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President Biden Issues Statement On Armenian Remembrance Day

WASHINGTON — On April 24, as per tradition, the White House released a statement on the Armenian Genocide. The statement by President Joe Biden is printed below in its entirety.



Today, we pause to remember the lives lost during the *Medz Yeghern* — the Armenian Genocide — and renew our pledge to never forget.

The campaign of cruelty began on April 24, 1915, when Ottoman authorities arrested Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople. In the days, months, and years that followed, one and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths—leaving families forever broken, and generations forever changed.

As we mourn this tragedy, we also honor the resilience of the Armenian people. After enduring one of the darkest chapters in human history, survivors began forging a better future for our world. With courage and commitment, they rebuilt their lives. They preserved their culture. They strengthened the fabric of nations around the world—including our own. And they told their stories to ensure that the mass atrocities that began on this day 109 years ago are never again repeated.

This remains our solemn vow. Today — and every day — the United States will continue to stand up for human rights and speak out against intolerance. We will continue to meet hate and horror with hope and healing. And, we will continue to stand with all those who seek a future where everyone can live with dignity, security, and respect.



People commemorated at the Armenian Genocide monument in Yerevan.

Armenians Told to ‘Overcome Trauma’ Of 1915 Genocide

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan urged Armenians to “overcome the trauma” of their ethnic kin massacred by the Ottoman Turks and stop yearning for their “lost homeland” as they marked the 109th anniversary of the genocide on Wednesday, April 24.

In a statement issued on the occasion,

Pashinyan claimed that the enduring trauma prevents many of them from objectively assessing international affairs and challenges facing Armenia.

“Maybe this is also a reason why we get new shocks, reliving the trauma of the Armenian Genocide as a legacy and as a tradition,” he said, risking more opposition al-

legations that he is helping Turkey deny the 1915 genocide as part of Yerevan’s ongoing rapprochement with Ankara.

The unusually worded statement came as tens of thousands of people marched to the Tsitsernakaberd memorial in Yerevan to commemorate the genocide victims.

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Thousands Participate in Times Square Genocide Commemoration

By Taleen Babayan

NEW YORK — As Armenians gathered in Times Square for the 39th year to commemorate the Armenian Genocide, their spirits remained in solidarity with their brethren in Armenia, who continue to persevere in the face of challenges and change.

The 109th anniversary commemoration, sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, and co-sponsored by a number of American-Armenian organizations, created a communal space for descendants of survivors to remember their ancestors who perished in the Armenian Genocide, and to continue to fight for global awareness and recognition.



Senator Chuck Schumer, Senate Majority Leader (D-NY) (Photo: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)

“Your presence shows that year after year you honor the memory of your ancestors whose lives were brutally cut short by the Ottoman Empire a century ago,” he said. “I’m always inspired to see you here as a living, resilient witness to the tragedy and moral outrage of the Armenian Genocide.”

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POW Vardanyan Granted Permission to Speak With Family, Ends Hunger Strike

YEREVAN — Family members confirmed on April 25 that thanks to the growing international public and government awareness, illegally detained philanthropist, Ruben Vardanyan, was granted permission to speak to his wife, Veronika. This marked only his second call to his family after nearly three weeks of incommunicado detention since Vardanyan had launched his hunger strike on April 5.

He began his strike after requests were repeatedly ignored for a fair and transparent trial to be held in a timely manner in line with international legal standards. His trial was originally slated for January, but then extended to May without cause.

The family was finally able to plead with Vardanyan to end the hunger strike in light of his deteriorating health. In their brief conversation they were able to inform him of the growing pressure on Azerbaijan from government officials around the world. After hearing of this global movement to free Armenian prisoners and after listening to his family’s pleas, Vardanyan reluctantly agreed to pause his hunger strike for his family’s sake.

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

European Commission Delegation Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on April 30 received the delegation led by the European Commission's Director-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Gert-Jan Koopman.

Pashinyan welcomed Koopman and emphasized the importance of continuous development of Armenia-European Union relations. Pashinyan emphasized the key importance of the Armenia-EU-US high-level meeting in Brussels on April 5 and stressed the need for effective implementation of the agreements reached. The Prime Minister expressed confidence that Mr. Koopman's visit will contribute to the formation of the program of measures and agenda and its further promotion.

Koopman noted that the European Commission is ready to contribute to the implementation of the priorities of the Armenian government in close cooperation in order to strengthen the resilience of our country and economic growth. The European Commission's Director-General of Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations expressed confidence that Armenia-EU relations will continue to develop and expand dynamically.

Armenia Ready to Contribute to Gaza Peace

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — In an interview with Al-Jazeera on April 30, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan, addressed the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip, emphasizing Armenia's stance against the targeting of civilian populations.

"We are strongly against targeting civilians, we have faced a similar situation in Nagorno-Karabakh when more than 100,000 Armenians had to flee their ancestral homeland to save the lives of their family members, so we stand strongly against targeting the civilian population. Just recently we sent some humanitarian assistance to help to ease the situation and the suffering of the people who found themselves in the similar situation. But in general, we have always supported a peaceful resolution of the conflict, but also the two-state solution for the long-standing conflict and the Palestinian issue. Besides that, we are ready to preserve the cultural and spiritual heritage, particularly when it comes to the written heritage we have a famous and world-known depositary for the manuscripts so we can temporarily host the manuscripts, if there is a need, from the conflict zone, preserve them and then return when everything is settled," Mirzoyan said.

When asked about Yerevan's approach to stopping the ongoing conflict and making some proposals for it, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs said: "We are lobbying for a peaceful settlement and the end of hostilities, and if official Yerevan can be of help in this context we are more than ready."

Hungary 'Blocking EU Military Aid to Armenia'

By Heggine Buniatian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Hungary is blocking the European Union from providing modest military assistance to Armenia, a diplomatic source told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on April 30.

After months of deliberations, the 27-nation bloc moved earlier this year to approve such "non-lethal" aid from its European Peace Facility, a special fund designed to boost EU partners' defense capacity.

A relevant draft document seen by RFE/RL's Armenian Service in mid-April calls for 10 million euros (about \$11 million) to be provided to the Armenian military over the next two-and-a-half years. The money would mainly be spent on creating a field hospital and auxiliary facilities for a battalion-size army unit. Its allocation requires the unanimous backing of all EU member states.

The European source that did not want to be identified said Hungary has for weeks been vetoing the decision and demanding that similar aid also be allocated to Azerbaijan. EU leaders are considering meeting Budapest's demand in hopes of overcoming the deadlock, added the source.

In early April, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev warned Western powers against "arming Armenia," including through the European Peace Facility. Aliyev has long maintained a warm relationship with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

Unlike other EU member states, Hungary has openly supported Azerbaijan in the

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Hungarian Foreign Ministry reaffirmed that support three days after the outbreak of the 2020

decided to restore the diplomatic ties in 2022 even though Hungary never apologized for Safarov's release and continued to support



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (r) and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at a joint press conference in Budapest on January 30, 2023.

Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Karabakh.

Armenia's former leadership froze diplomatic relations with Hungary in 2012 after Orban's government controversially extradited to Azerbaijan an Azerbaijani army officer who hacked to death a sleeping Armenian colleague in Budapest in 2004. The officer, Ramil Safarov, was pardoned, rewarded and promoted by Aliyev on his return to Azerbaijan.

The current Armenian government de-

clared last September, Budapest reportedly vetoed a statement by the EU member states condemning the Azerbaijani military offensive that displaced Nagorno-Karabakh's entire population and restored Baku's control over the region.

One month later, Armenian leaders received Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto in Yerevan. Armenian President Vahagn Khachatryan visited Budapest in February this year.

Ruling Party Blocks Parliament Debate on Land Handover To Azerbaijan

By Susan Badalian and Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The pro-government majority in the Armenian parliament rejected on April 30 an opposition initiative to debate Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's territorial concessions to Azerbaijan that have sparked angry protests across Armenia.

Deputies representing Pashinyan's Civil Contract party refused to include on the parliament agenda a draft statement describing the planned handover of four border areas to Baku as illegal and dangerous for the country's national security.

"Civil Contract has once again refused to adopt this statement strengthening our statehood," said Artsvik Minasyan, a se-

nior lawmaker from the main opposition Hayastan alliance.

"States have state borders, but what you want us to be guided by a line of contact," countered Civil Contract's Maria Karapetyan. "How does it strengthen the statehood?"

Hayastan and other opposition groups say that the land handover would create severe security risks for not only border villages in Armenia's northern Tavush province but also the country as a whole. They maintain that Armenian withdrawal from those border areas would leave Tavush far more vulnerable to Azerbaijani attacks.

Some opposition lawmakers have taken part in the ongoing protests. Their epicenter is just outside the Tavush village of

Kirants. A section of a key national highway passing through Kirants has been blocked by protesters since April 20.

Artur Khachatryan, the Hayastan lawmaker who presented the opposition statement on the parliament floor, also challenged the legality of what Pashinyan's government calls the beginning of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border delimitation.

Khachatryan's pro-government colleagues responded by implicitly accusing the opposition of collaborating with Russia. They also echoed Pashinyan's claims that failure to cede that territory would give Azerbaijan an excuse to invade Armenia.

Meeting with a group of Kirants residents on Monday, Pashinyan reportedly admitted that even his latest concessions to Baku will not guarantee the security of the affected Armenian communities.

One of those villagers, Vladimir Shahinian, confirmed on Tuesday that they came away from the meeting dissatisfied and discouraged.

"They say that everything will be good but we see nothing good for our community," he told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

The "border delimitation" would leave a bridge and agricultural land adjacent to Kirants under Azerbaijani control. Some village houses would find themselves extremely close to the new Azerbaijani border posts. Shahinian said their occupants would have no choice but to leave their homes.

"If [the new border passes] through the courtyard of our school, how can it work and how can children attend it?" he said. "If you open the door of your house and see Azerbaijanis standing nearby, how can you leave in peace with them after so much bloodshed? Of course you can't."

"We don't know how much time people will have to move out," added the man. "We don't know yet just how the authorities will accommodate them."



A new house is built in Berkaber, a border village in Tavush province, April 17, 2024.



ARMENIA

Armenians Told to ‘Overcome Trauma’ Of 1915 Genocide

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The daylong procession followed an official wreath-laying ceremony at the hilltop memorial led by Pashinyan, parliament speaker Alen Simonian and President Vahagn Khachaturian. Catholicos Karekin II, the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church increasingly at odds with Pashinyan's government, was again excluded from the annual ceremony.

The genocide began with mass arrests on April 24, 1915 of Armenian intellectuals and activists in Constantinople. An estimated 1.5 million Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire were massacred or starved to death in the following months and years. About three dozen nations, including Russia, France, Germany and the United States, have recognized the genocide.

US President Joe Biden has repeatedly used the word “genocide” to describe the mass killings and deportations. By contrast, his predecessors anxious not to anger Turkey used only the Armenian phrase *Meds Yeghern* (Great Crime) in reference to the events of 1915.

Pashinyan seemed to put the emphasis on *Meds Yeghern* in his latest April 24 statement. The 440-word statement mentions the term for 11 times, compared with four references to the “genocide.”

Pashinyan also did not condemn the regime of the so-called Young Turks that ruled the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. He said instead that Ottoman Armenians “became victims of geopolitical intrigues and false promises.”

“For us, commemoration of the martyrs of the *Meds Yeghern* should symbolize not the lost homeland but the found and real homeland, the Republic of Armenia, whose competitive, legitimate, thoughtful and creative policies can preclude a repeat [of the genocide,]” Pashinyan went on.

“Never again. We should say this not to others but to ourselves. And this is not an accusation against us at all but a point of view where we, only we, are responsible for and in charge of our destiny.”



Members of the opposition marched in Yerevan on April 23.

Earlier this month, a senior Armenian pro-government lawmaker allied to Pashinyan, Andranik Kocharyan, called for “verifying” the number of the genocide victims and ascertaining the circumstances of their deaths. Kocharyan said Pashinyan wants to “make the entire list of compatriots subjected to genocide more objective.”

The remarks sparked an uproar from Armenian government critics, civil society figures and genocide scholars. They accused Kocharyan of echoing the official Turkish narrative that Armenians had died in much smaller numbers and not as a result of a premediated Ottoman government policy.

Kocharyan stated the following day that



From left, President Vahagn Khachaturyan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan lay flowers at the Armenian Genocide monument on April 24.

he expressed his personal opinion, rather than the Pashinyan government's position. He denied casting doubt on the Armenian Genocide. Opposition leaders dismissed the explanation, continuing to accuse Pashinyan of planning another far-reaching concession to Ankara.

Pashinyan's wife, Anna Hakobyan, was jeered by several dozen people when she visited the Tsitsernakabert memorial later on Wednesday. The hecklers, who apparently included opposition supporters, chanted “Genocidal Nikol!” and “Nikol the Turk!” as Hakobyan and one of her daughters surrounded by bodyguards laid flowers by the memorial's eternal fire.



Opposition members burned the flags of Turkey and Azerbaijan on April 23.



The view from above on April 24 at the Armenian Genocide Memorial

Ex-ombudsman Slams ‘Disgraceful’ Campaign Against Tavush Diocese Leader

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Former Armenian Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan on April 30 denounced as “disgraceful and unacceptable” the campaign of insults and slander targeting Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, Primate of the Tavush Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, who has actively joined ongoing protests against the unilateral land handover to Azerbaijan in Armenia's Tavush Province.

“The campaign is also targeting the Armenian Apostolic Church and other clergymen,” Tatoyan posted on Facebook, alleging it is led by senior officials from

Armenia's ruling Civil Contract party.

“The campaign includes media reports and baseless statements defaming Rev. Fr. Bagrat, coupled with the use of profanity against him and the Armenian Church on social media pages. Whereas, Fr. Bagrat stands with followers of his diocese and has been supporting people waging an existential struggle for their rights and security day and night.

“The happenings in Tavush and other parts of Armenia are part of the ontological struggle for the rights and dignity of the entire Armenian nation,” Tatoyan wrote.



Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, center, with Arman Tatoyan, right

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

World Bank Official Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan on April 29 received Eugene Rhuggenaath, the World Bank Group Executive Director representing the constituency of countries that includes Armenia.

Grigoryan emphasized the importance of Armenia's cooperation with the World Bank, noting that it is not only a donor organization for Armenia, but also an important partner, with the support of which key reforms are being implemented in the country.

During the meeting, Grigoryan presented Rhuggenaath with the government's vision for the development of the most important sectors, such as education, healthcare, and the capital market.

