

Putin Agrees to Withdraw Russian Forces From Various Armenian Regions



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, left, and Russian President Vladimir Putin meet in Moscow on May 9. (Official Prime Minister's photo)

MOSCOW (Reuters) — President Vladimir Putin has agreed to withdraw Russian forces and border guards from various parts of Armenia at Yerevan's request, Putin's spokesman was cited as saying on Thursday, May 9, by Russia's Interfax news agency.

The announcement follows the departure of nearly 2,000 Russian peacekeepers from in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region which Azerbaijan returned by force in September last year. Their exit ended a multi-year deployment which

gave Moscow a military foothold in the strategic South Caucasus region.

Armenia has asked Russian border guards to also leave their posts at the country's main airport in Yerevan from August. 1.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was cited on Thursday as saying that Putin and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had reached an agreement on a wave of new Russian departures at a meeting in Moscow on Wednesday.

"In autumn 2020, at the request of the Armenian side, our military and border guards were deployed to a number of Armenian regions. Pashinyan said that today, due to changed conditions, there is no longer such a need so President Putin agreed and the withdrawal of our military and border guards was agreed," Peskov told Interfax.

The Sputnik Armenia news service cited a senior Armenian politician from the ruling party as saying that Putin and Pashinyan had agreed that Russian forces and border guards would withdraw from five Armenian regions.

Russian border guards will however remain on Armenia's borders with Turkey and Iran - at Yerevan's request - Peskov was quoted as saying by Interfax.

Pashinyan criticized Russia for not intervening to stop Azerbaijani forces in Karabakh and has since publicly questioned his country's traditional alliance with Russia - which has a string of military facilities inside Armenia - and has started to forge closer ties with the West.



ADL STATEMENT

The Armenian Government's Politics of Scorn Led to Popular Exacerbation

We call on the Armenian authorities to refrain from any forceful action and to create an occasion for an explanatory and conciliatory meeting.

Theocracy is not demanded, but rather true democracy.

The homeland, Armenian statehood and the people are living fateful days. Diasporan Armenians, at least their nationally conscious and active groups, each in the country where they live, breathlessly follow the events and developments in our homeland. As a result of the extraordinary situation created by the authorities in office and the positions they have adopted, it was predictable that their scornful attitude towards the serious concerns expressed by public leaders and especially the population of the border regions would eventually engender a momentous popular protest movement.

In order to prevent disturbances, we repeatedly appealed to the government through our press for months to adopt a policy that is based on Armenian interests and aware of the people's demands, by undertaking the formation of a consultative body for national salvation with the participation of organizations with varying approaches. This was in vain. The latest outbursts against the willingness of the authorities to cede 4 villages of Tavush, as well as Artsakh, to the enemy, has led to a situation in which the current government stands literally opposing the common people, in particular the population of Tavush, which rightfully refuse to surrender and leave its centuries-old settlements, including its homes, schools, kindergartens, gardens, pastures and, finally, dating from the 7th century, its sacred St. Asdvadzadzin Church.

Therefore, it was naturally expected that the Armenian Apostolic Church, in the person of the Primate, the spiritual leader of the Diocese of Tavush, under the instructions of the Catholicos of All Armenians, would be a defender
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Protests Continue Rocking Yerevan

Archbishop Demands Premier's Resignation

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An archbishop leading ongoing anti-government protests vowed to keep trying to oust Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan as he addressed thousands of supporters who again rallied in Yerevan on Sunday, May 12.

Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan insisted that his protest movement sparked by Pashinyan's decision to cede territory to Azerbaijan is "little by little" getting closer to a parliamentary vote of no confidence in Armenia's government. He labeled Pashinyan as a liar who has led the country to ruin and is unable to deal with its serious challenges.

"I am out fighting today because we live at a time of stolen joy and infamy when a wonderful section of our home-



Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan meets his followers.

land, our beloved Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), is lost, when all the borders of our homeland are in danger and when we are

stuck in an environment of lies and hatred," Galstanyan told the crowd.

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UN Committee Against Torture Blasts Azerbaijan For Treatment of Armenians in Karabakh

NEW YORK — The UN Committee Against Torture released in its findings on May 10 violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law related to the treatment of ethnic or national Armenians by Azerbaijan, which was deemed as "totally unacceptable."

The Committee monitors

states' compliance with the 1984 Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. If it determines that a State is not meeting its legal obligations, it will issue suggestions and recommendations to the State to achieve compliance. Its previous review of Azerbaijan took place in 2015.

Civil society groups had the right to make written submissions to the Committee, and present orally to the Committee at the U.N. Palais Wilson in Geneva on April 22. The

In its Concluding Observations (paras. 22-25), the Committee made significant and targeted findings against
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Armenian Assembly Founder Robert Aram Kaloosdian Dies

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

US Still Believes 'Peace Is Possible'

WASHINGTON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The United States continues to believe that peace is possible between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Principal Deputy Spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State Vedant Patel told a briefing on Monday, May 13.

"When it comes to the Nagorno-Karabakh region, we continue to believe that peace is possible," Patel said when asked about the recent meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister in Almaty.

"It's something that the Secretary and others continue to remain deeply engaged on. I don't have any updates on the negotiations between the parties, but we will continue to support this process."

Armenia Places 8th in Eurovision Finals

MALMO, Sweden — Armenia placed eighth in the Eurovision Song Contest 2024, with the song *Jako* performed by the group Ladaniva, on May 12.

Singer Nemo, representing Switzerland, won first place. Croatia and Ukraine came in second and third, respectively.

World Bank Program Aims at Reforestation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors approved the RESILAND: Armenia Resilient Landscapes Project (RESILAND Armenia) that aims to help the government to strengthen community engagement and improve the management of forests, wetlands, and protected areas in selected locations in Armenia.

According to a press release by the World Bank, supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), in the amount of \$5.45 million and co-financed by the Government of Sweden, in the amount of \$3.65 million grant, the project will also reinforce the institutional framework for sustainable landscape management. It will expand the areas under sustainable management, mitigate forest fragmentation, increase tree cover density, and improve the management of neglected abandoned wetlands.

Additionally, the project will promote sustainable economic activities and foster the creation of environmentally sustainable jobs in selected rural communities. New and restored forests and wetlands will contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and will enhance the country's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

"Armenia's beautiful landscapes are one of the country's biggest assets. This asset has been threatened by man-made deforestation and landscape degradation, fueled by unsustainable practices of communities and weak environmental oversight. The RESILAND project addresses forest degradation by providing alternative livelihoods for communities and by strengthening oversight mechanisms."

Protests Continue Rocking Yerevan

PROTESTS, from page 1

"We need a new government, a government of the people, a caring, suffering government, a government of reconciliation," he said one week after deciding to take protests against the territorial concessions to Azerbaijan from the affected border villages in Armenia's northern Tavush province. to Yerevan.

The opposition Hayastan and Pativ Unem blocs represented in the Armenian parliament pledged to jointly attempt a no-confidence vote when the protests reached the capital on Thursday. They control only 35 seats in the 107-member National Assembly, lacking a single vote to formally put a motion of censure. That vote could potentially come from Ishkhan Zakarian, a nominally independent deputy who defected from Pativ Unem in 2022. Galstanyan said that in recent days he twice met with Zakarian and that the latter "didn't refuse to join this process."

More importantly, the opposition would also have to win over at least 18 other deputies representing Pashinyan's Civil Contract party. Senior Civil Contract lawmakers have expressed confidence that none of their pro-government colleagues will break ranks to vote against Pashinyan. They made a point of reaffirming their allegiance to the prime minister on social media after Galstanyan attracted tens of thousands of people to Yerevan's central Republic Square on Thursday.

Galstanyan did not set a date for his next major rally, saying that it will be announced when there is more clarity on the motion of censure as well as the key question of who should replace Pashinyan as prime minister.

The Armenian constitution requires parliament factions demanding a no-confidence vote to simultaneously nominate a candidate for the post of prime minister. Galstanyan said he will discuss potential candidates with the parliamentary opposition as well as other groups and individuals supporting his movement.

The cleric, who will turn 53 later this month, again did not rule out the possibility of his own candidacy while acknowledging legal hurdles to it. In any case, he said, the next prime minister must run an "interim government" and not be affiliated with any political group.

The constitution bars dual citizens from

serving as prime minister. Galstanyan received Canadian citizenship when he lived in Canada and headed the local diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church from 2003-2013. He took over the church's Tavush diocese after returning to Armenia.

The four border areas which Pashinyan's government agreed to give up used to be occupied by small Azerbaijani villages captured by Armenian forces in 1991-1992. For its part, Azerbaijan seized at the time large swathes of agricultural land belonging to several Tavush villages. None of that land will be given back to Armenia under the terms of a border deal reached by

mechanisms for delineating the entire Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

More Arrests on Monday

At least 171 people demanding Pashinyan's resignation were detained on May 13 as they again blocked streets in Yerevan, heeding appeals from Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, the leader of ongoing anti-government protests there.

Armenia's Interior Ministry said 156 of them were released from police custody by late afternoon.

Galstanyan urged supporters to "paralyze" the Armenian capital and other parts of the country during another massive rally



The protest Sunday in Yerevan (Azatutyun photo)

Yerevan and Baku on April 19.

Four of those villages are adjacent to the areas in question. Many of their residents strongly oppose the land handover, saying that it would isolate their communities and make them far more vulnerable to Azerbaijani attacks.

Pashinyan has said that the unilateral concessions are necessary for preventing Azerbaijani military aggression against Armenia. His critics say that he is on the contrary encouraging Baku to demand more territory from Armenia and use force for that purpose. They include two former Armenian foreign ministers and other retired senior diplomats who set up an association last month.

One of those ex-diplomats, Vahagn Melikyan, presented a report drawn up by the Pan-Armenian Diplomatic Council (PADC) during the anti-government rally. The group insisted that the land handover is illegal and dangerous for Armenia in the absence of any maps or other agreed

held in the city's central Republic Square on Sunday. Hundreds of them briefly disrupted traffic in the center of Yerevan the following morning.

Riot police forcibly unblocked the streets, making arrests in the process. They were accused of using excessive force and even detaining protesters who did not close any roads.

"We were just walking on the sidewalk and they took away all of our boys, using brute force," one young woman told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

There were also reports of similar protests on major highways outside Yerevan. In some of those cars, motorcades of opposition supporters drove very slowly in order to interfere with traffic.

Meanwhile, Galstanyan spent the morning and the afternoon meeting with members of the national unions of writers and painters as well as scholars and scientists as part of his efforts to drum up greater support for his protest movement.

Ruben Vardanyan Has 'No Regrets' About Moving to Karabakh

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Ruben Vardanyan, an Armenian billionaire and former Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) premier jailed by Azerbaijan, has said that he does not regret relocating to Karabakh in September 2022, one year before it was recaptured by Baku.

Vardanyan, who held the second-highest post in Karabakh's leadership from November 2022 to February 2023, was arrested at an Azerbaijani checkpoint in the Lachin corridor as he fled the region along with tens of thousands of its ordinary residents. He was charged with "financing terrorism," illegally entering Karabakh and supplying its armed forces with military equipment. He denies the accusations.

Vardanyan, 55, went on a hunger strike in prison last month to demand the immediate release of himself and seven other Karabakh Armenian leaders also jailed by Baku. He reportedly agreed to stop refusing food

after Azerbaijani authorities allowed him to talk to his wife, Veronika Zonabend, by phone three weeks later.

According to Vardanyan's press office in Yerevan, he also managed to send a written message to participants of the annual award ceremony of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity which he had launched, together with two other Armenian Diaspora philanthropists, in 2015. Zonabend read it out during the ceremony held in Los Angeles on Thursday, May 9.

"My decision to move to Artsakh — Nagorno Karabakh — was motivated by the Aurora heroes. I made a choice to be with the people who needed help and wanted to help in any way I could," read the message. "Being here, totally isolated from the world for nearly eight months, I have a lot of time to reflect.

"I have no regrets about taking that path. I am deeply grateful to you for inspiring

me to do the right thing. Now, I understand much better what motivates Marguerite Barankitse, Tom Catena and other Aurora laureates, and why they have this strong belief in the power of one individual to make a difference."

The Aurora Prize is an annual international award in memory of the victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey. It is designed to honor individuals around the world who risk their lives to help others. The latest winner of the prize carrying a \$1 million grant is Denis Mukwege, a gynecological surgeon and human rights activist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Born and raised in Armenia, Vardanyan is a former investment banker who made his fortune in Russia in the 1990s and 2000s. He is also known as a philanthropist who has financed many charity projects in Armenia and Karabakh.



ARMENIA

Revisiting Gyumri, Armenia's Cultural Capital

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GYUMRI, Armenia — It was our long-awaited trip to Armenia, the first since 2019. The Coronavirus pandemic, then repeated, escalating conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), culminating in the mass expulsion of Armenians in September 2023, had interrupted our happy routine of yearly trips to Yerevan. In April this year we finally returned for a week-long visit to the capital, several villages nearby, as well as the cultural capital Gyumri.

As always, we stayed at the Berlin Art Hotel, where Alexan Ter-Minasyan, who is also honorary consul of Germany in the Shirak and Lori regions, welcomed us with the news that members of the famous German all-male chorus Ars Musica from Thuringia would be arriving the following day. It was a very special occasion: In the German city of Halle an der Saal on that day, April 25, city representatives were celebrating the Day of City Partnerships. Halle and Gyumri had decided to become sister cities in 2020, and three years later they officially certified the relationship. It was the first such city partnership between the two nations.

This year, on April 27, we joined their parallel celebration in Gyumri, with a tour of the city, a reception in the municipality and a visit to the conservatory. As the mayor was unfortunately ill, First Deputy Mayor Lusine Sanoyan received us in the city hall. Following introductions by Ter-Minasyan, Sanoyan welcomed the visitors from Germany, who included members of the Rotary Club and expressed her thanks for the continuing cooperation as well as hopes for new projects. She underlined the importance of the TUMO center, an “Armenian export to Germany,” this innovative project, which offers free instruction in computer technology to youngsters 12-18 years old, established its first German center in Berlin in November 2020.

Ars Musica Artistic Director Maik Gruchenberg recalled the process initiated three years ago, which has led to the twin city relationship, and stressed the importance of music as a means to bring peoples from different countries and cultures together.

Center of Culture, Music, and Sports

Sanoyan was elected by the City Council in January. She oversees several departments crucial to the city's functioning. Gyumri, she said in a brief interview, “is a city with much to boast about, from its kindergartens, music and sports schools, to well-known museums.” And, she added, “it hosts the unique Youth Palace, which offers various classes including languages, and sewing with recycled materials.” Youngsters can study music there and can also perform — it is a place for social contact and creative interchange. She spoke of Gyumri's immense pride in its “local heroes, like the esteemed Olympic Champion Arthur Aleksanyan and numerous European champions who bring honor to our city.” It is no wonder that



Hasmik Mkrtchyan plays in front of a Komitas portrait.

the city's cultural and sporting activities are thriving, with festivals and exhibitions.

Gyumri has arisen from the ashes of the devastating earthquake in 1988, but, she added, the city still “faces challenges, notably the longstanding issue of temporary shelters housing residents for over 36 years.” In addition, there are the new refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite laudable efforts by charitable organizations and the government, which have provided some support, “employment and housing remain pressing concerns for these residents.”

Sanoyan, who in 1988 was just 4, remembers everything from the disaster that claimed about 25,000 lives, 17,000 from Gyumri: the depressed mood, the air of decay and scenes of destruction — and somber black, the color worn, it seemed, by everyone, and for decades. Now, she reported, bright colored clothing has returned and with it, a sense of optimism. In her role in the city, she is eager to utilize local and international opportunities, to fulfill the hopes of the citizenry. “Through innovative strategies and collaborative partnerships,” she concluded, “I remain steadfast in my commitment to Gyumri's prosperity, aiming to leave behind a legacy of enduring progress for generations to come.”

The Venera Harp

The delegation from Ars Musica was scheduled to perform in the following days in the city, before going on tour. After a visit to the City Council assembly, which hosts an impressive fresco by Minas Avetisyan, we visited the Conservatory, the Gyumri branch of Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan. Director Prof. Hasmik H. Harutyunyan welcomed us in the concert hall, where a beau-

tiful, huge harp dominated the stage.

Harutyunyan introduced the visitors from Germany to the conservatory, named after Komitas Vardapet, the renowned Armenian musician, composer, choirmaster, and founder of Armenian ethnomusicology. Komitas travelled throughout the land in the 19th century collecting local folk melodies and transcribing them. He studied from 1896 to 1899 at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin and published studies on the characteristics of Armenian music. In Germany he engaged in intensive study of Baroque music, especially the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, and with this new knowledge, revolutionized Armenian music, she explained. Through his studies, publications, and compositions, Harutyunyan said, Komitas came to symbolize the strong ties between Armenia and Germany to the current day.

