

Armenian Opposition Demands Parliament Hold Debate on Pashinyan’s Resignation

By Ruzanna Stepanian and Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Amid continuing anti-government protests in Yerevan, the Armenian opposition moved on Monday, June 10, to force an emergency parliamentary debate on its demands for the resignation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his cabinet.

The opposition Hayastan and Pativ Unem alliances petitioned the leadership of the National Assembly to convene such a session as protesters led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan occupied a section of the city’s Marshal Bagramyan Avenue adjacent to the parliament building. They set up a tent camp there early in the morning after security forces prevented them from marching through another street located closer to the building.

The opposition lawmakers want the parliament to debate and approve by June 17 a resolution saying that Pashinyan’s government must quit because it “has failed the defense, security and territorial integrity” of Armenia, left



Opposition leader Artsvik Minasyan addresses protesters on Marshal Baghramyane Avenue, Yerevan, June 10, 2024.

Minasyan stressed that the proposed measure is not a vote of no confidence in the government which was demanded by Galstanyan at the beginning of his month-long campaign for regime change.

The parliament leadership dominated by pro-government lawmakers rejected the initiative later in the day. Speaker

that an emergency session must take place if it is demanded by at least 27 members of the 107-seat legislature. Hayastan and Pativ Unem collected 33 signatures in support of the debate, meaning that it has to be scheduled for June 17 at the latest.

However, the parliamentary majority can scuttle the debate by boycotting it and preventing the National Assembly from making a quorum. Hayk Konjoryan, the parliamentary leader of Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party, made it clear that he and his pro-government colleagues will do just that.

Opposition lawmakers said that despite the parliamentary majority’s stance they hope to succeed in forcing the debate.

“Many things will happen before June 17,” said Hayk Mamijanian, the Pativ Unem leader.

For his part, Minasyan said Armenians should take to the streets in large numbers in order to force the ruling majority to obey “the will of the people.”

“It’s important that the people’s demand be so powerful that they show up for that session,” he told protesters camped out on Marshal Bagramyan Avenue.

see OPPOSITION, page 2



Anti-government protesters occupy a street in Yerevan, June 10, 2024.

the country’s sovereignty “under immediate threat” and must be replaced by experienced professionals trusted by the public. Hayastan’s Artsvik

Alen Simonian insisted that Pashinyan and his political team still enjoy popular backing.

The parliamentary statutes stipulate

Aliyev: Peace Treaty ‘Impossible’ with Armenia’s Current Constitution

By Arshaluys Barseghyan and Aytan Farhadova

Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev has stated that it will be “simply impossible” to reach a peace deal if the Armenian constitution “remains unchanged.”

Aliyev stated on June 6 that the Armenian constitution’s basis, the Declaration of Independence, “contains territorial claims against Azerbaijan.”

Armenia’s Declaration of Independence, signed in August 1990, includes a joint decision by the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Karabakh Council to “reunify the Armenian SSR and the Mountainous Region of Karabakh.”

“From a young age, Azerbaijanis and Turks have been portrayed as enemies in their society. It is their society that has been poisoned by nationalists and

war criminals,” said Aliyev, who previously stated that he expected guarantees from Yerevan against “Armenian revanchism.”

In response, Armenia’s Foreign Ministry stated that Yerevan does not have any territorial claims towards Azerbaijan or any of its neighbors, and stressed that amendments to the constitution are Armenia’s internal affairs.

see ALIYEV, page 6

Armenia’s Public Life Must Rise From the Street to the Level of Constitutional Legitimacy

More than a month has passed since the day when the protest against the border demarcation works carried out in the Tavush



region was transformed into the “Movement of Tavush for the Motherland,” led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, the Primate of the Diocese of Tavush. This movement initiated

a march to Yerevan’s Republic Square, where on May 9, a mass meeting with 31,000 participants took place, and on that day, the clerical leader of the movement demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Pashinyan with a one-hour deadline. After that, the authorities, headed by Prime Minister Pashinyan, continued to run the state administration in the usual manner, while the movement initiated actions of civil disobedience, especially blocking streets.

Through the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) press, we followed all of this with some concern and were content initially to merely report on the various developments taking place as news.

Today, more than a month later, we find it necessary to pass from the stage of news reports to that of a brief and objective analysis of the state of crisis that has been created, to take a position and define our expectations of the Armenian people and the authorities, in order that Armenia remains a democratic member of the great family of civilized countries, subject solely to the implementation of the will of the majority.

see LEGITIMACY, page 19

Russia Condemns Armenian Officials’ Trip to Ukrainian Town

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Russian Foreign Ministry has sent a note of protest to Yerevan over pro-Ukrainian statements reportedly made by two Armenian officials

during a visit to a town near Kyiv late last month.

Armenia’s ambassador to Ukraine, Vladimir Karapetyan, and the chief executive of Yerevan’s northern Nor Nork district, Tigran Ter-Margaryan, traveled to Bucha on May 31 amid a continuing deterioration of Russian-Armenian relations. They met with the town’s mayor, delivered humanitarian aid to local hospitals and lit candles at a memorial to Bucha residents killed following Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine.



Armenian Ambassador Vladimir Karapetyan and the head of Yerevan’s Nor Nork district, Tigran Ter-Margaryan, visit Bucha, May 31, 2024.

They met with the town’s mayor, delivered humanitarian aid to local hospitals and lit candles at a memorial to Bucha residents killed following Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

see UKRAINE, page 7

ARMENIA

Afeyan Launches New Initiative: Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation

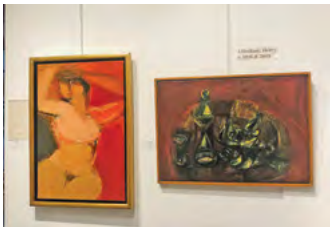
Page 6



RHODE ISLAND

Gallery Z Presents ‘One Name, Three Generations + One’ Tribute to Elibekian Family

Page 15



MIRROR-SPECTATOR ANNUAL SUMMER VACATION

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will close for its annual two-week vacation in early July. The last issue before the vacation will be that of June 29. The first issue back will be that of July 20. Enjoy a safe and healthy summer.



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia Elected to UN Economic Council

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia on June 7 elected as a Member of the UN Economic and Social Council for 2025-2027, receiving 148 votes in the voting held at the UN headquarters in New York.

“We thank Armenia’s partner states for their support. Armenia is committed to contributing to international cooperation in implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda for the period up to 2030,” said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Artsakh President’s Official Car Seized

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — An investigator has ordered the seizure of Artsakh President Samvel Shahramanyan’s official car, lawyer Roman Yeritsyan said on Tuesday, June 11.

It is part of a drug trafficking investigation. The lawyer stated that the investigator failed to provide substantiation for the car seizure.

The vehicle was inspected as part of the same probe a few months ago, but nothing of interest to the investigation was found.

US, Armenia Sign Customs Deal

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The United States and Armenia signed on June 11 an agreement on “mutual assistance” of their customs services after talks in Yerevan which a senior US official said highlighted growing ties between the two nations.

“Our discussions focused on democratic development, economic diversification, defense reforms, and Euro-Atlantic cooperation,” James O’Brien, the US assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia, tweeted after chairing the latest session of the US-Armenia Strategic Dialogue together with Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan.

“Today’s meeting is yet another expression of high-level political dialogue between our two countries that will give another impetus to the evolving partnership,” Mirzoyan said during the talks.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry reported that the head of Armenia’s State Revenue Committee, Rustam Badasyan, and the US ambassador in Yerevan, Kristina Kvien, signed the agreement on “mutual assistance of their customs authorities.” It gave no details of the deal.

Speaking during the talks, O’Brien said that the deal calls for an “exchange of information” between the US and Armenian customs services. It will help to expand bilateral commercial ties, he said.

According to data, US-Armenian trade reached \$670 million last year. US exports to Armenia accounted for almost 93 percent of the figure equivalent to 3.2 percent of the South Caucasus country’s overall foreign trade.

By comparison, Armenia’s trade with Russia totaled \$7.3 billion in 2023. It has grown sharply since the Russian invasion of Ukraine despite a significant worsening of Yerevan’s relations with Moscow.

French Echoes in Armenia: A Tapestry of Experiences

By Victoria Ren

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The relationship between France and Armenia is a compelling narrative woven from threads of history, culture and shared values. This friendship manifests itself in various forms and locations, from using common words such as “merci,” to the construction of remarkable buildings like the Paul Eluard Francophone Center in Stepanakert, where a visiting European chef brought their expertise in French cuisine, or small yet significant places such as the restaurant Aux Délices Arméniens near the central train station in Cannes.

The geographical reach of this relationship is as extensive as the investments made by France throughout Armenia. According to the analytics firm CEIC Data, French foreign direct investment (FDI) in Armenia was at its lowest in 2019, amounting to 99 million drams (\$256,000), down from its peak in 2016 at 461 million drams (\$1.9 million); currently, it averages at around 128 million (\$330,000). Previously, France had been the second-biggest investor in Armenia after the Russian Federation. Statistics show that the United Arab Emirates has now taken the leading position.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) France Arménie reports that more than 100 French companies have launched operations in Armenia since its independence. These include major players like CBA Bank (Crédit Agricole), Amundi, Yerevan Brandy Company (Pernod Ricard), Veolia, and Bureau Veritas, among others, each contributing to the French influence there while bringing their unique expertise.

Beyond economics and politics, the bond between France and Armenia is sustained by a web of educational, cultural and humanitarian efforts. Institutions such as the French University in Armenia (Université Française en Arménie) and the Anatole France French School (Lycée Français Anatole France) offer students a unique education, encouraging bilingualism and expanding their cultural horizons. Organizations including Erasmus+ and AVC (Armenian Volunteer Corps) facilitate exchanges and volunteer programs, fostering deeper connections between the two nations. Currently, there are 17 AVC volunteers of French origin residing in Armenia, spanning a wide age range, from 20 to 70.

The French footprint in Armenia creates

a sense of home for some visitors. At the restaurant Avenue de France on Abovyan Street 23, the melodies of Charles Aznavour serve as a comforting reminder of shared cultural roots. At Café D’Angelo, reminiscent of Paris’ iconic Café de Flore, visitors find solace in the familiar, embracing the warmth of Armenian hospitality and the allure of French-inspired cuisine.

The French presence in Armenia not only enriches the cultural landscape but also attracts individuals from diverse backgrounds, drawn to the unique blend of traditions and modernity found in this vibrant land. Of course, there are many French Armenians in Armenia, but this journalist spoke to some French citizens of non-Armenian background.



Nikola

Among the French citizens here is Nikola, born in Paris, who, at first glance, may appear Armenian, but he is of French-Serbian and Italian heritage. Having studied at the London School of Economics, he identifies as an “advocate.” Despite his unconventional appearance — bright green pants, a funky, oversized scarf draped in the most artistic French manner, and long, thick, dark hair — Nikola confidently navigates the streets of Yerevan. Nearly ten months after his initial encounter with the country, he remains unfazed by the curious stares of conservative locals, who often favor more subdued attire.

Initially, Nikola’s was to stay in Armenia as part of an internship program by the Service Civique Programme [Civic Service Program], focusing on peacebuilding. Given the turbulent global climate, the French advocate could have opted for any other location, yet he chose this specific country. Prior to this, he had worked in Tunisia.

During the interview, Nikola humbly recounted his childhood, noting that while he wasn’t directly involved with the Armenian community in Paris, Armenian culture had been a part of his life since the age of 8.

“I remember watching several Armenian movies, like ‘Mayrig,’ which gave me valuable insights into Armenia,” he reminisced. “My father’s restaurant was located between the Jardin d’Erevan and the Komitas statue in Paris, with an Armenian church nearby,” he added, reflecting on the cultural influences that shaped his upbringing.

Nikola fondly reminisces about his first encounter with an Armenian at the age of 20, which created in him a strong desire to ask them many questions. Little did he know that approximately four years later, he would find himself sent to the mysterious country of Armenia, to settle for a year in the small town of Vanadzor, in Lori Province. His mission was to lead various initiatives aimed at raising awareness against all forms of violence.

Nikola vividly recalls an early encounter at the airport while he was with his mother. “We saw people with a lot of bags, youngsters speaking Armenian,” he recounted. “I told my mum that they seemed like nice people, because Serbians are similar in that sense. Every time they travel home, they have a lot of packed bags, something I have witnessed throughout the years,” Nikola added.

Almost immediately after landing, Nikola started to feel at home, a sentiment he recalled during our conversation. He noted that in Yerevan, he was quickly introduced to young Armenians, whereas in Vanadzor, his only friend initially was the landlord.

However, after 10 months of living in and developing a deep affection for Armenia, Nikola succeeded in forming a substantial circle of friends. Still, of course, he is an outsider; he recalled an incident in Vanadzor where a child referred to him as a tourist while he waited for a friend next to a shop where he was a regular, underscoring the feeling of being labeled an outsider despite his extensive immersion in the country, efforts to grasp the basics of the Armenian language and exploration of its rich history.

In Vanadzor, Nikola was referred to as the “handsome French guy.” When questioned about the French community in

continued on next page

Armenian Opposition Demands Parliament Hold Debate on Pashinyan’s Resignation

OPPOSITION, from page 1

Galstanyan discussed his further actions with these and other opposition leaders who reaffirmed support for his protest movement. The outspoken cleric announced afterwards that the street sit-in will continue and culminate in a major rally in the same location on Wednesday. It will be an “extremely important day,” he said, urging supporters to turn out in force.

“With our presence here on June 12, we can change a lot in our lives,” the protest leader added without elaborating.



Anti-government protesters occupy a street in Yerevan, June 10, 2024.



ARMENIA

Paros Foundation Launches New Community Living for Older Artsakh Refugees in Goris

GORIS — The Paros Foundation has launched a new effort to provide permanent housing for older Artsakh refugees with the purchase of a home for the Community Living for Older Refugees project in the community of Goris.

Peter Abajian, executive director for the Paros Foundation, said, “Following the mass exodus from Artsakh in September 2023, many older refugees have no one to look after them, very little income, and are left without affordable housing options. Providing group housing for these older refugees can alleviate their challenges, especially after leaving so much of their lives behind in Artsakh.”

This home will serve as a group home for older refugees to offer them a clean, safe, and comfortable environment to live dignified lives. Ten residents will be selected from older refugees currently living in the area. The project will be administered in coordination with the local Goris municipality and renovations on the home will be starting in the coming weeks.

The community living home is situated in the community of Verishen and is adjacent to Goris, in the province of Syunik. The home has a large footprint that will

provide both communal and private living spaces in addition to a large plot of land with fruit trees and garden spaces. The home even has a chicken coop should the future residents care to keep chickens! It is envisioned that the home will be equipped with both solar hot water systems and solar panels to keep utility costs low.

While the home has already been purchased, complete renovations, furniture and appliances will cost an additional \$60,000. To contribute to this important project, please visit The Paros Foundation website at www.parosfoundation.org.

This is the newest housing project in a series of successful permanent housing that The Paros Foundation has purchased and renovated for Artsakh refugees including three in Geghamasar, two in Meds Masrik, two in Vardenis, one in Nerkin Karmir Aghbyur, four in Kajaran, and 10 new homes that are being built in the neighborhood of Qeti in the village of Kajaran. With this addition, The Paros Foundation continues to assist refugees of every age, building not just homes, but communities where they can restart their lives.



As a part of The Paros Foundation’s relief efforts, new and lightly worn winter coats and boots were distributed earlier this year to Artsakh refugees.

from previous page

Armenia and his interactions within it, he emphasized his inclination to communicate more with the locals to gain a deeper understanding of Armenia. On his final night before departing the country, he found himself at a folk party in the heart of Yerevan, immersing himself in the vibrant rhythms of Yarkhushta (a war dance that belongs to a wider category of Armenian “clap dances”).



