

# Hundreds Arrested at Protests against Armenian Govt.

## Archbishop Galstanyan Says Will Challenge Pashinyan for Premiership

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Bagrat Galstanyan, an outspoken archbishop who has led anti-government protests in Armenia over a controversial border deal with Azerbaijan, on May 26 announced his intention to challenge Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for the premiership as he addressed tens of thousands of supporters who gathered in central Yerevan.

Galstanyan, a 53-year-old head of the Tavush Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, said at the rally in the capital’s main Republic Square that he had asked Catholicos Karekin II to suspend his “spiritual service” so that he could challenge Pashinyan.

Rally participants cheered and applauded Galstanyan’s remarks that he was ready to accept the “nomination” as a candidate for prime minister in the

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Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan greets supporters rallying in Yerevan on May 26.



A protestor is arrested on Monday.

### By Shoghik Galstian & Naira Bulghadarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Police made nearly 300 arrests on Monday, May 27, as Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan and his supporters continued to demonstrate in Yerevan to demand Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s resignation.

The protesters were detained as they blocked streets in the city center in the morning to step up the pressure on Pashinyan. There were reports of similar

blockages of highways outside the Armenian capital. The police used force to unblock them as well.

The chief of the national police, Aram Hovannisian, accused the protesters of “behaving like thugs” as he oversaw the crackdown in downtown Yerevan.

The Armenian Interior Ministry put the total number of detained protesters at 284 in the afternoon. A ministry spokesperson said 278 of them have already been released without charge.

The detainees included two opposition lawmakers affiliated with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) party. Footage posted on social media showed members of a special police squad punching and swearing at one of them, Ashot Simonian, outside the Dashnaksutyun headquarters.

In a statement, Dashnaksutyun accused the policemen of acting like “street hooligans” and demanded criminal

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## Call for Help Restores Music for Artsakh Children and A Dedicated Music Teacher Twice a Refugee



Victory of good over evil

### By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Garen Garibyan does not give up. Although he has been forced to leave Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) twice, his opera studio project for children will continue to grow and thrive. His story is a demonstration of courage, and an inspiration.

Singer, actor, and director, Garibyan received his master’s degree at Tallinn Conservatory and lived and worked for many years in the United States. In 1992, thanks to sponsors from all over the world, he founded the Shushi Music School in Artsakh; his Shushi Music School Society, also founded in 1992, thrived until the Azerbaijani aggression in 2020 shut it down. At that time, he, his teaching staff, and students fled to Stepanakert, leaving their homes and the music

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## Russia Recalls its Ambassador to Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russia recalled its ambassador to Armenia for consultations on May 24 amid a continuing deterioration of relations between the two longtime allies.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova announced that Ambassador Sergei Kopyrkin was “summoned to Moscow for consultations” but gave no reason for the move.

The Armenian government did not immediately react to the decision, which came two days after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed that two member states of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) helped Azerbaijan prepare for the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is believed that Pashinyan was referring to Russia and Belarus.

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## ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

## OSCE's Bono Visits Armenia for Meetings

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan on May 23 received Louis Bono, the Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations, the U.S. Co-Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

According to Grigoryan's Office, the two sides discussed the normalization process of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, recent developments within the negotiation process, and the prospects for establishing long-term peace. Additionally, they covered various topics within the bilateral agenda during the meeting.

On the same day, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan received Bono.

During the meeting, the parties discussed regional developments, addressing the process of normalizing Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and emphasizing the importance of ensuring its continuity.

## Avetisyan Wins Gymnastics Cup

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian gymnast Artur Avetisyan became the winner of the World Challenge Cup held in Varna, Bulgaria, on May 27.

He won the gold on the rings with 14,500 points in the final.

All four representatives of the Armenian national team made it to the finals. Artur Tovmasyan took the 6th place on the rings with 13,766 points. Olympic bronze medalist, world champion, two-time European champion Artur Davtyan was the 4th in the pommel horse exercise with 14,266 points.

European youth champion Erik Baghdasaryan ranked 8th on the parallel bars.

## Russian Official Says Russia Is Interested in Stable Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — First Deputy Chair of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Dzhavarov said on May 28 that Russia is interested in a stable situation in Armenia, RIA Novosti reported.

Dzhavarov also stated that the Russia will work with any government in the republic.

"The main thing is that there [in Armenia] there should be no human victims," he said.

According to Dzhavarov, Russia is closely monitoring the situation because Armenia is "our partner in the CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization], although they have recently been increasingly talking about leaving this structure."

"In addition, it is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union. So far we see that Pashinyan retained his power both after the elections and after the second Karabakh war. He has a fairly strong position," he wrote.



Throng gathered in Yerevan.

## Hundreds Arrested at Yerevan Protests Against Armenian Government

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proceedings against them. The Interior Ministry said it has launched an internal inquiry into the incident.

Meanwhile, Galstanyan again marched through the city center together with a hundred supporters. He announced afterwards that they will head to a World War One memorial 50 kilometers west of Yerevan to spend the night there and celebrate the next morning the 106<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of a short-lived independent Armenian republic.

Official ceremonies to mark the public holiday called Republic Day have traditionally been held at the Sardarapat memorial. It was not clear whether Galstanyan planned to try to prevent Pashinyan and

other top state officials from visiting the site on Tuesday.

The outspoken archbishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church announced the latest "disobedience" actions on Sunday as he again rallied tens of thousands of supporters in Yerevan as part of his opposition-backed attempts to oust Pashinyan. The massive crowd supported his candidacy for the post of prime minister which appears to enjoy the backing of a wide range of opposition groups.

The 53-year-old archbishop accepted the "nomination," saying that he has asked the supreme head of the church, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, to "freeze my spiritual service." Karekin's office reported on Monday that Galstanyan has been

relieved of his "ecclesiastical and administrative" duties while retaining his episcopal rank.

Galstanyan has until now headed the church diocese encompassing Armenia's northern Tavush province. He emerged last month as the leader of angry protests in several local villages against Pashinyan's controversial decision to cede adjacent border areas to Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan has claimed that the territorial concessions are necessary for preventing another war with Azerbaijan. His political enemies and other critics dismiss the explanation, saying that the land handover will only create additional security risks for not only Tavush but Armenia as a whole.

## Abp. Galstanyan Says He Will Challenge Pashinyan for Premiership

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opposition's possible impeachment bid against Pashinyan.

Under Armenia's constitution, at least one-third of lawmakers can initiate a no-confidence vote against the prime minister in parliament, provided they also name a candidate who will replace him or her.

Earlier, Hayastan and Pativ Unem — opposition factions in parliament associated with the former presidents of Armenia, Robert Kocharian and Serzh Sargsyan — said they would support the bid.

They will need the support of the only nonaligned lawmaker to initiate the process, which, in order to succeed, will require a majority vote in the legislature dominated by Pashinyan's Civil Contract party.

Pashinyan -- who remains largely popular with the population despite some dissatisfaction with recent events -- has rejected Galstanyan's resignation demand and his allies in parliament have ruled out that any of them would break ranks to support the protest leader's possible bid.

The Armenian Constitution bars dual citizens from serving as prime minister.

Galstanyan, who is a dual citizen of Armenia and Canada, said he would not violate the constitution but did not explain how he was going to surmount the legal obstacle.

Earlier, his supporters did not rule out that it would have to require an amendment to the constitution.

At the end of the rally, Galstanyan told participants he would go to Pashinyan's residence to meet him and press his resignation demand.

But after waiting for some time near the prime minister's residence with no response, Galstanyan told supporters he would return to Republic Square to discuss plans for the start of "civil disobedience" actions to begin on the morning of May 27.

"We will make the government reckon with the demand of the people," he said.

Pashinyan was out of Yerevan during the afternoon hours, visiting the Lori and Tavush regions, where at least three people had been killed in severe flooding.

Armenian police urged protesters to preserve public order during the day.

The anti-government movement started in the northeastern province of Tavush in April as Armenia and Azerbaijan began the demarcation process of their

heavily militarized border following an agreement announced by Yerevan and Baku on April 19.

The demarcation, which was formally completed on May 15, alters the boundary in a way that affects the infrastructure of a number of Armenian border villages.

Local populations have expressed fears of possible further Azerbaijani attacks after the Armenian military withdrawal from four abandoned villages that used to be part of Soviet Azerbaijan but have been controlled by Armenia since the first Armenian-Azerbaijani war in the early 1990s.

The Pashinyan government has pledged to solve infrastructure-related problems of the border villages within a few months, including the construction of a new road and payment of compensations to those who are losing property and land as a result of the demarcation.

The prime minister has also stressed that having a demarcated and recognized border with Azerbaijan is in itself assurance against Azerbaijan's possible aggression.

Both the United States and the European Union have hailed the border demarcation between the two bitter Caucasus rivals.





## ARMENIA

# Police Confront Catholicos at Sardarapat at Unusually Tense May 28 Commemoration

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — The Sardarapat Memorial was the scene of a tense standoff between the government and opposition members on May 28, which saw police tried to stop the Church, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, from visiting the war memorial as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan led there an official ceremony to mark the 106th anniversary of an independent Armenian republic.

A group of police officers formed a human chain to bar Karekin II from entering the Sardarapat Memorial on May 28 celebrated in Armenia as Republic Day.

“Janissaries are blocking the Supreme Patriarch’s access to the Sardarapat Memorial,” Proto-Archimandrite Zakaria Baghumyan wrote on Facebook, posting a video of the incident.

The entry ban was presumably attributed to the visit of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his cabinet members to the memorial complex.

The short-lived republic was officially established on March 28, 1918 as Armenian army and militia units defeated Ottoman Turkish forces trying to occupy Yerevan and the rest of modern-day Armenia. The decisive battle was fought from May 22-29, 1918 around Sardarapat, a village about 50 kilometers west of Yerevan.

The anniversary has been a public holiday in Armenia, called Republic Day, since the Soviet collapse. The country’s current and former leaders have marked it at a memorial built near Sardarapat in the late 1960s. The official ceremonies there have traditionally been held in the morning.

Pashinyan and other top state officials visited the memorial in the afternoon this time around apparently because it was occupied on Monday night by hundreds of anti-government protesters demanding his resignation. The protesters led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan spent the night there in what looked like an attempt to disrupt the anticipated ceremony. They returned to Yerevan at around noon on Tuesday after celebrating the holiday with patriotic songs and a speech delivered by Galstanyan.

Catholicos Karekin II and other senior clergymen arrived at Sardarapat a couple of hours later. Amateur videos shot at the scene showed them running into lines of riot police that kept them a hundred meters from a monument where Pashinyan addressed officials, soldiers and border guards on the occasion.

They managed to get through the police cordon after a brief altercation with the policemen. Karekin then laid a wreath and prayed at the memorial.

In a statement released later in the day, the Echmiadzin-based Mother See of the Armenian Church deplored the “reprehensible



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan gives a speech at the Sardarapat war memorial, May 28, 2024.

behavior” and “violent actions” of the security forces. It described the incident as “yet another manifestation of shameful and anti-national activities of the authorities.”

The church, to which the vast majority of Armenians belong, officially voiced support for Galstanyan and his supporters on May 7 as they marched from the Tavush province to Yerevan to protest against Pashinyan’s territorial concessions to Azerbaijan. The outspoken archbishop demanded Pashinyan’s resignation when he rallied tens of thousands of people in the capital two days later. His continuing campaign for regime change has been joined or endorsed by virtually all Armenian opposition groups.

Pashinyan rejected the demands, defending the land transfer to Baku. He and his political allies have attacked Galstanyan and the church as a whole over the past month, threatening to impose new taxes on it.

Galstanyan acknowledged on May 21 that he regularly discusses the protest movement with Karekin. During another mass rally held on Sunday, May 26, the 53-year-old archbishop, who has until now headed the church’s Tavush Diocese, announced that he has asked the Catholicos to suspend his “spiritual service” in view of his political activities. Karekin’s office announced on Monday that Galstanyan has been relieved of his “ecclesiastical and administrative” duties while retaining his episcopal rank.

The protest leader on Tuesday pledged to continue the anti-government protests. He urged supporters to gather outside a Yerevan church for that purpose on May 29 (after MS press time).

Pashinyan’s relationship with the church has increasingly deteriorated since the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Karekin and other senior clergymen joined the Armenian opposition in calling for Pashinyan’s resignation following Armenia’s defeat in the six-week war. They have also blamed Pashinyan for Azerbaijan’s September 2023 recapture of Karabakh and the resulting mass exodus of the region’s ethnic Armenian population.



Riot police confront Catholicos Karekin II and other top clergymen at Sardarapat memorial, May 28, 2024.

Pashinyan and his entourage have boycotted Christmas and Easter liturgies led by Karekin for the past three years. They accuse the clergy of meddling in politics. Karekin and his bishops say they cannot remain silent in the face of what they call existential threats to Armenia resulting from Pashinyan’s misrule.

Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II on Tuesday, May 28 issued a message that the events of the heroic May battles of 1918 became the cornerstone in the restoration of Armenian statehood.

“Today, when we are faced with existential threats, it is extremely important to be united and unwavering in the face of internal and external challenges that threaten the existence of the nation,” Karekin II said.

According to him, the nation needs to put aside destructive indifference in order to restore security and peace.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan too released a message and said that Armenia is moving forward “without interruption” and

that the nation’s coveted goal is “on the horizon”.

## Galstanyan Campout

Protesters led by Galstanyan spent the night of May 27 there to celebrate the 106th anniversary of the establishment of the first independent Armenian republic in 1918. He called the gathering a pilgrimage in which the participants laid flowers at the memorial, said a prayer and sang the country’s national anthem.

Police made nearly 300 arrests the day before – on May 27 – as Galstanyan and his supporters continued to demonstrate in Yerevan to demand Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s resignation.

The protesters were detained as they blocked streets in the city center in the morning to step up the pressure on Pashinyan. There were reports of similar blockages

of highways outside the Armenian capital. The police used force to unblock them as well.

The chief of the national police, Aram Hovannisyan, accused the protesters of “behaving like thugs” as he oversaw the crack-down in downtown Yerevan, RFE/RL’s Armenian service reports.

The Armenian Interior Ministry put the total number of detained protesters at 284 in the afternoon. A ministry spokesman said 278 of them have already been released without charge.

The detainees included two opposition lawmakers affiliated with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) party. Footage posted on social media showed members of a special police squad punching and swearing at one of them, Ashot Simonian, outside the Dashnaksutyun headquarters.

(Reports from Azatutyun, Panorama.am, PanArmenian.net were used to compile this story.)



Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan at Sardarapat





ARMENIA

# Flooding in Lori and Tavush Provinces Leads to 4 Deaths

YEREVAN (Armenpress/Azatutyun) — The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that due to floods in the northern provinces of Lori and Tavush, four persons were confirmed dead as of May 26.

They are Avag Avagyan, Saribek Balyan, Gnel Zakaryan and Gagik Nazlukhanyan.

The Ministry noted on May 27 rescue operations were restarted. A total of 75 rescuers, 13 combat units, and 3 operative groups from the Ministry of Internal Affairs went to the region.

According to the operational situation, the search and rescue and urgent emergency rehabilitation works are continuing, as a result of which rescuers and other involved forces rescued and evacuated 429 people from different settlements in Lori and Tavush regions, namely, 387 people in Lori region, 42 people in Tavush region.

Currently, the evacuation of the residents of the Sanahin Station settlement, the drainage of water from the basements of the flooded buildings, as well as the removal of the blocked truck in the Haghpat settlement are being carried out.

Several settlements in Armenia’s northern Lori province remained cut off from the outside world on Monday more than 24 hours after the country’s worst flooding in decades that killed four people and caused extensive damage to local infrastructure.

Due to heavy rainfall, rivers flowing through Lori and neighboring Tavush province burst their banks early on Sunday,



Catastrophic flooding in Armenia’s north

washing away roads, bridges and parts of a railway and flooding towns and villages located along them. The National Rescue Service evacuated 429 local residents.

According to Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan, some 5,500 other people remained stranded in Akhtala, a mining town close to the Georgian border, and several nearby villages. Rescuers supplied them with food and drinking water for the second consecutive day.

The Akhtala area was cut off because the floods left a bridge on the sole road connecting it to the provincial capital Vanadzor under water. Sanosyan said authorities on the ground are scrambling to build a bypass road.

“We have a total of 14 damaged bridges,” Sanosyan said during Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s video conference with members of a task force coordinating the Armenian government’s response to the calamity.

The floods also seriously damaged the two national highways leading to Armenia’s main border crossing with Georgia. The damage was particularly severe to the M6 highway passing through Lori.

“At eight or nine sections, the road was completely or partially destroyed,” Sanosyan said, adding that rebuilding them “will take a lot of time and resources.”

In Lori, M6 runs parallel to the sole railway connecting Armenia to Georgia. Sanosyan said a total of 2.5 kilometers of rail tracks were washed away. In the minister’s words, “it will take some time” to restore railway communication between the two countries.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on May

27 received a delegation headed by Georges Siffredi, the President of the Hauts-de-Seine of France.

According to the Prime Minister’s Office, Nikol Pashinyan welcomed the visit of the delegation and emphasized the close decentralized cooperation between Armenia and France.

According to Pashinyan, this cooperation once again emphasizes Armenia’s special relations with France. The Prime Minister highlighted the mutual interest in this cooperation. At the same time, the PM highly appreciated the attitude of President Emmanuel Macron and, in general, France towards Armenia.

“France is one of our primary partners, and we have great potential to deepen our active cooperation,” Pashinyan said.

According to a government statement, Pashinyan and other officials agreed on the need for “international support in solving problems” caused by the floods. The statement said nothing about the scale of such aid that could be requested by Yerevan.

It also remained unclear whether the government could compensate Lori and Tavush residents whose homes were destroyed or seriously damaged on Sunday. Some of them also lost shops and other businesses or had goods perish because of flood waters.

In a flooded neighborhood of Alaverdi, another town in Lori, the owner of a butcher shop was desperate to find another refrigerated place for her meat worth thousands of dollars.

“We don’t have electricity, water or gas,” the woman told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service. “The neighborhood is cut off. Even bread can’t be brought here right now. I don’t know what to do.”

During the video conference, Pashinyan, who visited some of the flooded areas on Sunday, praised his government’s response to the natural disaster. He said local residents that he spoke to shared his view that “consequences of this disaster could have been much more severe.”

However, the government faced growing questions about its failure to warn the locals of the risk of severe flooding in advance despite heavy rainfall forecast by its meteorological service.



Flooded homes and cars in Alaverdi, May 26, 2024.

## Former Mayor Of Stepanakert Arrested in Yerevan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The former mayor of the Nagorno-Karabakh capital Stepanakert, David Sargsyan, was arrested on May 26, and is to be detained for 20 days, his lawyer Ruben Melikyan said on Monday, May 26.

Earlier, security forces had searched Sargsyan’s house. He and three others were detained and charged with fraud and theft of 4 cars. The investigation is ongoing.

On May 23, Hayk Shamiryan, the former mayor of Askeran, a town in Karabakh, was detained in Yerevan. Investigators searched Shamiryan’s apartment and took him away afterwards. On May 24, Shamiryan was placed under house arrest.

It was reported on May 25 that the former mayor of Martakert, Misha Gyurjyan, had been detained too. The Investigative Committee revealed he was suspected of embezzling property on a large scale.

## Azerbaijan Takes Control of Border Areas Ceded by Armenia

YEREVAN/BAKU (Azatutyun.am) — Azerbaijan on Friday, May 24, took control of most of the border areas which the Armenian government agreed to hand over to Baku under last month’s controversial border deal that sparked antigovernment protests in Armenia.

Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, who negotiated the deal on April 19 with his Armenian counterpart Mher Grigoryan, announced that Azerbaijani border guards took up positions there in the morning. Mustafayev said Azerbaijan won back a total of 6.5 square kilometers of territory that used to be occupied by four Azerbaijani villages captured by Armenian forces in 1991-1992.

For its part, the Azerbaijani army had at occupied at the time large swathes of nearby land belonging to several villages in Armenia’s Tavush province. It will not withdraw from that land in return for the Armenian territorial concessions.

Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) confirmed the completion of the first land transfer which Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has described as “yet another victory” for his country. In a statement, the NSS indicated that another, more sensitive

border area will be handed over to Baku by July 24.

The area is located in and around Kirants, one of the four Tavush villages affected by the Armenian withdrawal. Kirants will lose not only much of its agricultural land but also several houses and a bridge connecting it to the rest of Armenia.

Local residents say that the land transfer will also leave their community dangerously close to the new Azerbaijani border posts. Many of them staged protests late last month and early this in a bid to prevent it.

Security forces cleared a protest camp in Kirants on May 2 to allow the Armenian authorities to continue preparations for the handover. They again blocked on May 19 all roads leading to the village. It has remained cordoned off since then.

The protest leader, Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, and his supporters took their campaign against the “illegal” handover to Yerevan on May 9, holding rallies there to demand Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s resignation. Galstanyan, whose movement has been joined or endorsed by a wide range of Armenian opposition groups, is due to again rally supporters in the capital

on Sunday.

Pashinyan has claimed that the unilateral concessions are necessary for preventing Azerbaijani military aggression against Armenia. He reiterated that in a televised address to the nation aired on Friday evening.



Demonstrators sit around a fire as they block a road in the village of Kirants, April 26, 2024

“If our strategic vision is not real Armenia, the already difficult peace will not be possible because our environment will consider us a strategic threat,” he said.

Pashinyan’s critics say that he is on the contrary encouraging Baku to demand more territory from Armenia and use force for that purpose.





INTERNATIONAL



Dignitaries, including his son, Nicholas, at right, and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, at the event

Charles Aznavour Square in Paris Is Officially Unveiled

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On May 23, the Paris Municipality named a square after Charles Aznavour. The square is located in the 8th arrondissement of the French capital, the city’s historical center, on the Champs-Élysées, BFMTV reported.

The event commemorating the artist’s 100th birthday was attended by Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, as well as Aznavour’s family and friends.

The Paris City Council had voted to name the square in honor of Aznavour in December 2023. In 2021, his bust was installed in the Odéon district of Paris, where Aznavour spent his childhood.

Aznavour died on October 1, 2018. He was not only a brilliant artist but also a poet and composer, who was born in Paris in a family of Armenian immigrants.

Charles Aznavour wrote about 1,000 songs. His records sold 180 million copies. He starred in 60 films.



The square named for Charles Aznavour in Paris

Azerbaijan Promises Free Education, Laptops to Convince Students to Study In Nagorno-Karabakh

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) — Comfortable dorm rooms on a campus with manicured lawns and a view of the mountains. Sleek lecture halls in brand new buildings where some of the country’s finest professors will teach. And it’s all for free.

To lure as many as 1,200 students to study in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan is pulling out all the stops. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in February allocated the equivalent of nearly \$6 million to build, much of it from scratch, Karabakh University in Xankendi, as Stepanakert is called now by Azerbaijan.

Baku has controlled Karabakh since September 2023, when its military forces launched a lightning offensive to retake the territory, where ethnic Armenians had enjoyed de facto independence since the mid-1990s.

Within days of the September offensive, some 100,000 ethnic Armenians — nearly the entire population — fled to Armenia. Since seizing control, Azerbaijan has been

accused of erasing Armenian towns and sites of religious and cultural heritage.

Russia deployed troops in Nagorno-Karabakh after the last major war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020, but [announced](#) in April that it had started withdrawing them.

With nearly all of the Armenians having left what was for them Stepanakert, today’s Xankendi has been [described](#) in recent months as a ghost town.

Scrambling for ways to repopulate the city, Aliyev, president since 2003, signed a decree in November 2023 to establish Karabakh University. On May 20, he appointed Sahin Bayramov, a seasoned university president, to head it.

The Azerbaijani Science and Education Ministry recently said that infrastructure work was under way, with lecture halls, dormitories, and other buildings due to be completed in the coming months.

Karabakh University expects to open its doors to students this fall for the upcoming

academic year. Officials stress that everything will be gratis, including tuition, room and board, as well as a free laptop. In Azerbaijan, about half of universities charge for study.

The Science and Education Ministry plans to initially offer eight areas of study at the new university, including engineering, economics, and tourism.

The goal is to have 1,200 students enroll at the university, according to Emin Amrullayev, the science and education minister.

To ensure its success, the university will need to offer “more promising majors,” including computer science and artificial intelligence, said Farid Imanov, an education expert.

“It is easier to find a job with one of these majors,” Imanov told RFE/RL’s Azerbaijani Service.

Baku and Yerevan are currently negotiating what is hoped will be a final peace deal, something that is being watched and supported by the EU and the United States.

INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan Issues Angry Retort to France

YEREVAN (news.am) — On May 27, Aykhan Hajizada, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Azerbaijan, wrote on social media that “France can be sure that the anti-Azerbaijan campaign, the derogatory remarks and provocations will not remain unanswered.”

“Not only did France fail to offer an apology for such irresponsible and unacceptable remarks, but it also expanded the smear campaign against Azerbaijan in Le Point and other local French media outlets. Anti-Azerbaijan campaign waged by France under the veil of ‘democracy’ aims to cover up the shortcomings of this country’s foreign policy,” Hajizada said.

“Before calling Azerbaijan a ‘dictatorship,’ France would do well to take note of its [colonial] actions. France can be sure that the anti-Azerbaijan campaign, the derogatory remarks and provocations will not remain unanswered,” Hajizada added.

Leaders of Three Countries Are No Shows At CIS Meeting

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The prime ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan chose not to participate in the meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Ashgabat on May 24.

Representing Armenia at the meeting was Ambassador of Armenia to Belarus Razmik Khumaryan.

Representing Azerbaijan was Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance Jamshid Kuchkarov represented Uzbekistan.

Mirzoyan Speaks with EU’s Borrel

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with Josep Borrel, the Vice President of the European Commission, High Representative for EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on May 25.

Within the context of the deepening partnership between Armenia and the European Union, the two emphasized the importance of both the implementation of already established cooperation programs and reaching a new milestone in additional directions. The EU’s Resilience and Growth Plan for Armenia, developed as a result of the Brussels meeting of April 5, as well as the steps taken to conclude the new Armenia-EU partnership agenda in the near future were touched upon.

Mirzoyan also emphasized the importance of making a final decision regarding the launch of the Armenia-EU dialogue on visa liberalization.

Mirzoyan and Borrel also exchanged views on regional issues.



# Khachkar (Cross Stone) Consecrated in Front of Almudend Cathedral of Madrid

MADRID — During the Feast of Pentecost, on Sunday, May 19, an Armenian *khachkar* (a cross stone) was blessed and consecrated in front of Almudend Cathedral of Madrid by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate of Western Europe and the Representative of the Armenian Church to the Holy See — along with Cardinal Jose Cobo Cano of Madrid. Also assisting was Father Shnorhk Sargsyan, Vicar of the Pontifical Legate in Spain and Portugal. Others present included Ambassador of Armenia Sos Avedisyan, the deputy mayor of Madrid, and members of the Armenian community.

The *khachkar*, brought from Armenia as a gift of the Armenian community of Spain to the Cathedral of Madrid, represents its gratitude to Spain and its Catholic Church.

After the blessing of the *khachkar*, the celebration of Pentecost Liturgy took place in the cathedral, presided over by the cardinal of Madrid.

Cardinal Jose, at the beginning of his sermon, expressed his welcome to Archbishop Khajag and to Father Shnorhk saying: “We embrace the entire Armenian community with whom we have gathered, with the gesture of the cross, and with thanks to the Ambassadors, the diplomatic corps, and Mr. Borja Fanjul — who accompanies us in this mass from the Madrid City Council — and has also done so during the blessing of the Armenia cross stone. Like any cross, the one being blessed today is a sign of peace and unity, so that we may be prepared to embrace our diversities, while thanking the Armenians for their resilience and bravery over the centuries in carrying the cross of the Lord.”



Fr. Shnorhk Sargsyan chants a prayer in front of the new *khachkar* in Madrid with Cardinal Jose Cobo at far left

At the conclusion of the celebration of the mass, Archbishop Khajag conveyed the greetings of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and expressed his thanks for the cardinal's warm welcome. He continued: “Amidst the rugged landscapes and ancient monasteries of Armenia, one finds

the *khachkar*, or cross-stone, as an enduring symbol of Armenian culture. Carved from solid stone, these monuments serve as more than just markers of time. They are profound expressions of faith, heritage, and artistry. The tradition of crafting *khachkars* dates back over a millennium — with the earliest known examples being traced to the 9th century. At the heart of every *khachkar* lies the cross — its most striking feature.

“From the early days of Christianity, the cross has stood as a timeless symbol for both Catholic and Armenian churches — a perpetual symbol of our Christian faith which embodies love, sacrifice, and redemption.

The *khachkar* in front of this cathedral is a beautiful symbolizes the unity of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and represents the very close relationship between the Catholic and the Armenian churches.”

