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Putin Talks to Pashinyan After Azerbaijan Visit

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated his latest offer to help Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate a peace treaty and delineate their border in a phone call with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday, August 23.

Putin offered to help broker such an agreement during a state visit to Baku on Monday. Meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, he said he will talk to Pashinyan about “the results of our negotiations.”

In its readout of Putin’s call with Pashinyan, the Kremlin said the two men discussed

the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the context of the Russian leader’s talks with Aliyev.

It said Putin reaffirmed “the readiness of the Russian side to continue to assist Armenia and Azerbaijan in negotiating a peace treaty, advancing the process of border delimitation and demarcation as well as in unblocking transport and logistics links.”

In a short statement, the Armenian government’s press office said Pashinyan thanked Putin for sharing “the impressions of his visit to Azerbaijan.” It did not give

further details of that discussion.

The statement also said the two leaders agreed to meet soon to “discuss issues of the Armenia-Russia bilateral agenda.”

Russia has repeatedly offered to resume its mediation of Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks over the past year, including in the aftermath of last month’s meeting of the foreign ministers of the two South Caucasus states hosted by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia has essentially rejected these initiatives amid rising tensions in Russian-Armenian

relations and its ongoing drift to the West.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sparked a fresh war of words between Moscow and Yerevan during Putin’s trip to Azerbaijan. Speaking to Russian state television, he accused Pashinyan’s government of torpedoing a Russian-brokered agreement to give Azerbaijan a transport corridor to its Nakhichevan exclave.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry rejected the accusation and said Lavrov is calling into question Russia’s “constructive involvement” in Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks.

Azerbaijan Bans PACE Deputies

YEREVAN (Lurer/Public Radio of Armenia) — Ahead of the COP29 climate summit, Azerbaijan has banned several dozen Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) deputies from entering the country. Baku explained that those deputies voted in favor of limiting the powers of the Azerbaijani delegation at the PACE meeting.

On August 26, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan announced that 76 politicians from 26 European countries will be deprived of the right to enter the country. The decision was taken after the vote held at PACE in January, as a result of which in 2024 Azerbaijan has been deprived of the right to vote.

Social Democrat Frank Schwabe, the head of the German delegation to the PACE, stated that Azerbaijan did not fulfill its obligations to the PACE, Baku was also criticized for arresting activists and journalists in the fall 2023.

PACE cited the country’s failure to meet key commitments. The Assembly expressed serious concerns regarding Azerbaijan’s ability to conduct free and fair elections, the separation of powers, the weakness of its legislature in relation to the executive, the independence of the judiciary, and respect for human rights. This resolution was adopted with 76 votes in favor, 10 against, and 4 abstentions.

The Assembly also highlighted the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, noting that Azerbaijan’s leadership “did not acknowledge the very serious humanitarian and human rights consequences” resulting from the lack of free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor. The Assembly also recalled its condemnation of the September 2023 military operation, “which led to the flight of the entire Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia and to allegations of ethnic cleansing.”

see PACE, page 4



Gonzalez reporting from Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 during the 44-day war.

How an Accused Russian Spy Traversed Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenian Politics as a Journalist

By Heggine Buniatian and Hasmik Smbatian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Following a historic prisoner swap between Russia and the West this month, Armine, an ethnic Armenian displaced from the



Pablo Gonzalez was arrested in Poland in 2022 on charges of spying for Russian military intelligence, known as the GRU. Photo: azatutyun.am (RFE/RL)

disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, watched footage of the exchanged Russians disembarking from their plane and being greeted on the tarmac by Russian President Vladimir Putin — rewinding

and replaying it in disbelief.

Among those returning home were convicted Russian spies and one convicted assassin. But Armine, whom RFE/RL is identifying with a pseudonym due to security concerns, recognized another one: a Spanish journalist who had been a frequent visitor to Nagorno-Karabakh -- particularly during times of escalating tensions there.

“I met Pablo about 10 years ago.... He introduced himself as a Spanish journalist and was eager to interview Karabakh officials, visit the seven districts around Karabakh, and talk to the locals,” Armine told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

“He made many contacts in Karabakh and was warmly received. Strangely enough, the Karabakh authorities — who were typically suspicious of outsiders — had no doubts about Pablo,” she added. (see SPY, page 6)

Tim Kurkjian Champions America’s National Pastime, One Game at a Time

By John Gigian

Special to the Mirror Spectator

WATERTOWN — If baseball is the national pastime, then Tim Kurkjian can be considered one of its greatest chroniclers.

Kurkjian has been covering Major League Baseball (MLB) since 1979 and has been with ESPN, the premier all-sports channel, as an analyst since 1998. During that time, he has covered different levels of baseball all across the country,



Hank Aaron with Kurkjian in 2018

from the World Series to Little League games. He is renowned for his storytelling abilities, being named the 2022 Baseball Writers’ Association of America (BBWAA) Career Excellence Award winner and honored by the Hall of Fame.

Kurkjian was drawn towards covering baseball from a young age, with his family inspiring his love for the game.

“My dad was a really good baseball player, and he loved baseball as much as anyone I’ve ever met. He was the reason that my two brothers and I played the game, loved the game, and had a feel for the game because he gave it to us. Baseball was the primary language

see KURKJIAN, page 12

BOSTON

Miqayel Voskanyan Brings Armenian Tar to Boston’s Stage

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August 24 Issue of Mirror-Spectator Delayed

The August 24 issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* was not sent out due to technical printing difficulties. The printer was due to reprint the issue and mail the issues this week.

Until then, readers can see the issue in its entirety online, at www.mirrorspectator.com. We apologize in advance to the readers of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Regional FBI Chief Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Investigative Committee, Arsen Ayvazyan, on August 22 received Alexander W. Tyguy, the newly appointed legal attaché of the U.S. Department of Justice's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in Armenia and Georgia.

According to the Investigative Committee of Armenia, while congratulating Tyguy on assuming his new position, Ayvazyan expressed confidence that the warm and effective cooperation established between the Investigative Committee of Armenia, the FBI, and the US Embassy in Armenia would continue to develop successfully, given Tyguy's extensive previous experience and the opportunities created by the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the Investigative Committee of Armenia and the FBI in 2023.

Tyguy conveyed his belief that the cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of the two countries, along with the further implementation of joint programs aimed at strengthening the Armenian Investigative Committee, will significantly enhance efforts by both sides in combating transnational crimes and contribute to the development of criminal justice in Armenia.

Free Economic Zone To Be Created in Aragatsotn Province

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — A free economic zone will be created in Yeghipatrush settlement of Armenia's Aparan community. The decision was made at the government sitting on August 15.

The creation of a free economic zone is expected to promote the development of tourism, create of new jobs, attract investments.

The goal of the project is to build a high-standard ski resort at the regional level, which will contribute to increasing the tourist attraction of the country and sustainable socio-economic development of the country/region.

A high-standard ski resort is expected to be built as part of the project. Up to 30 billion drams (\$77 million) will be invested for the acquisition of slides and artificial snowmaking system and the construction of entertainment centers (tobogganing, tubing, "magic carpet", zipline, water attractions) and other infrastructure.

According to the plan, in addition to the basic infrastructure, the organizer will also build ropeways, three hotels, a restaurant, a skating rink, a children's activity center and a spa center. The number of jobs is estimated to be 1,500 in the first phase, and 10,400 in the third phase.

Mailer ATG LLC has already invested \$15 million to create appropriate infrastructures. According to estimates, by the end of the first phase, the resort is expected to receive up to 20,000 visitors per day during the winter season.

Giant Armenian Statue of Christ 'Almost Ready'

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Gagik Tsarukyan, a wealthy businessman and politician, on Monday claimed to have addressed government concerns about his controversial project to erect a giant statue of Jesus Christ on a mountain near Yerevan.

Tsarukyan said the statue is "almost ready" as he spoke with journalists at a workshop where it is hewn.

"You must be looking and seeing that there is nothing like this in the world, that ours must be the best, the most beautiful and imposing in the world," he said.