Iran, Armenia Discuss Need for Agreement

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Anna Grigoryan, Armenian National Assembly deputy, member of the Standing Committee on Defense and Security Affairs emphasized the need for a military agreement between Armenia and Iran.

In an interview with IRNA on April 29, the MP said the potential for the development of relations between the two countries is very high. She emphasized Iran's numerous statements regarding the preservation of Armenia's territorial integrity.

Grigoryan noted that, despite Iran's statements supporting Armenia's territorial integrity, the two countries currently do not have any specific military agreement. She noted Iran's stance regarding the preservation of regional borders will not change, as this issue is a "red line" for Iran, given its national interests.

Kazakhstan Will Not Act as Mediator

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Kazakhstan will not act as a mediator in the upcoming negotiations between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Almaty, TASS reported on April 29, quoting the official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Aybek Smadiyarov.

"We are planning such negotiations in Almaty. We are now in contact with our colleagues in Azerbaijan and Armenia. The upcoming negotiations will be held exclusively between the parties. We are not talking about the mediation of Astana, we are only providing good-will services," said Smadiyarov.

The representative of the Foreign Ministry recalled that the president of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, during his recent visits to Azerbaijan and Armenia, had mentioned the importance of establishing long-term peace.

Earlier, in an interview with Armenpress, Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ani Badalyan said that Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov are scheduled to meet in Almaty.

Blinken Again Talks to Armenian, Azeri Leaders

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan by phone at the weekend, again welcoming their border delimitation agreement that sparked ongoing angry protests in Armenia.

The US State Department said that in his separate phone calls with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev Blinken praised them for agreeing to "use the Alma Ata Declaration as a basis for border delimitation." The declaration was signed by independent former Soviet republics that recognized each other's Soviet-era borders.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani understanding praised by Blinken is part of the border deal announced by the two sides on April 19. It commits Armenia to handing over to Azerbaijan four disputed border areas occupied by Armenian forces in 1991-1992. They have since been part of Armenia's northern Tavush province.

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 the deal.

Residents of some of those border villages, which would be directly affected by the handover, have been holding nonstop demonstrations since April 20. They say they would lose much of their agricultural land, have trouble communicating with the rest of the country and be far more vulnerable to Azerbaijani armed attacks.

According to the official Armenian read-out of his call with Blinken, Pashinyan



One of the new demarcation markers

"spoke positively about the demarcation process" while pledging to address the "legitimate concerns" of the Armenian border villagers. Some of those villagers have accused Pashinyan of lying about details of the land handover during his meetings with them held in March and earlier in April.

Aliyev was likewise reported to tell

Blinken that "the start of the border delimitation process was a positive step."

"The Secretary urged President Aliyev to keep up the momentum with his Armenian counterpart, reiterating US willingness to support those efforts," the State Department spokesman, Matthew Miller, said in a statement on their conversation.

POW Vardanyan Granted Permission to Speak With Family, Ends Hunger

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In recent weeks several initiatives were undertaken, including the United States Congress putting forth proposed legislation to sanction high level officials from Azerbaijan government for the illegal detainment of political prisoners, as well as the EU Parliament resolution introduced today, April 25. In addition, rallies of support to release the political prisoners took place yesterday in the U.S., France, and Armenia aligned with recognition of the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Vardanyan remains in captivity in Baku and faces worsening prison conditions. After his hunger strike began, he was denied regular telephone calls with family, adding to the list of Azerbaijan's violations of international norms. Vardanyan was also isolated, with no access to appropriate health care beyond occasional evaluations of his blood pressure. Serious concerns remain about the true state of his health condition.

"We are gravely concerned about my father's deteriorating health, though we are not surprised by his bravery," said David

Vardanyan, one of Vardanyan's sons. "Despite our initial relief, my father's conditions are only worsening. The world has shown Azerbaijan that it is watching the fate of the Armenian prisoners, including my father, and from our family I want to thank everyone for their support at this difficult time. I hope that this growing international attention may lead to his release in the nearest future. We urge the international community to further increase the pressure on Azerbaijan to ensure that at least his trial takes place in May 2024 with international observers."

The State Department's annual Human Rights Report, released on April 23, corroborated the unjust conditions that Vardanyan and other political prisoners and detainees face in Azerbaijan. The report on Azerbaijan estimated that the country held approximately 254 political prisoners and detainees as of December 2023. The judiciary was also described as largely corrupt, inefficient, and lacking independence. According to the



report, defendants in Azerbaijan were often "denied the right to a presumption of innocence; a fair, timely, and public trial; to communicate with an attorney of their choice; to have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense; to confront witnesses and present one's own witnesses and evidence; and not be compelled to testify or confess guilt."

Vardanyan is one of eight former officials arrested last September when armed forces of the Azerbaijani government invaded the Nagorno-Karabakh region, triggering the mass exodus of the 120,000 inhabitants. Now more than 200 days later, the eight Armenian leaders face a series of politically motivated charges.

He is a philanthropist and businessman, a father of four and husband who has been illegally detained for over 200 days.

He is now charged with false accusations and held in poor conditions. His trial is not expected to adhere to international standards, including those that ensure international observers are granted access to the proceedings. Vardanyan's case is also separated from the other seven political prisoners, prompting questions about whether he is being politically singled out.

For additional information, visit www.freearmenianprisoners.com.

Armenia's Ambassador to Canada Meets with Trade Chief

OTTAWA (Public Radio of Armenia) — On April 29, Ambassador to Canada Anahit Harutyunyan met with Sara Wilshaw, Canada's chief trade commissioner.

The sides discussed the prospects of strengthening and deepening economic cooperation between Armenia and Canada, expressing confidence that the bilateral economic relations have a great potential for development.

The two welcomed the first business mission of the Canada Eurasia Chamber of Commerce to Armenia which was successfully completed several days ago.

They discussed the issue of implementing joint educational and professional development programs.



Sara Wilshaw, left, and Ambassador Anahit Harutyunyan



INTERNATIONAL

International Criminal Court Could Investigate Aliyev for Genocide

THE HAGUE — The Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ) is petitioning the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open a preliminary examination into the ongoing genocide being perpetrated by Azerbaijan's armed forces against ethnic Armenians in Armenian territory under the unlawful occupation of Azerbaijan since May 12, 2021. The submission includes access to testimonial evidence gathered and recorded by the CFTJ that corroborates the alleged policy of genocide being planned, instigated, and implemented by President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, including their Parliament.

The petition, submitted on April 17, outlines a vast array of atrocities carried out by the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan under the leadership of President Aliyev: forcible displacement of at least 7000 civilians, murder of civilians, enforced disappearance of at least 2000 civilians and prisoners of war (PoWs), arbitrary detention, sexual violence, at least 350 documented cases of torture and extrajudicial executions of ethnic Armenian PoWs.

The petition by the US-based NGO, which is dedicated to documenting war crimes in the South Caucasus, asks the ICC for a preliminary examination to evaluate whether there is a reasonable basis for a formal investigation of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and others accused of planning, inciting, ordering, and executing a

state policy of genocide against Armenians.

This is the first case of any entity lodging a case at the ICC for genocide of Armenians, and it comes days before the April 24 annual commemoration of the World War I-era genocide in which Ottomans killed 1.5 million Armenians.

"This is an emotionally heavy moment, as we never considered that a second genocide against our people would occur within our lifetime," said Armenian-descended Gassia Apkarian, a Superior Court judge in Orange County and CFTJ advisor. "The ICC should send a clear message that there will be no impunity for such crimes and those responsible for genocide will be held accountable."

The filing details a deliberate Azerbaijani strategy to eradicate ethnic Armenians, both in attacks on sovereign Armenian territory and in actions against the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh (also known as Artsakh), which was blockaded by Azerbaijan from Dec. 2022 until an attack in Sept. 23 which caused the population of 150,000 to flee to Armenia. In all cases, Azerbaijan used advanced weaponry to target civilian populations.

That blockade was described as a genocide attempt in an Aug. 2023 report by Luis Moreno Ocampo, the former ICC chief prosecutor — a position since backed by the International Court of Justice in its prelimi-

nary orders, as well as other leading global experts and jurists. The resulting exodus last fall was one of the largest genocide in recent history.

"Sadly, the world community has largely ignored this war crime, a clear case of genocide under Article 2(c) of the Genocide Convention, so it is time for the international legal system to address this breakdown of the world order," Ocampo said of the filing.

Beyond Aliyev, the filing personally targets Azerbaijani Minister of Defense Zakir Hasanov and Chief of General Staff Karim Valiyev for their role in the alleged state policy of genocide — including forcibly removing Armenians from occupied territories, systematically killing civilians and prisoners of war, and engaging in hate speech that dehumanizes Armenians.

Aliyev's public statements, glorifying the removal and destruction of Armenians, further demonstrate genocidal intent, the petition argues. Aliyev has openly referred to Armenians as "rats" and "dogs," as "devils" and "barbarians" and a "virus" — and several years ago declared that they "have neither conscience nor morality. They do not even have a brain." Aliyev himself said as top officials in Baku celebrated the forced displacement of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Moreover, since May 2021, Azerbaijan's

armed forces have engaged in an unlawful military campaign aimed at annexing approximately 200 square kilometers of Armenian sovereign territory. In Armenia's provinces of Gegarkunik, Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Tavoush and Ararat.

The dossier of evidence gathered by the CFTJ contains over 530 testimonies from representatives of victims and from witnesses detailing atrocities, war crimes, and genocide. There is evidence of widespread atrocities committed against ethnic Armenian women, including mutilation and sexual violence, as part of a systematic campaign to terrorize and subjugate in order to destroy the Armenian population. Over 1500 items of open-source evidence reflecting intention to commit genocide back the claim. The research and interviews were carried out by 121 trained lawyers and law students in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Present at the Hague will be Lala Abgaryan, whose sister Gayane was killed in 2022 by Azerbaijani soldiers, suffering extensive abuse and mutilations that were then recorded and glorified online. She took in the orphaned children and gave extensive testimony, and will be available to the media.

The CFTJ's investigation reveals that stickers depicting tortured Armenian women were downloaded by approximately 20,000 Azerbaijani users within a five-day period.

Artak Beglaryan and Raffi Kalfayan Present Azerbaijani Crimes to United Nations Committee against Torture in Geneva

GENEVA — Artsakh Union President Artak Beglaryan and International and Comparative Law Center representative Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, together with representatives of a number of other Armenian non-governmental organizations, participated in the discussions of the UN Committee against Torture in Geneva on April 22-23. The Committee was examining the

ing first the cases of Azerbaijani torture against Armenians based on ethnic hatred back in April 2016. They emphasized that the impunity of those Azerbaijani crimes led to the 2020-2023's sharp increase in torture and assimilated crimes, as a result of which the whole people of Artsakh were subjected to a ten-month siege and then forced displacement.

Kalfayan and Beglaryan stressed the evidence for the torture of ethnic Armenians captives in Azerbaijani detention facilities. They referred to the information shared over Azerbaijani social networks as well as to the testimonies of repatriated Armenian prisoners. In that context, they highlighted the need for active steps by the international community to protect and release Armenians still held as hostages in Azerbaijani prisons.

Taking part as observers in the discussion between the members of the Committee against Torture and the delegation of Azerbaijan, they witnessed the insistence of the Committee to obtain clear responses of Azerbaijani delegation to submitted allegations.

Todd Buchwald, Committee Expert and Country Co-Rapporteur, said "there were many reports of abuses against Armenian prisoners of war. One horrifying video showed an Azerbaijani soldier decapitating a struggling Armenian man, with the assembled crowd clapping and cheering. What steps had been taken to investigate these and other cases of ethnic hatred and prosecute any persons responsible?"

Azerbaijani representatives provided a lot of false information, covering up their mass crimes, undermining the essence of the Karabakh conflict, or justifying the prosecutions against prisoners.

The delegation said that "Azerbaijan rejected claims that Armenian prisoners of war were not treated in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. Prisoners of war were not tortured and received necessary medical care. After the signing of the Tri-

lateral Statement, Azerbaijan had returned all Armenian prisoners of war to Armenia."

The delegation claimed that "the Prosecutor General's Office had undertaken investigations regarding the treatment of Armenian detainees captured on video. Some military officers had been found guilty of desecrating Armenian corpses and graves and were issued disciplinary sanctions or prison sentences. Two individuals had been issued prison sentences for the murder of Armenian nationals."

Azerbaijani delegation ended by saying that "Any recommendations that were not

based on established facts and reports received from credible sources did not contribute to the review process."

Kalfayan and Beglaryan held follow-up meetings with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and representatives of other NGOs in Geneva. During the meetings, they presented the Azerbaijani crimes suffered by Armenians and consequently issues linked with the respective mandate of these bodies.



Artak Beglaryan, right, and Raffi Kalfayan

periodic report of Azerbaijan. They also held a number of meetings with various UN mechanisms.

In March, the International and Comparative Law Center NGO, Union for the Protection of the Interests and Rights of the Artsakh People NGO, Rights and Justice Center Tatoyan Foundation and "Arbane" Foundation published and submitted a joint report to the UN Committee Against Torture, titled "Violations of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment by Azerbaijan in the Context of Racial/Ethnic Discrimination towards Armenians."

The speakers delivered statements at the Committee Against Torture's briefing for non-governmental organizations, present-



Mayor Anne Hidalgo with Artak Beglaryan

Paris Mayor Awards Beglaryan Medal

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia)— Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, on April 26, awarded Artak Beglaryan, the former state minister for Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), the Medal of Honorary Citizenship.

In his speech Beglaryan reminded those gathered that philanthropist Ruben Vardanyan's life is in danger in an Azerbaijan jail.

Hidalgo emphasized her readiness to support the efforts to protect the rights of the Artsakh people.



Community News

Grammy Nominee Aloe Blacc to Premiere Single Honoring Aurora Humanitarians

LOS ANGELES — Chart-topping and Grammy-nominated artist Aloe Blacc will debut a new single, *Shine*, in honor of the Humanitarians supported by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, a foundation that seeks to address on-the-ground challenges around the world.

Blacc will premiere the new anthem on May 9 at the 2024 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity Ceremony in Los Angeles. The Aurora Prize will award \$1 million to one Humanitarian based on their demonstrated record of courage, commitment, and impact. “SHINE” was inspired by the fortitude and fearlessness of heroes who fight for justice and humanity. The new single will be released on streaming services the same evening of its live debut, May 9, at 9 p.m. PT.

