

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932

Volume LXXXIX, NO. 49, Issue 4840

JUNE 29, 2024

\$2.00

Armenia Recognizes Palestinian State

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia officially recognized a Palestinian state on June 21 in a move strongly condemned by Israel and welcomed by the Palestinian Authority.

In a statement announcing the recognition, the Armenian Foreign Ministry pointed to the “catastrophic humanitarian situation” in Gaza and Yerevan’s long-running support for a “two-state solution” to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

“We believe that this is the only way to ensure that Palestinians and Israelis can realize their legitimate aspirations,” read the statement. “Based on that and reaffirming its commitment to international law and the principles of equality, sovereignty and peaceful coexistence of peoples, the Republic of Armenia recognizes the State of Palestine.”

The Israeli Foreign Ministry was quick to condemn the move and summon the Armenian ambassador in Tel Aviv for what a ministry spokesperson described as a “harsh reprimand conversation.”

see PALESTINE, page 5



Palestinian demonstrators hold Palestinian flags near Ramallah as they celebrate after the UN General Assembly approved a resolution to fly Palestine’s flag at UN headquarters, September 11, 2015.

Police Raid Karabakh Leaders’ Offices

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Nagorno-Karabakh’s leading political groups on Monday, June 24, accused Armenia’s government of unleashing repressions and discriminating against Karabakh Armenians who took refuge in the country following Azerbaijan’s

sued by four of the five parties represented in Karabakh’s exiled legislature.

They also condemned what they called a smear campaign against the Karabakh Armenians waged by Prime Minister’s Nikol Pashinyan’s political allies and other supporters.

participate in anti-government protests in Yerevan and threatened them with serious consequences.

Armenia’s Investigative Committee denied any political motives behind the claims. It said Shahramanyan’s limousine was impounded as part of a continuing criminal investigation into his bodyguard and driver.

The Karabakh factions said the police actions “exposed the fact that the current authorities of Armenia have gone beyond the boundaries of both legal and moral values.” They also denounced the June 12 crackdown on demonstrators demanding Pashinyan’s resignation, saying that the authorities are ready to violate the Armenian constitution and use “disproportionate force” to cling to power.

The authorities indicted last month the exiled mayors of Stepanakert and two other Karabakh towns who signaled support for the protest movement led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan. One of them is in jail while the other two are under house arrest on charges of fraud and forgery denied by them.

Videos posted on social media showed masked officers of a special police squad smashing the iron gates of Karabakh’s permanent representation in Yerevan to enter it and seize the limousine driven by Shahramanyan’s bodyguard.

see RAID, page 3



Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan meets Karabakh Armenians in Yerevan, May 21, 2024

recapture of the region last September.

“For quite some time, the Armenian authorities have been targeting various groups of Artsakh citizens and individuals under the guise of democracy, applying repression and discriminatory treatment against them and using the divisive vocabulary of ‘Armenian vs. Karabakh,’” read a joint statement is-

The statement was prompted by Friday’s special police raid on Karabakh’s permanent representation in Yerevan during which security forces impounded a car used by Samvel Shahramanyan, the exiled president. They broke into the mission’s compound one week after Pashinyan accused unnamed Karabakh leaders of encouraging refugees to par-

Justice Gabrielle Wolohojian Reaches The Top of Her Field

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — Justice Gabrielle Repsimé Wolohojian has sedulously worked many years in the field of law, first as a lawyer and then as a judge, and has reached the top ranks of her profession. Along the way, she achieved a number of “firsts.” This year, she became the first person of Armenian heritage to ever sit on the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) and the first woman of Armenian heritage to ever sit on any US state supreme court. Her Armenian heritage has played an important role in her life and has inspired her in various ways.



Massachusetts Appeals Court and the Supreme Judicial Court

Until this year, Wolohojian served on the Massachusetts Appeals Court, to which she was appointed in 2007. The jurisdiction of state courts is broad. In fact, Wolohojian said, “The jurisdiction of state courts is unlimited. I will tell you that when I was on the Appeals Court, I literally sat on cases which involved murders, and at the same time, on the opposite end of the spectrum, such as, and this is extreme — it did not happen often — an appeal from a water bill.”

see WOLOHOJIAN, page 12

French Arms Sale To Armenia Fuels Tension in Caucasus

By Ani Avetisyan

A Caesar self-propelled howitzer. France announced the sale of 36 such howitzers to Armenia, which immediately sparked vitriolic responses from Azerbaijan and Russia. (Photo: U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mikki L. Sprenkle)

A cold conflict is escalating between France and Azerbaijan. And the latest twist in the tit-for-tat spat is heightening the prospect of renewed conflict in the Caucasus.

On June 18, French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu announced the sale of 36 Caesar self-propelled howitzers to Armenia. The move immediately sparked vitriolic responses from Azerbaijan and Russia. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry called the sale as a “provocative” step that could revive the region as a “hotbed of war.”

see TENSIONS, page 6

JERUSALEM

Churches in Jerusalem Oppose Municipal Tax Decision

Page 5



LOS ANGELES

Khachkar Blessed at Tekeyan Cultural Association Beshgeturian Center

Page 8



MIRROR-SPECTATOR SUMMER VACATION

WATERTOWN — The current issue of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, dated June 29, will be the last before our traditional two-week break.

The first issue back will be dated July 20.



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

US Supports Dialogue Between Armenia, Azerbaijan – State Dept.

WASHINGTON — The US continues efforts to resolve the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on June 24.

“We continue to support engagement between Azerbaijan and Armenia and continue to work to try to resolve that dispute,” he said at a press briefing, referring to the recent phone call between Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

A US statement on the phone call said that Blinken “recognized ongoing progress by Armenia and Azerbaijan toward a peace agreement and underscored the significance of concluding an agreement without delay.”

Economist Says Armenia Can Serve as Economic Bridge

YEREVAN (Panorama) — Armenia can become a unique bridge between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), economist Suren Parsyan claimed on June 25.

“For the first time in its history, Armenia has a good chance to serve as a bridge between different economic unions, countries and integration systems,” he said.

Highlighting the key role of the Russian market for Armenia’s economy, Parsyan also insisted on the country’s access to the European and U.S. markets to boost its economy.

“The Russian market is important for us and accounts for a significant share of Armenia’s overall exports, but the EU, US and other Western markets serve as vital alternatives for economic development,” he stated.

Parliament Debates EU Membership

YEREVAN (Caucasus Watch) — Armenia’s EU membership reappeared on the political agenda recently, driven by several pro-Western groups loyal to PM Nikol Pashinyan. These groups urged the government to hold a referendum within the next three months to gauge public support for a membership bid.

Following this development, the Armenian parliament, controlled by the ruling party, promptly organized hearings on the proposal for an EU membership referendum on June 21. During the six-hour session chaired by Arman Yeghoyan, the chairman of the Armenian Parliament committee on European integration, commented cautiously on the proposed referendum. He clarified that such a vote could only take place after Yerevan decides to apply for EU candidate status and receives positive feedback from Brussels.

Opposition politician Eduard Sharmazanov criticized the leadership’s push for a referendum.

“Under the pretext of Armenia’s Europeanisation, they will try to meet Aliyev’s demands,” Sharmazanov, a senior member of the Republican Party of Armenia, wrote on social media.

Pashinyan Orders Drafting of New Constitution

By Gayane Saribekian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has ordered an ad hoc body set up by him to start drafting a new Armenian constitution amid Azerbaijan’s continuing demands for such a legislative change.

The Council on Constitutional Reforms was formed in 2022 with the aim of proposing amendments to Armenia’s current constitution. An executive order signed by Pashinyan and publicized on May 24 changed the council’s mandate, saying that it must draft a “new constitution” from scratch before January 2027.

Artur Sakunts, a civic activist sitting on the council, said on June 19 that the body has not yet met to discuss its new mission. He said he does not know whether Pashinyan’s order means that he will have to “throw away” the results of his work done since 2022.

“There are lots of issues that are not clear to us,” Sakunts told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

Pashinyan declared in January that Armenia needs a new constitution reflecting the “new geopolitical environment”

in the region. He later denied critics’ claims that he wants to scrap the country’s current constitution at the behest of Baku. Still, Pashinyan said that peace with Azerbaijan will be impossible as long as its preamble refers to Armenia’s 1990 declaration of independence.

The declaration in turn cites a 1989 unification act adopted by the legislative bodies of Soviet Armenia and the then Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly said since January that this constitutional reference amounts to territorial claims to Azerbaijan and must be removed before Baku can sign a peace treaty with Yerevan. The only legal way to do that is to enact a new constitution through a referendum.

On June 7, the Armenian Foreign Ministry issued a statement rejecting Aliyev’s demands as a “blatant interference in the internal affairs of our country” and accusing him of “torpedoing the peace process.” The ministry also said one of the “agreed provisions” of a draft peace treaty discussed by Baku and Yerevan stipulates that the parties cannot use their domestic legislation for not complying



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

with the document.

Aliyev renewed his demands in late April after forcing Pashinyan’s administration to agree to hand over four disputed border areas to Azerbaijan. Armenian opposition leaders have strongly condemned Pashinyan for bowing to the Azerbaijani pressure, saying that the land transfer will only encourage Baku to demand more Armenian concessions.

Armenian Constitutional Reforms Council ‘Unaware’ Of Decree to Draft New Constitution

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Several members of Armenia’s Council for Constitutional Reforms have said they were not informed that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had issued a decree last month to draft a new constitution by December 2026.

RFE/RL [reported](#) on June 19 that some of the council’s members only learned of Pashinyan’s [decree](#) recently, despite it having been issued on May 24.

The Constitutional Reforms Council is responsible for drafting constitutional amendments.

In a later [decision](#), Pashinyan apparently amended the council’s tasks and responsibilities, replacing their task to “draft amendments to the constitution” with “drafting a new constitution.”

Pashinyan [stated](#) in January that Armenia needed a new constitution, explaining that the constitution should be adopted by a fair referendum. He said the country needed a constitution that would make it “more competitive and more viable in the new geopolitical and regional conditions”.

Observers at the time attributed Pashinyan’s announcement to pressure from Azerbaijan.

In early June, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev stated that it would be “simply impossible” to reach a peace deal if the Armenian constitution “remains unchanged”, arguing that it laid claims to territories in Azerbaijan and Turkey.

The Armenian constitution references the Armenian Declaration of Independence, which 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.”

Artur Sakunts, the head of the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly-Vanadzor and a civil society representative on the council, told RFE/RL that he only learned of the decision on June 19.

He said that the council had already sent a preliminary version of the concept to the

government, and that it was unclear whether they would have to start their work on an entirely new constitution.

Sakunts said that he opposed the removal of any references to the Declaration of Independence.

Another civil society representative in the council, Daniel Ioannisyan of the Union of Informed Citizens, argued that the council could only vote on the declaration’s removal from the constitution following public discussions on the matter.

Commenting on Aliyev’s remarks about Armenia’s constitution, Ioannisyan [said](#) that it should only be discussed with the citizens of Armenia.

“And one more thing: there is a need to show the world that the constitution of Azerbaijan also contains significant territorial claims against Armenia,” he added.

The authorities in Yerevan have consistently denied that amendments to the constitution were part of the peace negotiations

with Azerbaijan.

Prior to Aliyev’s latest remarks on the constitution, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan [reiterated](#) that the constitution was not part of the negotiations, despite both countries noting ‘significant problems and obstacles’ to peace in each other’s constitutions.

On June 20, Mirzoyan [said](#) that Armenia had sent “very constructive” peace treaty drafts to Azerbaijan, stressing his country’s willingness to finalize the agreement during the upcoming month.

“Unfortunately, we have not been hearing from the Azerbaijani side so far. Moreover, Azerbaijan is bringing new issues which at least raise questions about their genuineness towards the final goal of establishing peace in our neighborhood and broader region,” he said.

(This article originally appeared on the website OC-Media on June 20.)

Armenian Airlines Still Banned From EU Airspace

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Four years after a ban imposed by the European Union, airlines registered in Armenia are still not allowed to fly to EU member states.

The EU’s executive body, the European Commission, blacklisted them in June 2020 after assessing the country’s “safety oversight capabilities.” The EU Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) recommended the measure.

The Armenian government pledged at the time to address the EASA concerns. Senior officials from its Civil Aviation Committee expressed confidence that the ban would be lifted by the end of 2022.

In a statement, the EASA said it provided “technical assistance” to the Civil Aviation Committee in 2022-2023 and continues to advise the government agency on how to improve inspections of airline safety standards. It gave no time frames for the possible lifting of the ban.

The deputy head of the committee, Stepan Payaslyan, also could not say when Armenia will be removed from the blacklist. Yerevan

has made “big progress” towards meeting the EU standards for aviation safety but still lacks certified inspectors, he said.

Vaner Harutiunyan, the co-founder of passenger rights group Passenger.am, cast doubt on the EU’s official rationale.

“A legitimate question arises. Had Armenia previously enforced stronger safety measures towards Armenian airlines than it does now?” he said.

“The EU blacklist does not include an authoritarian, undemocratic country like Azerbaijan or Pakistan, which is considered a dangerous country by international organizations. So there are also political and economic factors at play here. We need to openly talk about them. I’m sure there are technical problems, but they are not the kind of problems that Armenia could not overcome,” added Harutiunyan.

Payaslyan denied any political or economic motives behind the EU ban. “These are [aviation safety] problems accumulated over the years,” said the government official.



ARMENIA

Armenian Police Raid Karabakh Leaders' Offices

RAID, from page 1

They did not produce a court warrant, Shahramanyan's lawyer, Roman Yeritsyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. He called the police actions illegal and politically motivated.

Armenia's Investigative Committee denied the claims. A spokesman for the law-enforcement agency said the car was impounded as part of a continuing criminal investigation into the bodyguard and driver, Ashot Danielyan.

In February this year, Danielyan was arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking and released without charge three days later. According to Yeritsyan, the car was already impounded, searched and returned to him at that time.

Investigators tried to seize it again on June 7. They gave up after a four-hour argument with Shahramanyan aides who insisted that they cannot do that without court permission. Yeritsyan said the compound was raided again on Friday as the Karabakh president was about to visit the Investigative Committee to be questioned as a witness in the case.

On June 14, Pashinyan accused unnamed Karabakh leaders of encouraging Karabakh Armenian refugees to participate in anti-government protests in Yerevan and threatened them with serious consequences. The threats came the day after Shahramanyan pushed back against Pashinyan's allegations that Karabakh forces did not fight back last September's Azerbaijani offensive because the author-

ities in Stepanakert as well as the Armenian opposition wanted the region's population to flee to Armenia to topple him.

At least 198 soldiers and 25 civilian residents of Karabakh were killed during the 24-hour hostilities. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry acknowledged around 200 combat deaths among its military personnel involved in the operation. Baku stopped the operation and allowed the region's entire population to flee to Armenia after Shahramanyan's administration agreed to disband the Karabakh army.

Shahramanyan on June 13 also criticized the Armenian riot police for using "disproportionate force" against the anti-government protesters led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan. What is more, he declared that the Karabakh refugees have a "legal and moral right" to participate in peaceful demonstrations because "they are also citizens of Armenia."

The Armenian authorities indicted last month the exiled mayors of Stepanakert and two other Karabakh towns who signaled support for Galstanyan's protest movement. One of them is in jail while the other two are under house arrest on charges of fraud and forgery denied by them.

Yeritsyan said that the criminal cases are government retribution for Karabakh Armenians' participation in the protests aimed at forcing Pashinyan to resign. "They are trying to tell us to know our place," added the lawyer.



The gates of the Karabakh mission in Yerevan broken during a police raid, June 21, 2024.

Mirzoyan Meets with Lithuanian Leadership

VILNIUS, Lithuania — On June 20, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met with Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, the Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. The Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Seimas and the head of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) delegation also attended the meeting.

Further deepening of the partnership between the two countries, as well as regional issues, were discussed.

"I fondly remember my previous visit to Lithuania as the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. We are united by strong ties, friendship, as well as shared democratic values and the challenges that often arise in advancing them," emphasized the Foreign Minister of Armenia.

The two touched upon the achievements resulting from the implementation of Armenia's ambitious agenda of democratic reforms. Minister Mirzoyan expressed gratitude for the support extended along this path, as well as for bolstering Armenia's sovereignty and resilience.

Issues of cooperation on multilateral platforms were also touched upon.

