



Armenian Gymnast Artur Davtyan Wins Silver

PARIS (News.am) — Tokyo Olympic Games bronze medalist, world champion, two-time European champion, three-time World Cup winner, and European Games champion Artur Davtyan of Armenia won an Olympic silver medal for the vault on August 4.

Davtyan scored 14.966 points in the sum of his two jumps in the Vault exercise in the artistic gymnastics competition at the 33rd Summer Olympics being held in Paris. He scored 14.966 points in both jumps.

see MEDALIST, page 20



Artur Davtyan with his silver medal, and with gold medalist Carlos Yulo of the Philippines and bronze medalist Harry Hepworth of Great Britain

Former Karabakh Leaders Languish in Azerbaijani Jails Awaiting Trial

By Ani Avetisyan

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev doesn't want anything to draw attention away from the annual UN climate summit, COP29, which will take place in Baku in November. Accordingly, he's pushed up parliamentary elections to September, so they won't coincide with COP29. But there's another potential distraction that Baku hasn't yet fully addressed – the trials of prominent Karabakh leaders in Azerbaijani custody.

When Azerbaijani forces completed taking over Karabakh in September of last year, they took into custody a bevy of Armenians who held leadership roles in the de facto republic during the almost three decades it operated as a quasi-independent entity.



Ruben Vardanyan in Azeri custody. (Photo: gov.az)

The precise number of those who can be described as war-related political detainees in Azerbaijani custody is a matter of contention. What's certain is Baku wants to settle old scores.

At least eight prominent Karabakh individuals were arrested by Baku in the days after the September 2023 takeover, including former presidents Arkadi Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan and Arayik Harutyunyan. Former military leaders of the region were also arrested.

According to the Armenian lawyers working with the prisoners in Azerbaijan, at least 23 Armenian political figures are being held in Azerbaijan: five of them were captured during the initial phase of the Second Karabakh War in 2020, with the remainder detained last September. About 80 additional Armenians have not been accounted for: Armenian lawyers claim to have information that many are in Azerbaijani custody, but Baku hasn't confirmed such information.

see POWS, page 5



Dr. Mikayel Grigoryan, kneeling, with his colleagues at the Erebouni Hospital in Yerevan

Panel Is Bringing Stroke Care in Armenia on Par with the West

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — A group of doctors, neurologists and neurosurgeons from the US and Armenia, are collaborating to pioneer lifesaving care for stroke patients in Armenia, thereby preventing death, or more commonly, a lifetime of debilitating after effects.

The group, called the Armenia Stroke Council (ASC), was officially formed in 2019 through a decree by the Armenia

Ministry of Health, as a scientific advisory body. The ASC is tasked with creating a standard care protocol for stroke patients, oversee accreditation guidelines for stroke centers throughout Armenia, and in general act as an information and communication tool connecting the Ministry of Health and various hospitals in Armenia and the diaspora where affiliated doctors work. As part of its efforts, members also offer training to doctors.

see STROKE, page 12

Shushanik Mirzakhanyan Changed the Way the National Cinema Center of Armenia Worked

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Shushanik Mirzakhanyan, director of the National Cinema Center of Armenia (NCCA), visited Boston in April, as part of the Boston Armenian Film Festival organized by the Amaras Art Alliance of Massachusetts together with the NCCA. A film producer, lecturer at the Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinematography and managing director of the Hayk documentary film studio NGO, Mirzakhanyan

see CINEMA, page 2



ARMENIA

AGBU Provides Free Medical Care To Displaced Artsakh Families

Page 5



WASHINGTON D.C.

U.S. Senate Calls for \$65 Million Aid to Armenia

Page 8



CALIFORNIA

Dentist Massis Armen Bahador's Passion for Art

Page 14





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Byurakan Hosts Meteor Shower Observation

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — On August 10, 11 and 12, starting from 7 p.m., visitors can witness a beautiful celestial phenomenon from the Byurakan Observatory, away from city lights. The Perseid meteor shower, also known to many as “shooting stars”, “star rain,” and “falling stars” will be visible in the night sky.

The Perseids are fast-moving meteors that burn up and disappear upon reaching the Earth’s atmosphere, leaving a beautiful trail in the night sky.

Turkey Links Rapprochement with Armenia to Yerevan-Baku Processes

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Turkey may open its border with neighboring Armenia if relations between Yerevan and Baku are normalized, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on August 1.

“The negotiation process between Azerbaijan and Armenia is ongoing. We need to prepare our scenario in case of its positive outcome, and work is underway in this direction,” Fidan told *Sabah* newspaper.

“If it (the normalization process – Ed.) is completed, we will activate the positive scenario, which means we can open our gates on the border.”

On July 30, the special representatives of Armenia and Turkey, Ruben Rubinyan and Serdar Kilic, met at the border of the two countries, confirming their intention to continue the process of normalizing bilateral relations without preconditions.

Yazidi Genocide Anniversary Marked in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Genocide is a crime against humanity, and it is the gravest crime. Rustam Bakoyan, Deputy Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Human Rights Protection and Public Affairs, wrote on his Facebook page, referring to the 10th anniversary of the Yazidi (Yezidi) genocide in Sinjar. The message reads as follows:

“10 years have passed since the tragedy of August 3, 2014. In the 21st century, a genocide took place in front of the civilized world, which is still not over, as around 2,600 women and girls are still in the hands of Islamists, and 100,000 Yazidis are in camps. This year was symbolic for me, I’m sure, for my fellow Yazidi people as well, because the National Assembly adopted the project authored by me on making an amendment to the law ‘On Holidays and Memorial Days of the Republic of Armenia’ and designated August 3 as the date of the 2014 Sinjar Yazidi Genocide Memorial Day. This was a historic event for both Yazidis and the Republic of Armenia, because, although dozens of countries condemned the Yazidi genocide, we designated it as a Memorial Day.

Shushanik Mirzakhanyan Changed the Way the National Cinema Center of Armenia Worked

CINEMA, from page 1

spoke with the *Mirror-Spectator* about the work of the NCCA and the state of film in Armenia today.

Shortly after the interview, on May 2, the Armenian government decided to reorganize the NCCA as the Cinema Foundation of Armenia (CFA). It then appointed an interim acting director, Davit Banuchyan, in place of Mirzakhanyan, and on July 24, the Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports Zhanna Andreasyan and Deputy Minister Daniel Danielyan visited the CFA to introduce Banuchyan to the staff. This article consequently only concerns the activities of the NCCA prior to this new appointment and any changes that might be forthcoming.

As Minister Andreasyan remarked to the CFA staff on July 24, “We are at a very important stage with you now. Several secondary legislative acts [regulations] are at different stages of discussion and circulation. They will increase the scope and functions of your work. In that sense, the foundation needs a certain period of time in order to make reassessments, understand what the higher priority steps are to be taken in the near future, and what kind of results should be recorded under the new legislative conditions.”

NCCA Financed Films

Mirzakhanyan, a graduate of the Moscow Film Institute, prominent in the Soviet era, has worked for more than 40 years in the field of film, starting with film production, and has worked as an assistant director and then director of films. In mid-2017 she left her position as director of the Armenian Film Studio to become NCCA director, and implemented many changes. NCCA was a legal successor to the famed Soviet-era ArmenFilm (HayFilm) studio, founded in 1923. ArmenFilm was sold to private investors Gerard Cafesjian and Bagrat Sargsyan in 2005, who renamed it as CS Film Studios. Meanwhile, the Armenian government created NCCA in 2006 as a state nonprofit organization under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education and Science. In 2015, the Armenian government reclaimed the CS Film Studio’s assets, claiming the latter failed to refurbish and revitalize the studio as required in the sale, and turned it into NCCA.

Mirzakhanyan said that the NCCA staff was not a large one, with 21 people working at the Henrik Malyan Theater, which presents productions in the style of Malyan, and 60 people in the rest of NCCA, which is around 80 altogether. Of course, she interjected, this does not include the many people outside of the organization with which NCCA cooperates. Its yearly budget for film production was 130 million dram four years ago, while in the last two years this was raised to around 380 million dram. The film restoration budget for many years fluctuated between 2 ½ and 3 million dram, but for the second year now it is around 80 million dram. Mirzakhanyan said that the government, seeing the success of NCCA’s earlier projects, decided to increase its budget.

Mirzakhanyan said that soon after starting her post as NCCA director, by 2018, she was able to change the approach towards financing films used by the center, which no longer operated as a film studio. She said, “We created a new framework with new standards. We announced competitions in a new way through which independent producers can present their bids. We chose that

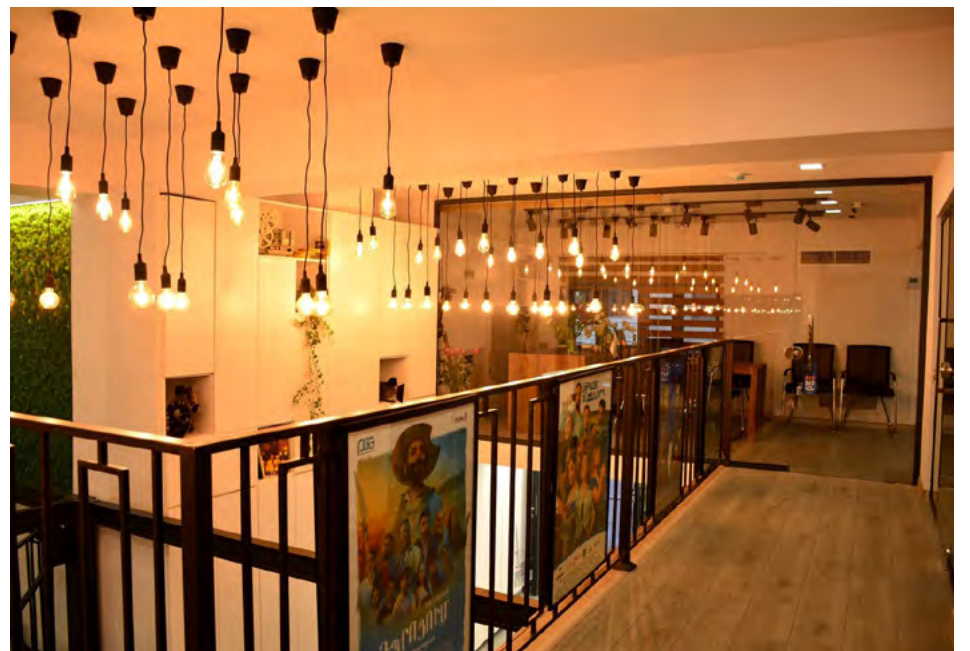
model by studying French cinema production, and European production in general.”

Mirzakhanyan said that instead of fully financing its own films, the NCCA provided partial financial assistance of around 30-40 percent of the estimated budget to independent film producers, who in turn had to find the remaining funding elsewhere. She said, “This was important because when you make the producer independent, and give him these possibilities, he can first of all create films through joint productions, often with several different countries. This brings about another important fact, that when your product is ready, there will be greater possibilities of disseminating the film and presenting it to greater numbers of viewers.”

She noted that NCCA has supported numerous such joint productions with different countries, usually 2-3, and even one which was done with 5. This model allows cooperation with European coun-

Thirdly, she mentioned the 2022 documentary “Aurora’s Sunrise,” directed by Inna Sahakyan, which is a hybrid format including animation, excerpts from a Los Angeles interview of genocide survivor Aurora Mardiganian, and excerpts from the surviving part of the film “Auction of Souls,” made in New York in 1919 about her experiences. A coproduction of Armenian, Lithuanian and German companies, it won the Asia Pacific Screen Award in 2022 in Australia for best animated feature film and was Armenia’s official submission to the 95th Academy Awards for Best International Feature Film.

Mirzakhanyan said, “This too was a great achievement for us. It was screened in over 50 cities and countries and had great success in around 20 festivals. What is important is that by showing the film, the Genocide is also spoken about and the most influential journalists and newspapers write about the Genocide again. So through film



Armenian movie posters adorn the NCCA offices (courtesy NCCA)

tries and even the United States. She cited the 2022 film “Amerikatsi” directed by Michael Goorjian as the first project done as an Armenian-American joint film. The NCCA was the first to give financing for it, Mirzakhanyan said, because it believed in the project. She said, “We are very proud that we took the right step because later it was borne out. It has won success in many interesting European festivals. It was even presented by the Armenian Film Academy to the Oscars. It again achieved great success as it was on the short list. This was the first time that an Armenian film was on the short list.”

As another example of the success of this model, Mirzakhanyan pointed to “Should the Wind Drop” [*Si le vente tombe* in French, or in Armenian, *Yerp vor kamin hantardvi*] directed by Nora Martirosyan, which in 2020 was jointly produced by companies in Armenia, Belgium and France. It was presented at the Cannes Festival that year as an Armenian film.

Mirzakhanyan said, “This was an achievement, since during the years of the period of [Armenian state] independence, in other words, during the last 30 years, this was first film with which we registered success in a serious European film festival, and which was selected as part of the program of competition.” While the Covid pandemic prevented the competition from being fully conducted, festival artistic director Thierry Frémaux mentioned this film in his online remarks and it received two nominations.

we were able to revive this topic and make the whole world listen about this frightful calamity.”

The Armenian state benefited from its participation in Eurimages, the cultural support fund of the Council of Europe, which provided funding for “Aurora’s Sunrise” and “Should the Wind Drop,” as well as “Luka,” written and directed by Jessica Woodworth, Mirzakhanyan said. (This film, supported by organizations from five different countries, including Armenia, has among its main performers Armenian actor Samvel Tadevossian.)

Mirzakhanyan said that NCCA did not support the makers of comedies, who generally do not apply for aid but find sponsors privately and earn money. Instead, NCCA supported feature films, art and documentary films, short films and various other types of genres. It invited film experts from different countries of the world, who can participate online in the pitches and examinations of films, especially Armenian diasporans who help in the advancement of Armenian film. She said NCCA placed great emphasis on supporting young Armenian filmmakers through financing.

If there is any profit from a film NCCA invested in, the producers were obliged to return the money up to but not greater than what NCCA originally invested, Mirzakhanyan said, so that the money could be used to finance another film. However, few were able to return the entire sum, she noted.

The effect of the change of Armenia’s
continued on next page



ARMENIA

from previous page

government in 2018, called by some the Velvet Revolution, was positive for the NCCA, Mirzakhanyan said, though she emphasized that she initiated the changes in NCCA prior to this. The new regime provided financing for the renovation of the NCCA's office space. For many years, this space was rented out, while other property was rented by NCCA for its own use. She said this was absurd, so she was able to get the state to support this. Also, for the last two years, the budget provided by the state had been increased a lot, she said, especially for Armenian film restoration.

Film Restoration

Aside from promoting the creation of new films, NCCA restored a number of films that are important parts of the country's film heritage. Working with specialists of European countries, Mirzakhanyan said, "We learn things through this cooperation, and thanks to this, we can do a higher quality production."

In 2018, NCCA, working with colleagues in Poland and France, digitized and restored Sergei Parajanov's short documentary film "Hakob Hovnatanyan," originally made in 1967 prior to the director's famous "Color of Pomegranates," along with two other of his shorts. Mirzakhanyan said that the Armenian General Benevolent Union in New York aided in this greatly. Three 35mm 4K film copies were prepared. In 2019, one was given to the Pompidou Center in Paris, which was the first Armenian film given to that important museum, and one in 2020 to New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), in another first.

Aside from helping promote the classics of Armenian film, Mirzakhanyan explained that such gifts were made for the sake of preservation. She said that in case a copy of the film in one place over the years is damaged, another copy hopefully will remain intact and preserved.

In 2022, NCCA restored Frunze Dovlatyan's 1966 feature film "Hello, It's Me," which was selected in competition at the Cannes Festival that year, and presented again by Armenia in the framework of the centennial of Armenian film at Cannes in 2023 as a classic. Mirzakhanyan said, "We were able to present it as one of the best films of the world. This is also an important work of the Cinema Center — we restore legacy films."

MK2 Films, the global French film distribution association, signed an agreement of cooperation and said that they found a pearl this year in Cannes. Mirzakhanyan said, "This was very moving for us."