“I have always had a profound admiration for those who have endured and overcome dehumanizing experiences, such as Nelson Mandela, who eventually led his nation out of dark-



Aloe Blacc (Photo by Zach Bell)

ness,” Blacc said. “Brave people such as Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Denis Mukwege, and Nasrin Sotoudeh, who are willing to risk their lives for the sake of others, give me a sense of hope that good will conquer evil.”

A native of Southern California, Blacc fell in love with music and started writing lyrics at a young age, going on to top global charts with *I Need a Dollar* and *The Man*. He also co-wrote and performed vocals on the megahit song *Wake Me Up* produced by Avicii, which topped the charts in 22 countries. Blacc has long been involved in philanthropy, extending his commitment to social issues through his partnership with the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

“Music has the power to uplift and unite all of humanity. We are grateful to Aloe Blacc for sharing his tremendous talent with Aurora and through “SHINE”, helping us continue to spotlight the important work of humanitarians around the world,” said Armine Afeyan, Executive Director of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. Afeyan added: “We applaud Aloe for channeling his talent to benefit society at large and hope that as others listen to *Shine*, they will connect with the power of his lyrics and message of hope.”

“All humans have a right to joy, safety, dignity, and humanity. We are all here to experience the best that life has to offer,” Blacc said. “With *Shine*, I offer words of affirmation and motivation to encourage positive social transformation. I hope this song will motivate others to join the global humanitarian movement inspired by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.”



Knights of Vartan Grand Commander Hunan Arshakian (photo Aram Arkun)

Knights of Vartan Leaders Present Economic Sustainability Program in Boston

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan Hunan Arshakian, together with Lt. Commander Levon Thorose and Grand Treasurer Ron

Nazeley, visited Boston as part of a tour of the East Coast. Arshakian and Thorose spoke about the Economic Sustainability Program at a dinner meeting hosted by the local Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge No. 1 and the Daughters of Vartan’s Arpie Otyag No. 9 on April 18 at a hall of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. Current Knights of Vartan New England Grand District Representative and former Commander Bob Avakian served as the master of ceremonies.

The meeting also honored former Commander of Ararat Lodge Fr. Antranig Baljian, a native of Worcester, Mass. His son, Fr. Stephan Baljian, Commander of the Arakadz Lodge of the Knights of Vartan and pastor of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Merrimack Valley in North Andover, Mass., spoke about the career of his father, who spent decades serving the Armenian Church and the Armenian community.

Avakian presented Fr. Antranig with a plaque recognizing his 30 years as pastor of St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church of Watertown and his services as Ararat Lodge commander to the Knights of Vartan. Fr. Antranig will be retiring this June.

At the meeting, Grand Commander Arshakian declared, “It is vital, it is critical, and it is everyone’s duty to support our people in Armenia and the Artsakh refugees.” When he came to office, he and his executive had goals of increasing membership and rejuvenating the organization, he said, but then they were blindsided by the blockade and further developments in Artsakh. Nevertheless, they tried to deal with both types of issues.

They created a brand-new website for communication and increased the use of social media. They modernized the ritual of the Knights, revitalized a number of lodges which brought in new younger members, started a number of new projects in Armenia, including scholarship programs and science and technology startups, and helped Armenian churches, summer camps and other projects in the US. Knights of Vartan, Inc., has been established in Armenia as a registered charitable organization for the first time, with its own bank account. This will allow transferring funds directly from the Knights’ US accounts to this account.

They also founded ESP at the end of 2023. Arshakian stressed its importance. He said that it is necessary to reassure the Artsakh refugees that they are not alone and help so that they can remain in Armenia and support themselves. This model, used in Israel, is a long-term project. He urged everyone to participate in rebuilding the Armenian nation.

Arshakian exclaimed: “Imagine losing everything you have. Imagine having three days to leave. You have to leave your home, your business and your place of birth, where your grandparents are buried. You have to leave, and there is no hope of going



Bob Avakian (photo Aram Arkun)

ANCA Western Region Meet with Governor Newsom and CA State Legislators on Capitol Advocacy Day

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — On April 22, 2024, the Armenian National Committee of America — Western Region (ANCA WR) board, staff, chapters, and advocates spearheaded Armenian-American advocacy efforts during the Capitol Advocacy Day, organized by the Armenian Legislative Caucus in Sacramento, in commemoration of the 109th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. ANCA Western Region was joined by the Armenian Assembly of America — Western Region and Southern California Armenian Democrats and their advocates.

During the Capitol Advocacy Day, Assemblymember Laura Friedman and Senator Scott Wilk respectively introduced resolutions HR-82 and SR-83 in the California State Legislature reaffirming California’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 and calling upon the Federal Government to ensure accountability for Azerbaijan’s genocidal actions in Artsakh and sovereign Armenia. During the Assembly and Senate sessions, Assemblymembers Zbur, Ramos, Rivas, Alanis, Patterson, and Carrillo spoke in favor of HR-82, while Senators Durazo, Min, Archuleta, Portantino, and Senate President Pro Tempore McGuire spoke in support of SR-83 before both resolutions were unanimously passed. Local Homenetmen Lori Scouts administered the flag ceremony while prayers were offered by Armenian clergy.

“This week’s advocacy efforts in Sacramento were paramount, as it was the first Armenian Advocacy Day held since Azerbaijan’s genocidal blockade, invasion and ethnic cleansing of Artsakh in late September 2023,” said Oshin Harootonian, Chair of the ANCA Western Region Board of Directors. “With the continued threat of Azerbaijan and Turkey against the sovereign territories of the Republic of Armenia, ANCA Western Region will continue to mobilize its chapters and advocates to increase the pressure on local, state, and federal officials to hold Azerbaijan and Turkey accountable for all the crimes they have committed against the Armenian nation, especially since 2020.”

ANCA Western Region advocates highlighted four key active legislations during their meetings in Sacramento. The four CA legislations supported by ANCA WR are: SJR-11, introduced by Sen. Bob Archuleta, which calls upon the Federal Government to decisively act to secure the unconditional release and safe return of all Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and hostages illegally detained by Azerbaijan; SB-1277, introduced by Sen. Henry Stern, which seeks to enhance Genocide and Holocaust education within California’s educational system; SB-1041, introduced by Sen. Anthony Portantino, which seeks to facilitate the integration of Armenian-trained doctors into

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COMMUNITY NEWS



Knights of Vartan Lt. Commander Levon Thorose (photo Aram Arkun)

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back. All you have is a suitcase and your children, and no money, because for nine months you were under a blockade. Now you end up in the Republic of Armenia, with no place to go and no place to work.”

ESP gives these refugees an opportunity to support themselves and their families, and to develop Armenia economically. Arshakian said it was the duty of the Knights and Armenian Americans to step up during these hard times.

Thorose then took the microphone to make a presentation about the four unprecedented crises faced by the Knights and Daughters in the last 20 months and future challenges, which he accompanied with a slideshow. The first recent crisis was the Artsakh blockade starting in December 2022. The Knights and Daughters raised \$200,000 in funds for 740 tons of food and medicine to prevent illness and deaths from starvation.

The second crisis was how to transport

food from Armenia to Artsakh and then distribute the aid to reach all regions of Artsakh during the blockade. The Knights and Daughters of Vartan Action Committee facilitated the sending of 71 trucks through the Azerbaijani blockade, distributing 20 kg. packages to children, kindergartens, orphanages and poor families of martyrs of the 2020 war. This was in a period where Armenian government humanitarian containers of aid were not allowed to enter Artsakh.

The third crisis was how to help the influx into Armenia of over 120,000 Artsakh refugees, most of whom arrived in a period of three days last September. Since October of 2023, the Knights and Daughters of Vartan have subsidized 242 Artsakh families (1,262 people) with over \$108,978 disbursed to address their pressing needs, ranging from rent to appliances and household essentials.

The fourth crisis is how to keep those families living in Armenia. The Economic Sustainability Program (ESP) was established for this purpose, and it has so far assisted

12 families in the first quarter of 2024. The goal of this program is to provide the means for Artsakh refugees and other permanent residents in the Republic of Armenia to be able to maintain a sustainable life by creating jobs and developing and supporting trade skills. It provides tools and equipment for small family businesses, and thus creates jobs, which is important particularly in rural areas. There is a limit of \$3,000 assistance per family.

There are two teams working on the ESP. The first is in Armenia with Gohar Palyan, who is the Knights of Vartan representative stationed in Yerevan, and 2 volunteers, which meets and vets the applicants as to their capabilities and what kinds of businesses they can operate. Another team or committee is in the US, with members both in the East and West Coast. It meets once or twice a week to approve the applicants. The chairman of this ESP committee is Jake Bournazian.

Thorose related that the first family approved made *jingyalov hats*, a bread with herbs traditionally made in Artsakh. Vladimir Grigoryan, a 56-year-old father of three from Stepanakert, used to help the Knights in Artsakh, and as a refugee, he recalled that

Ararat Province was chosen for testing out the process of the ESP. A town hall meeting was organized by Gohar Palyan on February 6, 2024. There were 50 applications vetted, from which 22 refugee families were approved by the Avak Tivan (Grand Executive) of the Knights. The grants were for fields such as seamstress/tailor, construction, car/machinery repair, greenhouse, beekeeping, pig farming, beauty salon/barber, bakery, cultivating land, and towing services, for a total of \$61,610 in grants. Of the 22 grants, the field with the largest amount was bakery with \$5,000.

The grants for the first 7 families of the aforementioned 22 families will require \$20,250. Thorose said that it is possible to adopt individual families, whether by individuals, Knights or Daughters of Vartan lodges, or aid from outside organizations. Ideally not just Armenians but non-Armenians could contribute.

Donations can be made through https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=AYXJ4WKJ6FGDA or through checks sent to the Knights of Vartan. Future projects will be in the five provinces that border Yerevan.

After Thorose’s presentation, Arshakian




From left, Knights of Vartan Grand Commander Hunan Arshakian, Yn. Arpineh Baljian, Fr. Antranig Baljian, Fr. Stephan Baljian, Knights of Vartan New England Grand District Representative Bob Avakian (photo Aram Arkun)

his mother could make this bread. I have been tracking this family every month since January. They made 300,000 drams profit in January, and in February, 450,000 drams. With the extra money, they will buy a dough rotating machine. Prior to the Boston meeting, he spoke again with them and he said we already hired one person, and added to the menu pizza and other things. In March they made 500,000 dram and plan to hire one more local person. So this family not only sustains itself but provides jobs for two more individuals.

Thorose gave several other examples of individuals aided through the ESP.


noted that the following stage of the ESP would be non-interest loans, not grants, which will allow more people to be helped with the same amount of money. Once the loan is paid back, a new family would be helped. In response to an audience question, Arshakian said that sometimes the ESP money sent to Armenia is used directly to buy equipment for the family being helped instead of being given to the family itself.

Before the end of the meeting, Dirouhie Lucy Delefevre of Daughters of Vartan Arpie Otyag spoke in praise of Fr. Antranig Baljian and encouraged the perpetuation of the good Armenian spirit of prior generations.

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Tekeyan Cultural Association
Metro Los Angeles Chapter

Հայաստան - Միայնակ Բարը: Դարեր ի վեր անհաղթելի
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 **ARMENIA - THE LONE STONE**
INVINCIBLE THROUGH THE AGES

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Tekeyan Cultural Association Beshgeturian Center
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Երեկոյեան ժամը 7:30-ին
ԹՄՄ Պէշկէթօթիւրեան սրահին մէջ:
1901 N. Allen Avenue, Altadena, CA 91001
info@tekeyanla.org



COMMUNITY NEWS

TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Pays Tribute to Benefactors Vahan and Nartuhi Beshgeturian and Decedent Members

ALTADENA, Calif. — A Requiem Service (*hokehankisd*) was requested in St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church in Pasadena for Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) benefactors Vahan and Nartuhi Beshgeturian, after whom TCA Beshgeturian Center was named, as well as members active in the past who have passed away. After the service, all members and friends were invited to a remembrance gathering at the TCA Beshgeturian Center. A pomegranate tree was planted in



Fr. Yeremia Abgaryan and Dr. Simon Simonian

memory of the philanthropic Beshgeturian couple in the Center's garden.

Chapter Chair Siran Oknayan welcomed all guests and invited long time TCA Central Board and Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Committee member Kevork Keushkerian

to serve as master of ceremonies.

Keushkerian spoke about the mission of TCA and its activities. He remembered all those who served in the Pasadena-Glendale Chapter with much dedication throughout the years. He then invited Dr. Simon Simonian, an otolaryngologist, or physician specializing in the ear, nose and throat, and a past chairman of the TCA Pasadena Chapter for many years who had also served on the Central Board to speak. He was one of the main leaders that were instrumental in bringing the Beshgeturian Center into reality.

Simonian presented the history of how the idea came into reality and narrated the story with a PowerPoint presentation covering over 45 years.

TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian then announced a very generous donation by the philanthropist Harout Bronozian for the amount of \$10,000 to the TCA Pasadena Glendale chapter for its upcoming activities and cultural events and projects. Bronozian, who has always supported TCA, lately was very pleased with the TCA's new Azad Pem Theatre Group.

Melo Ekizian recited a poem by Vahan Tekeyan as part of the program, while Tavit Samuelian presented two songs. Dickran Ekizian and Vartan Nazerian shared their memories.

Fr. Yeremia Abgaryan was present representing Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. He prayed for the souls of the deceased members and blessed the meal.



Mayda Kuredjian



Tavit Samuelian



Melo Ekizian



Kevork Keushkerian

Armenian Community of Worcester Commemorates Genocide Anniversary

By Kenneth Martin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WORCESTER — Armenian-American residents of Worcester County, which is the oldest Armenian community in the US, held a series of united events to mark the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

On April 24, people from all the churches and their respective clergy met at the outdoor Armenian Khachkar Monument

on the lawn of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, the first Armenian Apostolic church in America.

Rev. Tadeos Barseghyan of the church, joined by Rev. Ardag Arabian of Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Worcester, Rev. Mikael Der Kosroffian from Holy Mother of God Armenian Apostolic Church of Whitinsville, MA, along with Rev. Avedis Boynerian, held a Prayer Service for the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

As traffic hummed in the background and drivers turned their heads to watch, parishioners from all the churches prayed and sang for their lost ancestors and renewed their faith in the Armenian Churches and in the hopes that someday earthly justice would be achieved for their families and heritage, especially for those who recently were ethnically cleansed from Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) by Azerbaijan.

Throughout the week Armenian Genocide memorial anniversary events took place at the other locations throughout the city of Worcester. Many of the attendees left the ceremony to view film, "Invisible Republic," by Garin Hovanessian, about the 2020 war in Karabakh, and one young journalist's story about life and death under bombardment in 2020, showing at Worcester State University.