The earliest contacts between Armenians and Spain date back potentially to the medieval period. During the time of the Crusades in the 11th and 12th centuries, Armenian knights and merchants traveled throughout Europe, establishing connections that would lay the groundwork for future interactions. The Kingdom of Cilicia, for instance, had diplomatic and trade relations with various European states including in the Iberian Peninsula.

In medieval Spain, Armenian merchants were known to trade silk, spices, and other goods. Some even settled in cities like Barcelona, Cadiz and Seville. During the Renaissance, Armenians in Spain were known for their craftsmanship — particularly in the field of jewelry making and textiles. Armenian merchants also played a significant role in establishing trade routes that connected Europe with the Middle East and Asia.

The latter half of the 20th century saw a revival of the Armenian community in Spain. Presently, there are about 40,000 Armenians in Spain. Recently an Armenian Church was consecrated in Malaga. However, parishes of the Armenian Church

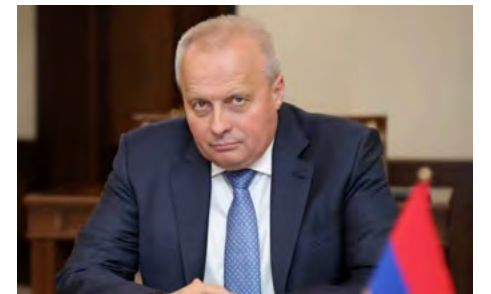
exist in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante, Arnedo, and Seville.

## Russia Recalls its Ambassador to Armenia

RECALL, from page 1  
Zakharova on May 23 challenged Pashinyan to name the countries.

She also said that Russia repeatedly tried to stop the 2020 war, pointing to Pashinyan's rejection in October 2020 of a ceasefire agreement brokered by Moscow and accepted by Azerbaijan. Armenia suffered more territorial losses before Pashinyan agreed to another Russian-brokered truce two weeks later.

Russian-Armenian relations have worsened significantly since then, with Yerevan



Ambassador Sergei Kopyrkin

seeking closer ties with the West and accusing Moscow of not honoring its security commitments to Armenia.

Pashinyan has repeatedly threatened to pull his country out of the CSTO, prompting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to charge that Pashinyan's administration was “leading things to the collapse of Russian-Armenian relations” at the behest of the West.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Pashinyan discussed the rift when they met on May 8 after a Eurasian Economic Union summit in Moscow.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and Cardinal Jose Cobo during the ceremony of the blessing of the new *khachkar* in Madrid, Spain



Inside Almudend Cathedral of Madrid during the celebration of Pentecost Liturgy





# Community News

## Assembly Board Thanks Pallone For Armenia Aid Package Efforts

WASHINGTON — On May 22, in a meeting with Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian and Executive Director Bryan Ardouny thanked the Congressman for spearheading a bipartisan letter requesting a \$250 million aid package to Armenia and sanctions against Azerbaijan. They also discussed the unique position that Armenian NGOs have played, and continue to play, in providing much-needed assistance to the Armenian people in the aftermath of Azerbaijan's genocidal campaign, which culminated last Fall with over 100,000 Armenians driven from the ancestral homeland, and seeking refuge in Armenia.

Reinforcing the bipartisan request, the Assembly in its testimony before a key House Committee, noted that the U.S. "is uniquely positioned to ensure that Armenia has the necessary tools and resources to protect its people and defend its borders," and called and urged Congress and the Administration to "provide defensive weapons to further assist Armenia in protecting its sovereignty."

The Assembly emphasized the importance of humanitarian assistance as a result of the "ensuing humanitarian crisis caused by Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing," stating that "U.S. assistance can also play a role in preventing further genocide." The Assembly specifically called for funds to be "made available to Armenian American private voluntary organizations" that have proven most cost effective.

With respect to the indigenous Armenians of Artsakh, the Assembly urged Congress to "help ensure that the fundamental right of return," as well as the "fundamental principles of democracy, the right to self-determination, and the universal human rights of the people of Artsakh are upheld," and for the U.S. to hold Azerbaijan "accountable for its gross human rights violations."

Upholding the letter and spirit of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, the Assembly expressly endorsed H.R. 7288, the Armenian Protection Act of 2024, and urged its inclusion. The Assembly's testimony also made clear that U.S. military or security assistance should not be provided to Azerbaijan.

The Assembly also urged the inclusion of language calling for the immediate release of all prisoners of war and captive civilians held by Azerbaijan, including Artsakh's leaders who have been detained and subjected to "sham trials."

"The United States has taken a strong stand in support of democracy in Ukraine and should do the same for the Armenian people who also face existential threats," the testimony concluded. "The Assembly's position is clear: stand up for democracy and human rights; oppose genocide and hold Azerbaijan accountable by imposing sanctions."



Zaven P. Akian presented the AUA Visionary Philanthropist Award

## AUA Supporters 'Ignite Change' at LA Fundraiser

LOS ANGELES, California — On Saturday, May 18, at the home of American University of Armenia (AUA) ChangeMakers Vahe and Ruzan Kuzoyan, the community of AUA supporters gathered to ignite change for a brighter future in Armenia. The gala, titled "A Night to Ignite Change: Honoring the Akian Family," recognized the Akian family for their decades of commitment to AUA and raised \$800,000 in support of the University's efforts to advance higher education in Armenia.

The event underlined the critical role that AUA continues to play and emphasized the importance of investing in higher education in Armenia. Together with his wife, Kuzoyan, who was recently appointed to the AUA Board of Trustees, commented, "We see firsthand the impact AUA has on Armenia's ability to produce talent based on the alumni hired at ServiceTitan's Yerevan office. We are big believers in AUA's mission and want to inspire others."

Following the national anthems sung by Alene Aroustamian and the invocation prayer by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the emcees, AUA alumni Anna Bakunts (MBA '11) and Hayk Mamajanyan (LLM '12), took the stage to speak briefly on the impact their AUA education had on helping them find professional success in their respective careers. They also acknowledged the presence of Karen Israyelyan, consul general of Armenia, who shared about the significance of AUA and the Diaspora's support in Armenia.

see AUA, page 12



AUA Vice President of Development Gaiane Khachatryan with the AUA Development team

## Salpi Ghazarian Retires from USC After 10 Years

LOS ANGELES — After a decade, Salpi Ghazarian, the former director of the University of Southern California (USC) Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies and special initiatives director throughout the past year and a half, has announced her retirement. Ghazarian's departure marks a tenure characterized by innovation, determination, and a steadfast commitment to expanding the boundaries of knowledge on the contemporary Armenian experience.

Ghazarian's leadership has played a monumental role not just in the trajectory of the institute, but also the position of USC in the field of Armenian Studies and Armenian communities worldwide. She has



played a pivotal role in shaping the Institute's mission, research endeavors, and innovative programming, all while fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and meaningful dialogue among scholars, community leaders, and policymakers.

In celebration of her remarkable contributions, colleagues, academics, university administrators, friends, family, and supporters gathered at the USC University Club on May 6th. Among the attendees were LA City Council President Paul Krekorian and former CA State Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian, as well as members of the Institute's Leadership and Academic Councils who joined to honor Ghazarian's legacy, reflect on the impactful 10 years of her work at USC, and wish her well in her future endeavors.

Reflecting on Ghazarian's reputation as a "doer, actor, and a force to be reckoned with," Institute Director Dr. Shushan Karapetian noted that she effortlessly traversed the realms of action, communication, and listening, embodying a rare combination of qualities that set her apart from her peers. "Indeed, it was Salpi who helped me realize just how much work needs to be invested in the Armenian world when it comes to not only having clear messaging but also delivering it effectively – with force, without mincing words," said Dr. Karapetian.

Among the speakers were academics Dr. Manuel Pastor, Dr. Laurie Brand, Dr. Dan Mazmanian, and Dr. Ghazarian, page 8





COMMUNITY NEWS

# Eastern Diocese Holds 35th Annual Women’s Guild Assembly

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — The 35th annual Assembly of the Women’s Guild of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America held its meetings May 3-4, with 31 delegates representing 17 parishes. The delegates, some of whom were first-time attendees, arrived eager to learn from each other.

Like the 122nd Diocesan Assembly and Clergy Conference that ran concurrently, the Women’s Guild gathering took place in Springfield, hosted by the city’s St. Mark Armenian Church.

Each day of meetings began with a prayer led by Yn. Patricia Buttero. During the first session offers of the assembly were elected, with Sara Andonian elected chair,



A mother and child attend services at St. Mark Armenian Church in Springfield. (Photo by Mano Baghjejian)

Buttero as vice chair and Elizabeth Barone as recording secretary. Nancy Kassabian and Yn. Buttero were appointed by the chair as Parliamentarians.

Among the business reports were the minutes from the 34th Assembly, financial reports, auditors’ findings, and the Women’s Guild Central Council (WGCC)

reports. Reports had been sent out prior to the Assembly, so the delegates were able to quickly approve all.

Lucy Murad led a report and discussion on the Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program (CASP), the successful ongoing WGCC project that has been supporting orphans in Armenia since the 1990s. The day-to-day administration of CASP is in the process of transitioning to the Fund for Armenian Relief (the Eastern Diocese’s humanitarian relief and development arm in the homeland), while the Diocesan Women’s Guilds will continue to support and promote the program.

A progress report on the WGCC’s work with Armenia’s Vanadzor Old Age Home was delivered by Louisa Bagdasarian.

### Sharing and Witnessing

Nancy Kassabian organized an interactive activity titled “Sharing is Caring,” in which the delegates were divided into six groups, where each member shared a successful achievement of her local guild, and a challenge it faced. The results of the six lively discussions were reported to the full assembly, where delegates received counsel on such topics as fundraising, service, and women’s ministry, which they could take back to their respective parish guilds.

The Friday morning session occurred in concert with the concurrent Diocesan Assembly gathering, during which Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrob Parsamyan gave an inspirational message on the theme, “Be My Witnesses.” Orthodox Christian scholar Dr. Ann Bezzerides also gave a presentation on “Witnessing,” after which the Women’s Guild and Assembly delegates together discussed, what it means to wit-



Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrob Parsamyan with delegates to the Eastern Diocese’s 2024 Women’s Guild Assembly, hosted by St. Mark Church, Springfield, MA. (Photo by Mano Baghjejian)

ness for Christ.

The Women’s Guild delegates also heard from Sarah Stites of “Ayo,” the crowd-sourcing platform of the Fund for Armenian Relief. She related her experiences in Armenia; described how “Ayo” and FAR are helping Armenia’s women with technology education; and discussed how Women’s Guilds could help. In response, the Women’s Guild delegates pledged to give half of its raffle proceeds to “Ayo.”

A highlight of the meeting came when Bishop Mesrob Parsamyan paid an extended to the Women’s Guild Assembly, to spend time with the members and address them on the importance of women in the church.

To conclude the Women’s Guild Assem-

bly on Saturday, May 4, the WGCC held its annual “Woman of Wonder” luncheon, this year honoring Marion Vartaresian, an active parishioner at St. Mark Church in Springfield. A successful “Hye Raffle” led by Liz Barone rounded out the two-day Women’s Guild Assembly.

“We met, broke bread together, discussed, and solved issues,” said Nancy Kassabian, who was elected to chair the Women’s Guild Central Council for 2024-25 during the assembly. “Mostly, we learned that though we come from different churches and different parts of the country, we all have a common goal: sharing our commitment and dedication to the Women’s Guild and its mission to educate, nurture, support, and share our faith.”

## Salpi Ghazarian Retires from USC

GHAZARIAN, from page 7

Robert English. Dr. Razmik Panossian and Dr. Ronald Suny sent video messages. Current and former institute team members, including Dr. Lilit Keshishyan and Syuzanna Petrosyan, USC alumna Maral Tavitian and Ghazarian’s son Mshak Ghazarian, also provided remarks.

Mazmanian reflected on Ghazarian’s

narrow corners of history departments and area studies and instead for boldly fashioning a space for things Armenian in global discourse.

In a letter addressed to Ghazarian, Dr. Khachig Tölölyan, who is widely regarded as one of the founders of Diaspora Studies, wrote, “complex mind, clear sight, pessimism about reality but unflinching optimism

about the possibility of addressing at least some relevant aspect of it — that’s our Salpi.”

Throughout her tenure, Ghazarian’s unwavering dedication to mentoring and guiding students from all walks of life has left an indelible mark on the Institute and its broader community. Present at the celebration were USC alumni who described the transformative impact her mentorship and guid-

ance have had on their careers and life trajectories. “My parent’s raised me, but Salpi sent me to Armenia. A place that until then had been almost entirely absent from my upbringing...where the course of my life changed forever,” stated Maral Tavitian.

“Salpi has no desire to hoard information or credit. This allows for those who work with her to use her expertise, wisdom, and large network to grow and thrive. She puts you in the room, sits you at the table, and without saying anything assures you that



LA City Council President Paul Krekorian presents Salpi Ghazarian with award

“capability for not only imagining but realizing change,” a sentiment shared by everyone in the room. Nearly all remarked on her transformative role in the field of Armenian Studies and her dedication to expanding the scope, breadth, and reach of the Institute with academic initiatives such as Innovate Armenia, End of Transition, Unpacking Armenian Studies, Focus on Karabakh, and more.

Above all, they commended Ghazarian for refusing to confine things Armenian to



Shushan Karapetian, Director USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies

you belong there,” stated Dr. Lilit Keshishyan, the Institute’s “California History Through Armenian Experiences” project director.

At the conclusion of the celebration, Los Angeles City Council President Paul Krekorian recognized Ghazarian “for her remarkable leadership and contribution to the University of Southern California and a decade of commitment to the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies.” Commenting on her contribution to not only USC but the Armenian community in the diaspora, Krekorian stated, “very few people have run their leg of this race as effectively as you have. We’re all grateful for it, and we’re all inspired by it.”

Reflecting on her long and dynamic ca-

reer, Ghazarian stated, “I am serious about things Armenian. It isn’t something that I do in my spare time. It is something that I’ve been fortunate enough and chosen to make my good fortune and done in a way that has impact.”

In her parting remarks, Ghazarian brought the focus back to the Institute and its transformative work, entreating attendees to continue their crucial support of intellectual labor. “What they are trying to do is going to take time. It is exhausting, and you won’t see the results tomorrow morning. Research and teaching and trying to create audacious, committed, passionate, and knowledgeable people who can go out there and tell our story is going to take time.”





## OBITUARY

# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

## Armenian Mirror-Spectator Seeks Summer Intern

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer (mid-July through August).

The intern will receive a \$150 weekly stipend provided through the Armenian Students' Association of America's Internship Program.