Tsarukyan announced plans to place such a statue on Mount Hatis in January 2022, saying that it will serve as a "guardian of our country and people" and impress the outside world. The Armenian Apostolic Church said the idea is inappropriate and goes against Armenian Christian tradition. That did not stop Tsarukyan from organizing a contest for the statue and announcing its winner in May 2022.

The statue designed by sculptor Armen Manvelyan will stand 33 meters (108.3 feet) tall atop a 44-meter pedestal to be perched on Hatis. The mountain located about 30 kilometers northeast of Yerevan itself stands more than 2,500 meters above sea level.

The Armenian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture ordered a halt to the construction of the monument in July 2022 one day after it officially began in the presence of a government member. Echoing concerns voiced by archaeologists, the ministry said Hatis is home to about two dozen ancient monuments legally protected by the state. It singled out the ruins of

a Bronze Age fortress discovered at the mountain's summit by an Armenian-Italian archaeological expedition in 2019.

Tsarukyan said that he has amended the project to address the ministry's concerns. He pledged to preserve the monuments and even refurbish some of them.

Still, the 67-year-old tycoon would not say when the statue will be erected. "That

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and demanded his resignation even before the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Tsarukyan was charged with vote buying and arrested in September 2020 just days before the outbreak of the war. The BHK leader, who rejected the accusations as politically motivated, was released on bail one month later.



Businessman Gagik Tsarukyan (right) and Economy Minister Vahan Kerobian (center) attend a ground-breaking ceremony on Mount Hatis, July 9, 2022.

depends on the will of God," he said vaguely.

The Ministry of Education has not yet made any statements giving the green light for the project. Nor has the Armenian Apostolic Church publicly dropped its objections.

Tsarukyan is the founding leader of the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) that was the leading opposition force in the country's former parliament. It challenged

Tsarukyan has kept a low profile since his party failed to win any parliament seats in the last general elections held in June 2021. Last November, the Armenian authorities moved to confiscate hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of assets belonging to him and his family. They invoked a controversial law that allows them to seize money, properties and companies deemed to have been acquired illegally.

Armenian Students Win 3 Medals at Astronomy and Astrophysics Olympiad

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian schoolchildren won 3 bronze medals at the 17th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on August 17-27.

The event featured 232 students from 53 countries. Each country was represented by a maximum of 5 schoolchildren.

At the Olympics, the Armenian team was represented by four students of the Physmath school named after A. Shahinyan school: 12th grader Arsen Aghayan and

11th graders Narek Galstyan, Gor Hasratyan and Emil Musheghyan. Arsen Aghayan, Gor Hasratyan and Emil Musheghyan won bronze medals, while Narek Galstyan was awarded a certificate of commendation.

The Armenian team was led by Hrant Topchyan (Yerevan Institute of Physics) and Karen Baghdasaryan (YSU).

The Armenian team had won 1 silver and 1 bronze medals at the 16th Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics in 2023.



Members of the Armenian team in Rio

Baku Repeats Precondition for Peace Deal with Yerevan

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The signing of an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty is conditional on a change of Armenia's constitution, a senior aide to Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said in a newspaper interview published on August 27.

"We are very close with Armenia to finalize a peace agreement, but we need to ensure this peace is sustainable," Elchin Amirbayov told the Korea Times daily. "The remaining obstacle is Armenia's constitutional territorial claim on a part of Azerbaijan. Once that is resolved, we can move forward."

Aliyev has repeatedly set this precondition in recent months and especially after forcing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to cede four disputed border areas to Azerbaijan in April. Baku specifically wants Yerevan to remove from the Armenian constitution a reference to a 1990 declaration of independence which in turn cites a 1989 unification act adopted by the legislative bodies of Soviet Armenia and the then Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast.

The only legal way to remove that reference is to enact a new constitution through a referendum. Pashinyan announced plans to do that earlier this year, leading his domestic detractors

to claim that he is bowing to yet another Azerbaijani demand.

Pashinyan appeared to alter his rhetoric last Friday in a statement congratulating Armenians on the 34th anniversary of the 1990 declaration's adoption. He said that "contrary to various interpretations" the constitutional reference in question "does not mean that the entire content of the Declaration of Independence is included in the Armenian constitution and that the content of these two documents is identical."

The Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiation process was reportedly on the agenda of Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov's latest talks with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan held in Ankara on Tuesday. No details of the talks were immediately made public.

Bayramov flew to the Turkish capital one week after Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit to Baku during which he offered to help broker the peace treaty between the two South Caucasus states. Putin reiterated the offer in a subsequent phone call with Pashinyan. The latter's response is still not known.

Unlike Yerevan, Baku has welcomed this and previous Russian peace initiatives. Still, Amirbayov told the Korea Times that he does not want any third country to play a "direct role" in the peace process.



ARMENIA

ATP's Innovative Course Inspires New Nursery Keepers

YEREVAN — Celebrating three decades of dedicated environmental work, Armenia Tree Project (ATP) marks its 30th anniversary with the introduction of an exciting new initiative: the Tree Nursery Establishment and Management course.

Over the years, ATP has transformed Armenia's landscapes, planting over 8.5 million trees and shrubs. Our nurseries have become vibrant hubs of innovation, attracting visitors who are eager to understand and replicate our success.

Many visitors, curious about starting their own nurseries, often asked: "How do you cultivate such thriving plants?" Their questions inspired us to create this hands-on course, aimed at sharing our expertise with a broader audience.

This June, ATP launched its first-ever course at Karin Nursery. Over three days, participants immersed themselves in the essentials of nursery management. The participants came from varied backgrounds, with some having formal education and others bringing practical experience, all united by a passion for learning.

They explored themes such as Propagation Techniques: From traditional seeding to innovative hydroponics as well as irrigation and grafting fruit trees.

Reflecting on the experience, Lusine Gyurjinyan, who



Hosting foresters from Moldova and US Forest Service in Margahovit

was one of the participants of the course said:

"I willingly participated in the Tree Nursery Establishment and Management training course organized by Armenia Tree Project. I'm grateful to the organizers and trainers for their comprehensive knowledge and for teaching us tree nursery management skills. I look forward to sharing what I've learned with my students and collaborating with

Armenia Tree Project on many other projects."

In addition to learning, participants visited cultural landmarks such as St. Mesrop Mashtots and St. Gevorg churches in Oshakan and Mughni Villages. The course concluded with the planting of a commemorative tree in ATP's Semonian Park, symbolizing a shared commitment to nurturing the environment.

Protestors Throw Vegetables and Eggs At Belarusian Embassy in Armenia

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

A group of protesters threw vegetables and eggs at the Belarusian Embassy in Armenia on Wednesday, August 21, calling on them to "get out of Armenia," in response to a statement by Belarusian president Aleksander Lukashenka that no one needed Armenians 'besides us.'

During the protest, a statement signed by six political parties and civil society organizations was read out, urging the Armenian government to 'immediately' sever diplomatic relations with Belarus 'until the dismissal of dictator Lukashenka'.

Other demands included declaring the ambassador of Belarus and Belarusian diplomatic staff in Armenia as Persona Non-Grata, and to terminate all bilateral agreements with Belarus, including the visa-free entrance of Belarusian nationals to Armenia. The statement also demanded Armenia leave the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union, and the Commonwealth of Independent States, stating that it was impossible to be in the same military alliance and economic and customs zones as Belarus.

This action, which the organizers called the "collective attitude" of the Armenian people, came as a response to the statements of President Lukashenka, who questioned Armenia's foreign policy in an interview with Russian TV channel Rossiya last week, saying 'Who needs Armenians besides us? No one'.

He also advised Armenia to "develop their economy and focus on what they have" and suggested that France and the West would soon "forget about Armenia."

The interview went viral earlier this week after coverage by the Belarusian media agency Belta.

"Lukashenka carries out Putin's direct instructions," said political scientist Harutyun Mkrtchyan during the demonstration. The deputy chair of For the Republic, Ruben Mehrabyan, elaborated on this statement, arguing that Lukashenka has taken on the role of Putin's press secretary — "what is on Putin's mind is on [Lukashenka's] tongue."