Darya

While Nikola advocated for peace through common practices, Darya, a French-Iranian art therapist, does similar work, but with brush and paints. After spending her formative years in the Brittany region of France, she has risen to prominence as an established artist in Yerevan. Currently, Darya exhibits her works at Art-Kvartal, a gallery located, coincidentally, near Charles Aznavour Square.

Darya’s journey to what she fondly refers to as “beautiful Armenia” commenced in 2019, a time when everything appeared notably brighter. Her arrival was part of a project aimed at integrating refugees from Syria, Iran and Afghanistan into Armenian society. “Back then, I read that Armenia was the best place for welcoming refugees,” she noted. “I was surprised to find out that many refugees from Syria knew Armenian and shared a similar culture. However, for refugees from other countries, they were primarily asylum seekers.”

Darya’s parents underwent a similar experience, leaving Iran after the Islamic Revolution. With the current state of the country, it’s challenging for Darya to visit her ancestral land. However, she maintains a connection to it from a distance, as Armenia has been her home for the past four years.

During her time in Armenia, Darya has

witnessed significant changes. The country transitioned from a state of complete peace to enduring a never-ending war, which ultimately altered not just its physical landscape but also the mental state of its people.

“The 44-day war started a few days prior to my departure to see my family in France. I remember soldiers walking on the streets, people packing aid, and having a final dinner with friends who would later fight on the battlefield. I felt like I was in World War II,” she said.

Just like many diaspora representatives, Darya also experienced the challenge of communicating with people outside Armenian culture. She spent some time in France, which she later referred to as “the new country,” where strict COVID restrictions were imposed at that time. Despite limited flights and the inability to return, she firmly decided to come back to her troubled home. “I felt the urge to return as soon as the airports allowed travel. I hopped on the first flight to Yerevan. This time, I didn’t have a fixed plan but was determined to stay.” The artist later would remember the blur of post-war Armenia and, as she would frame it, “body and mind were out.”

Darya has been involved with an NGO called Frontline Therapists, aiding local soldiers in recovering from trauma. Even in the never-ending war setting, she managed to make many Armenian friends of different origins: Iran, Lebanon and other diasporas. Intentionally avoiding French because of her simple desire to be fully integrated into the community, perhaps stemming from her work experiences, she has gained a basic understanding of Armenian and can communicate in the language to some extent.

Despite the constant barrage of negative news surrounding the city and the country, Darya still affectionately refers to Armenia as a beloved place, often with a gentle smile on her face reminiscent of someone deeply in love.

Juliette

Juliette, like her two French compatriots, had little exposure to Armenian communities while growing up. Furthermore, she was unaware of the longstanding friendship between France and Armenia. Her introduction to the country came primarily



ly through architectural typology she was conducting a few years ago.

Originally from the north of France, Juliette spent a significant portion of her formative years there before pursuing her academic degree in Switzerland. Eventually, she relocated from the orderly and quiet city of Zurich to the chaotic streets of Yerevan. Following her studies in architecture, she received a job offer in Armenia, focusing on the restoration of archaeological sites in Vedi, a town along the Armenian-Turkish border.

Initially, Juliette didn’t have any issues communicating with locals. She mentioned, “I had Armenians at my university who told me a bit about the country; they were diasporans. When I first moved here in November, I started to learn the language and slowly began to get to know people.”

Although the fashion scene in Armenia is rapidly shifting towards a more European-oriented style, possibly aligning with the country’s political direction, those originating from Europe still stand out. Juliette is no exception in this regard. With long blonde hair adorned with sectional highlights arranged in a creative circular manner, dental crystals are the perfect extra touch to show her funky character. She opts for simple attire yet manages to exude French chic. While this style may blend seamlessly in urban settings in Armenia, the countryside may not be as receptive.

“While working in Vedi, I am often advised to engage with local women as communication with men can be more complex,” she remarks. “Men tend to shield their female counterparts from perceived external threats, hindering their ability to handle various life scenarios.”

One episode that left Juliette astonished during her initial exposure to countryside

culture was when the local driver refused to let her take control of the car because she was a girl. “After that incident, I felt like I couldn’t do anything on my own here. There’s this pervasive sense of fear, but it’s uncertain whether it’s truly warranted or just a perception passed down,” she reflected.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the driver in Vedi, Juliette eventually found herself behind the wheel of what she refers to as the Armenian “dream car” — a black Lada Niva with rear suspension. Surprisingly, she enjoys driving it not only in the countryside but also on the upscale streets of Yerevan’s center.

While posh Yerevan may seem safe to many locals, the looming threats from neighboring countries pose a constant concern, evident from the warning flyers on entrance doors, mentioning shelters in case of an air attack. Despite this, Juliette chooses to remain in the city: “My parents were unaware of the conflict before my move. However, afterward, they became more apprehensive, a common reaction in such circumstances.”

Juliette’s project is situated in close proximity to zones not recommended for French tourists or visitors. When asked about her feelings regarding the conflict, she admits, “I try not to dwell on it too much. It’s more concerning for others in my family, like my cousin, who lives far from the conflict zone.”

While the fear of yet another war in the country does not consume much of Juliette’s attention, she tries to focus on more positive things, such as enjoying crêpes at the Parisian-style café located on Tumanyan Street or making local friends at her boxing classes. She is focusing on learning the language, which, to be fair, she knows quite well for a newcomer, allowing her to freely interact with staff at restaurants.

These narratives highlight only a portion of the French community here. With the Armenian Embassy in Paris acquiring a new prestigious building, formerly owned by the former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, it seems that the cooperation between France and Armenia will only grow, opening new doors for educational, cultural, and diplomatic opportunities.



ARMENIA

Afeyan Launches New Initiative: Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation

YEREVAN — Noubar Afeyan, the Founder and CEO of a number of successful biotech companies, such as Flagship Pioneering, and co-Founder of many philanthropic initiatives such as the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, has established another future-oriented initiative, the Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation.

The inaugural ceremony for this newly launched Foundation, attended by the Armenian Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan, Mission Director of USAID/Armenia John Allelo, UNICEF Representative in Armenia Christine Weigand, and many of the Foundation’s local and international

partners, including Ruben Vardanyan — now illegally kept in captivity in Azerbaijan — had so far launched and supported in Armenia. The goal of the Revival Foundation, in his words, is to support those who pass through challenges and associated psychological traumas due to the war or its consequences, and are willing to chart a new path in their lives through a psycho-spiritual healing and recovery journey.

“The origins of this initiative stem from the absolute shock and trauma that we all experienced in 2020, then again in 2022, when Azerbaijan made the life of our com-

proaches. The foundation aims to develop and implement innovative mental health programs rooted in psychology, the Armenian survivalist experience and the centuries-old traditions and spiritual values of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The foundation was established by the blessings of the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and implements its programs in close partnership with the Armenian Apostolic Church.

“Our history has shown us that we can recover. My friend Noubar is the best example of this. I was lucky to get to know many Armenians, the children and grand-

Co-Founder and Board Member at the Revival Foundation.

In close cooperation with the most leading Armenian and international experts, the Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation supports its beneficiaries in finding their way to post-traumatic recovery, helping people overcome post-war and post-traumatic mental health challenges. Among the diverse international partners of the Foundation, Dulwich Center Foundation in Australia — the home of narrative therapy — stands out. Its co-director, a renowned narrative therapy expert David Denborough sent a welcome video message to the participants at the inaugural event to express their full support to aspirations both in Armenia and global outreach thereafter.

The Foundation offers to its beneficiaries a uniquely “Armenian path” of psycho-spiritual revival, a journey that spans over three months, but really does not end there. The programs are fully needs-based.

“This initiative, as a missing element, creates a full cycle to a number of successful initiatives that Noubar and his partners have implemented in Armenia and Artsakh for decades. Our foundation is future-oriented too, like other programs. The beneficiaries of our programs are all those who need revival and a path to thriving. The foundation offers its beneficiaries a simple formula: we support you today, and when you recover, take it as an honor to lend your hand to someone else in need,” said Hovhannes Nikoghosyan, the executive director of the foundation.

That day, a memorandum of cooperation was signed with Matenadaran.

In parallel with its main projects, the foundation implemented a special Rapid Response program designed for Armenians forcibly displaced from Artsakh in September 2023.

Eighteen psychologists from Artsakh were trained and in the previous months provided free-of-charge psychological support to about 500 forcibly displaced adults from Artsakh (in partnership with AGBU) and about 160 children. A special program was also implemented for about 150 ‘first responders’ who are involved in daily work with people displaced from Artsakh. Support programs for Artsakh Armenians will also be mainstreamed.



From left, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan and Dr. Noubar Afeyan

partners, mental health experts and beneficiaries, was held in Matenadaran on May 17.

The main goal of the event was to present the work done by the Foundation in the preceding months, with a special emphasis on the novel approach to mental health issues, named a “psycho-spiritual revival” journey.

In his welcoming remarks Dr. Afeyan highlighted that the roots of this initiative have been laid well before the 2020 war and that this had been a natural continua-

patriots in Artsakh unbearable. I mean the war, then the invasion of the territory of Armenia, and then the ethnic cleansing that we witnessed in September, 2023. I thought we would never again witness such things, after experiencing great suffering 100 years ago and undergoing a century of recovery,” Afeyan said.

The mission of the Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation is to transform modern approaches to mental health recovery in post-crisis situations, creating and implementing innovative psycho-spiritual ap-

children of Genocide survivors... they succeeded and had been supportive not only to Armenia, but to the whole world. Our people’s past conveys the message that it is possible to overcome anything — by faith and hope,” said Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, who has served more than two decades as Primate of the Eastern Diocese in the United States, and for a number of years now has been in Vatican as Pontifical Legate of the Western Europe and Representative of the Armenian Church to the Holy See. Archbishop Khajag is also a

Russian Ambassador Returns to Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russia’s ambassador to Armenia, Sergei Kopyrkin, has returned to Yerevan more than two weeks after being recalled to Moscow for consultations amid heightened tensions between the two states.

“Sergei Pavlovich has been to consultations and, as far as I know, he is already in Yerevan,” Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin told the RIA Novosti news agency on Monday.

Galuzin seemed to downplay the recall, calling it “an absolutely standard procedure that is often used.” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov earlier gave a similar explanation to journalists.

Kopyrkin was summoned to Moscow on May 24 two days after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed that two member states of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) helped Azerbaijan prepare for the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. A Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman challenged Pashinyan to name those countries. He is believed to have referred to Russia and Belarus.

Russian-Armenian relations have worsened significantly since the 2020 war, with Yerevan seeking closer ties with the West and accusing Moscow of not honoring its security commitments to Armenia. Earlier this year, Pashinyan repeatedly threatened to pull his country out of the CSTO. Lavrov charged in March that Pashinyan’s government is “leading things to the collapse of Russian-Armenian relations” at the behest of the West.



Government Continues Work On Flood-Damaged Provinces

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On June 6, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with Ignazio Cassis, the Head of The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said, on the situation in Lori and Tavush regions of Armenia following the heavy floods.

Cassis conveyed his condolences for the loss of lives and underlined the support of Switzerland for the assessment of the damages. Ararat Mirzoyan expressed his gratitude to his colleague for the quick response and support already provided.

Construction of the railway damaged by floods in Lori and Tavush regions continues, said Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia Gnel Sanosyan at the government session.

“There, the works related to the railway continues and are going fast, so that the railway will start working in a day,” said Sanosyan.

In his turn, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan noted that Russian partners are carrying out extensive work on the full restoration of the railway.

Earlier, at the session of the Government, Sanosyan said that the damages in different sections of the railway reach about 2 kilometers.

Four pedestrian bridges have already been built in the disaster zone of Lori and Tavush regions, said Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia Gnel Sanosyan at the government session.

“Four pedestrian bridges have already been built, which made communication quite easy. Until tomorrow, we will have a temporary bridge for cars, construction is already underway, which is being carried out to restore the connection of seven settlements,” said Sanosyan.

According to the minister, electricity supply, gas supply and water supply in the disaster zone have been restored by 90 percent.



INTERNATIONAL



Haigazian graduation ceremonies in Beirut

Haigazian University Holds its 64th Commencement Exercises

BEIRUT — On Friday, June 7, despite the challenges that Lebanon and the region are undergoing, another successful academic year came to an end by holding Haigazian University’s 64th Commencement Exercises.

Some 123 students from the various faculties of Business Administration & Economics, Humanities, Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences received their undergraduate and graduate.

Amidst an atmosphere of cheer and pride, sometimes mixed with moments of high emotion, a capacity audience of officials, diplomats, religious leaders, community representatives, family and friends were gathered in the courtyard of the First

pressed his pride in the graduating class and acknowledged the unwavering efforts and dedication of the administrative and teaching body, the students and their parents during this challenging year the country and the region is facing, asking the audience to give them a hearty applause.

In his talk, Haidostian mainly tackled the notion of “lost and found” and in ways of finding balance and explanation to it.

“Focus on the deeper side of things, on the spiritual serenity of life, and on the dignified aspect of being and working,” said Haidostian as an answer to this critical topic.

Considering this generation in general, with its rich potential, and the Class of

are weaving the fabric of Lebanon’s society of tomorrow. Your wings are now fully feathered and complete. Like eagles, go fly high. Soar in the sky,” said Hayek in his inspiring keynote speech, to the Class of 2024.

“In the old days, a day like today would mark the end of your education and the beginning of your working life, but in today’s world, it marks the beginning of your education in your working life,” said Hayek putting significant importance on sustained education in non-classical formats and the love of continuous learning.

As entrepreneurship has become the norm again with the technological revolution, Hayek considered that due to social media and artificial intelligence, one’s personal brand, name and reputation have become of vital importance.

“Your entire life and friends and deeds and ratings and remarks and reputation are out there for everyone to see. Reputation will be critical again, especially reputation for diligence, for hard work, for teamwork, for leadership and most importantly reputation for ethical values,” Hayek noted.

With a sense of accomplishment, valedictorian Hovig Jahizian, expressed his immense gratitude to the University for this unique opportunity and experience.

Applauding the various assets acquired during his education path, such as work ethic, motivation, perseverance, adaptability and resilience, Jahizian assured his fellow graduates that “they will climb and conquer the towering mountains of challenges.”

For her part, fellow valedictorian Dana Younes, also gratefully acknowledged the determination, strong will and resilience of her fellow graduates in overcoming the political instability as well as the economic and financial challenges of the country, as they embark on a new phase of their lives.

Younes praised the sense of belonging the University has instilled in them, in addition to all the efforts pooled in providing the exemplary education, as well as building their character, skills, confidence and social responsibility.

Finally, after singing the Alma Mater, and upon the benediction offered by Former Campus Minister, Rev. Nishan Bakalian, with waves of resounding cheers graduates threw their caps high into the air.



Haigazian graduation ceremonies in Beirut

Armenian Evangelical Church, next to the university campus, to applaud the graduating students.

Ziad Hayek, a tech entrepreneur and president of the World Association of Public-Private Partnership, was the keynote speaker.

The ceremony commenced with the formal processional march. After the Lebanese National Anthem, the prayer of invocation was offered by the Campus Minister, Rev. Wilbert Van Saane.

In his welcoming address, University President Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian ex-

pressed his pride in the graduating class and acknowledged the unwavering efforts and dedication of the administrative and teaching body, the students and their parents during this challenging year the country and the region is facing, asking the audience to give them a hearty applause.