The intern should be in college or graduate school and does not necessarily have to be studying journalism. Most likely, the internship will be done long distance, via electronic communications, therefore location is not an issue (but native speaker knowledge of English remains important). Main tasks will be writing and working on the *Mirror* website, but they could also take part in marketing campaigns and work to increase digital advertising.

The *Mirror* also is looking for interns during the regular year.

If interested, please email a resume and cover letter to either [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com) and [alin.gregorian@gmail.com](mailto:alin.gregorian@gmail.com).

## Nonny Hogrogian

### Award-Winning Children's Author, Illustrator

Nonny Hogrogian, a Caldecott Award-winning children's book illustrator died on May 9, 2024, two days after her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

She never lost her love of folk and fairy tales, poetry, fantasy and stories when she reached adulthood.

Hogrogian was born in New York City on May 7, 1932, to parents born in Armenia. Both parents were amateur painters.

Hogrogian earned a B.A. in Fine Arts from Hunter College in 1953. She then started working as a book designer at Thomas Y. Crowell Co. She then studied with Antonio Frasconi and Hodaka Yoshida and studied art at the New School.

In 1960, Crowell published her first works in the book, *King of the Kerry Fair*,



other works for publication.

Hogrogian won the Caldecott Medal for illustration in 1966 and 1972. The American Library Association award annually recognizes the previous year's "most distinguished American picture book for children." The two books for which she won were *One Fine Day*, which she both wrote and illustrated, and *Always Room for One More* by Sorche Nic Leodhas. The former is based on an old Armenian story, in which after an old woman cuts off his tail when he steals her milk, a fox must go through a long series of transactions before she will sew it back on again. *Always Room for One More* is based on a Scottish folk song in which



by Nicolette Meredith, which Hogrogian illustrated with woodcuts. Subsequently, she has worked as a designer at Holt and Scribner's and as a freelance illustrator.

In 1971 Hogrogian married David Kherdian, a writer and editor. For two years they lived in Lyme Center, where he was the state "poet-in-the-schools." She illustrated some of his poetic anthologies and

generosity is encouraged.

Hogrogian received a Caldecott Honor in 1977 for *The Contest*, another story she retold and illustrated.

She illustrated a children's book Kherdian wrote in 2019, called *The Animal*, about a visitor to earth from a distant galaxy, who is mesmerized by the beauty of the planet's flora and fauna.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# International Scholars Confirm the Incontestable Nature of the Armenian Genocide

TORONTO — Research and publications on genocide and human rights studies, undertaken by international scholars, document some of the darkest chapters of human history. The Zoryan Institute, in its search for affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, has commissioned scholars of various nationalities to conduct research and analysis on archival documents from different countries, and published their work in different periodicals and as books. The books below feature the results of such research by world-renowned scholars from various disciplines, offering a clear perspective on the Armenian genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish State.

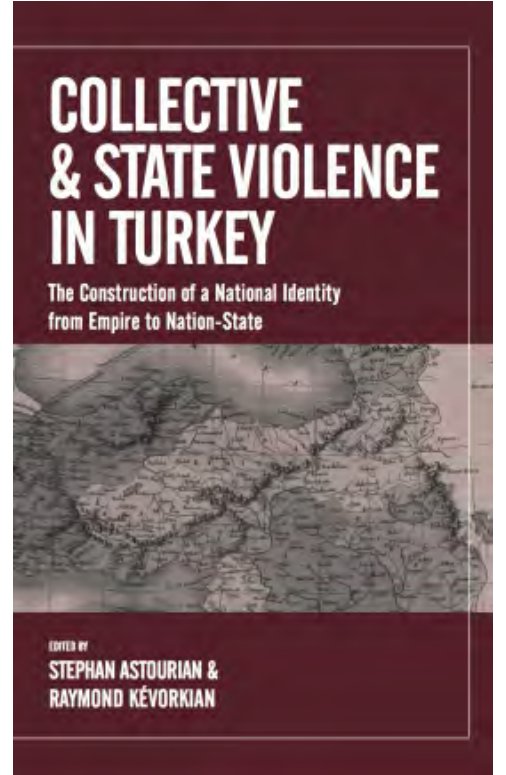
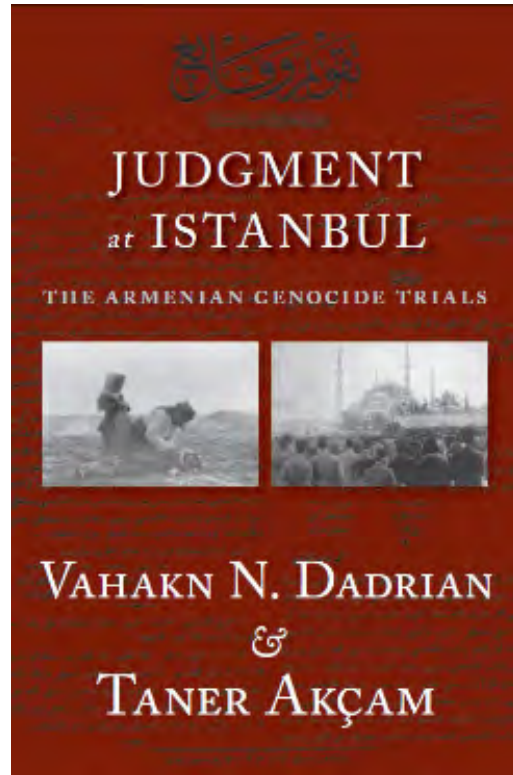
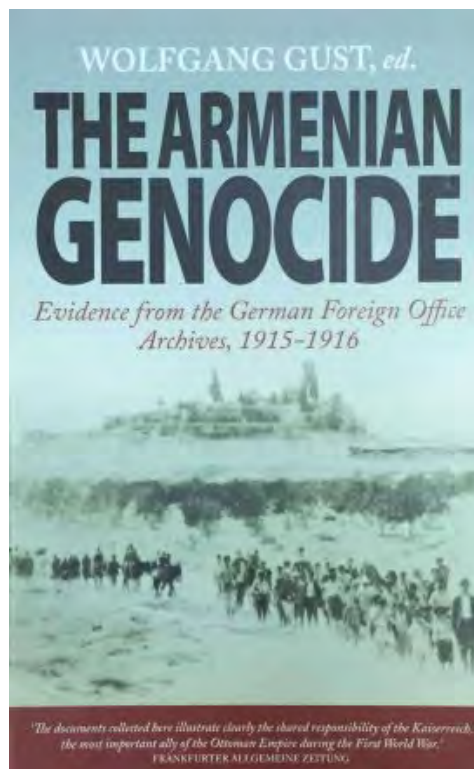
Wolfgang Gust, a German journalist, historian, author, chief of heading for magazine *Der Spiegel*, and an independent scholar, with the help of his wife, Ingrid Gust, collected, researched, and restored, over the course of 11 years, documents from the German Foreign Office archives during WWI. His book, *The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives, 1915-1916*, compiles findings from one of the uncensored sources of communication between German foreign diplomats stationed in the Ottoman Empire and their superiors in Berlin. The book was published in German (2005), Turkish (2012) and in English (2014).

Some 218 telegrams, letters and reports from German consular officials in the Ottoman Empire to the Foreign Office in Berlin, describe the unfolding genocide of the Armenians. This material is unimpeachable by those who would deny the Armenian Genocide, as it is from Turkey's own wartime ally. It provides researchers with a deeper understanding of the actions and the motives of the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide. The German edition of the book played a major role in the German Parliament's recognition of the Armenian Genocide on June 2, 2016. The Co-Chair of the Green Alliance Party of Germany, Mr. Cem Ozdemir, during his visit to the Zoryan Institute, had this say: "Wolfgang Gust's work and that of the Zoryan Institute was very crucial, because it was the first time that we saw the documents of the German Foreign Ministry, and these documents are probably the best saved archive in the world on the Armenian Genocide."

In December 1915, the German Ambassador, Count Paul Wolff-Metternich, to Constantinople wrote to the Imperial Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg: "... Our displeasure over the persecution of the Armenians should be clearly expressed in our press and an end be put to our gushing over the Turks. Whatever they are accomplishing is due to our doing; those are our officers, our cannons, our money... In order to achieve any success in the Armenian question, we will have to inspire fear in the Turkish government regarding the consequences. If, for military considerations, we do not dare to confront it with a firmer stance, then we will have no choice but... to stand back and watch how our ally continues to massacre."

The Chancellor's response was: "The proposed public reprimand of an ally in the course of a war would be an act which is

unprecedented in history. Our only aim is to keep Turkey on our side until the end of the war, no matter whether as a result Armenians do perish or not."



Vahakn Dadrian and Taner Akçam, an Armenian and a Turkish scholar, together have explored the Turkish military archives.

*Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials* is an authoritative translation and detailed analysis of the "Takvim-i Vekâyi", the official Ottoman Government record of the Turkish Military Tribunals concerning the crimes committed against the Armenians during World War I.

In the aftermath of its disastrous defeat, an inquiry commissioned by the Ottoman government in 1919, presented enough preliminary evidence to organize a series of trials involving the perpetrators of these crimes. These authors have compiled the documentation of the trial proceedings for the first time in English and situated them within their historical and legal context. These documents show that Wartime Cabinet ministers, Young Turk party leaders, and others inculpated in these crimes were court-martialed by the Turkish Military Tribunals. Most were found guilty and received sentences ranging from prison with hard labor to death. In remarkable contrast to Nuremberg, the Turkish Military Tribunals were conducted solely based on existing Ottoman domestic penal codes.

This substitution of a national for an international criminal court stands in history as a unique initiative of national self-condemnation. This compilation is significantly enhanced by an extensive analysis of the historical background, political nature and legal implications of the criminal prosecution of the twentieth century's first state-sponsored crime of genocide against its own citizens.

Turkey has gone through significant transformations over the last century — from the Ottoman Empire and Young Turk era to the Republic of today — but throughout it has demonstrated troubling continuities in its encouragement and deployment of mass violence. In particular, the construction of a Sunni Muslim-Turkish identity has been achieved in part by designating ethnic-religious groups, including Alevi, Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Greeks, Kurds and Yazidis as 'internal enemies' at whom public hatred can be directed.

This volume provides a wide range of case studies and historiographical reflections on the alarming recurrence of such violence in Turkish history. It shows not

of how to move forward. The Zoryan Institute strives to raise awareness about and enrich the field of genocide studies and human rights through academic endeavors.

only how atrocities against ethnic-religious groups have propelled the nation's very sense of itself, but also how the impunity of these atrocities has contributed to broader patterns of violence in the Middle East, including the rise of ISIS and other non-state actors and their violence against minorities.

Amidst the headlines of escalating tensions between nations, devastating conflicts, and unease around genocide denial globally, it can be difficult to make sense

The Institute publishes and sponsors many books, articles, and journals alongside its university program and diaspora studies. We believe that these three books should be in every human rights library worldwide and in Armenian homes as part of contemporary Armenian history.

Consider supporting a library in your community by donating a copy of one of these books in addition to obtaining one for your family. For further information visit: [zoryaninstitute.org/publications/#books](http://zoryaninstitute.org/publications/#books).

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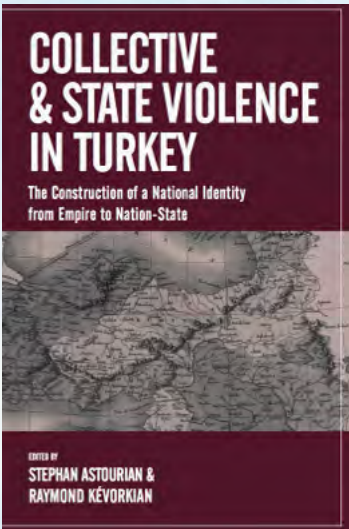




COMMUNITY NEWS

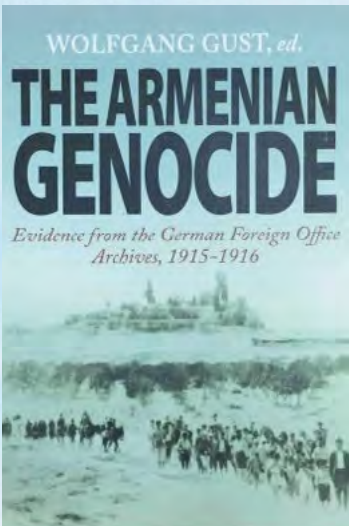
# The Incontesible Nature of the Armenian Genocide is Confirmed by International Scholars

**THREE BOOKS THAT MUST BE IN EVERY HUMAN RIGHTS LIBRARY AND ARMENIAN HOME**



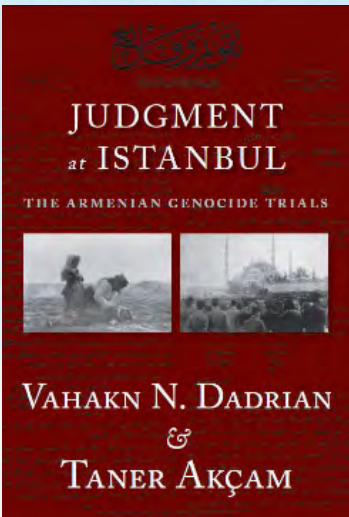
**16 international authors look at how the pursuit of a national Muslim-Turkish identity led the Turkish state to designate its minorities, Alevis, Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Greeks, Kurds, and Yazidis, as ‘internal enemies’ at whom public hatred and violence can be directed.**

*Edited by Stephan Astourian & Raymond Kevorkian*



**This extensive translated selection contains some 218 telegrams, letters and reports from German consular officials in the Ottoman Empire to the Foreign Office in Berlin describing the unfolding genocide of the Armenians. It played a major role in the German parliament’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide.**

*Wolfgang Gust*



**This book on the Armenian genocide trials provides vital background information and is a prime source of legal evidence and authentic Turkish eyewitness testimony of the intent and the crime of genocide against the Armenians.**

*Vahakn N. Dadrian & Taner Akçam*

**FOR BOOK INQUIRIES CONTACT**

**[zoryan@zoryaninstitute.org](mailto:zoryan@zoryaninstitute.org)**



**Zoryan Institute**



COMMUNITY NEWS

# AUA Supporters ‘Ignite Change’ at LA Fundraiser

AUA, from page 7

President of AUA, Dr. Bruce Boghosian, then took the stage to provide updates on the University’s recent re-accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The University first received accreditation in 2016, becoming the first institution outside the United States to be accredited by WASC, and recently had its status renewed for a term of ten years, the maximum term offered by the agency. Dr. Boghosian also delved into the importance of the AUA 200 ChangeMakers campaign. “We believe that this vision can be realized by offering our students quality education in multiple disciplines, nurturing a culture of research and innovation among students and faculty, increasing the number of highly qualified academics and researchers in our faculty, and expanding the scope of AUA’s research centers,” he expounded.