Members of the clergy in Worcester commemorate the Armenian Genocide. (Ken Martin photo)

ANCA Western Region Meet with Governor Newsom And CA State Legislators on Capitol Advocacy Day

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the California healthcare system, enhancing medical services and cultural competence; and AB 2763, introduced by Assemblyman Bill Essayli, which seeks to improve demographic reporting for Middle Eastern and North African communities and ensure more accurate and comprehensive data collection through the inclusion of an Armenian Checkbox on the CA Census Questionnaire.

ANCA Western Region met with California Governor Gavin Newsom to advocate in favor of all active California legislation of critical importance to the Armenian-American community, while also sounding the alarm on the continuation of attacks on Armenian community institutions such as schools, churches, and cemeteries across California, most recently in Fresno. ANCA Western Region requested tangible action to be taken by all levels of California law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and security of the Armenian-American community.

During the Capitol Advocacy Day, ANCA Western Region advocates also held several policy meetings with California State legislators and their senior staff, including with the offices of State Senators Tom Umberg, Aisha Wahab, Josh Newman, and Anthony Portantino.

ANCA Western Region advocates who participated in the Capitol Advocacy Day on April 22, 2024 included, Oshin Harootonian, Lina Davidian, Aram Sarkissian, Ayk Dikijian, Lenna Hovanessian, Matt Senekeremian, Edward Barsoumian, Ruben Karapetian, Ani Yenikomshian, Haig Baghdassarian, Ara Makasdjian, Roxanne Makasdjian, Sophia Armen and Suzie Abajian.



OBITUARY

Michael ‘Moushegh’ Gulbankian Businessman and Philanthropist

SOUTHBOROUGH, Mass. — Michael “Moushegh” Gulbankian, 93, passed away peacefully at home on Saturday, April 20, with his loving family at his side.

Mr. Gulbankian leaves behind many dear family members and friends including his loving bride of 63 years, Alice D. (Kirkorian) Gulbankian, son Michael Gulbankian and his wife, Hykouhie, and their children Anna and Eva, his daughter, Carolyn Gul-



bankian and her children, Emmelia and Julia, and his son, John Gulbankian, wife, Armine, and their two children, Arsen and Arek.

Michael was born on August 22, 1930, in Marlborough, the son of the late Eva (Mouradian) and Giragos Gulbankian. Following his graduation from Peter’s High School and Marlborough Vocational School, he worked tirelessly on his family’s Southborough farm that was founded in the 1920s. Michael was known for his incredible work ethic that he acquired at a very early age. He was later employed by Baker Nail Company and Sealtest Ice Cream where he managed their maintenance departments.

Although Michael was working full time, he put in a lot of work after-hours toward

his dream of growing his family’s farm. After the passing of his father in 1958, he took over the management of Gulbankian Farms. In 1965, he relocated the family business to Mount Vickery Road. It was at this time, he and his wife opened Southborough’s very first florist shop. They renamed the business Gulbankian Farms Garden Center and Florist Shop. Soon after, he expanded the family business to include Gulbankian Bus Lines which provided busing for the Southborough School District, Assabet Valley, St. Mark’s school, and other charter bus services. While his wife Alice managed the town’s popular florist shop and greenhouses, now managed by their daughter Carolyn - who further expanded the business to include a fashion boutique and gift shop, Michael oversaw the day-to-day operations of the family’s growing businesses. Michael also shared his passion for business and mechanics with his two sons, Michael and John - who currently own the J & M Machine Company, Inc. in Southborough.

Mr. Gulbankian was so very proud of the family business that he and his wife built together, and how they instilled in their three children a strong work ethic that has kept the Gulbankian businesses thriving, even during the tumultuous COVID years.

Michael was extremely fond of his deep Armenian roots which he embraced through his travels to Armenia and his extensive and joyful collection of Armenian music which could often be heard by those traveling along Mount Vickery Road. Michael and Alice proudly sponsored a preschool and kindergarten in Nor Kharpert, Armenia that was later named after them.

He was a former commander for the Knights of Vartan Worcester chapter in addition to being an active member of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour in Worcester. Michael fully embraced fellowship, brotherhood, and the many leadership roles he dedicated himself to at his church and

Knights of Vartan chapter. Michael was a “giver.” When he saw a need, he didn’t hesitate to jump in and offer his time and resources to the cause. He thoroughly enjoyed the many Armenian church picnics, convocations, fundraisers, and conferences he attended all over New England, the U.S., and abroad. He truly considered his church and Knights of Vartan friends as an extension of his family.

Michael especially loved being a longtime resident of Southborough and the frequent meet-ups with his friends at the Dunkin Donuts at the Town Center Plaza where he enjoyed their old-fashioned cake

donuts and coffee. His family businesses and kindness made him a well-known and respected resident around town and beyond.

Above all else, Michael cherished the time he spent at home with his family, who will miss him immeasurably.

The family held a private funeral service and celebration of Michael’s life and is genuinely appreciative of the outpouring of sympathy and love from the community, and for the many contributions being made in Michael’s honor to his beloved Armenian Church of Our Saviour at 87 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609.

Michael Manion Dedicated to Family

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Michael Manion, AKA “Beepa”, 92, of Lexington, formerly of Lawrence, Belmont, and Watertown, passed away peacefully on April 25, 2024, with his daughters at his side.

He was predeceased by his wife, Ginger, his brother, Jack Chakmanian, his parents, Paylag and Vartanoosh Chakmanian, and his son-in-law Paul MacDonald. He is survived by daughter Candy Costas and her husband, Peter Costas; daughter Shelley

MacDonald; grandchildren Hayley (Goff) Denker and her husband Tyler Denker, Bradley Goff, Dana MacDonald, Michael MacDonald and his wife Shannon (Kyne) MacDonald, and great-grandchildren Henry Denker, Emily Denker, and Owen MacDonald.

Michael attended Northeastern University, was a former employee of the Star Market Company, then went on to own his own supermarket, Manion’s Star, in Burlington, MA. In his later working years, he was a business consultant to Starfish Market in St. John, USVI, then a volunteer at Mount Auburn Hospital. He valued his family more than anything and was always an enthusiastic participant in family happy hours, parties, and on vacations. It would be the norm for him to chase his great-granddaughter around the dining room table, go down slides at the park with his great-grandson, or dance to Frank Sinatra with his granddaughter in the kitchen. His surprise vocal performance of *The Best of Times* at daughter Candy’s wedding was a joyous culmination of his talents and charisma. Most remarkable to all that knew him was Mike’s glass half-full mentality, his unwavering positivity regardless of what challenges he faced.

The family would like to thank the staff of Waterstone Assisted Living in Lexington and the caregivers of Privatus Care Solutions for their kindness, support, and compassionate care.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Michael’s memory can be made to Mount Auburn Hospital, Office of Philanthropy; 330 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

A memorial service was held on Wednesday, May 1 at the Aram Bedrossian Funeral Home. Burial followed at Westview Cemetery in Lexington.



MacDonald; grandchildren Hayley (Goff) Denker and her husband Tyler Denker, Bradley Goff, Dana MacDonald, Michael MacDonald and his wife Shannon (Kyne) MacDonald, and great-grandchildren Henry Denker, Emily Denker, and Owen MacDonald.

Victoria (Keshishian) Deirmendjian Born in Aleppo

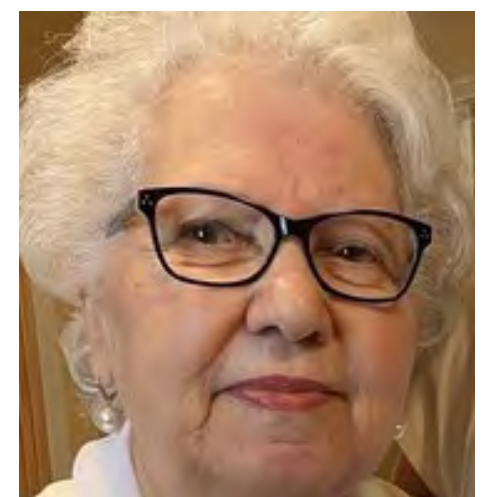
MALDEN, Mass. — Victoria (Keshishian) Deirmendjian of Malden passed away peacefully at home surrounded by her family on April 28, 2024 at 89.

Victoria was born on June 30, 1934 in Aleppo, Syria to the late Setrak and Marie (Orchanian) Keshishian.

Victoria was the wife of the late Mihran Deirmendjian who passed away in 2012.

She was the mother to Aram Deirmendjian and his wife Louisa of Malden, Zabel Mujukian and her husband Steve of Malden and Lucy Grigorian and her husband Harut of Georgetown. She was the grandmother to John Grigorian and his wife Meri, Hasmik Bitar and her husband Kevin, Mihran Deirmendjian and his wife Anush, Hyke Grigorian and his wife Marie-Kohar, Sevak Deirmendjian, Armen Mujukian and his wife Vivienne and Zareh Deirmendjian and his wife Arpine. She also leaves eight great-grandchildren whom she adored.

She was the sister to the late Simon Keshishian, the late Sirvart Deirmendjian, the late Zabel Keshishian and Azadouhi Safarian of California. Additionally, she leaves behind many nieces and nephews, relatives and friends.



Funeral Services were held at St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown on May 1. Interment followed at Woodlawn Cemetery in Everett.

Memorial donations may be made in Victoria’s memory to St. James Armenian Church or The Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Rd, Haverhill, MA 01835

Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home.

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Thousands Participate in Annual Times Square Genocide Commemoration

COMMEMORATION, from page 1

Schumer recounted stories he heard from survivors and their descendants which resonated with him on a personal level, as his ancestors also escaped massacres when Nazis invaded Ukraine during World War II.

“These atrocities are more than just a stain on the nation and those who did it, [as] the world looked away in each case with a blind eye,” he said, which prompted him to sponsor Senate resolutions that called on American presidents “to name the

Corridor, and assault on territory resulting in tragic deaths of hundreds of Armenians,” followed by the forced exodus of the ethnic Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh.

“I know I’m not alone in saying my mind was cast back to darker days that happened before,” said Schumer, stating his promise that as Senate Majority Leader he will do everything he can to support Armenia and displaced Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, including securing funding and call-

ing out human rights abuses, as he “watches these developments like a hawk.”

“We must never turn a blind eye again,” concluded Schumer. “Armenia faces serious challenges, but if history is any guide we know that this small but mighty nation has outlasted authoritarian thugs in the past and will continue to do so because the Armenian nation has not only endured, but prevailed.”

Dr. Michael Rubin, senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and Director of Policy Analysis at the Middle East Forum, delivered remarks centered on both past and present history, tying in the current events in Armenia.

“I’m not here to simply commemorate an old genocide,” said Dr. Michael Rubin, who holds a PhD from Yale University in history and who has testified before Congress over 20 times. “It’s just as important to recognize that we’re here to prevent a new one.”

He highlighted that the US should follow France’s lead, which became the first NATO country to provide arms to Armenia against the growing threats of its neighboring country, and has “made clear Armenia’s

sovereignty is not up for debate.”

“Appeasement does not work,” he continued. “It’s great that President Joe Biden kept his campaign pledge to recognize the Armenian Genocide, because ‘never again’ is now.”

“The time is now not only to commemorate the Armenian Genocide, but to recognize that prevention of all future genocides requires a strong and consistent partnership diplomatically, economically, and militarily, with the Republic of Armenia.”

In her remarks, Dr. Asya Darbinyan, who is a genocide scholar, educator, and executive director of the Center for Holocaust, Human Rights & Genocide Education

(Change) in Lincroft, NJ, focused on the educational aspects of genocide and how it can advance the cause for recognition and mass atrocity prevention.

“With official recognition comes the opportunity to speak about genocide openly and boldly, and to promote educational programs,” said Darbinyan, who earned her doctorate in history from the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University under the mentorship of Prof. Taner Akçam. “Recognition allows the Armenian community and its descendants to move forward with our struggle for justice.”

She elaborated on the need to hold per-

petrators accountable and to demand justice when basic human rights violations and dehumanization take place, as well as the importance of sharing photographs, letters, and documents of Armenians prior to the Genocide.

“Show the life of Armenians and their experiences because they were not nameless, faceless victims,” said Darbinyan. “Each of them had a name, a face, a home, and a story to be told that should be honored and not forgotten.”

Grand Matron of the Daughters of Vartan, Nancy Berberian Thompson, reflected on the Armenian martyrs who lost their lives and paid tribute to the survivors who found refuge in the US, without forgetting their history.

“When I was younger, we listened to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and we keep their memories alive,” she said. “Armenians worked hard to be leaders here in the US and help aid Armenia.”

Berberian Thompson stressed that Armenia still needs, particularly in the aftermath of the Artsakh war and the displacement of 120,000 Artsakh Armenians. She noted that the Knights and Daughters have raised over \$150,000 to assist them and will continue in their efforts.

Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan, Hunan Arshakian, emphasized the continuous Azerbaijani aggression against the Armenian people, which serves as a reminder that “the threat towards the Armenian people remains real and present.”

He expressed that the Knights of Vartan is involved in cultural preservation and humanitarian efforts, serving as a bridge between the diaspora and Armenia.

“To the world, we declare our unwavering attempt to keep fighting for recognition and justice,” said Arshakian, who emphasized the importance of the younger generations to “uphold our traditions and push forward our legacy.”

“Your energy and commitment are key to securing a future where Armenians can live in dignity and peace,” said Arshakian. “We will never forget and we will never stop fighting for our right to live as Christian Armenians.”

Canada-based singer Harout Bedrossian and his band, featuring Steve Vosbikian, Jiro Tavitian and Mher Vartanian, performed Armenian patriotic songs, including Giligia, Hayer Miatzek, Karabakh, Artok Ovker En, for the audience.

continued on next page



Dr. Michael Rubin (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)

ing out human rights abuses, as he “watches these developments like a hawk.”

“It happened because of you and your hard work, and your moral clarity,” said Schumer reflecting on the overwhelming passage of US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide in Congress in 2019, and subsequent affirmation by President Biden in 2021. “But our work is not yet done, and it’s our duty to speak out against human rights abuses happening today against the Armenian people.”

Schumer said he “unequivocally condemns” the actions of Azerbaijan, including “their war of aggression in 2020, their cruel and cynical blockade of the Lachin

Corridor, and assault on territory resulting in tragic deaths of hundreds of Armenians,” followed by the forced exodus of the ethnic Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh.