In response to the protest, Belarus summoned the Armenian Chargé d'Affaires, Narek Tiraturyan, to the Foreign Ministry in connection with the "act of vandalism" against the Belarusian embassy building. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry also claimed that Armenian authorities took 'clearly insufficient measures' to prevent damage.



A group of protesters handling vegetables to throw at the Belarusian Embassy in Armenia. Screenshot via 1in.am

Armenian authorities have not responded yet to these statements, however, diplomatic tensions between Armenia and Belarus have been ongoing since June, with the two countries recalling their ambassadors after Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said he would not visit Belarus while President Lukashenka was in power due to his support for Azerbaijan in the second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

The President of Belarus in exile, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, condemned Lukashenka's comments in a post on the platform formerly known as Twitter, calling them "outrageous insults."

"The dictator has betrayed both Belarusians & [Armenians], acting on behalf of the Kremlin. Belarusians stand with the friendly people of Armenia and we are committed to strengthening our ties," Tsikhanouskaya wrote.

During the same interview, Lukashenka also stirred up controversy in Kazakhstan, by suggesting that Kazakhstan was among some post-Soviet countries that were 'dodging' their obligations to their economic and foreign partners.

He referenced Kazakhstan's 2022 protests, noting that Kazakhstan did not request support from the nearby countries of China, India, or Pakistan, but instead cried 'Putin, Lukashenka, help!', after which CSTO troops were transported to Kazakhstan 'within half a day' to calm things down.

(This article originally appeared on the website OC-Media on August 22.)

Man Prosecuted for Throwing Apple at Pashinyan

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A 71-year-old resident of Yerevan is facing charges carrying up to two years in prison after hurling an apple towards Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in an apparent protest against his policies.

Pashinyan was targeted by the man, Albert Arustamyan, on the evening of August 23, as he was about to meet with a relative living in the city's northern Zeytun district. The apple was thrown from an apartment block located in the same neighborhood. It reportedly did not hit Pashinyan or any of his bodyguards.

"Eyewitnesses (neighborhood children) say that Nikol Pashinyan and his bodyguard thought a grenade was thrown in their direction and immediately laid down on the ground," Arustamyan's lawyer, Roman Yeritsyan, claimed in a weekend Facebook post.

Police detained Arustamyan hours after the incident. According to Yeritsyan, his two daughters and a granddaughter were also forcibly taken to a nearby police station for questioning.

The suspect, who is a native and former resident of Nagorno-Karabakh, was on Sunday charged with hooliganism and released from custody pending investigation. The crime attributed to him is punishable by heavy fines and/or a prison sentence of up to two years.

Yeritsyan denounced the accusation, saying that his client would not have been indicted had he pelted an ordinary citizen with the apple.

"I think that the whole thing is about the target of the apple," the lawyer told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Monday. "When the target is Nikol Pashinyan, they launch a criminal investigation into hooliganism."

Yeritsyan pointed out that parliament speaker Alen Simonian, a key political ally of Pashinyan, was not prosecuted for spitting at a heckler in a popular dining area of central Yerevan in April 2023.

Just days after that incident, law-enforcement authorities arrested and charged a woman who threw her umbrella at Pashinyan during the prime minister's visit to a village in southeastern Vayots Dzor province. Although the woman was set free shortly afterwards, she stood trial and received a suspended 2-year prison sentence in May this year. A local court also ruled that the umbrella must be confiscated and destroyed.



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Red Cross Reps Visit Armenian POWs in Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited Armenian detainees in Azerbaijan in August, ICRC Armenia Communications and Prevention Manager Zara Amatuni said on August 26.

Amatuni said ICRC representatives visited those whom Azerbaijan acknowledges as detainees.

“All detained Armenians who are in Azerbaijan and whose names are confirmed by that country’s authorities were included in that visit,” Amatuni said.

She said the detainees contacted their families.

Azerbaijan has officially acknowledged that it is holding 23 Armenian captives. However, a senior Armenian law enforcement official said that the number of Armenian captives in Baku is 55. The captives include former presidents of Nagorno-Karabakh Arkady Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan and Arayik Harutyunyan, as well as former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan and other officials.

Telegraph Founder Did not Meet Putin in Azerbaijan, Peskov Says

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) — Russian President’s Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said on August 26 that Vladimir Putin did not meet Telegram co-founder Pavel Durov during his visit to Baku last week.

Some media outlets and Telegram channels published reports claiming that Durov had an unofficial meeting with the Russian President during the latter’s state visit to Azerbaijan August 18-19.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that no meeting took place.

Durov was detained at Paris-Le Bourget Airport shortly after arriving from Baku on August 24 for alleged offenses related to his popular Telegram messaging app, French media reported.

“We don’t know exactly what Durov is accused of, we haven’t received any official statements yet,” Peskov said. “Let’s wait until the charges are made public, if they are. After that, we’ll be able to draw some preliminary conclusions.”

Armenia Ties Normalization on Top of Turkish, Azeri Meeting

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The normalization of relations with Armenia was on top of the agenda as Turkish and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers Hakan Fidan and Ceyhan Bayramov met in Ankara on August 27, the Hurriyet Daily News reported.

The two ministers also raised bilateral issues including economic and trade cooperation as well as energy, transportation and other relevant areas.

Azerbaijan’s Gas Exports Increase, but Baku Still Challenged to Meet EU Goal

By David O’Byrne

Azerbaijan is on pace to meet its natural gas export target this year. But Baku still has a long way to go before the country can meet its ambitious export commitments for 2027.

Touting Azerbaijan as a “reliable supplier,” President Ilham Aliyev announced at a political conference in the UK in July that the country’s annual export volume for this year was projected to increase by over 10 percent of 2022’s total, reaching almost 13 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas.

Provided Azerbaijan hits that number, it will mark the first time the country sends more than half its gas exports to Europe.

Overall, gas production during the first seven months of 2024 reached 29.5 bcm, a 4.6 percent increase over the previous year’s production figure for the same period. Total exports for the period rose by 5.7 percent to 14.7 bcm, just over half of which (7.8 bcm) went to Europe.

While export growth is strong, total volume is still far below the level needed for Azerbaijan to fulfil a promise made to the European Union in July 2022 to double its Europe-bound gas exports to 20 bcm per year by the end of 2027. In other words, Baku needs to increase its export volume by over 50 percent in just over three years.

Aliyev has tried to tamp down speculation about Azerbaijan’s export capacity, but he has supplied few specifics. “We are trying to do everything in order to be able to implement our commitment to supply 20 bcm only to the EU by 2027. This is our target,” he said during the UK conference.

Production from Azerbaijan’s main Caspian Shah Deniz gas field is still increasing with field operator BP drilling new production wells. BP has also said that it hopes to start production from a new “deep gas field” beneath the ACG oil field later this year, or early in 2025.

Crucially, neither BP nor Baku have confirmed whether the increased production will be enough to meet Baku’s commit-

ments, not only to the EU, but also growing domestic consumption, as well as rising demand in neighboring Turkey and Georgia.

Turkmenistan might hold the key to solving Baku’s export challenges. Both Azerbaijan and Turkey have shown interest in forging a transit supply arrangement with Ashgabat to potentially plug the looming supply gap to Europe. But Turkmenistan has proven difficult to pin down.

In late July, Turkish energy minister Alparslan Bayraktar visited Ashgabat to firm up a framework agreement signed with Turkmenistan in the spring providing for up to 2 bcm of gas delivered to Turkey annually for onward transit to Europe. This arrangement would include swaps involving Iran and Azerbaijan.

Despite two days of meetings with senior Turkmen officials, including Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedov and Energy Minister Annageldi Saparov, Bayraktar made little progress towards finalizing an arrangement. He returned to Ankara with only an agreement to continue working on a possible gas swap deal, and a vaguer commitment to look at developing a pipeline capable of carrying 15 bcm annually of Turkmen gas across the Caspian Sea to Turkey and on to Europe.

Plans for such a pipeline have been under discussion on and off since the late 1990s; they have not progressed in large part because of the enormous cost.

