Forum in 1961. He served as Chairman in 1966 and has held executive offices throughout his 63 years of membership. He served as the Chairman and Co-Chairman of the St. Paul Annual Grape Blessing Picnic, the Men's Forum Dinner/Meeting Chairman, was a member of the Men's Forum Cooking Committee and has been the purchasing agent/logistic coordinator for the Picnic, Merchant's Lunch, and any other St. Paul



activity or organization that needed help. He and his wife Sara organized the St Paul Service Committee, serving Memorial lunches for 7 years, and they founded the Avaks, a group of church senior members who gathered monthly to have lunch and play card and board games.

Bob was a member of the Armenian Assembly and the American Legion. He served on the Board of Directors the Armenian Community School of Fresno.

He enjoyed gardening, spending time with friends, and playing cards.

Bob lived a life of service devoted to the causes he supported and to his family. He donated his time, energy, and dedication whenever asked. His light and energy will be missed, and his departure from this earth will leave a void in the hearts, minds, and souls of all that knew him.

He is survived by his wife of 66 years Sara, children Paula and her husband Richie; Mark and his wife Sue; Brian and his wife Cindy; grandsons Alec, Ben, and Michael; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Knights of Vartan Services for Bob was held at St. Paul Armenian Apostolic Church on Friday, April 19, followed by a funeral service and a memorial luncheon. Burial service was at the Masis Ararat Cemetery.

Remembrances in Bob's name may be made to St. Paul Armenian Church at 3767 N. First St., Fresno, CA 93726; the Fresno Rescue Mission at www.fresnomission.org; St. Jude's Cancer Research at www.stjude.org/give/cancer-donations.html; or the donor's favorite charity.

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Michael Rubin, Asya Darbinyan to Headline Times Square Genocide Commemoration

COMMEMORATION, from page 7

"We should never forget the Armenian Genocide of 1915 committed against the Armenian people, and we should teach our younger generations to make an effort to keep the memories alive of the 1.5 million Armenians who were massacred," said Bedrossian, who will perform a musical interlude with his band members consisting of Armenian cultural and patriotic songs.

In conjunction with the Times Square Commemoration, the Knights and Daughters of Vartan is sponsoring its annual student essay contest that gives Armenian students the opportunity to express their voices and concerns regarding genocide awareness and human rights. Winners will be announced at the commemoration, and selections from each essay will be read.

The Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square is sponsored by the Knights of Vartan and Daughters of Vartan, a national fraternal organization, and co-sponsored by the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of America, Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Armenian National Council of America, Armenian Bar Association and the Armenian Missionary Association of America; participating organizations include the Diocese of the Armenian Church, Prelacy of the Armenian Church, Armenian Presbyterian Church, Armenian Evangelical Union, Armenian Catholic Eparchy, Armenian Network of Greater New York, Homenetmen Scouts of New York and New Jersey, Armenian Youth Federation, and national Armenian youth organizations.



COMMUNITY NEWS

CYSCA Meeting to Feature Guest Speaker Ani Babaian

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The 38th Annual Membership Meeting of the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) will take place in the Community Room at the Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, on Wednesday, May 8, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The evening will begin with guest speaker Ani Babaian who is the library curator at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and an art researcher and conservator. Her topic is “Identity through Colors: Exploring Armenian Painting.” At 7:15 PM, the annual business meeting will begin for CYSCA members and others who wish to become CYSCA members. A reception will follow immediately after.

Admission is free and the public is invited. Individuals considering membership are encouraged to attend and join.

RSVP is requested but not required to: info@cambridgeyerevan.org.

Babaian holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Alzahra University in Tehran. She has authored numerous articles on Armenian and Persian art, has participated in conferences held in Iran and Armenia, and presentations on Armenian Art in the US. She has contributed to the volumes *Armenian Frescoes* edited by Dr. Karen Matevosyan (2019) and *Armenian Communities of Persia/Iran* edited by Richard G. Hovannisian (2022). She is also an artist in her own right.

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

The mission of the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) is to foster friendship, mutual trust and dynamic interaction between the peoples of Cambridge and Yerevan as well as their neighboring regions; to build links between them; to promote public awareness of issues of mutual concern; and to appreciate and accommodate the various manifestations of diversity in these communities.

Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association, Inc. (CYSCA) was the brainchild of a group of concerned



Martiros Saryan's "Bright Flowers"

citizens of Cambridge, MA, who in the 1980s believed they could help promote world peace by organizing a grass roots movement through a partnership with a city in a Soviet republic. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the connection with Yerevan and its environs has remained strong. It is Cambridge's oldest sister city relationship.

CYSCA's numerous projects have included Community Connections (a professional exchange program operated by USAID through which CYSCA participated 19 times during 12 years); support to scores of schools in Armenia since 1994 through The Eva and Jack Medzorian Armenia School Aid Project; hosting 6 delegations, most recently in 2023, of

emerging young leaders in various fields through the congressionally-sponsored Open World program; and frequent participation in the Cambridge Science Festival.

For more information, browse the CYSCA site: <https://cambridgeyerevan.org>

CYSCA Membership is open to those who support the purposes of the Association and pay annual dues (\$25 Individual, \$50 Family and \$10 Student). The 2024-2025 membership year begins on April 1, 2024. Please either send a check made out to "CYSCA" to CYSCA Treasurer, P.O. Box 382591, Cambridge, MA 02238, or bring it to the annual meeting to be able to vote.

Looking for Boston Area Armenian Architects and Students

WATERTOWN — Architect Arto Kurkjian has been working with Ashot Grigorian in Yerevan, who is the director of the Architecture Museum, about assembling the names of Boston area Armenian architects and their work for a possible future publication. Through his contacts, he already created a list of 33 architects.

Last Saturday April 6, he organized a first meeting at the Watertown Public Li-

brary at which 10 architects and students of architecture were present.

If there are other students from Boston area colleges or architects practicing in Boston area, please email your information to Arto at aakurkjian@verizon.net.

The next meeting of Boston area architects and students will take place on May 25, at 2 p.m., at the Watertown Public Library.



Participants in the first meeting at the Watertown Public Library

Portantino and Senate Select Committee Members Urge Administration to Include Armenian-American Representation in Census

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D – Burbank) led efforts during the second week of April to submit a letter to the White House urging President Biden to address the exclusion of Armenian Americans from the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) checkbox in the US census.

“I am deeply concerned that hundreds of thousands of Armenian Americans were excluded from the MENA checkbox,” stated Senator Portantino. “Excluding an entire segment of the population in the census has serious repercussions for equality, justice, and democracy. Armenian Americans have a rich and vibrant history in the United States, and especially in the 25th Senate District. They have made significant contributions to the cultural, economic, and social fabric of our state and nation. It is imperative that they are accurately counted and represented in the census to ensure fair allocation of resources and equitable representation.”

On March 29, the Office of Management and Budget announced revisions to Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards or Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (SPD 15). Although the notice is intended to yield a more accurate census of people with Hispanic, Middle Eastern and North African heritage, Armenian Americans were excluded from the new Middle Eastern and North African Category.

“California is home to the largest population of Armenian Americans in the nation. Excluding them from the census fails to acknowledge the atrocities their people have faced, and diminishes their ability to be represented. I strongly urge the Biden Administration to right this wrong,” stated Senator Scott Wilk (R-Santa Clarita).

The letter, also signed by Senators Archuleta, Durazo, Wilk, Stern, and Menjivar, urges the Office of Management and Budget to rectify the oversight and to ensure that Armenian Americans have a presence in the census. Senator Portantino chairs Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia, and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art, and Cultural Exchange.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Taner Akçam Speaks on Armenian Restitution

By Kevork Keushkerian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BURBANK, Calif. — Under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, the Diocesan Zvartnots Cultural Committee invited historian Dr. Taner Akçam to deliver a lecture entitled “What Follows Recognition? Possibilities of an Armenian Restitution Movement” on Wednesday, April 10, in the Armen Hampar reception hall of the Diocesan headquarters in Burbank.

The reception room was appropriately decorated with the pictures of some of the literary giants of the time, who fell victim to the Armenian Genocide, perpetrated by the Young Turks. They included Siamanto, Taniel Varoujan, Roupen Sevag, Yeroukhan, Krikor Zohrab, Roupen Zartarian and Tlgadintsi.

Welcoming remarks were made by Zvartnots Committee Chair Dr. Simon Simonian, who asked the audience for a moment of silence in honor of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. Today, he said, 32 countries around the world recognize the Armenian Genocide. He then invited artist Roupen Haroutunian for a musical interlude. Roupen performed four solemn selections on the *duduk*.