The highlight of the evening, which served as the inspiration behind the gala’s theme, was the recognition of the Akian family and their decades-long commitment to AUA. A special video tribute contained a compilation of messages from the University community highlighting the family’s significant contributions and impact they have had on AUA, in Armenia, and within the Armenian Diaspora.

Following the video presentation, Dr. Boghosian presented the inaugural Visionary Philanthropist Award, dedicated to Zaven P. and Sonia Akian. Akian and his family took the stage to accept the honor, with his two daughters each saying a few words. Lori Akian Stephan read a mes-

sage from her father, commenting on the family’s contributions over the years, and emphasized: “I remember when Sonia reflected one day about Michael Bloomberg delivering a commencement address. She was so impressed by Mayor Bloomberg’s thoughts, that the future belongs to those students who are not afraid of breaking with the past or charting a new course. We both felt that this is so true about our young generation in Armenia. So, we decided to assist AUA with a meaningful scholarship program to facilitate not only the bestowment of a degree, but also of a challenge — a challenge to go forth and do more, and do better, than those who came before them.”

In her turn, Lena Akian highlighted how she and her siblings, Lori and Haig, are now AUA ChangeMakers, inspired by their parents as AUA Pillars and carrying forth the family’s legacy at the University first established by their parents.

The program also included a special panel discussion featuring four AUA ChangeMakers: Sharon Anoush Chekijian, MD, MPH of Yale University School of Medicine; Vahan Janjigian, PhD, chief investment officer at Greenwich Wealth Management, LLC; Christine Soussa, global client director at Equinix; and Lilit Yenokyan, director of engineering at Roku. The discussion centered around the advancement of the University over three decades, physically and academically, and highlighted AUA’s role in advancing multiple sectors of Armenian society through education, healthcare, finance, and technology.

Vice President of Development Gaiane

Khachatrian opened up by thanking the Kuzoyans for opening their home to AUA, addressed the guests and thanked them for attending, acknowledged the event’s spon-



AUA alumni Anna Bakunts (MBA ‘11) and Hayk Mamajanyan (LLM ‘12)

sors, expressing gratitude for their steadfast support of AUA, and pointed out alumni in the audience, noting the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with their alma mater.

Khachatrian then recognized the co-founders of ServiceTitan, Vahe Kuzoyan and Ara Mahdessian, and thanked

the company for establishing an endowed scholarship fund at the University and for the major role they play in creating employment opportunities for youth in Armenia.

A video presentation ensued that showed how ServiceTitan, with the opening of its Yerevan office, has hired a bulk of its workforce from AUA and equipped these students and alumni with the tools, confidence, skills, and access to resources that has allowed them to remain in their homeland and forge bright paths for themselves in Armenia.

The evening concluded with the recognition of the AUA ChangeMakers and a special call-to-stage of those ChangeMakers in attendance, as well as those who wanted to join the exclusive group. A dazzling display of ignited sparklers ensued, with several inspired individuals from the audience committing to join the group, as well as a special announcement from the alumni emcees that saw them become AUA ChangeMakers that evening.

A silent auction took place throughout the program, as well as musical performances including notable Armenian artists Vardan Ovsepiyan, Garik Hovsepyan, Mister X accompanied by Armen Martirosyan, and Christine Pepelyan.

To learn more about the AUA ChangeMakers campaign or the University’s philanthropic efforts, visit [philanthropy.aua.am](http://philanthropy.aua.am)



Tekeyan Cultural Association

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia

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



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

☐ \$240   ☐ \$480   ☐ \$700   ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Make check payable to: Tekeyan Cultural Association  
Memo: Sponsor a Teacher  
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# Arts & Culture

## Armenian Cultural Foundation Celebrates The Legacy of Alan Hovhaness

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Arguably, no American composer has enjoyed higher praise, been lauded by more musical luminaries, or been hailed as the “Prince of Music” quite like Alan Hovhaness. On Sunday, June 9, at 3 p.m., the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF), as part of its annual Mirak Chamber Music Series, will present a concert in tribute to Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000) at the Robbins Memorial Town Hall, Arlington.

Born Alan Vaness Chakmakjian on March 8, 1911, to Harutiun Hovhaness Chakmakjian, an Armenian chemistry professor at Tufts College, and Madeleine Scott, he changed his surname to Hovhaness in honor of his grandfather. He grew up in Arlington (5 Blossom Street), and it was within that nurturing environment of Arlington Public Schools that Hovhaness discovered his musical talent and even composed his first opera. His journey from a local student to a globally recognized composer is a testament to Arlington’s role in fostering artistic growth.

Upon graduation from Arlington High School in 1929, he studied under Leo Rich at Tufts and later under Frederick Converse at the New England Conservatory of Music. There, in 1932, he won the Conservatory’s Samuel Endicott prize for Composition with his *Sunset Symphony* (also known as *Sunset Saga*). In the early 1940s, he served as the organist at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. In 1942, he won a scholarship at Tanglewood to study under Czech composer Bohuslav Martiní.

Hovhaness joined the faculty of Boston Conservatory in 1948, where he taught until 1951. He received Guggenheim Fellowships in 1953 and 1954 for composition. He went on to write scores for the Broadway play “The Flowering Peach” by Clifford Odets in 1954. He also created a ballet for Martha Graham (“Arden Song”) and two scores for NBC documentaries on India and Southeast Asia (1955, 1957).

Starting in the early 1960s, Hovhaness’s music increasingly incorporated influences from other cultures. He had traveled to India, Hawaii, Japan and South Korea between 1959 and 1963. As a Fulbright fellow in India, Hovhaness collected more than 300 *ragas*, learned to play the *veena*, and even composed a work for Carnatic orchestra titled *Nagooran*. This piece was performed and broadcast by the South Indian Orchestra of All India Radio Madras on February 3, 1960. He was given the title “Prince of Music” by Indian music critics.

In Japan (1962-1963), through a Rockefeller Foundation grant, he studied Japanese *gagaku* as well as *nagauta* (*kabuki*) *shamisen* and *joruri* (*bunraku*) *shamisen*. These experiences led to his composition of *Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints Op. 211* (1965), a concerto for xylophone and orchestra.

see HOVHANESS, page 17



Actor Michael A. Goorjian, center, receives an award for his work, as he is flanked by organizers.

## Armenian American Museum Honors Actor Goorjian at Sold Out Gala

GLENDAL — The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California hosted the highly anticipated Horizon Gala on Saturday, May 11. The signature annual event, which supports the developing institution, drew a full house of supporters to the prestigious InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown.

The evening commenced with welcoming remarks by Master of Ceremonies Talin Yacoubian, who serves as the Board of Trustees co-treasurer for the museum representing Armenian General Benevolent Union Western Region.

“Let’s raise a glass to how far we have come and the glorious future that is waiting for us,” stated Yacoubian. “Together, let’s keep fueling this dream and watching it blossom into something truly extraordinary — a beacon of inspiration for generations to come. Cheers to our museum in making.”



Master of Ceremonies Talin Yacoubian

The Horizon Award was presented to Michael A. Goorjian, an accomplished Armenian-American director, writer, and actor. He has starred in many films and television series with notable roles in “Leaving Las Vegas,” “SLC Punk,” “Party of Five,” “Illusion” and more. He won an Emmy Award for his role in the television movie “David’s Mother.” Most recently, Goorjian earned widespread acclaim as the director, writer and lead actor of “Amerikatsi,” a film of tremendous spirit and hope. In a historic first

for Armenia, “Amerikatsi”

was shortlisted in the category of Best International Film by the Academy Awards.

Board of Trustees representatives Zaven Khanjian representing the Armenian Missionary Association of America, Vicky Marashlian representing the Armenian Relief Society of Western USA, Garo Kupelian representing Nor Or Charitable Foundation, and Krikor Moloyan representing Nor Serount Cultural Association joined together on the stage to present the Horizon Award to the honoree of the evening.

“Michael A. Goorjian has beautifully captured the spirit of the Armenian people and homeland in Amerikatsi and helped the community reach new heights through his contributions in film and television,” stated Board of Trustees representative Zaven Khanjian during his introduction of the honoree.

“You are building the Armenian American Museum for that kid that is going to show up in the museum struggling to find their story and they are going to be able to find it in the space that you have created for them,” stated Goorjian during his heartfelt acceptance remarks, discussing the impact museums have had on his own life. He dedicated the award to his late father.

see GOORJIAN, page 16

## Vadim Toumaniantz



### Our Guy from Tahiti with A Pomegranate Tree

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/PAPE’ETE, French Polynesia — Vadim Toumaniantz was born in 1983 in Tahiti (French Polynesia), to an Armenian-Italian father and a Russian mother. He was the Tahiti swimming champion in 2000 in the 50, 100, 200, 400 and 1500 freestyle (and the relays thanks to friends). He attended two world championships as an official for his federation. Currently he works in the administration, and manages a labor union in Pape’ete.

**Dear Vadim, it was a pleasant surprise to me to correspond with you, learning about your interest on Armenia’s current situation and history. Let’s confess it is really unusual to read in a correspondence with a Tahiti-born guy about his knowledge of Portasar archeological site in historical Armenia! Where is your family from?**

Well, obviously my name. That’s the main thing that survived the many travels my family had. My grandfather Garegin came to France and gained citizenship thanks to the French Foreign Legion. He won it for himself and his Italian wife and my father came to Tahiti.

Unfortunately, I do not speak Armenian; the language was lost in my family at the time of my grandfather. He only taught a word per day to my father and my uncle. I barely speak Russian, as mother was born in Baku, but she is of Russian origin: my grandfather was born in Ukraine, was Russian, and I sure hope for peace there — same for Armenia!

**Do you know other Armenians in Tahiti? Some years ago, I published an article on Armenian presence in Oceania, including Polynesia. I was in touch with Natacha Mirimanoff from Pape’ete, who is of Armenian-Polish-Tahitian origin.**

We have some people here that I know of (some I have actually met, but mostly people whom I noticed their name thanks to the ian/yan ending), but I have never heard of any official association. Anyway, Tahiti is a melting pot of three main cultures (Polynesian, French and Chinese). Thanks to that, most people are usually welcomed nicely there no matter where they come from.

**What do you know about your ancestors?**

see TAHITI, page 14





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Hagopian Awards Winners of 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Student Rug Design

DETROIT — Edmond Hagopian and Angela Hagopian Snow recognized the 2023-2024 Student Rug Design Competition winners at the 2024 College for Creative Studies Student Exhibition on May 10.

This year's theme called for students to design an area rug inspired by American art from the 1960s through the 1980s and the winners were recognized and awarded scholarships provided by Hagopian; first place Rachel Barker, MA, Design and Materials; second place Milena Pukalo, product design; third place Hoda Solati, MFA UXD; and three honorable mentions went to Samantha Mantua, communication design; Morgan Newby, interior design; and Kyleigh Kotulis, interior design.

The competition, a long-standing collaboration (the longest partnership recognized by the school) between the College for Creative Studies and Armenian owned Hagopian World of Rugs gives students the chance to submit their designs based on specific criteria and compete for scholarship moneys funded by Hagopian who also makes an annual donation to the school. In addition, Hagopian has the first place design made into a rug and displayed at the annual Student Exhibition. The competition, originally conceived by the late Edgar Hagopian to mentor students and encourage interest in the textile arts through community involvement, continues under the direction of third generation owners, Suzanne Hagopian, Edmond Hagopian and Angela Hagopian Snow and has become a much-anticipated annual event.

The Hagopian Family of Companies are long-time supporters of the cultural arts and community projects in metro Detroit. In addition to this competition they host (22+ years in 2024) the Detroit Chamber Winds "Night Notes" series in their Birmingham showroom bringing fine music to local venues at an affordable cost; and, Hagopian World of Rugs / Hagopian Cleaning Services is a Signal Benefactor to the Detroit Institute of Arts.



From left, student Milena Pukalo (2nd), student Morgan Newby (HM), Angela Hagopian Snow, Edmond Hagopian, Rachel Barker (1st), Don Tuski, President of CCS, Student Kyliegh Kotulis (HM), Student Samantha Mantua (HM), Student Hoda Solati (HM)

## Vadim Toumaniantz: Our Guy from Tahiti with Pomegranate-Tree

### TAHITI, from page 13

I assume that, having a name that is historically connected to Armenia, they might be from Armenia, but also Georgia, Iran and Russia. And I know there was a Touman, a probable ancestor, who came as an ambassador to France, because in some editions of Marco Polo's book there is a credential letter from the Kublai Khan to him.

My father was born in France. He severed all his contacts with his family, and my grandfather was not willing to share a lot in the first place, if I understood their relationship.

I never met with either of my grandfathers. I know that my paternal grandfather was a colonel in the Tsar's army. Another family members, Yervante Toumaniantz, was an architect in France after World War II, and there is now a Toumaniantz avenue in Calais in France named after him. My father once also told me that the famous American ballerina Tamara Toumanova was a distant cousin of him.

Despite all of his efforts, my father never found out where my grandfather was born (he might have lied about his date of birth to get in the Legion). He even wrote to the Georgian government once or twice. As my grandfather had scars from an assassination attempt made when my father was a baby (meaning years before the Genocide occurred), I assume we're from the military branch of the family since a long time.

### And how did your father end up in Tahiti?

As Charles Aznavour says: "Il me semble que la misère serait moins pénible au soleil," which translates as "It seems to me that misery would be less painful in the sun." And he said so in a song about the end of the Earth, which we're not too far away from, considering our origins...

My father wanted to feel the sun; he almost died from tuberculosis when he started university. He asked to be sent there (he was working as a teacher) and he got lucky. Then he refused to leave (as he had bought a house and had a son here), and was subsequently fired.

But I am grateful to my father. I'm lucky to be in a place where (despite all the diffi-

culties) most people are nice, and easy-going. The myth of the Noble Savage has clearly its roots here in the South Pacific, and I have always felt blessed to be here. Tahitian people are nice (kudos to all the member of my labor union and particularly Sandy, Thierry, Christophe, Stéphane, and also all my friends Arcus, Tepuanui, Seb, Edgard, and Patrick for being there).