In the fall 2023, MoMA screened Hamo Beknazaryan's 1928 film "Khaspush" after NCCA sent a restored 35 mm 4k version, while in January 2024, two more restored Beknazaryan films, the 1928 "House on the Volcano," and the 1930 "Land of Nayiri," were presented to MoMA, which screened them too. Mirzakhanyan said, "For about 3 years back-to-back we had such close collaboration with such an important international platform as MoMA, and we have had a presentation nearly every year." There is a preliminary agreement that next year too there will be a presentation there.

Mirzakhanyan said that NCCA was also working actively with La Cinémathèque française of Paris, where for three years in a row, Armenian films were shown. This year, she said, NCCA planned to show something by Parajanov because of his anniversary, which is part of the UNESCO list of anniversaries for events, and jointly restore another film.

As part of the centennial celebrations, in early April, Parajanov's "Color of Pomegranates" was screened along with scenes unused in the film at UNESCO headquar-



The Temple of Cinema installation at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, April 2024 (photo courtesy NCCA Facebook website)

ters. In Soviet times, such scenes, either doubles or pieces the director chose not to use, normally were discarded, but the workers at HayFilm understood their value and preserved them anyway, Mirzakhanyan said.

The film fragments had been completely restored and digitalized in 2018 by NCCA with the Polish Fixafilm association together with restoration curator Daniel Bird, and they were shown in the form of an installation, on 24 special table monitors of different sizes on which they played continually on a loop.

The first showing of the installation, called the Temple of Cinema, was at the 48th International Film Festival of Rotterdam, Netherlands, in 2019, and then in Yerevan the same year at the Ararat Film House. Financial assistance from the Armenian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports allowed the creation of portable table monitors, the feet of which fold, and it was this version that was set up at UNESCO. Though this UNESCO showing was important for Armenia, Mirzakhanyan at the same time noted that the hall was not ideal for the installation. For future showings, she said, "As it was called the Temple of Cinema, it should rather be in a place like a church, airy, where Sayat Nova is heard and there is the smell of incense. That would create a totally different aura."

NCCA did not possess the equipment necessary for scanning films, but the Armenian state television company did, so sometimes NCCA collaborated with it, Mirzakhanyan said. There were only a few restoration experts in Armenia, she added, so NCCA first would scan films in Armenia and then send out the digital files for restoration. Many Armenian films are held in Moscow by the Gosfilmofond [the Russian State Film Archive] as a result of Soviet policies, though NCCA retained their copyrights as the legal successor to HayFilm, so NCCA paid for scans of these films as the first stage in their restoration.

Mirzakhanyan added that subtitling was added to films when they were digitalized in languages like English, French or other major European languages. A new project was started last year, Mirzakhanyan said, with students from the Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, as well as with students from other universities. They were taught how to prepare the subtitles, and they did this in French for the

Armenian film "We Are Our Mountains" by Henrik Malyan. The subtitling of other films was planned, she said, which gets new viewers for Armenian films, gets students interested in Armenian cinema, and simultaneously advances the students' abilities in various languages.

NCCA applied to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports to create a laboratory which would be called, on the model of the Matenadaran (the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts), the Kinodaran, or repository of films, where both preservation and restoration would take place. Right now, Mirzakhanyan said, films are being preserved in Armenia but not in good technical conditions with climate control and other factors. The set-ups are old, which is why such a step must be taken. Film, if properly taken care of, is a long-lasting format, unlike digital ones, which also are changed frequently, she noted.

Where Can You View Armenian Films?

NCCA has its own YouTube site (http://www.youtube.com/@HayFilm_Official) where there are a variety of digitalized videos of Armenian films, though nearly all without captions or subtitles and many are not restored. There are some 88,000 subscribers. These include very old films as well as some from the 2000s, but not the newest films nor many of the recently fully restored and captioned ones.

Everything produced by HayFilm belongs to NCCA (and now its successor foundation). NCCA/Cinema Foundation of Armenia has the rights also to screen the contemporary films which receive state financing, but this is only with the agreement of the producer, so that authorial rights are preserved. Mirzakhanyan gave the example of the films shown in Boston in collaboration with Amaras, for which NCCA had previously realized written agreements with the producers to allow them to be brought to the US and screened.

Contemporary films as well as those classics which have been newly restored and captioned were presented through professional platforms such as through museums and cinémathèques. This provided these films almost automatically with a greater valuation. "It is as if we place a label on them and we obtain a certain level," Mirzakhanyan said. She stressed that NCCA

was always ready for cooperation with institutions in many different countries.

Last year, 2023, was the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Armenian film production, and NCCA tried to show Armenian films everywhere, she said — in festivals, in private cinemas, and various other platforms. Around 100 films were shown for free.

In Armenia, there are very few remaining true movie houses. In Yerevan, Mirzakhanyan said, there is only one left, Kino Moscow, and the rest are in malls, as the culture of going to movie houses has declined compared to the Soviet era. This is a problem for movie producers, who want to distribute their films and of course make some money too. Another problem, she added, is that Armenian producers do not have the financial means to properly advertise their films. They can use social media, but ads are very expensive.

Now there is a movement to recreate movie houses, and NCCA established ties with them in cities. Mirzakhanyan said that in the villages, NCCA brought mobile screens to show films outdoors in the summer.

During the Soviet era and even afterwards, Mirzakhanyan remarked, "For many years, we did not present our Armenian films. It only has begun now. Films were shown in different festivals and won successes but not with a planned program of Armenian film, just the works of individual film directors. It is remembered more, it becomes more permanent and global, when you present Armenian cinema — Malyan, Dovlatyan, Peleshian, Parajanov, and various others, you show the breadth to film specialists and directors...It is never too late to present our history and legacy. This is our chronicle through film."

As far as Armenian filmmaking itself, Mirzakhanyan said, "It seems to me that there was a different style in the Soviet years. I think now a new style or nature of Armenian film is being created, because there are new youth and new thinking. I cannot say that everyone is talented and everyone's films are great. This cannot be, but I think that the more possibilities we give to create, from that quantity, we can find and choose certain pearls and give those directors a greater possibility of growing more. I believe we are in a stage where we have cultivated the soil, planted the sprouts, and now wait for the fruits."



ARMENIA

Kalfayan: Release of Armenian POWs in Azerbaijan Is a Matter of National Dignity

PARIS (News.am) — On July 31, news.am published the following interview with **Philippe Raffi Kalfayan**, PhD in International Law, Associate-Researcher at Paris Pantheon-Assas University, Legal Counsel to Governments. He is also a regular columnist for the *Mirror-Spectator*.

News.am: Azerbaijan continues to illegally keep 23 Armenians in Baku prisons. From the application sent by Ruben Vardanyan's legal team to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, we have learned that he is being tortured. Surely, other Armenian prisoners are subjected to torture and cruel treatment, as well. According to you, in this case, what should the state do to protect its citizens, what should human rights organizations and NGOs do and what should the Diaspora do?

I need to remark on how the question is posed.

First, there is no doubt that prisoners of Armenian descent have been subjected to torture and to cruel treatment in the past, including the prisoners of war. Some of those cases are documented and have been reported to the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) during its last session in April 2024. CAT was reviewing Azerbaijan's situation in the framework of the periodic review. It concluded: "The Committee was alarmed by alleged extra-judicial killings,



Philippe Raffi Kalfayan

torture and ill-treatment of national and ethnic Armenians during armed conflict and anti-terrorism operations, and the perceived lack of investigations and prosecutions of these allegations. It also expressed concerns over the continued detention of 23 individuals of Armenian ethnic or national origin for terrorism and related offences. The Committee urged Azerbaijan to state at the highest levels that any violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law are unacceptable. It also called for independent, impartial, transparent and effective investigations into the allegations of serious violations and urged the State party to bring those responsible to justice."

The UN Committee's findings have stronger legal force than any procedure engaged by UN special procedures (the Special Rapporteur on Torture is one of them). Azerbaijan has an obligation to respond to UN Committee against Torture, since it is a party to the Treaty prohibiting torture and ill-treatment, while it may decide without consequence to not respond to the Special Rapporteur.

Meanwhile, all channels, be they treaty bodies or special procedures, must be used by NGOs and lawyers in regional (European) and international forums. Each record of violations of international law is

a precious element for current and future judicial proceedings against Azerbaijan, as well as for awareness of governments, legislative bodies and intergovernmental institutions around the globe. This is where the diaspora and the diplomatic apparatus of the Republic of Armenia must act in a concerted manner.

Second, as far as the eight former Karabakh (Artsakh) officials arrested and imprisoned, I personally don't have many details. The application made to the Special Rapporteur on Torture by one of Ruben Vardanyan's lawyers mentions the ill-treatment related to his detention conditions and the retaliatory measures he has been subjected to after he decided to go on a hunger strike. Those ill-treatments are quite common in authoritarian countries. Here, it is specially alarming due to Azerbaijan's official policy of hatred toward Armenians, and in particular, toward Artsakh Armenians, who are presented as the worst among the Armenians.

As a matter of fact, the arbitrary arrest and detention of those persons, the fabricated charges of terrorism and the hatred toward Armenians are creating an environment conducive to ill-treatment. Knowing that terrorism or terrorism-related offences are punished very severely in Azerbaijan, and considering the absence of rule of law, in particular independent Judiciary and attorneys guaranteeing fair trials, the prisoners are indeed subjected to mental ill-treatment at the very least, since they cannot build any hope on justice; they can only hope for political pressure from the international community. I am not sure that the so-called international community exists at the moment, especially when it concerns the violations of international law.

The Republic of Armenia does not communicate much about the prisoners. The authorities instead issue contemptible words against Artsakh people and their leaders. One can still hope that the fate of the 23 known prisoners is part of the negotiations taking place between Armenia and Azerbaijan; not doing so would be criminal.

Third, your statement construes that the prisoners have the status of citizens of Armenia, but are they indeed Armenian citizens? Considering the public debates about that issue which revealed the subtle differences between citizenship and passport, on one hand, and one of the stated goals of the government, which is to define Armenians as only those who live within the borders of the Republic of Armenia, on the other, one must wonder legitimately if the Armenian government considers those prisoners as Armenian nationals that ought to be protected.

I have said publicly from the beginning that no peace treaty or agreement should ever be drawn without the prior return of those prisoners. This is a matter of national pride and precisely a trust-building between nationals and their government. This is also a customary practice for most states. You will never see the US, France, Russia, Israel or others willing to sign a peace treaty with a hostile party that keeps their nationals hostages.

Hence my response to your question is purely political:

The Republic of Armenia, as a state, should never have let this situation happen as far as the arrest of former officials at the end of September 2023 is concerned. It is still an enigma: why did many former Artsakh officials leave the territory, while

others were arrested?

News.am: Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan Hikmet Hajiyev recently announced that an invitation was sent to Armenia to participate in COP29, to be held in Baku in November. Azerbaijan also has declared on all platforms that COP29 should be the "COP of Peace," but it continues to violate human rights and illegally detain Armenians. Is this not an opportune moment for Armenia to demand the return of the Armenian hostages and prisoners?

Your question makes no mention of the fact that Armenia already got compensation for its support for Azerbaijan's bid to host the 29th Session of the Conference of Parties (COP29) (see <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2023/12/07/Announcement/>). Thirty-two Armenian military servicemen have been released thanks to this support. Azerbaijan insisted in the joint statement that this action was "driven by the values of humanism and as a gesture of goodwill." Therefore, Armenia cannot play that card anymore. It is the role of other states to boycott the COP29 in Azerbaijan if the prisoners and hostages are not released prior to the opening that conference. There are already enough factual and legal records of the arbitrary arrests of those prisoners and of their torture and ill-treatment by Azerbaijan to justify such a stance. In addition, it is of general knowledge that there is no rule of law in Azerbaijan: no independence of the judiciary and of the lawyers.

News.am: Recently, the first prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, announced a campaign advocating for COP29 to consider not only issues surrounding climate change, but also human rights and the release of prisoners. How do you evaluate such an initiative?

This statement is conforming to my hereinabove response. I commend his call but I am ashamed that Mr. Ocampo needed to issue that open letter to make the Armenians move.

His call means: Armenians, if you don't take the lead for the immediate release of Armenian hostages and political prisoners from Baku at the occasion of COP29 coming event, then others cannot help! (This statement is true for the question of prisoners, as well as for the conduct of other Armenian public affairs.)

My opinion is that the remaining prisoners, especially the former leaders of Artsakh, will be kept hostage by Azerbaijan until Armenia abandons the mention of Artsakh from its constitution. This hostage-taking is unlawful from an international law perspective but it is a case of the victor's law being imposed on the defeated party, personified by the Prime Minister. Azerbaijan's goal is to humiliate definitively the Armenians and cancel all dreams of an independent Artsakh. Keeping hostages and condemning in Azerbaijani courts the former leaders of Artsakh aim at destroying any capacity of resistance.

News.am: One of Azerbaijan's demands is that Armenia withdraw the lawsuits filed against Azerbaijan in international courts. What consequences could this have for Armenia?

First of all, I would like to say that this demand would not be a surprise if confirmed. That would be a normal step if Azerbaijan were a sincere partner in its will to sign a fair peace treaty. Obviously, it is

not since their leaders ask for new conditions every day.

What was more surprising was that the idea of abandoning interstate proceedings was first brought to the public debate domestically by Armenia's Prime Minister.

The human rights community reacted promptly, as did my colleagues, the former Armenian and Artsakh ombudspersons Arman Tatoyan, Artak Beglaryan and Gegham Stepanyan, as well as lawyers representing the interests of Armenian citizens in international courts, Ara Ghazaryan and Siranush Sahakyan. Those five issued a joint statement warning against the consequences for Armenia dropping lawsuits against Azerbaijan in international courts. I fully subscribe to the key points developed into this statement.

Both the evocation and the debate about this eventuality are a disaster for the cause of justice, the struggle against impunity for international crimes, the credibility of Armenia as an international subject of law, and finally for the diplomatic efforts of Armenia.

International law and diplomacy are intrinsically related. The statement of the Prime Minister sabotages the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Republic of Armenia Agent for international legal affairs. It endangers the temporary legal victory obtained at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), one of the very few good initiatives of this government. Indeed, none of former governments did ever engage in interstate proceedings.

Abandoning the interstate proceedings at the ICJ would be the definitive burial of the Artsakh cause. Such a move would also damage all other proceedings at the European Court of Human Rights or at the International Criminal Court, because the judges are not indifferent to diplomatic pressures or bilateral settlements

The current temporary measures decided by the ICJ already protect the right of return of Artsakh population on their lands.

It must be reminded that the ICJ Order of December 7, 2021, indicated that Azerbaijan shall, in accordance with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, (a) Protect from violence and bodily harm all persons captured in relation to the 2020 Conflict who remain in detention, and ensure their security and equality before the law; (b) Take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin; (c) Take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artefacts.

In its last request for interim measures from the ICJ, after the September 19, 2023 full-scale military assault on the 120,000 ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and their forcible displacement to Armenia, Armenia indicated that "Azerbaijan shall refrain from taking punitive actions against the current or former political representatives or military personnel of Nagorno-Karabakh."

The ICJ order on November 17, 2023 concludes that "Azerbaijan must ensure that persons who have left Nagorno-

continued on next page



ARMENIA



A pediatrician from Artsakh examines an infant at the AGBU polyclinic.

AGBU Provides Free Medical Care to Displaced Artsakh Families

YEREVAN — Following the forced displacement of Artsakh Armenians from their ancestral lands, AGBU has extended its humanitarian relief program to support the health and wellbeing of uprooted individuals and families. One important initiative involves the AGBU Claudia Nazarian Polyclinic—originally established in 2017 to provide medical support to Syrian Armenian refugees delivered by Syrian Armenian health professionals. In that same spirit, the polyclinic has recruited key specialists who are from Artsakh themselves. This goes a long way to establish trust and mutual understanding between patient and provider. The facility has also been enhanced and refurbished, along with extended hours of operation.

In January 2024, the polyclinic opened its doors to provide free-of-charge services in cardiology, ENT, ophthalmology, gynecology and pediatrics, as well as mental health services for children and adults. In general, the facility can serve over 8,000 people annually. As of mid-July of this year, out of the 2,870 patient visits 1,200 were Artsakh Armenians.

Executive Director of AGBU Armenia Marina Mkhitarian stated, “We aimed to provide a safe space for physical and psy-

chological healing for the Artsakh people. That starts with providers who speak the Artsakh dialect and are no strangers to the tragedy and loss that marked the past three years of intense destabilization in Artsakh. Fostering this sense of community in Armenia, along with ensuring easy access to high-quality care, can make all the difference to a family’s road to recovery.”