In the context of enhancing current programs and making significant progress in new directions using the existing tools, Mirzoyan and the Speaker of the Lithuanian Seimas, along with parliamentarians, exchanged views on deepening the Armenia-EU partnership. In the context of expanding people-to-people contacts and actively involving Armenian youth in the EU programs, Minister Mirzoyan also emphasized the significance of launching the visa liberalization dialogue with the EU.



Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met with Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, the Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Mirzoyan presented Armenia's vision for achieving lasting peace in the South Caucasus and the steps being taken to implement it. Minister Mirzoyan briefed on the current status of the normalization process of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including discussions on the draft peace treaty.

On June 20, Mirzoyan met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic

of Lithuania Gabrielius Landsbergis. The tête-à-tête meeting between the Foreign Ministers was held, followed by the meeting in an enlarged format.

Mirzoyan wrote in the guest book of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry, expressing hope that his visit would give a new impetus both to the bilateral relations between Armenia and Lithuania and to cooperation in the EU format.

The meeting of the Ministers was followed by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on Cooperation on European Union Related Matters.

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Lithuania also held a joint press conference.



ARMENIA

Moscow Warns Yerevan over EU Membership Bid

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia will lose tariff-free access to the Russian market and other economic privileges granted by Moscow if it seeks to join the European Union, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk indicated on Tuesday, June 25.

Overchuk issued the warning as he addressed an international expert forum in Moscow just days after the Armenian government revived talk of an EU membership bid amid a continuing deterioration of Russian-Armenian relations.

A senior Armenian pro-government lawmaker, Arman Yeghoyan, said on Friday, June 21, that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his political team are "seriously considering" making such a bid because they believe accession to the EU would benefit the Armenian economy. Yeghoyan spoke as he chaired a parliamentary hearing on the issue initiated by pro-Western fringe groups supporting Pashinyan. They urged his government to hold a referendum on EU membership within the next three months.

"There is a well-known half-joke that Nikol Vovaevich [Pashinyan] made in one of his interviews," the Sputnik news agency quoted Overchuk as saying. "Answering a question about when he would join the EU if he were to choose, Pashinyan joked 'this year.' Discussions are also underway regarding holding a referendum on joining the EU."

"Of course, speaking about Armenia, it is impossible, it would be wrong to turn,



An Armenian truck passes through the Russian-Georgian border crossing at Upper Lars, June 21, 2023.

Union and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) are incompatible things.

"And the benefits that a country receives from proximity to Russia must also be perceived as the price we pay for our security and strategic depth. So the arrival of some extra-regional players there would, of course, have consequences."

"We don't do gifts here," added the Russian vice-premier, who also co-heads a Russian-Armenian intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation together with his Armenian opposite number, Mher Grigoyan.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin likewise warned last week of the economic cost of Armenia's further drift to the West. Pashinyan's government has frozen its membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization under Western pressure, Galuzin claimed, adding that Western powers will also demand the South Caucasus country's withdrawal from the EEU, a Russian-led trade bloc. That would lead to a "loss of the main [export] market for Armenian business," he said.

Last year, Russia accounted for over 35 percent of Armenia's foreign trade, compared with the EU's 13 percent share. It absorbed 40 percent of Armenian exports worth \$8.4 billion.

Armenian exports to Russia have skyrocketed since 2022, with local entrepreneurs taking advantage of Western sanctions against Moscow to re-export Western goods to the Russian market.

These and other cash inflows from Russia have been the main driving force behind a significant increase in Armenia's GDP recorded in 2022 and 2023.

Russia is also Armenia's main supplier of natural gas. The price of Russian gas for the country has long been set well be-

low international market-based levels.

In a nonbinding resolution adopted on March 13, the European Parliament seemed to encourage Yerevan to apply for EU membership. However, none of the bloc's 27 member states have voiced support for such a prospect.



Mikhail Galuzin

so to speak, a blind eye to the fact that today the political vector of this country is leaning more and more towards the West," he went on, according to another Russian news agency, TASS. "You also need to understand that the European

Armenians Unwilling to Fight, Claims Pashinyan

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed over the weekend that most Armenians support his appeasement policy towards Azerbaijan because they want to enjoy their lives, rather than fight and make sacrifices.

Pashinyan said the dominant mood in Armenia is that "we don't want to fight anymore, we don't want to survive, we don't want to suffer, we don't want to be sacrificed, we just want to live."

"And the people's message to their elites and to us as the ruling, governing majority is: 'Can you create conditions for us to just live, just live?'" he told a conference of his Civil Contract party.

This, Pashinyan went on, is the ideology of "real Armenia" which he and his political team are trying to build. Azerbaijan's continuing hostility towards the Armenians is one of the main obstacles on that path, he said, adding that his administration must "manage" this challenge.

"What Azerbaijan says [to Armenia,] if we put it very briefly, is as follows. 'You didn't let me live for 30 years. I won't let you live either, and I will take revenge on you,'" he said.

Pashinyan's remarks were denounced on June 24 by representatives of Armenia's leading opposition groups that blame him for Azerbaijan's victory in the 2020 and subsequent takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh and say that his "treasonous" policy is now creating existential threats to Armenia.

"The concept put forward by him is as follows: 'We must yield to the Turks on all issues to prevent war, but if there is a war... we must hand the country's keys to the Turks or become a Turkish province because we don't want to suffer,'" said Artur Khachatryan of the Hayastan alliance.

"In order to be able to live in your country you must be ready to defend your country's borders against its enemies," Khachatryan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "But he says, 'No, enough with fighting.' He is thereby destroying the idea of statehood."

"So in order to live well, raise children and be happy, you have to renounce your faith, your land and [the memory of] your martyrs," scoffed Hayk Mamijanyan, the parliamentary leader of the opposition Pativ Unem bloc.

He added, Pashinyan wants Armenians to "give up national security" while admitting that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has no intention to make peace.

Pashinyan made his statement following more than month-long anti-government protests in Yerevan sparked by his decision to cede several disputed border areas in the Tavush province to Azerbaijan. The protests led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, head of the Tavush diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, drew tens of thousands of people to the streets of the capital.

Pashinyan defended his unilateral territorial concessions even before the mass rallies, saying that they will prevent an Azerbaijani invasion of Armenia. The Armenian opposition dismissed those claims as scaremongering. Opposition leaders maintain that Pashinyan's appeasement policy will not lead to a lasting peace between the two South Caucasus nations.



Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk



INTERNATIONAL

Churches in Jerusalem Oppose Municipal Tax

JERUSALEM (*Jerusalem Post*) — The heads of various Christian churches in Jerusalem united in opposition to the Jerusalem Municipality's decision to impose municipal taxes (Arnona) on church properties. In a joint statement released on behalf of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches on Sunday, June 23, the leaders expressed deep concern over the municipi-

ties for the disadvantaged. It asserted that civil authorities have historically recognized and respected these contributions.

The heads of churches called upon the Jerusalem Municipality to retract its decision and uphold the historically sanctioned status quo. They emphasized the importance of maintaining Jerusalem's sacred character and protecting the churches' abil-



The Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem

ality's move, which they argued contradicted centuries of historical agreements between the churches and civil authorities.

"We declare that such a measure both undermines the sacred character of Jerusalem and jeopardizes the Church's ability to conduct its ministry in this land on behalf of its communities and the worldwide church," stated the collective heads of churches.

The statement emphasized the significant contributions of Christian churches to Jerusalem, including investments in schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly, and facil-

ity to fulfill their ministries.

The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches who signed the statement included:

- Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate- Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate- Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator, Latin Patriarchate- Fr. Francesco Patton, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land- Archbishop Anba Antonious, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem- Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate- Archbishop

Aba Embakob, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate- Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate- Archbishop Mosa El-Hage, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate- Archbishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East- Bishop Ibrahim Sani Azar, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land- Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate- Msgr.

The churches' collective opposition to the municipal tax underscored their commitment to preserving Jerusalem's religious and social fabric, reflecting concerns shared by the Christian community in the Holy City.

The conflict over municipal taxes on church properties in Jerusalem had been ongoing for several years. In 2018, the Jerusalem Municipality announced plans to collect NIS 650 million in taxes from properties owned by churches that are not used as houses of worship. This decision led to significant backlash from church leaders, who viewed the move as violating longstanding agreements and international obligations guaranteeing their rights and privileges.

The situation escalated when church leaders closed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in protest, a rare and dramatic step highlighting the severity of their opposition. During a peak time for Christian tourism, the closure underscored the potential economic and diplomatic repercussions of the municipality's decision.

In response to the outcry, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu intervened, halting the tax collection efforts and forming a commission led by Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi to find a resolution. This intervention aimed at preserving the status quo and preventing further damage to Israel's relations with the global Christian community.

INTERNATIONAL

Mirzoyan Speaks With Turkish FM

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan had a phone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Hakan Fidan, on June 25

The two discussed issues of continued dialogue between the two countries and referred to regional developments.

The process of normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey and the implementation of the agreements were also touched upon.

Aliyev, Bayramov Complain about Armenia Constitution

YEREVAN (News.am) — Both the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov have started saying that Armenia's constitution is a roadblock to peace.

On June 21, the Azerbaijani news outlet Day.az reported that Aliyev, in a conversation with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, had complained that Armenia's constitution enshrines territorial ambitions towards Azerbaijan.

Aliyev emphasized that the efforts to promote the settlement process and the peaceful agenda on a bilateral basis are ongoing.

Aliyev said that the time has come to officially stop the activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group and its related institutions, in order to completely close the chapter of the conflict, which has become a remnant of the past.

Striking a similar note few days later, Bayramov, at a meeting with Russian Foreign Ministry's special representative for normalization of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations Igor Khovayev, as reported by APA, said, "Claims to Azerbaijan's territorial integrity in the Armenian Constitution" are the main obstacle to the negotiation process.

Azerbaijan's Borders To Remain Closed for Another Three Months

BAKU (JamNews) — Azerbaijan has once again extended the special quarantine measures imposed since March 2020. The special regime is now extended until October 1, 2024. This means that Azerbaijan's land borders will remain closed for another three months.

Although the government had previously justified the extension of the quarantine measures by citing the spread of the coronavirus infection, this argument became less convincing after the World Health Organization declared the end of the pandemic.

In April 2024, during an international forum on "SDG 29 and the Green Vision for Azerbaijan" in Baku, President Ilham Aliyev announced the decision to keep the land borders closed as a security measure.

Armenia Recognizes Palestinian State

PALESTINE, from page 1

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited self-rule in the West Bank under Israeli military occupation, welcomed Yerevan's decision.

"This recognition contributes positively to preserving the two-state solution, which faces systematic challenges, and promotes security, peace, and stability for all parties involved," the Authority's presidency said

in a statement.

Yerevan also drew rare praise from Turkey, with the Foreign Ministry in Ankara hailing the Armenian recognition of Palestine.

"Turkey will continue its efforts for more countries to recognize Palestine," the ministry said in a statement.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol

Pashinyan by phone earlier in the week. They discussed "recent developments of the regional and international agenda," according to the official Armenian readout of the call.

Dozens of mostly Middle Eastern, African and Asian countries have also recognized Palestine as a state. Four European countries — Spain, Ireland, Norway and Slovenia — followed suit late last month and early this.

Armenia voted twice late last year for United Nations General Assembly resolutions demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. It sent 30 tons of food and medicine to the Palestinian enclave in March.

Armenia's relationship with Israel has been uneasy ever since the Jewish state became over a decade ago one of Azerbaijan's main suppliers of weapons and other military hardware. Those supplies continued even during the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia recalled its ambassador to Israel in protest just days after its outbreak in September 2020.

Azerbaijani forces heavily used Israeli-made attack drones and multiple-launch rocket systems throughout the hostilities stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire in November 2020. Visiting Israel in March 2023, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov thanked the Israeli government for that support.

Azerbaijani-Israeli military cooperation appears to have continued unabated since the 2020 war. Nevertheless, Armenia sent a new ambassador to Israel in April 2022.

Photos of Displaced Karabakh Residents Part of Uruguay Refugee Photo Exhibit

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On the occasion of World Refugee Day on June 20, a photo exhibition titled "Hope, Away from Home" opened at Carrasco International Airport in Montevideo. The exhibition also featured photographs of families displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, the Embassy of Armenia in Uruguay said.

According to the source, the event, organized in cooperation with the South American Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Aeropuertos Uruguay, was attended by the Minister of the Interior of Uruguay, Nicolás Martinelli, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Relations, Nicolás Albertoni, and the Chief Executive Officer of Corporación América Airports, Martín Eurnekian.

The Ambassador of Armenia to Uruguay Mariam Gevorgyan, several other foreign ambassadors and officials also attended the event.



The dignitaries, including Ambassador Mariam Gevorgyan, third from right, at the Montevideo airport



INTERNATIONAL

Revisiting Yazidi Genocide in Sinjar 10 Years On

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

NEW YORK — On June 12, the Armenia-based Institute for Security Analysis sponsored an online discussion about the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the genocide inflicted upon the Yazidi (Yezidi) population in Sinjar, Iraq, by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Daesh, where many were killed and thousands of women and children were kidnapped and enslaved.

(The abbreviation for Islamic State [ISIS] and ISIL are used interchangeably. In addition, the spellings Yazidi and Yezidi are both used.)

The discussants were Pari Ibrahim, executive director, Free Yazidi Foundation (FYF); Murad Ismael, president of Sinjar Academy and Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, executive director of the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention. Khatchig Mouradian, a lecturer at Columbia University, served as moderator.

The genocide was launched on August 3, 2014, and by August 8, the US and UK responded with airstrikes on ISIL in northern Iraq.

Around 10,000 Yazidis were killed and 6,800 women and children were kidnapped by ISIL.

A theme frequently touched upon in the discussion was that the Yazidi population has not just experienced one genocide, but that throughout its existence, it has under-



Pari Ibrahim

gone many.

Ibrahim established FYF in August 2014 to support Yezidi survivors of the ISIS-perpetrated genocide. The foundation's core values include advocating for women's rights, justice for gender-based and sexual violence, and the rights of ethno-religious minorities. Pari, from Iraq, advocates for equal opportunities and rights for Yezidis and promotes women's empowerment and gender equality in Iraq. She holds a law

degree from the University of Amsterdam.

Ibrahim praised the Yazidi community for being "very strong in their advocacy," leading to the message of desperation being amplified worldwide as "our people were stranded on Mount Sinjar."

She, however, said there has been no justice for the genocide inflicted on the Yazidis in Iraq, Syria or anywhere else.

The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), was established in 2017; in 2021 it presented its findings in a video. It has since ended its mission.

"All this information has been gathered,



Murad Ismael

What will happen to it," Ibrahim asked.

Continued Ibrahim, "How are you going to make sure we don't see a lot of genocide cases? You want to see perpetrators behind bars."

Making matters worse, she said, Yazidis don't have a voice in Iraq or Syria. "It is very important to be politically empowered," she said.

The effects of the genocide continue, she added. "Our youth have lost almost 10 years of their lives," Ibrahim said, "losing the chance for continuing their education or working." One cause she said, is that the Iraqi government is closing schools in camps where the Yazidis live.

The next speaker, Ismael, co-founded the Sinjar Crisis Management Team and was part of a delegation that secured US intervention. Murad co-founded the Yazda organization and the Nadia Initiative, named for one of the most famous advocates for Yazidis, Nadia Murad, and now serves as president of Sinjar Academy, an educational initiative.

Ismael noted that the painful Yazidi history is one they share with the Armenians. He added that while the events of 10 years ago were unimaginably painful, it was no-

where nearly as big in terms of scope as what the ISIS perpetrators had wanted. He said that "ISIS wanted to enslave half a million people but they took 10,000."

Gaining recognition for the Yazidi genocide took a lot of effort. Once the UK, Germany and the Netherlands recognized it, so did the US.

"I consider these big successes," he said, adding that in addition, 4,500 enslaved people were rescued.

There is much to rue, however, with 300 villages lost in Turkey and Syria, and 80,000 Yazidis leaving Syria, leading to the "termination of Yazidi existence in Syria," Ismael said.



Elisa von Joeden-Forgey

"The goal of ISIS was to take our homeland," he said.

The Yazidi community is much more resilient today, he said, dealing with a new way of life, away from their traditional lands. "We are new to this world. We are a community in the mountains."