In his talk, Haidostian mainly tackled the notion of “lost and found” and in ways of finding balance and explanation to it.

“Focus on the deeper side of things, on the spiritual serenity of life, and on the dignified aspect of being and working,” said Haidostian as an answer to this critical topic.

Considering this generation in general, with its rich potential, and the Class of

INTERNATIONAL

US ‘Troubled by’ Civil Society Arrests in Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The US is troubled by continued arrests of members of Azerbaijani civil society and calls for their immediate release, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said at a press briefing this week.

While addressing the recent arrest of another prominent economist and journalist, Farid Mehralizade, as part of the investigation on Abzas Media, Miller said that those who exercise their fundamental freedoms, should not face arrest for doing so.

“So we are deeply troubled by the continued arrest of members of Azerbaijani civil society. Those who exercise their fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, should not face arrest for doing so. And we continue to urge the Azerbaijani Government to immediate release — immediately release all individuals who are unjustly detained and to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all,” Miller said.

Mehralizade, who was arrested on May 31, was ordered detained for three months 20 days as part of the investigation on Abzas Media. A group of Azbas Media employees are accused of currency smuggling as part of an organized group.

Erdogan and Aliyev Discuss Military Cooperation

ANKARA (news.am) — The presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ilham Aliyev met on June 10.

During the meeting, they discussed the expansion of energy, transport, economic, and trade ties between the two countries, as well as cooperation in defense, military-industrial, and other spheres, Azerbaijani media reported.

The importance of joint activities of the two countries on the development of the Middle Corridor was emphasized. The sides exchanged views on regional issues.

CSTO Budget to Be Adjusted as Armenia Opts out of Paying

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) budget for the current year requires adjustments due to the refusal of the Armenian authorities to pay for membership, the Russian Foreign Ministry told RIA Novosti on June 10.

Earlier, the press secretary of the Armenian Foreign Ministry Ani Badalyan had announced Yerevan’s intention to refrain from joining the decision of the CSTO Collective Security Council of November 23, 2023.

“The corresponding draft decision of the Collective Security Council is currently being worked out. At the same time, there is no talk of redistribution of contributions,” the Russian Foreign Ministry noted.



INTERNATIONAL

Shanghai Coop. Organization Leader Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan on Friday, June 7, had a meeting with Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Zhang Ming, who is on an official visit to Armenia. A private conversation between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the SCO Secretary General was held, which was followed by an extended meeting.

According to the readout issued by the foreign ministry, it was noted with satisfaction on both sides that it was the first visit to Armenia at the level of the Secretary-General of the organization. The parties expressed hope that the discussions during the visit would contribute to expanding opportunities for cooperation between Armenia and the SCO.



Delegations led by Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, right, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization Secretary General Zhang Ming meet in Yerevan.

According to the source, Minister Mirzoyan emphasized that Armenia attaches great importance to the principles of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and inviolability of state borders, as well as to the non-use of force or threat of force, which are the foundation of SCO activities.

“Peace, security, and economic development - these are the goals Armenia is striving to achieve in our region, and I am pleased to report that the fundamental principles and the vision of peace align with the key approach of the SCO,” stressed Ararat Mirzoyan.

Mirzoyan and Ming exchanged ideas on the development of economic and transport channels and logistics networks.

Mirzoyan stressed the importance of the “Crossroads of Peace” project developed by the Armenian government, stating that its goals and opportunities could be significant components of the trade-economic cooperation and transport interconnection agenda within the framework of the SCO.

Addressing the security environment in the South Caucasus, Mirzoyan briefed on the latest developments in the process of regulating Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, including Armenia’s vision and ongoing efforts to conclude a peace treaty.

Turkey Has Highest Incarceration Rates; Armenia Shows Lowest Rate in South Caucasus, CoE Report Shows

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The SPACE I survey, conducted annually for the Council of Europe by the University of Lausanne and containing information from prison administrations in the Council of Europe member states, reflects the relevant data for 2023. According to the report, Armenia has the lowest incarceration rate in the South Caucasus.

Among the countries with the highest incarceration rates Georgia is 256th, Azerbaijan at 244th, while Armenia is 79th.

According to the report, prison overcrowding continues to be an acute and persistent problem in a significant number of European prison administrations. In countries with over 500,000 inhabitants, twelve prison administrations reported having more inmates than places available in January 2023.

Overall, in Europe, the number of prisoners per 100 places available grew by 2 percent from January 31, 2022 to January 31, 2023 (from 91.7 to 93.5 inmates). Seven prison administrations reported a prison density of more than 105 inmates per 100 places available, indicating severe overcrowding: Cyprus (166 inmates per 100 places), Romania (120), France (119), Belgium (115), Hungary (112), Italy (109) and Slovenia (107). Five prison administrations reported very high prison density: Greece (103), Sweden (102), North Macedonia (101), Croatia (101) and Turkey (100).

On January 31, 2023, there were 1,036,680 inmates detained in the 48 prison administrations of Council of Europe member states that provided this information (out of 51). From January 2022 to January 2023, the median European prison population rate grew by 2.4 percent in countries exceeding one million inhabitants – from 113.5 to 116.2 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants, a similar increase to the year before.

Sixteen prison administrations experienced a significant increase in their prison population rates from January 2022 to January 2023: the Republic of Moldova (+52 percent), North Macedonia (+26 percent), Cyprus (+25 percent), Turkey (+15 percent), Azerbaijan (+13

percent), Ireland (+12 percent), Montenegro (+11 percent), Armenia (+11 percent), Croatia (+10 percent), Hungary (+8.7 percent), Northern Ireland (UK) (+8.3 percent), Georgia (+8.2 percent), Bulgaria (+8.1 percent), Austria (+6.8 percent), Italy (+5.7 percent) and Sweden (+5.1 percent), in countries with over 500,000 inhabitants. Incarceration rates only fell substantially in Malta (-22 percent), Lithuania (-8.9 percent), Estonia (-8.8 percent) and Greece (-5.2 percent) while they remained stable in 23 prison administrations.

The countries with the highest incarceration rates were Turkey (408 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants), Georgia (256), Azerbaijan (244), the Republic of Moldova (242), Hungary (211), Poland (194), Slovakia (183), Albania (179), Czechia (176), Lithuania (174) and Latvia (172). Other countries with high incarceration rates were Montenegro (168), Serbia (162), Estonia (151) and North Macedonia (142).

“For the second consecutive year, the overall European prison population rate slightly grew. This could still be a bounce-back effect from the reduction experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic years, due to the drop in offline crimes during the lockdowns, the release of prisoners in some countries, and a decrease in the activity of the criminal justice systems. However, this increase contrasts starkly with the overall strong downward trend in incarceration rates since 2013. It remains to be seen if there is a change of trend. The persistence of overcrowding remains an important challenge for many prison administrations,” said Prof. Marcelo Aebi, Head of the SPACE research team from the University of Lausanne.

Violent and drug-related offences represent more than half of the main crimes for which European prisoners are serving prison sentences. Drug offences are the most common offence (19 percent of the sentenced population), followed by homicide and attempted homicide (13 percent), theft (12 percent), sexual offences (8.9 percent), robbery (7.7 percent) and assault and battery (6.7 percent).

Aliyev: Peace Treaty ‘Impossible’ with Armenia’s Current Constitution

ALIYEV, from page 1

The Ministry also stated that the peace treaty draft stipulates that Armenia and Azerbaijan recognize each other’s territorial integrity, adding that Baku’s rhetoric “torpedoes the peace process.”

“There is also an agreed provision in the draft peace agreement that neither party may invoke its domestic legislation for not implementing its obligations under the peace agreement,” the Ministry stated, adding that Armenia was willing to work constructively and intensively to sign the peace agreement within the next month.

Aliyev’s statement came as Armenia and Azerbaijan began delimiting the northern part of their shared border, as leading officials claimed that relations between the two countries had warmed.

Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan recently stated that there had been a “significant change in atmosphere” between the two countries. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov also praised

Armenia’s latest peace treaty draft, saying that the “number of issues that remained open has declined and positive dynamics are observed.”

‘Significant Obstacles’ in Both Constitutions

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Pashinyan sparked controversy after saying that Armenia needed a new constitution. At the time, observers speculated that this was a response to pressure from Azerbaijan.

On June 4, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan stated that amendments to the constitution were not part of the peace negotiations with Azerbaijan, despite both countries noting “significant problems and obstacles” to peace in each other’s constitutions.

The following day, Azerbaijan’s Foreign Minister stated that Azerbaijan’s constitution does not lay claim to neighboring territories.

“Attempts to draw parallels in this matter are unacceptable. Unfortunately, we

repeatedly see such tendencies. In some cases, when issues that are inconvenient for Armenia are raised in the negotiation process, attempts are made to artificially create a mirror effect, even if Azerbaijan has no similar analogues,” he said.

Tigran Grigoryan, a political analyst and the head of the Regional Center for Democracy and Security in Yerevan, told Civilnet that the border delimitation process had taken precedence over any potential amendments to the constitution over the past few months.

During border delimitation, Armenia returned control of four abandoned villages to Azerbaijan in a unilateral handover of territory. Pashinyan had earlier suggested that returning the villages to Azerbaijan could prevent war.

“The Azerbaijanis presented an ultimatum to Armenia on that issue,” said Grigoryan. “In these two or three months, the Armenian authorities tried to disseminate their rhetoric and narratives around [delim-

itation].”

“Now, if there are no new developments in the demarcation issue, I think at some stage they [Armenian authorities] will start talking about the need to change the constitution, claiming that it is a threat to national security.”

On Thursday, Aliyev also stated that Armenia’s constitution laid territorial claims to Turkish territory.

In April, Pashinyan urged Armenians to discern the difference between “real” and “historical” Armenia, a reference to Western Armenia, current day eastern Turkey, which was inhabited by Armenians prior to the Ottoman Empire’s genocide of Armenians in the early 20th century.

He said that Armenians must accept modern Armenia within its current borders, suggesting that calling for the territory of ‘Historical Armenia’ harmed Armenia’s sovereignty and independence.

(This article originally appeared on OC-Media.org on June 7.)



INTERNATIONAL

Russia Condemns Armenian Officials’ Trip to Ukrainian Town

UKRAINE, from page 1

“We are proud of the courage of the Ukrainian people who defend their freedom and independence on the battlefield,” Bucha’s municipal council quoted Ter-Margaryan as saying in a statement on the trip.

“The city of Yerevan and Nor Nork district will always support Bucha and other communities affected by Russian aggression. This humanitarian aid is only a small part of our solidarity,” he added, according to the statement.

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, condemned on Sunday, June 9, the “overtly unfriendly step on the part of official Yerevan.”

“In connection with the transfer of aid for the needs of the [Armed Forces of Ukraine] and the inadmissible statements made there against Russia, a note of protest was sent to the Foreign Ministry of Armenia,” she said in written comments posted on the ministry website.

Ter-Margaryan is affiliated with the pro-Western Hanrapetutyun (Republic) party allied to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Yerevan’s pro-govern-

ment Mayor Tigran Avinyan appointed him as head of the Nor Nork administration last fall as part of a power-sharing deal struck by Hanrapetutyun and Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party.

“We did not expect anything else from a figure like Tigran Ter-Margaryan... It is unfortunate that the Armenian authorities are in solidarity with this,” added Zakharova.

Bucha has become a stop for international visitors to Ukraine because of atrocities committed against its civilian residents in February and March 2022. Moscow denies accusations of executions, rapes and torture by Russian troops that occupied the town for 33 days.

Speaker Hits Back

Armenian leaders were until recently careful not to openly criticize the Russian invasion. Pashinyan voiced such criticism during a February visit to Germany, underscoring Yerevan’s deepening rift with Moscow.

Alen Simonyan, the Armenian parliament speaker and a close Pashinyan ally, reiterated the criticism in April when he attended and addressed a meeting of his

counterparts from European Union member states held in Spain. Senior Russian lawmakers reacted furiously to Simonian’s speech, demanding an official explanation from the Armenian parliament.

Parliament speaker Alen Simonian on Friday dismissed a senior Russian official’s warning that Armenia will cause irreparable damage to its relations with Russia if it moves closer to Western powers and shares “sensitive” information with them.

In an interview with the Russian TASS news agency published on June 5, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin suggested that the Armenian government is trying to deepen security ties with the West at the expense of the South Caucasus nation’s traditional alliance with Russia.

“Rash decisions that will give Westerners full access to national databases and information sensitive to the country’s security ... could make it objectively impossible [for Armenia] to return to joint efforts to build a common defense space with Russia and other CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization] allies,” he warned.

Simonyan, who is a key member of Pashinyan’s political team, countered that

Armenia is not seeking to join another military alliance or host Western troops on its territory.

“What information could we convey [to the West?]” he told journalists. “It’s absurd. Enough with such rhetoric about us, enough with threatening us directly and indirectly.”

Simonian also brushed aside Galuzin’s claim that there are no “viable alternatives” to Armenia’s membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The Russians, he said, should clarify instead “what obligations they have [to Armenia] both as a CSTO partner and a party to Russian-Armenian treaties.”

Armenian leaders regularly accuse Russia and other CSTO allies of not honoring their security commitments to Armenia. Over the past year, Armenia has boycotted high-level meetings, military exercises and other activities of the CSTO in what Pashinyan described in February as an effective suspension of its membership in the military alliance of six ex-Soviet states. Pashinyan said afterwards that Yerevan could leave the CSTO altogether.

Archbishop Barsamian Addresses Armenians of Almelo, Netherlands

By Haik Khanamiryan

ALMELO, Netherlands — On June 1, the Armenian community in Almelo were visited by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, marking a significant day of commemoration for St. Gregory the Illuminator, after whom the local church is named. This year holds special importance as it marks the 20th anniversary of the church in Almelo, a milestone to be celebrated in September. The archbishop’s visit drew a crowd of over 200 young disciples, eager to engage with his insights and guidance.

The evening began with Archbishop Barsamian addressing the gathered community, emphasizing the historical and spiritual significance of the church. He spoke passionately about the journey and contributions of St. Gregory the Illuminator, connecting the past’s rich heritage to the present and future aspirations of the community. His words set the tone for a reflective and inspiring event, as participants were invited to consider their personal contributions to the church and their faith.

Following his address, the participants had the opportunity to engage directly



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian addresses the community

break-out sessions, where attendees gathered in smaller groups to discuss their personal development and contributions to the church. Throughout these discussions,

greater than themselves.

A key message of the archbishop was the importance of young people exploring their personal identity and embracing their Armenian heritage. He urged the attendees to delve into the hidden treasures of their Armenianness, to uncover and celebrate their unique cultural and spiritual identity.

He also emphasized the inclusivity and women’s empowerment within the Armenian Church, highlighting the role of technology in creating and disseminating content that celebrates the church’s significance.

In his closing remarks, Archbishop Barsamian extended an invitation to the youth to think deeply, act boldly, commit wholeheartedly and elevate their personal development. He encouraged them to use their talents and resources to contribute positively to their community and beyond, reinforcing

the idea that their efforts could create a lasting impact.

Building on the momentum of this inspirational event, there will be a follow-up in the Netherlands in the fall aimed at moving from idea to implementation. This follow-up will take the form of a Leadership Development event, designed to serve as



A break-out session with the youth

with the archbishop. This interactive session allowed the young attendees to ask questions and share their thoughts, fostering a sense of inclusivity and dialogue. The archbishop’s approachable demeanor and insightful responses created a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

The event concluded with a series of

the archbishop’s central theme of personal development and self-leadership resonated strongly. He shared stories and examples that highlighted values such as courage, empathy, confidence, and creativity. These values, he explained, are essential for building an everlasting legacy and empowering individuals to serve purposes



The youth thank Archbishop Khajag Barsamian

a catalyst for spiritual revival within the community.