Dr. Simonian introduced Dr. Taner Akçam, who Simonian said has dug up every stone to uncover the truth about the Armenian Genocide and has been called the Sherlock Holmes of the Armenian Genocide by the *New York Times*. During the 1990s, Akçam was the first Turkish scholar to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.

Akçam was born in the province of Ardahan, Turkey, in 1953. He received his doctorate in 1995 from the University of Hanover, Indiana, with a dissertation on “The Turkish National Movement and the Armenian Genocide Against the Background of the Military Tribunals in Istanbul between 1919 and 1922.”

A socialist, Akçam was arrested in 1976 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. Amnesty International adopted him as a prisoner of conscience. A year later, he escaped to Germany, where he received political asylum. He has



been a member of the history department at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, from 200 until he came to the University of California, Los Angeles in 2022 as the inaugural director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program of the Promise Armenian Institute. Akçam has authored many books on the Armenian Genocide.

Akçam presented his lecture, augmented by a PowerPoint presentation. The three foci of Dr. Akçam’s lecture were Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide, the Arme-

nian Genocide recognition movement, and possibilities of an Armenian restitution movement.

Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide institutionalized racism, like apartheid in South Africa, said Akçam. Furthermore, continued the historian, denialism led to an ideology of discrimination in Turkey. Today in Turkey, he added, Armenians, Kurds, Alawites and Christians are not at the same level as Turks are.

Akçam said that in 1965 a movement around the world emerged to compel recognition of the Armenian Genocide. That movement began on April 24, at the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, with a march in Yerevan to the Genocide Monument, where the eternal flame is a sign of survival.

Akçam noted that US President Joe Biden recognized the Armenian Genocide in 2021, which was a turning point. He further said that Biden’s recognition provides the legal framework to begin working on restitution. Now it’s time for us, he added, to push for a legally binding law in the Congress of the United States. And for this, he concluded, the burden falls on Californians, who have the largest Armenian population outside of Armenia.

Akçam pointed out that there should be a legal consequence after the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, which is the compensation of Armenians. He further noted that reparation and restitution should be our next step and we should work toward that goal diligently and systematically with united forces.

Dr. Akçam then wondered if the Jewish reparation movement can serve as an example for Armenians to follow. For this, he suggested, two things should be taken into consideration: a spirit of unity and political perspective, which requires support by the United States government.

In conclusion, Dr. Akçam mentioned that there is a special envoy for the Holocaust in the US State Department and asked if there should not be a special envoy for the Armenian Genocide in the US Department of State. This was a well taken suggestion. Questions and answers followed his presentation.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Assyrian Genocide (Seyfo) Oral History Project

LOS ANGELES — The Assyrian people represent one of the groups targeted by the genocide that the Ottoman Empire carried out against its Christian citizens during World War I. The genocidal policies towards the Assyrians, also known as the Seyfo, resulted in thousands of innocent Assyrians being brutally murdered, tortured, exiled, and forced to struggle with hunger, thirst and disease.

The effects of the Assyrian genocide on the communities that survived in their homeland or became scattered throughout the world are still being felt, and therefore must be remembered. However, the effects of the Seyfo have not been sufficiently documented or studied due to limited sources.

In order to fill this resource gap to some extent, the Armenian Genocide Research Program (AGRP) of The Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA and the Assyrian Genocide Research Center (Seyfo Center) spearheaded a project called, “The Assyrian Genocide Oral History Project.” The goal of the project is to incorporate the gathered research into the collections of foundations working on the subject and make it accessible to the public.

Although there have been studies conducted on the experience of the Assyrians, there is no systematic archive that can be used to study the Seyfo. This project aims to archive the events that took place during and after the 1915 genocide, as well as the experiences of the Assyrian survivors, through oral interviews and to pass them on to future generations.

The Assyrian Genocide (Seyfo) Oral History Project aims to (1) digitize the rare interviews of Assyrian genocide witnesses and eyewitnesses recorded within the last 30 years; (2) translate them into various languages, including English; and (3) transcribe and index them to provide ease of research. The ultimate goal is to create the first digital Assyrian genocide archive.

This digital archive will not only shed light on the painful past of the Assyrian people, but it will also remind peo-



Survivor of the Assyrian Genocide (courtesy Seyfo Center)

ple now of the devastating consequences of the massacres and contribute to the historical memory of humanity.

The success of this project is shaped not only by our technical work, but also by the contributions of our valued supporters. If you have access to any previous oral and written interviews about the Seyfo, we kindly request that

you please contribute the materials to this archive project. Each contribution will be acknowledged accordingly.

The aim is to integrate the Assyrian genocide digital archive into the existing collection of digital archives, especially the Armenian digital archives, enhancing the resources available for research and education on this topic.



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.



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Arts & Culture

Detroit Symphony Violinist Kimberly Kennedy Records *An Armenian Trilogy*

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. — Renowned Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO) violinist Kimberly Kennedy has recorded *The Freedom*, the first movement of Dan Yessian's classical composition *An Armenian Trilogy*. The performance was recorded to commemorate Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day which will be held on April 24, 2024. Kennedy started performing with the DSO in 1998 at the age of just 22 and is now Associate Concertmaster. She visited Yessian Music in Farmington Hills, Mich. to make the recording to honor the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian genocide at the hands of the Ottoman empire and Yessian's effort to commemorate them.

In 2014, Yessian was challenged by Rev. Garabed Kochakian, pastor emeritus of St. John Armenian Church in Southfield, to compose a piece of music to give voice to those who had their brutally taken away. After Kochakian's request, Yessian began imagining how he would create a meaningful work.



Dan Yessian



Violinist Kimberly Kennedy

Yessian, a highly experienced musician and composer, and the founder of the international music production company Yessian Music, traveled far beyond that initial request. His journey led him to compose a 22-minute symphonic tribute. "Through this music, I had a chance to step back and chronicle my heritage," he said.

An Armenian Trilogy was originally written as a duet arrangement for violin and piano creating three movements: *The Freedom*, *The Fear* and *The Faith*, which debuted in Michigan in 2015. Yessian then took on the immense task of orchestrating his composition for 91 pieces, which was performed at the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall by the world-renowned Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra in Armenia in 2017. Eventually, an award-winning documentary, also called *An Armenian Trilogy*, was made which followed Yessian through his childhood

see DETROIT, page 14



Martin Barooshian (1929-2022), "Gomidas Vartabed 4/50," c. 1970-1979, signed color intaglio etching, 24x22, donated by Haig Der Manuelian.

Gandzaran/Treasury Exhibition Puts Spotlight on Art Collection of Armenian Museum of America

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America has recently opened its latest exhibition in the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries, "Gandzaran! Notable Selections from Our Collection." The show is curated by Ryann Casey, and co-curated by Gary Lind-Sinianian and Elias Trout.

"Gandzaran!" showcases 39 works by 24 artists from around the world. It is scheduled to run through August 4.

In recent centuries, Armenian fine art often focused on illuminations, reliquaries, and other pious objects, the most significant of which were secured and hidden in the *gandzaran*, or treasury, of a monastery. These treasure vaults were designed to protect religious works, which would be displayed periodically for the faithful, then returned to the vaults to be preserved for the ages.

"Drawing from the vaults of the Museum here in Boston, its own *gandzaran* of sorts, this exhibit highlights the development of Armenian art in the 20th and 21st centuries, from religious motifs to the Soviet period and its continuous reinterpretation among contemporary artists around the world," says Curator Ryann Casey.

"It's a show full of diversity that demonstrates the breadth of history in Armenia and the Diaspora, featuring paintings, etchings, and sculpture," adds Ms. Casey. Some of the artists include Minas Avetisyan, Maria Manukyan Batlle, Jean Carzou, Edgar Chahine, Felix Eghiazarian, Charles Garabedian, Sarkis Hamalbashian, Jean Janssem, Kevork Mourad, Reuben Nakian, Naomi Pridjian, and Hovsep Pushman.

The show opened with a preview for Museum members on March 22. It was attended by more than 100 people including Museum Trustee Hapet Berberian, the family of the late Martin Barooshian, and the curator of his Trust, Michael J. Russo. Mr. Barooshian is an American-Armenian surrealist featured in the exhibition with two incredible etchings, including one of Gomidas Vartabed.