Thorsten Weiss, Chairman of the Board of Ars Musica, delighted his listeners with the story of the harp. In discussion with the director of the conservatory years ago, he had casually inquired what he and his colleagues might be able to contribute to the music school. Prof. Harutyunyan's quick answer, a “concert harp,” came as a surprise. She had students who were eager to play the harp, but without an adequate instrument she could not offer instruction. It would not be easy. Weiss, undeterred, set about the task of finding one in Europe. It turned out that the market for used concert harps was practically non-existent, and the price of a new instrument appeared prohibitive. Weiss however managed to locate a magnificent new instrument, a Venera Grand Concert Harp, in St. Petersburg. Through the mediation of Alexan Ter-Minasyan, a coalition of donors came together, the chorus, the Rotary Club and our private foundation in Germany. Through benefit concerts as well as donations, together we raised the funds to purchase and transport the instrument to Gyumri. That occurred in August 2021.

Last year in June, Hasmik Mkrtchyan, a talented student at the conservatory, had presented a premiere performance on the new harp, the first such concert in the Gyumri Conservatory's 25 years. Now she offered an informal concert for the visitors from Germany, including my husband and myself, who were experiencing this magnificent instrument in live performance for the first time. Komitas, whose portrait hangs on the wall, seemed to be listening too.

Music for a Dialog among Peoples

The new harp is not just another instrument for musical education. As Prof. Harutyunyan explained in a brief interview, the mission of the Gyumri Conservatory, founded in 1997, is to provide higher musical education and train professional musical personnel, and to fulfill this mission quality instruments are indispensable. In addition, the conservatory contributes to preserving the musical-cultural heritage of the Shirak region. She stressed the importance of cultural exchange with musicians from other lands, and considers the city partnership with Halle as “a dream.” If there may be a lack of instructors in some areas, professional exchanges with leading musicians become all the more vital. Master classes, for example, taught by visiting musicians, like violinists Aram Badalian and Sergei Khachatryan, are sterling examples of such cooperation. And Badalian hopes to expand this cooperation, by promoting travel for Armenian music students to Germany for study. Komitas was a pioneer in introducing Baroque music to Armenia, and this remains an important link to Germany, Harutyunyan added. It would be desirable to arrange for small groups of Armenian musicians/students to work with larger groups in Germany.

Harutyunyan herself is a musicologist, researcher, and scientific secretary at the Shirak Center for Armenian Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. A graduate of the Komitas State Conservatory, she received her PhD in 2005, and has published widely. She is the author of a monograph entitled, *The V-XV Century Music in the Context of Armenian Historiography* (2010) and about 50 articles. She has conducted research on the *ashugs*, bards or troubadours, who played and sang folk music, and is interested in exploring the parallels to the Minnesänger or minstrels in Germany, who were also organized in guilds.

Harutyunyan has studied the history of church liturgy, and is also active as a voice trainer in this field. She teaches young men training for the priesthood, providing instruction in European solfeggio and notation as well as medieval Armenian notation, voice training, and choral work.

In the realm of her scientific work, too, Harutyunyan is eager to develop cooperation with musicologists and ethnomusicologists abroad. Such collaboration not only enhances scientific research, it forges productive relations among individuals and nations.



Ars Musica members with Alexan Ter-Minasyan, Muriel Mirak-Weissbach, and Deputy Mayor Sanoyan in center, City Council
Ars Musica members with Alexan Ter-Minasyan, Muriel Mirak-Weissbach, and Deputy Mayor Sanoyan in center, City Council



ARMENIA

Tavush Movement Continues as Demarcation Gains Speed

By Marut Vanyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The Tavush for the Motherland movement, led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, continues its actions in Yerevan and regions. Protesters are blocking streets in the capital, chanting through megaphones “Armenian, Armenia, Homeland and God.”

On May 13, 170 protesters were detained by the police, though later it was announced that all of them were released. Armenian media reported that police had used disproportionate force while detaining them. The use of disproportionate force was also denounced on May 14 by a member of the “Armenian Genocide Justice Fighters” secret organization Hampig “Harry” Sassounian.

“The sad thing is that one of them hit me in the face when the others were holding my hands,” Sassounian told journalists. Sassounian, who was released from prison in the US in 2021 for his part in the assassination of a Turkish official in Los Angeles in 1982, moved to Armenia upon his release.

The movement is against Armenia’s unilateral border delimitation with Azerbaijan and demands the resignation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to prevent the process.

“Being morally and politically not the people’s government, Pashinyan should leave. We need a new government, people’s government, a government that cares, reconciliation government,” stated Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan on May 13.

The movement has also demanded the opposition parties to start an impeachment process against Pashinyan’s government, but the opposition lacks the necessary number of members of parliament to start it.

Earlier, Galstanyan had announced the movement’s

schedule and said that they will continue actions of civil disobedience. To this end, he planned on meetings with university students and professors, writers, artists and journalists’ unions, among others.

However, the ruling Civil Contract party leadership suggests that the goal of this movement is just to achieve change of power (d’etat) in Armenia.

“I don’t think that this movement had any other demand from the moment of its birth than the change of power in Armenia, bringing well known people. Their support by the parties of Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan is proof of this. This movement, so to speak, will remain surrounded by the resources of both clans, which is already visible,” said Civil Contract faction deputy Vahagn Alexanyan with Azatutyun on May 12.

However, Galstanyan said that this movement is about the homeland and its security but not his desire to become prime minister.

“The demands of this march and rally should be the decisions about demarcation and borders in general by law,” told Naira Hayrumyan, editor of the only Artsakh media outlet Step1.am, told this reporter. “They came to Yerevan to get answers to these questions from the government. What is the basis of this demarcation? They demand that the demarcation be done by law. Such a process should be done by law, not by any secret agreements, even if it’s good one. Otherwise, there will always be doubts and vulnerable. In that sense, if the demand of this movement is for the demarcation to be by law, then I only welcome it.”

Despite these mutual accusations of the movement and the government, the fact is that those pillars have already been installed and according to Pashinyan, the bulk of the work has been completed.

“As of now, most of the work has already been done;

90 percent is already done, and the more that work goes on, the stronger the belief that security guarantees are being formed and the war is losing ground, the war is becoming illogical, the war is becoming not legitimate. Why do we install border posts? First of all, these pillars are installed on a juridical basis and these pillars become a security guarantee for the villages of Voskepar, Kirants, Berkaber, Baghanis and the Republic of Armenia in general,” stated Pashinyan at his press conference on May 7.

The process of Armenian-Azerbaijani border delimitation is also considered positive by the West. French Ambassador to Armenia Olivier Decottignies, in an interview with Azatutyun, said, “Well, it’s good that the delimitation is starting and it’s even better that it’s starting on the basis of the Almaty Declaration. So it’s a positive development. Obviously, it needs to be followed up. Armenia has expressed its will to make some concessions based on the Almaty Declaration and we expect Azerbaijan to make concessions as well. Azerbaijan is currently occupying large swathes of Armenian territory and it should withdraw from those territories. Our prime minister recently reminded this point. And so we think it’s a good development that needs follow-up.”

The main fear and dissatisfaction in Armenia regarding the delimitation process is that it is happening unilaterally, outside the law and people afraid that the same will happen to Tavush as happened to Artsakh. The more we give in, the more Azerbaijan will demand, this is what many think, considering Aliyev’s bigoted statements.

“The process of delimitation and demarcation is underway on our terms, and this is yet another victory of ours,” Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev had said in Shushi on May 10.

AECP Supports Forcibly Displaced Refugees from Artsakh with Free Eye Care

As many know, the year 2023 began in total blockade for the Republic of Artsakh, with little-to-no food, health care and other basic rights available for the people living there. By September 2023, the whole of Artsakh was under fire, with deadly attacks launched against the entire population of ethnic Armenians living there. The heartbreaking result was a mass exodus of the hundreds of thousands of residents in the territory and the official dissolution of the Republic of Artsakh. In a matter of days, an estimated 100,490 Artsakh residents left their homes and took a long and difficult journey toward Armenia.

Since this time, Armenians everywhere have made it a priority to help these forcibly displaced refugees from Artsakh. Armenia’s government quickly created a humanitarian center to respond to emergency needs; volunteer organizations helped those in need with food, clothing, medicine, healthcare and the like; and individuals and groups donated what they could in support of these displaced Armenians.

From the first days of the Artsakh peoples’ displacement, the Armenian EyeCare Project (AECP), too, has supported compatriots through services the organization provides. AECP has provided eye screenings, detailed eye examinations, treatment including laser procedures and eye surgery as well as the provision of prescription eyeglasses, all at no cost. Several prosthetic surgeries have also been performed for wounded soldiers.

And because refugees have dispersed throughout the country since seeking refuge in Armenia, it’s been important to have this eye care available in all of AECP’s facilities in the country, including AECP’s Mobile Eye Hospital; Regional Eye Centers and Diagnostic Eye Clinics located in various regions throughout Armenia.

Additionally, in cooperation with state institutions and social organizations, both AECP screening teams in Armenia as well



A screening for one refugee, Aleksey Harutyunyan

as volunteer physicians from the U.S. who have visited the country for AECP’s Medical Mission have carried out eye screenings in temporary shelters for Artsakh refugees and further provided them with additional care such as provision of eyeglasses or surgery.

The AECP has also made it a point to send general screening teams to Ararat, the province with the largest number of forcibly displaced refugees from Artsakh, and to have the AECP Mobile Eye Hospital stationed there. According to government statistics, 12,000 of the 47,300 who are utilizing state-provided assistance were living in this region at the time of AECP’s service there. AECP worked extensively to

serve both the local population and Artsakh refugees in Ararat before moving on to the Armavir province to continue its screening and treatment work.

Since the mass displacement of Artsakh residents in September 2023, hundreds of refugees have undergone eye screenings on the AECP Mobile Eye Hospital and AECP Regional Eye Centers. More than 30 refugees have received eye surgery on the Mobile Eye Hospital, some on both eyes; and more than 150 pairs of eyeglasses have been provided to these individuals.

Among those helped are Eduard and Edmilina Movsisyan, 73 and 69, respectively, from Talin, in Aragatsotn province. The couple lives in a tiny room in one of Yere-

van’s hotels that now serves as a shelter to a group of people from Artsakh. The two are from Berdashen village in Artsakh.

“It is extremely hard to start from the beginning, but I am thankful to God that we have only had material loss,” Edmilina said. “All three of my sons bravely fought in the war, were wounded but they returned home alive.”

Eduard and Edmilina got acquainted with AECP in 2008 when the Mobile Eye Hospital visited Artsakh. Eduard received laser treatment at that time due to his diabetes. The treatment saved his sight.

In 2020, during the 44-day war in Artsakh, the couple moved to Armenia and relocated to Talin. Upon getting screened, it was determined that both Eduard and Edmilina had cataracts. They both received surgery and their sight has been restored. Eduard has also received further eye treatment this past year.

“This program helped us restore our vision,” Edmilina explained. “Though I will turn 70 next year, I want to work. I have already made an appointment with the manager of a nearby bakery and after finally solving my vision problem, I hope they give me a chance.”

Another person who received help is Arkadya Ayvazyan, 68, who now lives in Metsamor, Armavir province. His son and daughter fought on the battlefield during the recent war. During Azerbaijan’s military aggression and the tragic events of September 2023, Arkadya and his family locked the doors of their Artsakh home and moved to Armenia. Here in Armenia, Arkadya learned that he has a cataract in his left eye. The local ophthalmologist referred Arkadya to the AECP’s Mobile Eye Hospital to be treated at no cost.

After the successful surgery, Arkadya said: “I was so glad to receive this opportunity. Thanks to my restored vision I can now try to find a job and help my family solve our financial problems.”



INTERNATIONAL

Good COP, Bad COP: Azerbaijan's Climate Charm Offensive Is Backfiring

By Gabriel Gavin and Sara Schonhardt

Azerbaijan scored a major diplomatic victory when it won the right to host this year's COP29 U.N. climate talks.

Now it's experiencing the downside of this newfound prestige — heightened scrutiny of the regime's murky foreign influence peddling, jailing of critics, political crackdowns and unrepentant fossil fuel dealmaking.

The most recent example came Friday, May 3, when the U.S. indicted Congressman Henry Cuellar on charges he took hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes from Azerbaijan to act as its "foreign agent" in Washington. According to the indictment, the Texas Democrat actively lobbied for Azerbaijan's oil firm SOCAR while working with the country's ambassador to advance the nation's interests.

The charges by the Biden administration came months after Azerbaijan won the right to host and run the negotiations at this November's massive global gathering. That was the capstone of the South Caucasus petro-

state's years-long effort to burnish its credentials with Western politicians and investors.

Yet experts say the allegations circling Cuellar — which he denies — are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Azerbaijani influence efforts abroad.

"This is not new, just in terms of their efforts in the U.S., because they've been doing the same thing in Europe," said Richard Kauzlarich, a former ambassador to Azerbaijan during Bill Clinton's 1990s administrations.

He cited the U.K. and Germany as two examples where Azerbaijan has tried to use influence and money to garner political support. In January, two former German lawmakers were even charged with taking bribes from the country.

"There's a pattern of behavior here that the Azerbaijanis have been following," said Kauzlarich, now a visiting professor at the George Mason University Schar School of Policy and Government.

With the COP29 climate talks approaching, that pattern is getting more attention.

Freedom House ranks Azerbaijan as one of the least free countries in the world. Its vast oil and gas revenues "tend to benefit privileged elites rather than the general population" because of widespread corruption, the NGO said.

The country's current president, Ilham Aliyev, has been in office since 2003, when he took over from his father. His wife is vice-president.

In February Aliyev declared victory in his most recent election, claiming 92 percent of the vote. Given the country's growing role in global energy diplomacy, the election drew international opprobrium, with observers saying the vote had been rigged through political repression and a tightly controlled media.

The ballot came just months after Aliyev ordered Azerbaijani troops to launch an offensive to take control of the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh, inside its internationally-recognized borders in September, sparking a mass exodus of the enclave's 100,000 ethnic Armenian inhabitants. The U.S., EU and many other countries condemned the violence, which left hundreds dead and sparked allegations of "ethnic cleansing."

COP29 falls just weeks after the one-year anniversary of the humanitarian crisis, another reason the conference will be a lightning rod for NGOs, think tanks and reporters.

Conference Clashes

Controversy at COP events is nothing new. Past hosts of the annual U.N. climate negotiations have also drawn scrutiny from green groups and human rights activists.

When Egypt hosted in 2022, activists used the event to highlight the government's crackdown on political opponents. Last year saw widespread criticism when COP28 host the United Arab Emirates appointed the man tasked with expanding the country's oil and gas output to lead the talks. Likewise, the incoming president of COP29 is a former Azerbaijani oil and gas industry executive — though he was later tapped to lead the country's ecology ministry.

Still, Baku has been unapologetic about its intention to use the conference to promote its own economic interests. Aliyev used a speech as host of the talks to brand his country's natural gas reserves "a gift of the gods" and to push for more investments in the fossil fuel industry, in addition to renewable projects — climate critics be damned.

"As a head of the country, which is rich with fossil fuels, of course, we will defend the right of these countries to continue investments and to continue production," he said.

"Petrostates are perfecting a sinister COP playbook," said Patrick Galey, a fossil fuel investigator with Global Witness, a human

rights NGO. "Just like the UAE, Azerbaijan is planning a massive increase in gas production. Just like the UAE, Azerbaijan plans to legitimize its authoritarian regime by hosting these global talks. And just like the UAE, Azerbaijan appears set to use COP to develop its international business ties."

Fresh from its own military conflict, Azerbaijan intends to brand COP29 a "COP of peace," focusing on the prevention of climate-fueled conflicts and championing green solutions to geopolitical problems. "This provides a big opportunity for Baku, often accused of pursuing a militaristic foreign policy, to showcase its peace plan," said Murad Muradov, a researcher with Topchubashov Center in the Azerbaijani capital.

Azerbaijan has traditionally been sensitive about what it sees as foreign interference in its sovereign affairs, and criticism from abroad could have negative repercussions for its relations with the West.

"Baku has made it clear that it prefers relations based on purely pragmatic principles of mutually beneficial cooperation, rather than a value-based approach," he said. "Non-interference into what Azerbaijan considers its internal affairs, has become an absolute red line."

That red line will inevitably be crossed — repeatedly — as COP29 approaches.

The event is a major foray onto the world stage for a country with little track record of diplomacy outside its home region. That means opportunities, but also potential pitfalls.

"Did COP28 improve the image of the UAE? No," said Kadri Tastan, a European affairs and climate specialist with the German Marshall Fund. "And the Emiratis are much better at dealing with international audiences, they have more money being spent on lobbying, they're more used to working with the West and have much more experience than Azerbaijan."