Community News

NAASR to Host Hybrid Talk by Samson Avetian on Tech in Armenia

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host a hybrid talk by Samson Avetian, “Securing Armenia’s Economic Outlook: The Role of a Strong Tech Sector,” on Thursday, June 20, at 7 p.m. Eastern/4:00 pm Pacific.

Members of the community are invited to attend this program which is co-sponsored by First Armenian Church of Belmont, and taking place under the aegis of the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues. The event is being held in association with American



Samson Avetian

University of Armenia’s Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (AUA EPIC), Angel Investor Club of Armenia (AICA), ArmTech Boston, and eqwefy. A reception will follow the program.

The webinar will be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and on NAASR’s YouTube Channel.

Avetian will explore Armenia’s economic prospects and the critical role that technology, sciences, and innovation play to ensure security and sustainability. He will review the progress made, the current dynamics, and the outlook for the Armenian technology industry. The Armenian Tech Economy has recently witnessed remarkable growth driven by global technology companies including Microsoft, Nvidia, Synopsys as well as by innovative startups such as ServiceTitan, Picsart, Codesignal, and others.

Avetian, a graduate of Harvard Business School, Gothenburg School of Business and Stockholm University, is the author of *Armenia’s Economy: The Next 25 Years*. He is the CEO of eqwefy, a university research-born initiative which has been supported by AUA and the ICMPD/European Union and the co-founder of Angel Investor Club of Armenia. Avetian also contributes to outlets such as Civilnet, EVN Report, How2B, Radio 106.5, Re:Arrange, Forbes Armenia and Benzinga, among others. An invited professor at AUA since 2015, Avetian repatriated to Armenia in 2010.

For more information contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



Roupen Avsharian

Avsharian Lectures on Middle East Turmoil at Joint Tekeyan And AGBU Event

PASADENA, Calif. — On Thursday, May 23, the Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles Chapter and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Special Events Committee hosted an enlightening lecture by Roupen Avsharian, Esq. at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center’s Boyadjian Hall.

Avsharian provided a comprehensive analysis of the Middle East turmoil following the Israeli-Gaza war from October 2023 to the present. He delved into the historical context, underlying intentions, conspiracy theories and realities, and the current and future implications of the conflict. Avsharian’s insightful discussion also highlighted the connections between the Middle East conflict and other global issues, including the Armenia and Artsakh dilemma and the Russian-Ukrainian war.



Hovsep Melkonian

Asdghig Dadourian, chair of the Special Events Committee, welcomed the guests and introduced Avsharian, highlighting his impressive biography.

Following the lecture and a question-and-answer session, Hovsep Melkonian of the Tekeyan Cultural Association expressed gratitude to the attendees and underscored the significance of the event, extending special thanks to Avsharian for his compelling presentation.



Bill to Name Glendale Post Office for Paul Ignatius Passes

WASHINGTON — The House of Representatives on June 3 passed a bill introduced by Rep. Adam Schiff to name a Glendale post office after former U.S. Navy Secretary Paul Ignatius, the son of one of the first Armenian families to settle in Glendale, and the highest-ranking Armenian-American in the U.S. government.

Schiff’s bill, which was passed via unanimous voice vote, now heads to the U.S. Senate. If passed into law, it would name the Glendale post office at 6444 San Fernando Road in honor of Ignatius. Schiff’s 30th Congressional District, which includes the cities of Burbank and Glendale, is home to the largest Armenian-American diaspora community in the country.

Before the vote, Schiff spoke on the House floor on the importance of Ignatius’ legacy of service.

“In Glendale, he has been a pillar of the community, a mentor, and a source of inspiration for many, especially the Armenian community who he has encouraged to follow him into public



Former US Navy Secretary Paul Ignatius

service. His commitment to education, civic engagement, and cultural preservation has profoundly impacted the Armenian-American community and the broader public. He has worked to promote understanding, tolerance, and unity, reflecting the values that make our community strong and vibrant,” Schiff said.

“From humble beginnings, Paul served his nation bravely as an ordinance officer during World War II and rose to become the highest-ranking Armenian-American in the U.S. government to this day, serving as the 59th U.S. Secretary of the Navy under President Lyndon B. Johnson. This remarkable journey from the son of immigrants to a high-ranking presidential appointee is a path only possible here – a dream that is uniquely American,” Schiff added.

“Throughout his life, Paul has remained true to his values, honest in his dealings, and deeply optimistic about our future. These principles guided his efforts and earned him the trust and admiration of his colleagues and the communities he served. He likes to say that when he joined the see IGNATIUS, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

Dr. Alina Gharabegian Appointed New AUA Provost

YEREVAN/NEW YORK — The American University of Armenia (AUA) in May announced the appointment of new Provost Dr. Alina Gharabegian. Occupying various teaching roles since the age of 19, Dr. Gharabegian taught in California and New York — at California State University in Los Angeles and throughout four of the City University of New York's campuses, teaching both literature and composition/rhetoric — before she was hired into a tenure track position at New Jersey City University (NJCU) in 2009. She served as chair of the English department at NJCU from 2014-17, vice president of NJCU's Union for a term, and interim dean of AUA's College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) during her Fulbright stint in the 2018-19 academic year.



"We are delighted to welcome Dr. Gharabegian to the role of provost of the American University of Armenia," said AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian. "She brings a wealth of experience in academic administration, combined with familiarity with the AUA community from her time as acting dean here. As our chief academic officer, she is well equipped to raise the level of teaching and research at this institution to the next level. All of us on the AUA executive team are very much looking forward to working with her."

Gharabegian holds B.A., M.A., and M.Phil. degrees in the field of English literature, as well as a PhD in English, with an emphasis in Victorian poetry and poetics, from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), the largest urban university system

in the United States. There, she also underwent extensive training and developed expertise in composition/rhetoric theory and pedagogy, in addition to her primary training in 19th-century British literature. We asked Dr. Gharabegian about her vision for the role of provost, her motivation to return to AUA, and more.

What is your vision for your role of provost?

AUA has articulated for itself a sacred mission, in my opinion. Guarding the integrity of this mission is, in part, the provost's responsibility. As chief academic officer, the provost is charged with maintaining the academic standards and facilitating the academic growth of the institution, so I see my role primarily as serving those twin purposes. I hope to foster a greater sense of community and collaboration among the academic units, and one way to achieve a sense of community is by unifying people, which I take to be part of my charge, as well. I'm a humanist, first and foremost, so I intend to model humanistic conduct — to privilege ethics and rationality, honor and inspire individuals, and expect social responsibility from all. It's also part of my role, I think, to learn from others and to teach. The provost's position, if I may be allowed to use an analogy, is that of a conductor who relies on every single individual in the orchestra to make the magic happen — together!

What motivated you to join AUA?

As I mentioned, I hold AUA's mission sacred and near to my heart. The university's formation — its very existence — is like a miracle. It has overcome some quite significant odds and obstacles in its history. And so, of course, this makes AUA a particularly special place. It's an honor, I think, to be part of an institution that has met and conquered challenges and continues to grow. The year I spent at AUA as interim dean of CHSS was, despite its attendant difficulties, the most spiritually rewarding year of my academic career, so a potential return to AUA was an easy decision to make. And of course, as a Diasporan, I want very much to contribute in my own small way to nation-building; given the synergies between AUA's current needs and my training and experience, I think this is an ideal role for me. I feel that work at AUA is meaningful work.

What are some challenges you foresee in this new role?

Generally speaking, as in any undertaking in life, I think the greatest challenge is reconciling the gap between the ideal and the real. What do we hope for, desire, or aspire to, and what do we achieve in the world, by contrast? It's challenging to negotiate the psychological space in which you have to accept that what you want and what you can have are often different things. So I imagine there will be things I will hope for, work toward, and then have to relinquish. The second challenge — a related challenge — concerns what is arguably our greatest commodity: time. I believe I will not have nearly enough time to do all I would want to do for the institution.

More specifically, AUA is on a huge growth trajectory, and where there is growth, growing pains are inevitable. I think that in the years ahead, there will be many challenges associated with that growth, which the provost's office will have to face.

What do you enjoy most about working in education?

An educational institution is a place that brings together people who are constantly involved in the multifaceted enterprise of learning-teaching-investigating-discovering-sharing. It's a fascinating place, in a sense. And for those of us who remain with it past the mandated 12-year period, this enterprise involves love, to some degree. I'm a curious person, so I think the academy is the best place for me. However, I think my greatest curiosity (even my curiosity about history and literature) concerns people. (Etymologically, "curious" comes from "care.") I'm curious about what makes people tick, what their interests and desires and hidden capabilities are, what inspires them, what and how they think, and so forth. So, discovering what motivates individuals and then helping them find their way to achieving what they want is a rewarding pursuit for me. As educators, we have the privilege of facilitating this discovery process for and with our students. My experience is that this paradigm holds true for people with whom one works in a leadership capacity, as well.



JOIN US FOR A

BAR-B-Q

Boston's Tekeyan Cultural Association invites you

to celebrate FATHER'S DAY

Sunday, June 16
2 p.m.

The Baikar Building

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown
(use Norseman Ave. side door)

\$40 per person, khorovadz, pilaf, salad, etc., AND SPECIAL RAFFLE

RSVP bostontca@gmail.com or call Sossy 617 281-1647

FAR Commits Funds for Disaster Relief Efforts in Armenia

NEW YORK — The Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) has announced that it will commit funds to provide humanitarian aid and economic relief to the hundreds of Armenian families and businesses displaced as a result of recent flooding in Northern provinces of Lori and Tavush.

Recent torrential rains have caused severe flooding and widespread devastation across several communities along the border with Georgia, where rivers have overflowed, inundating homes and businesses. The destruction of critical infrastructure has left entire towns and villages isolated, hampering rescue and relief efforts.

FAR was established in response to the devastating earthquake of 1988. Over the years, it has developed vital experience and expertise in supporting people during disasters.

"We assisted those in need after the Gyumri earthquake, the wars in Artsakh, and the blockade and forced displacement of our Artsakhtsi compatriots in September of 2023," said FAR Executive Director Garnik Nanagoulian. "FAR will do what we have always done in these times of crisis and ensure that our people get the

resources they need to rebuild their lives."

The Armenian government has declared six Lori communities and three Tavush as disaster zones. These nine communities encompass 39 settlements affected by the flooding of the Debed and Aghstev rivers. To date, more than 400 residents have been evacuated, but nine communities remain stranded. Tragically, four people have lost their lives, and others are missing. Many have lost their homes and sources of income as an estimated 1,500 hectares of farmland are submerged, leading to substantial crop losses.

"FAR has people and resources in place to make an immediate impact assisting those Armenians who have been the most directly impacted," said Bree Carriglio, FAR Director of Development. "FAR members and supporters throughout the diaspora have rallied and are providing necessary humanitarian aid for the displaced and economic aid to assist those who have lost their businesses. Armenians have always been resilient people, and FAR teams on the ground in Lori and Tavush will lead the way to recovery during this critical time."

Bill to Name Glendale Post Office for Paul Ignatius Passes

IGNATIUS, from page 8

Pentagon, nobody asked him what party he belonged to. Public service was something that went far beyond partisan politics and reflected Paul's genuine and deep love of his community and country," Schiff emphasized about Ignatius' character and dedication to our country. "We could all learn a thing or two from that," he said.

The U.S. Navy announced in 2013 that one of its new destroyers would be called the USS Paul Ignatius. That became a reality in 2019, when they commissioned its newest Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer during a ceremony at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Schiff had introduced the bill to name the post office in honor of Ignatius in November 2022.

COMMUNITY NEWS

AAHPO Honors Healthcare Providers for Their Service at Winter Brunch

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

NORTH BERGEN, N.J. — The Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) held its Annual Winter Brunch at the Waterside Restaurant here in January, where more than 100 members and supporters from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut joined to mark the organization's successful 2023 philanthropic initiatives.

The event culminated in a Service Award presentation featuring this year's Honorees, AAHPO members Raffi Barsoumian, MD, and Ara Kayayan, MD. Both were recognized for their altruistic dedication and professionalism toward AAHPO's mission of connecting Armenian healthcare professionals. Their work also improved the health services of the Armenian community

Philadelphia-based surgeon, Dr. Raffi Barsoumian, for his humanitarian work with the National Center of Burns and Dermatology in Yerevan. Barsoumian was instrumental in delivering desperately-needed treatment, medical equipment and supplies to severely burned victims of the Artsakh conflict.

After an introduction and presentation of the award by AAHPO Vice President Garbis Baydar, MD, Barsoumian shared details of his firsthand experience helping Armenians in the motherland. "It was heartbreaking to see the life-altering injuries that teenage Armenian servicemen sustained on the front lines of battle," Barsoumian recounted. "After speaking with the surgeons at the Burn Hospital, I discovered that they didn't have even some of the most basic tools to treat burn patients."

Determined to rectify the situation, Bar-



From left, Dr. Raffi Barsoumian, Dr. Garbis Baydar and Dr. Larry Najarian

in the New York metropolitan area as well as Armenia, including the displaced people of Artsakh.

The event began with a moving a cappella rendition of *Hayr Mer*, sung by Dr. Kayayan and Deacon Levon Capan, MD. AAHPO President Larry Najarian, MD, then thanked all members for volunteering their time, knowledge and expertise to help those in need.

"It is very humbling to reach out to many of you when someone is in crisis, either here or in Armenia, and know that you will do all you can to help them," he said. "You've always answered the call and provided a safety net to the community, assisting with countless medical needs the diverse fields of healthcare expertise you all possess."

AAHPO's membership includes doctors, nurses/nurse practitioners, dentists, pharmacists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, nutritionists and many other healthcare professionals.

Next was the Service Awards Honorees Presentation, starting with the recognition of

soumian utilized AAHPO's telehealth resources and network of healthcare providers to help source, purchase and ship skin grafting equipment and supplies to Armenia. He also travelled to Armenia on multiple occasions to provide his surgical skills to treat the soldiers who put their lives on the line to defend their country. Barsoumian emphasized that none of his efforts would have been possible without the assistance of others. "This was a collaborative endeavor that involved many people working toward a common, humanitarian cause," he said. "I am grateful to the extraordinary efforts of the dozens of volunteers who agreed to take the equipment to Armenia. They — along with the soldiers — deserve our recognition and gratitude."

The event's second Service Award Honoree, Dr. Ara Kayayan, an internal medicine specialist based in Albany, NY, was recognized for his humility, patient-centric approach to medicine and devotion to helping the global Armenian community. Kayayan has repeatedly demonstrated his willing-



From left, Dr. Larry Najarian, Dr. Ara Kayayan and Dr. Garbis Baydar



Young healthcare providers who are some of the newest members of AAHPO

ness to provide around-the-clock emergency medical response and counsel at a moment's notice. One example of this was in 2022, when Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan was transported via helicopter to Albany Medical Center's Level One Trauma Center after being gravely injured in an automobile accident.

Kayayan, one of the first medical professionals called to assist, reached out to AAHPO to help assemble a special advisory board of ten healthcare providers in a matter of hours. "Dr. Kayayan was our eyes and ears on the scene every day for eleven weeks, organizing a team of medical students, interns, residents and clergy to visit

the Bishop and provide his medical reports and vital signs from the specialists each day to the advisory board for evaluation and recommendations," Najarian recalled. "There is no doubt that Dr. Kayayan's erudite advice and involvement played a major role in Bishop Mesrop's complete recovery during the following months."