### visiting Armenian sites worldwide?

Well, the only good part about Aghet (*the Armenian word for catastrophe, also meaning the Armenian Genocide* – A. B.) and communist revolution (that happened around the same time, and the Russian nobility had to escape from it) is that we are now everywhere. So, I had the luck to meet with many Armenian and Russian people

I also want to discuss it with my uncle and my Russian family as well.

As for the places, to be honest, I'd even love to see Portasar site you mentioned in the beginning of our conversation. I'd also would like one day to visit Baku, also... Caraglio and Tioumen, from where my Italian and Russian ancestors hail. But I am focused on the family first.

I am perfectly aware of the fact that the Turkish population nowadays has very little to do with the genocide (and for some of them are Armenians who converted). And I am perfectly aware people are not their government. But some personal experiences and people I have befriended clearly made me know it wouldn't be safe for me to travel in Azerbaijan.

### Do you know anything about Armenian music, film, literature, etc.?

I know about Hohvannes Toumanian. Obviously, I like Charles Aznavour's songs. I was surprised to find out about Toros Rasguelénian statue in Aix-En-Provence simply by walking around (I traveled there to see the city where my father studied in and whom he really loved, and where he had the luck to learn to play piano on the cathedral's organ).

I love Michael Vartan, who has a good character in the Alias TV series.

I really loved the story of Calouste Gulbenkian. Not for his story itself (although it is always nice to see someone rise itself above and beyond all expectations), but for what he has done with it. His art collection is impressive, as I do collect some drawings myself.

Artem Mikoyan's inventions are also interesting. I have always loved the sight of fighter jets, as they're the planes that mostly look like birds and have the most elegant design, well, at least from my point of view. You know, boys will be boys, or something.

As for the food, I really love the pomegranate. We actually have one tree in our yard here!

**Vadim, I hope you know we will be very happy to welcome you in Armenia!**

Thanks! And I hope one day you'll be able to visit here as well!



Vadim Toumaniantz with his father (2010)

The biggest regret I have is not being as close as I should to my brother, who lives in France.

### Have you ever been in our region?

The closest I came was Sochi. Would love to visit, and it is one of my projects, although not in the immediate future. My name having the meaning it has, I do plan to come and see the small part of our lands that survived.

### What about meeting Armenians or

around the world. And it usually gives us a common basis toward a discussion.

I have always felt blessed by the people I have met. Most of them were good or excellent friends. And what are friends, if not the family you can choose?

I still have an invitation to see Costa Rica from an Armenian friend who lives there (dear Arthur, I know it's been a while, and maybe one day I'll find out the time to come to see your living place).





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe  
Corner



by Christine  
Vartanian Datian



Fesenjan (Persian  
Pomegranate And  
Walnut Chicken Stew)

This recipe at The Mediterranean Dish by Persian-British recipe developer Mersedeh Prewer is for a traditional Persian stew, with fall-off-the-bone tender chicken cooked in a rich, sweet and sour pomegranate molasses and walnut sauce. Mersedeh was born and raised in the United Kingdom, where she still lives. She is passionate about all cuisines but her writing primarily focuses on Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisine. She is a contributor to both The Kitchn and Simply Recipes. Finish this recipe with a sprinkle of fresh pomegranate seeds and serve over rice or bulgur pilaf.

“The use of pomegranate and walnuts in Persian cuisine goes back to the Sassanid period (224 to 651 AD), where they were used to flavor and thicken stews. It is believed that Khoresh-e Fesenjoon evolved from these earlier stews and became popular in the northern regions of Iran, where the climate is more suitable for growing pomegranates and walnuts.”

“My family eats fesenjan (fesenjoon) on the night of the Winter Solstice or Shabe Yaldā as we call it. Taking place on the longest night of the year, Yaldā translated from Persian to English means ‘birth,’ which ultimately underpins the essence of this festival,” says Suzy Karadsheh, creator of The Mediterranean Dish. “The festival dates to ancient times when a majority of Persians were followers of Zoroastrianism. From its Zoroastrian roots, Shab-e Yaldā celebrates the renewal of the sun and the victory of light over darkness — the winter solstice marking the lengthening of days, shortening of nights and the advancement towards spring. Pomegranates are a symbol of this festival so fesenjan is a perfect stew to cook on this special occasion.”

“Fesenjan is a stew made with chicken simmered in a pomegranate molasses and walnut sauce. This isn’t something you’d throw together on a Tuesday night after work. It requires time for the flavors to meld in a memorable way. Save this recipe for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon when you can take your time and enjoy the process.”

“The recipe combines two super foods whose nutritional benefits have come to light in recent years -- pomegranates and walnuts. The flavor is like no other,

it is tangy with a hint of sweet. The walnuts add a nutty taste to make the flavors come together in a rich sauce. Fesenjan originates from Gilan province in northern Iran — a beautiful, lush area near where pomegranate and walnut trees grow in abundance. In fact, due to this abundance of walnuts and pomegranates several dishes from Gilan use the fruit and nut combination. It is used in recipes for Kal Kabab, an eggplant, garlic, walnut and pomegranate molasses dip, and Kabab Torsh, chicken or lamb kebabs coated in a walnut and pomegranate paste before cooking over charcoal.”

“When we serve this dish at our family functions everyone gathers around the table waiting to spoon this incredible stew onto their plates. There is nothing quite like the combination of meltingly tender chicken, nutty, earthy walnuts and sweet and sour pomegranate molasses. Don’t be intimidated by this recipe, it is actually remarkably easy to produce this famous dish. All you need is time and patience — and hopefully a good food processor for the walnuts.”

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 1/2 cups walnuts
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, or a little more
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 8 (2 pounds) bone-in chicken thighs, skin removed
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon saffron threads, ground
- 3/4 cup pomegranate molasses, more as needed
- 2 tablespoons sugar, more as needed
- Fine sea salt, to taste
- Black pepper, freshly ground, to taste
- Pomegranate seeds, for garnish

PREPARATION:

Grind the walnuts: Finely grind 3 1/2 cups of walnuts in a food processor until they start to look like sand that clumps together. Do not over process. You don’t want to end up with walnut butter.

Toast the walnuts: Place a dry non-stick skillet over medium heat. Lightly toast walnuts, stirring continuously for a few minutes until you can smell the aroma from the ground nuts, making sure not to burn them. Pour toasted ground walnuts into a bowl and set aside until ready to use.

Cook onions: Take a large stockpot or Dutch oven with a lid and set over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil. When olive oil glistens, add 1 finely diced onion. Cook onions until they start to caramelize and turn golden brown. Then add 1 teaspoon turmeric and stir into onion mixture.

Cook chicken thighs: Add chicken thighs and sear for a few minutes on each side. Pour in 3 cups water and add 1 teaspoon cinnamon. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to low to allow stew to simmer for 10 minutes. Then remove chicken and set aside.

Add the ground walnuts: Pour ground walnuts into the simmering cooking liquid and stir. Place the lid back on the pot and simmer the walnut mixture for 1 hour. Stir occasionally throughout to make sure walnuts don’t stick to the bottom of the pan. After the cooking time the walnut sauce should have thickened, darkened in color until its deeply golden like tahini or honey, and there will be a layer of walnut oil on top.

Bloom saffron, add pomegranate molasses, sugar: In a small bowl add 1 tablespoon of water. Using a mortar and pestle or a spice grinder add the 1/2 teaspoon of saffron threads and grind. You should end up with about 1/4 teaspoon ground saffron. Add the 1/4 teaspoon of ground saffron to the 1 tablespoon of water. Into the pot with the walnut mixture, add 3/4 cup of pomegranate molasses, 2 tablespoons sugar and bloomed saffron. Stir to combine.

Add chicken back into stew and simmer for about 45 minutes or until the meat is falling off the bone. The stew will be a rich dark brown and the oil from the walnuts will form a layer on the stew. Stir, season and taste. Adjust seasoning to taste. Ladle the stew into a serving dish and sprinkle with pomegranate seeds. Serve with rice, Greek yogurt, and a side salad.

To freeze: Once the fesenjan has cooled down, place it in an airtight container but leave about an inch of space to allow for expansion. Freeze for up to 3 months. Defrost completely before reheating.

To reheat: Pour the stew into a saucepan and place over low heat on the stove. You can reheat in the microwave using the appropriate microwave dish.

Order today at: <https://www.themediterraneandish.com/cookbooks/>

For step by step instructions, see: <https://www.themediterraneandish.com/fesenjan-persian-pomegranate-walnut-stew/>

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2024 The Mediterranean Dish.



# Armenian American Museum Honors Actor Goorjian

GOORJIAN, from page 13

Executive Chairman Berdj Karapetian invited representatives of the Board of Trustees, Board of Governors, and Staff to join him on stage for a special announcement at the conclusion of the program. He announced that a generous anonymous donor has made a transformative commitment to the museum through an \$8 million gift. The program concluded with a roaring applause following the announcement.

The national anthems were performed by renowned singer Alene Aroustamian.

The Invocation was conducted by Board of Trustees Co-Chairs Archbishop Hovnan Derderian representing the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, Archbishop Kegham Khatcherian representing the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Rev. Hendrik Shanazarian representing the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, and Bishop Mikael Mouradian representing the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of the United States and Canada.

The Message of the Museum was delivered by Horizon Gala Chair Avedik Izmirlian, who serves as the Board of Trustees Co-Treasurer for the museum representing Armenian Cultural Foundation.

“Your support of the Armenian American Museum can make an impact in the life of future generations,” stated Horizon Gala Chair Avedik Izmirlian. “The spirit that united us in this unprecedented venture is vital to our community because it enhances our collective achievements and makes it possible to carry out our dreams.”

Next, the museum presented the world premiere of a special music and dance video project featuring an original musical score written for the museum called “Hope



Members of the Gevorkian Dance Academy perform.

Rising.” Following the video premiere, Gevorkian Dance Academy made a grand entrance into the ballroom and delivered a crowd-pleasing live dance performance.

The evening featured a comedy performance by award-winning entertainer Kev Orkian, who had traveled from London for the occasion.

Mayor Elen Asatryan delivered remarks reaffirming the City of Glendale’s commitment to the museum project and expressing her excitement for the future museum campus at Glendale Central Park that will feature a new central lawn, outdoor amphitheater, and children’s park to serve museum patrons and the general public.



Kev Orkian

The evening was capped off with socializing, dancing, and celebration at a special post-reception for attendees featuring a DJ, cigar lounge, and cognac bar.

The Horizon Gala Committee members included Mayda Altounian, Alvard Barseghian, Ani Bekarian, Araxie Boyamian, Garine Depoyan, Hilda Fidanian, Christine Hovnanian, Carmen Libaridian, Margaret Mgrublian, Aleen Orucakciel, Anita Siraki, Diana Timuryan, and Elizabeth Zoryan.

The cultural and educational center is currently under construction in the museum campus at Glendale Central Park. The first phase of construction, featuring the museum parking garage and building foundation, has been completed. The second phase, featuring the two-level museum building superstructure, is currently underway.



Religious leaders speak, including Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, center

71ST ANNUAL

Armenian Night  
at the POPS

Wednesday, June 5, 2024 at 7:30 PM  
SYMPHONY HALL, BOSTON

with pianist  
**MARTA AZNAVOORIAN**  
and **Boston Pops Orchestra**  
**Keith Lockhart**, conductor





Presented by the Friends of Armenian Culture Society

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ARTS & CULTURE

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MASSACHUSETTS

**JUNE 2** — The performance reading of a new play with music, “The Four Mrs. Hemingways” by Robert Pushkar, presented by Paul T. Boghosian/Harborside Films, in association with the Armenian Cultural Foundation and the Armenian International Women’s Association. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington. Sunday, 2-5 p.m. Suggestion donation, \$25. To reserve a ticket, call (617) 484-9539 and leave your name, phone number and numbers attending. Tickets also sold at the door. For more information, visit [www.harborsidefilmsboston.com](http://www.harborsidefilmsboston.com)

**JUNE 3** — St. James Men’s Club Monthly Dinner & Fellowship. Guest Speaker will be Greg Jundanian, who will discuss “The Armenians of Whitinsville Project.” His website acts as a public archive for Armenians who had either once lived in Whitinsville or had ancestors who had lived there. The project is a look into a special community as well as a glimpse into how Armenian identity has evolved over the years. Social hour [mezza] 6.15 p.m., Losh Kebab and Kheyma Dinner 7 p.m. \$20 per person. 464 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown

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

**JUNE 8** — The performance reading of a new play with music, “The Four Mrs. Hemingways” by Robert Pushkar, presented by Paul T. Boghosian/Harborside Films, in association with the Belmont Media Center. Belmont Town Hall Auditorium, Belmont, Saturday, 2-5 p.m. Suggestion donation, \$25. To reserve a ticket, call (617) 484-9539 and leave your name, phone number and numbers attending. Tickets also sold at the door. For more information, visit [www.harborsidefilmsboston.com](http://www.harborsidefilmsboston.com)

**JUNE 9** — Father’s Day Dinner open to the community at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church. Catered by Vico Italian Restaurant. Sunday, at 5 PM, with live entertainment by Luigi Grasso and Dj Ryno, Tickets: \$85 Adults, \$50 Youth/Children, for reservations call Sonia 617-875-1107 or Parish office 617-489-2280, at Nishan and Margrit Atinizian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont, MA 02478.

**JUNE 9** — St. James Armenian Festival – Annual Picnic! Delicious Armenian food, Live Armenian music, children’s activities with moon bounce, face painting, and more! Rain or shine. Noon-5 p.m. St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more info visit [www.stjameswatertown.org/festival](http://www.stjameswatertown.org/festival) or call 617.923.8860.

**JUNE 9** — Armenian Cultural Foundation: Mirak Chamber Music Series Presents Alan Hovhaness Tribute Concert, 3 p.m., Arlington Town Hall, 730 Mass. Ave., Arlington. Works by Hindemith, Hovhaness, Khachaturian, Tassone. Performers: Wei Zhao, Yelena Beriyevea, Knarik Nerkararian, Jing-Huey Wei, Sylvie Zakarian, Aaron Larget-Caplan, Michael Peipman, Arlington-Belmont Chamber Chorus, The Menotomy Chamber Orchestra. More details to follow.

**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](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org) Armenian Heritage Park ongoing Programs: MOVEMENT & WALKING MEDITATION. LABYRINTH WELLNESS WALKS TOGETHER through Octo-

ber. 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](http://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](http://ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar)

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

**JUNE 21** — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church invites the community to celebrate World Music Day Under the Patronage of His Excellency the Most Reverend Mikael Mouradian, Bishop Of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg in the USA and Canada. The event will feature performances by Rev. Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian, the Meghedi Children’s Vocal Ensemble and students of Do RE Me Music School, Artistic Director Marina Margarian. Friday, 6:30 p.m . Free Entry, a reception will follow the program, Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont. **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.