Assuming Azerbaijan can boost gas production sufficiently to meet its export commitments, Baku will still have to increase the capacity of the pipelines carrying gas to Europe. Currently the three pipelines that comprise the Southern Gas Corridor can deliver a little over 10 bcm per year. The only planned expansion currently in the works would take that total to 11.2 bcm annually.

To date, there has been no commitments to boost the capacity of either the South Caucasus Gas Pipeline (SCP) running from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey, in which Baku is a major partner, or

the TANAP pipeline that carries Azeri gas across Turkey to Greece, in which Baku holds a majority stake.

A chicken-or-egg type of scenario is currently enveloping the issue of pipeline construction: Azerbaijani officials say that before huge investments are made to construct pipelines, they need commitments from European gas buyers to purchase Azerbaijani gas. But European buyers are reluctant to make such commitments before Baku proves that it has sufficient gas supplies to sell.

Some incremental agreements have been reached. On August 1, Azerbaijan’s state oil company Socar began supplying gas to Slovenia’s biggest gas importer Geoplin. That deal brings to six the number of countries in southeastern Europe importing Azerbaijani gas. Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Romania and Serbia are the other regional states on the receiving end.

Major EU markets for gas, including Germany, have yet to demonstrate a willingness to import Azerbaijani gas. With insufficient commitments to make the expansion of the southern gas corridor pay for itself, Azerbaijan and Turkey are pursuing workarounds.

Greek gas grid operator DESFA announced back in April that it was working to expand the capacity of its cross-border link with Turkey to 5.5 bcm per year. And in July, Turkish Energy Minister Bayraktar announced plans to expand the capacity the country’s cross-border link with Bulgaria to 7 Bcm/yr or even 10 Bcm/yr.

Such moves, coupled with existing unused capacity in Turkey’s own gas grid, along with planned pipeline expansions within the Balkan states, could go a long way to meeting the pipeline capacity requirements to meet Azerbaijan’s 2027 EU export target.

(David O’Byrne is an Istanbul-based journalist who covers energy. This piece originally appeared on Eurasianet.org on August 21.)

Azerbaijan Bans PACE Deputies

PACE, from page 1

Schwabe submitted an application to participate in the COP29 as part of the German delegation, but he was informed that, like all the deputies who voted for the resolution in the PACE, he was declared a “personae non gratae” in Azerbaijan.

The chairman of the Swedish delegation to the PACE, Markus Vihel, told Blankspot that he was not surprised by Azerbaijan’s decision.

“This was completely expected and inevitable. I have been criticizing the Azerbaijani dictatorship and its actions against Nagorno-Karabakh for a long time. I am glad that all present Swedes voted in favor, and I do not regret it at all,” Vihel said.

PACE President Theodoros Rousopoulos said, “This is more than a regrettable signal which only renders the current position of Azerbaijan in the Council of Europe more difficult. Member states have undertaken to respect the standards of democracy: blacklisting those who have voted according to their conscience can only backfire.”

Azerbaijan Reportedly Detains Second OC Media Contributor as New Crackdown Intensifies

Azerbaijani writer and OC Media contributor Samad Shikhi has reportedly been detained at Baku airport as he was attempting to leave the country.

Reports emerged of Shikhi’s detention on Friday evening, shortly after the Sabail District Court charged Bahruz Samadov, another OC Media contributor and researcher, with treason.

Shikhi, like Samadov, was an outspoken advocate for democracy and human rights in Azerbaijan — and for peace with Armenia.

Rustam Ismayilbayli, an activist, posted on social media that Shikhi had texted him that he was being detained at the airport. Ismayilbayli told OC Media that Shikhi was headed to Tbilisi at the time of his detention. He added that Shikhi had told him earlier that he had expected to be arrested.

Nurlan Libre, an Azerbaijani journalist, also told OC Media that Shikhi was detained at the airport. He said Shikhi’s detention was the “start of another wave of repression and arrests of peace activists.”

“This isn’t the first time, the last time was a year ago around this time, when Azerbaijan was conducting a military operation in [Nagorno-Karabakh]. Four people were arrested last year for their [peace activism],” he said.

There have been no official comments on Shikhi’s reported detention.

Shikhi has previously written for OC Media about Azerbaijan’s persecution of Shiite Muslims against the backdrop of Azerbaijan’s deteriorating relations with Iran.

It is not yet clear what charges Shikhi could face.

However, Samadov was the second Azerbaijani researcher to be charged with treason in less than a month, after the Azerbaijani authorities arrested Igbal Aliyev, an ethnic Talysh researcher, on charges of treason and accused him of making “secret negotiations and deals” via Skype with Armenian academics.

(This article originally appeared on OC-Media on August 26.)



INTERNATIONAL

Turkey to Host Iraq, Qatar, UAE Officials For Development Road Summit

By Amberin Zaman

ISTANBUL (AI-Monitor) — Turkey will host a four-way summit with Iraq, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates on Aug. 29 to discuss an ambitious multi-billion-dollar project to connect the Iraqi port of Basra on the Persian Gulf to Turkey and beyond, Turkish Transport and Infrastructure Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said on Friday.

The meeting will bring together relevant ministers from all three states at the Dolmabahce Palace, home to the last Ottoman sultan, where “significant decisions” will be made, Uraloglu told Turkish state broadcaster TRT. Qatar and the UAE are potential investors in the project.

The estimated \$20-billion project was formalized during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s official visit in April to Baghdad and will link the al-Faw port in Basra that is currently under construction to Turkey via a 1,275-kilometer (792-mile) rail and road network. Abu Dhabi’s AD Ports Group has inked a preliminary deal with Iraq’s General Company for Ports of Iraq to develop al-Faw and its planned economic zone.

Iraq is home to roughly 10 percent of global oil reserves and accounts for 5 percent of global production. Energy will hence play a pivotal role in the scheme. The Iraqi government reckons that once completed, the project will significantly reduce the cost of trade between China and Europe.

Nejat Tamzok is a Turkish academic who

writes on the energy and mining industries. “The project is expected to reduce the time it takes to transport goods between the Chinese port of Shanghai and the Dutch port of Rotterdam from thirty-three days to fifteen days by creating an alternative route to the Suez Canal. It includes not only transportation infrastructure but also energy transmission and communication lines,” he observed in a recent essay for the Eurasia Review.

Tamzok noted, however, that the Development Road faces stiff competition from China’s Belt and Road Initiative, the US-supported India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and Iran’s rival plans to develop its own ports for regional trade routes connecting Asia with the Middle East and Europe and is leery of any projects that would diminish its political and economic clout, as the Development Road likely would. At the same time, Iraq does not figure in China’s regional transport projects and “Ankara’s priority is to be a direct main corridor between China and Europe.” For Turkey, the Development Road is mainly about bolstering commerce with the Gulf.

Next week’s summit comes against the backdrop of concerted efforts between Iraq and Turkey to improve bilateral ties. Erdogan’s visit, his first to the Iraqi capital in 14 years, saw the signing of a slew of accords in the fields of energy, trade and water sharing. Last week Turkey and Iraq announced the signing of what the sides called a “historic” military cooperation agreement.

A key component is Turkey’s ongoing



UAE Energy Minister Suhail Mohamed al-Mazrouei (L) and Turkish Transport Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu (R) speak together during the signing of the Development Road framework agreement in Baghdad on April 22, 2024. — AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP via Getty Images

military campaign against Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants based in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. Ankara argues that eliminating the group from Iraq is critical for the Development Road and wants Baghdad to aid in its anti-PKK endeavors to the full.

Analysts point out, however, that Turkey and Iraq have signed multiple accords in the past that have rarely been fully honored. Arzu Yilmaz is an associate professor at the University of Kurdistan Hewler in Erbil who has written extensively on Turkey, Iraq and the Kurds. Signing new deals that envisage carrying oil from Basra when

even the existing Kirkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipeline between Turkey and Iraq remains sealed hardly inspires confidence, she told AI-Monitor. Ankara turned off the spigot last in March 2023 after an international court of arbitration ruled that it had violated Iraq’s sovereign rights by allowing the country’s Kurds to export their oil directly to Turkey without Baghdad’s consent.