The persecution of the people goes back hundreds of years, he noted, adding that in Yazidi history, they learn there have been 24 genocides committed against them.

What led to the Sinjar attack was the "external versus internal triangle between actors" Iraq, Syria and Turkey. The Sinjar events, he said, comprise "at least 1 million individual crimes."

If things continue as they do now, there will be no Yazidis left in Iraq either. "We need to protect the [Sinjar] region. We want Sinjar to become a province in the future," Ismael said, noting that Turkey and Iran are trying to get a foothold there.

Von Joeden-Forgey said that the Yazidi genocide marked the "frontline of the international community to properly respond before, during and after" to a genocide. "ISIS was very open about how they view the Yazidis."

Geopolitical interests, she said, can affect

ancient peoples living there. When such crimes happen, members of the community need to ask, "who is profiting from this?"

There is a failure by the international community, she said, to "consider the fate of small communities. We don't have sensitive early warning system."

She had visited Sinjar in 2016 and 2017 and noted that many journalists preferred to focus only on the prurient details of the horrors in Sinjar, and that the governments and international authorities involved with the massacre oversight did not exactly come across well. One example she brought was that the mass graves there were not legally secured, and therefore a lot of evidence was lost.

Von Joeden-Forgey is a distinguished expert in genocide studies, gender issues, and the history of colonialism. She has held prestigious positions as the Endowed Chair in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College and as the Dr. Marsha Raticoff Grossman Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Stockton University.

During the question-and-answer portion of the program, Ismael in particular dropped his guard and expressed his deep anger at the United Nations. "To me, the UN was the place to go for things. Now I know it's an NGO looking for funding. They wanted to use us to get funding. They never asked how to help the people that were rescued. There is no quick reaction system. You have to do the job yourself. Do not expect anyone to protect you."

He also referred to Karabakh (Artsakh), where, he said to the many Armenian viewers, "your people were removed from your land. The world is a nasty place."

Ibrahim, who is based in the Netherland, added, "It is very clear to me this was a genocide. ISIS wanted to eradicate us because of who we are."

It was only when President Obama allowed the start of airstrikes against ISIS that minds in Europe were changed regarding the seriousness of the crimes, she said.

She spoke about the women and children who are still in captivity, often used as sexual slaves. "I went to Syria last year. The world has failed the women and children that are in captivity. We did not get the funding and support we needed. Little girls, 8 or 9 years old, were sold as sex slaves."

Ismael said populations have to make themselves more valuable so that they can't be wiped out. He said his "heart and soul" was with the people of Gaza.

French Arms Sale to Armenia Fuels Tension in Caucasus

TENSIONS, from page 1

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova echoed the Azerbaijani narrative, saying that "Paris is provoking another round of armed confrontation in the South Caucasus, and they are doing it in different ways."

The Armenian Foreign Ministry brushed off the criticism, issuing a statement asserting that "it is the sovereign right of every country to have a combat-ready army equipped with modern military hardware."

In recent days, Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry has reported several instances in which Armenian forces allegedly fired on Azerbaijani positions along the two countries' border. Yerevan has denied allegations of initiating any gunfire exchange. At the same time, reports appearing in state-connected media in Azerbaijan have

hinted at the rising potential of renewed conflict; one commentary published June 22 by the official APA news agency raised the possibility of a "Third Karabakh War."

"The Armenian leadership, which did not draw any conclusions from its successive defeats in the military and diplomatic fields, has begun to exhibit a non-constructive approach," the APA commentary stated. It went on to single out France as provoking confrontation in the Caucasus.

"In the 21st century, France, which still has the status of a shameful neo-colonial state, is trying to play the provocateur role it plays on a global scale, in the processes in the South Caucasus region," according to APA.

As the APA statement highlights, Azerbaijan's sharp response is connected to Baku's deep antipathy for France, root-

ed in Paris' strong support for Armenia throughout the three-decade struggle for control of Nagorno-Karabakh, a conflict that ended late last year with Azerbaijan's decisive defeat of Armenian forces and the cleansing of Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population.

The reaction is also linked to a chain of events since the start of 2024, in which France and Azerbaijan have taken turns antagonizing each other. In March, for example, French president Emmanuel Macron welcomed Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Paris, offering unambiguous political backing for Armenia's territorial integrity and its efforts to improve relations with the West.

Resenting what it perceived as further meddling in the Karabakh peace process, Azerbaijan reportedly helped stir up inde-

pendence sentiment that led to violent protests in May in the French Pacific colony of New Caledonia. Baku denied French allegations of involvement, but Azerbaijani media outlets did start assailing France's "neo-colonial" behavior.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev appeared to take a backhanded swipe at France earlier in June when he raised the possibility of Azerbaijan creating a development fund to help small island nations.

The howitzer sale can be seen as France clapping back at Baku. But a feud that has been up to this point limited mainly to verbal sniping now has reached a point where, if not managed well, it could prompt actual bullets to start flying again in the Caucasus.

(This article originally appeared on Eurasianet.org on June 24.)



Community News

A New Cross Will Soon Grace St. Vartan Cathedral

NEW YORK — New York's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral is approaching an exciting milestone in its ongoing restoration process.

The magnificent, 56-year-old cathedral of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America has been undergoing a major renovation throughout 2024, to repair and restore the structure of the cathedral. Top architects and artisans are undertaking the project, whose current first phase is addressing the exterior, while the cathedral interior will be the focus of subsequent phases.

Sunday, June 30, will be a turning point in the renovation. On that day, following badarak, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese, will bless a new cross for the cathedral dome.



The new cross that will soon sit atop St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, in its manufacturing workshop (at left), alongside its future "home" (at right), currently enshrouded with scaffolding as it undergoes a major restoration of its physical structure.

The new cross will grace St. Vartan Cathedral for the next era of its existence. Designed in a beautiful, stately Armenian fashion, it will shine proudly atop St. Vartan Cathedral—affirming our undying faith to the Heavens, and our distinctive Armenian Christian identity to the surrounding world.

The public is cordially invited to join in this event and the reception that follows—and to bear witness to the blessing of the cathedral's new cross.

The cross will be raised to the summit of the cathedral during the night hours of June 30, in accordance with New York City construction ordinances. Once installed, it will be gilded to match the cathedral dome.

St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral is located at 630 Second Avenue (at 34th Street), in New York City. Learn about the restoration — and contribute to the ongoing project—by visiting the website StVartan.org.



Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan taking part in the ceremony

Seven New Priests Ordained By Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan

NEW YORK — On Sunday, June 16, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan was blessed to ordain seven new priests to serve the Armenian Church. The Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America did so while he was visiting Armenia to attend the Supreme Spiritual Council meeting at Holy Echmiadzin.

The ordination service took place at St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral in Yerevan. Each of the seven young men who knelt before the altar embodied a unique calling that God had planted in their hearts. These seven represent the first priests to be ordained by the hand of our Primate.

The day was especially meaningful to Parsamyan as it coincided with Father's Day. "This day has now taken on a new meaning for me," he reflected during the ceremony, "as I have become the spiritual father to these seven new priests, consecrating them and dedicating them to the Lord. As I laid my hands on each candidate, I felt a father's profound sense of responsibility and joy."

"This day also reminds me of the ultimate Father," he went on: "our Heavenly Father who loves us unconditionally and calls us to follow Him. He is our guide, our protector, and our source of strength. As we honor our earthly fathers today, let us also give thanks to God for His boundless love and grace."

The bishop expressed gratitude to the Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II, for giving him the opportunity to serve in the sacred role of ordaining new clergy to serve the church.

Of the new priests, the Primate said: "May they be blessed in their ministry, and may they always feel the presence of God guiding their steps. As they embark on this journey, let us keep them in our prayers, asking the Lord to fill them with His wisdom and love, so they may faithfully shepherd their flocks."

Among the newly-ordained clergy, five are married priests and two will serve in the celibate order.



Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan ordained seven new priests to serve the Armenian Church. The ceremony in Yerevan's St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral took place June 16, 2024.



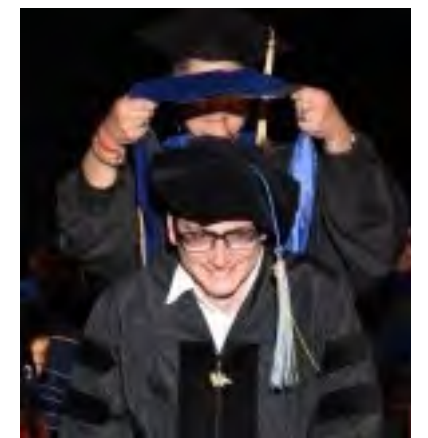
New priests and Bishop Parsamyan with Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II

Bedros Torosian Becomes UC Irvine First-Ever Armenian Studies PhD

IRVINE, Calif. — On June 15, the rather new eight-year-old University of California, Irvine's Armenian Studies graduated its first PhD, Bedros Torosian.

UCI Armenian Studies was first established in 2015 through the passion, guidance, and years of labor of Sylvie Tertzakian who galvanized the Armenian community to support the establishment of the program.

Prof. Touraj Daryaei, Director of the Jordan Center for Persian Studies, and a community group helped support Armenian history courses and programming until the endowment



Dr. Bedros Torosian during his hooding ceremony

of a lecture series and a chair in 2015 thanks to the generosity and vision of a few donors, especially Vahe and Armine Meghrouni and the Meghrouni family.

In 2016, Prof. Houri Berberian became the first Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies. Her appointment was renewed in 2021. Dr. Torosian joined UCI Armenian Studies and the History Department's Graduate Program in Fall 2019 to work under her mentorship.

A native of Lebanon who was introduced to the program by one of the Center's longtime supporters, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry Ara Apkarian, Torosian is a remarkable scholar whose dissertation, "Whiteness Across Waters: Domesticating Euro-American Racialisms and Masculinities in the Service of Ottoman Imperial and Communal Subalternities," focuses on Armenian and Arab diasporic communities in the United States and makes significant contributions to multiple fields in Armenian, Ottoman, and Middle East history as well as diaspora, migration, race, and gender studies.

For 2024-2026, Torosian was awarded the Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellowship in Armenian Studies at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and UC Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship.

After careful consideration, he elected to join UC Davis's History Department in Fall 2024 as the UC Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow, where he will revise his dissertation into a book manuscript.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Khachkar Blessed at Tekeyan Cultural Association Beshgeturian Center

ALTADENA, Calif. — Saturday, June 22, was a milestone day for the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Metro Los Angeles Chapter, with the blessing of a stone cross (*khachkar*) from Armenia at the Tekeyan Cultural Association Beshgeturian Center.

The program began with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Pasadena-Glendale and Los Angeles San Fernando Valley Scouts leading the United States and Armenian national anthems.

Immediately following, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, blessed the *khachkar*, accompanied by Very Rev. Fr. Eremia Abgaryan, Very Rev. Anania Tsaturyan, Rev. Fr. Moushegh Tashjian, Rev. Fr. Vazken Movsessian and Dn. Armen Jesralyan.

Mihran Toumajan of the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter and Assistant Secretary of the Central Board of the TCA, welcomed the audience and noted that the *khachkar* was the work of Varazdat Hambarzumyan, the preeminent *khachkar* sculptor in Armenia. In 2010, Hambarzumyan was awarded a Gold Medal from the Ministry of Culture of Armenia, which is the highest honor awarded by the ministry for contributions to Armenian culture. Unquestionably, the *khachkar* has already become a landmark to Armenians and non-Armenians — a highly visible symbol of the Armenian identity and faith — on the Altadena and Pasadena border.

Toumajan noted that the *khachkar* was donated by Dean Shahinian, Esq. of Washington, DC, an ardent supporter of the Armenian Church, culture and religious architecture. He expressed gratitude and appreciation for Shahinian's donation to the TCA Beshgeturian Center and for his continued support of the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter. Toumajan thanked the Central Board of the TCA of the United States and Canada, as well as those who contributed towards the installation of the *khachkar*. He stated that although Shahinian had been unable to attend the *khachkar* blessing, he had expressed that “the way that our faith has shaped our art” had motivated him to donate the *khachkar* and added “we have a rich culture.” His goal was for the *khachkar* to “educate and inspire those who see it.”

In recognition of Shahinian's donation, the *khachkar* was dedicated in memory of his maternal grandfather, Rev. Vahan (Manoug) Jelalian, who was born in Palu in



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian blessing the khachkar

1891. Jelalian had been a student at Brown University in Providence, RI, when he joined the Armenian Legion as a volunteer soldier with the goal of fighting the Turks and liberating Cilicia. After the evacuation of Cilicia, he taught at the Melkonian Educational Institute in Cyprus. In 1936, he was ordained a priest in Cyprus and returned to the United States to serve as a pastor of Armenian Apostolic Churches in Detroit, Providence and Paterson, NJ.

Remarks were made by Dr. Karen Israyelyan, Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles. He was accompanied by his wife, Anna Israyelyan, and Nazeli Hambarzumyan, Counselor of the Consulate General of Armenia.

In his remarks, Dr. Israyelyan saluted the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter in realizing such a critical cultural undertaking. He emphasized that it was especially



Keynote speaker Assistant Professor Ani Shahinian of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New York

important for young generations of Armenians to feel inspired by the creative symbolism of *khachkars*, which are revered across the Republic of Armenia as symbols of faith, fortitude and resilience.

Keynote speaker Dr. Ani Shahinian, assistant professor of the Grace and Paul Shahinian Lectureship in Armenian Christian Art and Culture at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in Armonk, NY, noted Shahinian's unwavering commitment to Armenian culture and congratulated the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter. Dr. Shahinian captivated the audience with her intimate knowledge of the history of *khachkars* dating back to the 9th century. She also shed light on the “tuff” rock, formed by hardened volcanic ash, which is abundant in the Armenian Highlands and prevalent in the construction of *khachkars*, churches, monasteries and contemporary structures across Armenia. She noted some of the interesting motifs of the newly blessed *khachkar*.

Vahan Tekeyan's words, “The Armenian Church is the birthplace of my soul,” were selected by the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter and inscribed on the *khachkar*. The *khachkar* features a traditional Armenian cross, a motif of Khor Virab with Mount Ararat in the background, as well as angels, pomegranates, birds, grapes and grape vines throughout. The seventh letter of the Armenian alphabet թ is also featured with a unique wheat design, in addition to the Armenian symbol for eternity. Surrounding the cross are the abbreviations for Lord, God, Jesus and Christ which are often found on *khachkars* and in manuscripts.

The TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter was pleased to welcome California Superior Court Judge Michael Amerian, who represented the Triple X Fraternity, to the blessing. In addition, the following Armenian organizations had representatives in attendance: Armenian Democratic *continued on next page*



TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter member Mhare Mouradian, Esq., at left, with welterweight boxer Gor Yeritsyan



TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter Treasurer Shahnour Hovsepian and heavyweight boxer Gurgun Hovhannissyan



Guest of honor Dr. Minas Kojayan, center, with former students Talene Hachikian and Shahnour Hovsepian of the TCA Metro Los Angeles



TCA Metro Los Angeles Committee member Hasmig Karayan and guest of honor Vartan Torosyan of Toro Boxing Promotions with a historic photo of 1956 Gold Medal Boxer Vladimir Yengibaryan and Catholicos Vasken I at Holy Echmiadzin



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

Liberal (Ramgavar) Party, AGBU Pasadena-Glendale Chapter, AGBU Pasadena-Glendale Sports Committee, Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region, Hamazkayin Armenian Educational & Cultural Society-Pasadena Chapter, Knights of Vartan-Ghevont Lodge in Pasadena, Knights of Vartan-Ardaz Lodge in Los Angeles, Knights of Vartan-Sevan Lodge in the San Fernando Valley, Nor Serount Cultural Association, St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Pasadena, St. Gregory A. & M. Hovsepian School of Pasadena, TCA Beshgeturian Center Maintenance Committee, TCA Los Angeles Chapter, TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter, TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Azad Pem Theatrical Group and the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church.

Toumajan introduced the day's first guest of honor, educator Dr. Minas Kojayan. Toumajan noted that since the inception of the chapter in 2018, Kojayan's support and assistance, including with the *khachkar* project, have been greatly appreciated by the chapter members. Kojayan highlighted the leadership role taken by the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter during last October's 28-member Pasadena-based Armenian coalition's "Sol-



Master of Ceremonies Mihran Toumajan, Secretary, TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter

idarity for Artsakh and POWs, MIAs and Captured Civilians" demonstration at Pasadena City Hall.