Executive Director Jason Sohigian noted at the opening, "We hope this exhibition gives visitors a glimpse of the range and complexity of our modern and contemporary art collection." He went on to thank the artists who created these works, the donors who have gifted these pieces to the collection, and the people who support the mission of the Museum as members.

A section of the show reflects on collecting art. The first acquisitions outside of historic art in the collection of the Armenian Museum of America were primarily paintings donated by the founders, members, and artists. With a growing reputation, the Museum gradually attracted the attention of art collectors, establishing

see SPOTLIGHT, page 14

A View From Afar

The following extract is from Yerevan-based Russian author Yan Shenkman's recently published book, *At Home in Yerevan*.



Yan Shenkman (photo by Igor Vereshchagin)

Shenkman, born in 1973, is a writer, journalist, literary and musical critic. He is the author of five books. In March 30, 2024, just after the beginning of the Ukrainian war, he migrated from Russia. Currently, he works at the "Noyan Tapan" news agency in Yerevan and hosts the "Displaced People" program.

His book is available from <https://buyarmenian.com/product/here-in-yerevan-yan-shenkman/>.

Translation from Russian And comments

by Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

We were debating what city Yerevan resembles. A little bit like Paris, which feels natural given spots such as Republic Square, Aznavour Square, and France Square. In the heart of France Square, at a bustling crossroad, stands Rodin's sculpture. However, it is so small that Yerevan residents often stage large protests to get a better view. These protests lead to traffic being blocked, allowing people to approach the sculpture more closely.

France's influence is strongly felt; the ties with France are very close. Perhaps not as strong as the ties with Russia, but this city has no resemblance with Moscow. However, this city bears no resemblance to Moscow at all, despite the abundance of khrushchyovka [A khrushchyovka is a type of low-cost apartment building constructed in the Soviet Union during the early 1960s, during the time of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev] buildings in Yerevan. The khrushchyovkas here, made of tuff, vary in color — some are black, some grey, and others pink — but they still fail to evoke a sense of recognition in me.

The city appears small, at least visually. However, this is an optical illusion; only the city center is small. If you've lived here for a long time, it's impossible to walk in Kentron without encountering an acquaintance. You can traverse the center in half an hour. And it won't grow any larger, as

see TRANSLATION, page 14



ARTS & CULTURE

A View From Afar

TRANSLATION, from page 13
there's no room for expansion, with mountains surrounding it.

Comparing it to Tbilisi, which exudes a solemn and serious atmosphere like that of an adult city, Yerevan may seem more childlike and domestic in nature. However, when you go outside the center and view the neighborhoods and districts from above, it leaves a powerful impression, especially at night. The sight of numerous small fires dotting the entire area is captivating to behold.

I was surprised to learn that several European cities, such as Geneva or Bern, are actually smaller than Yerevan. Thus, Yerevan's size is not as small as I had previously thought.

Similar to Bern in the Soviet TV series "Seventeen Moments of Spring," Yerevan is a magnet for intelligence services from all over the world. The city is practically inundated with intelligence operatives, easily accessible from both the East and the West. It serves as a comfortable platform for observing one another and conducting separate negotiations, akin to General Karl Wolff's meetings with Dulles. [In 1945, German SS functionary Karl Wolff, as part of Operation Sunrise, assumed control and coordination of intermediaries to establish contact in Switzerland with the regional headquarters of the US Office of Strategic Services, led by Allen W. Dulles. This initiative aimed to negotiate the surrender of German forces in and around Italy.]

During one of the anti-war meetings in Yerevan, I encountered an investigative officer from the Center for Combating Extremism. I had previously seen him three years ago near the Presnensky District Court of Moscow during pickets. While it could have surely been a hallucination, they conduct operative activities exactly in such a manner, with a similar posture and expression. Although I should have just walked

past, I couldn't resist and approached him, saying: "Can you take a picture of me too?"

Last year, with forty planes from Russia flying per day and people sleeping on park benches, it felt like I was in Casablanca from the famous film — a place where many flee without money or proper documentation to seek refuge in America and other powerful states. It became a haven for the destitute, overcrowded and bursting at the seams. Three, four, or even six people would share living quarters; separate housing was a luxury.

Here, you find everyone or nearly everyone: displaced people, with few having lived their entire lives without leaving the city. Those who have left know that staying in one place is unlikely. Our previous homelands include Lebanon, Syria, Russia, Ukraine, Iran... and no one knows where we'll be tomorrow.

All of this creates an atmosphere reminiscent of Noah's Ark, ready to set sail. We must hurry. You've climbed the hillside, but soon the waters will reach here too. And the ark is not yet ready—not even the boards have been cut.

Sometimes Yerevan reminds me of Vichy in southern France before the Nazi invasion, where immigrants flocked from all over Europe. Everything seems fine, and you feel relatively safe, but at any moment disaster can strike. I don't want to think about it, but it crosses my mind.

The feeling of living on a volcano, on the edge of a precipice, gives the city a unique flavor. Everyone understands the situation, but they don't seem overly concerned. They're accustomed to it; it's impossible to worry every day for thousands of years. The lava is simmering beneath your feet, ready to erupt, yet the person to whom the feet belong is saying you:

"How are you? Are you all right? Sit down, we'll have a bite to eat."

Gandzaran/Treasury Exhibition Puts Spotlight on Art Collection of Armenian Museum of America

SPOTLIGHT, from page 13

itself as a hub of Armenian cultural production and as a contributor to the wider arts community. "Armenian art is a living tradition—it is the Museum's duty to embrace that dynamism as we acquire new works," concludes Sohigian. "Our collections now include emerging artists alongside nationally and internationally renowned Armenian artists, representing a wide array of mediums, movements, and eras."

The curator of the exhibition is Ryann

Casey, a New Jersey based artist and educator. She holds a BA in Photography from Stockton University and an MFA/MS in Photography and Art History from Pratt Institute. She currently works as the Exhibition Coordinator at the Stockton University Gallery and is an adjunct Professor of Photography, Art History and Critical Theory.

The Armenian Museum of America is located at 65 Main St. For more information, visit www.armenianmuseum.org/gandzaran.

Detroit Symphony Violinist Kimberly Kennedy Records An Armenian Trilogy

DETROIT, from page 13

as a talented clarinet player, the early years of building his music production company, and then his travels to his ancestral homeland of Armenia, where he and his family explored their rich heritage and heard his composition performed by a professional orchestra for the first time.

"I'm here to raise awareness about An Armenian Trilogy, a suite of music written by Yessian in commemoration of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide," Kennedy said in a YouTube video prior to her performance. "I'm very proud to be here representing Yessian and his composition and I hope you find it as inspiring as I have."

Yessian said he was very moved to hear Kennedy's stunning performance. "Nine years after my work was first performed in Michigan it is a real privilege to have such a talented artist as Kennedy continue to give such a beautiful, fresh voice to my work as we continue to honor the victims of the Armenian Genocide," said Yessian.

An Armenian Trilogy featuring the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra performing at the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall in Yerevan, can be seen on YouTube.

An Armenian Trilogy is also available as a box set and is available at armenian-trilogy.com/store. For more information visit: DanYessian.com

2024 Friends of HMADS Gala Celebrates 'Pearl' of School Community

By Arpi Arukian

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — This year marks a significant milestone for the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School (HMADS) community: the 30th anniversary of its fundraising pillar, the Friends of HMADS committee. This year's Gala Dinner Dance will pay tribute to this all-volunteer group of HMADS supporters that proudly celebrates 3 decades of service and dedication to the school.

In 1994, former school board chairman Nurhan Adarian gathered a group of parents and school supporters who had experienced firsthand the benefits of the quality education and family-like community that HMADS offers — together, they formed the Friends of HMADS committee. Over the years, Friends members made it their mission to ensure the financial stability of their beloved Armenian institution, ensuring that families would reap its benefits for years to come. Little did they realize the impact their hard work and ambition would have, as HMADS continues to thrive!

Today, Friends of HMADS remains a strong force, chaired by Hovannes Malikyan, who also serves on the school board. Committee members include former parents, board members, and alumni, whose goal is to raise funds by offering the community an array of cultural and social events. Thanks to their efforts, HMADS maintains an affordable tuition, making it possible for

Armenian families to take advantage of this superior learning institution.