Iraq’s drought problem has assumed critical proportions, yet a water-sharing deal between Iraq and Turkey, which controls the headwaters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, also has yet to be successfully concluded, Yilmaz added.

Small Tax on the Super-Rich Could Raise Big Revenue in the Caucasus

A recent study published by an advocacy group finds that imposing a modest tax on top earners can generate hundreds of millions of dollars in much needed revenue for countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The added revenue could go a long way in addressing social and economic challenges connected with global warming and climate change, the study adds.

The working paper, titled Taxing extreme wealth: What countries around the world could gain from progressive wealth taxes, contends that a comparatively small tax paid by the top 0.5 percent of income earners in every country around the globe could collectively raise more than \$2 trillion. The paper, published by the UK-based Tax Justice Network (TJN), uses the example of Spain’s wealth tax as the basis for its global model of super-rich taxation.

“Global challenges, in particular the climate crisis, inequality, and the cost-of-living crisis come along with substantial financial needs,” the report states. “A moderate, progressive wealth tax could help countries to raise these urgently needed funds. The proposed tax would seek a reasonable contribution from the top 0.5 percent wealthiest individuals in each country, who, on average, possess more than 25 percent of a society’s total wealth.”

Under the TJN plan, the super-rich in every nation would pay taxes on assets above a pre-determined threshold, calculated on a sliding scale ranging from 1.7 percent to 3.5 percent. The plan sets a high net-worth threshold to ensure that the middle class is not punished by the tax.

According to the working paper’s estimates, wealthier states of the Caucasus

and Central Asia could raise hundreds of millions of dollars in added revenue. In Kazakhstan, the richest state in the two regions, over 61,000 citizens would be eligible to pay the wealth tax. The minimum asset threshold for those facing the tax in Kazakhstan would be \$819,381. TJN’s estimate, adjusted for existing taxes and other factors, indicates that its proposed wealth tax could generate an additional \$3.7 billion in revenue for the Kazakh government. Those funds could have come in handy to speed recovery efforts for areas of Kazakhstan that were devastated by flooding this spring. Residents of at least one hard-hit area staged protests in May over what they contended was inadequate government assistance.

Elsewhere, the introduction of the TJN plan could generate roughly \$695 million in added revenue for the Uzbek government, which has been running up big deficits of late as it strives to retool the country’s economy. Under the TJN formula, the Caucasus’ richest state, Azerbaijan, could add more than \$241 million to its state coffers. The poorest nation in the two regions, Tajikistan, could generate about \$54 million.

The working paper makes an argument that the super-rich should feel a moral obligation to help defray the consequences of global warming. “The wealthiest citizens bear more responsibility for carbon emissions, both due to their more excessive consumption, as well as to their investment habits,” the report states.

TJN does not outline an action plan to secure international adoption of its super-rich taxation proposal. For the proposal to work,

the introduction of stringent international transparency rules would be needed, the report acknowledges, urging the creation of a Global Assets Registry. The chances that any such mechanism will come into being in the foreseeable future seem slim to none.

“Existing tax systems offer opportunities for the super-rich to engage in international tax abuse, primarily through the

use of secrecy jurisdictions to shield their fortunes,” the report states. “Therefore, the implementation of a moderate, progressive wealth tax must be accompanied by a move towards full beneficial ownership transparency for all types of companies and assets.”

(This article originally appeared on the website www.eurasianet.org on August 26.)

Azerbaijan Launches Bid to Join BRICS after Putin Visit

BAKU (Politico) — The BRICS group of emerging economies could soon have a new member, with Azerbaijan having announced its intention to sign up to the club.

In a statement on Tuesday, Aykhan Hajizade, spokesperson for the South Caucasus country’s foreign ministry, confirmed that Azerbaijan is pushing for membership in the BRICS bloc of countries.

Initially founded in 2009 to foster closer ties among Russia, China, India and Brazil, the partnership now comprises nine members including Iran, Egypt, South Africa, Ethiopia and the UAE.

Russian President Vladimir Putin previously sought to brand BRICS as an alliance of “the global majority” as part of Moscow’s efforts to challenge a dominant West and evade sanctions related to Russia’s war on Ukraine. The group has also been at the forefront of a push to replace the dollar as the key currency of international trade.

Membership of BRICS is invitation-on-

ly, but multiple countries were given the chance to join at the start of this year.

The Azerbaijan announcement comes after Putin landed in the capital, Baku, on Sunday, August 18, for bilateral talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. On Monday Aliyev hailed the fact that “our economic and trade relations are progressing successfully” despite global challenges.

The pair enjoy a rosy relationship. They signed a “declaration on allied interaction” in February 2022, just days before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

At the same time, however, Azerbaijan has become an increasingly critical energy partner for Europe, having signed a deal in mid-2022 with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to help the continent wean itself off Russian oil and gas. The fossil fuel-rich state has since become a major trading partner for the EU, despite calls in Brussels for it to face sanctions over human rights abuses.



INTERNATIONAL

How an Accused Russian Spy Traversed Nagorno-Karabakh

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The man Armine recognized is Pablo Gonzalez, Spanish-Russian freelance journalist who is identified in his Russian passport as Pavel Rubtsov. He was arrested in Poland in 2022 on charges of spying for Russian military intelligence, known as the GRU.

Armine is one of more than a dozen people who spoke to RFE/RL's Armenian Service about their encounters with Gonzalez in Nagorno-Karabakh, which was a predominantly ethnic Armenian region before it was recaptured by Azerbaijan after the attack on September 19, 2023.

Most said they found nothing suspicious about the visitor, who in addition to reporting about hostilities in the region wrote about Armenia's nuclear power plant and used his status as a journalist to interview Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and snap photographs inside the ruling Civil Contract party headquarters.

They did note that Gonzalez, 42, demonstrated an appetite for covering conflict.

"He was not afraid of war at all," said Sergey Shahverdyan, the former director of Stepanakert's Hotel Europe, where Gonzalez stayed.

Just days after Putin launched Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Polish authorities arrested Gonzalez in the border town of Przemysl, through which hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war have passed.

Following the arrest, Poland's counter-intelligence agency alleged Gonzalez had "carried out his activities for Russia using his journalistic status." Richard Moore, the head of Britain's MI6 foreign spy service, said later in 2022 that Gonzalez was a deep-cover spy who was "trying to go into Ukraine to be part of their destabilizing efforts there."

Polish prosecutors last week formally indicted Gonzalez, accusing him of supplying the GRU with information that was potentially "harmful" to Poland and NATO, though after the prisoner swap he is now beyond Warsaw's reach.

While Polish authorities have not officially disclosed further details, journalistic investigations have previously found

that Gonzalez had ingratiated himself with Russian opposition activists and compiled reports on them.

Karo Sahakyan, an Armenian photographer who says he first met Gonzalez during the 2020 war over Nagorno-Karabakh, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that he "didn't notice anything suspicious" about him.

"I'm still not 100 percent sure," Sahakyan said.

'He Did Not Hide'

During the 2020 war, Gonzalez checked into the Hotel Europe in Stepanakert — now called Xankendi under Azerbaijani rule — several hundred miles from what would later become the Russian-Ukrainian front.

"You couldn't mistake him for anyone else," Shahverdyan, the former director of the hotel who was displaced from the region along with tens of thousands of other ethnic Armenians, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Shahverdyan says Gonzalez registered locally as a Spanish citizen and an independent journalist, and that unlike many journalists he would rush to the battlefronts like a trained soldier.

"He did not hide in bomb shelters or fear bombings," Shahverdyan said. "We appreciated his resilience a lot."

Shahverdyan noted that the alleged spy "spoke Russian very well."

"He would explain that he was born and raised in Russia, and that his grandparents were communists," Shahverdyan said.