MICHIGAN

**JULY 20** — Save the date! Armenia Fest 16! At the Royal Oak Farmers Market. Celebrate 16 years of getting together and showcasing our rich Armenian heritage with music, vendors, food and dance! Friday, 5 to 10 p.m. The Royal Oak Farmer’s Market will once again be transformed to a wonderful “little Yerevan” with vendors selling Armenian food, folk goods, jewelry and desserts; live band “The Armenia Fest Allstars” with celebrated musicians under the direction of Vaughn Masropian; Hamazkayin Arax Dance Troupe, and a vast array of Armenian taste treats. Special fun in mind for the little ones with Mr. Mouse and his balloon magic and face painting. Armenian food rovided by original Armenia Fest caterer, Gary Reizian and his crew from Uptown Catering. Don’t miss our annual Choereg Contest! To set up a stall, contact Vendor Chair, Noreen Masropian at [nmas@comcast.net](mailto:nmas@comcast.net). Reserve your space now. \$60 for a Vendor table. To date our Fest has donated \$70K+ to these worthwhile endeavors.

NEW YORK

**SEPTEMBER 15** — Parish Council members and friends of St. Paul Armenian Church, Syracuse, will host its Annual Shish Kebab Picnic. Great food, games, prizes, etc., on scenic, sheltered, private grounds at Ryder Park. Serving starts at 1 p.m. The entire community is invited.

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

Armenian Cultural Foundation Celebrates the Legacy of Alan Hovhaness

HOVHANESS, from page 13

In 1963, he set up a record label, Poseidon Society, which released around 15 discs over the next decade. Two years later, in 1965, he travelled to the Soviet Union, including Georgia and Armenia, as part of a U.S. government-sponsored delegation.

Hovhaness was inducted into the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1951). He received a number of honorary degrees from various universities and institutes worldwide. He moved to Seattle in the early 1970, where he lived for the rest of his life with his wife, Hinako Fujihara (1932-2022).

Hovhaness died on June 21, 2000. His vast body of work, including over 68 symphonies and more than 500 surviving works of diverse genres, reflects a deep exploration of Armenian, American and Asian musical traditions. He left a great legacy unmatched in the history of the twentieth-century classical music.

Throughout his career, Hovhaness garnered praise from renowned figures across the music world: numerous music critics such as Rudolph Elie, Joel Schwartz, Virgil Thomson, Hubert Roussel, Robert Sherman, John Cage, Lou Harrison, Harold C. Schonberg, world renowned orchestra conductors, such as Leopold Stokowski, Andre Kostelanetz, Dominick Argento, performers Keith Jarrett, novelist and playwright William Saroyan, and Carl Sagan spoke highly

of Hovhaness for his genius, unique style, and philosophy.

The Archives of Hovhaness, comprising scores, photographs, sound recordings, correspondence, and video recordings, are located in several academic centers, including the Armenian Cultural Foundation in Arlington.

In 2009, the town of Arlington honored Hovhaness by dedicating a monument to him, which was followed by a concert at the Robbins Memorial Town Hall. The monument is located on the grounds of Whittemore Park, next to the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum.

“A Tribute to Alan Hovhaness,” under the musical directorship of Dr. Pasquale Tassone, will include pieces by Paul Hindemith, Alan Hovhaness, Pasquale Tassone and Georg Philipp Telemann.

Performers will be an impressive roster of professional musicians: Wei Zhao, Flute; Yelena Beriyevea, Piano; Knarik Nerkararyan, Soprano; Jing-Huey Wei, Viola; Sylvie Zakarian, Marimba; Michael Peipman, Trumpet; and Aaron Larget-Caplan, Guitar. In addition, the Arlington-Belmont Chamber Chorus conducted by Barry Singer, and The Menotomy Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Jing-Huey Wei, will perform.

The concert is free and open to the public. Robbins Memorial Town Hall is located at 730 Mass. Ave.



Composer Alan Hovhaness





THE ARMENIAN  
**MIRROR  
SPECTATOR**  
SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE  
UNITED STATES

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA  
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**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

**Other than the Editorial, views  
and opinions expressed in this  
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COMMENTARY

# Hrant Dink: The Role Model We So Desperately Need

By Laura Avetisyan

Hrant Dink, a prolific Armenian-Turkish journalist, activist and advocate for human rights and democracy, was shot to death in Istanbul on January 19, 2007. Hrant’s assassination sent aftershocks through Turkey, Armenia and beyond. Videos reposted on social media on the anniversary of the assassination in January 2024 ignited a new spark in me towards rediscovering Hrant, especially in the context of Armenia’s defeat in the 2020 second Karabakh war, and the ultimate loss of Karabakh in September 2023.

Disillusioned by the ever-victorious national narratives reigning over the Armenian republic, since its inception in the 1990s, Armenians are now struggling to redefine themselves. Unfortunately, no viable alternatives have yet appeared to replace the old narratives, people are yet again served rigid and extreme interpretations of what it means to be Armenian. Hrant was a rare thinker who believed in a version of Armenianness that didn’t have to be rigid, an Armenianness which was in touch with history but also in tune with the present; a creative and pragmatic leader, unafraid to grapple with the challenges of the time.

Hrant was a creative thinker, when it came to our identity and our cause, which our modern-day Armenian social and political life hopelessly lacks. Our pre-2020 idea of the national self was rigid — an ethnonational state, tied strongly to the Armenian church and anchored around the unity of Armenia, Artsakh and Diaspora. This conceptualization of the self was inflexible at its core, exclusive of those positioned outside of these bounds. Nowadays, we see extreme departures from the old narratives, without offering sustainable alternatives. Whilst the church held a central role in the past, now we see an active distancing away from the church. Regular standoffs between church and state representatives, refusals to attend religious events have become commonplace. We are also seeing a sharp move away from Artsakh, the idea and the reality of it. Whilst these moves are justified as negotiating steps in protection of Armenia, ideationally they create a cumbersome vacuum. For the past few years we have also seen a reshuffling of the idea of diaspora — starting from dismantlement of the diaspora ministry to the weakening of ties with key diaspora institutions. Whilst heavily criticized by multiple layers of the society, these acts are not inherently wrong. However, they do come in stark contrast to and rejection of the past, unsubstantiated and without an alternative.

Hrant was creative about our identity. In 1996, when Hrant founded *Agos*, the Turkish-Armenian community already had two other Armenian publications, *Marmara* and *Jamanak*. However, unlike *Marmara* and *Jamanak*, *Agos* decided to publish in Turkish, with only a two-page Armenian section. From an Armenian perspective, the decision to publish in Turkish, raised immediate alarm bells. “Why run an Armenian paper in Turkish? Why write about us in the language of a hostile nation? Why not instead write in Armenian and strengthen the diminishing role of our language and culture in Turkey?” However, Hrant thought differently. By writing in Turkish, *Agos* adopted a clear mission: to make the Armenian voice in Turkey heard in Turkish.

As Eydin Engin, a Turkish journalist and playwright put it; “Until Hrant, Turkish Armenians were a community which didn’t speak — they would only whisper. Hrant came and loudly started talking and announced that in 1915 there was an Armenian genocide. Hrant was killed because he was speaking up, and in a language that people understood.”

In an interview with SBS Armenian, Hrant explained that at a time when Armenians were misrepresented and attacked in Turkey, he felt “we had to protect ourselves in the language in which we were targeted wrongfully, and in the language in which the taking away of our rights was legitimized.”

Hrant was open-minded about the Armenian identity, unlike modern-day rigid conceptualizations of what Armenians are. He was aware of the multitudes existing amongst us. In fact, when explaining his decision to publish *Agos* in Turkish, he said, “We were forced to publish in Turkish because our own community had to be reached out to in Turkish.” He expressed that, unfortunately, many Armenians had lost touch with the Armenian language in Turkey and had been Islamized. Hrant was of the opinion that estimated millions of Armenians in Turkey no longer spoke Armenian or kept in touch with the Armenian culture or the Armenian church. From the point of rigid Armenian identity, tied to our language and church, even the idea that an unknown number of Armenians might exist out of touch with the Armenian language and the Armenian church, might be a hard pill to swallow. Hrant, however, was brave enough to talk about the existence of Armenians, who did not fit within the traditional

bounds of what it means to be Armenian, publicly.

After the victory in the first Karabakh war in 1994, amidst the euphoric wave of Armenian independence, the nascent Armenian identity became anchored in the idea of victory. The defeat in the second Karabakh war in 2020 came to shake the Armenian psyche to its core. Naturally, the defeat did not fit within the victorious narrative of the self. Were we winners or losers? These are weighty topics for a nation to find its bearings around. Initially, tying the nation’s identity to a victory, which itself was founded on loose grounds, laid a dangerous foundation for the future. However, it is equally dangerous to witness the adoption of a loser’s mentality. Many concessions to our identity today are rationalized from the point of view of the losing side. Whilst wars shake nations and leave large imprints, it is too simplistic to encourage a victory or defeat to overwhelm the formation of identity.

Not only is the identity of a loser and winner not in Hrant’s style since it is binary, but also it compromises the idea that we have a greater core, irrespective of position in the balance of power. It makes us forget that we have a set of values and ideas that are worth respecting and fighting for, regardless. Hrant was always fighting an unequal battle, where he was in a significantly weaker position than his opponents. He continuously faced a large traffic of opposition ranging from slurs to consistent death threats and prosecution. Yet, he never gave up. In answer to questions probing how he managed to continue the struggle and fight for the rights of Armenians in Turkey, Hrant once calmly answered, “We got used to the battle, we got used to being a demanding citizen.”

Even in 2006, amidst trials based on fabricated charges for having offended Turkishness as per the Turkish Criminal Code’s Article 301, Hrant carried on his work and made regular public appearances. He was committed to his cause, and knew that despite the conditions, he had to continue.

Armenians are also currently struggling to fit in the regional neighborhood. In the pre-2020 identity, Armenia was largely isolated from the neighborhood, and mostly didn’t seem to have much interest in getting to know its neighbors with the exception of a brief normalization period with Turkey in 2009. However, Hrant, unfashionably so for his time, encouraged Armenians to reconcile. He said; “I have a strong belief in dialogue, let people forgive me...our country is in such a location that we have no other way than to speak to our neighbors.”

Hrant also encouraged Armenians to pay closer attention to the nuances of modern Turkish society, inviting people to understand each other better. He strongly advocated for Armenians and Turks to try and make room to know each other and created that space himself through *Agos*. Nonetheless, as an Armenian activist operating out of Turkey, Hrant kept an impressive degree of firmness in advocating for acknowledgment of the truth behind the fate of the Armenians in Ottoman Turkey. He always spoke of the Armenian Genocide with clarity and precision.

The issue of coming to terms with the reality of being a small nation in a hostile region often presents a wider issue of decision-making between wishful idealism and objective pragmatism. However, Hrant proved to us that we need not keep these ideas in opposition — we can open up to our surroundings while retaining our core values.

Hrant thought outside the box, targeting communities which had not been addressed before, fighting for a cause that had been lingering for too long. He was creative in adopting an unorthodox approach to advocate for us, Armenians, in a language which was antagonizing us. To the great horror of many, even despite his balanced stance, Hrant was still viewed as an enemy by the Turkish power centers and was eventually assassinated.

The Armenian intellectual space now seems to be void of pragmatic fighters; we either have attempts to shrink the Armenian identity as we know it, or unrealistic and maximalist chants of even more inflated alternatives.

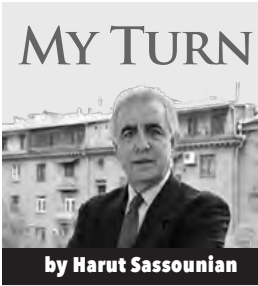
Lastly, Hrant taught us to dream. On this path of despair, we have also sunk deep into apathy and fail to see a better future. Hrant’s ideas for peace and reconciliation in the region between Armenia and Turkey seemed unattainable, however, the difficulty of the task did not stop him from harboring hopes and passionately advocating for them. Today, when peace in the region and our national identity are still in crisis, we ought to get inspired by leaders like Hrant Dink, tap into our inner Hrants, dream and continue fighting.

(Laura Avetisyan is a London-based researcher and writer, with a bachelor’s degree in Politics, Sociology and East European Studies from University College London. She primarily focuses on the geopolitics of Armenia and the wider region.)





COMMENTARY



# MY TURN

## Rather than Fizzling out, the Movement To Replace Pashinyan Is Gaining Strength

Even since Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan with his thousands of followers started marching towards Yerevan, many wondered what would happen on May 9 once they reached the Republic Square where Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s offices are located.

After arriving in Yerevan, Bagrat Srpazan gave one hour to Pashinyan to resign. When the hour was over and he did not resign, Srpazan announced that there would be acts of civil disobedience throughout the country beginning the next day. He urged his followers to act peacefully and not to commit any acts of violence.

Pashinyan was hoping that the number of protesters would dwindle over time and the movement would fizzle out. The regime did everything in its power to vilify and defame Srpazan and the protesters. Government propagandists announced that there were merely around 20,000 protesters in the Republic Square on May 9, whereas most observers estimated the crowd to be several times larger. After misleading the Armenian public for six years with thousands of lies, Pashinyan continued his deceptive practices by claiming without any evidence that the protesters are Kremlin’s agents who were paid money to participate in these protests. Government leaders ridiculed not only Srpazan, but also the Armenian Church, an institution that has shepherded the nation ever since 301 AD, particularly during the absence of an Armenian state.

To the disappointment of the prime minister’s diminishing number of supporters, as his rating has gone down from 80% six years ago to 8% now, Srpazan held a second rally in the Republic Square with tens of thousands of followers in attendance. Despite the brutal actions of Pashinyan’s police which viciously attacked the peaceful protesters, the movement grew stronger rather than fizzling out. During the past week, Srpazan held separate meetings with groups of lawyers, doctors, retired military officers, artists, and dozens of opposition leaders.

Srpazan proved the falsehood of Pashinyan followers’ repeated mantra that no one else can replace the prime minister. Srpazan succeeded for the first time to unite the various opposition groups under his leadership. Large segments of the public, livid at Pashinyan’s defeatist concessions to Azerbaijan, responded enthusiastically to Srpazan’s peaceful, but urgent message for change.