Throughout its 30-year history, Friends of HMADS has promoted and hosted Armenian performing arts groups, including Sayat Nova Music School from Yerevan, Navasart Dance Ensemble from France, and Nor Serund Armenian Youth Ensemble. It has shared the humor of comedians Vahe Berberian, Krikor Satamian and Kev Orkian. Each fall, the committee also



The Friends of HMADS

sponsors an annual Telethon, which is the school's second most profitable fundraiser.

The end of spring brings with it the most exciting Friends event of the school year: the annual Gala Dinner Dance. This year the dance will take place on Saturday, June 1 at North Hills Country Club in Long Island.

Musical entertainment will be provided by international singer Bartev from Istanbul, whose career spans 4 decades. In 2018, on the 40th anniversary of his musical career, Armenia's Ministry of Diaspora granted him its highest golden award in recognition of his contributions to Armenian song and music.



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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



For the Love of Apricots: Lisa Prince Newman's Award-Winning Apricot Almond Tart

SARATOGA, CA —“This beautiful tart pairs a favorite duo, apricots and almonds, in sublime fashion,” says Lisa Prince Newman, author of *For the Love of Apricots: Recipes and Memories of the Santa Clara Valley*, now in its fifth anniversary edition. In 2018, Lisa prepared this recipe for the Marin County Fair Pie Competition (a highly competitive experience), and won second place. “I’ve made this recipe each June with fresh Blenheim apricots and consider it my finest pastry of the summer.”

Lisa grew up in Saratoga in what was known at the time as The Valley of Heart’s Delight. “The Valley of Heart’s Delight flourished for 100 years, from the California Gold Rush until World War II, with family farms spreading across 150 square miles. Then, as now, the area enjoys coastal cooling through its northern border with the San Francisco Bay and inland warmth from the protective Coast Range Mountains that frame it to the east and west. Blessed with some of the richest topsoil in the world and a nearly year-round growing season, the Valley of Heart’s Delight was unique for its agricultural productivity and fruit orchard production,” she adds.

At one time, California boasted 18,600 apricot orchard acres, but after WWII, agriculture and housing priorities shifted dramatically, with apricots getting the short end of the stick. As of 2017, the Bay Area’s Santa Clara and San Benito counties combined had just 696 acres of apricot orchards remaining, down from their peak of 8,800 acres in the 1940s. “The season for apricots is from early May to August. Approximately 85 percent of the U.S. crop comes from California and 15 percent from Washington — so you can consider them a West Coast treat. Fresh apricots are petite, round fruits that are pale yellow to bright orange in color, depending on the variety and how ripe they are when picked,” says Lisa.

“Apricots are a good source of flavonoids, an antioxidant that helps to protect against inflammation and inflammatory illnesses, along with reducing your risk for obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. The potassium in the fruit can lower blood pressure levels and can hence prevent heart attacks. And the fiber in the fruit lowers cholesterol levels and prevents heart-related diseases like atherosclerosis.”

Celebrate the tart sweetness of this treasured fruit with this award-winning recipe:

INGREDIENTS:

Basic pastry dough for single crust:
1/2 cup (1 stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, plus extra for rolling the dough
1-1/2 teaspoons sugar
Generous dash of fine sea salt
1/4 cup ice-cold water

TART FILLING:

3/4 cup whole almonds, skin on
9 tablespoons sugar, divided
7 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
1/3 cup cake flour
2 large eggs, at room temperature
12 medium-size fresh, ripe apricots, halved and pitted
1/2 cup slivered almonds

SWEET APRICOT GLAZE:

1 cup apricot jam
1/3 cup sugar
1/3 cup water
Makes 1 10-inch tart.

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 400°F, and position a rack in the lower third of the oven. Line a baking sheet with foil.

PREPARE THE DOUGH:

Mix the butter and flour on low speed with an electric mixer or by hand, until the mixture looks like coarse meal. Mix together the sugar, salt and all but 1 tablespoon of the cold water and blend into the flour mixture just until the dough comes together. If the dough seems dry, mix in the remaining water a few drops at a time. Form the dough into a 1-inch thick disk. Wrap disk in plastic and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes or until firm.

Place chilled dough on a lightly-floured work surface and sprinkle with a little flour. Gently roll out the dough into a 13-inch round with uniform thickness. Ease the dough into a 10-inch tart pan with a removable bottom.

Trim away the excess dough, leaving a 1-inch overhang and fold the overhanging dough into the pan to form sturdy sides and a smooth edge. Refrigerate until firm, about 20 minutes.

Blind bake the shell as follows: Line the unbaked pastry shell with a sheet of foil or parchment cut at least 2 inches larger than the pie pan. Gently ease foil or parchment onto the dough and add dry beans or pie weights, filling up to the top of the pie pan (this helps to reduce shrinkage). Bake until the dough no longer looks raw, 15 to 20 minutes (gently lift the foil to check; the dough will still be pale). Carefully remove the foil and beans. Let cool on the baking sheet.

PREPARE THE TART FILLING:

Reduce the oven to 375°F. Spread the almonds on a small baking pan and toast in the oven, stirring once, until lightly browned and fragrant, 8 to 10 minutes. When cool, in the bowl of a food processor, combine the almonds with 4 tablespoons of the sugar and process, pulsing the machine on and off, until the nuts are finely ground. Add 1 tablespoon of water and process until the mixture comes together.

Using the paddle attachment on an electric mixer, cream butter and remaining sugar until very light and fluffy. Stop the mixer at least once to scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl. Mix in the almond mixture.

Sift flour into a small bowl. With the mixer on low speed, add 1 egg, half of the flour, then the other egg, and the remaining flour, mixing after each addition until smooth. Stop to scrape down the sides of the bowl if necessary. Continue mixing on low speed for 5 minutes longer, until the mixture is very fluffy. Spread the almond batter evenly in the tart shell.

Cut each apricot half into a fan, making 1/4-inch vertical cuts, stopping about 1/4-inch from the top of the apricot half so that the pieces remain attached. Arrange apricots skin-side down on top of the batter, starting at the outside edge and working in concentric circles toward the center. The size of the apricots will determine how many you need to cover the tart. Press the apricots gently into the batter. They must be below the top edge of the tart shell to prevent burning during baking.

Next, sprinkle sliced almonds over the tart. Bake until the crust is golden brown and the almond filling is set, about 55 minutes. Cool to room temperature. Remove the sides of the tart pan and, using a metal spatula, slide the tart off the pan bottom and onto a serving plate.

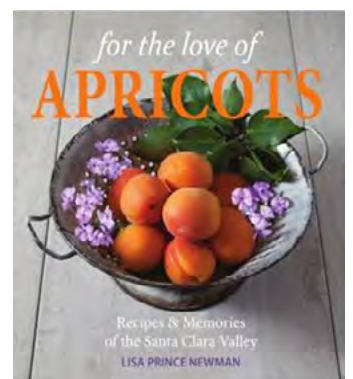
While tart is cooling, prepare the Sweet Apricot Glaze:

Combine 1 cup apricot jam, 1/3 cup sugar, and 1/3 cup water in a heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Stir, breaking down any large pieces of fruit, and let boil for 3 minutes.

Remove from heat and set aside to cool. Pour the warm glaze through a sieve set over a bowl and cool to room temperature. Brush a thick layer over the top of the tart and let cool. Leftover glaze will keep for a long time in a closed container in the refrigerator. Gently reheat the glaze to liquefy.

For the Love of Apricots: Recipes and Memories of the Santa Clara Valley is a cookbook that will satisfy your love of apricots through more than 60 kitchen-tested recipes beginning with breakfast and ending with cocktails. *For the Love of Apricots* is also a feast for the eyes as well as the mind. Beautiful food photography blends with images of California’s apricot orchards; from today as well as not so long ago, when fruit orchards covered much of the Santa Clara Valley landscape. Reflections on what the famed Valley of Heart’s Delight was like, how it changed, and what remains, add another dimension to the cookbook. *For the Love of Apricots: Recipes and Memories of the Santa Clara Valley* is published by Prince of the Orchards Publications. 2020 Food Photography Copyright © 2018, 2020 by Jessica Yager Photography. Orchard Photography Copyright © 2018, 2020 by Eric Larson.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Ethiopian Exhibit Comes to Mass., Includes Armenian Artifacts

EXHIBITION, from page 1

pointed out that an estimated 12,000 Ethiopians live in the greater Boston area, making it an important diasporan center, though the Washington D.C. and Baltimore area holds the largest concentration of Ethiopians in the US.