While the talks in Dubai ended with a breakthrough agreement among nearly 200 countries to move away from fossil fuels, their UAE hosts had to navigate months of criticism, culminating in a tense exchange with media just days before the summit's close.

International Fallout

If bad press is frustrating for Baku, it will also be uncomfortable for its Western partners, including the EU.

Europe has increasingly turned to Azerbaijan in recent years as a replacement for the Russian fossil fuel it shunned after Moscow invaded Ukraine. In 2022, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen landed in the country to sign a deal to boost gas imports, hailing the country as a "crucial energy partner" for the EU.

That came despite warnings that Azerbaijan was stepping up its own imports of Russian gas, at the same time as it was boosting supplies to the EU. Gubad Ibadoghlu, an energy markets expert at the London School of Economics, wrote shortly afterward that "the only viable way" Baku could fulfill its obligations to the EU under the agreement was to purchase supplies from Moscow.

Responding to the claims, EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson told POLITICO that Azerbaijan's repackaging supplies as its own wouldn't be against the bloc's rules "because Russian gas is not sanctioned."

Ibadoghlu was detained last summer by Azerbaijani authorities and held behind bars until being released under house arrest last month. He is now facing trial for allegedly counterfeiting money and "religious extremism."

Amnesty International says the case is based on "fabricated charges."

(This article originally was published on the website www.politico.eu on May 8.)

INTERNATIONAL

Pashinyan Expresses Wish to Join EU

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan arrived in Denmark for a working visit on May 13.

Pashinyan was attending the Copenhagen Democracy Summit on May 14. During this event, he participated in a discussion titled "From the Frontline: Armenia's Defense of Democracy."

Pashinyan stated that he would like Armenia to join the European Union in 2024.

The moderator of the discussion asked him in what year he would like to see Armenia join the EU.

"What year? This," replied Pashinyan.

According to the source, as part of the visit, meetings were scheduled with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Parliament Speaker Soren Gade, and founder of the summit and founder of the international political consulting organization "Rasmussen Global" Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

Mirzoyan Says Meeting With Bayramov Was 'Constructive'

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Negotiations with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov in Almaty took place in a constructive atmosphere, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan told a press conference with the current OSCE-Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign, European Affairs and Trade of Malta Ian Borg in Yerevan on Monday, May 13.

According to him, the Foreign Ministry's assessment is reflected in the press release following the negotiations in Kazakhstan.

"The process continues — based on the principles that we have repeatedly stated," Mirzoyan said.

At the moment, according to him, there is no basis for additional comments.

On May 10-11, direct negotiations between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Ararat Mirzoyan and Jeyhun Bayramov, took place in Almaty.

Georgia Passes Controversial 'Foreign Agents' Bill Despite Widespread Opposition

TBILISI (CNN) — Georgia's parliament has passed a controversial "foreign agents" bill despite widespread domestic opposition and warnings from the European Union that its enactment would imperil the country's chances of joining the bloc.

The new law will require organizations receiving more than 20 percent of their funding from abroad to register as "agents of foreign influence" or face crippling fines. Opponents say that the legislation was modeled after similar laws in Russia that the Kremlin has used to increasingly snuff out opposition and civil society.

ADL STATEMENT

The Armenian Government's Politics of Scorn Led to Popular Exacerbation

ADL, from page 1

and guardian of its flock in the current existential crisis and would lead the "Tavush for the Homeland" movement. And it was inevitable and logical that different Primates of dioceses of Armenia would join that movement, such as the Primate of the Shirak Diocese, along with various groups and large numbers of people.

The episodes of Avarayr and Sardarapat in the past are vivid examples of the Armenian Church's mission to save the Armenian nation at critical moments of Armenian history, in order to fulfill its God-given duty to protect the people and the state.

Once again, it is vitally important that on May 9, the anniversary of our Triple Victories, as well as in the following days, encounters between the participants of the movement, which arrived in Yerevan, and the government, on Republic Square, will take place without bloodshed and without upheavals, in a spirit of explanation and conciliation, with external security and internal peace and mutual understanding in the homeland. We repeat: if the government had fulfilled its duty to explain the policy it implemented months ago, it would have prevented this shocking state of crisis created today.

It is crucially important that the government puts an end to its current, apparently defeatist and unacceptable policy of unilaterally ceding territories of the homeland to the enemy. At the same time, it is a true and fully democratic government that is demanded, not a theocracy.

We call on all Armenians, in particular diasporan Armenians, to unite around the homeland and put all their political, economic, informational potential, at this historical moment, to work in the struggle to overcome the current fierce challenges for the homeland.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Coordinated Press

May 7, 2024

(Translated from the Armenian



INTERNATIONAL

Family of Ilham Aliyev's Security Chief Owns Vast Property Holdings in the United Kingdom

By Kelly Bloss (OCCRP), Olga Loginova (Vlast), Fatima Karimova (Mikroskop Media), Aidan Iusubova (iFact) and Nana Bregadze (iFact)

LONDON (OCCRP) — As head of security for Azerbaijan's president, Baylar Eyyubov is closely trusted by one of the world's most authoritarian leaders. Reporters found that his family owns three posh mansions all on one street in north London — and much more.

Few could claim to enjoy the trust of Azerbaijan's authoritarian leader. But one man could.

He is Baylar Eyyubov, the head of presidential security for the entire two decades of Ilham Aliyev's rule. In event after official event, the thick-set, mustached Eyyubov can be seen hurrying to remain by the president's side and personally opening the doors of his limousine.

In fact, Eyyubov, 73, has served in his role even longer than the president himself. He used to provide the same service to Aliyev's father, Heydar, who ruled Azerbaijan during the country's first decade of post-Soviet independence.

In Azerbaijan, a resource-rich dictatorship that consistently ranks among the world's most corrupt nations, access to wealth and power often depends on proximity to the Aliyevs. So it's no surprise that Eyyubov, who has also married into the ruling family, is widely seen to be influential. But the security chief has always maintained a cloak of secrecy around himself and his relatives.

In a new investigation based on corporate documents and land records in multiple countries, OCCRP, its Azerbaijani partner Mikroskop Media, and its Georgian partner iFact can reveal his family's holdings for the first time. The Eyyubovs own real estate in the United Kingdom and Dubai that cost at least \$160 million to acquire.

Their holdings are crowned by three mansions owned by Eyyubov's wife and daughter, Zohra Sultanova and Elvira Eyyubova, all on the same street in an exclusive corner of North London. Elvira also owns two penthouses and a luxury apartment closer to the city center, another apartment in Canterbury, and a house in a seaside Dorset town.

The family holds these U.K. assets through secretive offshore companies that acquired them between 2007 and 2018. Reporters have been unable to trace these firms' sources of financing, and even the fact that they belong to the Eyyubovs has only now emerged because of a 2022 law that requires overseas entities that own British real estate to disclose their beneficial owners.

In Dubai, where real estate ownership data is normally not available to the public, Eyyubov and several family members own villas and office space in their own names, according to leaked documents.

Eyyubov's wife also holds shares in two businesses: a well-reviewed London cafe and an upscale hotel in the Georgian resort town of Batumi. Neither of these was in operation before 2014, meaning they couldn't have contributed to bankrolling the family's real estate purchases.

So for now, the source of the Eyyubovs' wealth remains a mystery. At least until 2020, the last year this information is available, Eyyubov's official annual salary has never exceeded \$22,000. His wife's current employment status is unknown, but in 2016 she was listed as an employee of Azerbaijan's State Institute of Botany. His daughter Elvira is a U.K.-based life coach.

The couple have at least five other children, but reporters were not able to establish whether any of them have significant

independent sources of income. Azerbaijani corporate records do not reveal the owners of companies, and Tax Ministry data, available online until 2012, only reveals that one of Eyyubov's daughters once co-owned a horse riding club.

Eyyubov also has a wealthy brother named Rafiq Hasanov. There is no paper trail showing that he ever gave any money or assets to Eyyubov.

Reporters were able to find just one record of Eyyubov receiving a transfer of cash. In 2007, the same year the family's U.K. property acquisitions began, a company he owned in the British Virgin Islands received \$250,000 from a New Zealand shell company. The origin of the money is unknown, but the New Zealand company has been alleged by Danske Bank, where it held an account, to have engaged in money laundering in a separate scandal.

The corporate records examined for this story contained another interesting finding. In both the London cafe and the Georgian hotel, Eyyubov's wife and two of his daughters have a notable business partner: a wealthy Georgian businessman named Sulkhan Papashvili with interests in the Azerbaijani energy sector.

Reporters have uncovered no documentary evidence that Eyyubov or any members of his family received any money or assets from Papashvili. But the circumstances raise questions about the nature of the relationship — particularly since companies owned by Papashvili's longtime business partner and a relative are also involved in managing the Eyyubov family's real estate.

Eyyubov and his family members did not reply to requests for comment.

In response to reporters' questions, a law firm representing Papashvili wrote that Eyyubov has never been in a position to exert influence in the energy business and that inferring any connection between Papashvili's energy business and his interactions with the Eyyubov family is "clearly illogical and thus misleading."

Raze, Rebuild, Repeat

Courtenay Avenue, which runs between the sprawling green acres of Hampstead Heath and the 18-hole Highgate Golf Club, has been described as one of London's most expensive streets.

The Eyyubovs' three mansions on this gated cul-de-sac were purchased for a total of £63 million (\$94 million). But in fact that is just a fraction of the money that has been poured into the properties.

Their first house there — a red-brick and timber mansion known as Somerlese that stood at the end of the street — no longer exists. Less than two years after acquiring it for £17 million (\$26 million) in 2014, the offshore company that owns it obtained permission to replace it with an even grander residence.

According to photos posted by its architect on Instagram, the new Somerlese was largely completed by January 2023. A planning document for the three-story, six-bedroom home includes an indoor swimming pool, a gym, a wine cellar, a steam room, a cinema, and living space for multiple staff members. The cost of its construction is unknown.

Just one house away is the family's Branksome mansion. Acquired by another offshore company for £15 million (\$20 million) in 2018, it has also been fully demolished and replaced at an unknown cost.

Planning documents show that the new six-bedroom "Branksome" includes an elevator, a cinema, a games room, a gym, and a pool with a jacuzzi.

The third of the family's Courtney Avenue properties — the "Beaulieu" — is next door. Land records show that the mansion was purchased by Eyyubov's wife Sultanova for £31 million (\$47 million) in 2015 and then transferred to yet another offshore company.

Through more offshore companies, Eyyubov's daughter Elvira appears to own an additional five properties in the United Kingdom, purchased for a total of over £12 million (\$20 million). One of them — a 10th floor apartment with floor-to-ceiling windows and views across London — has been offered for rent at £1,925 (over \$2,400) per week.

According to her website, Eyyubova runs a life coaching business in London called Coach Soaring Wings. Eyyubova's rates — £120 for six one-hour coaching sessions, or £39 for a single session — do little to explain her real estate holdings. She did not respond to requests for comment about her assets.

The Eyyubov family's Dubai real estate includes more than a dozen properties held by Eyyubov, Sultanova, and three of his children, including Elvira. Most are villas located on various "fronds" of the Palm Jumeirah, an artificial island in the shape of a palm tree.

The Eyyubovs' Dubai Properties

Reporters learned about the Eyyubov family's Dubai properties through a set of leaked 2020 real estate data provided by the Center for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS). The current ownership of each property has been independently verified.

Eyyubov acquired four 4-6 bedroom villas here in various years since 2006. In 2023, he transferred one to his wife Zohra Sultanova and another to his son Elnur, while keeping one for himself. The current status of the fourth villa is unclear, but Eyyubov owned it as of 2020. The villas are worth an estimated \$26 million today.

Eyyubov's glittering portfolio of luxury real estate seems worlds away from his earlier years. In the Soviet era, he reportedly worked for the local Internal Affairs Ministry in the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan.

He was already well-connected, having married the grand-niece of Heydar Aliyev, then a powerful Communist Party boss in Moscow. But the family also lived through lean times, particularly after Aliyev returned to Nakhichevan amid the economic chaos of the Soviet collapse. Aliyev once recalled staying at his sister's home and listening in on conversations between his two grandnieces' husbands, one of whom was Eyyubov, as they struggled to find meat to feed the family.

But by 1993, Aliyev was president of an independent Azerbaijan and the family's fortunes were on the rise.

The other grandniece's husband, Vasif Talibov, became the dictatorial head of Nakhchivan. And Eyyubov was entrusted as the head of presidential security, a position he has retained through the succession of Ilham Aliyev to the presidency and a security service shake-up.

A 2010 report by the International Crisis Group named Eyyubov as one of Azerbaijan's most influential figures, noting that he "is one of the few people to have constant direct access to the president."

There have also been claims of impropriety. In a 2008 U.S. diplomatic cable leaked

by Wikileaks, a French businessman is reported to have claimed that Eyyubov pressured him to sell him a 40-percent stake in one of Azerbaijan's largest local breweries. Allegedly fearing for his multimillion-dollar investment, the businessman sold his stake to a Russian company and left Azerbaijan, saying there were "too many sharks in the pool."

OCCRP has not verified this allegation, and Eyyubov did not respond to reporters' questions about it.

Azerbaijani corporate ownership information is not publicly available, making further investigation inside the country difficult. However, the appearance of Eyyubov's name in the Pandora Papers, a leak of nearly 12 million files from 14 offshore corporate service providers obtained by ICIJ, does show that, as early as 2007, he used an offshore company to receive money of unknown origin.

That October, the files show, a Zurich-based bank helped Eyyubov establish a company in the British Virgin Islands for the purpose of holding a bank account. A few months later, the company, called Mente Ventures S.A., received a wire transfer of \$250,000 from a company based in New Zealand.

The stated purpose of the payment was "for stuff foods." Eyyubov is not known to have done business in the food sector.

No data about the origin of the money is available. But the New Zealand company that sent it, Bigland Corporation Limited, itself shows a pattern of suspicious activity. In addition to being suspected of money laundering by Danske Bank, Bigland was flagged by U.S. prosecutors as being one of the companies that received money from a Russian company involved in the infamous Magnitsky tax fraud. Such companies are often used for multiple purposes, and there is no suggestion that Eyyubov had any involvement with the Magnitsky scheme.

A Georgian Friendship

Reporters spent months poring through business registries around the world trying to find corporate traces that would shed more light on the origins of the Eyyubov family's wealth. But while nothing concrete was found that would explain their real estate holdings, the records did reveal something else: A close business relationship with wealthy Georgian businessman Sulkhan Papashvili.

Like Eyyubov, Papashvili was once a security official, heading the Special State Protection Service of Georgia between 1998 and 2003. Among other responsibilities, the service was charged with protecting the president, making him Eyyubov's one-time Georgian counterpart.

The two men's paths soon diverged: Papashvili left government service and became a successful real estate developer. But their personal relationship appears to have endured. When Eyyubov accompanied his boss, President Aliyev, on a state visit to Georgia in October 2023, Papashvili greeted him with a kiss on the cheek at the press conference and shared a table with him at dinner.

In recent years, Papashvili has turned his attention to Azerbaijan, building a massive energy trading business in Georgia that relied on imported Azeri electricity. The trade is run through offshore companies and is notable for its lack of transparency. Furthermore, corporate records show that Papashvili, a man who often handled his affairs, and a longtime business partner were at the same time developing joint businesses with

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INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Heritage Threatened by Jerusalem Hotel Plan

By Hadani Ditmars

JERUSALEM (*The Art Newspaper*) — While the world's attention is concentrated on Gaza, an at-times-violent battle for the historic Armenian quarter of Jerusalem's Old City has been playing out on the streets over several months.

The simmering dispute escalated anew in April when Israeli police entered an area that Armenian protesters have been guarding from developers for several months. The Old City and its walls are a UNESCO World Heritage site.

'Unlawful Eviction'

"An unlawful eviction was initiated by Israeli police on the grounds of the Cows' Garden located within the premises of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem," the Armenian Patriarchate said in a statement on 3 April. "The eviction began with the destruction of Armenian Patriarchate property, and assaults on clergy and indigenous Armenians."

The Israeli police spokesman Dean Elsdunne did not respond to *The Art Newspaper's* request for comment.

The conflict — now also the subject of two lawsuits — centers on a planned luxury hotel development at Cows' Garden, a former agricultural area that was converted into a community parking lot in 1967. It adjoins the 12th-century St. James Monastery, as well as five Ottoman-era houses in a courtyard compound abutting the historic city walls. One of these is home to a family with ancestral ties to the area dating back more than 1,600 years.