Kojayan, who was previously bestowed the St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Medal by Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, noted that today's honor by some of his former students and the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter, was also especially significant and meaningful to him. He expressed his love for all of his students, from Cyprus to Los Angeles to Jerusalem, and the need for the next generation to carry the torch.

Toumajan introduced TCA Metro Los Angeles Chairman Carl Bardakian, a member of the Central Board of the TCA of the United States and Canada, and thanked him for spearheading the *khachkar* project. He referred to Bardakian as a "pioneer" in Armenian basketball for making what was once merely a dream becoming what is now a reality. He explained how Bardakian was the first to arrange for Armenians born in the diaspora to receive passports and citizenship and represent Armenia in FIBA competition worldwide. Starting in 2010, first as a scout for the Armenian women's national basketball team and then as head coach of the Armenian men's national basketball team from 2012-2015 and then continuing as a scout for the U16, U18 and U20 boys and girls basketball teams of Armenia. Toumajan praised Bardakian for being the only four-time gold medalist at the international Pan Armenian Games in Armenia, twice as a member of the Valley AGBU team and once each as head coach of the Los Angeles men's and women's basketball teams.

Bardakian expressed his deepest appreciation and admiration to Dean Shahinian. He recalled how Shahinian jokingly asked if Olympic gold medal Greco Roman wrestler Artur Aleksanyan of Armenia would be attending the *khachkar* blessing. Bardakian said in order not to disappoint Shahinian, although he couldn't arrange for Aleksanyan to attend as he is preparing for the Olympics in France in July, he arranged for future title contenders and two of the top Armenian boxers in the world, heavyweight boxer Gurgen Hovhannisyan and welterweight boxer Gor Yeritsyan, to attend the *khachkar* blessing.

Bardakian thanked Vartan Torosyan of Toro Promotions, Inc., one of the fastest growing boxing promotion companies, for attending. He wished Gurgen Hovhannisyan continued success as he follows in the footsteps of other outstanding athletes born in Gyumri such as Olympic gold medal weightlifter Yuri Vartanyan and Olympic gold medal Greco Roman wrestler Artur Alek-



Representatives of the TCA Metro Los Angeles and AGBU Pasadena-Glendale Chapters

sanyan. Bardakian wished Yeritsyan good luck on his next match on July 26 at The Commerce Casino & Hotel in Commerce, CA and on his recent marriage to Alexandra Kamaian.

Earlier in the program, Torosyan, Hovhannisyan and Yeritsyan were recognized as guests of honor and each were presented with a historic photo of Vladimir Yengibaryan with Catholicos Vasken I at Holy Echinadzin in the late 1950s. The gifts were presented by Shahnour Hovsepian, Talene Hachikian, Hasmig Karayan and Mhare Mouradian, Board Members of the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter.

Yengibaryan, a gold medalist in boxing at the Olympics in 1956, would often visit Catholicos Vasken I prior to his boxing matches in order to receive a blessing.

With big smiles, Torosyan, Hovhannisyan, Yeritsyan and Consul General Israyelyan agreed to Bardakian's request for them to meet the 250-member student body and attend the *khachkar* blessing at the St. Gregory A. & M. Hovsepian School in Pasadena in September. This is the second of a total of five *khachkars* donated by Shahinian.



From left, Anna Israyelyan, Dr. Karen Israyelyan, Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles, Nazeli Hambardzumyan, Counselor of the Consulate General

Bardakian expressed appreciation to the Central Board of the TCA of the United States and Canada for their support of the project. He also acknowledged those who contributed towards the installation of the *khachkar*.

Bardakian thanked Hampig Nazerian of HEC Engineers and Contractors for his professional work and expertise in installing the *khachkar* within a few days of its arrival from Armenia. He also thanked Shant Dergazarian, senior construction inspector of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, for his dedication to St. Gregory Armenian Church, Triple X Fraternity and the Knights of Vartan. Bardakian expressed deep gratitude to the entire TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter Committee for their dedicated work the past six years



From left, welterweight boxer Gor Yeritsyan, TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter Chairman Carl Bardakian and heavyweight Gurgen Hovhannisyan

and on the *khachkar* project. Using humor, Bardakian paraphrased from St. Vartan Mamigonian's speech in the 5th century, as quoted by the historian Yeghishe, by saying that "neither fire nor sword" could prevent the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter from its vision to erect a unique, custom designed *khachkar* from Armenia at the TCA Beshgeturian Center.

The TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter also expresses its deepest thanks and appreciation to Rev. Fr. Norayr Kazazian, a former student of the Vahan Tekeyan School in Lebanon, who was an integral part of the *khachkar* project from its inception. Prior to his appointment in February as pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Charlotte, NC, Kazazian was in Armenia and provided assistance and support. Rev. Abraham Malkhasyan, Pastor, Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs, Bayside, NY, and former Parish Council members Dr. Lynn Cetin and Greg Saraydarian, also provided important insight and information.

The TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter expresses gratitude to Dn. Serop Demirjian of Cleveland, and Aram Arkun, executive director of the TCA of the United States and Canada, for their assistance.

The *khachkar* blessing and program concluded with Archbishop Derderian delivering the benediction and noting his over 40-year friendship with and respect for Dean Shahinian. He also commended the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter for installing the *khachkar* near a visible intersection in the San Gabriel Valley (Allen Avenue and New York Drive), which will catalyze non-Armenians and Armenians to educate themselves about the ancient, rich and unique culture of the Armenian people.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Tekeyan Boston Celebrates Father's Day with Armenian-Style BBQ

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Baikar Building was full of families honoring their fathers on Sunday, June 16, when the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter organized a barbecue luncheon. Master of ceremonies Sarkis Gavlakian smoothly ran the event, and as a poet, even recited several of his own poems in Armenian for the occasion.

This time, a team of ladies in the kitchen worked together with men preparing traditional Armenian *khorovadz* outside on grills, which was accompanied with a grilled mixed vegetable salad and rice pilaf. Fresh *lavash* bread was donated by Arman and Armine Manoukian of House of Lavash in Belmont.

Tekeyan Boston Chapter executive members Sossy Yogurtian and Rita Balyozian made the raffle a fun activity with a variety of prizes. Some of the younger people in the audience helped by pulling up the winning tickets. The Tekeyan Boston chapter thanks raffle donors Harry Gigian Co. Jewelers of Boston, Saro and Hilda Hartounian of New Jersey, Dinno Health (owner of Theatre Pharmacy in Lexington, Winchester Drug, West Concord Pharmacy, Acton and Keyes Drug in Newton), Robert's Salon of Belmont, and Dr. Knarik and Aram Arkun.



The Tekeyan ladies kitchen team: from left, Sossy Yogurtian, Rita Balyozian, Maral Der Torossian and Knarik Arkun (photo Aram Arkun)

TCA Boston also gratefully acknowledges the donation by Saro and Hilda Hartounian of a portable speaker box for indoor and outdoor events.

TCA Boston is preparing a full fall schedule of cultural and social events. Look to its Facebook page for more information soon.



Sarkis Gavlakian cuts the Father's Day cake (photo Aram Arkun)



The *khorovadz* team working outside: from left, Hrayr Israyelyan, Gegham Sedrakyan, and Sarkis Gavlakian (photo Aram Arkun)



Rita Balyozian reads one of the raffle ticket numbers (photo Aram Arkun)



Children helping conduct the raffle process (photo Sossy Yogurtian)

BOOK PRESENTATION
PROF. HRANUSH HAKOBYAN

"HOMELAND - DIASPORA PARTNERSHIP 10 YEARS' JOURNEY (2008-2018)"

IN THREE VOLUMES

MODERATOR:
ROUZAN KARABAKHTSIAN
PROF. OF PATHOLOGY, MD, PhD

PRESENTERS:
HERAND MARKARIAN, PhD
WRITER, PUBLIC SPEAKER, CHAIRMAN OF "HAMAZKAYIN OF NEW YORK"
HAGOP VARTIVARIAN
EDITOR IN CHIEF, "BAIKAR" WEEKLY
ZAVEN KHANJIAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARMENIAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

CONCERT SECTION
CLOSING REMARKS:
HRANUSH HAKOBYAN

NEW YORK CITY

PLEASE JOIN US:

- St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral Hall
- 630 Second Avenue
- Sunday, July 7, 2024, @1pm



COMMUNITY NEWS

Teen with CPR Training Gives Dad a Little More Time with His Family

LOWELL (*Lowell Sun*) — On the evening of February 22, Mark Greenwood was tired. He said goodbye to his oldest daughter, Veronica, and headed up to bed in his Centralville home.

A short time later, his wife, Suzana, went to check on him and found him unresponsive. He was not breathing. His heart had stopped.

“I started screaming and the kids (13-year-old Nathaniel, 11-year-old Zachary, and 9-year-old Isabella) all ran into the room,” recalled Suzana. “I called 911 and the dispatcher asked if anyone could do CPR. I looked at Nate, he looked at me, and he just sprang into action. He did it until the paramedics arrived and they were able to

restore his heartbeat before they left.”

A week prior, their son, Nate, an eighth-grader at the Pyne Arts Magnet School, had been certified in CPR and First Aid at school through a program taught by Armen Jeknavorian, a paramedic and founder/owner of Emergency Medical Educators.

It was Mark Greenwood who pushed his son, Nate, a quiet kid whose dream is to become a US Air Force pilot, to take the class, not because he ever thought he would use it on him, but because it is an important skill to have. There were nine slots available. Nate was the ninth kid to sign up. Mark himself went through CERT (Community Emergency Response Training) through

the city of Lowell in 2014 because he felt it was important to be prepared if you are going to be part of a community.

“Whether or not Nate wanted to take it, I don’t know, but he did it for dad,” Suzana said. “And he did a great job that night. I watched him. It was flawless, the compressions were just amazing. I freeze and I can’t handle that kind of stuff.”

On May 29, Nate Greenwood was honored at school in a ceremony attended by Superintendent of Schools Liam Skinner, Interim Chief Schools Officer Wendy Crocker-Roberge, Suzana, and several other members of Nate’s family, where Jeknavorian presented him with a Heartsaver Hero certificate from the American Heart Association and challenge coins to honor his courageous act from Emergency Medical Educators and Cataldo Ambulance.

“As a Pyne Arts family, I think it is important to share this story of bravery, courage, and heroism,” said Principal Lori Lang. “If it were not for Nate’s heroic and courageous behavior the Greenwood family may have lost Mr. Greenwood that night. The gift of time is precious.”

Jeknavorian said he has been working in his field for 30 years, teaching for 15, mostly to adults. Last spring, he met Sullivan Middle School Community Schools Manager Gayl Hurley at a karate class in which their children were enrolled and shortly thereafter he was teaching CPR/First Aid and babysitting classes to middle schoolers, first at the Sullivan, and then as word spread, in several schools across the city.

“The past year has been an amazing year teaching these youngsters First Aid, CPR, and babysitting skills,” he said. “They grasp the concepts very quickly; and they know how to respond.

“Nate, I can’t express how proud I am of you,” he added. “My colleagues all wished they could be here today to personally shake your hand. If you ever need a CPR certification, it’s on the house, for life.”

Mark Greenwood was born with a congenital heart defect and a mutation of the TNNT2 gene that caused cardiomyopathy. He had a pacemaker implanted when he was 27 years old.

Suzana met Mark when he sold her a car, and as she puts it, “we just instantly connected.” He was 32 years old at the time.

Manoogian Manor Earns Prestigious 2024 ‘Best of’ Recognition Award

LIVONIA, Mich. — Manoogian Manor, providing senior living care in Livonia since 1949, has, again in 2024, been honored with recognition by the city of Livonia.

Manoogian Manor has been selected for the 2024 Best of Livonia Award in the Assisted Living Facility category for the second consecutive year.

Hour Magazine also recognized Manoogian Manor by selecting it to be included in their Best of Senior Care listing, as one of the top retirement and assisted living facility providers, in their November 2023 issue. Methodology included consulting with state and government sources, media and press reports and consumer ratings.

These awards typify the culture of caring at Manoogian Manor – designed to enhance the quality of life for residents with its compassion and a sense of purpose and independence. For its residents, the Manor is simply home – in every sense of the word. “We look at it as this is our residents’ home and we are the guests, here to provide whatever they need,” said Robert (Baydarian) Harrison Jr., marketing manager at Manoogian Manor. “Everything we do is focused on improving their lives, shown by how our employees treat our residents – like family members. We feel that the reason we are still here and best at what we do is because of the care we provide.”

Manoogian Manor offers bigger rooms, more space for activities and services and

to make it more like home. Home-cooked meals, including Mediterranean/Armenian style food selections, are prepared by skilled chefs and are served in a spacious, sunny dining room or outside on the veranda. Residents also maintain active lifestyles, with daily activities like crafts, exercise and music, along with Friday night movies, ice cream socials, outside entertainment and field trips.

The sprawling grounds include lush gardens, shady trees and a fountain. The property incorporates walking paths, benches, a courtyard and frequent visits from deer. Residents enjoy American and Armenian live entertainment, outdoor concerts, painting, lecture series and discussion groups. Armenian church services and visitations by local clergy are also provided.

“The Armenian management team and care staff take a personal interest in your loved ones’ comfort and stay as their own family. We believe that each individual is unique, worthy of respect and dignity, and all our residents are entitled to care that reflects the idea that life in all circumstances has value,” Harrison Jr. said. “We wish to create an environment and atmosphere filled with vibrancy, pride, security and a sense of belonging. We want them to feel at home because they are home.”

Manoogian Manor is located at 15775 Middlebelt Road in Livonia, Michigan. For more information or to schedule a visit, log onto www.manoogianmanor.com.



MANOOGIAN MANOR
Armenian Home for the Aged
visit www.manoogianmanor.org



Awarded Best Assisted Living 2 Years In a Row!

**LONG / SHORT TERM CARE • RESPITE CARE • HOSPICE
IN HOUSE PHYSICAL - OCCUPATIONAL - SPEECH THERAPY
ARMENIAN / AMERICAN CUISINE • MULTI - LINGUAL STAFF**

**For More Information or to Request a Tour
Call Director of Marketing & Sales
Robert Harrison Baydaryan
at 734.838.1164**

James “Jack” Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME

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. DEVENY & SONS
Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

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



COMMUNITY NEWS

Justice Gabrielle Wolohojian Reaches the Top of Her Field

WOLOHOJIAN, from page 1

In other words, everything and anything you can imagine that has been tried in a Massachusetts administrative agency or in any of the various trial court departments ultimately comes up through the Appeals Court or the Supreme Judicial Court.

Furthermore, cases coming to the Appeals Court are randomly assigned to judges, who sit in panels of three, based on calendars. Wolohojian said “that seemed very connected to me to the idea of public service — that you don’t get to pick. Some of the cases are not that interesting, some of the cases are terrible, some of the cases are so interesting, but your job is just to make yourself available to the best of your ability to every case. I loved that notion.”

The jurisdictions of the Appeals Court and SJC largely overlap but there is one significant difference between the two. Wolohojian pointed out that the Appeals Court does not have jurisdiction over first-degree murder convictions, as only the SJC can take such cases. There are also some types of appeals, like from bar discipline matters, over which the SJC has exclusive jurisdiction.

While there is the general idea that everyone is entitled to one appeal, Wolohojian said that it would be very inefficient if every case would go to the Appeals Court and then come to the SJC. Instead, in general everyone has the right of appeal to the Appeals Court, but the SJC controls its own docket by deciding what cases to take, with the aforementioned exception of first-degree murder cases.

“Usually,” Wolohojian said, “the SJC takes matters of first impression. In other words, no one has decided the issue yet, so it is better for these to come straight here. Then we can say to all the courts below us that this is what this undecided question is.” This is called direct appellate review, when for the sake of efficiency, to avoid two appeals, a case goes directly to the SJC, skipping the intermediate Appeals Court level.

Though the judges of the SJC decide which cases come to it, all seven work as a team, so it is not an individual decision, and once the case is there, they decide it together. There is, however, an exception, because every month one person works in rotation as an emergency judge, which they call “single justice.” That person takes immediate action because the seven cannot get together, Wolohojian explained.

The Law Beckons

Wolohojian grew up in an academic household. Her father taught in the Department of French at Rutgers University, and she majored in English at the same institution, but she said she already knew she did not really want to become an academic. However, after graduating Rutgers in 1982, she continued with graduate studies at the University of Oxford in English language and literature.