A profile of Gonzalez by US-funded broadcaster VOA, for which he had contributed reporting as a freelancer, cited his wife and a friend as saying that his late grandfather, Andres Gonzalez, fled with his family as a child from Spain to the Soviet Union during the Spanish Civil War. He moved to Spain with his mother at age 9, VOA reported.

Both Armenian and foreign journalists who knew Gonzalez described him as cheerful, humorous, and quick to make friends — a person who loved noisy gatherings where he often showed off his tattoos.

"He had a tattoo of Tatik-Papik ('Grand-

mother and Grandfather'), a statue widely regarded as a symbol of Karabakh," the photographer Sahakyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "He would say that the Karabakh war was close to his heart, which is why he got the tattoo."

Gonzalez introduced himself as Basque and an independent journalist, Sahakyan recalled. He spoke with Sahakyan only in English and worked alone, never with accompaniment, the photographer added.

Probing Armenian Domestic Politics

Gonzalez also took a keen interest in Armenia's domestic political affairs, particularly in Yerevan's relations with its neighbors.

During the 2020 war, he managed to secure an interview with Pashinyan on behalf of the Spanish news agency EFE — Gonzalez's only known face-to-face interview with a head of government.

According to a transcript of the October 2020 interview released by Pashinyan's office, Gonzalez asked him about the course of the war and whether Moscow was doing everything it could to fulfill its obligations under its strategic alliance with Yerevan.

"We do feel Russia's support as a strategic partner of Armenia, and we do feel Russia's mediation efforts," Pashinyan said. "We see these mediation efforts for establishing stability in the region and achieving a peaceful resolution."

Gonzalez also asked Pashinyan why Russian border guards had been deployed along the border between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, according to reports published by Russian state media outlets.

His questioning of Pashinyan on that issue was not included in either the EFE report or in the transcript released by the Armenian leader's office.

Russia's state-run RIA Novosti noted the absence of this part of the interview in the official transcript and the EFE report, explaining that Gonzalez had shown its reporter this part of the interview.

A year after the war over Nagorno-Karabakh, Gonzalez wrote about the conflict on his Spanish-language website, and he continued to visit Armenia, including during the 2021 snap parliamentary elections.

Following the war, the Armenian opposition along with high-ranking military officials demanded Pashinyan's resignation. Gonzalez covered Armenia's political landscape at the time, taking photographs in the offices of Pashinyan's ruling Civil Contract party and attending a press conference held by the country's second president, Robert Kocharyan.

RFE/RL's Armenian Service spoke with people both from the pro-government and opposition circles about Gonzalez, but in stark contrast to those he encountered in Nagorno-Karabakh, none seems to remember him.

During this period, Gonzalez also focused on another issue of strategic importance: Armenia's Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant and its energy cooperation with Russia.

On his Spanish-language website, Gonzalez published an article featuring information about the nuclear power plant's location, the capacity of its reactors, the number of reactors in operation, and Russian fuel supplies for the facility.

The article also addressed whether Armenia would build a new nuclear power plant and, if so, whether Yerevan would award the contract to Russia once again.

Getting 'Back To Work'

After Gonzalez descended onto the tarmac following the August 1 prisoner exchange, Putin greeted him on a red carpet with a warm handshake. His fellow returnees included Vadim Krasikov, a former Russian FSB officer convicted of the 2019 murder of ex-Chechen field commander Zelimkhan Khangoshvili in Berlin.

Gonzalez was wearing a Star Wars T-shirt that read: "Your Empire Needs You."

"I would like to address those of you who have a direct connection to military service. I want to thank you for your loyalty to your oath and your duty to your Motherland, which has never forgotten you for a moment," Putin told the group.

The following day, Putin's head of the Foreign Intelligence Service, Sergei Naryshkin, said Russia had "welcomed our colleagues on home soil."

"They will rest a little now and get back to work," Naryshkin said.

Zelensky Honors Parajanov with National Legend of Ukraine State Award

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky honored 11 "outstanding individuals" with the National Legend of Ukraine state award, the presidential office said on August 22.

People's Artist of Ukraine and the People's Artist of Armenia, film director Sergey Parajanov was awarded the prize posthumously. This year marks the centennial of the artist's birth.

The National Legend of Ukraine Award was introduced in 2021. The president grants it to Ukrainians and foreigners who have made a contribution to the establishment of independent Ukraine and the country's defense.

"This is respect. This is honor. This is dignity. It is how the state of Ukraine says thank you to its people, its heroes, its legends. Those among us and those we must appreciate. Those who, unfortunately, are no longer with us. We must remember them all — legends who inspire us, legends applauded by the world. And I would like us all to applaud our Ukrainian legends now," said Volodymyr Zelensky.

One of the greatest masters of cinema, Parajanov created two masterpieces in a row, "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (1964) and "The Color of Pomegranates" (1969), had such legendary fans as Fellini, Godard, and Tarkovsky. He was imprisoned three times. His artworks, and particularly his Mona Lisa collages, put him in the company of Picasso and Warhol.

Major directors from Hollywood to Iran, fashion designers from New York to Brazil, Pulitzer Prize winning scientists and superstar musicians like Madonna and Lady Gaga have cited his influence.



President Volodymyr Zelensky and his wife, center, with the awardees



Community News

Society for Armenian Studies To Mark 50th Anniversary with An International Conference

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) is set to celebrate a significant milestone, its 50th anniversary, with a three-day international conference at Harvard University and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) on September 13-15.

The SAS was founded in 1974 by scholars Richard Hovannisian, Robert Thomson, Nina Garsoïan, Dickran Kouymjian and Avedis Sanjian.

Entitled “Armenian Studies: Evolving Connections and Conversations,” the conference is co-sponsored by the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies (Harvard University); the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (Belmont, MA); the Promise Armenian Institute (University of California, Los Angeles); the Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History (University of California, Los Angeles); the Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Studies (University of California, Los Angeles); the Armenian Studies Program (California State University, Fresno); the Institute for Armenian Studies (University of Southern California); the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies (Clark University); the Center for Armenian Studies (University of California, Irvine); the Center for Armenian Studies (University of Michigan, Dearborn); the Institute of Armenian Studies (University of Southern California); the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (Belmont, MA); the Armenian Studies Program (University of California, Berkeley) and the Armenian Research Center (University of Michigan, Dearborn).

More than 50 scholars from Armenia, Turkey, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, England, Australia and the United States will participate in the three-day conference. The conference will deal with connections and conversation in Armenian Studies that include — but are not limited to — the study of diaspora, migration, and forced displacement; collective violence, trauma, memory, and genocide; race and ethnicity; women, gender and sexuality; environment; transnational and global mobility of people and ideas; art, architecture and material culture; print and other established and emerging foci.

“The Society of Armenian Studies was founded upon the conviction of the vital need to cultivate and support scholars and students of Armenian Studies,” said Prof. Christina Maranci, the president of SAS and the holder of the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University. “The 50th anniversary is a moment not only to celebrate how far we have

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The Assembly Terjenian-Thomas interns on Capitol Hill

Armenian Assembly Internships in Washington and Yerevan Motivate Students for Advocacy Efforts

WASHINGTON — An enthusiastic and hardworking group of 28 college students participated in the Armenian Assembly of America’s (Assembly) internship programs in Washington, D.C., and Yerevan, Armenia, where they expanded their professional and personal experiences in the two symbolic cities. They also attended a speaker series and participated in networking events to help shape their career aspirations, while uplifting the voice and presence of Armenians.

“For some 47 years, the Assembly has enthusiastically welcomed students to the nation’s capital, and to fuel their interest in government, media, advocacy, policy, and research,” said Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. “The Assembly’s Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program serves as a foundation with students taking their positive experiences with them and continue their involvement and activism for the betterment of the Armenian people.”

The 2024 Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program in Washington D.C., which consisted of 20 interns, allowed participants the opportunity to meet with key elected officials, including Senators Ed Markey (D-MA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Co-Chair of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, along with fellow Co-Chairs Rep. David Valadao (R-CA) and Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA). Students also met with Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA).

Intern Coordinator Sarine Meguerditchian, who participated in the program last summer as an intern in Senator Markey’s office, praised the 2024 cohort for their dedication.