Armenian monks first settled in Jerusalem in the fourth century. The Armenian quarter, comprising around 14% of the Old City, was home to 27,000 people a century ago, as numbers swelled after the Ottoman Empire's genocide against the Armenian people. Only around 2,000 still live there, but it remains a spiritual homeland of sorts for the wider Armenian diaspora.

UNESCO Concern

The Old City and its walls, which have been on UNESCO's "world heritage in danger" list since 1982, are part of East Jerusalem, where the majority of residents

are Palestinian. According to a 2021 report by the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, of the Old City's 35,000 residents, 27,000 are Muslims, 5,000 are Christians and 3,000 are Jews.

While all of Jerusalem has been under Israeli control since Israel occupied East Jerusalem during the Six-Day war in 1967, Palestinians view it as the capital of their future state. The international community considers the Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem illegal.

The dispute over Cows' Garden dates back to a 2021 deal signed by the Armenian Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, in which he handed over 13 percent of the historic quarter to a company called Xana Gardens for a hotel development. The Armenian community found out about this transaction a year ago.

Two members of the community, Hagop Djernazian and Segrat Balian, founded a protest movement, the Save the Armenian Quarter (ArQ) association. ArQ first protested outside the office of the Patriarchate demanding full transparency, then in recent months took shifts guarding the site from developers and groups of settlers.

Ambiguous Contract

Djernazian says that an ambiguous clause in the contract allowing Xana Gardens to include "adjacent properties in the project" means a much larger area is at risk. This comprises the private garden of the patriarch as well as a modern seminary building, erected in 1975. Underneath the seminary are Roman ruins unearthed in 1960 by the British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon, as well as a crusader palace.

"You can't build a modern hotel within the ramparts of the Old City," Djernazian says. "It could damage the whole structure and status quo of the Old City. It will not be a hotel but a settlement. It's a provocative act."

Xana Gardens is based in Tel Aviv and led by the Australian Israeli investor Danny Rothman, who has consistently declined to speak to the press. The company does not appear to have a website. Rothman did not respond to *The Art Newspaper's* request for comment.

Cancellation

After months of protests, Manougian cancelled the agreement in October. A November 16 statement by the Armenian Patriarchate said the contract he signed in 2021 was "tainted with false representation, undue influence, and unlawful benefits".

Since the cancellation, the Armenian community says its members guarding the site have been attacked on several occasions. On 26 October, bulldozers entered the car park to dismantle the pavement, damaging part of a wall in the process. They were turned back by members of the Armenian community. In December, violence erupted. The Middle East Monitor reported that around a dozen people were injured when a group of men attacked residents.

Lawsuits

The Patriarchate has filed a lawsuit against Xana Gardens to be heard in the Jerusalem District Court. A second lawsuit was filed on behalf of the Armenian community on 18 February.

The state of Israel has also joined the legal fray, according to a February statement by two Israeli NGOs, Bimkom and Ir Amim. They said it recently emerged that Israel had initiated the official registration of land rights within the Armenian Quarter of the Old City.

"If the Xana Gardens company were successful in taking possession of this area at the alleged behest of settlers, it would dramatically alter the character of the environs and significantly damage the unique historic identity of the Armenian Quarter," says Amy Cohen at Ir Amim. "Such a move would likewise serve as another link along the growing ring of Israeli control in and around the Old City."

ArQ plans to appeal to UNESCO, Djernazian says. "We are of course aware of the legal procedure that is under way," Polina Huard, a spokeswoman for UNESCO, tells *The Art Newspaper*. "The State of Conservation Report on this property will be brought to the attention of the World Heritage Committee at its next session in July 2024."

In 2020, Eyyubov's wife and two of his daughters invested £3 million in a U.K. company called Beangreen Limited, the other owners being Papashvili himself — through an offshore company in Saint Lucia — and Kukhaleishvili.

Beangreen owns and operates a London café called Catalyst, along with the building that houses it. Catalyst once received a glowing review in the *Evening Standard* for its "inventive, exhilarating, taverna-inspired cooking," and Beangreen has been exporting Catalyst-brand coffee to Georgia at least since 2017.

In addition, a company co-owned by Lasha Papashvili's wife, Khatuna Parjanadze, was the principal contractor of the Branksome and also worked on the Somerlese.

The company, Rockbridge Limited, also worked on the Ridgfield, another mansion on Courtenay Avenue that lies between two of the Eyyubov's mansions and belongs to Sulkhan Papashvili's wife.

Papashvili and the Eyyubovs are not only neighbors on Courtney Avenue: Sulkhan Papashvili's daughter also owns a penthouse in the Visage Apartments, where Eyyubov's daughter Elvira has three of her London flats.

(Additional Reporting by Habib Abdullayev (Meydan TV), Marika Dudunia (Studio Monitori), Robert Denis (OCCRP), and OCCRP's Research and Data Team. This article originally appeared on May 14. It was edited slightly for space considerations.)

UN Committee Against Torture Blasts Azerbaijan For Treatment of Armenians in Karabakh

UN, from page 1

Azerbaijan's conduct towards ethnic Armenians.

Perhaps most importantly, referring to the "conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh," the Committee expressed its "deep concern regarding [Azerbaijan's] conduct of what it describes as anti-terrorism operations," in other words the military action by which Azerbaijan ethnically cleansed Nagorno-Karabakh on September 19-20, 2023. The Committee's concern extended to "the continued detention of what [Azerbaijan] describes as 23 individuals in connection with terrorism," referring to the detained former Nagorno-Karabakh leaders.

In a public statement, the UN Committee noted that it was "alarmed by alleged extra-judicial killings, torture, and ill-treatment of national and ethnic Armenians during armed conflict and anti-terrorism operations, and the perceived lack of investigations and prosecutions of these allegations."

The Committee also expressed concerns over the continued detention of 23 individuals of Armenian ethnic or national origin and called for "independent, impartial, transparent, and effective investigations into the allegations of serious violations and urged the State party to bring those responsible to justice."

The report stressed that "international humanitarian law is applied during all international and non-international armed conflicts to which the State party is a party," and that investigations and prosecutions include the "acts of any persons in a position of command or superior responsibility who knew or should have known that his or her subordinates had committed, or were likely to commit, extrajudicial executions, torture or ill-treatment, or other war crimes, and failed to take reasonable and necessary preventive measures."

The UN report also methodically addressed a wide scope of violations by the government of Azerbaijan against its own population, including allegations of torture and ill-treatment, the harassment of human rights defenders and journalists, hate crimes, hate speech and discrimination, gender-based and domestic violence, corporal punishment, among other concerns.

The Committee recommended that Azerbaijan "make clear at the highest levels that any violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law related to the conflict in the region, or otherwise related to the treatment of ethnic or national Armenians, are totally unacceptable," and that Azerbaijan promptly conduct full and impartial investigations into allegations of extrajudicial executions, torture and ill-treatment against ethnic Armenians.

It recommended that Azerbaijan fully apply international law concerning the immunity and release of combatants and that it join the International Criminal Court.

Finally, it stated that "[Azerbaijan] should publicly condemn hate speech, threats and attacks against persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin and all other minority groups, at the highest levels, and refrain from endorsing, through action or omission, such threats and attacks."

(Material from the Armenian Bar Association and the Armenian Assembly of America were used to compile this report.)

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the family members of top Azerbaijani energy officials.

When asked about his dealings with the family members of Azerbaijani officials, a law firm representing Papashvili wrote: "The fact that businessmen related to the families of the Azerbaijani officials are engaged in various businesses and/or are acquiring assets in Georgia is not proof of them receiving preferential treatment in any of their business dealings because of Mr. Papashvili." They also wrote that there was no basis to assert that his business lacks transparency.

While reporters found no evidence that Eyyubov used his influence or connections to help Papashvili, corporate records show that Papashvili helped members of Eyyubov's family launch energy ventures as well: His wife Sultanova acquired a stake in a Papashvili company that bid on a project to build energy transmission towers in Georgia, and his son Eldar had plans to build two hydropower plants with the help of George Kukhaleishvili, Papashvili's longtime business partner. A power of attorney shows Kukhaleishvili being given authorization to act on behalf of Eldar "as a trusted representative" in his hydropower company for an unlimited time. (He did not respond to detailed questions about this.)

Neither of these energy projects succeeded, but two other joint businesses did.

One of these is Le Port, a boutique "Apart

Hotel" occupying a prime waterfront location in the Georgian resort city of Batumi. In 2012, Eyyubov's wife Sultanova acquired a 50-percent stake in Gogebashvili 30 LLC, a Georgian company that subsequently built and now owns the hotel. The other half of the company is owned by Papashvili.

Papashvili's brother Lasha, contacted by reporters because he had also initially invested into the hotel before transferring his interest to Papashvili, provided some insight into the Eyyubov family's participation.

He said that the family had invested \$4 million into the hotel, that the money had come from Eyyubov's brother Rafig Hasanov, whom he described as a "very rich businessman," and that Hasanov had assigned the shares to his sister-in-law, Eyyubov's wife Sultanova.

Reporters could find no corporate records showing Hasanov owning any company before 2011, just one year prior to the hotel deal. However, he has indeed grown rich in subsequent years.

The secretive Hasanov, who was only identified through a relative's social media profile and voter registry records, now owns at least \$51 million of private and commercial real estate in Dubai and the Czech Republic, according to corporate and land records obtained by reporters. He has also owned assets worth \$9 million in Russia at least until 2022, but their current status could not be confirmed. Hasanov did not reply to a request for comment.



Community News

Dr. Denis Mukwege, Gynecological Surgeon And Human Rights Activist, Awarded Aurora Prize

LOS ANGELES — The Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity was awarded on May 9 to Dr. Denis Mukwege, a world-renowned gynecological surgeon and human rights activist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Mukwege is the president of Panzi Hospital and Foundation in the DRC, which he founded in 1999 to address the systemic issue of maternal healthcare and maternal mortality. Amidst ongoing conflict and critical healthcare needs stemming from war, the hospital has become one of the world’s preeminent treatment centers for survivors of sexual violence in conflict.

In recognition of his courageous work and dedication to improving human rights for all, the Aurora Prize Selection Committee revealed their decision after conferring during a



Dr. Denis Mukwege

three-hour closed session. The laureate receives a \$1,000,000 award and a chance to continue the cycle of giving by supporting local grassroots leaders helping people in need.

“Dr. Mukwege has dedicated his life not only to caring for women and girls suffering from the brutality of sexual violence, but also fiercely advocating for their rights,” said Dr. Noubar Afeyan, co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. “Aurora is honored to support Dr. Mukwege’s mission to help those in need, demand justice for the victims of sexual violence in war, and bring the perpetrators to justice.”

Mukwege and his staff have helped to care for more than 80,000 survivors of sexual violence since the hospital’s inception. The hospital not only treats survivors with physical wounds, but also provides legal aid, socio-economic reintegration, and psychosocial services to its patients. Dr. Mukwege has been fearless in his efforts to increase protections for women and to advocate that those responsible for sexual violence be brought to justice, including the Congolese government and militia groups laying siege to eastern DRC. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018.

“Dr. Mukwege embodies the very spirit of humanitarianism, tirelessly advocating for a society where sexualized violence as a weapon of war is

see AURORA, page 12



Anahid Melkonian hands 109-year-old Mary Vartanian a Hampartzoum wreath while Lianna Shememian holds the basket (photo Knarik Arkun)

Hampartzoum Holiday Celebrated by Boston’s Tekeyan Cultural Association

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Boston Chapter marked the traditional Armenian *Hampartzoum* or Ascension holiday with a luncheon and afternoon program full of poetry, games and song on Sunday, May 5 at the Baikar Building.

While the traditional holiday, this year on May 9, commemorates the ascension of Jesus Christ 40 days after his resurrection, there are also some folk customs that Armenians would practice, perhaps inherited from pre-Christian times.

One of these customs is called *vi-jaghan* or lottery. In the program at Tekeyan, this was conducted by the very charming 5-year-old Anahid Melkonian. Each participant first gave a personal item or *nshan* (“sign”) which was placed in a pail of water. Anahid pulled out items and for each owner, a poetically written verse or saying was simultaneously read in Armenian indicating the lot of the owner, and afterwards given to the owner.

All women who came to the event were given a crown of flowers to wear. TCA Co-chair Dr. Aida Yavshayan started the afternoon event by introducing the current executive members of her chapter, and musician Gegham Margaryan, who performed several elegant Armenian instrumental pieces on an electric keyboard.

Jeanine Shememian introduced a brief program of Armenian songs and poetry performed by two young local girls. The first was tenth-grader Alla Petrosyan from Newton Country Day School, who currently is in Voice Certificate Level 4 at the New England Conservatory of Music and is a member of their Youth Chorale Ensemble as well as the Boston Children’s Chorus. Alla, whose singing has frequently graced Armenian community events, performed three songs, *Hayasdan*, *Mayrig*, and *Kez Hamar Hayasdan*.

see HAMPARTZOOM, page 10



Ara Naroian, in Armenian costume, emphasizes an important point about the traditions associated with Hampartzoum (photo Aram Arkun)

Afeyan Foundation Donation to AUA Creates Grants in Economics, Law and Medicine

YEREVAN — The American University of Armenia (AUA) recently received a donation from the Afeyan Foundation for its efforts that will make a positive impact on Armenian research and development. As a result of a donation made by the foundation, AUA will create one-year research grants.

The supported projects are in the disciplines of economics, law and medicine, which have been deemed priorities for the development of Armenia. AUA will continue to support faculty research through internal seed funding for the continuation of these projects beyond the first year, as well as to promote similar research among other faculty members.

With extensive backgrounds in the life sciences, engineering and education, numerous highly successful entrepreneurial ventures — notably Flagship Pioneering and Moderna, Inc. — and significant accomplishments in the non-profit sector through the Afeyan Foundation and the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, the Afeyan family is immersed in several philanthropic endeavors in Armenia, the United States, and elsewhere.

This generous gift to AUA will foster multidisciplinary research and collaboration within the University, which is on its path to grow, and make a greater impact in Armenia. “The research activities will allow students to tackle complex challenges more efficiently by enabling closer collaboration, knowledge sharing, creative problem solving, and systems thinking. We hope to support the development of the next generation of leaders, scientists, and well-rounded citizens who could contribute to Armenia’s growth,” said the Afeyans in a recent statement.

The Afeyans’ support also highlights the importance of investing in Armenia’s human capital and the critical requirement for the country’s workforce to be equipped with the skills necessary to be productive in the digital age. They add: “This is even more important for Armenia, as its growth potential lies in its people and their ability to be creative, agile, and open-minded. AUA can play a unique role in adapting education for the digital age by emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration, teaching foundational learning skills enhanced through technology, and creating opportunities to master not only technical skills, but also soft skills needed to navigate future uncertainty.”

The research awards were announced on July 18, 2023, with immediate start dates. They are expected to be conducted during the academic year 2023-24, with each principal investigator delivering a mid-year status report as well as a final report upon completion of the project by August 30, 2024.

see AUA, page 12



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Holds Spring Advocacy Summit

WASHINGTON — In an inspiring display of unity and enthusiasm, activists from across the United States met with elected officials on Capitol Hill to bring attention to critical issues facing the Armenian people during the Armenian Assembly of America's Spring 2024 Advocacy Summit, held on Tuesday, April 16 and Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

Former US Sen. Ambassador Sam Brownback spoke to participants about the importance of educating decision-makers about the risks faced by Armenia as a Christian country, at a time when two major wars are being waged that has drawn attention away from the crisis in the Caucasus.

The following morning, a breakfast briefing took place prior to advocacy meetings, and the entire day was dedicated to meeting with elected officials, where advocates visited over 300 offices of elected officials.

The Summit concluded with the Armenian Genocide Commemoration on Capitol Hill, where Members of Congress shared their remarks on the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, and their efforts to support the Armenian people amidst its current challenges.

"We appreciate the dedication of our advocates who traveled to Washington, DC, to show their Armenian American presence on Capitol Hill and make the effort to inform their elected officials about ways to help the Armenian people during this crucial time," said Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. "We have already gained new members in the Armenian Caucus as a result of these meetings and anticipate Members of Congress supporting legislation that sanctions Azerbaijan for its unjust actions against Armenians, including the proposed \$250 million aid package for Armenia and the Armenian people of Artsakh who were forcibly driven from their ancestral lands."



Armenian Assembly Summit participants

A special highlight of the Assembly's Spring 2024 Advocacy Summit was the participation of young scholars, thanks to donor support, which allowed 20 scholarships to college students from across the US. Each of the participants voiced their appreciation for the program and the chance to serve as advocates, an experience they wish to repeat again soon. The scholars included: Maria Akhverdyan, Lilit

Arakelyan, Nanor Boyajyan, Nellie Chobanyan, Milena Davtyan, Maria Galstyan, Karine Grigoryan, Areg Hovhannisyian, Liana Issaian, Celine Khachiki, Norair Khalafyan, Susanna Kharatyan, Syuzanna Kovalenko, Araz Majnoonian, Meline Martirosyan, Yervand Matevosian, Artur Melikian, Nataleen Orangian, and Arman Tarverdyan.