She said, “I always say sort of glibly that I was an accidental PhD...I found a good dissertation topic and it all seemed to go very easily.” After earning her doctorate, she said, “I didn’t want to be bored. I wanted to do something that would be intellectually interesting but that would not be in an ivory tower, that would have pragmatic real-life consequences. I thought law school would combine these two urges.”

She had no idea what she might specialize in, as she had no role models for law in her family. She said she thought she would be most interested in intellectual property and specifically copyright law, but as she did well in law school, she was urged to apply for a clerkship. She got one with Judge Rya Zobel of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

She said that was the first time that she was

really exposed to the law in practice and what happens in court, seeing how lawyers and judges approach their work and present their cases. She said, “This was the first time I saw that, and it galvanized me.”

Judicial Calling

There is no specific track in the US for becoming a judge. After law school and a couple of clerkships, Wolohojian went into private practice. She said she really loved being a lawyer, but “I always had in the back of my mind the example that I had had clerking for terrific judges. It had lit a little fire in me to someday hope to become a judge myself. There is no guarantee in our system about that.”

After around 20 years of private practice, she said she felt the time had come to apply. In Massachusetts, after filling out an application, the candidate is screened by a committee of over 20 lawyers, some retired judges, which winnow the applicant pool and recommend qualified candidates to the governor’s office. Wolohojian was chosen by Gov. Deval Patrick for the Appeals Court.

When asked whether she felt motivated at all to change the world in some way, she responded, “I am not that kind of judge... What really motivates me is finding the right outcome. I don’t want to call it a purely intellectual puzzle because there is a component of fairness in every case.” She said that cases are decided according to principles of law and the actual facts in the case, so that the same principles may lead to different results in cases with different sets of facts. In every case, she said you must ultimately test the results to make sure they are consistent with fairness and justice.

“My job, and this is the best way I have ever figured out how to explain it,” she said, “is to figure out what is right, and then I have the huge privilege that once I have decided what is right, this is actually what is right. It is amazing. But the pressure I feel is that this is a huge responsibility. I never want to make a mistake.”

This approach, she said, is part of the bargain judges have with the greater society, “that, if I and my fellow judges work as hard as we can to always find the right answer, and to do our jobs correctly, apply neutral principles of law, neutrally and fairly, that is how we preserve the rule of law. People respect that. They can tell when you have done your job.”

Wolohojian takes the bargain seriously. She said, “I work all the time. Some would say that if I am awake, I am working. I am often in my office till 8 or 9 at night. Then I will work over the weekend.” She said she was not sure how her schedule would change in the SJC, which has a different work cycle than the Appeals Court, but she stressed that to say the least, “These are not 9 to 5 jobs.”

When interviewed at the end of this April, she said about her new posting, “It feels like an incredible privilege to be able to be given the opportunity to be a judge on the Supreme Judicial Court but also, I have my work cut out for me to get up to speed...The court is an extremely old court, with its own procedures and traditions that I have to learn.”

The seven members of the SJC include a majority of appointees from Gov. Charlie Baker (five), a Republican, and only two from Gov. Maura Healey, a Democrat, including Wolohojian. When asked whether partisan politics is significant in the world of the SJC, Wolohojian suggested looking at the decisions made by the SJC in different periods, when there were different groups of appointees. She said that there is a very small number of split decisions, and said, “If you look at those split decisions, my guess is that you would see that the disagreement is over a pure legal principle, or the consequence of a particular fact, and whether the fact should have made the case

go this way or that. The fact that a judge was appointed by a particular governor does not mean that the judge has any kind of political views, nor does it mean that the judge will view any particular case in a given way. Cases are really driven by the law and the facts.”

She did add that governors do have certain ideas about the types of people they like to put on the bench. Baker, for example, appeared to like to appoint judges who had experience as prosecutors.

Armenian Heritage

Wolohojian’s first language was Armenian because her parents wanted their children to speak and understand the language. Both her parents were, like her, born in the United States. They grew up in Armenian-speaking households because their own parents were immigrants, Wolohojian related. Her father, Albert, was a scholar who knew how to read and write both modern and classical Armenian, while her mother knows how to speak but never learned to read or write.

“I encountered English when I went to nursery school,” Wolohojian recalled, “and apparently came home after the first day and reported to my brother that we have apparently been living in a completely false world. There is something else going on out there...I apparently refused to speak Armenian when I came home. It felt like a little bit of a sense of betrayal when I went to school.”

There was no real Armenian-American community where they grew up so the only chance of the children learning Armenian was at home. Now, of course, she understands and appreciates what her parents did. She said, “It was important to me. I was very close especially to my paternal grandparents, who spoke English but were never facile in that language. It was important to my parents that we be able to communicate with our grandparents and our grandparents be able to communicate with us. I applaud that.”

She was not involved in any Armenian community activities until she started college and founded the Rutgers Armenian Studies program and student club in 1980 with the aid of her father. She said that she learned French well by living a lot in France, as her father was a French professor, and she also studied Italian language and literature for four years. It seemed strange, she said, that she didn’t know how to read or write Armenian.

They went through the student directory and found a fairly large number of Armenian Americans (nota bene: this author was one of the founders of a student club in a neighboring university, and had met the future justice and her father briefly). Wolohojian’s father then began teaching an Armenian language course.

Wolohojian said, “I remember what a pleasure it was for me, when by the end of the first year, I was able to read the Armenian-language newspaper to my grandparents and they were so tickled by that. That is not to say that I could understand everything that the newspaper was saying or that I knew what every word meant, especially the more complicated words, but I could read the entire newspaper to them. It gave my father a huge pleasure too to see that he was able to give that to his children, as well as to all these other Armenian-American kids.”

Wolohojian has noted at various public Armenian community events that due to their unique insights and experiences, descendants of genocide survivors, of which she is one, have a particular obligation to be in public service and to promote and protect the rule of law – something which they themselves did not enjoy. However, she herself did not know her full family story until the centennial of the Armenian Genocide.

When she was still in grade school at some point the students were all asked

to prepare a family tree, so she went to visit her grandparents and began asking questions. She said, “They kept saying, why are you going into this. Why are you doing this...and they were just so resistant. Finally I would get them to extract names, and I would ask, when was Vartuhi born and when did she die. Every death year was 1915. I was probably very clueless as a child. I don’t think you have the emotional dexterity to figure out what to do.”

She said that probably around 27 people had died in her grandfather’s family alone, and surmised that the silence of her grandparents may have been a protective mechanism to allow them to continue to live and function. She said, “In my family, on both sides people did not talk about what happened during the Genocide. They just didn’t talk. My mother and her siblings knew that her father would refuse to go to church on Maundy Thursday, and that something terrible had happened. That is what they knew.”

Wolohojian learned about the story of her maternal grandfather in 2015, who was one of the intellectuals rounded up in Constantinople on April 24, 2015. Even her mother did not know the full story until then. She had letters and other documents, but many were handwritten in Armenian which she could not read. She got the papers translated and put together a book, with copies for herself and her three siblings. It turned out some of the letters were from her grandfather while he was in prison, and others were letters from people who saw him in prison.

In hindsight, Wolohojian said, “We were brought up, I would say, in a very privileged way, because my grandparents took every step possible to not burden us with their history. And my parents impressed upon us that that history was terrible, but they also didn’t burden us with the details or the knowledge. I feel almost that I am the product of a conspiracy designed to help me succeed.”

Dealing with Sadness

Wolohojian saw a parallel with her grandparents’ approach to life, after the pain experienced in the Armenian Genocide and the application of justice in courts after events have taken place.

She declared, “One of the things that really burdens me as a judge is the sadness embedded in all the cases. ... You have to come to learn to somehow make your peace with the fact that the underlying sadness and dysfunction in most cases you can’t do anything to alleviate, because by the time the case comes to you, all of that harm has already happened and you’re deciding... You can’t help it. You can’t fix it. Your job as a judge is to apply the law and reach the correct legal outcome. You can’t actually go over and alleviate the distress.”

She said, “I think my grandparents’ history is a little bit the same thing. The way I understand it, their incredible delight in their grandchildren’s success and happiness is in some sense the balm for their pains.”

Wolohojian pointed out that everything that comes to her court is because something went wrong. She said though she is swayed by emotion and empathy, she puts it to one side so she can decide the case. She observed, “No one is coming to court to report happiness and satisfaction, so you can get a very skewed view of the world if you start substituting the legal universe for the whole real world.”

To better deal with this, she plays music. A violinist, she is a performing member of the Boston Civic Symphony and also a member of the board of advisors for the organization and radio show “From the Top.” Wolohojian said, “Music allows me to remember that there are still these important things such as beauty and cooperation and collaboration, and art, and it gives me hope.”



Arts & Culture

Heritage Park On the Greenway Continues Making Mark on Armenian Community

BOSTON — The Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway is where the community comes together, remembering, honoring and celebrating.

In the heart of downtown Boston, the Armenian Heritage Park is among the few public gathering sites in the United States that commemorates the Armenian Genocide on public land in a major city.

Annually, the April 24 Commemoration at the Park, under the leadership of the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Greater Boston, takes place there.

Many read the plaques next to the benches surrounding the Abstract Sculpture and Labyrinth and the seating walls. The plaques recognize the generosity of the Park's Benefactors for their extraordinary support of the Park and its Endowed Funds.

Every day passersby pause to read the Inscription on the Reflecting Pool upon which the Abstract Sculpture sits. "Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have offered hope and refuge for immigrants looking to begin new lives. This park is a gift to the people of the Commonwealth and the City of Boston from the Armenian American community of Massachusetts. This sculpture is offered in honor of the one and one-half million victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923. May it serve in remembrance of all genocides that have followed and celebrate the diversity of the communities that have re-formed in the safety of these shores."

The Park's innovative Abstract Sculpture tells the Armenian story, the shared story of leaving or being pulled away from one's country of origin and coming to these shores to start a new life. Annually the two halves of the split rhomboid dodecahedron made of stainless steel and aluminum are pulled apart and re-configured to create a new sculptural shape. This change brings vitality to the Park and reflects changing lives and the world in which we live. The Park is as fresh, dynamic and impactful today as it was when it opened 12 years ago.

"Geometry as Public Art: Telling A Story," the curriculum inspired by the Park's geometric features that tell the story of the immigrant experience, was developed in collaboration with the Boston Public Schools. This curriculum is now implemented in many 4th grade classes throughout the City of Boston. The Stephen H. Barmakian Family Foundation of the Columbus Foundation is providing the funding to support round trip bus transportation to/from the school to the Park for 10 fourth-grade classes in 10 Boston Public Schools during the 2024-2025 school year.

Programs at the Park are offered in partnership and in collaboration with civic, arts, community and/or educational organizations including

see GREENWAY, page 17



Rob Paravonian tells a story about discovering old photos from his father's trip to Soviet Armenia

An Evening of Armenian Storytellers in NYC

By Anoush Tatevossian

NEW YORK — On June 8, the Tumanyan Storytelling initiative's co-founder Anoush Tatevossian and New York City-based author Aida Zilelian, co-hosted "An Evening of Armenian Storytellers" at the Atamian Hovsepian Curatorial Practice in Manhattan.

This was the first event of its kind in New York, showcasing the art of oral first-person storytelling. With an audience of approximately 70 attendees, the standing-room only event offered an intimate opportunity to hear from six talented artists who shared their personal stories of the Armenian-American diasporan experience.

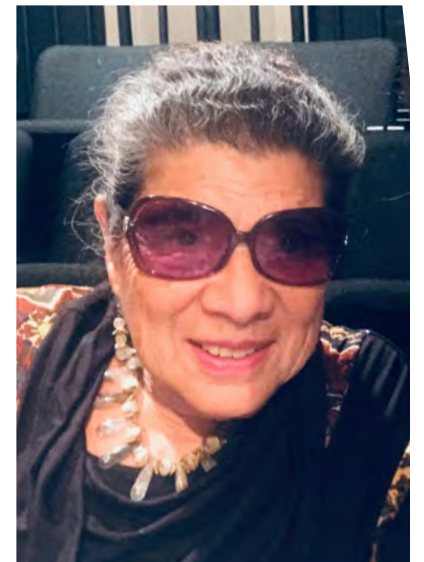
Anoush Tatevossian opened the event by sharing the story of the founding of the Tumanyan International Storytelling Festival (www.tumanyanstoryfest.com) in see STORYTELLERS, page 17



From left, Anoush Tatevossian, Rob Paravonian, Aida Zilelian, Alan Semerdjian, Lisa Yapp, Justin McElwee, Anoush Froudjian, Tamar Vezirian

Claire Hsu Accomando

Memoires and Lessons From Armenian Nani and Her Sisters



By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/ SAN DIEGO — American author Claire Hsu Accomando, born in 1937 in Switzerland to Chinese and French-Armenian parents, graduated from New York University with a degree in biology and chemistry. For many years she taught art history and English at California University, also worked at Sweetwater Union High School District. In 1993 Claire Hsu Accomando published her memoirs *Love and Rutabaga: A Remembrance of the War* (St. Martin's Press), which has been published also in French translation in 2021. She published essays and poems in *Women in World History*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *American History Magazine*, *Ararat*, *Artweek*, *Promising Practices*, *City Works*, *Atlanta Review*, *San Diego Poetry Annual*, etc.

Dear Claire, we have corresponded for many years, although we have never met in person. The initial interest in your book, *Love and Rutabaga*, was due to my admiration of Babaian sisters, the three Paris-based Armenian artists. One of them, pianist Shushanik (Suzanne) Laloy Babaian (1879-1952), is your Nani (granny in Armenian) — one of main characters of your book. And since our interview is going to be read by an Armenian audience, it will be focused mostly on the Armenian part of your heritage. Being born in a multicultural family you have richness of various background.

I feel enormously enriched by my Armenian ancestry. My grandmother, Shushanik Babaian, whom I knew as Nani, was my first best friend. My grandparents' bedroom was mostly my grandmother's domain. Grandpapa had his bureau on the third floor of the old ancestral home in the French village where we spent four years with them during World War II. Opening the door of the bedroom was like entering Ali Baba's cave. Treasures of all kinds filled the room. The

see CLAIRE, page 16

Books

Christian Armenian Architecture and the Influence of the Pre-Christian Culture: A Common Reader's Perspective

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Ashot Haykazun Grigoryan, author of the recently-published *Christian Armenian Architecture and the Influence of the Pre-Christian Culture* (Zangak, 2023), defines architecture as the art of building as only symbols can do. More than construction materials, the purpose of the structure, the consideration of surroundings, or any other consideration, avers Grigoryan, symbols characterize our architecture. The epigraph by fifth-century BC Chinese philosopher Confucius — “The world is governed by signs and symbols, not by laws nor words” — roots the book in the deeper significance of things that only symbols can reveal.

With his meticulously-researched 438-page study full of charts, illustrations and photographs of structures and monuments built from pre-Christian times through the late Middle Ages, both in the Armenian Highlands and urban centers, Grigoryan provides evidence for the symbolic foundation of Armenian architecture.

Symbols have played a key role in the creation of our pre-Christian culture and have left an indelible footprint on Christian Armenian architecture, posits Grigoryan. Interpreting Christian architecture from a symbolic perspective will reveal the continuity of the paradigm, he affirms.

There is much evidence of symbolic thinking in the first art of our ancestors, the rock carvings found in the Armenian Highlands, where whole histories are drawn as symbols. Symbolic images — such as the Armenian eternity symbol,

preserved their initial form and meaning, notes Grigoryan.

At least for the layman, Armenian architecture has been equated, almost exclusively, with the beauty and the magnificence of our churches, starting with Echmiadzin Cathedral, the mother church built in the fourth and fifth centuries following the adoption of Christianity by Armenia as a state religion in 301 AD, the seventh-century St. Hripsime, one of the oldest surviving churches in the country, and the many others built in the Middle Ages and later. The unmatched visual appeal of the architectural designs of these churches is undeniable.

Grigoryan's is simply an invitation to a new way of thinking that takes Armenian architecture beyond the Christian-pagan divide and expands it, giving it a wider, richer significance.

Besides reclaiming the infinite wealth of over two millennia of pre-Christian Armenian cultural heritage, and a mythology (Vahagn, Anahit, Astghik) that has been the inspiration of our poets (Daniel Varoujan, Vahe-Vahian, Levon Shant), Grigoryan's innovative approach makes the Armenian spirit and identity that reach back into our prehistory part of Christian Armenian architecture.