Upon modestly accepting the award, Kayayan described the value of serving fellow Armenians and others. "Today, we are called to continue the tradition of service and duty toward our Armenian communities in the United States and Armenia," he said. "It was a great honor to help with the management of our Primate's health and I am sure that any one of you would do the same."

The event concluded with an acknowledgement of AAHPO's newest members, including several recently-graduated medical professionals who are beginning their careers. Many expressed their appreciation for AAHPO's mentoring initiatives, which provide guidance and networking opportunities for the next generation of Armenian healthcare providers. Also noted is AAHPO's 30th anniversary this year, which will culminate with a gala banquet event on November 16, 2024 (location to be announced).

Those wishing to view future events, activities and donate to the cause may do so at www.aahpo.org



Guests at the AAHPO annual winter brunch

COMMUNITY NEWS

Fr. Untzag Nalbanidan Honored on 45 Anniversary of Ordination

TRUMBULL, Conn. — On May 31, Holy Ascension Church of Trumbull celebrated pastor Fr. Untzag Nalbandian’s 45th ordination anniversary in an event presided over by Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan. The Friday evening gathering also celebrated the publication of Nalbandian’s second book, *Reflect Recharge Renew*.

After a Gospel reading and brief prayer on healing, Master of Ceremonies Dn. Thomas Dabakian welcomed everyone by reminding them of the purpose of the gathering. Dorothy Bengoian, editor of Fr. Untzag’s newly published book, among her remarks said, “Der Untzag shared his weekly reflections in our weekly newsletter during Covid. His intention was not to write a book but to keep in touch with his parishioners during this difficult and unprecedented time. Fr. Untzag has the ability to put his thoughts on paper for the reader.” The result is this book.

Remarks were made by the benefactors of the book, Dean Shahinian of Washington DC; Adrienne Kachadourian of Binghamton, NY; and Heather Tarpinian of Branford, CT (who is also the parish chair of Holy Ascension Church). Additional sponsors Dr. Sarkis and Marita Nazarian of Arkansas were unable to attend the event. The late Andy Topalian, also a sponsor, passed away recently.

A welcome surprise was the presence of Albert and Zvart Amato from Niagara Falls, who had both served on the city’s parish council when Nalbandian had been assigned in 1978. Albert spoke and remembered some stories from those years.

Other remarks were made by the daughters of Fr. Untzag and Yn. Setta, Dr. Ani Nal-

bandian and Maral Nalbandian. They spoke about their father as an exemplary dad who encouraged them to achieve their best, at the same time teaching them to play the piano and be good Armenian-Americans. Ani also played a piano selection, *Armenian Eyes*.

Dn. Kit Kaolian presented a slide ret-

have two identical years here. Every year was different and equally exciting for him and for the parish. Fr. Untzag is wise, intelligent, hard-working, kind and humble.” Heather also acknowledged the services of Fr. Untzag’s three children to the church, as they all played the organ on Sundays during

and all who donated to the church in his honor. He said, “Tonight more than you honoring me, it is an opportunity for me to thank you for allowing me to serve you for the past four decades.”

Nalbandian spoke briefly about his book, which has 141 chapters encouraging readers to reflect on a topic or person, and renew their own lives for better. He emphasized he had no intention to write this book, but the pandemic motivated him to start sharing weekly reflections, now all contained in the volume. He thanked his wife, Setta, for all her support, as well as the Primate for presiding at this special event.

Following Bishop Mesrop’s remarks, the beautiful Armenian “kinetson” custom, when wine is poured

over a newly published book, took place.

In his remarks, Parsamyan warmly spoke about the honoree, stressing his profound appreciation for Fr. Untzag’s service to the Armenian Church. He shared, “Fr. Untzag even has inspired me. I regularly read his weekly reflections.” He presented Nalbandian with a hand cross before offering the benediction.

At a reception in the church hall, guests enjoyed the festive atmosphere as Fr. Untzag signed copies of his book.



Fr. Untzag Nalbandian, center, at the Kinetson ceremony with Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, the Diocesan Primate

pective giving a glimpse of the past 45 years of Fr. Untzag’s life and ministry at his three parishes. It began from his ordination in 1978 at St. Sarkis Church in Niagara Falls, NY, by the hand of Archbishop Tor-kom Manoogian, then-Diocesan Primate.

Heather Tarpinian reflected on Fr. Untzag’s 40 years of service in Trumbull parish and said, “Fr. Untzag’s clergy brothers ask him when he is retiring; but not his parishioners. Fr. Untzag has been in this parish for 40 years, and as he says, he did not

Badarak, and noted especially the precious services of Yn. Setta, who stood by her husband’s side all these years.

On behalf of the parish, Heather unveiled a portrait of Nalbandian standing at the altar of Holy Ascension, where he has celebrated Badarak for the past 40 years. The oil painting was done by well-known Branford artist Marc Anthony, who also was present at the event.

In his remarks, Nalbandian thanked all the benefactors and sponsors of his book,



Tekeyan Cultural Association

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia

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



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

☐ \$240 ☐ \$480 ☐ \$700 ☐ other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Make check payable to: Tekeyan Cultural Association
Memo: Sponsor a Teacher
Mail your check to:
TCA Sponsor a Teacher
5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056



Your donation is tax deductible.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Glendale Mayor Elen Asatryan Travels to Armenia

GLENDALÉ — Glendale Mayor Elen Asatryan is visiting Armenia from June 11-20, to participate, in part, in the U.S.-Armenia Local Democracy Forum organized by the U.S. State Department with Mayors and Executives from cities around the United States, her office reported.

Asatryan will arrive ahead of the delegation on the night of June 11, 2024. The goal of the trip is to enhance bilateral relations, explore economic opportunities, and foster cultural and educational exchanges between Armenia and Glendale, and beyond.

Her itinerary includes visits to Yerevan, Gyumri and, time permitting, possibly Kapan. The trip will also include meetings with Armenian local government officials, media outlets, business leaders, and community organizations. Asatryan will also participate in panels and discussions focused on strengthening relations with Armenia, sister city relations, democracy, efficient government structures, sustainability, trade, tourism, and technology

partnerships.

Reflecting on the trip, Asatryan stated, “I am thrilled to return to my birthplace Armenia as the Mayor of Glendale — home to the largest concentration of Armenians outside of Armenia, making up roughly 40 percent of our city’s population. As the fourth largest city in LA County and home to the largest immigrant/foreign-born population in California, Glendale and Armenia are intertwined in every way. This trip represents an incredible opportunity to deepen our connections, share knowledge, and create meaningful collaborations that benefit both Glendale and Armenia.”

Asatryan last visited Armenia in December 2022-January 2023 to join Armenia’s Opera House as she helped establish a partnership between Armenia’s Opera House and Los Angeles Opera. During that visit, Asatryan also visited Glendale’s Sister Cities Gyumri and Kapan and was the first Glendale elected official to do so since Gyumri and Glendale became sister cities



Elen Asatryan

in 2015 and the first city elected official to visit Kapan since 2009. Asatryan was unable to visit Glendale’s Sister City Martuni, Artsakh at the time due to the blockade.

Upon her return, Asatryan initiated a re-

view of Glendale’s current sister city policies, which she felt lacked proper structures, accountability, and staffing to ensure that initiatives, programs, and exchanges actually took place beyond visits and MOUs on paper. This item is scheduled to come to a discussion and vote at the Glendale City Council meeting next month. If Asatryan garners the support from her council colleagues, this will pave the way for structured committees and more support and productive bilateral relations. Asatryan also called for Glendale to create an Artsakh Fund during the blockade, encouraging larger Glendale organizations to donate and will use the trip as an opportunity to see how the funds can go to refugees from Martuni Artsakh, who were forcibly displaced from their ancestral lands. Mayor Asatryan has also noted that she plans to lead a city delegation during her tenure as Mayor and bring along experts and economic opportunities based on sister city needs.

OBITUARY

Vahe Setrakian Nuclear Engineer and AGBU Leader

BANGKOK —Vahe Setrakian passed away on May 28 in Bangkok, Thailand, where he spent his final years in retirement. He was 78.

The eldest of three boys, Vahe was born on August 3, 1945 in Jounieh, Lebanon to Hemayak and Arminee Setrakian. He had a

close relationship with his brothers Berge and Sebouh with whom he enjoyed the diverse activities that life had to offer in Lebanon, including his participation and leadership position in the Scouts’ Association.

A top student, he graduated with a degree in civil engineering from the American University of Beirut. As did many others, he moved to Montreal, Canada in 1975 to build a life of opportunity away from the Lebanese Civil War.

There he raised his two children Aida and Saro.

While rising to a prominent position in nuclear engineering at Hydro-Québec, he also found time for his community as he served for many years as chairman of the Board of Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Alex Manoogian School.

His engineering work led Vahe to a series of moves abroad where he headed major energy-related development projects in the Middle East. He made good friends and adapted to local life wherever he went. He finally settled in Thailand, a country he

called home with his partner Reina.

Vahe connected with the people he loved through his favorite hobbies: photography, golfing, backgammon, music, and swimming.

Vahe leaves behind his mother Arminee; his partner Reina;his children Aida (Andrew) and Saro (Heather); grandchildren

Anahid and Alyce, and brothers Berge and Sebouh, and their families.

A special service was held in his memory at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Cathedral of Montreal on Saturday, June 8.

Donations in lieu of flowers can be made in the name of Vahe Setrakian to the Armenian General Benevolent Union of Montreal.

Bedros Piandarian Longtime Member of the TCA, AGBU

PARAMUS, N.J. —Bedros Piandarian, of Paramus, passed away on June 5 at the age of 93.

He leaves his wife, Anne, and his daughters Elizabeth (Brian) and Alison.

He was the long-time financial administrator of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Central Board of Directors

and its worldwide schools and chapters, as well as the treasurer of the Central Board of Directors of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada.

A world traveler, he also spoke four languages fluently.

For decades, he dedicated his career to being an accounting manager at AGBU. He used his insight, intelligence and sharp sense of humor to promote his meaningful work supporting Armenian culture.

Bedros was also a proud American citizen.

In retirement, while he continued his service to the AGBU on a part-time basis, he dedicated time to his family, going to concerts and reading. He loved swimming in the ocean and feeling the sun on his skin. His greatest love, however, was his family.

A burial was held on Wednesday, June 12, at George Washington Memorial Park, in Paramus.

To honor and celebrate Bedros’ life and accomplishments, in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Armenian General Benevolent Union at 55 E 59th St, New York, NY 10022 or Autism New Jersey at 500 Horizon Dr # 530, Robbinsville Twp, NJ 08691.



James “Jack” Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

576 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472, Tel: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian
Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

DENNIS M. D EVENEY & SONS

Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543
(781) 891-9876 www.NEMonuments.com



Arts & Culture

Arlington Concert Raises Funds for Kapan Fest in Syunik

By Maral Taniel Der Torossian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ARLINGTON, Mass. — On May 31, the Amaras Arts Alliance hosted a benefit concert to support the Kapan International Music Festival, at the First Parish Unitarian Universalist. A large audience of music enthusiasts gathered to enjoy a unique musical program that featured a remarkable performance by prominent Armenian-Belgian cellist Sevak Avanesyan.

Avanesyan, the founder and artistic director of Kapan Fest, is renowned for his extraordinary musical talent. Born in Armenia and educated in Yerevan, Avanesyan moved to Brussels at a young age and has since traveled the world as a soloist and chamber musician. He is a laureate of many prestigious international competitions.

Avanesyan, who has roots in Kapan, the capital of Syunik Province, initiated the annual Kapan Festival in 2022. This world-class concert series brings together renowned musicians from around the globe, who also conduct master classes and workshops for local musicians to enrich their musical knowledge and improve their skills.

see KAPAN, page 17



Cellist Sevak Avanesyan performs with pianist Nune Hakobyan (Jirair Hovsepien photo)



he mother and son duo of Ani Hovsepien and Haig Hovsepien (Jirair Hovsepien photo)



The Pogossian family some years ago

Pogossian Family Yerevan Concert Supports Displaced Artsakh Families

By Movses Pogossian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Seeing our children grow with a love of chamber music, fueled in large part by our summers at the Apple Hill Chamber Music Festival in New Hampshire, where both of us taught for many consecutive years, fills me with emotion.

Aside from the obvious joy of experiencing the precious process of live music making and being touched by the grace of musical geniuses of the past as well as working to give birth to newly written compositions, there is an additional philosophical and deeply educational aspect that I feel strongly. Chamber music, in its core, is a truly democratic environment, without a division into “generals and soldiers,” where one has to be capable to lead and to follow, and where everyone in the group has its own equally unique and distinctive voice.

In retrospect, this was an incredibly powerful and educational experience as my wife and I were, in fact, receiving free lessons on how to be the best parents we can, with the help of playing music together, and trying not to fall into the many traps of common inter-generational dissonances.

One of my happiest memories is from eight years ago at our first Music for Food concert at the Sunday Montrose Farmers Market, walking distance from our home in Glendale. Through the efforts of our daughter, Cara, and her schoolmates, we got a booth, put up a simple poster, placed an empty violin case on the street for cash donations, and proceeded to play music for about four hours, along with a good number of our family’s friends — a very diverse group of professionals from the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Hollywood studios, current and former students, and our children’s middle school and high school friends.

We kept swapping players and pieces, laughed a lot, but also made a few hundred dollars that were donated to the Food Bank in Burbank.

For all of us, it was a simple yet effective lesson in giving and receiving, and also about stepping out of self-imposed boundaries and comfort zones. Since then, we see POGOSSIAN, page 16



Music for Food concert in Glendale, Calif. in 2016

Books

New Book Pays Tribute to Yerevan’s History

YEREVAN — *Memories of Yerevan*, edited by Nicolas V. Iljine, is a richly illustrated exploration of one of the world’s oldest continually inhabited cities.

Yerevan dates back to 782 BCE. This book brings together the work of twenty authors, each of whom is an expert in their field. It is an accessible look at the history and culture of Armenia through the story of its capital. In 301 CE, Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as an official religion.

Memories of Yerevan provides a detailed description of the religious life of the country as seen through its unique churches and its written heritage, including the precious documents kept in the Matenadaran in Yerevan, the world’s largest repository of Armenian manuscripts. As well as ancient history, the book explores the key period of the early 20th century, when Yerevan became the capital of



Images from the book



Armenia and the country had a brief period of independence from colonial rule.

In 1920, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic was formed. *Memories of Yerevan* records the changes that then took place in the city, including the creation of its unique early Soviet buildings and the stories of the Yerevan-based architects who designed them.

Memories of Yerevan will appeal to a wide range of readers, from those already familiar with Armenia, its capital, and its people, second and third generation Armenian diaspora, and those who are reading about the beautiful city of Yerevan for the first time.

Memories of Yerevan was published by Artguide Editions (Prague) in 2023 496 pages

ISBN 978-80-908899-0-3

It is available in hardback on amazon.com and as PDF on www.lulu.com

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Za'atar Roasted Cauliflower Salad with Harissa Tahini Dressing

Two Vegan Salads

Za'atar Roasted Cauliflower Salad with Harissa Tahini Dressing

Gena Hamshaw is a registered dietitian nutritionist, recipe developer, and the author of Food52 Vegan (2017) and Power Plates (2018). She shares vegan recipes on her blog, The Full Helping, which she has written since 2009. Gena lives in New York City. Her recipes and articles have been featured in the Huffington Post, Whole Living, O magazine, VegNews, Thrive magazine, Well and Good, Mind Body Green, Glamour, and the Chalkboard, among other publications.