The Assembly's Young Scholar Program, thanks to donor support, gave 20 Armenian American college students from across the US the opportunity to participate in the Assembly's Spring 2024 Advocacy Summit.

Meline Martirosyan, a nursing student living in Santa Clarita, Calif., who is originally from Syunik, Armenia, emphasized how impressed she was with the Summit and its all-encompassing scope, in addition to providing opportunities to network and advocate for Armenian issues with like-minded individuals.

"I have always been an activist online and consistently respond to action alerts as this is a personal commitment for me, but it was a new experience of meeting with elected officials in person," said Martirosyan, noting it was an emotional time for her as well because of her involvement in her homeland.

Areg Hovhannisyian, a student at Glendale Community College who is from Glendale, California, stated that the Summit "opened up a fresh path" for him to



Capitol Hill Meetings with Members of Congress including Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA); Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI) with Dr. Gary and Linda Assarian; Rep. Robert Menendez (D-NJ); Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA); Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA); and CA constituents outside the Capitol

become involved in advocacy and "have the opportunity to learn and talk to elected officials about issues I really care about."

Artur Melikian, a student at UCLA from Glendale, said he looks forward to the next Assembly Summit, as he "met with different officials and gained new friends."

The hands-on experience of participating in 10 meetings helped him understand the "different principles and approaches of elected officials," which was an insightful experience for him.



Capitol Hill Meetings including John Vatan and Michael Bezjian; Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) with Dr. Gary and Linda Assarian; Christopher Visser, David Onanian and Marisa Onanian; Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ); Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA); Oscar Tatosian and Paruir Sarkisian; Serge Seropian, Jacob Bournazian, Steven Keytanjian and Alex Bakalian; and Joseph Piatt and Tyler Bagdasarian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Hampartzoum Holiday Celebrated by Tekeyan Cultural Association

HAMPARTZOOM, from page 8

Ten-year-old Karina Sargsyan has only lived in the US for some six months now. A fifth-grade student Lincoln-Eliot Elementary School in Newton, she also attends Holy Trinity Armenian School in Cambridge. Karina clearly and emphatically recited Yeghishe Charents’s *Yes Im Anoush Hayasdani* [I Love Sun-Tasting Word of Armenia] and Hovhannes Shiraz’s *Mors srdi hed ashkharhn em chapel* [I Measured the World with My Mother’s Heart].

Shememian introduced TCA Boston chapter vice-chair Sargis Gavlakian, a poet who has published several volumes of his Armenian-language works and has been involved in TCA for many decades, both in English and in Armenian. A member also of the Writers Union of Armenia, Sargis first expressed his happiness at seeing the Baikar Building hall full again for cultural activities as it was in the 1990s after the difficulties of the Covid period. He recited several of his poems, including “Voroshum” [Decision]. He also spoke of his concerns about the current conditions in Armenia and how each Armenian was connected to whatever takes place there and cannot remain indifferent, and then recited his poem “Hayrenik” [Homeland], in which he called the homeland an Avarayr (the famous battle of A.D. 451 led by Vartan Mamigonian).

Ara Naroian, son of TCA Boston Chapter executive



Many of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter members who prepared the Hampartzoum event, together with five-year-old Anahid Melkonian in front. From left, Rita Balyozian, Jeanine Shememian, Suzy Naroian, Nirva Tomasian, Lucy Maserejian, Knarik Arkun, Maral Der Torossian, Sossy Yogurtian, Aida Yavshayan (photo Aram Arkun)



Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter Co-chair Dr. Aida Yavshayan (photo Knarik Arkun)

member Suzy Naroian, in English gave some explanations about the meaning and tradition of Hampartzoum while dressed in Armenian traditional costume.

At the very end, Anahid Melkonian sang a brief poem, “Mama, Mama, kez sirum em,” dedicated to her mother.

Rice pudding or *garnaboor* was offered as a dessert tradition for Hampartzoum day, along with *revani*, while the main dishes included pilaf with nuts and meat, chicken and stuffed eggplant. The entire meal was prepared by a team of TCA Boston ladies headed by Rita Balyozian and including Sossy Yogurtian, Maral Der Torossian, Aida Yavshayan and Knarik Arkun.

The TCA Boston Chapter thanks Artin Fine Jewelers (<https://www.artinfinejewels.com/>) for donating a beautiful sterling silver Armenian cross and pomegranate wristband and Saro and Hilda Hartounian of New Jersey for donating a home purifier, both for the raffle at the event.

The next event organized by the TCA Boston chapter is a celebration of Father’s Day with a barbecue and special program on June 16. Space is limited so please rsvp ahead of time by emailing bostontca@gmail.com or call Sossy at 617 281-1647.



Anahid Melkonian picks trinkets out of the Hampartzoum basket (photo Knarik Arkun)



Mary Vartanian, 109-years-old, at right, enjoys a moment with her granddaughter Jeanine Shememian at left, and the latter’s husband, Raffi Shememian (photo Aram Arkun)



Doing the raffle, from left, Suzy Naroian, Jeanine Shememian, Knarik Arkun



Kuzu içi made with nuts, rice and ground meat (photo Aram Arkun)



COMMUNITY NEWS

David Karamian Presents *Armenia - The Lone Stone* Book for TCA Metro Los Angeles

By Karine Armen

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ALTADENA, Calif. — David Karamian presented his photography book, *Armenia - The Lone Stone: Invincible through the Ages*, on Friday, May 10, at the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Beshgeturian Center in Altadena. The author and presenter is the founder and CEO of NorArt-Gallery Publishing (<https://www.norartgallery.com/>).

Organized by the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter, its board member, Mihran Toumajan, welcomed the audience and recounted the guest presenter's biography. Karamian's career has spanned more than 30 years in design systems and consulting for Fortune-10 companies. Karamian merged his passions for art, architecture, and history into his latest creation, *Armenia - The Lone Stone*, unveiled in September 2022. Toumajan added, "David's dedication to his craft extends beyond the pages of his book. He's a notable contributor to *Black and White Photography Magazine* and *Scene4 Magazine*. He is also an affiliate of UNESCO, a platform that showcases his commitment to cultural preservation and promotion."

Karamian's *Armenia - The Lone Stone* is a hardcover coffee table book of text and poetry, and color and black-and-white photographs printed on the highest-quality paper. The photos of the monasteries and monuments in Armenia and Artsakh were taken from 2005 to 2022 during Karamian's repeated visits. The text is in English and Armenian. It includes poems from Sayat Nova, Komitas, Silva Kapoutikyan, and several other notable poets. He also includes paintings by Armenian artists and attributes them to [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org).



David Karamian, during his slide presentation, with his parents' photo and the preface in the background (photo Karine Armen)

Karamian started the event by explaining how he added his family history to a photography book. "Without my family background, it would have been another book about Armenia. This way, I wanted to make it unique and show who I was." Karamian's digital presentation was well-organized. He had the presentation's outline and objective posted on an initial slide. His book encompasses 24 sections. While covering the first 12 sections, Karamian showed slides while the audience listened to Armenian instrumental music. Later, he highlighted the second half of his book and stated: "I don't want to focus only on the [Armenian] Genocide. The world can learn about our rich his-

tory, literature, and music." He emphasized, "I want non-Armenians and the new generation to know about our rich culture."

Karamian was born in Tehran and grew up in an Armenian family. He learned about Armenian history from a substitute teacher in second grade. Ever since Karamian was a child, he dreamt about visiting Armenia. Finally, in 2005, he visited his homeland. Feeling deeply touched by his experience, he photographed several churches, monasteries, and historical monuments and buildings. Karamian is a mechanical engineer with a passion for the arts. He uses his camera to capture the beauty of his homeland. By publishing his hardcover book, Karamian was able to thoughtfully weave his personal story with striking images of cultural treasures in his homeland. Storytelling is, after all, a form of art.

Karamian's photographs match the mood

of their respective settings. His pictures in Gyumri have dark gray tones. The white Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi is juxtaposed with a gray sky, and the photos of the paintings inside the church are in bold colors. Capturing the mountains and valleys in black-and-white has created intense texture, negative shapes, contrast, and lines. The Garni Temple is shot from different angles in black-and-white, emphasizing its architectural strength and beauty. One needs to look intently to notice them.

The book's accompanying text is well-researched. It can serve as an academic study of the location or as an inspiration to travel. Each chapter starts with detailed information about the place, as well as the church, monument, or structure. Yerevan's Matenadaran - the Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts - is displayed with an initial photo of the building, while ensuing photographs show each statue, in detail, surrounding the museum. Karamian uses color for the photos of the Dadivank Monastery, Sardarapat Memorial, and Karahunj (Zorats Karer), which have brown, yellow, and orange hues juxtaposed with blue sky. The author/photographer is well aware of complementary colors in art.

During a brief question and answer session, Toumajan encouraged Karamian to contact [Caucasus Heritage Watch](https://caucasusheritage.cornell.edu/) (<https://caucasusheritage.cornell.edu/>) and share his photographs of churches, monasteries, museums and monuments taken while exploring Artsakh. Another member of the audience asked Karamian if his book was a combination of art and memoir. The author responded that while the preface of the book included his family's history, he did not consider it a memoir. Karamian is currently working on a second volume of *Armenia - The Lone Stone*, in addition to a book highlighting his abstract photographs.

Armenia - The Lone Stone is a well-designed book. At first glance, it might seem overwhelming. By studying it mindfully, one can appreciate its value.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Menendez’s Bribery Trial Puts Scrutiny on His Motives and His Marriage

By Tracey Tully and Benjamin Weiser

NEW YORK (*New York Times*) — It had been a busy Thursday for Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey.

He was in Washington presiding over the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as it heard testimony about the need for sustained aid to Ukraine, and then preparing to travel to Philadelphia with his wife, Nadine Menendez, to accept an award from an Armenian-American organization.

Back at home, the F.B.I. was watching.

An agent, conducting surveillance near the couple’s modest, split-level house in Englewood Cliffs, N.J., snapped a photo of a Mercedes-Benz convertible parked out front, a court filing shows. Several weeks later, investigators searching the home would find 13 bars of gold bullion and more than \$480,000 in cash, much of it stashed in coat jackets, boots and a safe.

On Monday, May 13, almost two years to the day after that agent was watching the senator’s house, Mr. Menendez, a Democrat, is to go on trial in Federal District Court in Manhattan, charged with taking part in an elaborate, yearslong bribery scheme.

It will be his second corruption trial in seven years, but unlike the first, which ended in a hung jury, there is a volatile and surprising new element: charges against Mr. Menendez’s wife. The case, prosecutors have indicated, is

as much about Ms. Menendez as it is about her husband. The US attorney’s office for the Southern District of New York has depicted Mr. Menendez and his wife as collaborators who took bribes in exchange for the senator’s willingness to steer weapons and government aid to Egypt, prop up a friend’s halal meat monopoly and meddle in criminal investigations involving allies.

“What else can the love of my life do for you?” Ms. Menendez asked at a Washington steakhouse dinner during one of the many meetings that prosecutors say she arranged between her husband and Egyptian officials.

Together, prosecutors contend, the couple were entangled in corrupt schemes that began even before their marriage in October 2020. The bribes, which also included a diamond ring and home furnishings, helped Mr. and Ms. Menendez live above their lawful means, prosecutors say.

But that partnership may now be fracturing, as the senator’s lawyers appear to be preparing a defense that pins much of the blame on his wife.

Separate Trials

Ms. Menendez was to have been on trial with her husband this week, but a judge postponed her trial until July after her lawyers said she had a “serious medical condition” that required surgery and a potentially prolonged period of recovery.

Although she will not be at the defense table, she is expected to loom uncomfortably over the proceedings. By the government’s telling, Ms. Menendez, 57, was an essential cog in a wheel of corruption. She served as a conduit for bribes and as a go-between who relayed messages in emails and texts, sometimes using what she and her husband called her “007” phone.

The senator’s lawyers have said in legal papers that Mr. Menendez may, if he testifies, say he was duped by the woman he married less than four years ago, that she “withheld information” and that she “led him to believe that nothing unlawful was taking place.”

Such a tactic presents challenges, given the couple’s public persona as loyal partners who traveled and attended events together, said Tatiana R. Martins, a former chief of the Southern District’s public corruption unit who is now in private practice.

Martins said the senator’s lawyers might argue that his wife “did this all on her own; he had no idea; she kept it from him,” but prosecutors could seek to rebut that by introducing evidence of how close the two were and how they shared everything.

“They have this great relationship, yet she’s keeping all this from him?” Martins said.

As for Nadine Menendez, even if her husband’s strategy is to try to shift blame, such testimony would almost certainly be inadmissible at her trial, said Jonathan Kravis, a defense lawyer in Washington and former trial attorney with the Justice Department’s public integrity section.

The postponement of Ms. Menendez’s trial will also give her and her lawyers a preview of the full scope of the government’s case and enable them to make strategic adjustments as needed, he said.

“This is obviously not how the government wants to do it,” Mr. Kravis said. But, he added, the separate trials were “not a death blow, for either case, by any means.”

Senator Menendez will be tried alongside two New Jersey businessmen, Wael Hana and Fred Daibes, who were also charged in the bribery conspiracy. All three have pleaded not guilty, as has Nadine Menendez.

Robert Menendez, who is near the end of his third full term, has consistently maintained his innocence and has left open the possibility of running for re-election in November. On the Senate floor in January, he attacked the South-

ern District prosecutors, saying they were engaged “not in a prosecution but a persecution” and were seeking “victory, not justice.”

The charges, disclosed in a September indictment, shook Washington and prompted even Mr. Menendez’s most stalwart Democratic allies to call for his resignation. The brazen nature of the charges has also fueled a backlash against so-called machine politics in New Jersey, which has, in turn, significantly increased the challenges his son, Representative Robert Menendez, faces as he seeks a second House term.

The trial is expected to delve into issues of political intrigue at home and abroad at a moment of heightened scrutiny over legislative self-dealing. Two weeks ago, Representative Henry Cuellar, Democrat of Texas, and his wife were charged with taking bribes from companies controlled by the government of Azerbaijan, intensifying interest in the role played by foreign agents.

His lawyers have argued in court that by charging the senator, who has represented New Jersey in Congress since 1993, prosecutors are seeking to criminalize routine legislative actions. In one filing, the lawyers said “the government’s apparent zeal to ‘get back’ at Senator Menendez for defeating its prior prosecution has overwhelmed its sound judgment.”

The senator’s lawyers have also asked the judge, Sidney H. Stein, to allow them to present the jury with the testimony of a psychiatrist, Karen B. Rosenbaum, who has examined the senator. She has concluded, they said, that “fear of scarcity” stemming from Mr. Menendez’s father’s death by suicide and his parents’ history as Cuban refugees led to a “longstanding coping mechanism of routinely withdrawing and storing cash in his home” — a theory that defense lawyers will presumably use to explain the money seized by investigators.

In summarizing the psychiatrist’s findings, the senator’s lawyers also disclosed that Mr. Menendez’s father, a compulsive gambler, died after Mr. Menendez stopped paying off his gambling debts, contributing to what they called “intergenerational trauma.”

Federal prosecutors oppose allowing Dr. Rosenbaum’s testimony, questioning the scientific basis for her conclusions and arguing that the defense is trying to “engender sympathy” from the jury improperly.

Dr. Denis Mukwege, Gynecological Surgeon and Human Rights Activist, Awarded Aurora Prize

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eliminated. His unwavering commitment to lifting survivors from despair and leading them onto the path towards a better future is truly moving,” said Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee and Co-Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London. “As the 2024 Aurora Prize Laureate, his legacy of healing and compassion continues to inspire us all.”

On May 9, Mukwege accepted the Aurora Prize in Los Angeles in honor of all the people in the world who are working to fight for gender equality and against rape as a weapon of war.

“At this moment, I reflect on the power of Gratitude in Action exemplified by so many of the women I’ve treated. These women stand up again after being subjected to extreme violence, and not only reclaim their own strength, but also extend a helping hand to others in need. I recall one patient whose case deeply affected our staff. After she was treated, she trained to become a nurse. She said she was doing it because she wanted to aid others like her,” stated Mukwege.

In 2024, major conflicts have driven

massive humanitarian needs, with the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimating 300 million people will need aid this year. Almost one child in every five around the world is living in or fleeing from conflict zones.

“We are meeting today at a crucial time to dedicate our attention and resources to individuals risking their lives to care for those who are suffering,” said Dame Louise Richardson, a member of the Selection Committee and president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. “Dr. Mukwege and so many others, through their extraordinary courage and commitment, inspire each of us to create a world where we recognize and act on our shared humanity.”