Nature has always provided the sub-text for our religious structures and aesthetic creations, argues Grigoryan. The symbolic representations in our temples and churches originate in the natural forces of the physical world. Grigoryan cites the Holy Cross Church of Akhtamar, built in 915-921 AD, as an example of “a symbolic totality” showing the implementation of the Heaven, Man, Earth model, that divides the world into four parts/sides along vertical and horizontal axes, and the principle of four, manifest in cultures worldwide. The four walls which comprise the structure, for example, symbolize the four elements, earth, water, air and fire. The main altar faces east towards the rising sun. The external walls are covered with motifs of plants and animals from the natural world, and so on.

Reverting to nature as the source makes the creation of symbols part of man's aspiration to find his place in the universe. To illustrate, Grigoryan describes the gradual transitioning from establishing residences in natural caverns to using these as models for the

construction of dwellings. The hillside village where the roof of one residence is the yard of another is one example. Other factors that create environments suitable for habitation include the presence of potable water, arable land and geographies that offer protection from hazards, etc. Grigoryan describes a village where residences were



built all along the river that runs through it. This collaboration between art and nature has ensured the survival of mankind which, for Grigoryan, is the *raison d'être* of architecture.

When the man-made and the natural cohere and when the pre-Christian and the Christian unite in harmony, divisions and the ensuing hatred and wars become irrelevant. Grigoryan's strategy of connecting universally through symbols, which provide insight into the essence of things, reminds us of the commonality of all human endeavors and opens the doors to the possibility of forging connections that could alter the self-destructive path of genocides and wars. It is an ethos that strives to combine, versus one that creates a divide, helps preserve and advance history, not destroy it. This unifying vision is, to me, the book's greatest appeal.

On a more self-serving note, promoting continuity and unity makes it more difficult for Armenia's enemies to rewrite history. Evidence of a continuous Armenian presence could in fact be an antidote to the deliberate destruction by Azerbaijan of our religious and cultural artifacts in its efforts to annihilate a millennia-old culture from existence and erase all trace of the Armenian presence on our historic lands.

Grigoryan's energy and his attention to his subject matter should invite into the conversation anyone interested in Armenian culture and architecture. There are numerous mentions in history books of the existence of symbols, but there is no coherent or sustained research of the application and the interpretation of symbolic thinking in Armenian architecture, writes Grigoryan. This landmark study fills that huge gap. Notwithstanding, Grigoryan describes his astonishing accomplishment as “only an experiment.” The advent of new technologies and new evidence coming to light continually make future editions of the book inevitable, he avers.

Christian Armenian Architecture and the Influence of the Pre-Christian Culture

has been published by the AGBU Vahram Abdalian Cultural Fund established by Vahe-Vahian in 1980 in memory of his late son, to help preserve the Armenian cultural heritage by publishing manuscripts that contribute to that effort. The book is written in Eastern Armenian using classi-

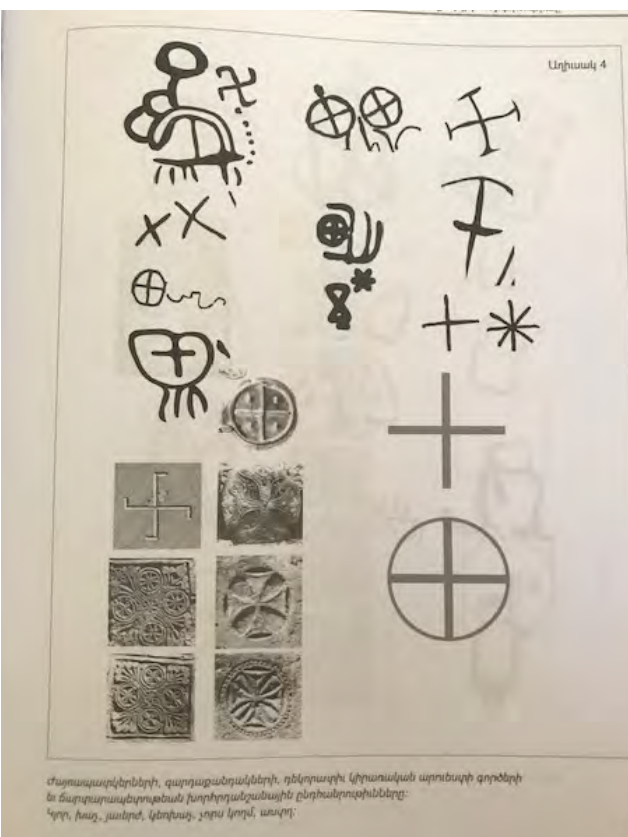


Պատկեր 35. Երկու իրար ազդուցած եռանկյունիների խորհրդանշանական պատկերներով հարուստ է Անիի ճարտարապետությունը

Symbolic images of two interlacing triangles

cal (Western) Armenian orthography. The handsome volume is a valuable addition to the ten works already published by the fund.

The study is supported by the Alexander Tamanyan National Museum-Institute of Architecture, in Yerevan, Armenia, of which Dr. Grigoryan, an architect himself, is Chairman of the Board.



Rock carvings

the two interlaced triangles used in the art of cross stones, the tree of life that is widely used in structures of worship, the sun-lion, and many more — have been used repeatedly in our dwellings, places of worship and monuments. Even as they have evolved, adjusting to the needs of a particular place or time, the symbols have



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



The Mediterranean Dish Spanakorizo - Greek Spinach Rice

“Growing up in the Mediterranean city of Port Said, my early years were filled with sweet memories of visiting the local Souq (market) with my father, gathering things from just-caught fish, to beautiful plump tomatoes, bunches of fresh parsley, and sticks of cinnamon from the vendors he would greet by name,” says Suzy Karadsheh, the cookbook author and creator at Mediterranean Dish.

“We would return home to my mother’s fragrant Mediterranean kitchen with our spoils. That family kitchen is where I learned to cook.”

“Spanakorizo or Greek Spinach Rice is a comforting dish made with spinach and medium grain rice then flavor boosted with dried herbs, garlic, onion, and a splash of lemon juice. This easy spinach rice recipe can be enjoyed as a vegetarian main for 4 people or as a side with your favorite protein (up to 6 people),” she says.

“Spanakorizo is considered classic Greek comfort food. It’s one of my go-to dishes, especially when I want something convenient while sticking to healthy, whole foods. Spanakorizo has flavors similar to spanakopita, my favorite crispy Greek spinach and feta pie, or my mac and cheese twist, but it’s a little less involved, which means I can make it on a busy weeknight. This recipe can be served as a vegetarian meal, or make it vegan by omitting the feta cheese at the end (although I think it adds flavor and a touch of luxury). As a side, it is particularly good with meatballs, baked trout, or lemon chicken.”



Suzy Karadsheh

“The kind of rice you use is key to the success of this recipe and achieving the perfect Greek spinach rice. I chose a medium-grain rice like arborio. This kind of rice is often used in risotto recipes like mushroom risotto or asparagus risotto or really any risotto for that matter. If you use short-grain rice, you risk having a mushy/sticky result. And long grain rice will not give you the silky, creamy texture you need here.”

“Lemon juice adds acidity and brightens the earthy flavor of the spinach. Freshly squeezed is best. Kosher salt and black pepper: Think of salt as a flavor enhancer and the black pepper adds a subtle warmth.”

“The benefit of cooking the spinach is that you can pack a ton of the nutrient-rich greens into just a few bites, with this dish or my spinach pasta, just to name a few. This recipe calls for 2 heaping cups of spinach to 1 cup of rice. It may sound like a lot of spinach, but the spinach wilts as it cooks making this rice-to-spinach ratio perfect. Plus, it’s a way to increase the nutrition since spinach adds antioxidants, fiber, iron, and calcium, as well as vitamins K, C, B12, B6, E, and more.”

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup medium grain rice
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 pound fresh baby spinach
- 1 large lemon, juiced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- Kosher salt
- Black pepper
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried mint
- 1 teaspoon dried dill
- Feta cheese, for garnish

PREPARATION:

Rinse the rice a few times until the water runs clear. Put the rice in a bowl and add water to cover it by 1 inch. Let sit to soak for 20 minutes or until you can easily break one grain of rice between your fingers.

Sauté the spinach: Heat 1/4 cup of olive oil in a braising pan. Add the onions and cook for 5 minutes, stirring regularly, until soft and golden brown. Add the spinach, lemon juice, garlic, tomato paste, and a big pinch of kosher salt and black pepper. Sauté the spinach until just wilted. Stir in the mint and dill.

Drain the rice well and add it to the pan. Add 1 1/2 cups of warm water. Bring to a boil for 3 minutes until the water reduces a bit. Turn the heat to low and cover. Let the rice cook undisturbed for 20 minutes or until the rice is tender and fully cooked through and all the liquid has been absorbed. Once cooked, let the rice sit covered for 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

When ready, fluff the rice with a fork and garnish with feta, additional finely chopped spinach, or minced parsley.

Following a Mediterranean way of eating is sensible, joyful, and balanced. It prioritizes wholesome ingredients and focuses on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes along with lean proteins from fish and poultry and good fats from things like extra virgin olive oil. Check out these Mediterranean diet-inspired cookbooks with easy recipes and bold and bright Mediterranean flavors from New York Times Bestselling author Suzy Karadsheh. Order at: <https://www.themediterraneandish.com/cookbooks/>



Visit and shop for Mediterranean ingredients like olive oil, tahini and spices at: <https://shop.themediterraneandish.com/>

For this recipe: <https://www.themediterraneandish.com/spanakorizo-greek-spinach-rice/>

For a recipe index: <https://www.themediterraneandish.com/recipes/>

See more recipes at: <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/food/story/recipes-mediterranean-dish-make-week-89601282>

Connect at:

- <https://www.instagram.com/themediterraneandish/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@TheMediterraneanDish>
- <https://www.facebook.com/TheMediterraneanDish/>
- <https://www.pinterest.com/themeddish/>

2024 The Mediterranean Dish.

Claire Hsu Accomando: Memoires and Lessons from Armenian Nani and Her Sisters

CLAIRE, from page 13

smell of lavender permeated the air.

At night, red, blue and purple shapes decorated the walls of the room. They shifted as the colored-glass lantern hanging from the ceiling swayed. Nani had a carved armoire with drawers filled with scarves that reminded me of dragonfly wings. Shelves held boxes crammed with jewelry she had brought from Tiflis [Tbilisi]. As I tried on the heavy silver necklaces and bracelets encrusted with shiny stones, she told me and my brother about Scheherazade and ferocious Cossacks who consumed food from their saddles so as not to waste time as they ravaged the countryside.

We loved to hear about her childhood. Our favorite story was the one in which, when she was a toddler, her parents feared she had fallen off a horse-drawn sleigh. After retracing their course and looking everywhere, they discovered she had been asleep under a heavy fur blanket.

Your grandmother was the first interpreter of one of the most beautiful piano pieces, *Shushiki* by the iconic figure of Armenian people, Komitas Vardapet. He also has sent a congratulating card addressed to Luis and Shushanik Laloy on the occasion of the birth of their daughter — your mother, Nicolette Laloy Hsu (1906-1995). It has been included in collection of letters by Komitas, published in Yerevan. Is there any memory that your family preserved of Komitas which you can share with us?

My aunt Marguerite Babaian never talked about Komitas Vardapet. Once I asked Mama why Tante Margit didn't have a husband and children like everybody else. "She once had a great love and a great loss," she answered, adding that was the reason she never married. My great-aunt lived all her life in a walk-up, cold-water apartment in Paris. Even when she was old and bent over, she played the piano, and



First row : Ninette Laloy, Claire Hsu Accomando (baby), Fuyun Hsu, Nicolette Laloy Hsu. Back row: Karen Laloy (wife of Jean Laloy), Jean Laloy, Nani (Shushanik Babaian), Louis Laloy. 1937.

when she sang, she had the incredible voice of a young girl. It is only after her death that I became aware of her relationship with Komitas Vardapet. The information did not come from the family.

Your grandfather, Louis Laloy, was a notable French music critic and scholar, a close friend of Claude Debussy, who wrote the composer's first French biography and who also appreciated Komitas Vardapet's music. He was proficient in eight languages, including Chinese. What about Armenian?

I never heard my grandfather speak Armenian. I never saw books written in Armenian on the bookcases that seemed to



Babaian sisters: Armenuhi-Arminia (Amo), Shushanik (Nani) and Marguerite. 1905.

hold up the ceiling of his bureau.

Could you please share your personal memories on truly fantastic Babaian sisters?

In 1905, when their three daughters were on the verge of adulthood, Avetik and Sophie Babaian, decided to send them to Paris to finish their studies. Marguerite chose to be a singer and interpreter of Armenian songs. Armenuhi or Amo studied art and painted luminous, misty portraits. Nani became a concert pianist. The younger sisters married French men. Amo had announced there were two types of men she avoided: soldiers and doctors. She married Charles Carbonell, a naval doctor! Nani married Louis Laloy, a musicologist and scholar. My brother and I liked Oncle Charles better than Grandpapa. Oncle Charles helped us

build castles with wooden blocks. Grandpapa didn't know our names. He called us "la petite" and "le petit."

During the war years, Nani and her sisters did not see each other often. France was divided in two and they lived in the occupied zone. In order to come to our little village, they needed permits from the Nazis and these "laissez-passeurs" were difficult to obtain. Their rare visits were festive occasions. They spoke fast, laughed, played music and sang. Nani, the youngest, had been forced to speak Russian in school, so she was not as fluent in Armenian as her sisters. Now and then to tease my grandmother the older two switched from French to Armenian. Nani pretended to be offend-

ed, but not for long. They soon reverted to French, peppered with words I didn't understand but loved to hear.

Nani told you never to be afraid of having enemies. What more life lessons do did you receive from her?

My grandmother was a free spirit. She was very disciplined in certain ways, but was not awed by authority. Her piano time was sacred, and she took great care of her appearance. She came down for breakfast fully dressed, and wearing shoes. Her black hair formed neat waves around her face. All the buttons of her dress were properly matched with their button holes. At a time when color had been boiled out of our clothes due to lack of soap, she added a scarf to her black dress and looked like a *grande dame*. She taught me the importance of self-discipline.

On the other hand, she was whimsical and spontaneous and when at a loss for an answer was not afraid to invent one. At the time of the liberation when an American soldier gave me a stick of chewing gum, she told me to chew but not swallow. When my jaw started to ache, I asked her what I should do. Without hesitation she told me to wrap it in my hanky and save it for the next day.

Sometimes when my mother reprimanded me, Nani took my side and reminded me that I meant well. When it was evident, I didn't mean well, she asked for clemency by mentioning that I probably had experienced a bad day at school. On walks she picked up pretty pebbles and we washed them when we came home. She took care of her pianist's hands and her only domestic chore was washing tea cups. Mama placed two dish pans on the dining room table, one for scrubbing, the other for rinsing. Before doing the task, Nani read us our future from the pattern formed by the black tea leaves at the bottom of the white cup.

In catechism we learned that not telling the truth was a sin, so when I caught my mother lying to a Nazi soldier, I asked Nani if Mama had committed a sin. She answered that lying to the devil was not a sin, in fact it was the opposite. The answer was clear and satisfying.

Nani taught me to savor the moment and to care for things and people. She exem-

plified the importance of being passionate yet flexible, and indicated that rules were not absolute.

It was a nice surprise to find among other interesting documents in the personal files of Marguerite Babaian at the Museum of Literature and Art of Armenia also a letter addressed to her by your father Fuyun Hsu (1905-2005). He worked for United Nations and was the founders of UNICEF, and also was a Tai Chi teacher. How did this gentleman feel as a part of your French-Armenian family?

My father came from China to France as a very young man. He had received a scholarship at the Sorbonne where he studied law. He arrived early for the lectures and sat in the front of the amphitheater so as to catch every French word. One day he noticed a young woman standing at the back of the room and offered her his seat. Although Nicolette Laloy never sat in front rows, to be polite she accepted. This is how my parents met. Because my grandfather was interested in Chinese music and had traveled to China, Fuyun Hsu was welcomed into the Laloy home. Papa was captivated by the Armenian side of the family and took voice lessons from Tante Margit.