“I earned my Master of Science in Nutrition from Teachers College, Columbia University. I went on to complete my dietetic internship with Teachers College. My internship training included rotations at Brookdale University Hospital Medical Center, the John Theurer Cancer Center, East River Gastroenterology, and the Institute for Family Health. I hold a premedical, post-baccalaureate degree from Georgetown University. I spent two years as a nutrition counselor in the office of gastroenterologist Robynne Chutkan, MD, specializing in dietary management of digestive disorders,” says Hamshaw.

“This salad is big on texture and flavor. It was created with Middle Eastern influences in mind, namely the za’atar spice on the roasted veggies and the swirl of harissa in the tahini dressing. I love these flavors, and they add so much character to a simple marriage of ingredients. Other ingredients: cauliflower, of course. The cauliflower gives the salad substance and lots of good nutrition; cauliflower is a good source of fiber, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, and folate. I add lentils to the za’atar roasted cauliflower salad. You can use brown, green, pardina, or black (beluga) lentils. I don’t recommend red lentils, which are too mushy to work in a salad like this. I top this salad with a lemony, spicy harissa tahini dressing. The harissa is optional if you don’t have it—garlic and lemon and creamy tahini go a long way—but it adds a lot of character to the dressing,” she adds.

INGREDIENTS:

- 3/4 cup dry lentils (brown, green, French, pardina, or beluga)
- 1 medium head cauliflower, chopped into bite-sized florets (about 1 3/4 lbs after prepping)
- 1 large red onion, sliced into wedges
- 2 tablespoons avocado oil (substitute grapeseed, safflower, or another neutral cooking oil)
- 2 tablespoons za’atar spice mix
- 1/2 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Black pepper to taste
- 4 heaping cups arugula

Harissa Tahini Dressing:

- 1/3 cup tahini
- 1/3 cup water
- 1 large clove garlic crushed or very finely minced
- 2 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice about 1 lemon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon harissa paste (add more if you prefer more heat)

PREPARATION:

Preheat your oven to 400°F. If you’re cooking lentils from scratch, mix the dry lentils in a saucepan with enough water to cover them by two inches.

Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Simmer for 25 minutes, or until the lentils are still tender but retain their shape and firmness. You can start testing them at the 20 minute mark for doneness. Drain the lentils and set them aside.

While the lentils cook, toss the cauliflower florets and sliced onion with the oil, za’atar, lemon, paprika, salt, and black pepper. Spread the veggies onto two parchment-lined baking sheets. Roast the vegetables for 20-25 minutes, or until the cauliflower is tender and lightly browning, and the onions are getting crispy. Check on the veggies and stir them on the sheet halfway through roasting. Allow the roasted vegetables to cool to room temperature.

While the veggies roast, whisk together the tahini, water, garlic, lemon juice, salt, and harissa to make the dressing. If it’s too thick, add a few extra tablespoons of water. When the vegetables are cool, toss them together with the lentils and arugula. Serve with dressing immediately. Alternately, you can store the roasted veggies and lentils, arugula, and dressing separately and mix when ready to eat.

For this recipe, see: <https://www.thefullhelping.com/zaatar-roasted-cauliflower-red-onion-lentil-salad-harissa-tahini-dressing/>

Rice, Beans, Tofu, and Greens

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 white or yellow onion, chopped
- 1 small bell pepper, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups cooked black beans, or 1 15-oz. can, drained and rinsed
- 1 14.5-oz. can diced or crushed tomatoes, preferably fire-roasted
- 1 cup white or brown basmati or long-grain white rice
- 2 3/4 cups water
- 1 15-oz. block extra-firm tofu, preferably pressed, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1 small bunch collard greens or other greens, stemmed and cut into thin strips
- Red pepper flakes (optional)
- Freshly squeezed lime juice

PREPARATION:

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion and bell pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 to 7 minutes, until the onion is tender and translucent. Stir in the cumin, chili powder, paprika, and salt, then stir in the beans, tomatoes, rice, and water. Add the tofu and stir gently to combine. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat, cover, and simmer, stirring gently from time to time, until the rice is tender, about 20 minutes for white rice or 40 minutes for brown rice.

Add the greens, cover, and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, until the greens are wilted. Season with red pepper flakes and stir in lime juice to taste. Taste and adjust the seasonings if desired. Serve right away, with any additional toppings you like.

Optional Toppings: Crumbled corn chips, chopped fresh cilantro, lime wedges, hot sauce.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Power Plates by Gena Hamshaw

Power Plates: 100 Nutritionally Balanced, One-Dish Vegan Meals [A Cookbook] by Gena Hamshaw.

These 100 recipes for wholesome and nourishing vegan food from blogger, nutritionist, and Food52 author Gena Hamshaw help you make delicious vegan meals that deliver balanced and sustained energy. Every recipe contains the key macronutrients of healthy fats, complex carbohydrates, and proteins, which together make for a complete meal--things like Smoky Red Lentil Stew with Chard, and Falafel Bowls with Freekah and Cauliflower. Photographs accompany each recipe, showing how Gena’s simple techniques and fresh ingredients yield delicious meals. Additional tips and tricks for taking food on the go, and for cooking ahead on the weekend for quick weekday lunches and dinners, round out the collection.

© copyright the full helping | site by kc + <https://madetothrive.com/> mtt | support by foodie digital



PHOTO: ASHLEY MC LAUGHLIN



ARTS & CULTURE

Gallery Z Presents ‘One Name, Three Generations + One’ Tribute to the Elibekian Family

WARWICK, R.I. — In June and July, Gallery Z is offering a family affair, presenting art from four different members of the Elibekian family spanning three generations plus one, hence the name, “One Name, Three Generations + One.”

The tradition of painting has been passed down within the Elibekian family for almost a century resulting in the brilliant artistic compositions that define the family’s artistic legacy.

The Elibekian family exhibit will feature paintings by Vagharshak (1910-1994), his two sons Henry (1936-2019 and Robert, 83, and grandson (Robert’s son) Areg, 54.

The works of these four artists are quite different despite their shared heritage.

Vagharshak was born in Tbilisi, Georgia. There he directed Tbilisi’s Armenian Theatre and worked as a painter. His work captures scenes of traditional Georgian customs, architecture, and lifestyles. In 2010, the National Gallery of Armenia celebrated his centennial with a retrospective.

His son, the late Henry Elibekian, was also born in Tbilisi. He graduated from Yerevan’s Institute of Art and Drama in 1967 with a degree in painting. Aside from painting, he also studied acting, directing, sculpture, graphics and design.

His other son, Robert Elibekian, was born in 1941, again in Tbilisi. He later moved to Yerevan, where he graduated from Yerevan’s Institute of Drama and Fine Arts in 1969. His colorful expressionist paintings portray beautiful women and energetic indoor scenes.

The artist’s creative life was reflected in numerous personal exhibitions throughout the world; his canvases are exhibited in famous museums such as National Gallery of Armenia, Yerevan Museum of Modern Art, the Matenadaran Manuscript Repository in Yerevan, Tretyakov Gallery, Bakhrushin Theater Museum and the Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow, the Alex Manoogian Museum of Detroit, Elysée Palace in Paris, Armenian Mkhitarist Museum in Venice, the White House and Zimmerli Art Museum in New Jersey.

The son of Robert, Areg Elibekian, represents the youngest generation in this exhibition. Areg was born in Yerevan and graduated from Yerevan’s Institute of Drama and Fine Arts in 1992. He has since moved to Montreal and teaches at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. He travels to Paris every summer to meet his father, Robert, and to paint.

Like his father and grandfather, Elibekian’s artwork is included in various private and public museums/galleries collections. He has had solo exhibitions in Arame Art Gallery, Yerevan; Stewart Hall, Montreal; Gallery Hai Cie, Paris; International Art Center, Beirut; Armenian Museum of America, Watertown; Gallery L’oeil



Works by Henry Elibekian

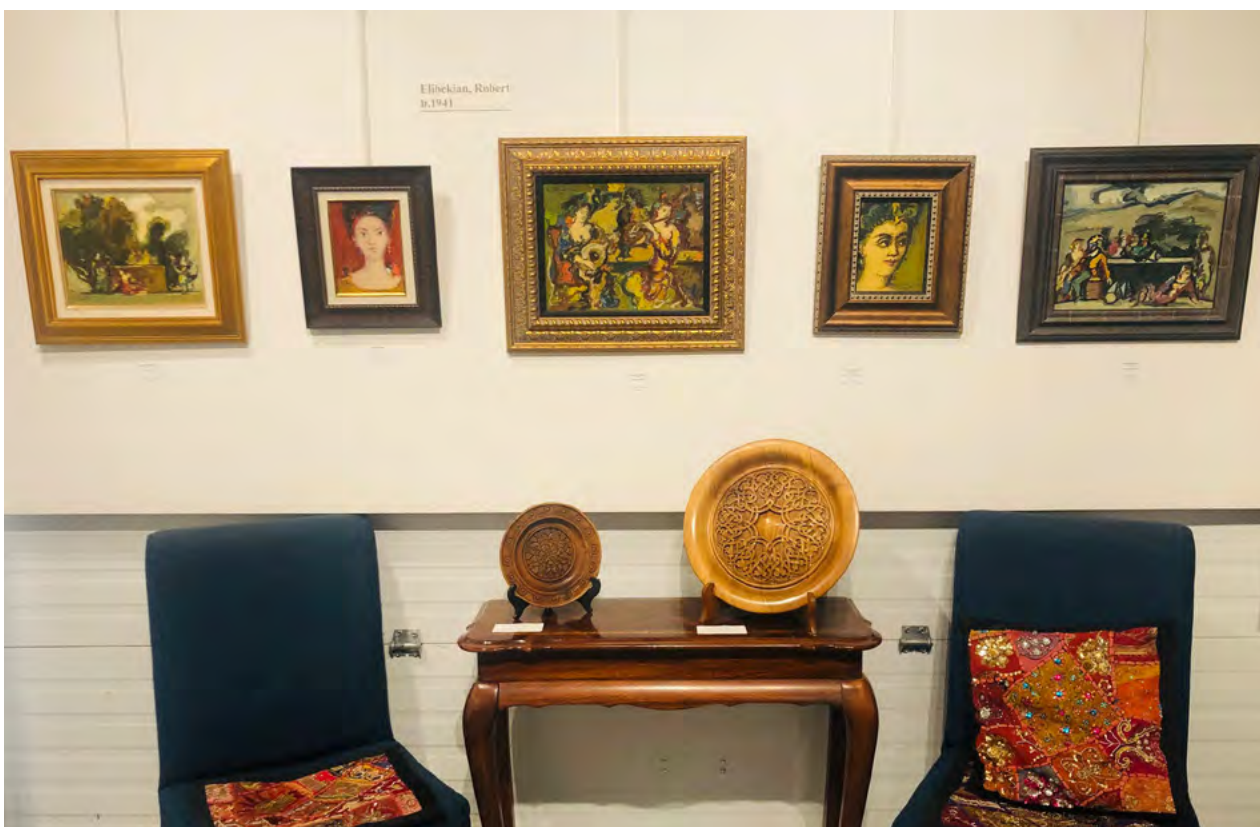
Reno Berg, Brussels; Studio 22, Antwerp; Saint Gregory Cathedral Church, Manhattan; Karen Mitchell Frank Gallery, Dallas; Robert Langen Gallery in Kitchener, Ontario and Stéphanie’s Art Gallery, Los Angeles.

In 2008, the Museum des Maitres Artisans du Quebec organized the Elibekian Family exhibition, which was titled “One Name, Three Generations.”

The exhibit’s main reception will be held on Saturday, June 29, from 12-5 p.m. Gallery hours are: Thursdays and Saturdays 12-5 p.m. or by appointment.

Contact Gallery Z Director Berge Ara Zobian to set up a private tour of the exhibit to experience a collection of fine art.

Gallery Z is located at 100 Bellows Street, Unit 8, Warwick. For more information, visit www.galleryz-prov.com



Works by Robert Elibekian



Three works by Vagharshak Elibekian



ARTS & CULTURE

Pogossian Family Yerevan Concert Supports Displaced Artsakh Families

POGOSSIAN, from page 13
have performed at a variety of venues and events, highlighting the ugly fact of an enormous food insecurity problem that, shockingly, exists in the richest country in the world.

During the pandemic, while isolating at our home, we were lucky to be able to continue playing music together and produced a few charity video concerts from our living room, highlighting this important problem, and other causes that we care about (some of our past performances can be seen on our Youtube channel).

Preparing for an upcoming family concert in Armenia (and joined by our dear friend, an incredible composer and pianist Artur Avanesov), has an additional powerful and personal meaning. I was dreaming of coming back with the entire family to perform in Armenia for my parents and close friends for quite some time, and we were all set to do it in June 2020, but the pandemic had other ideas, unfortunately. It took four more years of planning since then, since all five of us are now busy professionals, and it is a logistical challenge to find even a few days when everyone is available. But, finally, we have a date and a location: June 15 in the wonderfully renovated Babajanyan Concert Hall, which was formerly known as the “Small Hall of the Philharmonic,” and where I spent many evenings attending memorable concerts in my formative years growing up in Yerevan.

We will be performing chamber music masterpieces by Haydn, Mozart, Schumann, as well as the Armenian premiere of Artur Avanesov’s *Piano Trio*.

It also so happens that on the very next day my wife and I will be celebrating our 30th marriage anniversary (we got married in Yerevan in-between two rehearsals with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra).

It is not possible to ignore the pain of the recent events in Armenia, and the significant challenges that the society has to deal with on a daily basis. Therefore, it just makes sense to us as a family to use our upcoming concert to highlight a real and a very present problem. We have teamed up with a wonderful organization, Armenian Progressive Youth NGO (APY) to donate all of the proceeds from the concert towards their noble work of providing essential food and household items to displaced families from Artsakh, particularly those living in poverty with four or more

children under 18 years old. We will also visit the APY headquarters for an outreach performance and meeting with the APY community.

As Armenia’s market-based economy has rapidly took off in the recent years, with some rather incredible examples of opulence and excess, it is shocking for me to witness numerous contrasting examples of poverty and social inequality, with the current state of things being deeply unsettling and simply unfair. I think it is up to every person to do what they can, so that relatively small efforts can add up — not only financially, but, more crucially, to improve the ways of thinking and functioning in society.

Together with Grigor Yeritzian, founding president of the APY, we are planning to highlight and bring awareness to the Artsakh refugees’ very real difficulties and needs.

In addition, our family will perform a free community concert in Dilijan on June 17 at the beautifully renovated Dilijan State College of the Arts, an event made possible by the very generous and continuous support of the Toufayan family and the Fund for Armenian Relief.

We are very grateful to Music for Food and its founder, the inspirational musician and our dear friend Kim Kashkashian, for making available the Music for Food’s network to amplify our cause. To process donations outside of Armenia, please visit <https://musicforfood.net/donate> (please make a note “for Armenia concert”). And our thanks also go to the *Armenian Mirror Spectator* and the Tekeyan Cultural Association for their kind help with providing this platform for us.

For those able to attend the June 15 concert in person, here is a direct link to buying the tickets.

The Musicians

The Pogossian Family Ensemble is a family of classical musicians that frequently plays chamber music together in a variety of concert settings. They often perform to support Music for Food, a Boston-based non-profit which raises awareness for food shortages, and shares the powerful role music can play as a catalyst for change. During the recent pandemic, the family produced several online concerts, performing repertoire ranging from Mozart, Bartók, and Komitas to world premieres by Aida Shirazi, Ian Krouse, Artashes Kartalyan, and

Timo Andres, written for the Ensemble.