Children seeking psychological assistance were treated with therapies from the very first days of the polyclinic’s opening. According to Lilit Shahramanyan, Patient Liaison Officer of the AGBU Claudia Nazarian Polyclinic, also a displaced individual from Artsakh, many have already shown significant improvements and even discontinued therapy. In addition to helping children overcome war traumas, sessions are available to guide parents in supporting their children. To facilitate this process, a psychologist and a nurse from Artsakh were hired to aid communication and build trust between patients and therapists.

The most common adult cases were related to ophthalmology, followed by cardiology. “Patients primarily seek treatment for eye issues, blood pressure and diabetes, in addition to free medication for the latter

two. Mental health services are the third most sought after. In June alone, there were 47 patients seeking counseling services, 35 of whom were children,” noted Lilit Shahramanyan.

Lilit Shahramanyan mentions that some patients were diagnosed with specific cardiological diseases before the 2020 Artsakh War and 2023 forced displacement, while others began experiencing symptoms only after the displacement. “We often see patients seeking cardiological or gastroenterological assistance and winding up with mental health sessions instead. This is due to the immense stress Artsakh Armenians have endured, particularly over the past three years.”

In order for the polyclinic to provide better and more comprehensive services to the patients, AGBU is planning to acquire essential new equipment to fill in the gaps over time, which would also spare patients the time and energy of visiting other medical institutions for examinations for diagnostic testing and other treatments.

For more information and to donate to the AGBU Global Relief Fund to support programs such as the AGBU Claudia Nazarian Polyclinic, go to: agbu.org/global-relief.

Release of Armenian POWs in Azerbaijan Is a Matter of National Dignity

from previous page

Karabakh after September 19, 2023 and who wish to return to Nagorno-Karabakh are able to do so in a safe, unimpeded and expeditious manner.” It also recalls Azerbaijan’s undertaking “to protect and not to destroy registration, identity and/or private property documents and records found in Garabagh”.

Although this last order did not mention any measure in relation to the war and political prisoners, I do consider that the ICJ is the right forum where to bring and defend their case. If the forcible transfer of Artsakh’s population is later recognized by the Court as a violation of international law, the release of Artsakh people will become an obligation of Azerbaijan in the light of its obligation of cessation of the violation. There is a precedent in the case law of the ICJ (*United States Diplomatic*

and Consular Staff in Tehran case opposing United States v. Iran). The fact that the detained entities are human beings, injured by their unlawful treatment in their physical and psychic integrity, in their personal liberty and dignity, makes their release, morally and legally, an urgent question.

None of this may happen if Armenia abandons the interstate proceedings.

Although Armenia’s withdrawal from ICJ proceedings would create serious diplomatic hindrances, there exist alternative solutions to continue the defense of Artsakh people’s rights and the release of hostages.. It is inappropriate to elaborate on those options publicly.

News.am: And finally, is real peace, or any peace treaty, possible if one country continues to hold the citizens of another country as captives or hostages?

The continuous arrogant attitude and ev-

er-growing demands of the victor country, Azerbaijan, don’t augur a real peace. The Armenian government must admit that the peace at any price failed so far. Azerbaijan is trying to save the COP29 in November. After that, its behavior will depend on the geopolitical balance and perspectives in the South Caucasus at that time. The presidential elections in the US and its subsequent developments in the Ukraine-Russia war will be the strong factors.

Armenia must also take advantage of this time. It should focus its resources on making the country stronger in all aspects before the next stages of negotiation.

There cannot be lasting peace when it is built only on the demands of the bully victor. Armenia has demonstrated its good will to obtain peace. It is now the turn of Azerbaijan to do so: the release of all prisoners and hostages would be a good start.

Former Karabakh Leaders Languish in Azerbaijani Jails Awaiting Trial

POWS, from page 1

A few trials have already occurred. The most recent concluded in mid-July: Karabakh Armenian Rashid Beglaryan was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment, on a variety of charges, including “committing genocide” in Khojaly in 1992, during the First Karabakh War. The first Armenian detainee tried and convicted for conduct during the war was Vagif Khachatryan who received 15 years last November, also for “committing genocide” in Khojaly.

Perhaps the highest-profile detainee is Ruben Vardanyan, an Armenian-Russian billionaire who briefly held a top political post in Karabakh before the territory was completely overrun by Azerbaijani forces. Family members, who are permitted brief conversations with the detainee, say that he has been treated harshly, including prolonged periods of solitary confinement. There is no indication when his trial will take place, they add. An air of mystery shrouds the case: despite claims from the Azeri prosecutor that the investigation has concluded, Vardanyan’s local lawyers assert that the process is still ongoing.

In April, Vardanyan went on a hunger strike to protest his treatment. His lawyers in June filed a complaint with the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. Vardanyan’s family members and lawyers say he’s been punished for his hunger-strike protest, denied access to drinking water for over two days and forced to “stand for extended periods.” They add he has lost a “substantial amount of weight.”

“He was also deprived of proper medical support,” Vardanyan’s son, David Vardanyan, told Eurasianet. Vardanyan said his father eventually received a medical examination at a government facility, but “the report contained several factual errors,” casting doubt on its credibility.

The detainee’s son called on Azerbaijani officials to take quick action to address the cases against the Karabakh Armenian political detainees.

Armenian officials in Yerevan, meanwhile, have filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights about the detainees’ treatment. David Vardanyan said he is unaware if the Armenian government is engaging Azerbaijan in other ways on the issue. “There hasn’t been any concrete discussion or steps voiced to us by the Armenian government,” he said. “I remain hopeful that something is being done behind the scenes.”

Ruben Vardanyan made his fortune as an investment banker in Russia, running Troika Dialog, an entity implicated in a vast money-laundering scheme that benefited the Kremlin. In 2022, shortly after the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, he renounced his Russian citizenship and moved to Karabakh, obtaining the governmental post of state minister. He was taken into custody last September as he was attempting to cross the border into Armenia. Azerbaijani officials suspect him of acting as a political agent of Russia.

David Vardanyan maintained that a sense of Armenian patriotism motivated his father’s move to Karabakh. “He knew there was a worse outcome for him than being taken a prisoner,” Vardanyan said. “Yet he decided to go.”

(This article originally was published on www.Eurasianet.org on August 5.)

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Turkey Blocks Access to Instagram

ISTANBUL (Reuters) — Turkey has blocked access to social media platform Instagram, the infotech regulator said on Friday, August 2, without stating a reason or duration for the ban, which also left the platform's mobile app inaccessible.

The move follows comments on July 31 by Turkish communications official Fahrettin Altun, criticising the platform for what he called its decision to block condolence posts on the killing of Ismail Haniyeh, a key official of Palestinian militant group Hamas.

"This is censorship, pure and simple," Altun, the communications director of the Turkish presidency, said on X, adding that Instagram had not cited any policy violations for its action.

There was no immediate comment from Instagram parent Meta Platforms Inc (META.O), opens new tab on either the ban or Altun's comments.

Turkey's Information Technologies and Communication Authority (BTK) published the Aug. 2 decision on its website.

Well-known Member of Armenian Community Attacked in Istanbul

ISTANBUL (news.am) — Garo Kaprielyan, a well-known member of the Armenian community in Istanbul, was attacked on the densely Armenian-populated Kinaliada island near Istanbul, on August 2.

Kaprielyan was attacked by employees of a shop on the island, who hit him and shouted insults related to his nationality, reports the Armenian Agos weekly of Istanbul. Garo Kaprielyan turned to the police in a state of being beaten, and reported that one of his fingers was broken.

Turkey to Join Lawsuit Against Israel in ICJ

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Turkey plans to file an application with the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) to join South Africa's lawsuit against Israel, today said Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan.

The International Court of Justice in The Hague held hearings on May 16-17 regarding South Africa's request for additional measures against Israel due to the Jewish state's operation in Rafah. On May 24, the court ordered Israel to halt the military operation in Rafah and to take measures to ensure access to Gaza for missions investigating accusations of genocide.

"We will submit to the International Court of Justice our dossier on Israel on Wednesday so that we could participate in the trial," Fidan said at a joint press conference with his Egyptian counterpart in Cairo.

Fidan arrived in Egypt on August 4 and managed to visit the Rafah checkpoint on the border with the Gaza Strip, noting the importance of ensuring the supply of humanitarian aid and a ceasefire.

Armenians and Israeli Settlers Clash over Land Parcel in Old City Jerusalem

By Ella Chakarian

For more than 200 days, Setrag Balian, a fourth generation Jerusalemite-Armenian, has camped out in a tent in the Armenian Quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem. A ceramicist by trade, Balian is a co-founder of Save the ArQ, a group dedicated to blocking a murky development project that would forever alter the quarter's character.

In trying to scuttle the deal and preserve the Armenian Quarter, Balian's group is facing off against Israeli developers who have been photographed with top representatives of an organization called Ateret Cohanim, which bills itself as "the leading urban land reclamation organization in Jerusalem, which has been working for over 40 years to restore Jewish life in the heart of ancient Jerusalem." Ateret Cohanim has been involved in contentious property disputes in the past: most notably an almost-two-decades-long legal battle with the Greek Orthodox Church over control of three properties in the Old City. Ateret Cohanim representatives deny any connection to the Armenian quarter dispute, which involves a valuable patch of the Old City known as Cows' Garden.

The catalyst for confrontation is a sweetheart real estate leasing deal under which Israeli developers would gain the right to build a luxury hotel in Cows' Garden in exchange for a surprisingly low annual payment of \$300,000 to the Armenian Patriarchate, which controls the property. Members of the Armenian community in Jerusalem, alleging skulduggery on the part of those who secretly negotiated the deal, have sued to block it. But those who stand to benefit are not giving up easily — hence the standoff.

"Armenians have been in Jerusalem since the fourth century," said Balian. "The Patriarchate has been there as an institution since the 7th century. It is a very important plot of land."

Under the original agreement, signed in secret in 2021, the Armenian Patriarchate granted an Israeli entity, Xana Gardens Ltd, a 98-year lease to develop Cows' Garden and some adjacent areas, including land covering the Patriarchate's seminary. When the deal became public it caused an uproar among local Armenians. Responding to the backlash, the Patriarchate moved to invalidate the agreement in October 2023. Since then, the matter has been mired in legal wrangling.

The process that led the Patriarchate to sign the deal in the first place remains a source of contention. The man who headed the Patriarchate's real estate department and who negotiated the deal, Khachig (Baret) Yeretsian, was defrocked and has since fled Jerusalem, following allegations that he misled Archbishop Nourhan Manougian. Meanwhile, Palestinian and Jordanian authorities responded to the news by freezing their recognition of Archbishop Manougian as the leader of the Armenian Church in Jerusalem.

Yeretsian has claimed in interviews that he is a "scapegoat," insisting that others within the church hierarchy were fully aware and approved of the arrangement. He declined an interview request from Eurasianet, saying: "I have spoken before on many occasions, and I stick to my principles and will never change." In an apparent effort to prove his version of events, Yeretsian posted a letter on social media seemingly signed by a top official within the Patriarchate, Fr. Samuel Aghoian,

showing that the deal enjoyed the backing of the Patriarchate's entire hierarchy. The letter emphasizes that the deal will supply "a steady income of hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, to support the Armenian Patriarchate with all its departments and its congregation."

When queried by Eurasianet, Aghoian declined to confirm the validity of the letter or provide comment due to the ongoing legal case to invalidate the deal.

Balian says that since the Patriarchate moved to cancel the deal, there have been five separate incidents involving violence and intimidation against Cows' Garden, undertaken by Jewish settlers set on seeing the deal through.

"Within 24 hours of the Patriarchate issuing the cancellation letter to Xana Gardens, Israeli settlers attacked the boys on the ground with attack dogs and [brandishing] automatic weapons," said Karnig Kerkonian, co-founder of Kerkonian Dajani LLP, the law firm representing the Armenian community of the Old City in its lawsuit to invalidate the deal. In later incidents on Cows' Garden, Kerkonian alleged that Israeli police abetted efforts to get opponents of the deal to back down.

Xana Gardens Ltd. was registered in Israel on July 8, 2021, which, according to Kerkonian, was one day after the signing of the real estate deal with the Armenian Patriarchate. Kerkonian said that his law firm's research of the company raises questions about possible ties to "certain Jewish settler groups."

Israeli-Australian developer and head of Xana Gardens, Danny Rothman, also known as Rubinstein, has been known to associate with leaders of the settler group, Ateret Cohanim. He did not respond to a request for comment from Eurasianet.

George Warwar, another Xana Gardens representative who clashed with Armenians in Cows' Garden last year, did not respond to multiple requests for comment from Eurasianet.

Kerkonian said that since the creation of the state of Israel, the Armenian Quarter has lost 90 percent of its pre-1948 population. According to a census from 2006, 790 Armenians resided in the Old City — a 50 percent decline from the number in the 1960s. Kerkonian claimed that "there is clearly an attempt to remove the Armenian presence from places in the Middle East where they have had strongholds."

For centuries, Jerusalemite-Armenians have lived amicably with other communities in the Old City. Balian and other members of Save the ArQ believe that the current pressure against the Armenian Quarter is an outgrowth of the hard-right policies pursued by the Israeli government.

Daniel Seidemann, a Jerusalem-based attorney providing non-legal counsel to the Armenian community, said there are precedents for shadowy dealings across the Old City in Jerusalem — even in the Armenian Quarter. He cited Shahe Ajemian, the Armenian archbishop of Jerusalem who was detained in 1986 on suspicion of being part of a bribery scheme that "allegedly involved identification cards, land deals and inside information on planned future projects."

What makes the current situation in the Armenian Quarter different, according to Seidemann, is "the attempt at physical intimidation here of an entire community" that, he says, "goes beyond anything we've witnessed in the past."

"As serious as this is to the Armenian community, it is indicative of a much greater challenge to the Christian and the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem and a very, even deeper threat to the character of the city," he said.

Armenians who live in the quarter describe the current situation as a land grab. They contend that if the deal goes through, it will effectively mean the end of the Armenian presence in Jerusalem. Sensitivities among local Armenians in Jerusalem have been heightened by Armenia's loss of Nagorno-Karabakh in late 2023.

The legal battle could take years to resolve. As it plays out, members of the community keep watch over Cows' Garden in shifts, ready to resist any settler effort to occupy the parcel. Armenian volunteers play cards to pass the time and spend hours in conversation, while sacrificing time from their families and jobs. Balian said he feels motivated by the togetherness displayed in the tent.

"Everybody has understood that this is an existential battle," said Balian. "We all have to fight it."

(Ella Chakarian is a journalist based in New York City and current M.S. Candidate at Columbia Journalism School. Follow her on Twitter @ellachakarian. This article originally appeared in www.eurasianet.org on August 2.)

Armenia to Skip Another CSTO Military Exercise

CSTO, from page 1 May. On July 31, Russian border guards left the Yerevan airport after 32 years of deployment there following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Monday that the Russian officers who left the airport continued their service at Armenia's borders with Turkey and Iran. The NSS refused to name the number of such officers, citing the classified nature of this information.

Russia also has a military base in the South Caucasus country. In March, a senior Russian lawmaker said he "would not recommend that the Armenian authorities even think about" demanding an end to the Russian military presence. Pashinyan has signaled no such plans so far.

(With reporting by Shoghik Galstian)





INTERNATIONAL

Wife of Jailed Azeri Banker Forfeits House Near Harrods and Ascot Golf

By Rob Davies

LONDON (*The Guardian*) — A mansion in Knightsbridge and a golf club in Ascot owned by the wife of the jailed Azeri banker Jahangir Hajiyeve have been forfeited to the British state as part of a settlement worth an estimated £18.5m to taxpayers.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) said the luxury properties were obtained by Hajiyeve as a “direct result of large-scale fraud and embezzlement, false accounting and money laundering” linked to the looting of a state-owned bank in Azerbaijan.

The assets, which the NCA said were funneled through offshore jurisdictions including Guernsey and the British Virgin Islands, were the first to be subject to “unexplained wealth orders” (UWOs) introduced in 2017.

Crime agencies can use UWOs — which have previously been called “McMafia” laws after a BBC drama — to trace potentially corruptly obtained assets.