Your extended family included various countries and ethnicities. In Paris and Yerevan, I met one of your cousins, actress and poet Marianne Auricoste Babaian and Helene Carbonelle and I was also in touch with one of your relatives, Jean-Sérène Laloy, who even used Armenian words. I felt that the Arme-



Claire Hsu with her Nani

nian identity is quite strong in them.

My son and his wife live in Los Angeles. They have a house in North Hollywood, but used to live in Glendale. Both places have a lively Armenian community. When he visits me, he brings wine and delicious baked goods from the Armenian stores and bakeries that thrive in his neighborhood.

I recently returned from a family reunion in France. My cousin Erik Laloy, son of my mother's brother, Jean Laloy, generously invited over sixty family members to Normandy to celebrate his 80th birthday. I had not seen him in sixty-three years. I met many of my accomplished cousins for the first time at this lively gathering. There were slide presentations, readings and musical performances. Marianne Auricoste-Babaian spoke emotionally of her memorable visit to Yerevan a few years ago with Helene Carbonelle, her cousin. As the oldest I shared my childhood memories. This epic reunion made me immensely proud of being a member of this amazing family, that issued from Avetik and Sophia Babaian.



ARTS & CULTURE

An Evening of Armenian Storytellers in NYC

STORYTELLERS, from page 13 the aftermath of the 2020 war in Armenia. It is a new cultural initiative dedicated to re-connecting contemporary audiences with the rich tradition of storytelling, and serves as a platform for both preserving culture, and enabling the creation of new Armenian narratives. Zilelian shared a reflection on reconnecting with distant cousins who she came to find were connected to her Armenian family roots through shared traditions.

Anoush Froudjian told a story of marrying a non-Armenian, and the process of having him baptized as an adult so that they could be married in the Armenian church.

Rob Paravonian reflected upon his recent discovery of photo slides from his father's visit to Soviet Armenia. He told a story of how his uncle was a missionary Christian who visited Soviet Armenia and was one of the few linkages he has to the country and culture.

Tamar Vezirian, who was born in Lebanon and whose family came to the US during that country's civil war, told a story of breaking away from her Armenian upbringing by coming to New York as a young adult, only to befriend and move in with an elderly Armenian woman who

reminded her exactly of her own family dynamics.

Lisa Yapp told a both comedic and touching story of being Armenian in the melting pot that is the United States, and how melancholic it can be to try and maintain this "tradition for one" over generations, as she is the last of her family members left with a linkage to her Armenian heritage.

Justin McElwee, the non-Armenian husband of Anoush Froudjian, rounded out the night with his own reflections and comedic story of meeting Anoush's large Armenian family.

Finally, singer-songwriter and poet Alan Semerjian played two original songs on guitar, culminating in bringing the audience together to sing along in a moment of harmony and unity.

Feedback from attendees and participants was overwhelmingly positive, and discussions are already underway about hosting a second edition later this year due to popular demand. Tumanyan Storytelling is grateful for the support of the Atamian-Hovsepian Curatorial Practice, and Armenian General Benevolent Union Arts and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research for their sponsorship.

Heritage Park on the Greenway Continues Making Mark on Armenian Community

GREENWAY, from page 13 the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, Children's Museum, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Museum of Fine Arts among many others.

The park's labyrinth is symbolic of life's journey with one path leading to the single jet of water at the center representing hope and rebirth and the same path leading out. Many walk the circular labyrinth each day to relax, meditate, contemplate and/or for movement. From May to October, on Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m., the weekly Movement & Walking Meditation is offered in collaboration with Boston Public Health

of many working and living in the City of Boston and beyond. At each program, following a brief welcome and introduction to the Park, a community leader shares his/her immigrant experience. All walk the labyrinth together. Then a chef speaks about a signature dish that all then taste and enjoy while meeting and greeting. This series is funded by the City of Boston Office of Immigrant Advancement.

"Tea & Tranquility" is the monthly series on Wednesdays at 4 p.m. On July 10, Big Joe, the storyteller, will offer a performance for all ages. Modern Pastry is providing the Italian cookies for all to enjoy.



Commission and The Greenway Conservancy Fitness Program.

"Celebrating What Unites Us!" is a monthly program at the park offered in celebration of the immigrant experience. This series aims to build community and cross-cultural understanding while promoting active, healthy and engaged living. Each month highlights a country of origin

On August 7, Armina Manoukian, co-owner of the House of Lavash, will share her experiences and the art of making Gata, a luscious Armenian sweet for all to taste and enjoy with iced tea.

"Under the Moon" is the evening summer series which included the Strawberry Moon on June 13 that featured chocolate-dipped strawberries, hosted by Oven-

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

JULY 10 — TEA & TRANQUILITY Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 4 p.m. Meet & Greet, Enjoy refreshing Citrus Spritzer & Luscious Italian Cookies, hosted by Modern Pastry. At 4:30 p.m. **BIG JOE**, the storyteller, performance for all ages. Join us! RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org Joe in Subject Line.

JULY 29 — Saint James Armenian Church 24th Annual Harold Partamian Golf Tournament, Monday, Oakley Country club in Watertown, Rain or shine/ Scramble Format/ Raffle/ Silent Auction, Following golf- cocktails, appetizers and banquet dinner at Oakley Country Club. Please see church web-site form full information, registration and sponsorship.

AUGUST 7 — TEA & TRANQUILITY Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 4 p.m. Meet Armina Manoukian, co-owner, House of Lavash who will share her experiences and the art of making Gata, a luscious Armenian sweet for all to taste & enjoy with refreshing ice tea. Join us! RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org. Gata in Subject Line.

AUGUST 11 — Saints Vartanantz Annual Church Picnic, 12 Noon – 5:00 p.m., Music – Food – Dancing featuring the Jason Naroian Ensemble. 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford, MA.

AUGUST 18 — UNDER THE AUGUST MOON Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. 7:30 p.m. Festive evening meeting & greeting while enjoying the Black Sea Salsa Combo, refreshing Citrus Spritzers & dancing on the Moonlit Labyrinth. Join us! RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org. August in Subject Line.

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 7 — Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Boston Child Care Committee presents a special evening with joy and laughter at the Wellesley Country Club in Wellesley, MA featuring comedian Kev Orkian to benefit Khoren & Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan. For more info and RSVP visit: <https://amaa.org/bostonchildcare2024/>

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 provided 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.

bird Café, owner/chef Jason Reed. The upcoming "Under the August Moon" will take place on Sunday, August 18 at 7:30 p.m. and features the Black Sea Salsa Combo and refreshing citrus spritzers.

Programs are developed by the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park comprising teams of volunteers. Most programs depend on gifts in kind.

The Friends of Armenian Heritage Park is an initiative of the Armenian Heritage Foundation whose Board is composed of representatives from Greater Boston parishes and organizations. The foundation's Executive Committee oversees the annual

operation of the park that includes its year-round care and maintenance and overseeing the endowment. These endowed funds include the Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, Care & Maintenance of the Park, Public Programs and Lecture on Human Rights at Faneuil Hall. A key focus continues to fully endow the Park's Legacy Fund to annually support the care and maintenance of the Park during all seasons in perpetuity.

For the schedule of the programs, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org. For further information and/or ways to volunteer, email us at hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org.

COMMENTARY

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 (Mgditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

**REGIONAL
CORRESPONDENTS**

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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.

The Current Stage of Armenia–Azerbaijan Negotiations

By **Benjamin Poghosyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Following the military takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan in September 2023 and the forced displacement of Armenians, Azerbaijan has pursued a double-pronged strategy in negotiations with Armenia.

Its first approach has been to undermine Western-led Brussels and Washington negotiation formats while showing an interest in resuming negotiations on the Moscow or regional platform. President Ilham Aliyev canceled participation in the Granada summit of the European Policy Community in October and the scheduled tripartite meeting in Brussels facilitated by the European Council president, Charles Michel. In November, Azerbaijan rejected the United States' offer to resume negotiations with foreign ministers in Washington. Baku explained its decision by claiming that the European Union, France and the US have a pro-Armenian or anti-Azerbaijani stance. Simultaneously, Azerbaijan has several times expressed its readiness to resume negotiations in Russia or on regional platforms. President Aliyev met many times with Russian officials before the presidential elections of February 2024, while receiving Western officials only after the elections.

The second approach has been to push bilateral negotiations with Armenia without any mediators or facilitators. After September 2023, Armenia emphasized its willingness to continue negotiations on Western platforms based on the principles agreed in Prague in October 2022 and Brussels in May and July 2023. Armenia also agreed to launch the bilateral track to ensure smooth

negotiation. Armenia and Azerbaijan reached an initial result on December 7, 2023, when they signed a statement on releasing prisoners of war and Armenia's support for Azerbaijan to host COP29, the next United Nations climate summit, in Baku.

Bilateral negotiations have continued in 2024. Several meetings took place between the Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia and the assistant to President Aliyev on foreign policy. In February 2024, Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders met in Munich, in the margins of the Munich Security Conference, in the presence of the German Chancellor, and ministers of foreign affairs met in Berlin later in February. However, these two meetings cannot be considered as a resumption of Western mediation formats, as neither the Europeans nor the Americans were the organizers — or indeed were involved — in these talks.

The bilateral negotiations track continued in May 2024, when Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers met in Almaty, Kazakhstan, at the invitation of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Border delimitation and demarcation commissions, established in May 2022, held several meetings in early 2024. These resulted in Armenian forces withdrawing from areas along the Armenia–Azerbaijan border in the Tavush region, framed by the Armenian government as a part of the delimitation and demarcation process based on the 1991 Almaty declaration.

What are Azerbaijan's primary goals in the current phase of negotiations? First, Azerbaijan wants to solidify the post-September 2023 status quo and remove the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians from the negotiation process. Second, by boycotting Western negotiation platforms, Azerbaijan seeks on the one hand to prevent the growing involvement of the West in the region and on the other, by portraying itself as an anti-Western actor, to improve relations with Russia.

The Kremlin views the Western platforms as another channel for the West's penetration of the region and, thus, a threat to its vital interests there. In this context, Azerbaijan's efforts to undermine those platforms are aligned with Russian interests.

Azerbaijan also prefers bilateral negotiations without facilitators or mediators because, given the power asymmetry between Armenia and Azerbaijan, they allow Azerbaijan to obtain more concessions from Armenia and reduce the political cost for Azerbaijan if Baku decides not to implement previous agreements. At the same time, Azerbaijan is using the bilateral format as a smoke screen. It depicts itself as a constructive player genuinely involved in negotiations to achieve lasting peace and stability in the region and thus can disguise its assertive and aggressive posture toward Armenia. Pursuing the bilateral track strengthens Azerbaijan's narrative of the ineffectiveness of multilateral Western formats.

However, in these negotiations Azerbaijan is not seeking the signature of a comprehensive peace agreement. President Aliyev has effectively killed any possibility of signing such an agreement by stating many times that changes to the Armenian constitution are a precondition of any peace deal. It is obvious that while protests are underway against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan it will be highly challenging for the prime minister to push forward with constitutional change, as many in Armenia will perceive this as another concession to Azerbaijan.

Establishing an extraterritorial corridor to connect Azerbaijan with Nakhijevan via Syunik, another precondition set by Azerbaijan to the signing of a peace agreement, also impedes the process. Even if Armenia agrees to this demand, which is unlikely as the current government declares that the extraterritorial corridor is a red line for Armenia, Iran will do everything to prevent the establishment of the corridor, which Tehran views as a threat to its national interests. Thus, while publicly stating its interest in signing a peace agreement before the COP29 summit in Baku, Azerbaijan is taking action to prevent any possibility of reaching that goal. Azerbaijan may opt to sign a so-called framework agreement with Armenia, a high-level text of principles and statements, which will resolve nothing but help improve Azerbaijan's global standing, allowing Baku to speak about COP29 as a "climate and peace summit." It is highly likely that after this event, Azerbaijan will return to its policy of preconditions and blackmail of Armenia on issues such as the corridor, enclaves, the change of constitution, Western Azerbaijan, etc.

Azerbaijan aims to drag on negotiations indefinitely, using them to weaken Armenia by forcing additional concessions while re-

ducing the West's regional involvement. The ultimate goal is to see an incapacitated Armenia constantly under the threat of Azerbaijani aggression and forced to accept Azerbaijan's and its allies' dominance in the South Caucasus.

What could Armenia do in the face of this Azerbaijani strategy? First, while not

refusing to take part in bilateral talks, Armenia could declare that Azerbaijan is using them as a smoke screen to push forward an assertive and aggressive policy toward Armenia. Second, Armenia could be even more vocal in condemning Azerbaijan for undermining the negotiations by imposing preconditions and could state that Azerbaijan is not interested in signing a peace agreement. Third, despite Yerevan's previous agreement to sign a framework agreement with Azerbaijan, as indicated by the prime minister in November 2022, Armenia should refuse to sign an ambiguous framework agreement, which will only strengthen Azerbaijan's current smoke-screen strategy and focus on a comprehensive agreement only.

As Azerbaijan continues to push forward the concept of Western Azerbaijan and prepares to publish the list of those Azerbaijanis who "were expelled from Armenia in 1987–1991" and whom Armenia should allow to come back, Armenia should bring up the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh and the future of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. While these issues are likely not part of a peace agreement with Azerbaijan, they should be addressed, because no lasting peace or stability is possible for at least a few decades in a South Caucasus with an ethnically cleansed Nagorno-Karabakh. If this issue is not addressed, future generations of Armenians are likely to view the forced displacement of Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh as a humiliation and an historical injustice. This will prevent any possibility of genuine Armenia–Azerbaijan normalization, creating long-term instability.

(Benjamin Poghosyan is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, and Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Policy Research Institute (APRI) of Armenia.)

AZERBAIJAN AIMS TO DRAG ON NEGOTIATIONS INDEFINITELY, USING THEM TO WEAKEN ARMENIA BY FORCING ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS WHILE REDUCING THE WEST'S REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT.



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Ignoring Armenia's Existential Problems, Pashinyan Talks Wrongly about the Diaspora

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met on June 19 with a group of diasporan Armenians who worked as temporary staff members at various ministries in Armenia.

During his remarks to the group, the prime minister deviated from the subject matter and made senseless statements about the diaspora. He said that "... in a large part of our history, during the history of the Third Republic, the diaspora has often or sometimes been viewed as an auxiliary institution to the administration of the Republic of Armenia. The change that is occurring is as follows: we say that the diaspora cannot be an auxiliary institution to the administration of the Republic of Armenia because the Republic of Armenia, like any state, is an instrument with its clear mechanisms where it is very clearly described who and how is managing that mechanism. If there is no detail or larger whole in the architecture of that mechanism, we are trying to connect that whole to that mechanism; we are inhibiting the progress of that mechanism. This is obvious. And in this logic, I think that the change that is taking place is very important and very essential. But, on the other hand, I want to look at it with reverse logic as well. In many cases, the Republic of Armenia was also perceived as an auxiliary or non-auxiliary tool for the administration of the diaspora. I want to say that, in my understanding, this also needs to end. Why? Because in case we make the Republic of Armenia an auxiliary or non-auxiliary tool, we are placing the Republic of Armenia outside the limits of its jurisdiction and, therefore, we make the Republic of Armenia more vulnerable. Our strategy, which I have talked about, the conceptual framework of ensuring the security of the Republic of Armenia, is legitimacy which is also related to this -- that we can act only where we have jurisdiction and legitimacy to act. We cannot act where we don't have jurisdiction and legitimacy to act as a state. And because of this circumstance, social-psychological changes will inevitably take place in Armenia-diaspora relations as well. I described what should not be as we had pictured. I mean, I understand that there is a certain gap within what I said, but I am not ready today to even attempt to fill that gap because I don't think that's my job or at least only my job. That requires wider discussions, and there, the Republic of Armenia or officials of the Republic of Armenia can have a say, say something, but I think that these discussions are more public and informal level discussions about

how should be the new relations between Armenia and the diaspora. They are no longer like that and will not be like that. I think that is obvious...."

If you understood nothing from Pashinyan's rambling words, you are not alone. The problem is that he always speaks without a prepared text causing him to stray from the subject and say things that he had not planned to say.

In his lengthy statement, Pashinyan tried to refute a thought that did not exist in anyone's mind — that "the diaspora is viewed as an auxiliary institution to the management of the Republic of Armenia." No one had said that. We have always envisaged the diaspora's role as providing humanitarian aid, investments and professional expertise to the homeland.