“After the tragic events in Artsakh unfolded earlier this year, being able to work at the Assembly office has given me the space to engage in my passion for Armenian advocacy directly,” said Meguerditchian, a rising junior at Northwestern University, where she studies economics and political science. “I was honored to be surrounded by similar-minded and eager individuals once again this summer.”

The eight-week experience was enhanced by a guest speaker series, where successful professionals and notable program alumni shared information about their career trajectories. This year’s speakers included Professor Aram Gavoor, Esq., Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at the George Washington University Law School, a Board Member of the Armenian Assembly of America, and an alumnus of the Class of 2003; Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington D.C.-based think-tank, and an alumnus of the Class of 1981; Robert Avetisyan, who served as the Permanent Representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic to the U.S.; Bryan Ardouny, Assembly executive director; Dr. Rouben Adalian, director of the Armenian National Institute (ANI); Sarkis Karabashian, director of the Nexus Armenia program at the Assembly; Max Cherry, a communications consultant and media relations expert (and grandson of one of the Assembly’s founding members, Dr. Haikaz M. Grigorian); Grigor Sargsyan, principal portfolio manager and head of the Global Fixed Income at Asset Management and Advisory

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Anna Magzanyan Named President of L.A. Times Studios

LOS ANGELES (*Los Angeles Times*) — Anna Magzanyan has been appointed to the newly-created role of president of *L.A. Times Studios*. In this role, Magzanyan will lead *L.A. Times Studios* business operations as well as revenue growth across the *Los Angeles Times* businesses and affiliates through sales and business development programs, new IP collaborations and branded content initiatives, positioning the media organization to accelerate innovation and strategic growth.

In making the appointment, Patrick Soon-Shiong, owner and executive chairman of the *Los Angeles Times*, said, “Anna Magzanyan’s proven track record and strategic vision position her as the ideal leader to advance our studios initiatives. I am confident that her expertise will bring the company into a new era of innovation and success, strengthening our commitment to delivering engaging content to our audiences and ensuring a sustainable future for the *Los Angeles Times*.”

As president of *L.A. Times Studios*, Magzanyan will oversee new content development outside of the *Times*’ journalism and establish and nurture key collaborations. She will continue leading advertising sales, client solutions, events and business development while building new content offerings and diversifying revenue sources, with a focus on ad-supported initiatives to complement the *Los Angeles Times*’ core subscription business.



“I am honored and thrilled to step into this role and lead the talented *L.A. Times Studios* team,” said Magzanyan. “Our objective is to innovate and expand content monetization while continuing to drive revenue growth for our businesses. I am proud of how we’ve developed new products and enhanced existing ones, such as Image, Hot Property, Events and the whole Business to Business portfolio, and I am excited for what is ahead with *L.A. Times Studios*.”

Magzanyan joined the *Los Angeles Times* in 2020 as the chief of staff to the executive chairman and head of strategy and revenue. She previously served as publisher and CEO of the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, where she achieved significant growth in audience engagement and revenue. Prior to that, she held executive roles at industry leaders such as the *Hollywood Reporter* and iHeartRadio, and served as a consultant with organizations such as the *Houston Chronicle*, Omni Media and Cretan Pearl Resort.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Dr. Aram Demirjian Named Chair of Surgery at Mount Auburn Hospital

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — On August 22, Mount Auburn Hospital announced Aram Demirjian, MD, FACS, MPA, has been appointed as Chair of the Department of Surgery. Demirjian has been the Division Chief of General Surgery since 2021 and served as interim Chair of the department for the past year.

“Aram has been part of the Mount Auburn family for almost ten years, and we are pleased for him to take on this new leadership

role,” said Ed Huang, MD, president of Mount Auburn Hospital. “His experience showcases his exceptional surgical and clinical skills, compassionate patient care, and dedication to advancing the field of surgery.”

Demirjian specializes in surgical care for patients with precancerous and cancerous pancreatic and liver diseases. He is also an Assistant Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School. Demirjian completed his residency at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, where he was named Chief Resident, and completed a Fellowship in Surgical Oncology at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland. Demirjian is Board Certified in Surgery.

“I am honored to have been named Chair and I aim to lead and support my



colleagues in the Surgery Department to deliver unparalleled, patient-centered care in Cambridge and surrounding communities,” said Demirjian. “I plan to implement leading-edge treatment approaches, foster a culture of safety, and continually enhance the quality of surgical care at we provide.”

Demirjian has a deep commitment to surgical teaching. As a leader of resident teaching conferences, a clinical educator, and an examiner for mock oral board

exams, he has served as a mentor to many. In 2022, he was honored as Mount Auburn Hospital Surgical Educator of the Year for his efforts in training the next generation of physicians.

“As Chair, Aram will collaborate with Mount Auburn leadership and the Beth Israel Lahey Health community to strengthen our general surgery and surgical subspecialty programs,” said Toni Golen, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Mount Auburn Hospital. “He is the perfect choice for this position and I know he will lead his fellow surgeons with energy and insight.”

Demirjian graduated from Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Penn. He earned his medical degree from Boston University School of Medicine. Demirjian is also a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School with a master’s in public administration.

Society for Armenian Studies to Mark 50th Anniversary with an International Conference

ANNIVERSARY, from page 7

come but also to reflect on where we stand and to explore directions for the future of the field,” she continued.

The first day of the conference includes a reflection on the Society’s 50-year history and recognition of the contributions of eminent scholars who have passed away. These scholars include Robert Thomson, Avedis Sanjian, Robert Hewsen, Nina Garsoïan, Sirarpie Der Nersessian, Lucy Der Manuelian, George Bournoutian, Anahide Ter Minassian, Louise Nalbandian, Richard G. Hovannisian, Dennis Papazian and Vahakn N. Dadrian.

The Society will also award the Society of Armenian Studies (SAS) Lifetime Achievement Award to Stepan Astourian, Anny Bakalian, Levon Chorbajian, Roberta Ervine, Jirair Libaridian, Krikor Maksoudian, Levon Marashlian, Rubina Perroomian and Abraham Terian in recognition and appreciation for their outstanding service and contribution to the field of Armenian Studies.

“This is a huge milestone in the history of SAS,” said Prof. Bedross Der Matossian, Chair of the Organizing Committee of the conference and Past President of SAS. “The breadth, the scope, and the multidisciplinary approaches of the papers to be delivered at the conference demonstrate how SAS has evolved from a handful of scholars to become the most important academic society in the Western Hemisphere with cutting-edge approaches to Armenian Studies,” he continued.

The Society of Armenian Studies is an international body, composed of scholars and students, whose aims are to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, including history, language, literature, and social, political, and economic questions; to facilitate the exchange of scholarly information pertaining to Armenian studies around the world; and to sponsor panels and conferences on Armenian studies.

For those interested in joining this vibrant academic community or seeking more information on the Society for Armenian Studies, we invite you to visit the SAS website at societyforarmenianstudies.com. Membership in the Society offers a wealth of benefits, including access to a global network of scholars, opportunities to present research, and updates on the latest developments in Armenian studies.

The panels at Harvard will be held in the Sackler Lecture Hall, 485 Broadway, Cambridge, and the panels at NAASR will be held in the NAASR Headquarters, 395 Concord Ave, Belmont.

The conference is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact Prof. Bedross Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu.

Tekeyan Cultural Association • The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
National Association for Armenian Studies and Research/Calouste
Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Topics
present

“Fighting Misinformation Amid a Security Crisis: The Armenian Media Landscape”



a lecture by

Maria Titizian

Editor-in-chief of the weekly
online magazine EVN
Report in Yerevan

**September 5
Thursday**

7:30 p.m.

**Baika Building
Main Hall downstairs (Norseman Ave. entrance)
755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown**

Free admission. For more info email tcadirector@aol.com.



OBITUARY



**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,

Dikran Horoupiian Neuropathologist at Stanford

By Krista Conger

WOODSIDE, Calif. — Dikran Horoupiian, MD, chief of diagnostic neuropathology at Stanford Medicine from 1986 to 2002, author of more than 250 scientific publications and mentor to more than 20 neuropathology fellows, died on June 21 in Woodside. He was 91.