The NCA said it had seized the properties after a lengthy court battle over a UWO imposed on Hajiyeve’s wife, Zamira Hajiyeve.

A trustee will auction off the assets, which have been estimated to have a combined value of £26.5 million (\$33 million) in previous court hearings.

The government will get 70 percent of the proceeds, minus the NCA’s costs, with the remainder restored to Hajiyeve under the terms of a settlement agreement.

The actual amount recovered will depend on what the assets are sold for.

In 2018, Hajiyeve lost a court battle to prevent herself from being named as “Mrs A,” the controller of offshore companies that housed the assets. She also lost a subsequent appeal against the UWO in the supreme court.

Hajiyeve, whose £1.6m-a-year (\$2 million) shopping trips to Harrods were revealed in court, is one of several family members whom the authorities

claimed Hajiyeve had used to siphon money out of his home country, Azerbaijan. The family has denied the allegations.

On Thursday, August 1, the NCA said it had seized two assets understood to be the 170-acre Mill Ride Golf Club in Ascot, Berkshire, and a five-bedroom home on Walton Street in Knightsbridge, London, 100 yards from the doors of Harrods department store.

Hajiyeve was convicted in 2016 of multiple offences relating to his tenure as chairman of state-owned International Bank of Azerbaijan (IBA), including abuse of office, fraud and embezzlement.

In 2019, he was also convicted of embezzlement from the Moscow subsidiary of the IBA. He is now serving a 16-year jail sentence in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

The NCA said it had identified “numerous” examples of funds from the IBA being routed by an associate of Hajiyeve’s through multiple accounts in ways consistent with money laundering.

It said funds were moved through a network of accounts in multiple jurisdictions known for financial secrecy, including the British Virgin Islands, Guernsey, St Kitts and Nevis, Panama, Cyprus and Luxembourg.

The funds were then used to buy luxury assets for the family, the NCA said, with no reasonable explanation provided to the agency for where the money had come from.

A “significant” proportion was traced directly to loan agreements or promissory notes – effectively IOUs – used to conceal the theft of money from the IBA.

The NCA applied in March 2021 for a property-freezing order over the golf club and home.

The agency made no finding in relation to Hajiyeve’s knowledge of how the properties were paid for.

Her spending habits were revealed in 2018 after the Guardian and other media won a legal case forcing

the publication of her shopping sprees.

It was revealed that she spent more than £16 million (\$20 million) in Harrods alone between 2006 and 2016. She appeared to treat the department store as her corner shop, spending £24,000 (\$30,000) on tea and coffee, £10,000 (\$12,000) on fruit and vegetables and £32,000 (\$40,000) on Godiva chocolates.

She also spent £4.9 million (\$6.2 million) on Boucheron and Cartier jewelry and £300,000 (\$382,000) on the French couture label Celine. A further £251,000 (\$320,000) was spent in the toy department and tens of thousands on Disney princess experiences at the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique.

Hajiyeve denies any wrongdoing and her lawyers have said the case against her husband was politically motivated.

Tim Quarrelle, branch commander for asset denial at the NCA, said: “NCA officers worked tirelessly to track the complex movement of these funds across the international banking system, through shell companies in multiple jurisdictions, in order to ascertain their source.”

“This result comes almost six-and-a-half years after we served Hajiyeve with the first unexplained wealth order ever granted, and highlights our commitment to using all the tools at our disposal to combat the flow of illicit money into, and through, the UK.”

Lawyers for Hajiyeve said: “The settlement involved no finding of fact by the court about our client’s knowledge or state of mind, still less involvement, in relation to these properties.”

They said Hajiyeve had settled the proceedings because it had been “impossible to defend them” due to the inability to obtain documents that were “potentially crucial to the case” from her husband during his incarceration in Azerbaijan.

They said Hajiyeve and her lawyers had been denied access to her husband in prison.

An evening dedicated to

MAESTRO HAMPARTZOOM BERBERIAN

On the 55th anniversary of the establishment of the
Tekeyan Cultural Association in the United States



Tekeyan Cultural Association
Metro Los Angeles Chapter

Under the Auspices of
His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate
Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America

MAESTRO HAMPARTZOOM BERBERIAN
Renowned composer, conductor & educator
First President - Tekeyan Cultural Association - USA

ANAHIT NERSISYAN - Soprano
BERJ KARAZIAN - Tenor
RIPSIME RSHTUNI - Piano
ANGELA AMIRIAN - Violin
NANOR DEIRBADROSSIAN - Piano

Friday, September 6, 2024 at 7:30 PM
Armenian Society of Los Angeles
117 South Louise Street, Glendale, CA 91205

info@tekeyanla.org

facebook.com/TekeyanLA @TekeyanLA



Community News

U.S. Senate Calls For \$65 Million Aid to Armenia

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee approved a series of measures on July 26, including the Fiscal Year 2025 State Foreign Operations Bill, calling for \$65 million in assistance for Armenia, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

The report language states that “not less than \$65,000,000” will be earmarked “for Armenia to continue to advance reform efforts and Euro-Atlantic integration.”

In a not so veiled message to Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev about his record of violating every agreement he signed, and moving the goalposts on current negotiations to cover up genocide, the report language highlighted that the “Committee supports efforts to reach a lasting peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and directs the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator to consider the status of such negotiations when allocating funds made available by the act.”

It did not go unnoticed by legislators that the opportunity extended to Azerbaijan and Armenia to reach an agreement during the NATO summit in Washington this month - at the invitation of Secretary of State Antony Blinken - was torpedoed by Azerbaijan, despite Secretary Blinken’s encouragement that the two countries were close to a deal.

To underline his reluctance to reach an agreement, Aliyev also refused to meet his Armenian counterpart at a European community meeting in England a week later, while piling on condition upon condition - including emendation of the Armenian constitution, the contrived right of return to the newly-invented country of Western Azerbaijan (Armenia proper), and an extraterritorial Zangezur corridor - and at the same time proposing to avoid a treaty by suggesting agreement upon principles only.

In view of the scale of ethnic cleansing to which the Armenian people of Artsakh were subjected, the Report also states that funds “should be made available for humanitarian assistance for persons who have been displaced by the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, including for the needs of refugees who have been displaced since September 2023.”

In addition, the Committee “supports the efforts of OTI to respond to the needs of those displaced by the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.” Further, the Committee “supports humanitarian demining and unexploded ordnance clearance activities in areas affected by fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as appropriate, subject to prior consultation with the Committees on Appropriations.”

The Report also requires the Secretary of State to consult with the Committees on Appropriations before obligating funds to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The Committee made clear that funding for the Assistance to Europe, see AID, page 10



The first-place-winning team.

ABMDR Holds Its First Charity Golf Tournament to Support Life-Saving Mission

LOS ANGELES — On July 29, the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) held its first-ever Charity Golf Tournament, at the La Canada Flintridge Country Club Golf course, in Los Angeles.

Benefiting ABMDR’s life-saving mission, the tournament brought together enthusiasts and supporters from throughout California, including 56 accomplished golfers, as well as a dynamic team of volunteers, most of whom represented Next-Gen, ABMDR’s recently-established youth group.

The tournament was co-chaired by ABMDR Board members Armond Mehikhanian and Hutch Postik. The organizing committee included ABMDR Board member and longtime supporter George Titizian, Steve Chelebian, Alan Artunian, Hovig Garabedian, and Masis Moradi.

Mark Geragos, Esq., Chairman of the ABMDR Board of Directors, presented the trophies to the top three golf teams, as follows: First Place: Alan Artunian, Hagop Khatchadourian, Ara Bedros and Hovig Garabedian; Second Place: George Titizian, and Mark, Nicholas and Kristopher Mikaelian; and Third Place: Babken, Zareh, Armen and Nareg Amirian.

“This was an absolutely delightful event,” said ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan. “It drew seasoned golf players and spectators, as well as our young volunteers, for an exciting tournament, and, most importantly, for helping raise funds for our organization’s life-saving mission. Our heartfelt thanks go to our wonderful sponsors, the tournament committee, participating golf players, and all of our Board members, volunteers, and supporters!”



The second-place-winning team.

Armenian Bar Association, Yerevan State University, Prosecutor General’s Office Launch Collaborative Training Program

GLENDAL — The Armenian Bar Association this month announced the formalization of a professional development partnership with Yerevan State University (YSU) and the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Republic of Armenia. The three institutions have issued a Declaration of Intentions which calls for innovative learning and legal training opportunities for practitioners in the Republic of Armenia and for diasporan law students.

The signing ceremony and program took place in Glendale, California on July 31, 2024. The event was a significant milestone in the collaborative effort to enhance legal education and professional growth and advancement in Armenia. The program is spearheaded by Chairwoman Lucy Varpetian and Judge Armeni Amy Ashvanian. Judge Ashvanian is a prominent member of the Armenian Bar Association’s Board of Governors and a distinguished leader in the legal community who has been instrumental in shaping the initiative. Also present was Armenia’s Consul General in Los Angeles, Dr. Karen Israelyan, who expressed optimism for the collective endeavor. Several Armenian media outlets were on-hand to document the occasion and to conduct interviews.

The Declaration of Intentions signifies a commitment to develop a robust framework for legal training, which will include specialized courses, workshops, and practical experiences designed to equip new and emerging legal professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their careers. This initiative aims to bridge the gap between academic study and practical application, fostering a new generation of skilled lawyers and legal scholars.

In her address, Judge Ashvanian emphasized the significance of the program in enhancing legal standards and fostering a culture of continuous learning within the Armenian legal community. “This collaboration represents a pivotal step in advancing legal education and ensuring that our legal professionals are well-prepared to meet the evolving demands of the legal landscape,” said Judge Ashvanian.

The Armenian Bar Association, Yerevan State University, and the Prosecutor General’s Office of Armenia are united in this vision to create a dynamic educational environment that will serve as a model for similar initiatives in the future. This partnership is expected to have a lasting impact on the legal profession in Armenia, contributing to the overall development of the country’s legal system.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Barbara Joan (Kemalian) Stone

Beloved Educator, Reader, Mother

WARWICK, R.I. — Barbara Joan (Kemalian) Stone, 92, passed away July 30, 2024 from kidney failure. She lived a full and rewarding life and was loved by so many.

She was born in Providence, to Anthony (Andy) and Aroxie Kemalian on December 30, 1931.

After receiving a Bachelor of Arts in English from Brown University and a Master's in teaching from Harvard University, Barbara taught English on American Air Force bases in Bitburg, Germany and Tripoli, Libya for several years, an adventure that allowed her to travel extensively throughout Europe and the Middle East.

Barbara continued teaching at Warwick Veterans High School, where she was a beloved English teacher and drama coach. Her children can attest that many times over the years Barbara was greeted by former students at the market or drugstore lauding her as their "favorite teacher." Even last Christmas, she received a letter from a former student who expressed gratitude for being one of her biggest inspirations in life.

Barbara had twins and triplets — two years apart! — achieving legendary mother status from those who knew her. She loved her children unconditionally and had a gift of making each of them feel they were her favorite. Barbara was also the beloved grandmother to eight grandchildren. She loved her talks with them, never failing to cheer them on or offer advice on life's latest adventures.

Barbara had a lifelong love of literature and the written word and, for decades, enjoyed her book club. She was always prepared to discuss the book of the month with notes and analysis, continuing her love of teaching.

Barbara was also an eloquent writer and it was not uncommon for her friends to receive a hand-written poem or ditty for a special occasion, which she would lovingly

read aloud to them.

She was an avid bridge player, enjoying her bi-weekly games at Warwick Country Club, where she was a longtime member.

Barbara was a consummate hostess and, in true Armenian fashion, always ensured there was an abundance of food and refreshments for all — the more the merrier.

She was also an active member and president of the Brown University Class of '53, and served as a graduation marshal at her 75th college reunion last year.

She was also a member of the Wednesday Club and was quite the debater in her day.

Barbara was a dedicated New England sports fan, cheering on her teams late into the evening. She was thrilled to watch the Celtics win the championship this year.

She will be remembered for her kindness, generosity, intellect, loyalty, character, genuineness and true elegance. She is survived by her five children: Edward S. Stone IV (Cathleen Corrigan), of Warwick, RI, Andrew K. Stone, of Warwick, RI, Laura L. Stone (Neal J. Glickfield), of Washington, DC, Bradley S. Stone (Melanie), of Sebastian, FL, and Thomas P. Stone, of Warwick, RI; eight grandchildren: Justin D. Quam, William T. Quam, Ericson A. Quam, Samantha T. Stone, Bradley S. Stone, Jr., Skyler M. Stone, Catherine E. Stone and Edward S. Stone V; a brother, Andrew A. Kemalian (Eveline), of Canton, MA; her long-time significant other, E. Allen Reed, of Warwick, RI; and four granddogs.

A visitation will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 4, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, 70 Jefferson St., Providence, followed by a funeral service at 11 a.m. and burial at North Burial Ground, Providence, RI.

Barbara seldom wore black opting instead to wear bright colors to stand out in the crowd rather than fade into the background. The family wishes to honor this preference at the service.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the AGBU (Armenian General Benevolent Union) for the Global Relief Fund, 55 East 59th St., New York, NY 10022-1112, or Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church. Visit NardolilloFH.com for online condolences.



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.
Central Board of Directors of
the US and Canada

Dr. Nubar Berberian

2024 Annual Awards



Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head-and-shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from tcadirector@aol.com.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: tcadirector@aol.com,
- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is September 30, 2024.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in October, 2024 based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winners will receive their awards in November, 2024
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

July 10, 2024

755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA, 02472,

Donation

Laura A. Avakian of Massachusetts donated \$500 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

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

COMMUNITY NEWS

The Founding of Zoryan Institute: A National Research Center and Diaspora Studies

TORONTO — In the late 1970s, a small group of Armenians absorbed with questions about their history, their identity, and their future as a nation, concluded that there was a crucial need for a place to think critically about the Armenian reality. These individuals, propelled by deeply felt intellectual concerns and a strong desire for change, set about to conceptualize an institution which would provide a forum for free and critical thinking about contemporary issues affecting the Armenian people, through a process which would be analytical, scholarly, and detached. This forum would facilitate intellectuals and the community at large to raise substantial questions about contemporary Armenian history, identity, and would help to develop new perspectives on vital issues, both current and future. Among its primary goals would be for the Armenian people to express their history in their own voice and to define themselves, to understand the forces and factors that have brought them to where they are today. The founders of the Institute also intended to help the education and involvement of the people at a higher level of discourse without claiming to have all the answers. This process would include the continuous, systematic re-examination and re-evaluation of their reality.

In 1982, this small group of Armenians founded the Zoryan Institute with the goal of carrying out research and documentation in three areas which were either neglected or not studied with sufficiently high standards of scholarship. These were the Genocide, Diaspora and Armenian Studies.

The modern Armenian diaspora is shaped by key events which caused waves

of emigration, namely the 1915 Genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire, the events of WWII, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, over two-thirds of Armenians live outside of Armenia proper, dispersed across North America, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. With such a large diaspora, it was critical to understand the phenomenon of “diaspora” as a foundational point of reference, the collective Armenian diasporic concerns, and local experiences across the various diaspora centers. Issues such as assimilation, loss of language, intermarriage, preservation of culture, and the struggle for genocide recognition were all shared concerns across the Armenian diaspora.

A number of questions emerged when examining identity within diaspora: What does it mean for a diasporan Armenian to be defined as an Armenian when they have not lived in Armenia for generations – in some cases for centuries? What are the markers of Armenian identity – language, religion, culture, a nation-state? Can one have multiple cultural identities, and if so, how do they interact? Is one cultural identity dominant, and if so, what are the implications of this dominance? Finally, what is the role of the Armenians in diaspora towards Armenia’s future as an independent nation and a homeland?

In search of answers to these questions, Zoryan’s diaspora studies division, engaged its diaspora in several projects, programs, and publications to further expand the existing scholarship on diaspora through the comparative study of other diasporas, since 1982. One of Zoryan’s initiatives was the establishment in 1989 of the academic journal, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, where the

institute’s founding members entered into contract with Oxford University Press, investing \$125,000 (valued at approximately \$0.5 million today). *Diaspora* received critical acknowledgement of its content (Best New Journal, Council of Editors of Learned Journals’ International Awards Competition, 1991). The journal was conceptualized by Tololyan of Wesleyan University, who as the founding editor managed it until 2020, lending his unique intellectual contribution to its success.