“I know I’m not alone in saying my mind was cast back to darker days that happened before,” said Schumer, stating his promise that as Senate Majority Leader he will do everything he can to support Armenia and displaced Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, including securing funding and call-

ing out human rights abuses, as he “watches these developments like a hawk.”



Dr. Asya Darbinyan (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)



Singer Harout Bedrossian and his band performing in Times Square (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Primate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, delivered the invocation, and Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian, who represented Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, delivered the benediction. Very Rev. Andon Noradounghian, pastor of the Sacred Heart Armenian Catholic Church, who represented Bishop Mikael Mouradian, Primate of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of USA and Canada, led a prayer. Other clergy in attendance included Very Rev. Sahag Yemishyan, Vicar General of the Eastern Prelacy

and Pastor of Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church.

The Dance Grigorian Ballet School from Lyon, France, under the directorship of Anna Oundjian Grigorian, performed. The Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School students sang the Armenian and American anthems, and God Bless America was performed by Nina and Mila DaRocha.

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan have sponsored the Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration since 1985, along with the support of a multitude of Armenian American community organizations. This year the event was co-chaired by Haig Gulian, Ari Minnetyan, and Chris-



Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan Hunan Arshakian (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)



Grand Matron of the Daughters of Vartan Nancy Berberian Thompson (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)

topher Artun, under the guidance of Chairman Emeritus Hiran Gulian.

David Ojakian (Armenian Assembly of America), Chantelle Nasri (Armenian National Committee of America) and Nanor Hartounian (UCLA's The Promise Armenian Institute), served as MCs, while Bryan Ardouny, executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America served as media spokesperson.

The winners of this year's Knights and Daughters of Vartan Annual Essay Contest were announced: Sirahn Toufayan, 1st place; Madeline Berberian-Hutchinson, 2nd place; Mia Seferian Vickery, 3rd place; and runner-up Angela Mashuryan.

Co-sponsoring organizations included the Armenian Assembly of America, represented by Bryan Ardouny, Executive Director; Armenian General Benevolent Union, represented by Natalie Gabrelian, Director of Districts, Chapters, and Central Board Administration; Armenian National

Committee of America; ADL-Ramgavar Party, represented by Norair Megeurditchian, Chairman of the Eastern District USA; Tekeyan Cultural Association, represented by Hilda Hartounian, Member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Board of Directors of US and Canada and Chair of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater New York Chapter; Armenian Bar Association, represented by Gevorg Karapetyan; as well as the Armenian Missionary Association of America; and the Armenian Council of America.

Participating organizations included the Armenian Network of America, Armenian Youth Federation, Homenetmen Scouts of NY and NJ, Armenian Relief Society, Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, AGBU Young Professionals, Armenian Students Association, Hamazkayin Cultural Association of NY and NJ, and tri-state Armenian college and university clubs.

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MARTA AZNAVOORIAN
and Boston Pops Orchestra
Keith Lockhart, conductor

Presented by the Friends of Armenian Culture Society
For tickets and information please visit
FACSBoston.org or scan QR code



Arts & Culture

Natalie Qasabian And Sev Ohanian To Establish Filmmaking Scholarship Endowment

LOS ANGELES, CA — Armenian Educational Foundation (AEF) proudly announces the establishment of a new endowment fund through the generosity of filmmakers Natalie Qasabian and Sev Ohanian. The Natalie Qasabian and Sev Ohanian Filmmaking Educational Fund will provide vital support for Armenian students in Armenia pursuing studies in filmmaking, ensuring access to four years of college education and opportunities in the dynamic world of cinema.

Qasabian and Ohanian are a husband-and-wife producing team who have worked together on many celebrated films like “Searching,” “Run,” and “Missing.” Qasabian has also produced Sundance movies such as “All About Nina” and “The Persian Version,” and has been recognized for her commitment to nurturing emerging talent and fostering creative expression. Ohanian is a screenwriter in addition to producing and has built a reputation for his passion for diverse narratives and cinematic excellence. Along with his company Proximity Media, he has produced acclaimed films such as “Judas and the Black Messiah,” and “Creed III.”

Through the establishment of this perpetual Endowment fund, Qasabian and Ohanian aim to empower aspiring Armenian filmmakers to pursue their dreams and share their stories with the world. The scholarship will provide 4 years of college financial assistance to students in Armenia who demonstrate exceptional promise in the field of filmmaking, ensuring that talented individuals have the resources they need to succeed in the industry.

“We are thrilled to partner with Natalie Qasabian and Sev Ohanian to create this impactful scholarship,” says Serop Beylerian, President of the Armenian Educational Foundation. “Their dedication to supporting aspiring filmmakers and their commitment to advancing Armenian education align perfectly with AEF’s mission. Together, we will provide life-changing opportunities for Armenian students pursuing their passion for filmmaking.”

“We are honored to announce our support for the Armenian Educational Foundation by establishing an ongoing scholarship fund.” Said Qasabian and Ohanian in a joint statement. “This fund will be aimed at providing financial assistance to Armenian students studying film for all four years of college. Having seen firsthand the incredible impact of AEF’s efforts, we have no doubt that this scholarship will help cultivate the next generation of filmmakers and contribute to the rich tapestry of Armenian culture.”



Nora Armani in character as Zaruhi later in life (photo David Medzorian)

Nora Armani Captivates in ‘Mercedes and Zaruhi’ Play at Armenian Cultural Foundation

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Nora Armani performed in the one-person play “Mercedes and Zaruhi” at the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF) on April 28, with the cosponsorship of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter, the Armenian Women’s Welfare Association, and the Armenian International Women’s Association. The play, written by Anush Aslibekyan, was translated from Armenian and adapted into an English version by Armani.

ACF Curator Ara Ghazarians introduced the topic of the play to the audience of some 60 people. It is the story of two sisters from the diaspora whose parents had settled in Greece after the Armenian Genocide. One of them, Zaruhi, “repatriates” to Soviet Armenia, and reveals the difficulties of her life through letters to her sister and first-person narration all the way through the period of modern Armenian independence.

see ARMANI, page 15



Ara Ghazarians (photo Aram Arkun)



Actress Nora Armani with Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter members: from left, Jeanine Shememian, Aida Yavshayan, Nora Armani, Suzy Naroian, Knarik Arkun, Rita Balyozian, and Maral Der Torossian (photo Aram Arkun)

California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Announces Scholarship Winners

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation announced the winners of the 2024 California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Scholarship. California high school students (Grades 9-12) were invited to participate in an essay and visual arts contest.

For the Annual Essay Contest, students were asked to write a memo with the prompt: In 2022 and 2023, the Azerbaijan government launched a blockade of the Republic of Artsakh which displaced over 100,000 indigenous Armenians. How would you address the resulting humanitarian and refugee crisis? First Prize (\$1,000) went to Diego Gamboa Martinez attending Independence High School in Bakersfield, California. Second Prize (\$750) went to Lilit Tadevosyan attending La Cañada High School in La Cañada. Third Prize (\$500) went to Sylvia Balyan, attending Ulysses S. Grant High School in Van Nuys.

For the Visual Arts Scholarship, this year students were asked to submit artwork to be showcased on the cover of a news magazine which illustrates the individual and global community impacts of the evolving humanitarian and refugee crisis caused by the Azerbaijani blockade of the Republic of Artsakh. First Prize (\$1,000) was won by Xin Lu, attending Claremont High School in Claremont; Second Prize (\$750) by Aleen Kojikian, attending California School of the Arts, San Gabriel Valley in Duarte; and Third Prize (\$500) by Ile Joy Cheng, attending Claremont High School in Claremont.

Armenian Legislative Caucus members made the following comments.

“Congratulations to Sylvia Balyan of North Hollywood! Your powerful essay on addressing the humanitarian crisis in the Republic of Artsakh is a testament to the excellent programs and teachers at Ulysses S. Grant High School, your exemplary academic performance, and the strength of our Armenian community in Senate District 20. Each scholarship winner is showing California youth the importance of civic engagement, promoting attention to issues around the world, and ensuring your generation continues remembrance of the Armenian Genocide. I wish you all the best on your path to higher education and beyond!”, Senator Caroline Menjivar (D-San Fernando Valley).

“I am proud to join my colleagues in recognizing and congratulating the outstanding and talented California students. Our scholarship recipients have helped increase awareness about the Armenian Genocide through education and creative expression. As we mark the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, this is a great opportunity that highlights the resiliency of the Armenian people,” Senator Anthony Portantino (D-Burbank).

“As a member of the California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation and your State Senator I would see WINNERS, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Vatche Geuvdjelian

The Artist with a Universalist Viewpoint

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/PATZCUARO, MICHOCAN, MEXICO — Vatche Geuvdjelian (born 1956, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) is a painter and poet, who divides his time between Canada and Mexico. In 1978, he moved to Ontario, Canada. At age 5, he had moved to Beirut, Lebanon, with his family, where he attended primary and secondary schools. Later he studied at Kingswood School (England) and Haigazian College (Beirut), before continuing his undergraduate studies at New England College (England). He graduated the US campus of the same learning institute at Henniker, NH. From 1978 to 1982, he resided in Toronto, attending art classes at The Three Schools in Toronto. By 1981 he became a Canadian Citizen and in 1982 he established his permanent studio in Mexico.

Geuvdjelian has exhibited his art at galleries in Toronto and Los Angeles as well as in various art institutes in Mexico.

Dear Vatche for several years I have followed your creations and admired the expressive richness of your art. You have lived in different countries and studied and absorbed their cultures. Do you feel yourself a cosmopolitan artist or otherwise?

Mine is a universalist viewpoint. Yes, my roots are in Ethiopia, Lebanon and the western European urban cultures, but my experiences have branched out into North America and have juxtaposed with Mexi-

can mestizo and native cultures. I am a human voice, expressing a human experience.

But my Armenian roots and genes are always there like a filter to all my perceptions. Haik Nahabed, Vahagn and Anahid are always bringing their archetypal messages into my thoughts, mixed together with Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopotchli. Siamanto and Daniel Varoujan are here with me as I branch out and experience Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Marques. The native Huichol perceiving a magical world mixes with Anoushavan Sos and Ara Keghetzig. But ultimately, I am only stardust taking human form, only for a short stay.

You live in Pátzcuaro, where people speak the indigenous language, Purépecha. Do you speak that language?

Pátzcuaro is my home today and has been for the last 40 years, I speak only a few words of Purépecha, but have learnt a lot from the people here. As the years pass and I age, the word “home” takes on a new meaning: a place to always create and start letting go of youthful illusions and restlessness. The Artsakh war and the loss that it has meant to my original nation has been a disillusionment and a source of great sadness.

Pátzcuaro is famous with its Day of the Dead celebration. Does this unusual fest and other uncommon tradition of locals have influenced on your art somehow?

The native American cosmo-vision and ceremonies have been a surprising source of spiritual stimulation and growth. I did not expect this slice of a truly ancestral tradi-



tion to become part of my thinking and lifestyle. I consider it a true privilege that as an outsider in Mexico I managed to view into some of the secret wisdoms that the elder leaders possess here and are ready to share.

How much are you acquainted with Armenian painting? I know you knew brilliant Lebanese-Armenian artist Paul Guiragossian.

I have always paid close attention to the better-known Armenian painters and poets from Armenia, but my artistic formation was in Italy, England and the United States, finally maturing in Mexico.

Are there some Armenian motives in your painting and poetry?

The loss of my homeland appears in various forms in my paintings and poetry. The faith of my ancestors in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the loss that it meant in political terms to the political entity that is historical Armenia has etched a code that can be erased from my inner language.

I assume your father was from the Armenian orphans' choir known as the “Arba Lijoch” (“40 children”).

My father, Benon Geuvdjelian, was born in Darson to Panos Geuvdjelian and Rebe-

ca Sakajian. He was not one of the “Arba Lijoch” from Jerusalem, but came to Ethiopia with the second wave of orphans from Cyprus, who were encouraged by the adoption of the first wave. The details of his early life in Ethiopia are vague; I do not have much information about his early years in Addis Ababa. But he did find favorable conditions in order to prosper and branch out. He supported me and my siblings throughout our formative years through university educations.

My mother, Nouritza Sinanian, was born in Beirut to Sahag Sinanian from Bursa and Emma Ardzivian from Mersin, (both survivors of a pogrom and the Genocide). After spending the first 16 years in Beirut, she married my father and moved to Ethiopia. She encouraged my tendency towards the arts, and constantly supported my education and artistic formation.

You have traveled a lot. Have you visited Armenia?

I traveled to Armenia in 2004 and stayed there for almost two months, including a trip to Artsakh. I loved my visit there, which was truly inspiring, but the realities of my life brought me back to Mexico and

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Invitation to a lecture by renowned
Attorney ROUPEN AVSHARIAN
"From Crisis to Crossroads:
Shaping the Middle East Beyond Gaza's Upheaval"

THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2024 AT 7:00PM

Boyadjian Hall of the AGBU Vatche' & Tamar Manoukian Cultural Center
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Reception to follow - Free Entry . Հիրասիրութիւն - Մուտքը ազատ



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



(PHOTO COURTESY [HTTPS://WWW.DIMITRASDISHES.COM](https://www.dimitrasdishes.com))

Dimitra's Dishes' Greek-Style Stuffed Pepper Soup: Gemista Soup

"My Greek heritage has filled my heart with a deep love of cooking, and sharing those homecooked dishes with friends and family makes my heart sing. Here, on Dimitra's Dishes you will find easy to follow recipes with step-by-step video tutorials filled with tips to help you create delicious food for your loved ones," says Greek-American chef, blogger, author, and restaurateur Dimitra Khan.

"This hearty soup offers the flavors of Gemista (Greek-style stuffed peppers) in an easy, comforting soup. It is a filling meal for the whole family. This soup includes the flavors of caramelized roasted peppers stuffed with beef, onions, tomatoes, and rice. Gemista <https://www.dimitrasdishes.com/gemista-stuffed-roasted-tomatoes-and-bell-peppers/> is not a quick, throw-together meal, but we love it. I turn it into a comforting soup to get the same flavors in a fraction of the time. And it's a good way to use leftover rice or pasta. You can put it right in the soup to create a complete meal -- or spoon it over rice or pasta to make a stew-like meal. Either way, you'll be eating stuffed peppers in no time."

Dimitra adds, "In Greece, produce is available only when it's in season. If you have a farmer's market nearby, purchase local and in-season vegetables for maximum flavor. I grew up in a traditional Greek family in New York. All our meals were homemade, every gathering took place around a table full of traditional food that was shared with our loved ones. My summers spent visiting family on the beautiful island of Crete are filled with memories of my grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles, making and sharing our food while creating memories and the traditions that I now get to pass down to my children."