PEM exhibit co-curator Karen Kramer (also Stuart W. and Elizabeth F. Pratt Curator of Native American and Oceanic Art and Culture) spoke of the long rich Ethiopian heritage. Ethiopia was the only African nation to resist colonization and maintain its independence (along with Liberia). While global influences are visible, a distinct aesthetic emerged that belongs to Ethiopia alone, Kramer said. The African art collection of the Peabody Essex Museum was one of the first of its kind to be founded in the US, and includes rare and important Ethiopian icons, processional crosses, baskets and textiles. Many of these items, along with artworks from the two other co-organizing museums as well as loans from various American, European and Ethiopian lenders form the current exhibition.

Lydia Peabody, co-curator of the exhibit and curator-at-large at PEM, spoke about the contemporary works in the collection by artists from Ethiopia, including a photograph from Aida Muluneh, the first Black woman to co-curate the Nobel Peace Prize exhibition in 2019, and the next year to be commissioned for the Nobel Peace Prize exhibition herself. Kramer and Peabody acquired six of Muluneh's photographs simultaneous with the preparation of the exhibition.

Walters Art Gallery Curator of European Art 300-1400 CE Christine Sciacca was the originator of the idea of the exhibition and its organizing curator. She had come for the opening and called the exhibition her second baby, born in-between her two actual children. As Kramer previously noted, she realized this project over a period of seven years while raising children and enduring the Covid pandemic. Sciacca said that Ethiopia, home to over 80 ethnicities and an early home for the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, was an important cultural site. The exhibition traces the creation and movement of art objects, styles and materials into and out of Ethiopia, reaching

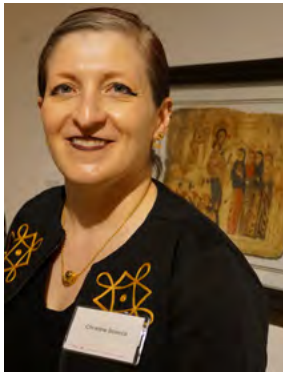


Exhibit curator Christine Sciacca in front of a 14th century Armenian Gospel leaf from Vaspurakan, loaned from a private collection (photo Aram Arkun)



Peabody Essex co-curators Karen Kramer, at left, and Lydia Peabody (photo Aram Arkun)

much of Africa, the Middle East, India and even Europe. Furthermore, it encompasses Ethiopian diasporan artists who in the 21st century now create works in the US and Europe.

She later told the *Mirror-Spectator* that one of the big connections of Ethiopia was with Armenia, which she hoped was demonstrated through the exhibition.

Armenian Connections on Display

Indeed it was, as Armenia has an entire section in the "Encounters" part of the exhibit with a number of Armenian works placed in comparative context. A large placard states that Armenia was the first Christian nation and Ethiopia the second. The clerics of the two countries maintained close contact in places like Jerusalem for centuries. Their Gospel books share decorative patterns and animal forms, and the cross plays a central role in both artistic cultures. The placard also briefly observes that Armenian traders included Ethiopia as part of their trade routes, and even today an Armenian quarter exists in central Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital.

A 14th-century leaf from an Armenian Gospel book from Vaspurakan and another 14th century illumination from the



James Melikian, a donor of various Ethiopian and Armenian artifacts to the "Ethiopia at the Crossroads" exhibit, standing in front of a case with an iron cross belonging to him and his wife Ana (photo Aram Arkun)

artist Petros is displayed in this section along with a late 16th-century Ethiopian three panel icon in order to show possible stylistic influences. A 14th-century Ethiopian depiction of Christ's entry into Jerusalem is juxtaposed with a 15th century Armenian composition with a similar sensibility. A 13th-century Armenian Gospel book with an image of the evangelist Matthew produced in Cilicia contains a Greek inscription and shows Byzantine influence.

The same curatorial approach is taken with other cultures interacting with Ethiopians. For example, there are comparisons of Italian and Ethiopian artists dealing with the theme of Madonna and child. What is unusual perhaps for a major exhibition is to see Armenian art included as a significant influence.

There are Armenian materials in other sections of the exhibit as well. In one area, three Ethiopian 19th or 20th century scrolls devoted to healing and divine protection are placed next to an Armenian 18th-century prayer scroll or *hmayil*. An Armenian Gospel book from about 1675-1725, loaned from New York's Morgan Library and Museum, has a leather binding with its front adorned with a headpiece ornament and various amulets.

As an aside, it should be noted that although the historical information and descriptions of the Armenian items displayed are all accurate, the geographical designations used might be a bit confusing to a casual viewer. For example, the title of the 13th-century Gospel book (mentioned above) states "Artist in Armenia," though the description that follows says "An Armenian manuscript produced in Cilicia, Türkiye (Turkey)...", while right next to it is the 14th-century Gospel book captioned "Petros, Active in Türkiye (Turkey)." The text of the latter description then states that Petros worked near Lake Van in present-day eastern Turkey. Of course a careful reader will understand that it is the modern state of Turkey which controls these territories now, but that they used to be Armenian populated and until the latter part of the 14th century in Cilicia's case, Armenian controlled.

In the part of the exhibition dealing with modern works, there is one oil painting on canvas by Alexander "Skunder" Boghossian, born in Addis Ababa of an Armenian father and Ethiopian mother. Called "The End of the Beginning," it was



The oldest Ethiopian manuscript in North America: Early 14th century Gospel book with canon table and the Fountain of Life, from the Walters Art Gallery (photo Aram Arkun)



Three Ethiopian scrolls with an Armenian scroll of 1710 from the Melikian Collection at far right (photo Aram Arkun)

Painted in 1972-73 after he emigrated to Washington, D.C., where at Howard University he taught Black artists from 1972 to 2001. The painting, loaned by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art, is said to represent the political struggles of the 1970s in Ethiopia that led to the creation of the modern Ethiopian diaspora.

It should be mentioned that there are slight differences both in the layout and the works shown in the three different sites of the exhibition, with the PEM version including more contemporary artwork. Unfortunately, the famous Toros Roslin illuminated Gospel of 1262 held by the Walters could not travel to PEM or Toledo.

Two of the Armenian artifacts at the PEM (the *hmayil* and metal cross mentioned above along with a leaf from a 14th-15th-century Gospel book) are loans from the Melikian Collection, belonging to James and Ana Melikian. They were present during the opening together with their daughter and kindly provided additional information about their items to the *Mirror-Spectator*.

The Melikians, prolific collectors, also loaned the exhibition an Ethiopian iron hand cross dating from about 1450, an 18th century Coptic Arabic book of prayer, two Qurans, a book of eulogies and prayers to the Prophet Muhammad and an 18th century manuscript of homilies.

Ethiopia at the Crossroads presents much for Armenians in particular to ponder. Ethiopia like Armenia has been at a crossroads of civilizations and has both benefited and suffered from its geography and interactions with others. Religion and modern nationalism have been both boon and bane. Ethiopia is in turmoil today. There is an Ethiopian diaspora which attempts to make sense of its heritage as well as the new environments in which its members must live.

According to Lydia Peabody, the Walters exhibition had 19,208 visitors over a 12 week period, and was its most attended exhibition since the Covid period. PEM expects to see tens of thousands visit, she said, while the Toledo museum probably will have the largest audience. It is a much larger institution with higher visitation.

This extensive exhibition warrants more than one visit, but if that is not possible, one can read the accompanying eponymous exhibition catalogue edited by Christine Sciacca and published by Yale University Press, which contains hundreds of illustrations and detailed essays, including one on Ethiopian-Armenian



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

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

MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 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.

MAY 4 — CELEBRATE PUBLIC ART! Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Welcome at 12:45 p.m. Meet in front of the Abstract Sculpture that annually reconfigures to create a new sculptural shape. Welcome. Theodore Touloukian, FAIA, Boston Society of Architects Board of Directors; Public Art. Marguerite Wynter, Now+There. At 1pm participate in World Labyrinth Day: Walk as One in Peace & Harmony joining all ages in cities, including Gyumri, and towns worldwide. Reception follows. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

MAY 5 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter invites members of the greater community to its Hampartsum Luncheon. Enjoy a special menu and celebrate Armenian traditions. Expect entertainment, raffle, gifts and more. 1.30 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Use Norseman Avenue side entrance. \$40/adult, \$25/student and free for those 10 and younger. RSVP bostontca@gmail.com or call Sossy at 617-281-1647.