Cellist Edvard Pogossian was recently appointed Professor of Cello at the Royal Northern College of Music (UK), and is a member of the award-winning Trio Isimsiz. Named Overall Winner of the 2022 Tunbridge Wells International Music Competition, he has recently released his first solo CD on Linn Records, “Journey through Ar-



The Pogossian family at Lake Sevan in 2022

menia”, which includes a world premiere of Tigran Hamasyan’s Cello Sonata written for him. Edvard tours with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and often performs as guest Principal Cellist with The Royal Northern Sinfonia (UK) and other European orchestras. He holds degrees from The Juilliard School, Royal College of Music, Royal Academy of Music, and the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel.

Cara Pogossian (Boston), a graduate of the New England Conservatory and the Curtis Institute of Music, is a sought after solo, chamber, and orchestral performer. She is Principal Violist of the Portland Symphony Orchestra (ME), and recently performed Bartók’s Viola Concerto in Jordan Hall as winner of the NEC Concerto Competition. She has performed at the Marlboro, Ravinia, Taos, and Perlman Music Programs and Festivals, and is also featured on the Delos label’s recording of E. Schulhoff’s chamber music.

A US Presidential Scholar in the Arts, clarinetist Anoush Pogossian (New York) is pursuing her graduate studies at The Juilliard School, having completed her Bachelors in Psychology with honors at Columbia University. She is an avid performer of new music in solo and chamber

settings, and is a long-time participant of the Yellow Barn Music Festival. Anoush is a teaching fellow through Juilliard’s Office of Community Engagement, working regularly as a teacher in K-12 public schools throughout NYC as well as in Juilliard’s Music Advancement Program.

Violinist Varty Manouelian is a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, as well as a lecturer of violin at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music. A prize-winner of several international violin competitions, Varty has concertized widely internationally, and performed with many luminaries in chamber music settings such as Kim Kashkashian, Thomas Adès, Sergei Babayan and members of the Juilliard, Guarneri, Tokyo, Brentano, Borromeo, and Mendelssohn string quartets.

In addition to music, Varty’s biggest passions are her dogs Sophie and Mia, and the joys of hiking in nature, especially with her family.

Movses Pogossian is an award-winning violinist and prizewinner of several international competitions. Harboring a special affinity for chamber and new music, he has premiered over 100 works, and has collaborated with some of the world’s greatest living composers such as György Kurtág, Tigran Mansurian, Kaja Saariaho, Gabriela Lena Frank, and many others. A committed educator and organizer, he is a Distinguished Professor of Violin at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, Founder/Advisor of the UCLA Armenian Music Program, and was the founder and artistic director of the Dilijan Chamber Music Series for 15 seasons. His multiple recordings on the New Focus, ECM, and Bridge labels have received critical acclaim.

Artur Avanesov is a composer, performer, and assistant professor of music at the American University of Armenia. Previously he was the chair of the Department of Musical Composition at the Yerevan State Conservatory where he previously studied piano and composition, and pursued postgraduate studies in composition. In 2005, he earned a Doctor of Arts degree with his research on Zen Buddhism in the music of the 20th century. Avanesov took piano master classes as a member of the Lucerne Festival Academy in Switzerland, and with Ensemble Recherche in Freiburg, Germany. He collaborated and performed with world-renowned musicians including Pierre Boulez, Krzysztof Penderecki, Rohan de Saram, Kim Kashkashian, Anja Lechner, Vladimir Chernov, Tony Arnold, Tigran Mansurian, Movses Pogossian. His chamber, vocal, choral and piano compositions have been performed internationally, and recorded on major labels such as Deutsche Grammophon, Brilliant Classics, New Focus, Albany Records, etc. As a composer and performer, Avanesov contributed to the foundation of a number of Armenian and international contemporary music ensembles, and as a musicologist, his scholarship appeared in various publications.

ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ
ՀԱՅԿԱՆ ԿՈՄԻՏԵ
ՀԱՅԿԱՆ ԿՈՄԻՏԵ

ՀԱՅԿԱՆ ԿՈՄԻՏԵ
ՀԱՅԿԱՆ ԿՈՄԻՏԵ

«ԱՐՆՈ ԲԱԲԱՅԱՆԻ ՀԱՄԵՐԳԱՍՏՐԱԸ»
ARNO BABAJANYAN CONCERT HALL

2024
Հունիս
15
JUNE
19:00

POGOSSIAN FAMILY ENSEMBLE

J. HAYDN - String Quartet Op. 76, No. 3 "Emperor" R. SCHUMANN - Märchenerzählungen (Fairy Tales), Op. 132 A. AVANESOV - "Tre-Sonate" W. A. MOZART - Clarinet Quintet in A Major, KV 581

MOVSES
POGOSSIAN
Մովսես Բոգոսյան

VARTY
MANOUELIAN
Վարդի Մանուելյան

CARA
POGOSSIAN
Կարա Բոգոսյան

EDVARD
POGOSSIAN
Էդվարդ Բոգոսյան

ANOUSH
POGOSSIAN
Անուշ Բոգոսյան

ARTUR AVANESOV
Արտուր Ավանեսով

APY
Armenian Progressive Youth

UCLA
Herb Alpert
School of Music

MUSIC
FOR
FOOD

ՀԱՅԿԱՆ ԿՈՄԻՏԵ
ՀԱՅԿԱՆ ԿՈՄԻՏԵ

ՏՈՒՄՈՒՄ
ՖՈՐ
ՏԻԿԵՏԻՆ
098 881717 060 276000 tamsarkgh.am



ARTS & CULTURE

Arlington Concert Raises Funds For Kapan Fest in Syunik

KAPAN, from page 13

The evening’s program featured a variety of talented local musicians who mesmerized the audience with delightful performances of works by Chopin, Rachmaninov, Schumann, Spendiaryan, Babajanian, and many more. Among the performers were: Armen Ghazaryan, violin; Nune Hakobyan, piano; Armenuhi Hovakimian, violin; Ani Hovsepian, piano; Haig Hovsepian, violin; Levon Hovsepian, piano; Sargis Karapetyan, violin; Astghik Martirosyan, voice; Dr. Lilit Muradyan, violin; Knarik Nerkararyan, voice and Andrei Sobchenko, saxophone.

The concert concluded with a stirring performance of Bach’s *Concerto for Two Pianos in C Minor, BWV 1060*, second and third movements, which was met with great enthusiasm from the audience. Following the program, attendees had the opportunity to enjoy refreshments and mingle with each other and the performers. The musicians created a wonderful evening of music. Efforts, such as this one by the Amaras Art Alliance, create opportunities for people to get involved, learn, and enjoy our diverse cultures, helping our society remain vibrant while preserving our Armenian heritage.



All the musicians at the concert (Jirair Hovsepian photo)



Astghik Martirosyan sings. (Jirair Hovsepian photo)



From left, Sargis Karapetyan, Dr. Lilit Muradyan, Sevak Avanesyan and Armenuhi Hovakimian (Jirair Hovsepian photo)

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

- 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/adult, \$25/student, under 12 years old free. Khorovadz, pilaf, salad and more. Special raffle. RSVP bostontca@gmail.com or call Sossy at 617-281-1647.**
- JUNE 21 — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church invites the community to celebrate World Music Day Under the Patronage of His Excellency the Most Reverend Mikael Mouradian, Bishop Of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg in the USA and Canada. The event will feature performances by Rev. Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian, the Meghedi Children’s Vocal Ensemble and students of Do RE Me Music School, Artistic Director Marina Margarian. Friday, 6:30 p.m . Free Entry, a reception will follow the program, Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont. **OCTOBER 25-27 — Save the date! Sanctuary consecration of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe. Presided over by Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill. Details to follow.****
- NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School will celebrate with a 40th Anniversary Gala. Saturday, 6.30 p.m., Hyatt Regency Cambridge. Details to follow.**

MICHIGAN

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

NEW YORK

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

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



Knarik Nerkararyan sings with Levon Hovsepian accompanying on piano. (Jirair Hovsepian photo)



THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
— SINCE 1932 —



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgreditichian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

**REGIONAL
CORRESPONDENTS**

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepan, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is
published weekly, except two weeks in
July and the first week of the year, by:
Baikar Association, Inc.
755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509
Telephone: 617-924-4420
FAX: 617-924-2887
www.mirrorspectator.com
E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com
For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

Other than the Editorial, views
and opinions expressed in this
newspaper do not necessarily
reflect the policies of the
publisher.

COMMENTARY

Gendered Racialization and Social Justice: *Seeking Interviews with Armenian Women Who Have Migrated from Turkey*

By Hafza Girdap

As both an activist and an academic, I am passionate about the transformative potential of both academic and civil society work to bring about meaningful change, particularly in the realms of social justice and gender equality.

In our globalized world, where human flows, ideas, and discrimination proliferate, I focus on the transformative journey of immigrant women in the United States. My research unravels the complexities of racialization, often clashing with cultural and international norms. It's crucial to recognize that race, radicalization and racism encompass more identity dynamics than just skin color and ethnicity, including religion, location, and sexuality.

As a recent Turkish dissident, I have experienced state-led discrimination and oppression firsthand. These atrocities against various groups based on religious, ethnic, ideological, and gender backgrounds profoundly impact society. Powerful state narratives perpetuate discrimination and violence, often resulting in migration.

Turkey's historical context reveals complex struggles and challenges concerning minority rights. Discrimination and violence against minorities, including Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, Greeks and Jews, have been pervasive, extending to language restrictions, cultural suppression, and violence. Patriarchy, evident in state structures and gender dynamics, shapes women's roles within the nation-state. Gendered racism — discrimination, prejudice, and violence against women based on intersecting identities like race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation — manifests in divisions such as Turkish/Kurdish/Armenian, men/women, secular/religious, and Sunni/Alevi.

These divides reinforce traditional roles, with Turkish-Sunni identity dominating state structures and norms. Minority women face dehumanization and discriminatory attitudes. This dehumanization normalizes violence and discrimination against these groups. Concepts of gendered citizenship and gendered racism highlight the marginalization faced by women from ethnic and religious minorities, as well as LGBTQ individuals. My research aims to explore the strong connection between gender and citizenship in Turkey.

Exploring gendered oppression, discrimination, and populism through transnational feminist endeavors, I aim to bridge academia and grassroots activism. We confront societal perceptions that oversimplify and stereotype immigrant women from the Global South, often portraying them as a homogeneous, victimized group, neglecting their agency.

My research acknowledges the multifaceted nature of identities, particularly those of immigrant women from Turkey. Cultural identity, intertwined with politics, gender, ethnicity, and race, plays a significant role. Contrary to homogenizing experiences, my research delves into the unique challenges faced by immigrant women from Turkey in the United States, emphasizing their diverse backgrounds.

Focusing on women from different ethnic, religious, ideological, and sexual backgrounds, I name my research group "women from Turkey" instead of "Turkish women" to highlight their diverse identities. This approach showcases that stereotyping women from the Global South, particularly immigrant women from Turkey, is a mistake. We must contextualize their voices and experiences based on their identity-based diversities. My feminist ethnographic research will derive primary data from participants' narratives, incorporating an intersectional lens to understand race, gender, class, and other oppressions. In-depth interviews with women from Turkey will explore their agency, racialization, and identification experiences in different spaces.

My work, both in academia and grassroots activism, aims to echo voices often unheard in narratives of gendered racism. In a global landscape filled with disparities, transnational feminist solidarity becomes crucial. We must explore decolonizing knowledge production, ensuring diverse voices are heard and valued.

As a transnational feminist activist scholar, I aim to challenge frameworks dominated by both Western perspectives and autocrat/oppressive/populist leaders, dismantling discourses affecting immigrant women. Drawing from the experiences of women from the Global South is crucial in emphasizing diverse perspectives.

Now, as individuals and communities from different backgrounds, we must unite our voices and strengths to document discrimination, violence, and persecution that force women to migrate and face further discrimination. Together, we can create awareness and take action. We must recognize the emotional impact of activism on immigrant women and their potential for reduced distress when advocating for equality. By reconceiving culture and religion as spaces for reasoned, autonomous, and democratic participation, we empower transnational feminist work to challenge all forms of gendered populism.

Research and civil society engagements are powerful tools for generating diverse perspectives and empowering immigrant women. Let's use them to create a more just world.

I am specifically looking to interview Armenian women who have migrated from Turkey. If you'd like to support this research by participating as an interviewee, please email me at hafza.girdap@stonybrook.edu. Participation involves answering my questions during a personal interview, conducted either in person or via Zoom. You will be interviewed once, for no more than an hour, depending on your availability and preference, at a time of your choosing. To ensure privacy, I take strict measures to keep all participant information confidential, and your name will not be disclosed.



(Hafza Girdap is a Ph.D. candidate in Women's and Gender Studies at Stony Brook University, New York. She is the Executive Director and Spokesperson of Advocates of Silenced Turkey (AST))

Lemkin Institute Urges UN to Withdraw Support For Azerbaijan as Host of COP29

The Lemkin Institute issued a statement last week urging the United Nations to withdraw its support from the organization's Climate Change Conference, COP29, scheduled to take place in Baku, in November.

The Lemkin Institute [calls on](#) the United Nations to withdraw support for Azerbaijan as host of COP29, stressing that Azerbaijan is a genocidal state run by a president who routinely expresses genocidal ideology towards Armenians, including referring to them as dogs, jackals, and terrorists. Its full statement is provided below.

"The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention opposes the decision by the United Nations to name Azerbaijan as host of COP29, the annual UN climate change summit, given Azerbaijan's genocidal strategies in Nagorno-Karabakh, the genocidal Armenophobic ideology of its leader, President Ilham Aliyev, and the extensive corruption and human rights abuses at home. By granting Azerbaijan the honor of hosting this important event, the UN is

endorsing genocidal speech, genocidal policies, and dictatorship, which benefits neither the climate nor the people of the world. The choice of Azerbaijan as COP host legitimizes, rationalizes, and normalizes genocide in world politics. Furthermore, it threatens the credibility of the principles established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In the interests of genocide prevention, human rights, and the legitimacy of the United Nations as a body representing the people of the world, the United Nations must rescind Azerbaijan's recognition as host of COP29 and either find another host country or hold this year's meeting in Bonn, Germany, COP's default meeting place.

Azerbaijan was chosen to host COP29 through an established UN mechanism in December 2023, less than three months after it had overseen the genocide through "ethnic cleansing" of Armenians from the region of Nagorno-Karabakh ("Artsakh" to Armenians) and following a ten-month-long genocidal blockade of the territory.

The exodus from Artsakh — which ended an almost 4,000-year-old continuous presence by one of the oldest Christian communities in the world — was one of the most effective genocides of recent times. To celebrate Azerbaijan's "victory" against the Armenians of Artsakh, President Aliyev even lit a bonfire in the Artsakh capital of Stepanakert for what he called a "final cleaning" on the occasion of Nowruz. President Aliyev viewed the choice of Azerbaijan as COP29 host to be an endorsement of his genocidal policies towards Armenians (among other things). Upon hearing the news, he stated: "We consider it as a sign of respect from the international community to Azerbaijan and what we are doing..."

It cannot be forgotten that during the 2020 war between Azerbaijan and Artsakh, Azerbaijani soldiers were guilty of engaging in extreme and horrific atrocities against disarmed Armenian soldiers as well as Armenian civilians, including elderly and disabled people. These documented see LEMKIN, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Turkey Is Backing Its Citizens Abroad While Armenia is Alienating its Diaspora

Armenia has a very large diaspora, estimated at seven million — more than double Armenia's population. Successive Armenian governments have attracted only

a negligible portion of this valuable asset for the homeland's benefit. The Diaspora is Armenia's most valuable backer, yet it is ignored. This is akin to a starving man neglecting the bag of diamonds in his possession.