Finally, Srpazan’s long-awaited big rally took place on May 26 during which several important announcements were made. The crowd was told that Srpazan would temporarily replace Pashinyan after which a coalition government will be formed, followed by parliamentary elections which will choose a new Prime Minister. Even though the Constitution requires that the Prime Minister be exclusively a citizen of Armenia for the preceding four years, Srpazan’s followers believe that his dual citizenship of Armenia and Canada would not prevent him from temporarily acting as Prime Minister. Srpazan made the commitment that he will be guided exclusively by legal requirements. Ironically, Pashinyan’s regime, which has violated just about every existing law, is demanding that the protesters comply with the laws of the country.

During the May 26 rally, Srpazan also announced that after consulting with other high-ranking clergymen and Catholicos Karekin II, it was decided that he will freeze his 30-year-long spiritual service in order not to combine political activities with his religious position.

Srpazan is attempting to topple Pashinyan the same way the latter toppled Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan. Pashinyan and his followers violated dozens of laws to come to power, blocking the streets, the Parliament building, the courthouse, and smashing the locked doors of the Armenian radio station. However, Pashinyan thinks that he is the only one who can get away with breaking the law. Amazingly, he even boastfully proclaimed: “is there a judge in Armenia who cannot do what the Prime Minister says?” If anyone else does what he did, his barbaric police are ordered, as he himself announced during the Parliamentary campaign in 2021 while holding a hammer in his hand, to smash the heads of his Armenian opponents, even though he falsely claims to be a democrat. Ironically, Pashinyan never uses such vile language against the real enemies of Armenia -- Azerbaijan and Turkey -- whose leaders make the most offensive comments about Armenia.

At the end of the mass rally in the Republic Square on May 26, Srpazan marched with his followers to the Prime Minister’s mansion and demanded that he meet with him and tell him to resign. However, it turned out that Pashinyan was not at home, visiting the flooded areas of Northern Armenia.

Srpazan then led the large crowd back to the Republic Square where the rally had started several hours earlier. He urged his followers to engage in acts of civil disobedience throughout the country to pressure Pashinyan to resign.

This is Armenia’s last chance to save the country from Pashinyan, a defeated and incompetent leader, who is willing to follow Aliyev’s and Azerbaijan’s orders, and make illegal and endless one-sided concessions, until the total loss of Armenia, after the loss of Artsakh!

# How Do We Accurately Inform People About a War?

(The following speech was presented to Holy Trinity Armenian Church parishioners by Bella Ishanyan on Sunday, May 19, as a part of their “Trinity Talks” program.)

I’d like to begin by thanking some of the people who brought me here today. Der Vasken [Kouzouian] and Lori, for inviting me and coordinating this talk. I’d also like to thank Yeretzkin for being a large part of my ACYOA experience these past 5 years. My father, Ara Ishanyan, who encouraged me to follow my passions within my community, the rest of the ACYOA Youth Leadership Team over the past three years, and the Juniors membership, who I’m thanking because I’m actually up here talking about them today, and I hope they don’t mind, because I didn’t ask them.

Typically, my role within the Holy Trinity community doesn’t go much further beyond Palm Sunday speeches, helping to organize Junior membership gatherings, and clearing plates at Thanksgiving, but today, I want to provide my input on the state of our community that doesn’t just end at 2 p.m. on a Sunday.

Last fall, during one of our first ACYOA gatherings, I posed a question to the membership, composed of kids ranging from ages 12 to 18. I asked them, “What do you guys know about the Nagorno-Karabakh War?” That was it.

It was dead silent.

And I found that very interesting. On one hand, option A is that in this group of 40 kids sitting together, where many of us have known each other for years and consider each other close friends, there is a chance that they were too embarrassed to say anything.

Or maybe they were just scared of me, I don’t know.

But on the other hand, option B, in this same group of 40 Armenian kids, whose ancestries and communities are backed by centuries of strife and among one of the most heinous crimes against humanity to ever happen during the history of our species, there is also a chance that they genuinely did not know what was going on.

And it pains me to admit, but I know it was the latter. Option B. That this group didn’t have anything that they could tell me. And I know this, not because I necessarily followed up after I posed my question, but because as I stood there in front of them, I was just as clueless as they were.

And so I’m going to admit something that is actually really quite embarrassing. As some of you guys may know, in the past year, I have created this persona of myself as someone who is thoroughly aware of what’s going on in Armenia, and ready to take action and educate the diaspora community here. I even joined the Armenian Assembly of America in DC to advocate for an end to the Lachin Corridor Blockade in March 2023. I’ve attended protests, drafted informational lessons, and had “courageous conversations,” but I remember the exact day that I actually learned what the Nagorno-Karabakh War was, and it is really recent.

On October 28, 2023, just this last fall, I was sitting in the backseat of my parents’ car, and we were all on the way to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator’s* 90th Anniversary Gala. While we were in the car, my dad told me about somebody who would be there, and who he hoped that I would be able to talk to and form a connection with. He mentioned that this person was an active member of the Assembly, and that it would be good to exchange ideas with him.

And at that moment, I panicked, because I didn’t know what to say, and I knew that if the topic were to come up, which it inevitably would, I wouldn’t know how to respond in an informed way either. And so, desperately, as we were approaching the venue, I Googled a synopsis of the Nagorno-Karabakh War and quickly skimmed over all the current events that may be relevant and the history that would make me sound smart to this person.

I didn’t use any of the information that I learned in that Google search during the gala. And of course, given the time, it was the hot-button topic, and I was talking about it with a lot of people. And so I kept wondering to myself

during and after those conversations: how has nobody picked up on the fact that I am not referencing any specific events that pertain to this war? Does anybody here realize just how clueless I am? How have I been able to keep up this facade for so long? And why are they not referencing specific events either?

In this spiral of questioning in the car after the gala, I kept asking those questions in my head. What do I even know about Armenian history and current events? Ok, so let’s go through it. Firstly, Armenia was the first Christian nation, second, the Armenian Genocide was committed by the Ottoman Turks in 1915, next, the genocide lead to a modern diaspora population that spread all over the world such as in Lebanon, Syria, Russia, France, and the US. What else...

That was it.

That realization was not only incredibly disappointing to me, but also just incredibly confusing. I have spent almost all of my life under the assumption that as Armenians, we are a tribal people who care deeply about one another because we all have similar stories to tell, but that is the only story we are telling. As a diaspora, we have completely allowed the Armenian Genocide, a tragic event, 109 years ago, to define our heritage almost completely.

The stories of the genocide are what we are constantly told as we grow up, and as we develop as bearers of this burden, we are expected to carry on the stories of those before us and, in a sense, relive the tragedy vicariously. We have embedded the fear and sadness of this history so deep into our diaspora psyche, that it has become what defines us. And what is the result of constant reminders of fear and sadness of those who gave us the opportunities we indulge in today? I believe that as Armenians in America, we all feel insanely guilty.

There is a term that defines a similar type of guilt called, “survivor’s guilt,” which is defined as a mental condition that can develop when someone feels guilty for surviving a traumatic event while others did not; however, most of us haven’t survived anything. We feel guilty of the fact that not only were we not there to experience this large event in our history, but we were not even close to even being considered a survivor.

And I see this guilt everywhere I go. I attended an Artsakh protest in February 2023, and all over, I saw signs

see WAR, page 20





# Call for Help Restores Music for Artsakh Children And a Dedicated Music Teacher Twice a Refugee

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school with all its instruments and teaching materials behind. There, in Stepanakert, he reopened his school in 2022, only to flee again. In September 2023, they experienced the traumatic expulsion a second time, leaving music school and homeland with only necessary belongings, this time for the Republic of Armenia.

Garibyan and his wife found refuge in Nor Hachn, 25 kilometers north of Yerevan. He was desperate. “After the terrible war and expulsion,” he recalls, “I walked the streets in Yerevan like a madman for a whole month.” Then, he found hope again.

In 2022, he had been able to start over again in Stepanakert with the help of contributions coming from Germany. A call for funds had gone out from the Association for the Promotion of an Ecumenical Memorial to Genocide Victims in the Ottoman Empire (FÖGG), co-founded by human rights proponent Tessa Hofmann. The donations covered costs for meals for students, about \$150 a day for 100 children. Garibyan appealed to all friends and acquaintances to help meet these costs, explaining, “We have pupils whose fathers never returned from the front, another with three children in the family who study at our school; I know you understand what is at stake here.”

Following their second expulsion in 2023, again it was through Hofmann and her associates in Germany that enough funds were raised to allow him to start a third time. Garibyan wrote to potential donors: “We continue our odyssey, I opened an opera studio at a local music school, gathered the children, and have already started work on a children’s opera, which I could not finish at home in Artsakh. I have already gathered 35 children (from 8 to 14 years old), half of them from Artsakh, many from our school.” In a brief C.V., he noted he had graduated in Europe from the University of Tartu, Estonia, (medical psychology), Tartu Art College, and the Tallinn Conservatory vocal class (baritone). “I have worked in many opera houses around the world and many chamber music concerts, in Europe and in America,” he wrote, then concluded, “For 30 years I had been building our school in Artsakh, and then I had to leave

our school to the Azerbaijanis.”

The crowd-fundraising effort in Germany generated enough funds to start up the project again. After learning of the success, he thanked his benefactors, writing, “Now, I have finally found myself, and this time, thanks to your outstretched helping hand, I have come to life again.”

## A Struggle between Good and Evil

In Nor Hachn he was able to set up shop in the local music school, and pick up the opera project from scratch. The children participating needed costumes, Garibyan required a stage equipped with set and props, lighting equipment, a piano, and certain repair work had to be done. Garibyan set to work, purchasing material for costumes, finding seamstresses to fashion them, designing a set, and finding an artist to paint it.

Beyond the material requisites, he had to educate his cast for the opera. The piece he chose to perform is an opera based on a work by the author of the short stories “Gikor” and “The Wolf,” the famous Armenian poet of the 19-20th century Hovhannes Tumanyan. He chose “The Wolf” because it deals with the struggle between good and evil. It takes place in a village high in the mountains of Armenia, and the roles in the opera are performed by all the villagers. The costumes are typical of the period, and special work is required to portray the animal characters.

Training the cast was no small task. The refugee children from Shushi who already had experience, having started with music in kindergarten, knew how to behave on stage, but the local children had no idea of what stage presence meant. They had never engaged in role-playing and had received no instruction in singing. Garibyan, himself a singer, trained voices, rehearsed with soloists and the chorus separately and daily — including Sundays — helped them learn their parts, and taught them to dance.

From among the cast of children from different local schools, ranging from the fourth to the seventh grade, he did find some soloists, but soon ran into a problem. He could not find any boys ready to taken on a solo part, and decided to use girls, many of whom had very good voices. At their age, with appropriate cos-



Garen Garibyan directing “The Wolf”

tumes and make-up, they could pass for young boys. (One should not forget that in Shakespeare’s day, it was young boys who performed the female parts.) The two leading roles (the negative character of the Wolf, and the positive character of the grandfather) therefore went to two girls.

## Preview for Guests from Germany

On Saturday April 20th, my husband and I had just arrived for a weeklong visit to Armenia from Germany, where we had participated in the fundraising drive. In the afternoon, we travelled to Nor Hachn on the invitation of Garen Garibyan, who had promised us “a surprise.” There was more than one surprise awaiting us. First, as we arrived at the school, we were greeted by an honor guard of energetic drummers, lining both sides of the large staircase and beating in perfectly synchronized rhythms; then we encountered a young girl in traditional local dress who offered us bread with butter and salt and juice — a reception, she explained, that is traditional in Artsakh. Escorted into the auditorium, we were able to see for ourselves how seriously, enthusiastically, and professionally the youngsters had worked under Garibyan’s guidance.

It was not a final dress-rehearsal, since the premiere was still months away, but a series of scenes, in full costume and beautifully performed. The soloists displayed exceptionally mature, developed voices, and admirable stage presence. The chorus was also convincing, as were the dancers. Those children playing the parts of animals — the ferocious wolf and others — acted with conviction and vigor. And as the final chorus sang the song of victory, it was clear that these children knew what they were enacting — a victory of good over evil. For Garibyan the project is vital to survival; “without our culture, without music and this project, we would have gone crazy,” he said; “we could not have mastered our destiny.” As for his own role, he said, “No matter what, we will live and fight for truth and justice. I am working with children who have lost faith in the beautiful and the kind, I am trying to help them recover.”

The premiere, scheduled to take place in early June, is sure to be a success. The project also provides enrichment for the village and the local music school, truly a blessing. Provided the funding is available, the group plans to tour the region and the country with “The Wolf.”

# How Do We Accurately Inform People About a War?

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saying, “Stop another Armenian Genocide.” When I was 10, I was given a bracelet with a charm on it that had been stamped with the outline of a forget-me-not flower. On April 24th every year, I see a flood of social media posts from people my age telling their followers to remember the Armenian Genocide. Telling me to remember the Armenian Genocide. Telling themselves to remember.

And so I was given the opportunity to join the Assembly through my father, who encouraged me to come and see what advocacy on Capitol Hill looks like. I had my own previous experiences surrounded by politics through the reporting that I had been doing in high school, but none to this level, so I immediately jumped at the opportunity before even knowing what we were really there for. My excitement came from simply being on the Hill, but I also

felt a strong sense of obligation to use my understanding of politics to help give voice to the people I’ve never met but have a deep connection to through my heritage.

And while I was there, I did see the processes of the legislative powers that we were appealing to, but I also saw just how much work is necessary to be effective in that environment. Within our group, there were members who had experience speaking the language that legislators can understand, but there were also members, such as myself, who did not have that experience and knowledge, but were there motivated by outrage, guilt, and obligation. Those with the experience effectively communicated their asks to the legislators and or their staffers, while the rest of us simply expressed our emotional outrage over our understanding of the events. I wonder: how much did the raw emotion help or hurt our cause? Did we do our job to communicate

the sense of urgency to invoke action, or were we just there to make ourselves feel better?

After all, legislators don’t have the time to be emotional. They don’t have time to care about a cause that will not serve them as well, and we can criticize that all we want, but just think: according to the World Population Review, Armenians make up 0.14 percent of the US population — it is terribly hard to be heard when we make up such a small portion of who legislators need to account for. They will politely sit and listen, but if we want to make an impact, we need to evolve our narrative away from simply being the victim to being a people they can cooperate with on the local, state, and federal level.

But before we can make that change externally, we need to change the way we see ourselves, not as victims, but as people who make contributions to society in a

way that only Armenians in America can. There is so much that has happened in Armenia and the diaspora during the last 109 years. We still hold a strong connection to our heritage in ways other than victimhood, and that connection is worth exploring further and celebrating, so that we can first see ourselves beyond the shadows of our past tragedies. Thank you.

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