On the positive side, I am glad Pashinyan acknowledged that Armenia has no jurisdiction to meddle in the internal affairs of the diaspora. He has great difficulty managing the problems facing Armenia, let alone the issues of the diaspora -- something he knows nothing about.

Pashinyan then strayed into the subject of "how many Armenians are there in the world." He said: "...There is another problem. We do not always attach big significance to arithmetic. Recently, a question arose in my head. We keep saying, '10 million Armenians, 10 million Armenians, 10 million Armenians.' Is there a list of these Armenians somewhere or not? I am convinced that there isn't. Here again is the phenomenon of sanctification. That number is sacred, do not touch it suddenly. It neither increases nor decreases. You cannot change it. It's 10 million! If someone says that 'it's not 10 million, it's 10,561,000,' everyone will attack him and say, 'ignorant, dilettante. How do you know that? Who counted it, etc.?' If someone says: 'no, it's 9,200,000,' they will say, 'you scoundrel, you are belittling the global influence of Armenians. With the stroke of a pen, you wiped out 800,000 Armenians.' This is our reality. This is about us, but we have to talk about it. If we don't talk about it, what is the use?"

The prime minister is wrong that no one knows the number of Armenians in the world. He could have checked Wikipedia under the topic of 'Armenian population by country,' which lists the approximate number of Armenians in each one of 107 countries. There are many other sources that give the number of Armenians in the world. Since no one has counted every single Armenian in the world. Naturally, the 10 million is a rough estimate.

If this subject really interests the prime minister, he should direct his High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs to conduct a worldwide survey and compile a more accurate number of Armenians in the world.

I also suggest that the prime minister's aides write his speeches, so he can read from a written text and not stray into whatever comes to his head at the moment.

Armenia Recognizes Palestine

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

A few days ago, Armenia recognized Palestine's statehood, becoming the 143rd out of 193 United Nations member states to recognize its independence, joining powers like Russia, Spain, Norway, Turkey and China. Whether one agrees with this step or not, this was a historical decision. As frequently occurs with the actions of the Armenian government, the announcement of the decision sparked numerous discussions and speculation.

The news itself came straight from Armenia's Foreign Ministry, which made the announcement about the recognition of Palestine two days after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Such timing sparked speculation that Erdogan may have urged Pashinyan to recognize Palestine's independence, putting Armenia's prime minister under pressure. Just hours after the statement by the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Foreign Ministry welcomed such a decision by the Armenian government, describing it as the right decision. This led to even more extensive discussions within Armenian society regarding the "Turkish scenario being carried out by Armenian government." Of course, the reaction from Israel was not long in coming and it mostly resembled a threat against Armenia concerning this decision.

There were varying opinions in Armenian circles, with some welcoming the decision while others took a critical stance. There was a claim by political scientist Eduard Abrahamyan that the "Armenian government

did not recognize Artsakh, which existed and was an important priority for Armenia, yet Yerevan recognizes something that does not exist in the first place and it is not a priority for the Republic of Armenia at all. There is an issue of political morality here. What kind of 'unrecognized state' is Palestine that rejoiced and congratulated Aliyev on the destruction of another unrecognized state, Artsakh?"

Some people, like political scientist Johnny G. Melikyan, contend that "the recognition of the state of Palestine by Armenia is illogical." He and this group of

people argue that "aside from official reasons, Armenia's decision stems from Israel's denial of the Armenian Genocide and its military support of Azerbaijan. This raises questions about Armenia's diplomatic strategy: straining ties with Israel while

seeking closer relations with Turkey, the perpetrator of the genocide, as well as Azerbaijan, which used weapons against Armenian/Artsakh civilians without facing consequences."

Another group of people, like politician Suren Surenyants, were greeting such a decision, noting "the decision's correctness and [that] it is reasonable to ponder what benefits non-recognition would bring to Armenia. Given Israel's antagonistic stance towards Armenia, aligning with supporters of Israel's genocidal policies is disgraceful today. Even if Palestine's recognition stemmed from the Pashinyan-Erdogan call, Armenia's recognition of Palestine seems warranted."

Some individuals debated the timing of such a crucial decision, contending that it would have been vital to recognize Palestine when Israel supported Azerbaijan

with weapons in the 2020 war, thus helping in its victory, or assisting Baku during the aggression against the Republic of Artsakh after a prolonged blockade in 2023.

Certainly, since Armenia gained independence, there has been an ongoing discussion about recognizing Palestine. However, Armenia refrained from taking this step to maintain its relationship with Israel. Despite having diplomatic ties, Armenia and Israel chose not to station resident ambassadors for several reasons. Yerevan was cautious not to strain these relations further. Furthermore, Yerevan deemed it illogical to recognize Palestine without first itself acknowledging Artsakh's independence.

Today, to grasp correctly the significance of Armenia's recognition, one must first understand the underlying motives for such a decision. If Turkey indeed pressured Armenia into this acknowledgment, it implies a lack of benefit for Armenia, with no reciprocation from Turkey given its reluctance to reciprocate unilateral concessions by Armenia. Of course, the timing of the Palestine recognition, following the Erdogan-Pashinyan call, raises questions about its connection to Erdogan. Whether right or wrong, attributing the decision to Erdogan, even if unfounded, appears to glorify the Turkish president in this regard. Even if this decision stemmed from Israel's support for Azerbaijan and Armenia aimed to promote a pro-Armenian stance, the public perception would be widely different.

Another crucial question is why Armenia chose to recognize Palestine now, taking into account the ongoing war in Gaza. Armenia is opposing not just Israel's stance but also that of Israel's allies, who not only reject Palestine but are aligned with Israel, such as, for instance, the United States. Currently, the US plays an active role as a mediator in the South Caucasus, engaged in Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani reconciliation, and this decision of official Yerevan conflicts with American interests in that regard.

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

WHAT KIND OF 'UNRECOGNIZED STATE' IS PALESTINE THAT REJOICED AND CONGRATULATED ALIYEV ON THE DESTRUCTION OF ANOTHER UNRECOGNIZED STATE, ARTSAKH?"



New General Manager Blocks 'Blunt Post With Vic'

By Vic Gerami

I've been a longtime programmer for KPFK 90.7 FM (Pacifica Network), am currently on the Board of Directors, and am the Convener of the Programming Oversight Committee. My program, "The Blunt Post with Vic," is the namesake of my online publication, The Blunt Post. Its focus is news and politics, and I interview members of Congress, governors, mayors, and many other elected officials, dignitaries, and high-profile public figures.

With the invasion of Artsakh in 2020 and the lack of mainstream media coverage, along with general news, I started to include important news about what consequently was the Artsakh Genocide. By then, we had a new Interim General Manager, Michael Novick, who was not too keen on me covering issues important to the Armenian community. He also raised the issue of me posting about related topics on X (Twitter) as I am a content creator for KPFK.

Last November, Novick wanted to move all 8:00 a.m. programs to bring "Democracy Now" back to its original spot. Four other programmers were offered alternate hour-long premium time slots except for me. Instead, he offered me two half-hour time slots on different days; my interviews alone are about 30 minutes. So, half-hour shows would not work.

I asked why the four other programmers were offered prime one-hour time slots, but I was not. But he never answered my question. Months have passed, and I have lost countless opportunities to interview elected officials. Nonetheless, I've continued to serve on the board and contribute to the network.

Out of 138 programs, not a single one focuses on issues important to the Armenian community, especially considering the diverse range of programs for other communities in SoCal.

KPFK recently sold its building in Studio City, CA, and moved to a new location in Glendale, where the largest ethnic group happens to be of Armenian descent.

The station's official mission statement includes, "KPFK's mission is to serve the community and support free

speech, cultural expression, peace, and justice." How is KPFK serving the community when it cancels the only program that discusses issues important to the hundreds of thousands of Armenian-Americans that live in Southern CA, the most prominent Armenian diaspora in the nation?

It's clear to me and the board that drastic action, including public support, must be taken to resolve this issue.

Thankfully, board members have supported me and advocated on my behalf. The following letter is from the KPFK executive board members, including the Convener of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and was sent to Michael by the Board Chair, Tatanka Bricca, on June 8, requesting the reinstatement of my program.

This powerful letter remains unanswered. When approached in person, he said he didn't want to talk about it.

You can contact Tatanka Bricca, KPFK Board Chair, at cbricca@me.com or me at vic@thebluntpost.com.

Below please find the letter of four board members to Michael Novick, edited for space:

Dear Michael,

We, the KPFK LSB members, request immediate reinstatement of Vic Gerami's show, "The Blunt Post with Vic" (TBPV) for several reasons, starting with the most pressing.

TBPV is an exceptional program that embodies KPFK's spirit. When covering national, regional, and local news, Vic gets his guests to open up with a friendly and warm demeanor but still asks tough questions. His catalog of interviews is impressive by any standard, including over 100 members of Congress, Governors, Mayors, local politicians, and beloved high-profile public figures. Among other noteworthy shows, when Vic interviewed Marianne Williamson at the KPFK studios in 2019, she disclosed her plan to drop out of the presidential race.

This is one of the most extraordinary times in our nation's history and possibly the most important election in our lifetime. Vic has interviewed over one-hundred members of Congress and is able to land interviews with some of the most significant high-profile people in the news, politics, and current events. Without Vic, KPFK and Pacifica are missing this opportunity to have major newsmakers on our air, and it's a huge loss for KPFK and Pacifica to be missing these opportunities.

Not a single program on KPFK has an Armenian host who covers topics which are particularly important to the roughly SoCal's 700,000+ Armenian community, especially at a time when the Armenians are going through the 2nd

Armenian Genocide and are targets of anti-Armenian and Armenophobic hate crimes locally. Of course, Maria Armodian has a terrific show, but she rarely touches on "Armenian" related topics.

Vic is a well-known gay Armenian-American activist, with a vast network of dedicated and intersectional supporters and listeners. KPFK should be maximizing Vic's notoriety to reach more listeners and members, not driving them away. We also cannot afford to lose the kind of PR and marketing he brings to the table that benefit KPFK. He produced KPFK's Pride Marathon for a few years, but the station hasn't done anything significant for Pride in 2024.

Since Vic, as a staff member replaced a board member who was elected in 2021, he is up for reelection this year. TBPV should be reinstated in June in order for him to qualify running as a staff member. Vic, as the convener of the Programming Oversight Committee (PrOC), is working on a substantial and much-needed project that includes analyzing all programs on our grid, that benefits the station greatly. We want him to continue his service.

It becomes hard not to consider attributing the cancellation of TBPV to a negative bias towards the Armenians, as this show is the only one that was targeted and eliminated with no rational, reasonable, and legitimate cause. Out of KPFK's 138 programs, not one has an Armenian host which regularly addresses issues important to the Armenian-American community. Finally, the fact that unlike four other programs moved from their 8:00 a.m. time slots, TBPV was the only one not given an alternate one-hour time slot, which further highlights the unfair, questionable, and possibly illegal cancellation of Vic's program. We hope this serious breach of ethical practices in the business of mass communication can resolve fairly, honestly, and free of any prejudice or discriminatory agendas towards one of the largest minorities and most vulnerable and disenfranchised communities in Southern California, the Armenians.

We urge you to give TBPV a drive-time hour-long time slot immediately so the station can benefit from his unique and important interviews and programming and we can keep one of our dedicated programmers on air and on the LSB.

Respectfully,

Tatanka Christopher Bricca, Chair, KPFK LSB
Harvey Wasserman, KPFK—Pacifica National Board Director
Evelia Jones, KPFK—Pacifica National Board Director
Jan Goodman, KPFK—Pacifica National Board Director
Myla Reson, KPFK—Pacifica National Board Director

IN CELEBRATION OF OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY, WE THANK YOU!

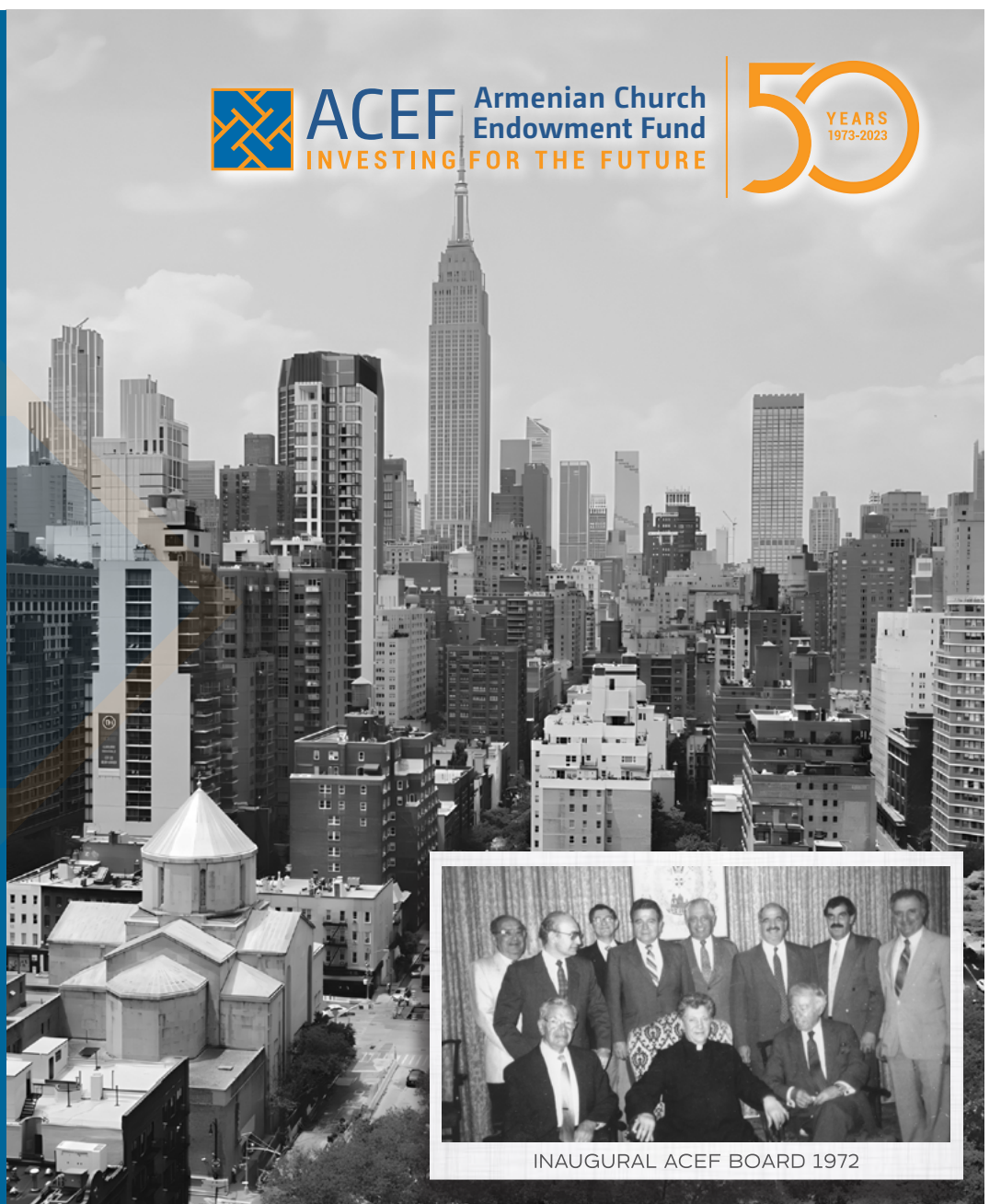
Since its founding in 1973, the Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF) has been committed to the long-term investment planning of hundreds of endowment and investment funds established by churches and parishioners alike—what we call "investing as a community." We are proud to have grown the funds we manage to nearly \$150 million while providing an annual source of income to beneficiaries, including parishes and various church organizations and programs, for the past 50 years.

As we mark our golden anniversary, we express our sincere gratitude to all the organizations and individuals who have entrusted ACEF with their funds throughout the years. We look forward to continuing our mission and helping ensure the longevity and strength of our Armenian community for years to come!

Learn more at ACEFINVEST.ORG
or call 212.686.0710.

 **ACEF** Armenian Church
Endowment Fund
INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

50
YEARS
1973-2023



INAUGURAL ACEF BOARD 1972



ACEF is an independent, separately incorporated, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to provide professional, highly disciplined, tightly controlled, and cost-effective asset management services to the various entities of the Armenian Apostolic Church.