Regrettably, rather than attracting the diaspora's support, the Republic of Armenia has done the exact opposite by erecting obstacles for the diaspora's participation in Armenia's development. Diaspora Armenians are deprived of the right to vote in Armenia's elections and are banned from holding high office. Even those who possess Armenian citizenship but live overseas are not allowed to cast their votes at Armenia's embassies or consulates in foreign countries.

The current Armenian government has gone out of its way to destroy the only bridge that existed between the homeland and its large Diaspora by closing down the Ministry of Diaspora. Instead, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan unwisely appointed Zareh Sinanyan, a useless Diasporan, as the "High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs." Sinanyan travels around the world, at Armenia's taxpayers' expense, to carry out propaganda for the Pashinyan regime.

Meanwhile, the powerful Turkish government, recognizing the benefits of having close relations with its diaspora, has embarked on a major campaign to strengthen its ties with Turks around the world.

Turkish investigative reporter Abdullah Bozkurt posted on the Nordic Monitor website an article titled: "Turkey is expanding its diaspora engagement to promote political goals abroad." He provides important details about Turkey's outreach to its diaspora.

"The Turkish government plans to enhance its support for diaspora groups abroad, both financially and through other means, with the aim of fostering stronger allegiance to Turkey, navigating legal and administrative challenges in host countries, encouraging active political engagement and forging connections with non-Turkish religious communities," Bozkurt wrote.

The Turkish government's diaspora agency, "the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities" (YTB in Turkish), has prepared a 71-page official report titled: "Strategic Plan for 2024-2028," which provides in great detail the specific goals of the agency, its vision, mission, and "strategy to mobilize approximately seven million members of the diaspora community to advance Turkish government policies."

YTB's goal is "to contribute to Turkey's ambition of becoming one of the world's leading powers — a vision articulated by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as the 'Century of Turkey.'"

YTB "recommended several policy actions to the Erdogan government. It urged the use of its diplomatic influence and public diplomacy tools to exert pressure on foreign countries to lift restrictions on Turkish diaspora groups. Cooperating with other Muslim religious groups in foreign countries is another recommendation put forward by the YTB to overcome restrictions on the Turkish diaspora."

YTB provides funding, logistical and technical support for the activities of Turkish Diaspora groups around the world. "YTB recently participated in a program organized by the Union of International Democrats (UID), an organization acting as a foreign interest group representing Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) abroad in Ankara."

The YTB report identifies groups who oppose the Turkish government's policies, labeling them as "terrorists." "YTB said these opposition groups undermine the Turkish government's public diplomacy efforts, sow division within the diaspora and pose political and security risks to groups aligned with the Erdogan government."

YTB stated that Turkish Diaspora students who receive scholarships from the Turkish government to study in Turkey will "become voluntary Turkish ambassadors." YTB also suggested that these students be connected "with Turkish companies engaged in foreign trade" so they can "become economic actors" in the countries they reside.

More ominously, "YTB actively collaborates with other Turkish government institutions, particularly Turkish intelligence agency MIT (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı), and also serves as a recruitment source for the spy agency within diaspora communities abroad. This includes exchange students who have studied in Turkey on government scholarships. Turkish embassies are also instructed to help with the work of the YTB in foreign countries with every available means."

YTB also collaborates with "non-Turkish groups referred to as 'related communities,' which include global Islamist networks such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir networks, among others."

The Turkish government provided the YTB a total budget of \$544.2 million for the years 2024-28, starting with \$61.5 million for 2024, increasing to \$83.5 million in 2025, \$103.3 million in 2026, \$133.5 million in 2027, and \$162.4 million in 2028.

YTB closely monitors the activities of the 15,000 foreign exchange students on government scholarships from 170 countries. In his speech on May 6, Pres. Erdogan disclosed that there are also 340,000 foreign students from 198 countries. "Furthermore, the agency [YTB] coordinates outreach efforts with over 150,000 graduates who have completed their education in Turkey. The Erdogan government also funds and supports nongovernmental organizations to complement the activities of the YTB with a \$92.5 million budget. One of the main beneficiaries of this program is the UID, President Erdogan's long arm abroad."

There are valuable lessons for Armenia's leaders to learn from the Turkish government's outreach to its Diaspora. But, is anyone in Armenia listening or cares?

Armenia's Public Life Must Rise From the Street to the Level of Constitutional Legitimacy

LEGITIMACY, from page 1

It is superfluous at this point to remind readers that Armenia, surrounded by predatory neighbors, and as a result of the often contradictory policies conducted by successive governments for more than thirty years after the reattainment of independence, after losing Artsakh in 2020, is now, to put it mildly, in a difficult and precarious political situation. To consider today's authorities, led by Prime Minister Pashinyan, as the sole responsible and the reason for all of this is without a doubt thoughtless and unfair.

However, it is also unavoidable that the government of the day is obliged to continuously explain its policies to the people who elect it, and to attempt in this manner to substantiate the trust they have in it.

We must be fair: knowing the current political, military, economic and international facts, the task of anyone who is at the head of the government today is unenviably difficult. No one political party or group has been able to offer well defined and clearly preferable alternatives until today.

Nevertheless, the ADL press has always been vigilant and over the course of the past months through its editorials and leading articles made clearly defined serious criticisms of certain positions adopted or proposed by the authorities of the day.

It is now time that we make the following brief objective analysis of the Tavush Movement, after following its activities and tasks, as mentioned above, for an entire month.

First of all, it is certain that many different groups in Armenia with deep dissatisfaction with the authorities joined the big May 9 rally at Yerevan's Republic Square. This large assemblage of protesting citizens would naturally expect to find in this movement a leadership capable of satisfying the people and offering a clear alternative policy.

However, the following days and in particular the follow-up public meeting on May 26, which was awaited with great expectations, created a great illusion in the above sense.

On May 26, the movement was unable to present itself as a group of experienced and capable leaders ready to lead and inspire confidence. Instead, Archbishop Galstanyan presented himself as the only apparent leader, as well as the prime ministerial candidate with the pretention of replacing the current authorities. He also announced that he has "frozen" his ecclesiastical activities, both clerical and administrative, without even explaining the meaning and scope of this "freezing." On May 26 and afterwards, until today, the complete absence of an alternative national political platform from the movement led to even more disillusionment. All that remained was the demand for the immediate resignation of the prime minister and the government, so that Archbishop Galstanyan would head a completely new and unknown government.

As a matter of fact, during the course of an entire month, the visible manifestation of the work of the "Tavush Movement" was mostly the fruitless actions of civil disobedience to block the streets, even on the days when important regions in the north of the country with their entire population were exposed to huge catastrophic damage due to the flooding rains.

In light of all this, based on the abovementioned indisputable facts, it is certain that if it were true that there are some important justifiable grievances concerning the activities of today's authorities, it is also true that the Tavush Movement until the present has not been able to inspire confidence in any way that it can guarantee that it is capable of replacing the current government with an administration that will conduct a more favorable policy for the country. The aspiring prime ministerial candidate

Bagrat Srpazan himself clearly does not have any political experience. As to his activities in Canada some ten years ago as the Primate of the local diocese, which are sometimes alluded to, the archives will show that his administrative work was at the very least very problematic, though this issue should not be addressed today, so as not to open old wounds.

The most important thing, however, is that in a country that professes democracy, while it is a common phenomenon to see daily expressions of dissatisfaction and protest of an important part of the people against a ruling government, the only way to change that government is through legal extraordinary or regular elections, which should take place following the laws provided by the Constitution.

Therefore, taking into account all the objective information we pointed out in this article and as a result of the unacceptable current practices that have turned into disorder in the streets of Armenia today, we would like to clearly state now that vague political expressions, closing streets and demanding the resignation of the prime minister are impractical, unreliable and therefore unacceptable measures to implement any regime change. The only acceptable way is to implement legally allowed and anticipated measures, to try to hold early elections in the near future, and if the parliamentary opposition does not have the appropriate means today, to wait until the next regular elections in Armenia in 2026, so that on that occasion they will try to achieve the change of the country's authorities.

Until then, the most important thing that is necessary — and this is our demand — is that as a priority, the public atmosphere of Armenia should return to a peaceful and productive state, so that Armenia strengthens its economy and especially its military, without which the existence of our homeland is seriously threatened.



Armenian Musician to Compete In Eurovision Contest

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

If you mention “Eurovision” in Germany, or any other European country, what comes to mind for most people is the Eurovision Song Contest for popular music. This year’s event took place in May, with Swiss musician Nemo winning. Not everyone knows that there is also a Eurovision contest held for classical artists. This year it will take place in Norway on August 17. And a musician from the Republic of Armenia will be among the contestants.

The Eurovision Young Musicians, which has been held every two years since 1982, is provides the opportunity for talented young classical musicians, aged between 12 and 21, to present their art to a broad stage, and open the way to an international career. Among previous winners, there have been several who have achieved success on the world stage, including, Julian Rachlin (violin), Natalie Clein (cello) and Eivind Holtmark Ringstad (viola). It has been held in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland, Portugal, Norway and France. This year it will be held at the Stormen Concert Hall in Bodø, Norway, which is the European Capital of Culture for 2024.



Hayk Hekekyan

The event is organized by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) along with the Norwegian broadcaster, Norsk rikskringkasting (NRK), who are hosting the competition.

The public television company of the Republic of Armenia has participated in this competition once, in 2012. That year, Armenia was represented by Hayk Kazazyan, a young *qanun* player, who won the third honorary prize. At the end of last year, Public TV of Armenia (First Channel) decided to rejoin the classical music television celebration-festival in 2024.

In Armenia, more than 3,000 gifted young classical music performers from all over the country submitted applications to participate in the selection process. A professional committee selected 214 of them in the first round, then, 30 in the second round, and 10 in the final.

The semi-finals, held in April, were organized in a format with three days of concerts, with performances for an Armenian as well as a foreign jury, and the television audience. The young musicians performed with the accompaniment of the State Chamber Orchestra of Armenia, conducted by Harutyun Arzumanyan. Ten of the 30 participants made it to the April 13 finals.

The young talents performed under the direction of Sergey Smbatyan and accompanied by the State Symphony Orchestra of Armenia. There were five outstanding musicians in each of the two juries, one Armenian and one foreign, that heard the contestants. In addition, television viewers had the opportunity to cast their votes.

The winner was 18-year-old oboist Hayk Hekekyan, a graduate of the Sayat Nova music school and a first-year student at the Yerevan State Conservatory. Upon receipt of his award on stage from the Minister of Education and Culture, Hekekyan, visibly thrilled, expressed his hope that he would not disappoint the people who placed their trust in him and pledged to do his best to live up to the excellent reputation that Armenian artists have established abroad.

Galvanizing the Diaspora With Grant Opportunities

YEREVAN — The Galvanizing Diaspora program offers ten grants, each worth \$10,000, to Diaspora-based Armenians who have pan-Armenian ideas and want to bring them to life. The program is implemented by the Armenia 2041 Foundation established by Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan.

Best known for the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, Afeyan and Vardanyan, along with likeminded individuals, have pioneered more than 700 projects showcasing their steadfast commitment to humanitarian causes, socio-economic development, ecological sustainability, and

Armenians from various communities to each other and help them grow,” said Arman Jilavian, head of the Armenia 2041 Foundation.

“This program wants to invigorate Armenian communities worldwide and reinforce their dedication to the Armenian causes. The topics that we support range from cultural promotion to entrepreneurship for youth. It warms our hearts to see how many bright and dedicated Armenians are coming forward with brilliant ideas,” noted Hasmik Hayrapetyan, the program’s manager.

So far, more than 150 proposals have



advancements in education, science, and technology.

“With the Galvanizing Diaspora program, we want to thank those who have been active in the communities for years and acknowledge their efforts towards our common goals through grants. At the same time, we want to signal to the new generations that any activity taken to cement us as a nation will be admired, appreciated, and saluted. Our efforts are not merely limited to receiving applications and distributing grants. Rather, we are forming a network where Armenians help each other to thrive. This is why the Galvanizing Diaspora program also includes a mentorship component. We are trying to connect

been pitched to the team. Each idea is as vibrant as its place of origin. Armenians from Indonesia, Singapore, Ukraine, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Iraq, Argentina, Brazil, the US and Canada apply to receive funding for initiatives such as improving mental health, producing podcasts, organizing international conferences, building Armenian parks, enriching Armenian museums, and researching lost Armenian recipes, to name just a few.

Interested parties can visit the program website at www.armenia2041.org to familiarize themselves with all the details, check their eligibility and apply. Applications are accepted till June 30.

Lemkin Institute Urges UN to Withdraw Support For Azerbaijan as Host of COP29

LEMKIN, from page 18

atrocities include beheadings, mutilations of Armenians while still alive, torture, and ritual humiliations of Armenians solely because of their identity, as evidenced by the use of flags and songs. When Azerbaijan started an aggressive war against Armenia in 2022, it engaged in similar atrocities, including the use of sexualized violence against Armenian women and the massacre of disarmed Armenian soldiers. There has been no accountability for these crimes. They are reminiscent of the genocidal atrocities committed against Armenians by Turkish and Azeri troops, gendarmes, soldiers, and civilians from 1915-1923 and help explain why it was so easy for Azerbaijan to terrorize the Armenians of Artsakh into flight with its invasion of the territory on September 19, 2023.

Apart from blockading the estimated 120,000 Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh for ten months, invading the territory, and

forcing the flight of almost the totality of that population, Azerbaijan also has been methodically destroying Armenian cultural heritage in Artsakh. If nothing is done about this, Artsakh will become like Nakhichevan, the Azerbaijani exclave that at one time had a significant Armenian population but now has none, where Azerbaijan has already destroyed an estimated 98 percent of Armenian cultural heritage, including churches, cemeteries, and monasteries.

Beyond these crimes, Azerbaijan continues to illegally detain Armenian POWs, civilians, and democratically-elected members of the Artsakh government, including Ruben Vardanyan, the noted international humanitarian who co-founded the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. There is strong evidence of the repeated use of torture against Armenian hostages.

Azerbaijan routinely flouts international law by ignoring treaties and judgements by international courts. The 2022 war

against Armenia, the ten-month blockade of Artsakh, and the invasion of Artsakh on September 19, were all violations of the Tripartite Ceasefire Statement agreed to by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia in November 2020, which ended the 2020 war. Moreover, Azerbaijan has ignored and violated provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice on 7 December 2021, 22 February 2023, 6 July 2023, and 17 November 2023.

It also bears mentioning that Azerbaijan has a dismal human rights record at home that is only getting worse. From 2023 to 2024, Azerbaijan’s Freedom Record declined by 2 points, from 9 to 7 (out of 100), making it one of the most authoritarian governments in the world. Furthermore, actions of Azerbaijan and the Aliyev regime in regard to land use and preserving the natural climate stand in direct opposition to the core principles at the heart of the COP29 conference. Not only is Azerbaijan a petrostate

that relies on fossil fuel exports, but also the state energy and natural resource industries in Azerbaijan are riddled with corruption, placing the country in direct opposition to one of COP29’s stated goals, which is the completion of the first enhanced transparency framework.

Azeri officials have claimed they want “to make COP29 a COP of peace”. The Lemkin Institute finds such assertions to be absurd, embarrassing, and deeply cynical, given what we all know about the Aliyev regime. If Azerbaijan truly wants to demonstrate its commitment to peacebuilding, it should start by facilitating the immediate and unconditional release of its political prisoners. If this small step cannot be taken, their true intentions are clear. At a time when the world population has lost faith in international institutions, the United Nations needs to get its head out of the sand and end its diplomatic sponsorship of the genocidal state of Azerbaijan, starting with COP29.”