"In 2008, in the middle of the Great Recession, my husband and I, without any experience in the food business, opened our first restaurant and ran it together as a family for 10 years. We sold it in 2018 to spend more time as a family and so that I could focus full-time on sharing these recipes with my readers. A few years after opening, our customers requested cooking classes, which led to my YouTube video tutorials on Dimitra's Dishes, then to the creation of my website where the recipes are available, and finally, the beginning of writing cookbooks. The best part about this dream come true is the emails and messages that I receive from my many readers. I love reading them and hearing your stories and supportive comments."

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound lean ground beef
3-4 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
5-6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 or 3 large bell peppers (yellow, red or orange), seeded and diced
1 28 oz. can crushed or diced tomatoes
1 teaspoon salt, to taste
1/2 teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
1/2 teaspoon dried dill
Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes, to taste
2-3 cups chicken, beef or vegetable broth
1 cup cooked basmati rice
1 teaspoon dried oregano
Feta cheese and Kalamata olives for serving

PREPARATION:

In a large soup pot, add the onion, bell peppers, and olive oil with a pinch of salt. Cook over medium heat until soft and golden for about 10 minutes.

Add the garlic and warm through for a few seconds until fragrant. Add the ground beef and cook until no longer pink. Add the tomatoes, broth, salt, pepper, dill, and red pepper flakes and bring to a full boil. Reduce the heat to medium and cook for 30-35 minutes. Add the rice and oregano, and stir. Cook a few minutes longer.

Taste and adjust the seasoning if needed and warm through.

Dimitra says, "We serve this soup with a creamy feta cheese, Kalamata olives, and crusty toasted bread. The bread soaks up all the delicious broth. We rarely have leftovers, but if you do, keep them in an airtight container in the refrigerator."

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.dimitrasdishes.com/greek-style-stuffed-pepper-soup-gemista-soup/>

Watch the how-to video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mE84HFdaFY>

The Brunch Table: Recipes, Menus, & Gameplans to Cook, Share, & Create Memories. This new eBook features 60 of Dimitra's favorite brunch recipes. Find Greek-inspired brunch ideas for any kind of holiday entertaining. Some of these recipes have been featured on Dimitra's Dishes website and YouTube channel. They have been upgraded to contain make-ahead tips and shortcuts. Order at: <https://www.dimitrasdishes.com/product/the-brunch-table-recipes-menus-gameplans-to-cook-share-create-memories-ebook-digital-download/>

For Dimitra's YouTube videos and Greek recipes, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/c/DimitrasDishes/featured>

For Dimitra's Best Greek Spanakopita (Updated), go to: <https://www.dimitrasdishes.com/the-best-spanakopita-recipe-updated/>

For Dimitra's Greek Lentil Tabbouleh Salad, go to: <https://www.dimitrasdishes.com/greek-lentil-tabbouleh-salad/>

For Koulourakia: Greek Butter Cookies, go to: <https://www.dimitrasdishes.com/koulourakia-greek-butter-cookies/>

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Nora Armani Captivates in 'Mercedes and Zaruhi' Play

ARMANI, from page 12

Original soundtrack compositions for the play were prepared by Armenian composer Vahan Artsruni, while art director Ared Spendjian played sound cues. David Medzorian of Daval Video Production set up the lights and speakers, and ran the sound mixer.

Prior to the Boston area performance, the play was performed in Providence, RI, at the Egavian Cultural Hall in Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, sponsored by the church's Cultural Committee with the Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee of Rhode Island, on April 26.

Armani last performed this solo play in New York City at the United Solo Theater Festival in November 2022. Before that, she noted, in 2015 and 2019 in Armenia she performed the full play version, in which other actors performed various characters along with her Zaruhi, who still had most of the lines. In Armenia, she performed in Western Armenian.

Afterward the performance, Armani noted for the *Mirror-Spectator*: "Each time is different because you have a different audience with different experiences and different expectations. I loved the audience here [in Arlington] and

also the space was amazing, with the focus and the lights. In Providence, the space was a bit wider and larger, so it was a bit difficult to focus and concentrate, but everything still went great." Her English adaptation includes some additional information to allow non-Armenian viewers, or people without sufficient context, to be able to understand the story, as well as the bit about photographs which she had heard through her own family, she said.

Armani thanked Maestro Konstantin Petrossian, because it was his initiative to bring her to Providence, and he also suggested that since she was coming to Providence she could come to Boston as well. She also thanked Ara Ghazarians of the Armenian Cultural Foundation and all the other people who made the current performance possible.

Armani stated that she is now writing another story which she will also eventually bring to the US. It is her grandmother's story and is called "Four Sisters." One of the sisters goes to Armenia, in the repatriation just like Zaruhi. However there is also an Egyptian part, where Armani's grandmother went and Armani herself was born, and sections concerning Australia and Canada, because the four sis-



Nora Armani with a mannequin serving as a prop in the play. It originally belonged to the Armenian Cultural Foundation founder and bibliophile Vahan Topalian, who was a tailor by profession. (photo Aram Arkun)

ters each went somewhere else. Armani exclaimed, "With those four sisters, you tell the entire story of the diaspora!"



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

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

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

MAY 17-18 — Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair, dine-in or take-out. Beef, chicken, losh kabob or vegetarian meals Friday 5-8 p.m.-Saturday 12 p.m.-7 p.m.: Sale of Armenian desserts and delicacies. The Armenian Memorial Church will donate 10% of the fair proceeds to the Armenian

Evangelical Boarding School in Anjar, Lebanon, which serves 82 needy students. 32 Bigelow Avenue Watertown, MA 02472

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

JUNE 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 Beriyeva, 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 Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown (Use Norseman Street side door). \$40 per person. Khorovadz, pilaf, salad and more. Special raffle. RSVP bostontca@gmail.com or call Sossy at 617-281-1647.

OCTOBER 25-27 — Save the date! Sanctuary consecration of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe. Presided over by Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill. Details to follow. **NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School** will celebrate with a 40th Anniversary Gala. Saturday, 6.30 p.m., Hyatt Regency Cambridge. Details to follow

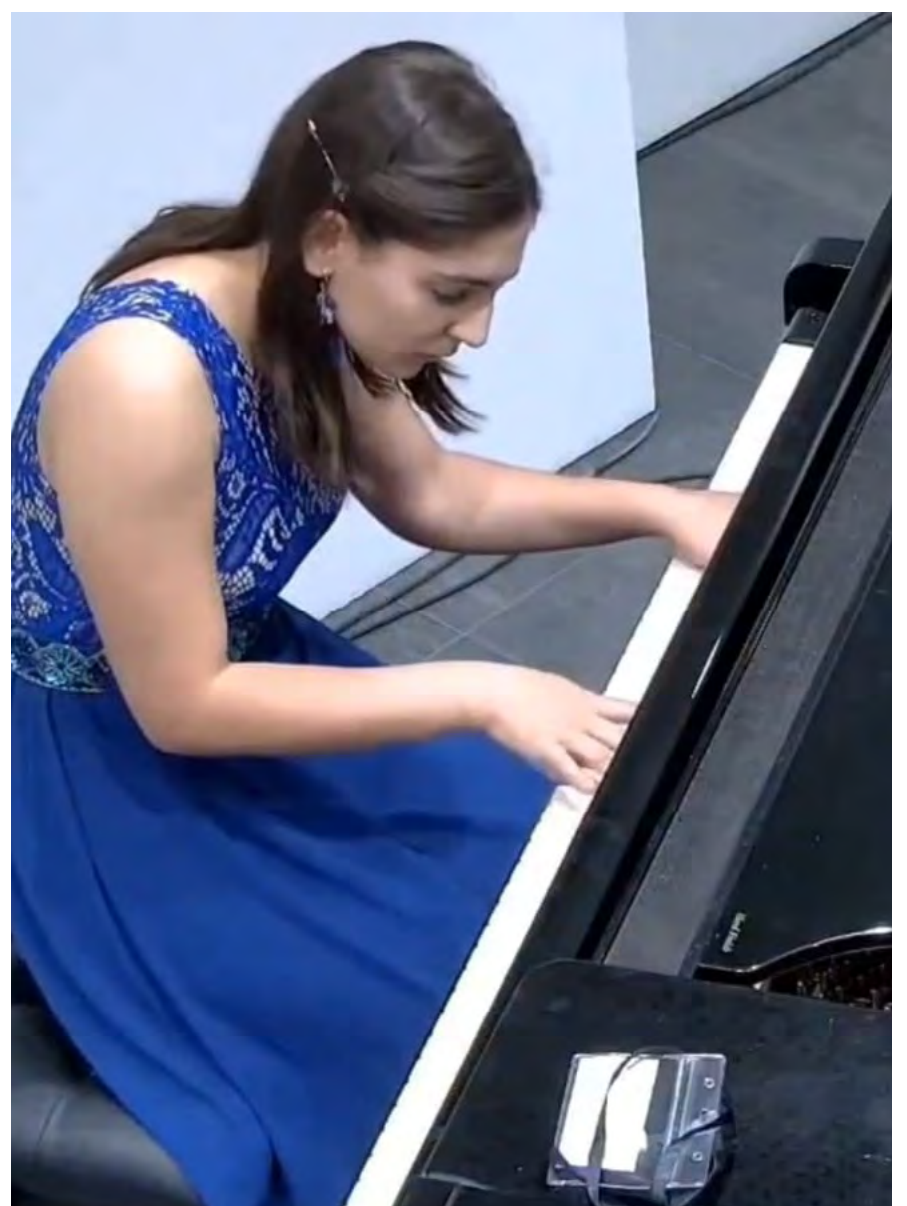
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Alicia Sargsyan Serrano Wins Prizes for Saxophone and Piano in Spain

VILA-REAL (Valencia), Spain — Young Spanish-Armenian musician Alicia Sargsyan Serrano, 16, during the weekend of April 27-28, won a double prize, First Prize Honorable Mention in Piano, playing *The Lark*, a piece by Mily Balakirev and an Artist Prize in saxophone with *Divertimento*, a piece by the composer Roger Boutry. The contest took place in Ciudad Faura (Valencia, Spain). Alicia participated in Category E (15-16 years old) on both days. On Saturday, April 27, she performed on the piano, and Sunday, April 28, she performed on the saxophone.

Almost four years ago, the Mirror-Spectator wrote about her participation in the second phase of the Online Music Performance Competition I of Buñol, a town in the province of Valencia, Spain, in June 2020. She ended up winning first prize by public vote.

Currently, Alicia is studying at the Francesc Peñarroja Professional Music Conservatory, in the city of Vall d'Uixo, Castellón (Valencia, Spain). Her piano teacher is Patricia Orenga and her saxophone teacher is her mother, Pilar Serrano Poles, with whom she lives in Vila-Real. Alicia is preparing to study for a higher degree in France soon, with renowned professors.



Alicia Sargsyan Serrano on saxophone and piano



ARTS & CULTURE

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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SINCE 1932



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Armenian Government Attempts To Avoid the Term Genocide

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On April 24, Armenians worldwide commemorate Armenian Genocide, remembering the 1.5 million innocents people massacred in the Ottoman Empire. Each year on this date, Armenians gather at memorials, churches, and services wherever they are. This year was no exception. Hundreds of thousands of people marched towards Tsitsernakaberd to lay flowers at the Armenian Genocide memorial fire. However, it transpired that the Armenian people are standing alone in this issue, with the Armenian authorities not backing them up.

While the political leadership of Armenia did visit Tsitsernakaberd, it was crucial to ascertain the Armenian government's stance on the fact of the Armenian Genocide itself. Unfortunately Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's address notably featured the phrase "Armenian Genocide" only 3 times, while *Medz Yeghern* [Great Crime] was mentioned 11 times. In 2023, Pashinyan used the term *Medz Yeghern* only once, while in 2020 and 2022, he used it twice. It is worth noting that the key sentences in the current message emphasized the phrase *Medz Yeghern* instead of just genocide.

Many will recall US President Barack Obama's avoidance of the term "genocide," similar to the actions of Pashinyan's administration. It is likely that there will be a gradual attempt to eliminate the term from the official position of the Armenian government, which means removing the recognition of the Armenian Genocide from the foreign political agenda of Armenia.

This shift suggests Armenia's gradual distancing from the term "genocide," especially in light of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent call for Armenia to abandon its recognition of the World War I events as genocide. And when we consider the Pashinyan team representative's suggestion to compile a list of 1.5 million Armenian names individually to determine the true number of victims, it is evident that this is a well-defined policy.

Until 2018, the fact of the Armenian Genocide was used as a tool in Armenia's foreign policy against Turkey. Any aggression towards Armenians by Turks could be branded as another genocide attempt, prompting Turks to refrain from such actions

to avoid being labeled as a genocidal nation by the international community.

Genocide is not merely a simple term. It represents a legal and political acknowledgment by various nations worldwide of the events that transpired against the Armenians in 1915. There is a significant legal distinction between the terms *Medz Yeghern* and Genocide. That is why, Armenian communities around the globe have long struggled for the recognition of the Genocide as such in the countries of their residence, yet Armenian authorities have opted to refer to it as the *Medz Yeghern*. This is a profound blow for any diasporan Armenian fighter for the truth affected by this tragedy, who now is being told that his efforts to recognize the Genocide were in vain.

These words hold further peril, as now, within nations that have acknowledged the genocide, dissenting voices may arise, questioning the validity of the genocide and its recognition by their own governments. The Armenians who at present endeavor to include the Armenian Genocide in American educational programs or elsewhere around the world find themselves in an exceedingly challenging position.

This stance also complicates matters for US President Biden, who acknowledged the Armenian Genocide by using the term. Critics now point out that even Armenian governmental officials avoid using the word, yet Biden persists. This sets a precedent for future American presidents, influenced by Armenian authorities, to steer clear of the term "genocide" or sidestep the April 24th presidential message on this topic.

It turns out that the Armenian government is repeating Turkey's long-standing official stance. Settling relations with Turkey has become a top priority for Pashinyan's government, which appears willing to make significant concessions, even at the cost of upsetting its own people, in order to achieve this goal.

(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.)

Armenia's Costly Political Blunders

By Nadeera Dickwella

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Armenia's intricate political journey, marked by historical struggles and the resilience of its nation, has been an ever-evolving story that has gone hand in hand with the region's changing geopolitical dynamics. However, if history is any indication, one trend Armenia has kept a record with is reading the geopolitical context in an erroneous fashion time and again.