MAY 6 — Monday St. James Men's Club Monthly Dinner & Fellowship. Guest speaker will be Robert Zorian "My Baseball Journey" Founder of "Zorian Bat Company" in 2003. Robert founded and currently serves as Director of the Board for the Weatherford Eagles Hall of fame, and Boston's Inter-city League Baseball Hall of fame. Social Hour [mezza] 6.15 p.m., Dinner 7 p.m., Losh Kebab and Kheyima. \$20.per person. 465 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown.

MAY 8 — 38th Annual Membership Meeting of the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) with guest speaker Ani Babaian, Library Curator at NAASR, and Art Researcher and Conservator, speaking on "Identity through Colors: Exploring Armenian Painting." Guest speaker at 6:30 PM, brief annual business meeting at 7:15 p.m., followed by a reception. Free and open to the public. In the Community Room of the Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, Cambridge. Metered parking is available in the garage under the library, accessible from Broadway. To RSVP (requested but not required) or for more info, please email info@cambridgeyerevan.org.

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 13 — Under the Strawberry Moon. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston at 8:15 p.m. Meet & Greet. Chocolate Dipped Strawberries hosted by Ovenbird Cafe. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

Armenian Heritage Park ongoing Programs:

MOVEMENT & WALKING MEDITATION. LABYRINTH WELLNESS WALKS TOGETHER through October. Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m. Series is offered in collaboration with the Boston Health Commission and The Greenway Conservancy Fitness program. For details, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar

CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US! Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Each month highlights the country of origin of many living and working in the City of Boston and beyond. Series is offered in collaboration with Age-Friendly Boston. For dates and details, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar

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 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.

Boston Armenian Film Festival Celebrates Century of Cinema and Female Directors

ARLINGTON, Mass. — The first-ever Boston Armenian Film Festival, a collaborative effort between the National Cinema Center of Armenia (NCCA) and Amaras Art Alliance of Massachusetts, is set to captivate audiences from Thursday, April 18 to Saturday, April 20, at the historic Capital Theater located at 204 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington.

This landmark event commemorates 100 years of Armenian cinema and shines a spotlight on the remarkable contributions of Armenian women directors to the global film industry.

All screenings will feature films presented in Armenian with English subtitles. Opening night will feature the screening of the 1925 classic "Namus" [Honor], produced by Hamo Beknazaryan.

A highlight of the festival will be the attendance of es-



A scene from the 1925 Armenian classic "Namus"

teemed filmmaker and Director of the National Cinema Center of Armenia Shushanik Mirzakhanyan. With a distinguished career as a film producer, managing director of

the Hayk documentary film studio NGO, and as an active lecturer at the Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinematography, Mirzakhanyan brings invaluable insights and expertise to the festival. She will be available for an engaging question-and-answer session following the opening night screening, offering attendees a unique opportunity to connect with an industry professional and delve deeper into the world of international film as both an art form and a means of cultural expression.

Don't miss this extraordinary chance to immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of Armenian cinema and celebrate the creative achievements of women directors.

Tickets for each night of the festival are priced at \$25 and can be purchased online or at the door. For more information and the detailed program of the three-day film festival, visit AmarasOnline.com.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
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FAX: 617-924-2887
www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com
For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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Key Takeaways from an Interview With US Ambassador Kvien

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

A few days ago, on April 10, the US ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien conducted an interview with Azatutyun radio station (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty), addressing various key aspects of US-Armenia relations and US foreign policy towards the South Caucasus region and Armenia. The interview, lasting just 22 minutes, was conducted professionally by journalist Hegine Buniatian.

The ambassador answered the questions with sincerity, clearly presenting the administration's pragmatic positions on key issues. Of course, being a diplomat requires extreme caution in selecting each and every word during interviews and speeches, unlike political scientists who do not have the same diplomatic constraints. For this reason, it is crucial to comprehend the message Ambassador Kvien was truly conveying to the Armenian public.

It should be noted that before this interview, which represents the official position of the US government, Western media and think tanks had already published articles and studies highlighting very similar points on the topic. The West definitely does not want Armenia to expect more than it is able to offer, including security assurances.

Previously, the Washington-based RAND Corporation, a top think tank, published a study titled "The U.S. Can't Guarantee Armenia's Security, Despite Azerbaijan's Threats, but It Can Help," highlighting the importance of Armenia improving its ties with Russia. The ambassador's position closely mirrored the sentiments in a RAND and Politico article titled "Armenia's EU Dream Faces a Big Obstacle: The Russian Army."

One of the key takeaways for me is Washington's reluctance to offer Armenia alternative security guarantees against potential Azerbaijani intervention or aggression. The ambassador emphasized American efforts to promote peace but acknowledged the absence of effective mechanisms to hold Azerbaijan accountable.

This indicates that the US is unlikely to defend Armenia in the event of an attack, ruling out the deployment of troops or arms sales as sometimes discussed in Armenia.

As I previously noted, the US has shown little interest in establishing a presence in the South Caucasus region, including refraining from setting up military bases in Georgia despite close security cooperation. Furthermore, the US aims to avoid antagonizing Iran and Russia, given the presence of a Russian military base in Armenia and mutual border between Armenia and Iran.

Another crucial takeaway is that the US will not hold Aliyev responsible for his actions towards the people of Artsakh. It is clear that the US will not enforce any sanctions on Aliyev, as Azerbaijan holds equal significance to Armenia for the US. Furthermore, the US has yet to label the events in Artsakh as ethnic cleansing. This lack of recognition allows Aliyev to proceed with his policies, even the aggressive ones, with a sense of ease. In this regard, the Armenian community in the US can play a vital role in collaborating with Congress to advocate for holding Aliyev responsible and urging the US government to accurately identify the situation.

My impression from this interview was that Washington does not encourage the deterioration of Armenian-Russian relations, as it would not be able to offer anything in the event of Russia's possible reaction. As the interview revealed, the ambassador stated that Armenia can have any mediator for the peace process, which would be beneficial for Washington even if the mediator is not the USA. It is clear that if not the West, then only Moscow can be that mediator and potential deal maker between Yerevan and Baku.

(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.)

Yeghishe Kirakosyan Presents Armenia's Case Against Azerbaijan at Int'l Court of Justice

Armenia's Representative on International Legal Matters Yeghishe Kirakosyan on April 16 delivered opening remarks at a hearing of Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan) at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), The Hague. (See story on Page 4.)

Kirakosyan's full statement is provided below with minor edits for space considerations.

On 16 September 2021, Armenia instituted these proceedings against Azerbaijan because of that State's egregious policies and practices of racial discrimination against ethnic Armenians. Azerbaijan's government has for decades cultivated an echo chamber of racist hatred against ethnic Armenians. The children of Azerbaijan are taught to hate and kill Armenians in their school textbooks. The State media spews vile hate speech. Public officials dehumanize ethnic Armenians and call for their complete elimination. This is the pervasive State-sanctioned racism that Azerbaijan's counsel dismissed yesterday as "so-called" Armenophobia. A climate in which literal axe murderers are awarded, promoted, and glorified as national heroes for killing Armenians in peace time.

This longstanding State policy of racial hatred came to a violent head in September 2020 when Azerbaijan launched a war of aggression against the ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. The stated goal was to eliminate and expel ethnic Armenians from their homeland. As President Aliyev later revealed "Hatred for the enemy ... was driving us forward." For 44 days, Azerbaijani soldiers systematically murdered, tortured,

and abused ethnic Armenians. They gleefully filmed themselves carrying out unspeakable acts of violence against ethnic Armenian civilians and prisoners of war, all while shouting racial slurs and insults. Through this violence and intimidation, Azerbaijan ethnically cleansed large swathes of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, expelling at least 30,000 people from their homes. President Aliyev declared victory, proclaiming that no songs would be sung in Armenian in those lands ever again.

In the aftermath of these shocking atrocities, which were the culmination of decades of racial discrimination against ethnic Armenians, Armenia sought accountability under the CERD [Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination]. Importantly, Armenia also sought the Court's urgent protection for those vulnerable ethnic Armenians who, at that time, had not yet been killed or expelled from their homeland.

Mr. President, Members of the Court, we all know what has happened since then. To the deep regret of Armenia and the international community, not even the Court was able to stop the tide of Azerbaijan's racist campaign of ethnic cleansing. In September 2023, after starving the ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh for nine months by blocking the Lachin Corridor, in flagrant violation of the Court's first two Orders on Provisional Measures, Azerbaijan launched an unprovoked attack, killing hundreds and forcing over 100,000 ethnic Armenians to flee their ancestral homeland. To this day almost 200 remain missing, and their families suffer without knowing the fate of their loved ones. Just as with the Court's previous Orders, Azerbaijan remains in defiance

of the Court's third Order of 17 November 2023. It has done nothing to "ensure that persons who have left Nagorno-Karabakh after 19 September 2023 and who wish to return to Nagorno-Karabakh are able to do so in a safe, unimpeded and expeditious manner."