In dealing with contemporary Armenian realities, it would have been impossible not to deal with the presence and influence of Armenia on the diaspora. Articles such as “Between Ambivalence and Intrusion: Politics and Identity in Armenia-Diaspora Relations”, “The Myth and Reality of ‘Return’ — Diaspora in the ‘Homeland’”, and “We Are All Armenian: Voices from the Diaspora” examined the complexities of Armenia-Diaspora relations.

Unfortunately, *Diaspora* soon faced financial challenges; the deficit of the first two volumes of *Diaspora* in 1991 and 1992 alone, amounted to over \$75,000. Low subscribership due to the limited market universe for the journal and high operational costs further impacted the viability of the journal, causing delays in publication and production. This prompted the Institute’s board to find a more feasible arrangement. The founding members of Zoryan Institute and the University of Toronto Press (UTP), entered into a 50/50 partnership in the publication and production of *Diaspora* was moved to its new home where the journal continues to be published today.

For many Armenians, Armenia has represented the concept of a homeland – a cul-

tural and spiritual center, and as a state, a guarantor of Armenian nationhood. However, Armenia has also been a source of serious friction between various elements within the Armenian diaspora. There exist conflicting views if whether the state is providing the security, economic viability, religious freedom, and finally if the cultural identity is preserved in today’s Armenia. The Institute strongly felt that the Diaspora had a special responsibility to help solve problems and the filling of a certain void in the homeland.

The Zoryan Institute has come a long way over the past 42 years, owing to the dedication and efforts of its founders, Academic Board of Directors, associated scholars, editors, the staff and numerous committed volunteers and donor-supporters worldwide. Zoryan’s work is designed to serve as a forum for research, analysis, raising awareness, and creating discourse for the purpose of developing and planning practical concepts related to the nation’s future progress and diaspora-homeland relations.

Reflecting on where the nation was at the time Zoryan was established compared to today, it is evident that the global landscape has radically transformed. The Soviet Union is gone, and Armenia is independent, with a prosperous and vibrant Diaspora.

As a nation-state, Armenia once again has the opportunity to define its identity, to shape its future, and to make its place among the family of nations within international norms. As it has in the past, the Zoryan Institute will continue its pursuits to contribute to the intellectual frameworks that support Armenia’s development and enhance diaspora engagement.

Senate Calls for \$65 Million Aid to Armenia

AID, from page 8

Eurasia, and Central Asia (AEECA) program is “for democracy programs, including to strengthen civil society, protect human rights, and support independent media; and economic and security assistance, which shall be prioritized and allocated based on the extent to which the governments of such countries demonstrate capacity and political will to pursue regional stability and economic integration, and to

counter the malign influence of the Russian Federation and other actors, as determined by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.”

The Bill itself restated Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act and the traditional carve-outs.

“We welcome the Senate Appropriations Committee support for the Armenian people,” stated Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. “The

inclusion of not less than \$65 million of much needed aid to Armenia addresses the continuing consequences of the 2020 war, and the influx of over 100,000 Armenians driven from their ancestral homeland of Artsakh as a result of Azerbaijan’s genocidal policies,” Khaloyan continued.



Assembly Terjenian-Thomas Internship Class of 2024 with Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee

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

Nardolillo Funeral Home

Est. 1906

John K. Najarian, Jr.

Rhode Island's Only Licensed Armenian Funeral Director

1278 Park Ave. Cranston, RI 02910 (401) 942-1220
1111 Boston Neck Rd. Narragansett, RI 02882 (401) 789-6300
www.nardolillo.com



COMMUNITY NEWS

DIASPORA

A Journal of Transnational Studies

Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies is a peer-reviewed academic journal that is founded, owned, and operated by the Zoryan Institute and is published twice a year by the University of Toronto Press. *Diaspora* has played a pivotal role in shaping the field of Diaspora Studies and Transnationalism, engaging in discourses ranging from Postcolonial Studies to World Literatures, and themes from environmental migrants to global networks. The journal endeavors to rethink mobility and mobilization, and thus reorient transnational accounts of home, homeland, host state, and diaspora.

FEATURED ARTICLES

Available to Read Now

Between Ambivalence and Intrusion: Politics and Identity in Armenia-Diaspora Relations by *Razmik Panossian*

The Myth and Reality of “Return” — Diaspora in the “Homeland” by *Sossie Kasbarian*

Diasporan Subalternities: The Armenian Community in Syria by *Simon Payaslian*

We Are All Armenian: Voices from the Diaspora by *Susan Paul Pattie*

Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation by *Khachig Tölölyan*

Mobile Motherhood: Armenian Women’s Labor Migration in the Post-Soviet Period by *Armine Ishkanian*

From Failed Recovery to Mutation: Armenian Women and Community in Post-Genocide Turkey by *Ohannes Kılıçdağı*





COMMUNITY NEWS

Improving Stroke Care in Armenia

STROKE, from page 1

Through their efforts, there are four stroke specialty centers in Yerevan, one in Gyumri and one in Vanadzor, but more on that later.

Efforts toward its formation, however, date back much further. In a recent interview, several of the doctors instrumental in pushing the efforts spoke about the work done as well as what remains to be done.

The main goal of the council is to make the lives of patients better, Dr. Nune S. Yeghiazaryan, president of the Armenia Stroke Council, and the head of the Neurology Department and Stroke Center at the Erebouni Medical Center in Yerevan said.

One of those doctors in the group is Dr. Viken L. Babikian, Professor of Neurology at Boston University.

Babikian said, “It is difficult to put a start date terms of efforts, but probably it is 15 years or so. The main start was in 2011 in Armenia at a conference. It took until 2019 for the government to approve acute interventions for stroke treatments, which includes giving a medication intravenously and removing blood clots from the brain. We can say that was the main turning point for us.”

He added, “Armenia, in terms of knowledge, was ready to take on such a breakthrough.”

He also credited then-Minister of Health Arsen Torosyan for his work in spearheading it.

Strokes and Treatment

A stroke, also known as a brain attack or cerebrovascular accident (CVA), is a life-threatening condition that occurs when blood flow to the brain is blocked by a thrombus (clot) or when a brain artery ruptures and causes a hemorrhage. This blockage of an artery to the brain prevents brain cells from receiving oxygen and nutrients, and they can begin to die within minutes, causing death or permanent brain damage.

Dr. Mikayel Grigoryan, an associate adjunct professor of neurology at USC, explained that there are two ways to treat vascular blockages which lead to strokes: intravenously with medication or through surgically clearing the clogged vein, much like a plumber would clear a drain.

Grigoryan is an interventional and vascular neurologist in private practice as well as the medical director of neurointervention at Adventist Health Glendale Comprehensive Stroke Center.

He recalled that in 2015, his next-door neighbor in Armenia, a physician herself, had a stroke in front of him. Since he knew an ambulance would not arrive in a timely manner, he got the neighbor’s daughter to drive him and her stricken mother to the hospital and drop them off, while she went to a pharmacy to purchase the clot-busting medication (Intravenous tissue plasminogen activator (IV-tPA), also known as alteplase or Activase), and bring it to Grigoryan.

All this had to be done within three hours to lessen the chance of permanent brain damage.

“It wasn’t readily available in the hospital and nobody had the money to pay for it,” he said.

Grigoryan said that some of the equipment in Armenia is often ahead of equipment in the US. “The biplane cerebral angiography machine in Erebouni is better than the one I use in Los Angeles, without a doubt.”

“The diagnostic tools are very costly, the medications are very costly and the intraarterial procedures are even more costly,” Babikian noted. “In such a financially chal-

lenged country, to undertake such a cost is quite brave.”

Strokes are 80 percent preventable, Yeghiazaryan said, but little is done toward prevention efforts in Armenia, though they cost very little in comparison to stroke care.

“As a poor country, we don’t do anything for prevention. We spend a lot of money on treatment but not on prevention,” she said. Things that can help prevent strokes include smoking cessation, physical activity, diabetes treatment, losing weight and treating hypertension.

Reliable statistics regarding common vascular risk factors for stroke are lacking in Armenia, and available figures seem to be underestimations. According to Yeghiazaryan’s paper, one third of adults aged 18 to 69 suffer from high blood pressure, and of those, only 64 percent seek treatment. In addition, about half the adult male population smokes, while only 2 percent of women do so, though they may be affected by second-hand smoke.

Pioneering Work

Previously, in Armenia, there was no training for strokes in medical schools, said Yeghiazaryan. Those who wanted to learn how to treat strokes had to either go abroad or have doctors from abroad train them, she added.

Yeghiazaryan said there are about 5,000 strokes annually in Armenia. According to

are state hospitals, while Erebouni is private.

Yeghiazaryan stressed that the Ministry of Health has been receptive to the suggestions of the ASC and provided the funding for needed treatment.

One issue is how a patient gets to the hospital. Yeghiazaryan said that the ambulance service in Armenia still has a long way to go.

“The sooner you arrive, the more damage you can prevent,” Grigoryan said.

“We have a lot to do but in this field also we have colleagues from diaspora helping,” she said, crediting Dr. Sharon Chekijian, an associate professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the Yale School of Medicine, for making “emergency medicine better in Armenia.”

One of the unusual things in Armenia is that instead of paramedics, the ambulances are operated by doctors. “Usually the ambulance is led by a doctor and there is a nurse also. Both go to the patient rather than paramedics. ... Ambulances are not under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, but rather the local authorities. It is very difficult to organize them uniformly.”

Still, she said there have been improvements, especially in Yerevan. “They are taking the stroke patients to the closest stroke centers without any discussion.”

One particular case that Grigoryan worked on was that of a 2-year-old girl,



Neurosurgeons in Yerevan, including Dr. Zhora Baghdasaryan, second from left, and Dr. Nune S. Yeghiazaryan, fifth from left

a paper she wrote with several other doctors in 2022, stroke is one of the country’s major public health problems and ranks as the sixth leading cause of death, with a mortality of 75.5 per 100,000.

“I don’t think the problem of strokes in Armenia is more or less than other country. Strokes are a major problem in most countries, especially developing countries. It is a fatal disease but mainly it is a disabling disease.”

Dr. Zhora Baghdasaryan, a neurointerventional surgeon, has been tasked with taking the lead of the Gyumri and Vanadzor stroke centers.

“You can have a stroke center, as long as you have the basic materials. Now there is infrastructure and better equipment. What is cause for optimism is that now, after this program, all the centers have bought new equipment for treatment of stroke victims,” Baghdasaryan said.

He added, for example, that at Erebouni Hospital in Yerevan, there is world-class equipment, thanks to the efforts of the Armenia Stroke Council. He added that in Gyumri, the hospital just got a CT Scanner, which is vital for its work.

The hospitals in Gyumri and Vanadzor

who had suffered from a dangerous brain dissecting pseudoaneurysm that caused several strokes. Because she was at risk for permanent disability, she was transferred to the Erebouni MC where she received endovascular brain surgery by Grigoryan and Dr. David Sahakyan. Now age 7, she is doing very well and is ready to conquer the world.

Providing Services to Rural Armenia

Baghdasaryan has headed up the Neurology and Comprehensive Stroke Center of Gyumri Hospital since March 2022.

“We treat over 500 stroke patients every year. We are getting more patients because they know to come to the hospital and also don’t have to go to the capital. Also people from neighboring provinces now come to the center,” he said.

The second affiliated regional stroke center, in Vanadzor, came on line two months ago. However, it lags behind the Gyumri center for the time being.

Grigoryan said, “I’m very proud of that. Zhora was the first interventional neurologist [in Armenia]. He came from China and did a unique fellowship.” Baghdasaryan did a three-year residency in neurointer-

ventional surgery at the Shanghai Naval Medical University.

The Gyumri Medical Center offers both thrombolytic therapy and thrombectomy — a minimally invasive brain plumbing procedure to clear blockages.

One effort championed by the ASC is TeleStroke treatment. “That is the latest major accomplishment. Through joint efforts we were able to put in place telehealth. We built on the infrastructure we had and it allowed us to have decision making and thrombolysis, without the doctor being there.” He specific said the work is allowing the doctor to save at least one hour in administering life-saving treatment or treatment that will possibly save the patient’s life or make sure they return back to normal.

At the Vanadzor Medical Center, there is still not a sufficient number of stroke specialists, and this TeleStroke program, is allowing non-specialist doctors to administer IV thrombolysis there in collaboration with stroke specialists at the Gyumri Medical Center. The center just handed its sixth patient though Tele Stroke.

Baghdasaryan said he hoped the program would expand to other rural regions in Armenia and that the concept would spread throughout the country.

Baghdasaryan said, “Our initial plans were to establish a primary stroke center in Vanadzor, for which from the technical point of view, they were ready, but since we were not able to have trained doctors there immediately. Therefore, we decided to go a different route. If we had to wait for the center with trained doctors, it might have taken a few years. The TeleStroke project allowed us to change Vanadzor to a thrombolysis-ready hospital.”

Now, the Vanadzor center transports stroke patients after procedures to Gyumri.

“Step by step it is improving. In time, we will have a primary center. This is the price we paid to have a center quickly. In a few months, we are going to analyze all the data of the two centers,” Baghdasaryan said.

He paid tribute to the ACS for keeping a close eye on the centers. “The Stroke Council keeps a close eye on things and makes suggestions. ... We think we will have concrete results and now taking care of the problems we encounter will help us have a primary center.”

The key to a stroke center, Baghdasaryan said, is having properly trained doctors, and that is very hard in rural areas.

“You can buy CT scans and MRI scans, but having the specialist there is the most important thing,” Baghdasaryan said.

In fact, he himself moved from Yerevan’s Erebouni Hospital to Gyumri to head the center.

They started with four specialists in Gyumri, including himself. Within the first few months, he said, the team got great help from Baghdasaryan’s friends at Erebouni. “They came to Gyumri and for a month, two specialists stayed in Gyumri until we could move things forward,” he said. “Again, like Vanadzor, we found creative solutions.”

“Now we don’t have a need for specialists in Gyumri. We have eight neurologists there, which is a very large number for a provincial hospital,” he said. “We have eight stroke specialists thanks to the Stroke Program.”

Babikian noted, “Like Zhora said, the focus for so long had been Yerevan. We are changing that. Now, we want to focus on Goris and get a center there, but it is an uphill effort. The second is to have stroke clinics all over Armenia, for checking blood

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page
pressure or other contributing factors. Finally, there are no neurointensive care units in Armenia. For example, if an Armenian sustains a serious brain injury from a motor vehicle accident, at the present time there is no neurointensive care center to provide appropriate care.”
“It’s a big lack of expertise in Armenia and the stroke counsel’s goal is to work on it,” he said. “I hope within the next two years we will get going on it.”

Fellowships

Baghdasaryan stressed that an important component of the Stroke Council was the creation of fellowships.
Grigoryan noted, “The fellowship is undoubtedly one of the biggest accomplishments of the Stroke Council. Neurologists now have an opportunity to have a formal exam curriculum developed by many of us. We already have graduates of the program. Before this, subspecialty training in neurology did not exist.”
Currently, the stroke fellowship lasts six months. Grigoryan said that plans are underway to extend the length, through efforts with Armenia’s National Institute of Health, to one year.
Yeghiazaryan added that in Armenia, there are no fellowships. “We decided to do a six-month fellowship training for doctors that were already working in other hospitals. There are two months of intensive training in major stroke centers in Yerevan, and then classes, concluded by a final exam.”
Many of the lectures were given by the doctors interviewed for this piece. While the lectures were recorded, they cannot be used even six months from now, because of

the high rate of change in the science.
“We cannot recycle the same lectures over and over again because scene in stroke is evolving so fast. Every six months if not every year, it is changing,” Babikian said. “The advance is amazing.”
About five doctors have been trained so far. Another six had taken part in the fellowships, Yeghiazaryan said, but had not passed the exams.
A new initiative is to host an international endovascular conference in Yerevan at the end of September.
Added Grigoryan, “The biggest help we need is the Ministry of Health expanding the coverage of the stroke program because this is what truly revolutionized the program, to have free acute treatment. There is definitely a role in having the diaspora help with some of the projects within because the stroke program is so multifaceted.”