Let me quote three examples. The first one was so fatal that its repercussions are felt even today. The King of Kings Tigranes the Great created an Armenian empire that had access to the Mediterranean, Black and Caspian seas. But he made the tragic mistake of siding with his father-in-law Mithridates and made an enemy of the most formidable empire ever to be on the earth, namely the Romans. While it would be unfair to judge the king's moral stand of protecting his family's honor instead of safeguarding the empire on behalf of the larger Armenian polity, his nation never had access to sea up to the present day as a result of his decision.

Thousands of years later the Armenians made another fateful mistake. When the nationalist Turkish CUP or the Committee of Union and Progress was rebelling for power in the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian political elites sided with their leaders, three pashas, instead of pursuing their own destiny. What those three pashas did to Armenians is globally known as "the Armenian Genocide." Even in these instances,

one could argue what Armenians did was choose to fight a common enemy with the hope of getting due justice later. Despite the core group known as the Ittihadists or the Unionists being radical Islamist, nationalist and xenophobic in character, the Armenians placed their trust in them. How wise they were in trusting well-known extremists who were openly anti-Armenian is anyone's guess.

The third blunder was made during the First World War. The Ottoman Empire as a Central Power fought alongside the Germans in a losing battle against four formidable allied world powers. Namely Russia, Great Britain, France, and the United States. However, the Armenian elites decided to wholeheartedly support the Ottoman Empire instead of pursuing the path of independence or taking advantage of the historical opportunity. The Ottoman's declaration of the war indeed put the Armenians in a bind. Their eastern compatriots were fighting alongside the Russian empire. The Ottoman Armenians decided to show their solidarity and steadfast support to the Ottomans. They took a few steps in publicly supporting and endorsing the Empire's war effort. In November 1914, the Armenian political elites decided the following: A public circular was to be sent to all the provinces so that "each fulfills its obligations and renews its oaths of fidelity to the Ottoman homeland"; setting up a field hospital at the expense of the Armenians; and publication by the Armenian Political Council of a circular calling upon Armenian subjects to mobilize for the "Ot-

toman homeland."

Sadly the Empire's war effort turned out to be nothing short of annihilating a million plus innocent Armenians in the most brutal event in modern history. Did the Armenian elites misjudge the geopolitics at the time? Apparently, their decision to stand by the Ottomans turned out to be most costly in the end.

Now I will turn to modern times. Armenia under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is closely following the historical precedents of reading the room entirely wrong. Surrendering the interest of the Armenian population to its arch-enemy with no strategic gain has been what he has been busy achieving. His declaration of Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan in May 2023 was duly recognized and compensated with an all-out ethnic cleansing in September 2023 by the Aliyev regime. If ceding the historical lands which are undoubtedly the very soul of the Armenian nation is not a betrayal, what is? What was his gain, one might ask. Powerful handshakes and a heap of praise by the Europeans who claim themselves as allies of Armenians. The irony however is that those allies are happily buying the blood gas from Azerbaijan while pumping Baku's economy with tens of billions in investments to bankroll its war machine. The very war machine directed against Armenian statehood. If that was not enough insult to injury, now he is using the state force to put his population in Tavush Province at risk by forcing them to acknowledge his will. What was his gain?

see BLUNDERS, page 20



COMMENTARY

Twinned Fates Of Artsakh and Western Armenia

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

The following keynote address was delivered by *Mirror-Spectator* editor Alin K. Gregorian at the annual Genocide commemoration in Providence, on April 28.

As most know, we commemorate the date April 24, 1915, because it was the day when the Ottoman government rounded up approximately 250 cultural and political leaders of the Armenian community. Of course, the Genocide had begun much earlier, in the 1880s, and continued until 1922.

After killing 1.5 million Armenians, the Ottoman government and later the Republic of Turkey embarked upon a concerted effort to erase all physical traces of Armenian presence from their historic homeland of Western Armenia. Churches have been destroyed, khachkar stone cross monuments have been pulverized or dismantled and used as bricks in new buildings, erasing these people all over again. We see the once-majestic churches in Ani, the medieval Armenian capital during the Bagraduni kingdom, now just so much rubble.

This attitude, both of rabid anti-Armenianness and destruction of monuments, has been inherited by the Azerbaijani government.

This year, as we mark the 109th anniversary of the Genocide, our worldwide Armenian community has been rocked by yet another ethnic cleansing, this time by Azerbaijan. One major difference between the events of a century ago and now is the smaller death toll in this most recent tragedy. However, as we saw with the events dating back to 2020's 44-day war, waged by Azerbaijan, the threats didn't stop until the very last Armenian citizen of Artsakh (or Nagorno Karabakh, as it is officially known) left in 2023. In one short week, September 23 through October 1, 2023, about 120,000 ethnic Armenian citizens of Artsakh poured out into Armenia.

Had those people stayed, their fates would have been similar to those of Armenians a century ago.

And at the moment, the Armenian leadership of Karabakh, is held as POWs, facing terrible odds.

The pictures from Artsakh were striking on two levels. I remember feeling such helplessness when viewing images of people being erased from their ancient homeland. On the other hand, I was struck by the similarity of the pictures to those of a century before. With the exception of the presence of motorized vehicles as opposed to carts, and modern clothing, their expressions were identical. The same agonized, defeated looks, wondering what was happening, where they would sleep that night and how they would take care of their children. Their homes were gone, as were most of their possessions.

I used to think that had the Armenian Genocide and the forced marches through Deir Zor Desert taken place in modern times, the result would have been different, that, with the proliferation of smart phones and social media, these horrors would have come to light and a global outcry would have put a stop to them.

History, however, has showed us that inaction or indifference seems to be the rule rather than the exception. Sadly, there are so many peoples and countries who have suffered similar fates in the past or current century. Among those that readily come to mind are Yemen. The Assyrians. The displaced refugees of Syria. Rwanda. The Holocaust. The Yazidis in Iraq. Gaza. The Kurds in Turkey.

Do we think about them? I think it behooves us, as a people whose ancestors experienced a Genocide, to raise our voices when it comes to other genocides.

Let's not forget that in February, an Armenian Genocide survivor who had lost his family and fled to France, Missak Manouchian, received a hero's sendoff, with his wife, Meline, when their remains were interred in the Pantheon in Paris, the final resting site of French heroes. He was buried as a non-French citizen, an incredible honor, as he had led the legendary French Resistance against the Nazi-installed Vichy government during World War II.

The lightning operation by the Azerbaijani government had been preceded by a six-month illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the enclave's only connection to the outside world. To give the Azeris credit, they did not bother to hide their actions. One day, in December 2022, the border was closed and no food or medicine could get in. And that was OK.

The International Court of Justice at the Hague, the legal arm of the United Nations, ruled against Azerbaijan in February 2023 and ordered it to end the blockade but the Azerbaijani government did not comply, nor did it suffer any repercussions.

Similarly, many, many Azerbaijani soldiers posted horrific videos of beheadings and torture of Armenian soldiers and civilians. There was no attempt to hide their actions nor their intentions. Again, no consequences.

In addition, the leader of the country, Dictator Ilham Aliyev, has often resorted to hyperbole and literally dehumanizing insults. He has also said that war and brute force were the only things that worked and he was happy to have employed them. Since winning the war, he has continuously threatened to invade Armenia and his forces have taken around 200 square kilometers of land in Armenia proper. The Armenian government just returned 4 border villages that it had taken from that country in the 1990s. Azerbaijan, which similarly had taken arable land from Armenia then, is certainly not returning anything.

After the disastrous 2020 war, when Azerbaijani forces took most of Artsakh, with the exception of the capital Stepanakert and its environs, the government started a disinformation campaign of deleting the Armenian past of Artsakh. Overnight, what was Armenian became Albanian, and Aliyev's government would tear off the Armenian lettering or pulverize Armenian cross stones, and "restore" a fictitious Albanian heritage to the churches and monuments.

Making this horrific episode even more appalling was that during this time, the vice president of Azerbaijan, Mehriban Aliyeva, the wife of the president, was a goodwill ambassador for UNESCO, the United Nations division tasked with protecting world heritage sites.

And let's not forget that at every step of the way, Turkey's leaders were by the side of the Azerbaijan, amplifying their threats and seconding their demands.

Even worse, right after Aliyev would make horrific statements and commit those actions, he would be embraced by leaders in Europe as a friend, a true beacon for the West at a time when their oil and gas supplies were in danger because of Russia's debilitating war against Ukraine.

Right before launching the Karabakh war, Azerbaijan and Russia signed a trade agreement which basically called for the highest level of economic cooperation between two nations. The majority of the gas and oil Azerbaijan sells to the EU is Russian. That is why when the head of the European Commission, Ursula Von Der Leyen, praises Azerbaijan for its cooperation after the Russian gas embargo, it is especially galling.

Again and again, the Azerbaijani and Turkish governments themselves tie this recent chapter, one rightly called genocide by Judge Louis Moreno Ocampo, to that of the previous century.

During the victory parade in Shushi one month after the end of the 44-day war, Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the soul of Enver Pasha was illuminated. The reference was clear as Enver Pasha was a member of the Ittihadist triumvirate, which had planned and put into motion the Armenian Genocide. Another reason was that Enver was killed by the Shushi-born Hagop Melkumyan of the Russian Red Army in 1922.

In addition, Erdogan has called the surviving Armenians "leftovers of the sword."

Now, the next step is finalizing a peace process but what will that peace entail? Official status for Karabakh? And where are those people going to go? I know there are efforts to reverse the outcome and to fight back for an Armenian Artsakh, but I am not sure I am at all optimistic. Armenians in Artsakh have nothing to negotiate with and yet their land, like Armenia, sits in a global hotspot straddling east and west. In fact, Armenia itself is in the crosshairs of Azerbaijan, facing demands for more and more corridors and lands.

The efforts of our lobbying groups in Washington have led to the US fully recognizing the Genocide. Now, they have to focus on the security of Armenia and the recognition of the ethnic cleansing in Artsakh.

My family does not hail from Western Armenia. My mother's family was from the ancient Armenian province of Salmast, which is now part of the Iranian province of Azerbaijan, and lived in Russia before fleeing to Iran in the wake of the 1917 revolution. My great-uncle, a doctor, had moved to Baku. There, he was killed by nationalist forces in the hospital where he worked, in 1918, during the pan Turkic movement.

My father's family had been in Iran for generations, and we believe they arrived from Julfa, in Nakhijevan, another historic Armenian province, during the reign of the Persian Shah Abbas, who forcibly moved the population of that city to Iran, where he founded new Julfa, in order to bring the Silk Road and all its riches, to his country.

Nakhijevan, given by the Soviet leadership to Azerbaijan, is today devoid of any Armenian reference. The cemeteries, monuments and churches, have been systematically dismantled or destroyed by the Azerbaijani government. This is the precursor of what it to come in Artsakh. Just this past week, news came to light of a large cemetery in Shushi as well as a church being razed.

I find it personally so gut-wrenching to witness what is happening in Karabakh. I spent four days there in 2009 exploring Stepanakert and Shushi with my daughter and her fellow fifth grade students and parents from St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School in Watertown. I spent hours in the Sourp Ghazanchetsots cathedral in Shushi. I visited the museum dedicated to the heroes of the war of the 1990s. Our guide was a small, elderly woman. She showed our group all the pictures of the soldiers killed. Toward the end of the tour, she pointed to one small photo of a handsome young man. She said, 'That's my son.' There were few dry eyes.

Disinformation by Turkey and Azerbaijan is rampant. The Azerbaijani government's use of Caviar Diplomacy is well documented.

The need for louder voices was glaring during the Karabakh war, when there were so few people that could provide correct information on the region's history, and geopolitical complexities. We have some very good scholars but the number is small. By contrast, the Azerbaijani disinformation machine churned out stories about Khojaly, a false narrative about Karabakh being historic Azerbaijan and more, and the reporters, almost always ignorant of the history of this particular part of the world, did not challenge them. At best, they did what do when they cover the Armenian Genocide: The Armenians claim, etc., while the Azerbaijani government denies....

We need to put money in establishing new and supporting existing Armenian studies chairs, as well as sponsoring the training of more political scientists, sociologists and historians. And we also have to cultivate major players in the media to connect those scholars to news outlets. The Turkish government has put a lot of money behind academic chairs in prestigious universities, pushing an alternative version of history.

The arts can be another way the Armenian issue can be brought to the masses.

The film "The Promise" was a great example as was the film "Amerikatsi," which was able to appeal to mainstream audiences, linking the Genocide with the legacy of Stalin and later the modern Republic of Armenia.

The fact that a century after the genocide and 7000 miles away from Western Armenia, the victims are commemorated and honored by their descendants says something about our people and their indomitable spirit. That we are here before this beautiful monument says exactly why we need to build these monuments and honor our ancient history.



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Falsely Blames Armenia's Problems on the Trauma from the 1915 Genocide

With each passing day, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's statements contradicting Armenia's national interests are getting increasingly alarming

Pashinyan started by denigrating Mt. Ararat, the preeminent Armenian symbol. He then mocked Armenia's coat of arms, questioning why there is a lion on it, claiming that there are no lions in Armenia. With this statement, Pashinyan made three factual errors:

- 1) He did not seem to realize that the lion symbolizes courage and strength. It has nothing to do with whether there are lions in Armenia or not;
- 2) There are over a dozen countries that have a lion on their coat of arms without having a single lion in their countries;
- 3) He is also incorrect that there are no lions in Armenia. A well-known oligarch has had several lions in his Yerevan mansion for many years.

The prime minister then made abusive remarks about Armenia's national anthem using the excuse that it contains the word "enemy." There are several other countries that have the word enemy in their national anthems.

Pashinyan went on to complain that what is now called "Army of Armenians" (Hayots Panag) should be "Armenia's Army" (Hayastani Panag), and that textbooks on the "History of Armenians" (Hayots Badmoutyoun) should be called "Armenia's History" (Hayastani Badmoutyoun). He also wants to distance today's Armenia from its past by contrasting "Real Armenia" with "Historical Armenia." He then suggested, in line with President Aliyev's demand, that Armenia adopt a new constitution deleting the references to Artsakh and the Armenian Genocide.

Last week, I wrote about one of Pashinyan's top lieutenants' incredible suggestion to make a list of all 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide. This is an indirect way of questioning the veracity of the Armenian Genocide.

All of these statements indicate that Pashinyan is retreating from Armenia's and Armenians' nationalistic stands to appease Azerbaijan and Turkey.