After threatening to do so for years, Azerbaijan has completed the ethnic cleansing of the region and is now consolidating it by systematically erasing all traces of ethnic Armenian presence, including Armenian cultural and religious heritage. All this is happening while this case is pending before you. Just last month, President Aliyev lit a bonfire in Stepanakert, Nagorno Karabakh, and tweeted that the bonfire was "doing the final cleaning."

Mr. President, Members of the Court: this is the context in which Armenia is pursuing claims against Azerbaijan under the CERD.

Faced with Armenia's claims and the overwhelming evidence against it, Azerbaijan has desperately sought to introduce a false sense of parity between the Parties by instituting its own case against Armenia. But the challenge for Azerbaijan is that it has no videos of racist atrocities to show and no pervasive hate speech by public officials to quote. So, what has Azerbaijan done? It has resurrected three-decade-old historical grievances that clearly fall outside the temporal scope of the Court's jurisdiction. Just yesterday we heard Azerbaijan misrepresenting an early twentieth century national ideology as racist, which has nothing to do with the mainstream political realities in Armenia today. Azerbaijan has also introduced outlandish claims about alleged

see ICJ, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

'Israel-Azerbaijan Relationship Relies on Unholy Trinity of Oil, Arms & Intelligence'

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz published on April 11 a revealing article about the extensive high-level links between Azerbaijan and Israel, titled: "How Strategic Relations with Azerbaijan Became the Business of the Lieberman Family." The article was written by investigative reporter Gur Megiddo.

Avigdor Lieberman was a high-ranking Israeli government official who made multiple trips to Baku, more than any other Israeli politician, meeting each time with Pres. Ilham Aliyev and other high-ranking Azeri leaders. He served twice as Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, and became successively minister at six different ministries: National Infrastructure, Transportation, Strategic Affairs, Foreign Affairs (twice), Defense, and Finance.

Lieberman was not the only Israeli official who traveled to Azerbaijan. Israel's defense ministers Benny Gantz and Yoav Gallant also visited Baku, in addition to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2016 and President Isaac Herzog in 2023.

Megiddo stated that "the Israel-Azerbaijan relationship relies on an unholy trinity of oil, arms and intelligence. Israel buys oil from Azerbaijan (about half of Israel's crude oil originates there), and sells it advanced military equipment. In return, Azerbaijan reportedly gives it access to its land and sea border with Israel's number one rival: Iran."

Azerbaijan was victorious in the Artsakh wars of 2020 and 2023, "thanks in no small part to game-changing weaponry supplied by Israel," including the Israeli Hermes and Harop drones, and other sophisticated weapons bought for billions of dollars. Azerbaijan purchased some of these drones while Lieberman was Defense Minister."

During Lieberman's visit to Baku in 2012, he was asked about a Foreign Policy magazine article which quoted a senior U.S. government official as saying that: "the Israelis have bought an airfield, and the airfield is called Azerbaijan. The names of several former Soviet air force bases were mentioned that, according to the magazine's sources, were or would be placed at Israel's disposal in anticipation of a possible airstrike" on Iran. Lieberman called the story "science fiction" that has "no connection to reality." However, The Times of London reported that the "Israeli espionage agency Mossad has a base in Azerbaijan."

"By any standard, Azerbaijan is a dictatorship" ranked 130th out of 167 countries by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2023. A delegation of four Israeli Knesset members led by Lieberman went to Azerbaijan ostensibly to oversee the presidential elections. They dismissed the reports of irregularities

in the elections which Aliyev had won with a whopping 85%. They falsely described Azerbaijan as "the only democracy in the Middle East." Lieberman called Aliyev's victory "a good lesson for some forces who, unjustly, criticize Azerbaijan."

When Israeli-Russian blogger Aleksander Lapshin was arrested and jailed in Baku for visiting Artsakh, his family asked then-Defense Minister Lieberman to intervene, but he did not lift a finger, even after Lapshin was attacked by the prison security personnel, trying to kill him. Lapshin believes that the Russians ultimately helped secure his release.

Megiddo reported that Lieberman's two sons -- Amos and Kobi -- have a "deep business relationship" with Azerbaijan's government. "The Lieberman brothers, it turns out, spend a lot of time in Baku, where they are considered intermediaries who know how to open doors to the government. In recent years, Lieberman's sons have marketed a number of Israeli high-tech products to the government of Azerbaijan: a cyberoffense product made by the cybersecurity company Candiru; a big data system for improving tax collection by another cybersecurity firm, Rayzone; and water desalination technologies by the Israeli company IDE. The potential commissions from brokering these three ventures alone could reach millions of dollars. Additionally, until recently, the Lieberman brothers represented Azerbaijan Airlines (the national flag carrier controlled by the state) in Israel."

Several Israeli firms like Pegasus and Candiru sold spyware to Azerbaijan to hack the phones of the regime's opponents. Today, 18 Azeri journalists are in jail. The Candiru sale was mediated by Lieberman's two sons in exchange for a commission, "estimated at hundreds of thousands of dollars." From a deal with cyberfirm Rayzone, they earned "a commission of about \$200,000," according to "TheMarker," published by Haaretz. Lieberman's office stated that "he is not involved in his children's businesses."

Lieberman's children also represented IDE Technologies which is planning on building a large water desalination facility in Azerbaijan. This is "a project whose cost may reach hundreds of millions of dollars -- and the commission for the Lieberman brothers would presumably rise accordingly," Megiddo wrote.

Megiddo wondered: "Do you think the two sons would have attained such significant status with the Azerbaijan government if not for their family connection?" A businessman was quoted as saying: "I can say about the Azerbaijanis that they're the kind of people who know how to say thank you. If you do good things for them and they appreciate you — they know how to say thanks, both in words and deeds."

Megiddo concluded: "there's probably no one within the Israeli establishment who would dispute the many benefits Israel derives from its ugly but perhaps vital relationship with Azerbaijan. But there is no contradiction between these two statements: the warm relations with the morally dubious rule of President Ilham Aliyev can be part of an Israeli national security strategy, and at the same time also part of the Lieberman family's business strategy."

US and European Aid Package to Armenia Is Not Only Cheap, It's Dangerous

By Michael Rubin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On April 5, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and USAID Administrator Samantha Power, alongside European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Union Foreign Affairs chief Josep Borrell met Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Brussels. The State Department said the meeting's purpose was "to reaffirm support for Armenia's sovereignty, democracy, territorial integrity, and socio-economic resilience." Turkey reacted furiously and without a sense of irony, calling Washington and Brussels' diplomatic involvement a violation of neutrality since the matter did not concern them.

To underscore the US and European commitment to Armenia's security and economic resilience, the US and European Union promised \$290 million to be disbursed over four years.

The Biden administration and European officials may want to view the money as a sign of their commitment to Armenia, but the package actually does the opposite.

To offer Armenia \$72.5 million per year suggests a lack of seriousness. It is one-third of what the United States gives the Central African Republic, even before adding the European contribution to that country, and

just slightly more than aid to Moldova, a former Soviet state with roughly the same population. Rather than truly supplement Armenia in its pivot to the West, therefore, the State Department and USAID are giving Armenia an infusion to get it to the starting line.

For too long, Blinken and Power have sought to pair any concession to Armenia with appeasement of Azerbaijan. So too do they now. True, US foreign assistance to Azerbaijan lags behind that of Armenia. This does not surprise, given that Azerbaijan receives tens of billions of dollars in hydrocarbon income annually. Nevertheless, the State Department and USAID increased foreign assistance to Azerbaijan by more than 1,100 percent since 2021. Such actions have consequence. Azerbaijan

FOR TOO LONG, BLINKEN AND POWER HAVE SOUGHT TO PAIR ANY CONCESSION TO ARMENIA WITH APPEASEMENT OF AZERBAIJAN.

has reportedly received more than one arms delivery per day, flying in advanced weaponry from both Israel and Pakistan.