Armenia as Regional Medical Center

Grigoryan noted that because of the group’s efforts, “Armenia is a regional leader in stroke care. We go and train physicians from neighboring countries because Armenian is sort of politically neutral so it is easier for us and for others to come to Armenia to learn.”
The ASC has 19 members from Armenia, the US, France, Canada and Russia. In addition to Yeghiazaryan, Baghdasaryan, Babikian and Grigoryan, they are Dr. Armine Aghajanyan representing the Ministry of Health, Dr. Manvel Aghasaryan, Dr. Sevak Badalyan, Dr. Sharon Chekijian, Dr. Ruben Fanarjyan, Dr. Arthur Grigoryan, Dr. Gurgen Hovhannisyan, Dr. Yekaterina Hovhannisyan, Dr. Samson Khachatryan, Dr. David Sahakyan, Dr. Nerses Sanossian, Dr. Armine Soghoyan, Dr. Marine Tanashyan



Dr. Zhora Baghdasaryan

and Dr. Lina Zubalova.
Baghdasaryan noted, “Armenians all over the world, can come together and work. We have many plans between the diaspora and Armenia, which don’t go beyond pretty words. That is fine, since there is some interaction but nothing concrete gets done. This, on the other hand, is very concrete. It’s an example of when specialists from Armenia and the diaspora come together and they do some excellent work. I want to stress again that Armenia, the US, Canada, France, those are the countries where the specialists are located. Second, for me, it is most important for me, we have advanced our country unevenly. Our provinces have much fewer opportunities for advances. Our stroke efforts in the provinces go against that trend. It is at an international standard for our provincial residents. I can say that that is the focus of my efforts.”
Grigoryan added, “The biggest accom-

plishment, in my opinion, of this group, is to make Armenia believe that it can make a self-sufficient program with the help of the government and private owners of the hospital. We made them believe this program could become self-sufficient without reliance on funding. ... We always think Armenia is so poor and rely on outside investors. We brought them to the point that they could believe this program could be moving forward and the equipment that Zhora had mentioned was purchased by the owners of the hospitals. Nobody had to twist their arms. They believed in the hospital because they had physicians like Nune, of the caliber that they believe this program has a future.”
And the knowledge accumulating there is shared by neighboring countries; Grigoryan said that a team from Kazakhstan was trained recently.
“With the help of device companies, we have a result training course that is held several times a year, which gives me an opportunity go to Armenia several times a year,” Grigoryan said. “We are a regional leader in stroke care.” Doctors from Russia, Kazakhstan, Baltic republics and Georgia for one-week training sessions. “It’s been very successful. This is the third year we are running that program,” he said. Different doctors take turns with lectures and practical instruction.
Those training sessions are for a fee, and therefore they bring in money for the hospitals.
Added Grigoryan, “Patriotism is loving your motherland with actions. Our main message is that if you want to come across as a true patriot of Armenia, you have to help with actions. This is how things get done.”



Tekeyan Cultural Association

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia

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



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

☐ \$240 ☐ \$480 ☐ \$700 ☐ other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

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



Your donation is tax deductible.

Arts & Culture

Marc Toureille

*Therapist for Children,
Hip Hop Artist for
Armenian Cause*



By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN-GERMANTOWN, Md. — Last July, through a mutual friend, I was pleased to meet American Hip Hop artist, songwriter, educator and activist Marc Toureille and his mother, Diane Kupelian, in Yerevan. Toureille, also known as Marc 2Ray, was born in Washington, DC, and is currently getting his occupational therapy assistant degree. He has been working as a therapist for children on the autism spectrum at the Floortime Center. Among many other pieces, Marc wrote the song *1915*, which led to world-wide renown and live performances in Times Square, outside the White House, and at the March For Justice in front of thousands of supporters in Los Angeles, also being used in curricula of 26 high school and colleges in the U.S. to help educate students.

Dear Marc, it was great meeting you and your mother not only for me, but also for my family and friends, as well as to know your songs. It is interesting how you combine your activities as a Hip Hop artist and educator?

It was fantastic meeting you all as well! So, I think that music can be such a great way to learn and retain information, and then especially Hip Hop is a genre that the younger generation can really identify with. Many of the teachers who have used my song *1915* in their classes have reported increased engagement among the students. I am very proud that this song can be used to help educate the next generation and combat The Turkish government's denial campaign.

Being a descendent of Armenian Genocide survivors shaped your identity. No wonder you created *1915*, but before that your mother wrote her dissertation on the continuing effects of the Genocide on survivors. Could you please introduce your Armenian ancestors and your mother's work to our readers?

see TOUREILLE, page 15



A painting from the Bahador exhibition (photo Karine Armen)

Dentist Massis Armen Bahador's Passion for Art

By Karine Armen

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — The Ararat-Eskijian Museum and the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Northridge, organized a lecture and exhibition on the life and work of Massis Armen Bahador at Deukmejian Community Center on Sunday, July 21.

Prof. Levon Chookaszian talked about Bahador at the Sheen Memorial Chapel adjacent to the museum and the community center. Bahador's relatives, who drove from all over Southern California, attended the art exhibition's opening reception on Saturday, July 20.

Bahador was a dentist by profession and an artist by passion. He was born in 1910 in Sungurlu, Turkey, near the Black Sea. Later, he moved to Mashhad, Iran. He attended high school in Venice, Italy, and taught himself about art while in Paris. Finally, he moved to Chicago, where he became a dentist.

Martin Eskijian, the museum's chairman, welcomed the audience. Pianist Vache Mankerian played two pieces, one by Arno Babajanian and the second by Aram Khachaturian. Later, the museum's director, Marguerite Mangassarian Goschin, introduced the guest speaker, Honorary Circuit Judge Jonathan C. Green, whose aunt was married to Armen Bahador. After that, Chookaszian, holder of the Chair of History and Theory of Armenian Art at Yerevan State University, gave a slide presentation about Massis Armen Bahador, talking about his life and art.

Bahador's grandfather was friends with Calouste Gulbenkian. Massis Armen's father was Armenak Bahadorian, a textile merchant. When Massis was five, the deportations of the Armenians started. His family joined Gulbenkian's aunt in Constantinople and were given refuge at their house. Armen's grandfather worked

see PASSION, page 15



A True 'Revival' Six Years in the Making

YEREVAN/LOS ANGELES — After years of persistence and hard work, the film "Revival" entered post-production in Armenia and wrapped in Cyprus in June.

"Revival," by writer and director Jivan Avetisyan, tells the story of identity through the eyes of Murat Arakelian, a brilliant engineering student at the University of Marseille. Under the guidance of Professor Jean Perbost, Murat works on an AI project, called ORCHID (ORGanizer of CHaotic Input Data), for a university competition.

Murat's project is disrupted when he finds a letter the home of his mother, Araksi Arakelian, during a dinner also attended by his girlfriend Isabelle Morel and his professor. The letter reveals that his mother has hidden the truth about his father. With ORCHID's help, Murat discovers that his mother's story about his father's death was a lie. The quest for the truth sends Murat and his girlfriend to Artsakh (Karabakh) and Armenia.

The Artsakh-born-and-raised filmmaker Avetisyan said, "'Revival'



Jean Perbost, portrayed by Armand Assante, is a Professor and the Director of the Faculty of AI. The photo was taken on the set of "Revival" in Cyprus, featuring the film's director Jivan Avetisyan, Director of Photography Rytis Kurkulis, and our Creative Consultant Viken Attarian.

continues the mission of my previous films, 'Tevanik' (2014), 'The Last Inhabitant' (2016), and 'Gate to Heaven' (2019), highlighting the stories of my peace-loving people and their right to live and create in their ancestral homeland. Having witnessed war throughout my life, I've sought to document lived reality through film. I believe in discussing war's long-term effects on innocent lives.

He added, "In 2018, when 'Revival' was still just a concept, I couldn't foresee the challenges ahead, from COVID-19 to the 44-Day War, the blockade and the loss of Artsakh. 'Revival' became my first film not shot in Artsakh, although the story unfolds in 2020 across Artsakh and France. The film follows Murat's search for identity, which leads him to Artsakh amidst war."

Added Avetisyan, "Artsakh is unforgettable. It marks the beginning see REVIVAL, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

Dentist Massis Armen Bahador's Passion for Art

PASSION, from page 14

as a carpet dealer for Calouste Gulbenkian's mercantile house in Mashhad, Iran. In 1922, the family was able to escape from Istanbul. Massis was sent to Mashhad, where his uncle worked as an exporter of carpets. Massis attended the local American school where he studied music and painting. When Massis was 16, he was sent to Murad Rafaelian College of the Mekhitarist Armenian Catholic Order in Venice. He attended many museums in Italy. The Italian artists influenced Massis. He was in awe of the masterpieces.



A painting from the Bahador exhibition (photo Karine Armen)

Bahador went to Paris in 1931 and stayed with a relative for a year and a half. He visited many museums and copied masterpieces to teach himself art techniques. He started painting without restrictions and expressed his feelings. He did not enjoy



Massis Bahador's family at the opening of the art exhibition (photo Onig Ghiulezian)

seeing the local artists struggling to survive and painted subjects in order to sell. In a quote from the book, he said, "I had long decided that I would never allow the artistic tastes of the masses to dictate my artistic direction. I knew that if I couldn't make a living with my paintbrush, I could find another way to earn money and continue to paint whatever I wanted, in whichever way I wanted, in complete freedom." He moved to Chicago and became a dentist. He married a Polish woman, Paula Krysztop.

Jonathan Green, Paula's nephew, said, "Uncle Armen painted many portraits of the family children." He added, "He became very animated talking about the Turks. After all this time, the trauma he lived through still stayed in his psyche, never to be forgotten. Yet his art expresses a colorful and beautiful world."

Chookaszian mentioned that Bahador showed people and landscapes positively without any trace of trauma. "Churches and monasteries of Venice were full of treasures. Living in Venice was an excep-

tional education for Bahador," emphasized Chookaszian.

Ararat-Eskijian Museum and Research Center stumbled upon Bahador's art in 2016 and received his art to preserve in accordance with the museum's mission. Since 1985, the museum has collected Armenian cultural artifacts. They started the long process of organizing and publishing a book on Bahador's work.

The book *Massis Armen Bahador, Life & Paintings* is available through the museum. The art exhibition closed on July 28.

Marc Toureille: Therapist for Children, Hip Hop Artist for Armenian Cause

TOUREILLE, from page 14

Yes! So, when I was a child, my mother, Diane Kupelian, was getting her PhD in clinical psychiatry from American University. For her dissertation, she wrote a chapter in a published work about the effects of generational imprinted trauma. She specifically focused on survivors of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust and how later in life as parents, many of their children grew up feeling lingering effects of their trauma. This is a very important topic as so many different genocides and wars have taken place and sadly continue to take place. Understanding how this shared trauma can be healed as effectively as possible can give the next generation a leg up.

Please let us know about your father's side.

I am Armenian (and part Greek) from my mother's side. My grandfather and great-grandmother survived the Armenian Genocide and started again in the United States. I'm part French on my father's side and my great-grandfather (Pierre Charles Toureille) was a French Huguenot pastor and used his position to help save Jewish lives during the Nazi occupation in WWII. Through means of sheltering and then smuggling to allied territories, he was part of a network that saved thousands of Jews during the war. His name is on the wall of Righteous Gentiles at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC and a tree is planted in his name at Yad Vashem -The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem. There is also a book entitled, *A Rescuer's Story*, which was written by Tela Zasloff

about what he did. These two sides of my family's struggles with genocide (both as survivors and as rescuers) have been a huge motivation for me to make music that tells truth to power.

Like System of a Down about quarter century ago, you also brought the Armenian Genocide to American pop culture. What kind of responses did you have?

So, I actually had the honoring of meeting Serj Tankian and John Dolmayan when I was a kid, and they came to DC to urge Congress to recognize the Armenian Genocide. System of A Down has been a huge inspiration for me. When I released *1915*, the overwhelming majority of responses were positive. Obviously, the Armenian-American community was extremely supportive, but also the Hip Hop community was very accepting of it. Hip Hop is a genre that is rooted in social activism, going back to early artists like Public Enemy, Grandmaster Flash, N.W.A., and more. In a lot of ways, it was created as a way to relay important information to the masses that was largely being ignored by television, radio, and other publications. So, I think there was a shared appreciation for the message that *1915* brought in this community.

We know how strong the Turkish lobby is in the US. What was their reaction to your song?

They were not fans of the song (laughs). After the first few months when the song started to catch on and really get noticed, I would get lots of wild comments on my social media pages from either Turkish

bots or trolls. They would be laughable and alarming at the same time. Simultaneously denying that the Armenian Genocide ever happened while also threatening to commit a second one in the same sentence. Stuff you just can't make up. Always spikes up every April, go figure. But honestly, I feel like that's part of the process. The song tells the truth about the Armenian Genocide and that truth is a threat to the Turkish lobby and their denial campaign. If they are hitting me with these comments it means that the song is having the effect of informing people about the truth. So, in that sense, I want all the smoke.

Please tell us about the song *Honoring The HYE*.

So, building upon the established platform from *1915*, my new song *Honoring The HYE* has a message of Armenian solidarity and resilience. Sonically, the song has an upbeat Hip Hop/Pop feel aimed to attract both Armenian and non-Armenian listeners alike. It was produced by CAPS-LOK, mixed by Chris Carter (credits: The Backstreet Boys, J. Holiday, Natalise) and mastered by Chris Gehringer (credits: Drake, Ed Sheeran, Rihanna). With the goal of helping Armenians in need, I will be donating a portion of the proceeds to the Emili Aregak Center located in Gyumri, Armenia. They provide therapy services for children on the autism spectrum and with other additional needs. They are offering free services to families from Artsakh who are starting a new life in Armenia. The song is available on all platforms now if you want to hear!

Your first visit to Armenia should be very inspiring for both you and your mother.

It was! So, neither of us had been before and our first day when we landed happened to be Vardavar. We actually didn't plan it to be that way, but I guess the universe willed it to be so. It was a wonderful welcome to seeing the homeland! I actually made a short video of my mom playing in the water in Yerevan which I posted on my Tik Tok page and it went rather viral getting over 125,000 views. She was getting noticed around Yerevan for the next few days as "the laughing lady from Tik Tok" (laughs). I also had a chance to go to Gyumri to meet with the staff at The Emili Aregak Center to speak about Floortime Therapy and also to do a performance for the kids at the center. I was happy to appear on Shant TV's "Good Morning Armenia," and sit in on the closing ceremony of the Apricot Film Festival. My mom and I got to see the Armenian Genocide Memorial and my mom gave a recorded account of my family's escape for their archives there. It was great to see the work they are doing in preserving so many important events. Plus, we were able to connect with so many amazing individuals (like yourself) and see many historical sites like Garni, Marmashen, and more.

We will always be very happy to greet you and your family members in Armenia!

Thanks so much for having me, and I can't wait to come back in 2025! The next trip is already in the works!



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Spinach and Feta Cheese Pastries (Photos courtesy Linda Peek)

Café Cat Featuring: Spinach And Feta Cheese Pastries

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA — These Greek-inspired Spinach and Feta Cheese Pastries from Canberran food blogger Linda Peek are loaded with spinach, cheese, onions, and garlic. “These pastries are the perfect addition to lunch boxes, picnics, brunches, and buffet lunches.



Canberran Food Blogger Linda Peek (Photos courtesy Linda Peek)

Or serve them as appetizers with drinks and cold beverages. Each one is a buttery puff of goodness that melts in your mouth. Kids love these pastries, and it’s a good way to add more green vegetables to their diet,” says Linda.

She adds, “Cut out puff pastry from ready-rolled puff pastry sheets. They need to be about 3 inches square, which means in Australia you can get 9 from each sheet. Once cooked and cooled, if you are not serving these pastries immediately, keep them in the refrigerator for a few days or freeze them. They will need just a few minutes in a hot oven or an air fryer to warm up.”

There wouldn’t be many food bloggers who can list “Diplomat’s Spouse” as a former ca-

reer but for Linda Peek it was a natural progression from one to the other. Having traveled the world for over 35 years with her diplomat husband living in Israel, Malaysia, South Africa, France and Denmark, Linda honed her cooking skills catering for many diplomatic events and receptions.

“Whenever I need an appetizer for a party today that I know will be easy, impressive, and a crowd-pleaser, I turn to puff pastry. These sheets of buttery, flaky dough are endlessly versatile, bake up beautifully golden every time, and can be found in the freezer section of any grocery store. This is that kind of special dish that’s perfect to serve for your next special event or party, too, and I know your guests will enjoy it every time,” she adds.