To make matters worse, on April 24, 2024, the prime minister issued a statement full of confusing words which reflect his unstable mental state. He referred to the Armenian Genocide as Meds Yeghern (Great Crime) 11 times and only four times as Genocide. Meds Yeghern is a term that Armenians used until the 1940s to describe the Genocide before the term genocide was coined by Raphael Lemkin. Since then, the proper and legal term that should be used is Genocide or Tseghasbanoutyoun, in Armenian.

It does not come as a surprise that Pashinyan, in his April 24 statement, once again obfuscated the meaning of the term genocide thus continuing his

attempts to downplay Armenian national symbols and terminology.

Pashinyan complained that due to the Meds Yeghern, Armenia often deals with other countries in a state of trauma or shock: "for this reason, sometimes we cannot correctly distinguish the realities and factors, historical processes and predictable horizons. Maybe this is also the reason why we get new shocks, reliving the trauma of the Armenian Genocide as a legacy and as a tradition."

By making such a statement, Pashinyan is blaming the trauma from the Genocide of 1915 for his incompetent decisions and mismanagement of the state. While it is true that there is such a thing as transgenerational trauma, I would advise the Prime Minister to look at his own inability to rule rather than the trauma from the Genocide.

Pashinyan then surprisingly suggested that Armenians "stop searching for a homeland, because we have found that homeland, our Promised Land, where milk and honey flow."

It appears that Pashinyan has lost all perceptions of reality! He is describing Armenia with its existential problems as "the Promised Land where milk and honey flow!" More likely, he and his family are the ones living a luxurious life at the Armenian taxpayers' expense.

The only people who were pleased with Pashinyan's April 24 message are the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkey, Ilham Aliyev and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. An indication of that pleasure was the crowd of Turks gathered on April 24 in front of the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C., chanting: "Pashinyan, Pashinyan, Pashinyan," in the faces of Armenian protesters.

The president of Turkey, as he has done on every April 24 ever since 2014, issued a statement trying to fool the international community that he is acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. He actually lumped together Armenians and Turks and everyone else "who passed away or were martyred as a consequence of armed conflicts, rebellions, gang violence and terrorist acts" during "World War I." He thus misrepresented the Armenian victims of genocide as war casualties. He described "the 1915 events" not as genocide, but a "tragedy in which both sides suffered casualties."

In a direct message to Pashinyan, Erdogan stated that "Türkiye's ties with Armenia ... appear to depend on Yerevan's stance on the issue [of genocide]... A new order is being established in the region, and it is time to set aside baseless claims. It is time to move forward with realities on the ground. It is better than moving forward with fabrications, tales." This sounds very similar to what Pashinyan is trying to do. Erdogan made the intent of his message more obvious when he said: "Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan understands this [reality]." As a final dig, Erdogan stated: "I hope Armenia escapes from the darkness it was condemned to, thanks to its diaspora, and chooses the path of new beginnings."

The true meaning of Erdogan's words was revealed when the Istanbul Governor's Office once again banned the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on April 24. Actions speak louder than words!

Why Is the Biden Administration Whitewashing Azerbaijan's Crimes?

By Michael Rubin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The year 2023 marked perhaps the worst year for Armenians since the Genocide of more than a century ago. Azerbaijanis backed by Turkish Special Forces and utilizing Israeli drones attacked Nagorno-Karabakh and successfully drove out its indigenous Armenian Christian population. For Azerbaijani dictator Ilham Aliyev, the eradication of Christianity and expulsion of ethnic Armenians fulfilled a lifelong ambition.

Alas, the US State Department "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023," released on April 22, 2024, downplays this reality. While President Joe Biden sees himself as a human rights president and prides himself on having the moral clarity to recognize the Armenian Genocide, the report's whitewashing not only of Azerbaijan's crimes but also its diplomats' own previous reporting suggests something is rotten in the State Department, if not the White House itself.

Superficially, the report does criticize Azerbaijan, but its omissions and elisions are the equivalent of referring to serial killer Ted Bundy only a man who perpetrated violence against women.

The reality is that when Azerbaijan blockaded the Lachin corridor, it not only violated the terms of the November 9, 2020 ceasefire agreement, but it also violated US law. The Humanitarian Aid Corridors Act prohibits any interference any country receiving American assistance with the provision or dispatch of US assistance to another country, region, or territory.

This is not clear from the State Department's report. Consider its description of the Lachin Corridor blockade: "Azerbaijan impeded access to the Lachin Corridor. This left the road inaccessible to most civilian and commercial traffic and inhibited access for deliveries of humanitarian supplies from Armenia. The Azerbaijan government stated it was prepared to supply goods to Nagorno-Karabakh via alternative routes; however, ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh refused to accept products transported from Azerbaijan."

This narrative ignores not only the fake environmental protestors subsequently identified as known Azerbaijani security officers but also omits Azerbaijan's cut-off of gas, electricity and other utilities. The State Department report also legitimizes the Azerbaijani offer to lift the blockade and amplifies Azerbaijani propaganda that the indigenous Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh shares blame for refusal to accept alternative supply routes. In reality, however, the Azerbaijani offer was never sincere; rather, it was equivalent to seeing good faith in German offers during World War II to feed the Warsaw ghetto.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken cannot plead ignorance. The State Department report contradicts his own statements and the State Department's findings between January and September 2023. Blinken put responsibility on Azerbaijan shortly after the blockade began and continued to demand Azerbaijan cease its "military actions in Nagorno-Karabakh." As the State Department report downplays moral clarity in favor of moral equivalence, it omits Blinken's previous findings that Azerbaijan's blockade and military aggression "are worsening an already dire humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and undermine prospects for peace." The moral equivalence infusing the State Department report also ignores Blinken's own October 2023 warning to lawmakers that Azerbaijan could invade Armenia.

The same holds true for the arrest of senior officials of the Republic of Artsakh. The State Department inserts scare quotes around "officials" despite Artsakh's free elections. In effect, Blinken engages in both election denial and minimization of the fact that Azerbaijan's

actions were not just ethnic cleansing and the deliberate eradication of millennia-old culture and indigenous population, but also represented the triumph of autocracy over a region that had embraced democracy. Blinken may find such elision sophisticated, but the Biden administration loses any moral high ground to condemn election denial at home when it encourages it abroad.

Alas, under Samantha Power's leadership, the US Agency for International Development is no better. After her and Blinken's meeting in Brussels with their European Union counterparts, USAID released a statement applauding its commitment to "provide \$33 million, to support the people of Armenia by assisting those displaced following recent hostilities; bolstering its energy sector; combating food insecurity; promoting economic stability, digital governance and regional integration; and defending human rights." Here, though, the devil is in the details. Power has allocated the money to support LGBT groups and help farmers navigate climate change. Less than a quarter of the funds announced will actually assist refugees of Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh. Put another way, the Biden administration has spent six times more money on building a new post office in rural Davidson County, North Carolina, than it has on feeding, clothing, and sheltering expelled from Nagorno-Karabakh. This was not how pre-government service Power counseled addressing genocide.

Make no mistake: Armenians should judge the annual White House statement by its willingness to acknowledge the fact that Azerbaijan ethnically cleansed the indigenous Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. Should the statement continue the pattern set by Blinken and not call out Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Artsakh, the result will greenlight renewed violence. Commemoration is meaningless absent sincerity. Symbolism should never come at the expense of substance. If Blinken wants to smooth relations with Azerbaijan, he should do so not based on lies, but by calibrating U.S. policy to reality.

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



Books

Hakan Seckinelgin's *The Armenian Genocide and Turkey: Public Memory And Institutionalized Denial*

LONDON/NEW YORK—I. B. Tauris, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, has announced the publication of Dr. Hakan Seckinelgin's book *The Armenian Genocide and Turkey: Public Memory and Institutionalized Denial*. The book is part of the series, edited by Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska, Lincoln) and published by I.B. Tauris, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing UK.

In this book, Seckinelgin investigates the mechanisms by which denial of the events of 1915 are reproduced in official discourse and the effect this has on Turkish citizens. Examining state education, media discourse, academic publications, as well as public events debating the Armenian genocide, the book argues that, at the public level, there exists a 'grammar' or 'repertoire' of denial in Turkey that regulates how the issue

can be publicly conceptualized and understood. The book's careful analysis examines the way that knowledge about the genocide



Dr. Hakan Seckinelgin

is censored in Turkey, from the language that must be used to publicly discuss it to the complex way in which selective knowledge and erased history are reproduced from 1915 and subsequent generations until today. It argues that denialism has become essential to a certain kind of Turkish national identity and belonging – and suggests ways in which this relationship

can be unpicked in the future.

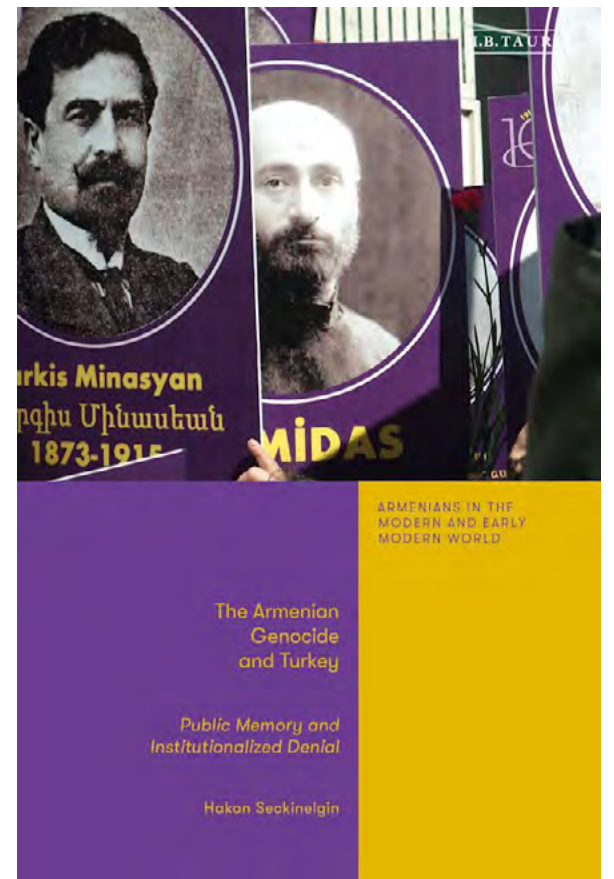
Seckinelgin noted: "This research project stems from a paradoxical realization: while many in Turkish public feel comfortable in denying the 1915 Armenian genocide, there is a significant lack of knowledge about Armenian lives before (or immediately after) 1915 in Turkey. I realized that there is a kind of intergenerational knowledge claim based on national citizenship at work here. People in the Turkish public deny the 1915 genocide as members of a community that has constructed and imagined an appropriate past for itself. This revealed a process of intergenerational knowledge claims through which genocide is denied. I here focused on the nature of the denialist knowledge claims that appear in public discussions. Thus, the book has a distinctive entry point to its analyses; rather than focusing on the historical discussion, it begins from the present to unpack the conditions of denial. In this way, I explore conditions for reproducing the present institutionalized denialism."

Seckinelgin also focuses on several mechanisms that make such a reproduction possible. In particular, the process is not only about controlling available public knowledge of the past, but it also aims to control how far the public should have empathy towards those who are constructed as enemies, that is, those who make 'us' insecure in different ways. He continued, "In the analysis, I find that the language of ahistorical insecurity, to a categorical other, is used as a master narrative that stops the possibility of thinking about living with others and prevents thinking about conditions of cohabitation without silencing. The wider aim is to reveal mechanisms that maintain a public denial of the Armenian genocide in Turkey, to open a possibility of thinking differently from what is currently taken as public knowledge."

"This is an excellent book that demonstrates the extent to which the denial of the Armenian genocide is embedded within Turkish identity," said Der Matossian, the editor of the series. "Seckinelgin demonstrates the multifaceted mechanisms employed by the Turkish state in denying the Armenian Genocide as an official policy. His theoretical approach and analytical skills demonstrate a sophisticated web of denial implemented by an unrepented

state," he concluded.

Prof. Fatma Müge Göçek, of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, said of the book: "This excellent book analyzes the significance of collective remembering





Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter invites you to a

HAMPARTSUM LUNCHEON

Enjoy a special menu and celebrate Armenian traditions. Expect entertainment, raffle, gifts and more!

\$40/adult, \$25/student, free 10 years old or younger



 Sunday, May 5, 1.30 p.m.

 **Baikar Building**
755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown
Use Norseman Ave. side entrance

Limited space, no tickets at door, RSVP: bostontca@gmail.com or call Sossy 617 281-1647

Harout Bronozian Donates \$10,000 to TCA's Pasadena Glendale Chapter

In appreciation of the Tekeyan Cultural Association's West Coast Pasadena Glendale Chapter's activities in cultural and social fields serving the community and bringing together members and friends of all age groups, Harout Bronozian donated \$10,000 to be used for new projects. He encourages and appreciates the efforts of the Executive and Social, Theatrical and Cultural committees and was very pleased with the recent establishment of the TCA Azad Pem Theatrical group that was very motivating, and performances were very successful in the community.

The TCA Pasadena Glendale Chapter's Executive committee and members are thankful for his generous donation.

Armenia's Costly Political Blunders

BLUNDERS, from page 17

Headlines of praise from European press and a white color border post. He seems to have placed more trust in the Azerbaijani dictator than his own countrymen. One wonders whether he suffers from Stockholm syndrome.

Now the juicier part of the story is Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's choice of security guarantors. The issue is not at all with those states he has chosen. After all, trusting democratic nations such as France or the United States is wiser and a healthier choice in the long run. But what is the pragmatic nature of that choice? If there is a war between Baku and Armenia, what practical military assistance can Paris or Washington give? Iran, Turkey, Russia, and even Azerbaijan do not want to see any European military presence in the region. A landlocked Armenia will have to depend solely on the Georgian route for military

assistance. In every such conflict, historically the brotherly nation of Georgia has famously betrayed the Armenians. Especially with a Russian-friendly prime minister in Tbilisi, not a single Western military cargo will cross the Caucasus mountains. That is a foregone conclusion. How about sanctioning Baku? None of the Western countries sanctioned Baku when it ethnically cleansed Artsakh in broad daylight. What are the chances of them doing it now?

Prime Minister Pashinyan has technically abandoned the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Eventually, though, it will be the only organization that has the capability, availability, and ability to stop such a military conflict. Will they come to the rescue? This is the day Moscow is patiently waiting for and has been preparing the South Caucasus theater for. Russia will ask for a pound of flesh from the Armenian prime minister at the end.