Guests at the Aurora Prize Ceremony also honored the contributions of two other shortlisted Aurora Humanitarians: Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, a human rights advocate who has been fearlessly defending the most vulnerable communities in Bahrain and the MENA region, and Nasrin Sotoudeh, a prominent Iranian human rights defender.

This was the eighth Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity. A video about the honoree is [available](#) online.

Afeyan Foundation Donation to AUA Creates Grants in Economics, Law and Medicine

AUA, from page 8

The three recipients of the Afeyan Research Grant are Manoogian Simone College of Business and Economics Associate Professor Dr. Vardan Baghdasaryan, Zaven P. and Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering Assistant Professor Dr. Varduhi Yeghiazaryan, and College of Humanities and Social Sciences lecturer Siranush Sahakyan.

Baghdasaryan’s team seeks to demonstrate that recent advances in natural language processing (NLP) and how the ability to analyze textual data can significantly improve the understanding of taxpayers’ operations and business and contribute to the task of tax fraud identification.

Yeghiazaryan’s team aims to design and implement a graphics-processing-unit-accelerated, deep-learning-based procedure for fully automated parallel segmentation and pixel-level classification of hyper-spectral images of atrial tissue undergoing radio-frequency ablation procedure, incorporating spatio-spectral information from the original image and segmentation output.

Sahakyan’s team will study the court decisions of the Anti-Corruption Court of Armenia in corruption cases (both criminal and civil), proposing adequate and feasible measures to address identified problems through implementation of evidence-based policy in the justice sector.

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Arts & Culture

HarborSide Films Presents 'The Four Mrs. Hemingways' At Armenian Cultural Foundation

ARLINGTON, Mass. — “Most people know of Ernest Hemingway, and many have read at least one book, *The Old Man and the Sea*, taught in most schools in the United States,” says playwright Robert Pushkar. “But not many know the importance of his four wives and the other women who shaped his life by providing inspiration, support, and love.”

The performance reading of “The Four Mrs. Hemingways,” an original play with music by the Wakefield writer, photographer and playwright Pushkar and produced by HarborSide Films of Boston will be held on Sunday, June 2, 2-5 p.m. at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Ave.

The event is cosponsored by the International Armenian Women's Association (AIWA).

President of HarborSide Films and producer Paul T. Boghosian believes “Hemingway was so much more than today's public image of him. He had a roguish personality, and he could be endlessly charming. He was extraordinarily handsome and manly — especially as a younger man, and he was the brilliant pathbreaking writer of the 20th century. Women loved to be in his company. Both idiosyncratic and charismatic, he always was interesting and compelling to both men and women.

“I've been working with Robert Pushkar on this project for a number of years, and we feel we have cracked the Hemingway code. The play outlines the unique relationship he had with his accomplished wives. Independent thinkers, each had her own agenda and her own reasons for staying in love and married to him — until she couldn't any further. Most interestingly and amusingly with wit and insight, the play showcases how the wives interacted with each other and revealed the true nature of the love of life they shared, and how Hemingway fit into it.”

In the play, Hemingway's wives — Hadley, Pauline, Martha, and Mary — meet in an imagined dream space, each confronting her own past, fears, regrets, hopes, and unresolved conflicts, while individually interpreting her marriage to the same man. Each was an accomplished and independent woman in her own era, reflected in the cultural expectations and social mores of womanhood at the time. Three were journalists; Hadley was an accomplished pianist.

Fantastic, unsettling and creatively imagined sequences are juxtaposed among realistic settings, which capture characters' emotional truths. Marlene Dietrich, with whom the writer had a 27-year intimate correspondence, adds theatrical flourishes with songs which provide further narrative commentary.

Directed by award-winning Boston-area director Steve Bogart, it features a stellar cast of leading

see ACF, page 14



The collage by Diane Holland dedicated to Joan Agajanian Quinn (Karine Armen Photo)

‘Divergent Synthesis’ Of Cultures at Korean Cultural Center

By Karine Armen
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — On Thursday, May 2, the Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles, hosted “Divergent Synthesis,” a significant multicultural, juried art exhibition held in collaboration with the LAUNCH LA Gallery. Judged by Dr. Virginia Moon, the associate curator of Korean Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and Peter Frank, associate editor for *Visual Art Source*, the competition showcased a myriad of artistic expressions.

One captivating piece among the exhibiting artists was Diane Holland's unique collage titled “Culture Alive: Homage to Joan Agajanian Quinn.” This artwork, a fusion of a map of Armenia and the vibrant hues of its flag, was printed on Kodak Endura metallic paper and measured 33 x 25 1/2 inches, inviting viewers to delve into its depth and complexity.

see SYNTHESIS, page 14



Joan Agajanian Quinn and Diane Holland (Karine Armen Photo)

IALA and h-pem Open the 2024 Young Armenian Poets Awards: In Honor of Tamar Asadourian

LOS ANGELES — The International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA), in partnership with h-pem, announces the fourth annual Young Armenian Poets Awards in honor of Tamar Asadourian, a contest for exceptional Armenian writers between the ages of 14 and 18. Over the past three years, the Young Armenian Poets Awards has provided a space for young Armenian writers from all over the world to express themselves and have their voices be heard on the global stage. This year is no exception.

This year's entrants are asked to submit work that explores the idea of “home.” Responses may consider physical spaces such as buildings and land as well as more abstracted notions such as the sanctuary of language, memory, or the one suggested in Naguib Mahfouz's words: “Home is not where you were born; home is where all your attempts to escape cease.”

Submissions can come from any young writer who identifies as Armenian, no matter gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, creed, national origin, socio-economic class, educational background, personal style/appearance, citizenship and immigration status, or political affiliation. Submissions will be read by IALA Advisory Board members and judges Gregory Djanikian, Arminé Iknadossian, and Raffi Wartanian. Cash awards totaling \$600 will be granted for the top three poems, which will be published online on IALA's and h-pem's websites in the fall of 2024. Winning authors will be invited to read their work at IALA's annual Emerging Writers Showcase and receive a copy of Tamar Asadourian's *I remember you my future...*

“Literature is a vital element of a people and a culture — we are our stories,” says IALA founder Olivia Katrandjian. “As writers, we must support each other if we want to thrive not only as individuals, but as a literary community. As a people, Armenians must support our writers if we want the world to listen to our stories. IALA provides a platform through which young Armenian writers can be heard.”

Poet and IALA Advisory Board member Gregory Djanikian, who serves as a judge for the program, adds that YAPA is “a wonderful way for young poets to know that their poems are being read by strangers, that their poems are afloat in the world.”

“We continue to honor and create a platform for the next generation of exciting Armenian poets who have so much to teach us,” says contest founder and director Alan Semerdjian, “and this year we're thankful, especially, to the family of musician/poet Asadourian whose support

see POETS, page 15

‘Divergent Synthesis’ of Cultures at Korean Cultural Center

SYNTHESIS, from page 13

Holland, a distinguished American artist, shares a long-standing friendship with Joan Agajanian Quinn. Her illustrious portfolio, spanning exhibitions in Armenia, France and Japan, is a testament to her global recognition and artistic prowess across traditional mediums and digital collages. Her collages were even featured in the 1997 publication *Amari Marbu*, with text penned by the renowned art critic, judge, curator, and writer Peter Frank, inspiring artists worldwide.

Quinn herself is a multitasking Armenian artist whose works grace numerous prestigious galleries, as extensively covered in articles by the Mirror-Spectator. Quinn’s artistic influence extends to television, her shows, and her YouTube channel, “Joan Quinn Profiles,” where she conducts insightful interviews with a diverse array of artists and actors. Notable figures like Lucas Reiner and Astrid Preston count among those who have painted her.

Reflecting on the inspiration behind her collage, Diane Holland shared, “It was an honor when I visited Joan with Peter Frank. I used my camera, which became a lens of investigation.” She elaborated, “I worked with a lot of elements. It took a long time to do research and understand Armenian cultures.” At the exhibition’s opening reception, Joan Agajanian Quinn herself pointed to the collage, identifying its elements: “This is the flag of Armenia, my father and his race car, Armenian coins, my *keet* and *achk* (nose and eye).”

The exhibition will run until May 31 at the Korean Cultural Center, with gallery hours from Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Group photo with Joan Agajanian Quinn and artists and organizers at the Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles (Karine Armen Photo)

HarborSide Films Presents ‘The Four Mrs. Hemingways’ at Armenian Cultural Foundation

ACF, from page 13

talents of the Boston stage. “Robert has written a highly theatrical and imaginative play,” says Bogart, “that gives agency, recognition, and respect to the wives of the deeply complicated Ernest Hemingway. What emerges from the women’s complicated relationships is dignity, integrity, and compassion.”

The play trends with the public’s enduring fascination for historic biographical drama depicted in theater, film, and television. “I chose key moments, turning points, if you will, to examine the importance of relationships and their outcomes,” Pushkar says. “In his writing, Hemingway had an astonishing ability to forge characters from people around him. Everyone always wasn’t satisfied with his depictions, but they were forever immortalized in his works.”

Pushkar is an independent scholar in Hemingway studies and a founding member of the Hemingway Foundation and Society. Besides investigations at the Hemingway archives at the John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, he has conducted primary research with Hemingway family, friends, and associates, including interviews with the author’s sole-surviving son, Patrick Hemingway of Bozeman, Montana.

A discussion with the playwright, director, and cast will follow the performance.

The suggested donation is \$25 per person, and tickets are available at the door. To reserve a ticket, call the HarborSide Films office in Boston and leave your name, phone number and the number attending. For more information, visit <https://www.harborsidefilmsBoston.com/>



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).

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Auntie Hasmig's Apricot Bar

BEIRUT — Hasmig Ouzounian Babahekian was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1942, and passed away on January 2, 2024 at the age of 81. Hasmig's parents were the late Joseph and Juliette Ouzounian who lived in Beirut but whose families were originally from Gaziantep. (Gaziantep, historically Aintab and still informally called Antep, is a major city in south-central Turkey. Gaziantep is not only one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, it is renowned for its rich and diverse cuisine, incredible local produce and creative use of spices. It is famous for its pistachios, baklava, lahmajoun and kebabs. In 2015, Gaziantep was added to the list in the gastronomy category of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network.)

Hasmig's culinary expertise went back to her early childhood and continued throughout her life's journey. Prized family recipes that may have been lost (since they were rarely documented or written down) were passed down to her through her beloved mother, grandmother, family, and special friends. These multi-generational collections spanned decades. Hasmig became an exceptional cook and baker, and excelled in creating traditional Armenian and Middle Eastern dishes, breads, and pastries (including nazook and lahmajoun) that delighted her family and guests for years.

As a young girl, Hasmig attended the Armenian Evangelical Central High School in Achrafieh in Beirut. She later met and married Garabed Babahekian, a former chairman of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Founders Body in Beirut, and a leader of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, who passed away in Beirut in 2020 at the age of 94. A respected Lebanese-Armenian philanthropist, Babahekian was an industrialist who made significant economic investments in Armenia. He served the Vahan Tekeyan Middle School of Beirut as a member of its board of trustees. His status as an intellectual leader of the Armenian community gave this support added value, and is a worthy example for the new generation of school graduates to follow in service to the Armenian people and homeland.

Over their 60 years of marriage, Hasmig supported her husband's many philanthropic activities and endeavors in Lebanon and Armenia. During the war years in Lebanon, Garabed sadly lost his eyesight so Hasmig organized his daily



Hasmig Ouzounian Babahekian

work calendar, communications and correspondence, read Armenian and Lebanese newspapers to him each day, coordinated his transportation schedule, and personally drove him to meetings and conferences -- no matter the distance or location. They both believed in the value of family, tradition, the church, and those organizations that support Armenian causes around the world. The couple regularly welcomed family and friends into their home where Hasmig would entertain and proudly serve many of her family's treasured recipes.

The couple contributed to numerous philanthropic projects in Lebanon and Armenia. Their list of accomplishments in the Armenian community and religious work is extensive, but one undertaking that stands out is their sending of more than 250 Cedars of Lebanon Tree plantings to Armenia for the advancement of improved relations between the two countries.

Hasmig left behind three loving children, daughter, Jenny Babahekian, daughter, Sossi and husband, Vatche Kalindjian, and son, Sebouh and wife Lena Babahekian. Grandchildren: Tamara Kiriakos, Armand Toursarkissian, Karin Kalindjian, Kristine Kalindjian, Garo Babahekian, and Alec Babahekian. Great granddaughters; Ashley Kiriakos and Chloe Kiriakos, sister-in-law, Maro Ouzounian, sister, Rosemary Ouzounian, brother, Jack and sister-in-law Melene Ouzounian, and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her cherished husband, her parents, brother, George Ouzounian, and brother-in-law, Albert Ouzounian. Hasmig's funeral was held on January 3, 2024 at the Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia in Antelias, after which the burial was conducted in the Bourj Hammoud Armenian Orthodox Cemetery.

"The apricot is one of the major fruits produced in Lebanon, located mainly in the North of Lebanon and northern Bekaa. Besides being consumed fresh, apricots are often transformed into jams, juice and desserts. This is a wonderful family favorite that can be enjoyed any season of year. I think of Hasmig every time I make her wonderful apricot cookie bar. I use my own homemade apricot jam, but store-bought jam works just as well," says her sister-in-law, Melene Ouzounian. "This recipe is also featured at our monthly drive-thru luncheons at the St. Paul Armenian Church in Fresno, and it is a real crowd-pleaser."

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound butter, softened
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla (optional)
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 4 to 6 cups all-purpose flour
- 3 cups apricot jam (homemade or store-bought)

PREPARATION:

Combine the first 6 ingredients to the crumble stage. Press 2/3 of the mixture into a 10 X 15 baking sheet. Spread with the jam and sprinkle with the remaining flour mixture. Bake in a preheated 350°F oven for 20-25 minutes or until edges are light golden brown. Let cool for 15 minutes before serving.

Also see: "Graduation Ceremonies at Beirut's Vahan Tekeyan School Dedicated to the Memory of ADL Leader Garabed Babahekian," <https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/07/29/graduation-ceremonies-at-beirut-vahan-tekeyan-school-dedicated-to-the-memory-of-adl-leader-garabed-babahekian/>

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The late Garabed and Hasmig Babahekian at a family event in Lebanon

IALA and h-pem Open the 2024 Young Armenian Poets Awards: In Honor of Tamar Asadourian

POETS, from page 13

going forward will allow us to provide increased monetary prizes and assist in the vision of the Young Armenian Poets Awards initiative."

Tamar Asadourian (1980-2020) was an accomplished pianist, author and artist. At 16, she performed at Carnegie Hall, and was acclaimed as "an absorbing artist of uncommon sensitivity and intelligence." While studying at the Manhattan School of Music, Asadourian was forced to give up the pia-

no due to illness. She suffered from severe depression, and dedicated herself to writing, drawing and the arts. After her untimely death, a collection of her poetry, prose and artwork was published in a volume entitled I remember you my future... (Naregatsi Art Institute, Yerevan, Armenia, 2022).

The Young Armenian Poets Awards this year and going forward are made possible by a generous donation from members of Tamar's family, Sam and Tamig Ekizian.

The deadline for submissions is 11:59 PM (Eastern Time) on June 2. Awards are expected to be announced in the fall of 2024.

Read previous winning poems, watch IALA's 2023 Emerging Writers Showcase, and submit your work here.

For more details, full submission guidelines, and more information on past winners, please visit IALA's website, www.armenianliterary.org, or contact Alan Semerdjian, Young Armenian Poets Awards

Founder and Director, at ialayoungpoet-sawards@gmail.com.

The International Armenian Literary Alliance supports and celebrates writers by fostering the development and distribution of Armenian literature in the English language.

H-Pem is an Armenian cultural platform that aims to highlight Armenian art, culture and other achievements by elevating Armenian voices from all walks of life.



ARTS & CULTURE

Araz Hadjian

A Nomadic Spirit from Armenia to Antarctica

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN-BUENOS AIRES — Photographer Araz Hadjian was born in 1970 in Aleppo, Syria, and in the same year, she moved to Argentina with her family. She received her primary and secondary education in Armenian colleges. Later, she earned a degree in design from the State University of Buenos Aires. Araz has participated in numerous training courses in Art and Photography and has exhibited her work in various photography exhibitions, including solo exhibitions in Buenos Aires, Yerevan, London, as well as at the Maritime Museum and the former Prison of Ushuaia, Argentina. From 1988 to 1995, she served as an Armenian language teacher at the San Gregorio El Iluminador Educational Institute in Buenos Aires. In 2023, she was a finalist with an honorable mention in the Culture category in the Patagon Journal 2023 contest in Chile.

Dear Araz, when I met you last year in Yerevan, you delighted me as a dynamic person who travels all around the world with her camera, speaking multiple languages and open to people from all walks of life. Do you consider yourself a cosmopolitan?