Note:

Puff pastry, also known as *pâte feuilletée*, is a flaky light pastry made from a laminated dough composed of dough and butter or other solid fat. The butter is put inside the dough, making a paton that is repeatedly folded and rolled out before baking. It is usually found in the same aisle as frozen desserts in most grocery stores these days. Puff pastry seems to be related to the Greek phyllo (or Filo), and is used in a similar manner to create layered pastries. Puff pastry is laminated with thin layers of butter in between. Phyllo is virtually fat-free and delicate, like parchment. Puff pastry can be leavened with baker’s yeast to create croissants, Danish pastry, Spanish *milhoja*, or Portuguese *empanadas*, though such preparations are not universally considered puff pastries. Defrost the pastry according to the package directions.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1-2 sheets of puff pastry, thawed in the refrigerator overnight
- Filling:
 - 8 oz. frozen chopped spinach, thawed, drained, liquid squeezed out
 - 4 oz. Feta cheese, crumbled
 - 3/4 cup thinly sliced spring onions
 - 2 cloves garlic, crushed
 - 1 egg, beaten
 - 2 tablespoons olive oil
 - 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley or more
 - Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Extra: 1 egg, beaten, to brush

PREPARATION:

- Preheat oven to 350°F.
- In a bowl, combine the drained spinach with the remaining filling ingredients. Cut out squares of puff pastry.
- Lightly spray or oil a 12-hole muffin pan and place a pastry square in each.
- Place a rounded tablespoonful of filling in each, then go back and use the rest to top them up. If you have too much filling, you could use another muffin pan and make a couple more.
- Pull the four pastry points over the top of the filling and pinch lightly together. Brush with the beaten egg, then bake for 20 minutes or until golden.
- Remove the pastries from the oven, and let them cool for 5-10 minutes. With a butter knife, gently remove the pastries from the pan. Serve warm or at room temperature.
- Makes 12 servings.

Connect at:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thecafecat>
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/the_cafecat

For this recipe, go to: <https://cafecat.com.au/2022/06/spinach-and-feta-pastries/#comments>
For Linda’s sensational Greek Greek-Style Lamb with Rocket Salad, go to: <https://cafecat.com.au/2013/08/greek-style-lamb-with-rocket-salad/>
For Linda’s international recipes, see: <https://cafecat.com.au/>
For more background on Linda, go to: <https://cafecat.com.au/about/>
See: “How a diplomat’s wife became a food blogger” at: <https://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/05/05/3751927.htm>

© 2023 Linda Peek. All rights reserved.

A True ‘Revival’ Six Years In the Making

REVIVAL, frpm page 14
of our history, defines who we are as Armenians, and now we must grasp the significance of its loss and strive vigorously to reclaim it.”

The segments that were supposed to take place in Artsakh were shot in Armenia. The team recreated locations such as the Freedom Fighters Museum in Hrazdan and dug trenches in Yeghvard. “Against all odds, we completed filming in Armenia and later shot the European scenes in Cyprus in June 2024, with incredible support from the local Armenian community,” he said.

The cast includes noted American actor Armand Assante of “The Mambo Kings.” Maia Morgenstern, renowned for her role in Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ” (2004), delivers a standout performance as Araksi Arakelian. Heino Ferch, one of the most sought-after German actors, plays a key role in “Revival”. Clémence Baudouin

stars as Isabelle Morel, alongside Robin Hairabian as Murat.

This is the director’s fourth collaboration with Babken Chobanyan and Narine Petrosyan, both distinctive talents from Armenia.

Narine Voskanyan (Armenia) and Monique Peterson (USA) wrote the script, and Adrineh Mirzayan is the executive producer. Other co-producers are Kestutis Drazdauskas and Constantinos Nikiforou. This film was made possible through support from the National Cinema Center of Armenia, Cyprus Cinema Center, ARTsakh Arts and Cultural Foundation (USA) and countless supporters over the years.

Avetisyan was recently accepted as a member by the European Film Academy. Additionally, he has been selected as one of 15 participants for the CineLink Producers’ Lab at the Sarajevo Film Festival.

“Revival” is currently in post-production, tackling daily challenges. Editing work is being carried out, but the film still requires color grading, sound design, and VFX work. The producers’ goal is to wrap post-production by the end of the year to gear up for the fall 2025 festival circuit.



Young Araksi Arakelian, portrayed by Narine Petrosyan, is in Artsakh in 1993, having a conversation with Father Arshavir. This is one of the pivotal scenes in the movie.

Avetisyan is the founder of Fish eye Art Cultural Foundation (<https://feacf.com/>). To reach out or to make a donation toward completing the film, visit the site or write to fishyeart.foundation@gmail.com.

Books

Those Words, That Offer to Us: The Armenian Creatives’ Endless Offerings

By Arpi Sarafian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Imagine that words are no longer a pre-requisite to translating, typically understood to be the reworking of a text from one language into another to create an equivalent of the original text. In other words, imagine taking translation beyond the formal equivalence of two languages and expanding it to actually include the memories and the stories that surrounded the original text when it was being created.

Using this new understanding of translation, *The Armenian Creatives’ Those words, that offer to us: Handwritten Texts*



(self-published with support from The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, May 2024) offers us four experiments that engage in a fascinating search and discovery process with handwritten texts the contributors have inherited from their elders. All four move beyond textual notations and make the interpretation of captions on the back of photographs, symbols embroidered into lace patterns and needlework, and other material realities of the heirloom, part of their “translation.”

For example, Alex Aleco, a mixed-media artist based in Pittsburgh, “gets intimate” with a letter Rose Keshishian, a neighbor and a friend who lived in the same building as his grandmother, Virgini Krikorian, during the Civil War years in Beirut, Lebanon, has written her. True to his understanding of translation as the reconstruction of the “then-present” into the “now-present,” Alex makes the stories Virgini shares with him for context — the war, the connection she has to Rose, “like I’m her daughter. I didn’t have anybody, my mother, it was war, they went to Armenia to escape” — as they read the letter “together, in her room in Glendale,” part of his “translation.” The intimacy and the closeness Alex has to his *medzmama* also builds into the “reconstruction” of the heirloom.

In another experiment, Emma Welty, a textile artist in Connecticut, explores “translation that’s possible when you don’t know any Armenian.” Through research and messages posted on social media asking for help with the meanings of the words handwritten on the back of a 1919 group photograph of her great-grandmother in a refugee camp, Emma deciphers the “good morning” inscribed on the photograph and interprets the lace patterns embroidered on the cloth hanging in the background as a reference to pre-Christian Armenian sun worship, in her words, “a reminder that these ancient

crafts will survive in our hands, even if our captions have forgotten some of the details.” Emma’s “translation” itself is a touching reminder of the Armenian Creatives’ — the collective of young artists who came together six years ago in Brooklyn, New York, “to fulfill an urgent need for togetherness” — commitment to their Armenian identity.

Expanding translation even further, writer and poet Cleo Abramian, an MFA candidate in poetry at UMass Amherst, attempts “to translate a practice that has always been spoken and then stops.” Her experiment involves “translating” the “recipe” for baking the Persian-Armenian pastry Nazook — a pastry made only in Armenian homes in Iran — that was never written down but passed from one generation to another by “the act of doing and remembered by repeating it over and over again . . . Here in the US, you’re never going to find what we call nazook.” The conversations and the stories of walking to the bakery in the middle of the night, of people stopping by any time for tea and nazook that the women share as they prepare the recipe may seem casual but they bring to light something hidden in the depths of the women’s identities — the feeling of belonging to a community, of caring and of sharing that semantics alone could not communicate.

Much in the same spirit of adventure, Rehan Miskci, a New York/Istanbul based visual artist explores the inscriptions on the back of a fragment of her father’s graduation photograph from Getronagan Varjaran in Istanbul along with other paper records — travel documents and her grandparents’ marriage certificate in Armenian granted by the church in Istanbul — to reveal the complexities of the lives of Armenians living in Ottoman Turkey. By scanning the barely legible inscriptions in different languages in the various documents and translating from Armenian — a language shared in secret — in Armenian letters, to Turkish — a language exchanged in public — in Armenian letters, to Turkish in both Arabic lettering and the Latin alphabet, Rehan discloses an identity that, in her words, “exists in a state of constant translation.” Her, “even when fragmented . . . even illegible, but still, we know what it’s about,” validates her “translation” as a truthful rendering of our complicated existences in the diaspora.

Whereas the inaugural volume (April 2022) of the projected three-volume series on translation focused on literature in Western Armenian, the experiments in this second book focus on handwritten texts which, in the editors’ words, provide “a more visual and tangible medium for becoming intimate with not only language itself but the personal histories intertwined with language.” Indeed, allowing the “translation” to move beyond mere equivalencies between Western Armenian and English to include the original contexts of the heirlooms, gives us a truer sense of the cultural identities and the instabilities that mark the lives of diasporic Armenians.

These are challenging ideas that need to be taken seriously, even when not adhered to literally, if we want to contribute to the effort of sustaining a language, a

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CANADA

OCTOBER 4-5 — 2024 Convention of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada at the Tekeyan Center in Montreal, with Friday night reception, Saturday meetings for delegates and members, and banquet for Abaka Saturday 7:30 p.m. Details, hotel and registration cost forthcoming.

MASSACHUSETTS

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.

AUGUST 25 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic, 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill, 12 Noon to 5 PM. Live Music featuring the fabulous Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes Lamb Shish, Losh & Chicken Kebab, Kheyma, Vegetarian Plate. Available, Beverages including Cash Bar, Cash Raffles, Armenian Pastry Table, Air Conditioned Hall, Tours of the new church will be given. Bring your lawn chairs for sitting outside. For more information visit: www.hypointeearnernianchurch.org or call (978) 372-5688.

SEPTEMBER 14 — The Mosesian Center For The Arts in Watertown will host a concert starting at 7:30pm with oud master John Berberian and the bands Armadi Tsayn and RazAvaz, for a night of Armenian folk music from the Armenian Highlands to the Diaspora. Armadi Tsayn, features young musicians who pay homage to the rich legacy of Western Armenia. Members include Alek Surenian and Sam Sjostedt, both of whom studied under Berberian. RazAvaz is a contemporary Persian ensemble based in Boston. Purchase tickets at : <https://www.mosesianarts.org/timedevents/1836?vid=WmF-PNXZnPT06OmVjYmlzOTQ2NGMxMjg4NTM0YmFjZjI2M2JmYzE2N2Fk&showall=1> For additional ticketing inquires:617-923-0100, tickets@mose-sianarts.org

SEPTEMBER 15 — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, under the patronage of Bishop of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg Mikael Mouradian, will celebrate the Feast of Exaltation of the Cross. Sunday, 10.30 a.m. at the church, 200 Lexington St., Belmont. Followed by a luncheon at the Oakley Country Club, 410 Belmont St., Watertown. Master of Ceremonies Maral Der Torossian, Keynote Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian and entertainment from singer Miriam and musician Vasken Habib and DJ Ryno. Donation \$125 adult, \$95 youth and \$75 child. Reservations by calling parish office at 617-489-2280 or emailing holycrossbostonma@gmail.com

OCTOBER 19 — AFA Kef Time is here again! Join the fun at the Armenian Friends of America (AFA) Dance. Open to all. Saturday, 6:30 p.m. to midnight. Featuring the live music of: Leon Janikian, Jason Naroian, John Berberian, Bruce Gigarjian and Bob Raphaelian. The Armenian Church at Hye Pointe; 1280 Boston Road; Haverhill. Individual tickets \$55; Tables of 8 - \$425. Ticket price includes Dance, Individual Mezza platters, coffee & dessert. Advanced tickets only - No tickets sold at door. There is a capacity limit. Online Ticket Sales at www.Armenianfriendsofamerica.org or call Mary Ann #603-770-3375 or Kathy #978-902-3198.

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.

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.

culture, a history. In fact, the collaborative effort many of the experiments entail can be especially useful in the classroom where students will be encouraged to share their own experiences and be empowered in the process. On the other hand, the young artists’ courage to exper-

iment with new ideas will inspire them to explore new strategies of survival on their own. The editors sum it up best: “Western Armenian holds a lot of complexity . . . Formal translation cannot fully construct our diasporic identities, which are complex in terms of history and language.”



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 (Mgrrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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.

Competition for the South Caucasus in Action

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

(Part 2)

In my last article for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, I discussed the competition in the South Caucasus among key players: Russia, Turkey, the USA, and Iran. I analyzed recent developments in Georgia and the region's competitive landscape. I've previously noted that the US views the South Caucasus as a whole rather than focusing on individual states, as regional influence is crucial for countering Russia, China, and Iran. Recent events further support the points I've made in my prior articles. Now I will try to review my previous assertions in the light of last week's events.

Turkey's recent statement pertains to its incursion into our region. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan remarked, "Just as we entered Nagorno-Karabakh and Libya, we could do the same to Israel. There is nothing we can't do. We must only be strong." This underscores Turkey's expansionist policies in the South Caucasus and beyond under Erdogan's leadership. Turkey, which significantly influences both Azerbaijan and Georgia, seeks to extend its influence in Armenia to solidify its position in the South Caucasus. On the same day, the special representatives for the normalization process between Armenia and Turkey, Ruben Rubinyan and Serdar Kılıç, agreed to evaluate the technical needs related to regional developments. This includes the operation of the Akhuryan/Akyaka railway border crossing and the facilitation of visa procedures for diplomatic and official passport holders from both countries. This indicates that both parties are actively working towards opening the so-called Zangezur Corridor, frequently mentioned by Erdogan.

One day after Erdogan's statement, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended the inauguration of Iran's president in Iran. Notably, he met with Iran's Supreme Leader, who reiterated the importance of Armenia's territorial integrity and stated that the "Zangezur Corridor" is harmful to Armenia, asserting that foreign powers should not restrict relations between neighboring countries. Ali Khamenei further emphasized on his X page that the corridor does not serve Armenia's interests and affirmed Iran's commitment to this position.

Pashinyan did not respond to Khamenei's remarks, and his press communication addressed nothing about the issue. This silence suggests that the Armenian government may align with the corridor's concept, despite Iran's clear opposition.

On July 30, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a subcommittee hearing to examine "The Future of Europe." James O'Brien, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, was invited to testify. During the hearings, O'Brien stated that "We met with the prime minister several months ago and established a new platform to help Armenia reduce its dependence on Russia. It's almost entirely dependent on Russia for its energy and its economy. We need to diversify. So, making it possible for them to make the brave steps that the prime minister is leading them on which is a break with Russia. Russia is trying to make sure that anything that happens there happens on its terms, and I think both of those two countries are a bit frustrated by the involvement to be honest, and we are working very hard so that the express desire of peace can be manifested in an agreement. I'll just say one more thing about why that matters so much. Look at the map. From Central Asia which is not part of this committee but Central Asia all the way through. The Central Asian countries are incredibly rich and right now they're only options to the global markets fundamentally are through Russia or China. If we can open up a route that goes through Azerbaijan and Armenia, then they will have access to global markets and much less dependence on Russia and China, so this is all a part again of allowing countries to choose their own paths to the global markets." Basically, this is the most accurate explanation of the US interests in the region and overall, this is precisely the plan that the United States has for the South Caucasus.

Hours later Secretary Blinken stated that "The Biden administration suspended \$95 million in US assistance to Georgia after its parliament adopted legislation related to foreign agents that critics say was inspired by a Russian law used to crack down on political dissent and that sparked weeks of mass protests. Blinken said that he had decided to pause the Georgian aid, which would directly benefit the government, as the result of a review of assistance that he ordered in May after the law passed. He said he took the action in response to "anti-democratic" actions the government has taken. The US has also already imposed visa bans on a number of Georgian politicians and law enforcement officials for suppressing free speech, particularly voices in favor of Georgia's integration with the West. "The Georgian government's anti-democratic actions and false statements are incompatible with membership norms in the EU and NATO," Blinken said in a statement. This statement once again highlights the competition between Russia and the US in Georgia, which will have a significant impact on the fate of the region at large.

As a result of these statements and developments, we can once again note the interests of the main players in the South Caucasus.