Such a buildup comes not only after Azerbaijan uprooted and expelled Nagorno-Karabakh's indigenous Armenian population, but also as it continues to attack Armenia proper and occupy Armenian land. Surveying the Azerbaijan-Armenia border near Nerkin Khndzoresk last year, the Armenia guard post under construction was simple: A two-story building to provide living and working quarters for the Armenia Border Guards in the area. Less than a kilometer away, the new Azerbaijani post was also visible, with advanced radar, helicopter landing and fuel facilities, rocket launchers, and machine gun nests. Put another way, Armenia built a border post, Azerbaijan constructed a forward operating base to continue its war.

Armenians in the United States should compare the US-European offer with aid accompanying other peace processes. Egypt receives approximately \$1.3 billion

annually to sweeten its agreement to the Camp David Accords. This has amounted to tens of billions of dollars in military assistance. Israel received even more.

Then there is North Korea, the world's most repressive country and a designated state sponsor of terror. After Pyongyang signed the 1994 Agreed Framework, Washington provided it over \$400 million in energy assistance despite its persistent cheating.

Pursuing peace is commendable but when haphazard, it undermines security and encourages aggression. Blinken and Power should not expect plaudits for their aid package but rather opprobrium, because they shows how unserious they are. A storm is brewing in the Caucasus. Armenia faces an existential threat from Azerbaijan and Turkey's irredentist, genocidal ideology and economic peril from a resurgent and vengeful Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Seventy percent of the \$5.7 billion Armenia receives in remittances comes from Russia. Russia also represents 40 percent of Armenia's export market, and a major source of its energy. Put another way, as Armenia potentially faces a Berlin Crisis-scale blockade, Blinken and Power wish to provide Armenia with 2.5 percent of what they stand to lose. This is the diplomatic equivalent of giving a starving child in Sudan a peppermint candy and declaring it proof that the United States stands firm against hunger.

After Russia's Nagorno-Karabakh betrayal and its overt efforts to interfere violently in Armenian politics, Armenians deserve real democracy, security, and partnership. Power made her career writing about the Armenian Genocide, and President Biden recognized it. Blinken, meanwhile, seeks moral authority from his stepfather's Holocaust experience. How sad, then, they seem not to recognize that the Armenian Genocide is not a forgotten historical event, but a looming threat that negligence can catalyze.

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



Arsonist Strikes Armenian Cemetery Ahead Of Genocide Commemoration

ARSON, from page 1

The incident marks the sixth of its kind since the start of 2024, bringing down more than 19 trees total in the cemetery, whose service to the community dates back to 1885.

The arson comes 11 days before the Cemetery's newer section, dubbed Masis Ararat, is set to host an Armenian Genocide commemoration and flag raising at its Soghomon Tehlirian Monument, dedicated to the revolutionary who assassinated the architect of the Ottoman Empire's World War I-era genocide against Armenians.

"As you can imagine, this is horribly upsetting to my Board of Directors, the Armenian community, and my staff and me," Ararat Cemetery manager Sheri Manning-Cartwright said in a statement to The Sun. "We are the only Armenian cemetery outside Armenia and the Middle East; our mission is to serve Armenian families with compassion in their time of need, while also keeping alive the memory of all who are buried here. The Board, my staff, and I take this mission very seriously. It would be impossible to overstate how upsetting this is to us."

"These heinous attacks on the Masis Armenian Cemetery are a clear indication that anti-Armenian sentiment is an unaddressed threat to public safety, and especially the Fresno Armenian-American community," said Oshin Harootonian, Chair of the ANCA-WR Board of Directors. "The local authorities must investigate the six incidents that have taken place since the beginning of 2024, and ensure that these patterns of crimes are effectively addressed, offender(s) be brought to justice, and that the Armenian-American community is compensated for all damages."

Kirakosyan Represents Armenia in Case Against Azerbaijan

ICJ, from page 19

environmental damage that have nothing to do with racial discrimination. And it is even attempting, for a third time, to convince the Court that its allegations about landmines fall within the scope of the CERD.

As Armenia will explain during the hearings that begin next week, the vast majority of Azerbaijan's claims fall squarely outside the Court's jurisdiction. Yet again, however, Azerbaijan is pursuing its same tired strategy of mirroring and whataboutism. It is undoubtedly aware of the jurisdictional challenges faced by the case it has brought against Armenia and it is now desperately attempting to convince the Court that Armenia's case also faces jurisdictional hurdles. But nothing could be further from the truth. In light of the manifest weakness of its Objections, Azerbaijan is simply hoping that the two sets of objections will cancel each other out.

Mr. President, Members of the Court, this is a cynical strategy of last resort. As Armenia will explain today, neither of Azerbaijan's objections stands up to even cursory scrutiny, and its tactic must fail.

Azerbaijan's First Objection is simply not serious. Not only does Azerbaijan's understanding of the negotiation requirement of Article 22 turn the Court's jurisprudence on its head, Azerbaijan's presentation of the facts also distorts reality. What Azerbaijan refers to as "negotiations about negotiations" was in fact an agenda imposed by Azerbaijan with the sole purpose of prolonging negotiations for as long as possible. What Azerbaijan refers to as a "confidence-building" exercise, was happening at a time when the Azerbaijani army was still expelling ethnic Armenians from their homes. While Azerbaijan was making a so-called "proposal for joint action", it was also torturing ethnic Armenian detainees, and destroying Armenian cultural heritage. While Azerbaijan, as it claims, was making "progress" in negotiations it was opening its military trophies

park and ridiculing ethnic Armenians with racist mannequins. Mr. President, Members of the Court, in such a context, one year of negotiations was one year too many. Armenia nevertheless negotiated with Azerbaijan in good faith and pursued discussions far beyond the point of futility. Armenia has fulfilled the requirements of Article 22 in letter and spirit, and Azerbaijan's First Objection fails.

Azerbaijan's Second Objection is also without merit. Unable to even argue that the vast majority of Armenia's claims fall outside the Court's jurisdiction, Azerbaijan attempts to convince the Court that a subset of Armenia's claims concerning violence, detention and enforced disappearances have nothing to do with the CERD. To do so, Azerbaijan relies on at least two fictions. First, it tells the Court that Armenia simply does not have enough "particularized" evidence of racial animus. Apparently, according to Azerbaijan, for the Court to enjoy jurisdiction, Armenia should prove that each and every instance of violence, detention or disappearance was sufficiently racist. And to do so, it is not enough that Armenia point to a general climate of hate speech, or to the most hateful atrocities, or even to the racist words of the perpetrators themselves. For Azerbaijan, Armenia must prove an elusive "something more."

Azerbaijan's other fiction is that Armenia's grievances fall outside the scope of the CERD because they implicate international humanitarian law. For Azerbaijan, Armenia is unduly attempting to litigate an ordinary armed conflict between two warring States. As I explained, Armenia's claims concern far more than the 44-day war of 2020. To borrow Azerbaijan's metaphor, the war itself was only the tip of the iceberg of decades of racist policies and practices. That said, the CERD is not displaced by the existence of armed conflict. How could it be? History has shown us that the most extreme forms of racial discrimination—including persecution, ethnic cleansing and genocide—most often occur

in the context of armed conflict. Indeed, as set out in the Convention's preamble, "discrimination between human beings on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin is an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations among nations and is capable of disturbing peace and security among peoples and the harmony of persons living side by side even within one and the same State." Unfortunately, there is no better example of racial discrimination upsetting peace and security than Azerbaijan's recent armed aggressions, which resulted in the ethnic cleansing of all of Nagorno-Karabakh. In this context, as Armenia will demonstrate today, Azerbaijan's arguments come nowhere near establishing that Armenia's claims are not capable of falling within the scope of the CERD.

I would like to underscore the importance that the Republic of Armenia attaches to the present proceedings.

Mr. President, Members of the Court, these proceedings concern fundamental human rights, and the dignity and equality of all peoples, regardless of their race or ethnicity. They are about justice for victims, accountability for perpetrators, and truth-telling for posterity. Yet Azerbaijan has been increasingly characterizing Armenia's human rights claims, whether before this Court or in Strasbourg as some sort of challenge to Azerbaijan's sovereignty or territorial integrity. It further claims that these proceedings are an obstacle to peace between the two States.

Azerbaijan is profoundly mistaken. Armenia has no claims to Azerbaijan's territory, and is also committed to establishing the conditions for a genuine and enduring peace. But it cannot be the case that, to quote President Aliyev, "might is right" and "international law does not work." A state that has carried out gross breaches of human rights cannot simply declare that it has completed its atrocities, and that it is ready to move on. History tells us that lasting peace is built upon justice, accountability, truth, and yes, reconciliation.

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