More than cosmopolitan, I consider myself a nomadic spirit, one that easily adapts to different places and social and cultural groups. My curiosity about the world began with reading Marco Polo’s travels, which sparked my imagination with worlds full of mysterious corners. My first trips, in addition to family vacations, were the annual camps of the Homenetmen Scout Group, and as I grew older, I continued traveling whenever I could. Almost always, I find myself in a place where I feel I could stay and live...

You have traveled to many countries around the world. Can you name three lesser-known destinations that you found particularly interesting?

1) Iran, 2) Armenia, 3) Antarctica.

Iran: the human factor is the main reason, the Iranians are some of the most hospitable people I have met while traveling, then there are some surreal landscapes like Yazd, with its tunnels, passageways and chimneys... the Persian architecture, the sweets...



Araz Hadjian in Armenia

Armenia: because even though it has already entered the list of countries with a lot of tourism, it is still an exotic country. For me, getting to know Armenia was verifying that the fantasy I had in my mind was real, the medieval churches built on the edge of cliffs, ravines, delicious fruits that I still haven’t identified...the vitality of the people always willing to help the visitor.

Antarctica: because it is more than a visual experience, it is a sensory journey! I have been twice in Antarctica, and the Antarctic experience goes beyond the purely visual; although the visuals are incredibly impressive, what struck me the most was the profound silence and the vast



Araz Hadjian on the top of Ararat Mountain

expanse of absolute white. At times, it felt like I was witnessing the genesis of the universe.

I cannot say about the last one, but I totally agree with your number one and two! And I will not be surprised if you tell you met an Armenian in Antarctica.

Coincidentally, the doctor on the ship I traveled on was from Armenia — the now late Konstantin Petrosyan. It was a pleasant mutual surprise to be able to speak Armenian in Antarctica.

What is your most unusual experience as photographer?

Unfortunately, more than unusual, it was something that I never thought I would witness and it was the most painful experience I witnessed, when I documented the exodus of the population of Artsakh in September 2023 after the Azeri occupation. While documenting it I felt as if I myself were the photographer of the images of the 1915 genocide, and that all Armenians have so engraved in our souls. I never imagined seeing this new Armenian tragedy with my own eyes.

You were born into the family of Armenian writer, educator, and journalist Bedros Hadjian (1933-2012). What was the most important lesson you learned from him, both as a person and as an Armenian?

My father dedicated his entire life to teaching, researching, and promoting Armenian culture and history as a journalist, writer, and educator in Syria and Argentina. His work is widely recognized throughout the diaspora. His greatest lesson was humility in human relationships and selfless dedication in pursuit of his vocation, which, in his case, was safeguarding the Armenian identity in a country as remote as Argentina.

By the way, the year my father passed away, I went to climb the top of Ararat mountain. There I buried my father’s portrait, wrapped in Armenian tricolor banner.

Despite the distance between Argentina and Armenia, you frequently visit your homeland and share its stories with the world. Last year, you came to document the patricide of Artsakh people. Moving forward, I hope your visits to Armenia will be filled with positive experiences.

Although, unfortunately, like all Armenians worldwide, last year was a very difficult blow due to the displacement of Armenians in Artsakh. Every visit I make to Armenia is filled with beautiful moments. Each time I go, I seriously



Araz Hadjian in Antarctica

consider the possibility of staying and living there permanently; I hope to define this one day. What gratifies me the most is the ease of integration and making friends with whom to share experiences. Also, the vibrant socio-cultural life, especially in Yerevan, where I spend most of my time since one of my brothers lives there. It’s a city where there’s never enough time to enjoy everything it offers. Exploring the country and visiting not only the classic tourist spots but also more remote locations full of stories and interesting people deserves a separate chapter. I love going with the flow, without a defined itinerary, and hitchhiking around Armenia. Doing this, I meet colorful people and experienced unforgettable moments. The months pass by in Armenia without ever getting bored!



ARTS & CULTURE

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CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

MAY 19 — (Re)Connecting with Western Armenia: A Symposium in Honor of Armen Aroyan, who had led more than 1,400 “pilgrimages” to Western Armenia. Hybrid event, with remarks by Manuk Avedikyan, USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies; Prof. Carel Bertram, San Francisco State University; Prof. Peter Cowe, UCLA; filmmaker Ani Hovannisian Kevorkian; Prof. Christina Maranci of Harvard University and Steven Sim, independent researcher of Armenian Cultural Remains. Moderated by Dr. Carla Garapedian of the Armenian Film Foundation. 4 p.m. pacific, Ararat-Eskijian Museum Sheen Chapel, 15105 Mission Hills Road, Mission Hills. Reception to follow. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and Research Center, NAASR, USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies, the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA and the Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Studies at UCLA.

MASSACHUSETTS

- MAY 26 — First Holy Communion.** The community is invited to celebrate the children’s First Holy Communion, on Sunday, at 10:30 a.m., at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 200 Lexington St., Belmont.
- 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 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.stjames-watertown.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 Beriyeve, 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 Armenian Heritage Park ongoing Programs: MOVEMENT & WALKING MEDITATION. LABYRINTH WELLNESS WALKS TOGETHER through October. Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m. Series is offered in collaboration with the Boston Health Commission and The Greenway Conservancy Fitness program. For details, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar
- CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US!** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Each month highlights the country of origin of many living and working in the City of Boston and beyond. Series is offered in collaboration with Age-Friendly Boston. For dates and details, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar
- JUNE 16 — Boston Tekeyan Cultural Association** is hosting a Father’s Day Bar-B-Q. Sunday, 2 p.m. at the Baika Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown (Use Norseman Street side door). \$40 per person. Khorovadz, pilaf, salad and more. Special raffle. RSVP bostontca@gmail.com or call Sossy at 617-281-1647.
- 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.

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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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Baikar Association, Inc.
755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509
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FAX: 617-924-2887
www.mirrorspectator.com
E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com
For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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COMMENTARY

Pashinyan in Moscow: Deep or Superficial Contradictions?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Nikol Pashinyan’s visit to Moscow had some interesting nuances. Pashinyan did not attend Vladimir Putin’s inauguration ceremony on May 7, citing the absence of an invitation. On May 8, he participated in a meeting of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) leaders. However, on the early morning of May 9, he returned to Yerevan without joining the planned parade on Red Square celebrating the victory day in the Great Patriotic War (World War II) of 1941-1945, despite the presence of the presidents or leaders of other countries.

During his time in Moscow, Pashinyan chaired the regular session of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council as part of the meeting of EAEU leaders. Shortly after the session, he had a tête-à-tête meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, which was the most crucial part of his trip considering the recent tense relations between Yerevan and Moscow. According to the official website of the Armenian government, Pashinyan mentioned that the two parties discussed the most crucial issues of bilateral relations and regional matters.

The official statement from the Russian President was more or less similar to the Armenian press release. But it was only an official side of the meeting. Given the complexity of Armenian-Russian relations, Armenians eagerly anticipated further details about these meetings, which were initially reported by pro-Pashinyan media. According to these sources, Pashinyan insisted in Moscow that all Russian forces deployed in Tavush, Syunik, Vayots Dzor, and other Armenian regions during or after the 44-day war should be withdrawn. Additionally, as per the pro-Pashinyan media reports, Russian personnel were to be relocated from Zvartnots International Airport.

Hours later, the press secretary of Russian President Putin commented on the meeting, mentioning that “Indeed, due to the fact that conditions have changed, Pashinyan and Putin agreed on this issue.” Press Secretary Peskov added that at the request of the Armenian side, Russian border guards will remain on the border with Iran and Turkey.

Despite the verbal tension, Armenia has not taken any actions directly against Russia or Russian interests. Despite initial discussions about leaving the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Armenia has not formally applied for termination, which requires a 6-month notice. Yerevan mentioned freezing its CSTO membership, but the organization’s charter does not allow for membership freezing. Armenia also declared it will not pay the CSTO membership fee, which is a small administrative cost funding a CSTO staff.

As for the economic side of relations, they are experiencing growth, with Russia remaining Armenia’s top economic partner. Armenian-Russian as well as Armenian-EAEU trade are experiencing increasing numbers and high-level cooperation, as noted by Putin and Pashinyan during their recent meeting with satisfaction. It is obvious that Armenia has no plans to leave the EAEU, as often discussed in Armenia. Yerevan is required to provide a year’s notice according to the EAEU charter, which it has not done so far. Despite the aforementioned outward tension, Armenia in fact does not appear ready or capable of exiting Russia’s sphere of influence.

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

ICC Should Consider the New Armenian Genocide Petition

By Luis Moreno Ocampo

December 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the Genocide Convention’s adoption. And yet, here we stand, at a moment when, despite constant discussion of the term, the international community is failing miserably to address the problem.

Just in the last months of 2023, the U.N. Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Alice Wairimu Nderitu alerted the world to six different situations where there’s risk of genocide against ethnic groups. She mentioned the risks affecting the Rohingya, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Tigray in Ethiopia, Israelis and Palestinians, and the Masalit in Darfur. Since her mandate doesn’t allow her to say if genocide was, indeed, committed, this is the most she can do.

And now, we face another: Last month, the California-based Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ) petitioned the International Criminal Court (ICC), where I served as the first chief prosecutor, to investigate Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev for genocide against Armenians in Armenia — and it’s a petition the ICC should consider.

The challenge in substantiating genocide often lies in proving intent to destroy — in whole or in part — a designated group. That’s why the massive dossier presented to the ICC on Apr. 18 by U.S. Orange County Superior Court Judge Gassia Apkarian, who represents the Center for Truth and Justice, is remarkable. It presents the consistent declarations made by Aliyev over the last decade, unequivocally demonstrating his intention to destroy ethnic Armenians.

To be clear, this isn’t just about the Armenian community in Nagorno-Karabakh — a disputed, self-governing enclave within Azerbaijan. The communication is focused on different forms of genocide committed against Armenians in Armenia itself.

As early as April 2015, Aliyev published a statement on the Azerbaijan government’s official website, warning ethnic Armenians: “If you do not want to die, then get out of Azerbaijani lands.” He has also repeatedly dehumanized ethnic Armenians, referring to them as a “virus,” “rats,” “dogs,” “devils,”

“terrorists,” “fascists,” “enemies,” “usurping interlopers,” “barbarians and vandals,” while encouraging violence against them.

To destroy different Armenian groups that were in areas of Armenia under illegal Azerbaijani occupation, he created conditions calculated to bring about the physical destruction of civilians and produce mental harm (as defined by the Genocide Convention’s Article 2c), in turn leading to their decimation (Article 2b) and forcible displacement. Subsequently, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces launched military attacks to take control of these areas, indiscriminately killing ethnic Armenian civilians who refused, or were unable, to flee (Article 2a).

In Nagorno-Karabakh, Aliyev implemented this strategy in clear view of the international community.

Initially, his armed forces enforced an unlawful blockade of the Lachin corridor — the only lifeline to the outside world — for nine months, ignoring two binding orders from the International Court of Justice, which warned about the risk of genocide against the 120,000 Armenians living there.

Subsequently, in September 2023, Aliyev launched unlawful military aggression, taking control of the territory and forcing ethnic Armenians to flee.

Aliyev celebrated this forced displacement of ethnic Armenians during several televised addresses, declaring: “I said that if they do not leave our lands of their own free will, we will chase them away like dogs, and we are doing that.”

However, Judge Apkarian’s legal analysis sheds new light on previous facts, uncovering that a similar genocidal strategy was implemented in sovereign Armenia’s provinces of Gegarkunik, Syunik, Vayots Dzor, and Ararat in May 2021, resulting in the unlawful, forcible displacement of at least 3,000 ethnic Armenians.

She also judged that women captured by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces were systematically singled out to be subjected to gender-specific brutalities, resulting in mental harm to the entire Armenian community.

In one of many incidents in 2022, the “Yashma” brigade of the Azerbaijani Armed

Forces shared a video on social media, showing a woman — captured, mutilated and killed, stripped naked, her eye gouged and replaced with a stone, her legs cut off, her ears cut off and her severed finger placed in her mouth, being kicked by an Azerbaijani soldier. The CFTJ’s documentation reveals that approximately 20,000 Azerbaijani users downloaded some of the images depicting tortured Armenian women within a mere five-day period.

Today, Azerbaijan’s genocidal policy continues to pose an imminent threat to other Armenians residing within Armenia’s borders as well. In 2023, Aliyev stated: “The Azerbaijani flag flew in Karabakh today . . . Today, the Azerbaijani flag flies in the Zangezur mountains. Can that human-like creature [ethnic Armenians] and his likes approach those flags? . . . One day, they may wake up to see the Azerbaijan flag above their heads.”

Then, on Mar. 9, 2024, Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev demanding the immediate surrender of border villages Baganis Ayr, Aşagi Eskipara, Heyrimli and Kizilhicili by Armenia, which would tragically condemn their ethnic Armenian residents to the same fate. Eventually, an agreement was reached, and Armenia agreed to return all four villages.

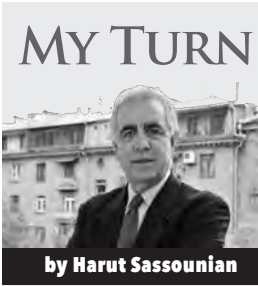
Finally, Azerbaijan’s parliament confirmed its genocidal intent toward Armenians in Armenia by adopting a resolution titled “Statement on the return of Western Azerbaijanis to their historical homeland,” claiming its sovereignty over the entirety of Armenian territory and marking the first genocide adopted by a parliament.

It’s a bitter reality that more than a century after the first widely recognized genocide of the modern era, where over a million Armenians were slaughtered by the Ottomans, Armenians are again the victims of genocide.

Indeed, soon after the ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Azerbaijan to show his support. And Western political leaders seem to support Aliyev too — European Commission President Ursula von der see ICC RECOGNITION, page 19



COMMENTARY



Archbishop Bagrat is Leading The Effort To Oust Pashinyan and Save Armenia

A lot has happened in Armenia this past week that has shaken to the core the incompetent, inexperienced, defeatist and deceptive Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who should have resigned on November 10, 2020, the day he signed the capitulation agreement with Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan came to power by exploiting the people’s gullibility and their resentment of the former leaders. He claimed that he will bring peace to Armenia, their sons will no longer die in wars, they will live in prosperity with high-paying jobs, there will be no corruption, and a million other falsehoods with which he misled the public.

Drunk with his newly-found power, Pashinyan became completely unhinged. He arrogantly announced, while he and his mob of followers surrounded the Parliament building in 2018, that either he will become the prime minister or Armenia will not have a prime minister! This is the pronouncement of a self-declared democratic leader who became a dictator.

During the campaign for the parliamentary elections in 2021, Pashinyan stood on a stage holding a hammer and promising to crush the heads of his political opponents. He also pledged to slam his Armenian rivals to the wall and flatten them on the asphalt. This is his crude understanding of democracy.

Pashinyan told his crowd of followers in 2018 that he will leave his office when the people demand his resignation. Since then, he has ignored all demands for his resignation clinging to his seat of power. During one of the many demonstrations calling for his resignation, when a journalist asked him if he will keep his word and resign, he pompously replied, “they aren’t people,” implying that he considers only those who support him as “people.”

Even though Pashinyan’s supporters falsely claim that he was elected Prime Minister, the fact is that he was not, since the Prime Minister’s post is not an elective position. He was chosen by his parliamentary majority which is composed of equally incompetent and inexperienced young men and women.

Pashinyan has no tolerance for dissent. If anyone living in Armenia dares to criticize him, the Prime Minister orders his well-fed police squad to lay the critic on the ground, beat him up and arrest him. His top ally, Alen Simonyan, the Chairman of the Parliament, spit on the face of an Armenian in the street, just because he criticized him. And if a Diaspora Armenian disagrees with Pashinyan, he will not be allowed to enter Armenia after he arrives at the Yerevan Airport. Under Pashinyan, Armenia has become a dictatorship, ruled by the whims of one man.

Now comes Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, the Primate of the Diocese of Tavush, who opposes Pashinyan’s arbitrary decision to turn over to Azerbai-

jan four Armenian border villages without a referendum and parliamentary approval.

The archbishop has come immediately under vicious attacks by Pashinyan himself and his cronies, including the thousands of fake Facebook followers who are paid to defame anyone who dares to criticize the prime minister.

Pashinyan called the archbishop and his supporters “drug lords” and “foreign agents sent from overseas” without a shred of evidence. It is very ugly when the head of a government uses street language to denigrate his political opponents. Anyone who dares to criticize Pashinyan is immediately labeled “a Kremlin agent” who is paid thousands of dollars to “undermine the country.” Why should anyone get paid to undermine Armenia when Pashinyan is already undermining the country all by himself?