USA: For Washington, having influence in the entire region is a priority because, through this, the US can more effectively counter the expansion of Russian and Chinese influence, including from the perspective of economic routes. At the same time, the spread of influence in the region, including through the corridor passing through Armenia would mean the isolation of Iran, which is one of Washington's main political priorities.

Iran: For Tehran, naturally, such a prospect is undesirable. In Iran, it is believed that the opening of any extraterritorial corridor would mean the loss of an external border, which would have a highly negative impact on Iran, especially considering the economic sanctions imposed against Tehran.

Turkey and Azerbaijan: These two countries have common interests. First, weakening Armenia and making it economically dependent would render Armenia incapable of being a factor of any kind. Instead, it could simply become a crossroads through which anyone can pass and circulate any type of goods. This simultaneously makes Turkey a transit point for Central Asian energy resources to Europe. Previously, Europe depended on energy resources passing through Russia, but now it would depend on those passing through Turkey. At the same time, Turkey could physically unite the entire Turkic world by having a corridor.

Russia: For Moscow, the opening of regional communications is important, but Moscow insists that Russian peacekeepers/troops should be stationed along this corridor, which naturally contradicts Washington's interests and Turkish interests. It is essential to consider who will control this corridor. Azerbaijan and Turkey prefer that no other state be involved, as it connects Turkey to Azerbaijan; they question why the troops of another country should be responsible for its security.

Armenia: For Yerevan, this prospect poses significant security challenges. Who will manage the security of this road? If another state controls it, an extraterritorial unit would effectively traverse Armenia, which would be catastrophic. If the Armenian armed forces manage it, different sorts of provocations from Turkey and Azerbaijan could lead to serious complications. Therefore, besides making extensive concessions, Yerevan should at least strategize the least risky scenario for itself, as Armenia finds itself isolated, seemingly conveying to regional powers, "You decide, and I will follow your lead."

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

LETTERS

Writer Ben Alexander Responds To Review

To the Editor:

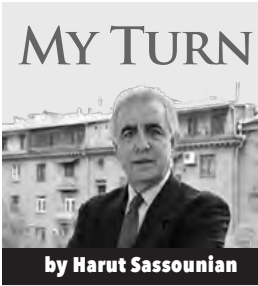
I want to thank Chris Atamian for taking the time to read my book and write his thoughtful [review](#), (Review: Benjamin Alexander's *Ararat in America*, July 29) which points out the things that I do effectively in the book as well as some of the things that my book doesn't attempt to do. I would urge fellow authors to read his list of themes that he perceives I gloss over, because it can definitely be seen as a list of needs and opportunities in the field that ought to be pursued, though for the particular set of years that my book covers (as opposed to the present), helpful source material on some of them may be a bit elusive.

For my part, I only want to respond to one of the review's criticisms, and that is where he quotes this sentence: "The East had a simple rural virtue and a touch of mystique, the West (as exemplified by Western youth) had the sophistication, and the task of Armenians was to find just the right blend." As presented in the review, the quotation might appear to be my own attempt at an analysis of the difference between East and West, that this is the world according to Ben Alexander. I think I can best clarify that sentence's actual meaning by providing the complete paragraph in which it appears. It's the final paragraph of a chapter largely about youth social life in the 1930s, capping off a flurry of letters to the editor where young Armenians of the time are reflecting on their own sense of identity and critiquing each other's views and conduct. That closing paragraph, in full, reads:

see LETTER, page 20



COMMENTARY



MY TURN

Turkey Allocated \$544 Million To Invigorate Its Communities in Foreign Countries

Two months ago, I wrote an analysis titled “Turkey is Backing its Citizens Abroad, While Armenia is Alienating its Diaspora.” It was based on an article by Abdullah Bozkurt in the Nordic Monitor: “Turkey is expanding its Diaspora engagement to promote political goals abroad.”

Last week, Bozkurt published a follow-up article titled: “Turkey Poised to Intensify Its Interference in the Domestic Affairs of Other Countries Using the Turkish Diaspora.” It provides further details about the Turkish government’s efforts to set up proxy groups using its citizens abroad. In contrast, Armenia is alienating its diaspora by creating rifts and banning some of them from entering the country. Given the serious crisis Armenia is in, its government should be doing everything possible to entice compatriots abroad to visit their homeland, invest in the country, and bring over their knowledge and skills. The diaspora is a valuable asset for Armenia, not a ‘milking cow.’

The powerful Turkish state, which doesn’t really need the help of its citizens abroad, is nurturing and strengthening its Diaspora. The Turkish government has allocated a budget of \$544.2 million for the years 2024-28 to its Diaspora agency, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB in Turkish). Its strategic plan is “to foster a stronger allegiance to Turkey on the part of people in the Turkish Diaspora, with increased financial and other support from the Erdogan government.”

Bozkurt explained that the real aim of the Turkish government is “to exert greater influence over the domestic politics of European nations by actively supporting Turkish and Muslim communities in their political engagement, as revealed by the head of the government’s diaspora agency during testimony before a parliamentary committee.” Abdullah Eren, head of YTB, told the Turkish Parliament on July 17 that he “could reveal more in a closed-door session, from which the record of his comments would not be made public.”

The reason for Eren’s secrecy is that YTB is “supported by Turkish agencies that work with diaspora groups, such as the Turkish intelligence organization MIT, Foreign Service, Maarif Foundation, Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet), Yunus Emre Institute and Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency.” The aim is “to place more pro-Turkish politicians on the political map abroad. Their efforts are particularly focused on Europe, where the bulk of Turkish Diaspora groups reside. In the last decade the Erdogan government has supported the establishment of smaller political parties in Europe, particularly those driven by religious agendas. It has endorsed candidates working in established mainstream parties, expecting them to act as proxies for Turkish government policies. However, the results

have been unsatisfactory so far, prompting the Turkish government to vow increased efforts to fulfill what it describes as a strategic goal.”

According to Seda Goren Boluk, the chair of the parliamentary committee overseeing YTB, “the target population in the diaspora is nearly 40 million, consisting of approximately 7 million Turks and over 30 million people from related [Muslim] communities in other countries. She vowed to do everything possible to address issues concerning Diaspora groups in order to empower the Turkish nation.”

According to a YTB survey, “among the youth in the Turkish diaspora, estimated to be around 2 million strong and now in its fourth generation, one-third of respondents expressed a desire to be proactive in the politics of European countries and sustain their campaigns.” Another third of the Turkish youth abroad “intends to conceal their true intentions and launch their campaigns on behalf of Turkey only after securing key positions in mainstream political parties.” The last third said that they have zero interest in getting involved in politics.

To encourage Turkish youth to get involved in the politics of the countries they live in, Eren cited the example of “Serap Guler, a German politician of Turkish background in the CDU [Christian Democratic Union] and a member of the Bundestag [German Parliament] since 2021. Despite expressing some criticism towards Turkey in the past, Guler has maintained contact with the Turkish embassy and Turkish government institutions.”

The overcome the legal and political challenges of Turks living overseas, YTB urged the Turkish government “to utilize its diplomatic influence and public diplomacy tools to exert pressure on foreign countries to lift these restrictions on Turkish Diaspora groups.”

YTB “has already been collaborating with numerous groups operating in Europe and other continents, providing them with funding, logistical, and technical support to enhance their effectiveness.” YTB participated in Ankara in early May “in a program organized by the Union of International Democrats, an organization that acts as a foreign interest group representing Erdogan’s ruling AKP abroad.”

YTB “brings 4,000 young men and women to Turkey every year under various schemes for training and education in camps maintained by Turkey’s Ministry for Youth and Sports. According to Eren, many young Turkish engineers studying in Europe have been enrolled in internship programs in what he termed ‘critical industries,’ such as defense and military technologies. He identified state-owned defense contractors like Aselsan and Tusash as venues where these individuals were recruited for internships.”

Eren stated that “groups critical of and opposed to the Erdogan government [are] a threat to achieving YTB’s stated goals since they undermine the Turkish government’s policies in the diaspora. This includes the Gulen movement, Kurdish opposition groups, and Alevis.”

It remains to be seen how governments in Europe and the United States will deal with the Erdogan government’s proxy groups which are considered to be unregistered foreign agents.

NATO Member Turkey Must Be Prodded to Rein In Azerbaijan

By Sheila Paylan

At July’s NATO summit in Washington, Turkey took heat for its double game on the Ukraine war: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan clearly wants the 32-member alliance to not get too much in Russian President Vladimir Putin’s way. The NATO leadership should be equally concerned about this prickly ally’s flirtation with another dictator: Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev.

Turkey’s relationship with Azerbaijan is at the heart of a web of contradictions that badly undermines the viability of Turkey as an ally of the West, but could be fixed in ways that would genuinely lead to progress in the region and recast Ankara as a good-faith player.

Since the Gaza war broke out, Turkey has been vehemently critical of Israel, presenting its position as moral and deploying the language of justice on behalf of the oppressed of the world. This effort to claim a mantle of righteousness is starkly contradicted by Turkey’s robust alliance with Azerbaijan — a country which is engaged in genuinely heinous actions against its neighbors and its own population (and which is also closely aligned with Israel, which seems to bother Turkey not at all).

Just a little over a week before the Hamas invasion of Israel, Azerbaijan carried out a massive ethnic cleansing of ethnic Armenians in the formerly self-governing republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is the historic heartland of the Armenians, the world’s oldest Christian civili-

zation (dating back to 301). Azerbaijan had been starving the 120,000 people in the enclave for 10 months via a brutal blockade — an action that the

International Court of Justice ordered (repeatedly, in vain) be stopped. Luis Moreno Ocampo, the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, called this a genocide (based on Article 2C of the United Nations’ Genocide Convention) — again to no avail. And in September 2023 Azerbaijan attacked, compelling the flight of the entire population within days, under the watchful eye of Azerbaijani troops, who also arrested Nagorno-Karabakh’s leadership. They are now being held hostage and subjected to sham trials. Azerbaijan has since busied itself with erasing any trace of the Armenians ever having been there.

Turkey, which calls Israel’s actions in Gaza a “genocide,” has armed a genocidally Armenophobic Azerbaijan and provided diplomatic cover throughout its actions. And, of course, it continues to steadfastly deny the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Empire, even though there is no dispute that about 1.5 million Armenians were killed over a few years beginning in 1915.

The Azerbaijani rampage in Nagorno-Karabakh is not the end of the matter. Azerbaijan’s Aliyev has repeatedly suggested he has designs on the territory of Armenia itself. The landlocked country of 3 million people may be small, but it is inconveniently situated for Azerbaijan’s desire for a land bridge to Turkey. It is a goal quietly shared by Turkey, since Erdogan’s neo-Ottoman ambitions would be served by direct access to Azerbaijan and other similarly Turkic nations beyond, in central Asia.

Thus can we expect Azerbaijan to eventually try to seize a slice of Armenia, through what it refers to as the “Zangezur corridor.” This would be intended to connect Azerbaijan with its exclave Nakhchivan via Armenia’s southern Syunik Province. If Azerbaijan attempted such a land grab, it would be doing this with weapons supplied by Turkey — from missile systems and armored vehicles to drones, electronic warfare systems, and anti-tank systems. One could even expect Turkey to provide Azerbaijan with Syrian mercenaries as it did during the 2020 Na-

gorno-Karabakh War. It would be a blatant assault on the world order and the notion of territorial integrity.

Aliyev does all this while running what every global watchdog sees as one of the most oppressive regimes on earth (see this report from Freedom House).

How can Turkey, a member of NATO who at least theoretically wants close relations with (if not membership in) the European Union, possibly justify any of this?

Historically, Turkey’s foreign policy has been a complex web of strategic alliances and ideological posturing. Under Erdogan, Turkey has sought to become a dominant regional power by leveraging nationalist sentiments and historical grievances to consolidate strength domestically while pursuing an aggressively independent foreign policy (currently exemplified by a double game with Russia, which included efforts to delay and impede the accession to NATO of Finland and Sweden).

It’s an approach that has frequently put Turkey at odds with international norms and expectations. Part of that defiance has been the installation by Erdogan of a prototypical authoritarian democracy, with massive power being concentrated in the hands of the executive and with opponents — be they generals, judges or journalists — languishing in jail.

The result has been significant challenges, including economic instability, internal dissent, and strained relationships with Western allies. For Turkey to step back and address these inconsistencies would require a monumental shift in how it approaches its foreign policy.

It should begin by recognizing the Armenian Genocide, or at least stopping the denial of it. That would not only mend historical wounds but also restore some moral high ground. Additionally, if Turkey aspires to be taken seriously as a leader and a country with any semblance of moral authority, it must reconsider its close alliance with Azerbaijan. It must ask whether that alliance is built on mutual respect and shared values or merely on transient strategic needs that could expose it to valid criticism and diplomatic isolation.

Writer Ben Alexander Responds to Review

LETTER, from page 18

“These writers, generally speaking, appear to have agreed on what the ideals were, while either finding fault with each other for failing to realize those ideals or explaining why some patience on the subject was in order. Generally speaking, the shared ideal was to effect a blend of innate, traditional Armenianness and modern, sophisticated Americanness, that is, to be modern-American, Armenian-style. Implicit in the discourse was the shared self-perception as a group living at the crossroads of the Eastern and Western worlds. The East had the simple rural virtue and a touch of mystique, the West (as exemplified by American youth) had the sophistication, and the task of Armenians was to find just the right blend. That this principle was well understood can be most effectively gleaned from those letter writers who alluded to it with some irony, like the young woman who complained in the January 8, 1935, *Mirror* that the recent New Year’s dance had featured music that was too American, while the ladies’ coat check was ‘run on a basis characteristically à la armenienne.’”

Perhaps, to be clearer, I could have modified that sentence to say, “The East, so the popular theory of the time went, had the simple rural virtue...” In any event, that was the intent, as I’d be in way over my head if I tried to put forth any grand theories of my own about global cultural patterns. (I might note, in passing, that the same clarification can be applied to my use of the terms “good Armenians” and “good Americans,” which Chris mentions.)

Again, though, my thanks. Reviews are part of the dialogue, and dialogue is what I wrote the book for.

Ben Alexander
New York



Armenian Gymnast Artur Davtyan Wins Silver at Paris Olympics

MEDALIST, from page 1

This is Armenia’s first-ever silver medal at the Olympics.

Two-time world silver medalist and 10-time champion of Asia Carlos Yulo became the Olympic champion for the second time in Paris 2024, 15.116 points. The Filipino gymnast had also won a gold medal in free exercises at the

Armenia’s artistic gymnastics team have finished their campaign at Paris 2024. Vahagn Davtyan, the other representative of the team in the Olympics, finished 6th in the rings exercise.

NATO Member Turkey Must Be Prodded to Rein in Azerbaijan

NATO, from page 19

A critical area where Turkey can demonstrate its commitment to a principled foreign policy is in its stance on the so-called “Zangezur Corridor.” If Turkey is to be seen as a responsible regional power, it must ensure that Azerbaijan does not resort to military aggression to carve out this corridor. Turkey should also actively move toward finally normalizing relations with Armenia and opening up a border crossing, regardless of Azerbaijan’s unwillingness to do the same.

Turkey’s role should be one of mediation and restraint, ensuring that any developments in this region are achieved through diplomatic means rather than force. The Erdogan regime must recognize that unwavering support for Azerbaijan’s aggressive ambitions undermines Turkey’s moral and strategic interests. By encouraging Azerbaijan to pursue

peaceful negotiations and respecting Armenia’s territorial integrity, Turkey can take a significant step towards restoring its credibility.

Turkey has the potential to play a constructive role in the South Caucasus — but it may need some nudging in this direction. Ankara’s NATO allies should insist that Erdogan cease being an enabler of Aliyev’s aggression and instead use its influence to rein in one of the world’s worst-faith regimes.

(Sheila Paylan (@SheilaPaylan) is a human rights lawyer with more than 15 years of experience advising the United Nations. She regularly consults for a variety of international organizations, NGOs, think tanks, and governments. This opinion piece originally appeared in *Newsweek* online on July 24.)



Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada

2024 Convention

of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada



October 4-5

Tekeyan Center in Montreal
825 Manoogian St, Saint-Laurent
Quebec H4N 1Z5, Canada

Friday Hospitality Night
Saturday Meetings for Delegates and Members
Saturday 7:30 p.m. Abaka Banquet and Armenian Pop Music Program

Details, hotel and registration cost forthcoming