In a strange turn of events, the archbishop has copied the same tactic Pashinyan used to come to power by marching from Gyumri to Yerevan in 2018. Thus Srpazan is giving Pashinyan a dose of his own medicine. The only difference is that Pashinyan violated many laws to come to power by smashing the doors of the Armenian Radio Station’s headquarters, surrounding a Court House with his followers to prevent the judges from entering the building, and blocking the entrances to the Parliament.

The archbishop has advantages and disadvantages. Srpazan is a clergyman whose weapon is truth and morality. He preaches peace, love and non-violence. All attempts by various opposition groups to topple Pashinyan by street protests in the past six years have failed. The archbishop is the only person who has gained the trust of a large number of Armenians who eagerly joined his march from Tavush to Yerevan. Over 100,000 Armenians flooded the city’s main square to listen to his message.

When Srpazan arrived in Yerevan on May 9, he announced that he was giving Pashinyan one hour to resign. When the hour passed and there was no resignation, the archbishop did not want to go to the next step of urging his 100,000 followers to storm the building and oust the prime minister. Instead, Srpazan announced a series of civil disobedience acts throughout the country.

Srpazan is now consulting with various opposition leaders to discuss the next steps. If and when Pashinyan resigns or is impeached, both unlikely scenarios, the archbishop said that a transition government will be formed which will later hold elections for Parliament to choose a new prime minister. It remains to be seen if Srpazan’s peaceful plans will succeed in ousting Pashinyan.

The best reason for getting rid of Pashinyan is that the presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkey have eagerly praised Pashinyan for his repeated and endless concessions. Prominent Azerbaijani analyst Ali Hajizade even suggested the possibility of sending Azerbaijani and Turkish troops to Yerevan to support Pashinyan’s government!

All patriotic Armenians, putting aside their internal differences, should form a coalition to establish a transitional government that will hold the next elections. Public pressure must be exerted on Pashinyan to resign as soon as possible before the country ceases to exist due to attacks by internal and external enemies. This may be the last chance to save Armenia.

Blinken Provides Case Study in How Not to Do Diplomacy

By Michael Rubin

After he took office, President Joe Biden declared, “Diplomacy is back.” Top aides Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan repeated the mantra. Their implication? The Trump era’s unilateralism and tweet-from-the-hip chaos were over.

A statesman embracing diplomacy, however, is akin to a surgeon wielding a scalpel: The tool depends upon the skill of its operator. While the Biden administration embraced the traditional trappings of diplomacy, its members approached the strategy with all the skill of a narcoleptic, epileptic monkey high on crack.

Put aside Sullivan’s curtailment of maximum pressure on Iran as its foreign reserves circled the drain, Blinken’s lifting of sanctions on Yemen’s Houthi militia, or the Biden team’s waiver of sanctions on Nord Stream 2 in advance of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. To understand just how weak American diplomacy appears both to adversaries and allies, consider Azerbaijan.

In December 2020, just a month after President Ilham Aliyev completed the first phase of Azerbaijan’s conquest of Nagorno-Karabakh, Andrew Schofer, the lead US diplomat on the crisis, traveled to Yerevan and Baku. Aliyev humiliated Schofer on live television, bragging about how Azerbaijan’s military prowess achieved what American diplomacy did not and then asking, “Why are you here?”

That episode should have colored Blinken’s approach to Azerbaijan when he entered office, but, alas, a willingness to tolerate Aliyev’s disdain for America came to define the Biden era.

The list of humiliation is long. When in June 2023 Azerbaijani snipers fired on a US Agency for International Development project in Yeraskh, killing an Indian worker, Blinken and USAID Administrator Samantha Power went silent.

Then, three months later acting Assistant Secretary of State Yuri Kim testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States would not tolerate any Azerbaijani military offensive. Days later, Azerbaijan ordered its drones and tanks across the region to erase the region’s 1,700-year embrace of Christianity. The US response? Crickets, even after it emerged that Aliyev had lied outright to Kim just days earlier about his intentions.

Well, not quite crickets. Power, whose rise to power came by criticizing the cynicism and immorality of past American inaction against genocide, responded with a visit to Armenia to lay a wreath at the genocide memorial. Rather than do so sincerely, though, she brought a camera crew with her to document her visit. As Armenians noted, however, USAID’s investment in public relations flacks to trail Power actually surpassed what Power had offered to the 120,000 starving citizens of the region during the 11-month blockade that preceded the attack. A designated terrorist group in Gaza got airdrops of food and medicine; indigenous Christians in Nagorno-Karabakh? Glossy head shots.

As criticism grew, Blinken and Power met with European counterparts to develop an aid package for Nagorno-Karabakh refugees. Alas, Blinken and Power earmarked much of the money for climate change and LGBT issues, hardly at the top of the refugees’ list. Aliyev responded as only dictators know how: He sent his forces deeper into Armenian territory.

When the State Department finds itself in a hole, Blinken digs. The same week that the Justice Depart-

ment leveled charges at Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX) for allegedly corrupting his office on behalf of Azerbaijan, Blinken sent U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan Mark Libby to visit Shushi, an ancient Armenian city ethnically cleansed by Azerbaijani forces. Satellite imagery from after the guns fell silent shows Azerbaijan has continued to destroy churches.

As the French recalled their ambassador from Baku due to such outrages, the US ambassador today stands on the side of genocide and destruction of churches. While the French now establish a consulate in an Armenian region Azerbaijan seeks to annex, the State Department goes AWOL.

Just as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher warned President George H.W. Bush against the back-drop of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, “Don’t go wobbly on me now, George,” the French are showing Biden and Blinken the meaning of backbone. Unfortunately, in the face of aggression and gratuitous anti-Americanism, the Biden team is going full invertebrate.

(The above article first appeared on May 9, 2024 in the *Washington Examiner*.)

ICC Should Consider Petition

ICC RECOGNITION, from page 18

Leyen has even called Azerbaijan a “crucial partner.”

All this is a sobering reminder of how little we’ve learned from history, and how vulnerable we still are to evil. In 1932, Albert Einstein wrote to Sigmund Freud, arguing that extreme nationalism could beget violence on a huge scale. It’s time the world understood this as well — and created new strategies to stop all genocide.

(Luis Moreno Ocampo was the first Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. This opinion piece originally appeared on www.politico.eu on May 10.)



OBITUARY

Robert Aram Kaloosdian

Armenian Assembly Founder, Community Leader

BELMONT, Mass. — Robert Aram Kaloosdian of Belmont, died on May 12, 2024.

He was the husband of Marianne (Voynick) Kaloosdian; father of Paul (Carl) Kaloosdian, Lori (Roland) Pease and Sonia (Brian) Hale; grandfather of Marianna and Nathaniel Pease, Alexandra, Julia and Emily Hale and great-grandfather of Ava.

He was a founder of the Armenian Assembly founder and core leader of the organization.

A lawyer's lawyer, a community leader his entire life, a universally respected activist with a unique set of skills that allowed him to transcend partisanship and communicate with all elements of the Armenian community in all its diversity, a man whom many trusted to advance the welfare of their community and to represent it within the structures of the community and the agencies of the broader society they inhabited, a constant presence in the Armenian Massachusetts scene whose contacts with state and national officials began in the Kennedy era, and the indispensable backbone of the organization to which he devoted decades of his attention to guiding and promoting, the longest serving board member of the Armenian Assembly, a friend to the scholarly community, an author, a firm believer in the potential of the Armenian people, especially its American contingent, and a committed friend of Armenia and Artsakh, Aram Kaloosdian epitomized the best of a generation of Armenian Americans who have left the deepest imprint upon their society.

Robert Aram Kaloosdian was among the original handful of activists who 52 years ago took up the challenge of creating a new entity for the Armenian-American community. Approached by Dr. John Hanessian and Dr. Haigaz Grigorian about their idea of forming an Armenian Assembly, he was persuaded by the value of their proposal and became over the course the next 50 years its most persistent promoter. Along with the other distinguished volunteers, including the likes of Dr. Lionel Galstaun, Dr. Richard Hovannisian, Haig Der Manuelian, soon joined by Dr. Dennis Papazian, and others, he enlisted in the Steering Committee that convened the three community-wide meetings held at Airlie, Va., in 1972, 1973, and 1974. He also had a major role in persuading significant donors to support the effort when still in the discussion stage.

Before he knew it, he found himself co-chairing the Armenian Assembly and guiding it through its formative years.

Kaloosdian remained on the Armenian Assembly board over the course of the decades, as its counsel, and at a critical stage in the life of the Armenian people he was at the helm of the organization. He, along with Jirair Haratunian and Hirair Hovnanian, believed strongly that the Armenian Assembly should lend every form of support to the emerging Republic of Armenia and do so in the non-partisan manner it conducted affairs. Under his firm leadership, the Armenian Assembly was well positioned to respond to the major humanitarian crises that struck Armenia with the 1988 earthquake, the Karabakh Movement, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

An attorney who practiced law from his offices in Watertown for his entire professional life, Kaloosdian was a fixture in the local Massachusetts business community. Besides his partnership in the Law Offices of Kaloosdian and Ciccarelli, Kaloosdian also served as a Trustee of the Watertown Savings Bank, and was a member of its Community Reinvestment Committee. He was also Corporator of the Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, and an active member of the Rotary Club and its president in

1975-76.

It was a point of pride for Kaloosdian as a lawyer to have been part of the legal defense in a very special case that tested the obligations under the law of the state's educational system in Massachusetts, which was one of only a half dozen states at the time that mandated teaching the subject of human rights and genocide, inclusive of the historical example of the Armenian Genocide. Kaloosdian, and many others in the Boston area, had strongly advocated for the adoption of the relevant legislation. The law was challenged under the argument that it did not permit instruction of a contrary point of view on the subject. While on the surface argued as an infringement on the First Amendment rights of educators to present a case from all points of view, the argument actually was tantamount to requiring educators to teach about denial of the Armenian Genocide. The case, *Griswold vs. Driscoll*, was appealed, and even brought to the Supreme Court, which declined to take up the matter, therein ending a multiyear effort that averted establishing the equivalence of historical fact and political denial.

Kaloosdian was appointed a member of the Ethnic Studies Task Force by Governor Francis Sargent, and testified before both Democratic and Republican Platform Committees. In 1978, he was sent to Lebanon by the State Department to establish a humanitarian aid program as Co-Director of a USAID grant the Armenian Assembly secured to assist the Armenian population of that country.

When he was honored by the Armenian Assembly in a gala tribute in Boston, he was hailed by the likes of then-Massachusetts Senate Majority Leader Linda Melconian, who had once been chief Legislative Assistant and Assistant Counsel to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas (Tip) O'Neill, who served in that capacity from 1977 to 1987.

A strong believer in preserving the Armenian heritage and especially the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, of which stories he had heard from his father, Kaloosdian always encouraged academic research in Armenian studies. When the Armenian Assembly established the Armenian National Institute (ANI), dedicated to the study, research, and affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, Kaloosdian was asked to head the undertaking. He quickly formed a Board of Governors and an Academic Council to guide the new enterprise and led the group from 1997 through 2010. He convened several conferences, most notably at the Library of Congress on the topic of America and the Armenian Genocide, held in 2000, out of which emerged another publication under the editorship of Dr. Jay Winter issued by Cambridge University Press. The ANI webpage on the Armenian Genocide, which is available in English, Turkish, Spanish and Arabic, emerged of the course of the years as an important repository of records on international affirmation of the Armenian Genocide and continues to serve as a major resource for educators, researchers, reporters, and policymakers.

A native of Watertown, Kaloosdian was involved with many of the old and new organizations that made the city a center of Armenian life in America. For 10 years, he served as chairman of the American

Committee for the Independence of Armenia, which had been created as far back as 1918 by American public figures advocating for Armenia. He served on the Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) in the United States. He resigned from the ARF when the party distanced itself from the Armenian Assembly. In 1965 he was among the organizers of the United Committee of Greater Boston, the first time all segments of the community worked together, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. In another example of his strivings for greater community development, Kaloosdian headed the steering committee, which under his chairman, oversaw the construction of the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center in Watertown.

Kaloosdian prized his heritage, and after a lifetime of gathering evidence about his father's family and birthplace, he published a marvelous account of the life of his forebears titled *Tadem My Father's Village*. To his surprise, and his family's pride in this accomplishment, the book won two awards. In an appreciation of the volume, Dr. Richard Hovannisian wrote: "Kaloosdian has made a lasting contribution through his meticulous combination of historical sources, memoirs, and oral histories..." Dr. Taner



From left, Assembly President Carolyn Mugar, former Assembly Board of Trustees Chairman the late Hirair Hovnanian, Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian, former Assembly Board of Directors Chairman Jirair Haratunian, Assembly Board of Trustees Member Annie Totah, and Robert Aram Kaloosdian

Akçam observed: "Kaloosdian has documented the collective memory of anyone and everyone that he could reach who had lived in a specific region. Taking each of these personal accounts and combining it with research that he conducted, he has developed a new form of local history. The book you hold in your hands contains the collective memory of an Armenian village called Tadem and it is a significant achievement for this reason."

In course of his research, Kaloosdian developed a considerable archive on the village of Tadem and its surroundings, including the transcriptions of audiotaped interviews with many of the living survivors he knew personally. At the same time, he also assembled an exquisite collection of historical works covering a wide range of subjects with Armenia and the Near East as its focus. Kaloosdian twice traveled to historic Armenia and visited his father's birthplace to document what little remained of Tadem. A work full of pathos about life in that ancient village, Kaloosdian traced his father's countless ordeals from the time of his boyhood growing up after the Hamidian massacres through his years of captivity during the time of the Genocide, his father's forcible conversion to Islam, his employment as unpaid help living alone without friends or parents upon the deportation of the population, his escape through the mountains to the Russian frontier and flight across Siberia during the Russian Revolution, refuge in Japan, and arrival in America and a cross country journey at last to join relatives on the East Coast. He patiently reconstructed from scattered scraps of evidence the travails of each of his relatives, especially the

tales and treatment of the handful of women who survived their banishment through the desert, and his father's traumatic witnessing of the murder of his brother in a moment of thoughtless innocence.

When in 2002 Carolyn Mugar founded a chair in Modern Armenian History and Armenian Genocide Studies at his alma mater, Clark University, she asked that, in addition to honoring the memory of her parents Stephen and Marian Mugar, it also be named in honor of Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian. The recipient of numerous honors for his years of service to the Armenian people, Kaloosdian was bestowed the Prince of Cilicia award by Karekin I Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia and recognized by President Levon Ter-Petrossian of Armenia with the Mekhitar Gosh medal.

Kaloosdian graduated in 1952 from Clark University, where he was vice-president of his class, President of the Inter-fraternity Council and president of his fraternity. After serving a tour of duty at the U.S. Army Medical Field Service School during the Korean War, Kaloosdian entered Boston University School of Law where he received a JD degree in 1957 and a Master of Law in Taxation in 1962. He was a member of the Delta Theta Phi Law fraternity of which he was the Tribune. He also served as a Special Assistant to the President of the Massachusetts Bar Association. His law firm concentrated in the areas of business, real estate, taxation, probate and estate law. He remained in practice for over 50 years and was a of the Member American Trial Lawyers Association, Middlesex Bar Association, and Massachusetts Bar Association.

Assembly President Carolyn Mugar, who was among his close personal friends, stated: "Our hearts go out to Aram's family. Over the course of these many years they generously shared him with the Assembly family and with many of us. That is a debt so great that it can only be paid forward as he taught us."

Speaking on behalf of the Armenian Assembly Board of Trustees, co-chairs Van Krikorian and Anthony Barsamian shared their sentiments: "Aram Kaloosdian was more than a pillar of our community and especially of our organization. He was its very foundation, and the generations that have succeeded him in office on the board of the Armenian Assembly have relied and built upon his legacy. Hundreds have served on the many boards and committees of the Armenian Assembly, and thousands have supported it through the decades. Rare are those who can be said to have devoted a lifetime of effort and energy, provided wisdom and guidance, inspired leadership and innovation, and remained convinced of the centrality of holding a respectable presence for the Armenian people in our nation's capital. His legacy is secure and his memory cherished by all of us in the Armenian Assembly."

Krikorian and Barsamian added that thanks to a generous donation, the new Washington offices of the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Institute (ANI) will have a dedicated library named in Kaloosdian's honor as a fitting legacy to his commitment to building the premier resource center on the Armenian Genocide in our nation's capital.

Funeral service at Saint Stephen's Armenian Church, 38 Elton Avenue, Watertown on May 16.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Saint Stephen's Armenian Church, Armenian Assembly of America, Washington, D.C. or Armenia Tree Project, 400 W. Cummings Park, Suite 3725, Woburn, MA. 01801. Veteran U.S. Army, Korean Conflict.