In addition to studying the developmental, degenerative and neoplastic diseases of the central nervous system, Horoupiian was well-versed in diseases of the skeletal muscle, pituitary gland and central auditory pathways, the American Association of Neuropathologists — for which he served as vice president in 1997 — noted.

“Dikran was very erudite,” said professor of pathology Raymond Sobel, MD. “Whenever an unusual case came up in discussion, Dikran had quite frequently already published on it. He was an inspiration.”

“Dr. Horoupiian left an indelible mark on neuropathology at Stanford Medicine, and his many trainees have become leaders in their field,” said Lloyd Minor, MD, dean of the School of Medicine and vice president for medical affairs at Stanford University. “His commitment to learning and teaching is a remarkable legacy.”

Horoupiian was born in Egypt in 1933 to survivors of the Armenian genocide. His background was humble, but he was determined to become a physician and earned several scholarships to medical school in his home country’s port city, Alexandria, graduating with high honors. After training as a surgeon in Egypt, he accepted an offer from the World Health Organization to serve as a district health officer in what was then the Republic of the Congo.

After 15 months, he flew directly from Africa to Winnipeg, Canada, in the middle of winter to study pathology at Deer Lodge Hospital and complete a pathology residency at Winnipeg General Hospital, now Winnipeg Health Sciences Center.

“When I landed on the tarmac, I was struck by the ice and snow that blanketed everything. I had never seen snow before, and the scenery left me numb,” Horoupiian recalled in a 2017 autobiographical article in the *Journal of Neuropathology and Experimental Neurology*.

During his time in Canada, Horoupiian became interested in diseases of the nervous system and taught himself neuropathology by reading textbooks and participating in neurology and neurosurgical grand rounds. He applied for and was accepted to a fellowship program in neuropathology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New

York, where he used the then-new electron microscope technology to study synaptic function and the degeneration of the brain in Alzheimer’s disease.

“The two years I spent at AECOM as a fellow were the most rewarding time in my career,” he recalled in his autobiographical article. After a brief period back in Winnipeg, followed by a year at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Horoupiian returned to Albert Einstein as the chief of diagnostic neuropathology. There he streamlined the neuropathology department and focused more intently on neurodegeneration.

An advertisement in the *New England Journal of Medicine* for a director of neuropathology at Stanford University brought Horoupiian to California in early 1986. At Stanford he launched a muscle and nerve biopsy lab and trained multiple future leaders in neuropathology while authoring over 250 scientific publications.

Horoupiian was dedicated to performing his job well — an attribute that was occasionally reflected in an impatience with those he considered less devoted — earning the enduring respect of his colleagues during his time at Stanford Medicine.

“We admired him and appreciated the support he gave us in our own work through his knowledge, experience and teaching skills,” Sobel said. Horoupiian retired as an emeritus professor in 2005.

“Dikran went from extremely humble beginnings to achieve and create an extraordinary life, and in so doing, became a role model to many, including his sons, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, students, residents, and fellows,” his family noted in a statement.

“I felt gratified that I had fulfilled my wish to be a successful physician contributing to the advancement of medical sciences and patient care,” Horoupiian noted in his autobiographical article. “My peripatetic life and exposure to a variety of languages and customs made me appreciate the various cultures I was exposed to and the fulfillment I have derived.”

In 2002 the American Association of Neuropathologists selected him to receive its Award for Meritorious Contributions to Neuropathology, citing his diverse interests and expertise in neuropathology, and giving him the moniker of a neuropathologic “man for all seasons.”

Horoupiian was fluent in: English, French, Armenian and Arabic. He was an active member of the Armenian community and devoted to his family. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Hermine; his sons Rupert, Mark and Garry; and six grandchildren.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Internships in Washington and Yerevan Motivate Students for Advocacy Efforts

INTERNS, from page 7

at the World Bank, and an alumnus of the Class of 2003; Mariam Khaloyan, Assembly Congressional Relations Director, and an alumnus of the Class of 2015; and Robert George, Data Consultant at Booz Allen Hamilton, and an alumnus of the Class of 2018.

Interns also attended special events, including the Helsinki Commission's hearing on Capitol Hill regarding the plight of political prisoners - where Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi shared remarks and spent time with Assembly interns - and touring the Library of Congress with the Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist Dr. Khatchig Mouradian.

The Assembly's Class of 2024 carved out time to socialize and bond with their fellow interns by attending the annual Congressional baseball game at Nationals Park; an Armenian dance class led by Aris Mardrossian, founder of the D.C.-based dance group Hayi Hoki; an intern mixer hosted by the ACYOA Seniors of the D.C.-based St. Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church; the annual barbecue of the ANCA's Leo Sarkisian and Maral Melkonian Avetisyan Internship Program; and also partook in memorable events such as watching the July 4 fireworks at the National Mall, touring the U.S. Capitol, joining the Congressional Armenian Staff Association (CASA) on Capitol Hill for a lunch and panel discussion, and visiting the Hillwood Estate, Museum, and Gardens, which featured paintings of Armenian artist Ivan Aivazovsky.

For intern Sabrina Ishanyan, the Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program was a "rewarding and fulfilling experience."

The Newton, MA native, who interned with Rep. Jack Auchincloss (D-MA), is a rising senior at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she studies history and economics.

"The people I met on the Hill, while being directly immersed in the federal legislative process, helped guide me towards

committed in Artsakh," said Hayriyan, a student at the College of Idaho where she is a double major in Political Science and Business. "Together we can advocate for justice and the rightful claims of our people."

As an intern for the government relations firm Potomac International Partners, Alex Marootian felt that the Assembly's Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program provided him with a "fantastic experience in and out of the office, on and off Capitol Hill."

"I have a deep connection with both my passion for politics and my Armenian identity, and being able to explore those as a part of this program has been such an amazing opportunity," said Marootian, who resides in Boston and is a rising senior at George Washington University, where he is double majoring in political science and French. "I was able to meet with our elected officials, talk with national leaders of Armenian-American political groups, and make deep connections with the other young and passionate Armenians in this program."

While interning at the Embassy of Armenia to the U.S., Alec Samra noted that his interest in international relations and foreign policy deepened, and he emphasized that a highlight of the program was meeting representatives on Capitol Hill and using his platform to raise awareness of pro-Armenian issues.

"I have been able to explore my interest in politics through numerous Assembly events and guest speakers, which have been incredibly informative and worthwhile," said Samra, a rising junior at Florida Atlantic University who is majoring in Political Science with a concentration in Pre-Law. "This experience has also allowed me to build valuable career connections and form strong friendships with my fellow interns."

menian Assembly of America; Lili Mkrtchyan, Armenian National Institute; Raffi Nalbandian, WilkinGuttenplan; Nareg Panossian, Armenian National Institute; Alec Samra, Embassy of Armenia to the U.S.; Mihranush Varzhapetyan, Armenian National Institute; Sergey Khachatryan, Armenian National Institute; and Susanna Kharatyan, Rep. Jen Kiggans (R-VA).

The Assembly's Summer Internship

ternship to give me is new strong friendships," said Danielyan, who studies Computer Information Systems at the University of Washington. "Being able to explore Yerevan with them has been a highlight and I'm glad to be taking these friendships with me when I leave."

Participants in the Assembly's Yerevan Internship Program included Adam Sherinian, RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Alek-



The Assembly Terjenian-Thomas interns with Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ)



Assembly Armenia interns in front of Mount Ararat

realizing my professional and personal pursuits," she said. "I was incredibly grateful to be in D.C. with the Assembly, where I met and was empowered by my fellow Armenians to continue to advocate for pro-Armenian issues."

Originally from Artsakh, Shushanik Hayriyan interned with the Armenian National Institute (ANI), where her family's story impacted her work and activism on Capitol Hill.

"It is imperative that we consolidate our efforts to ensure the safe return of Armenians to our ancestral homeland, and to hold Azerbaijan accountable for crimes

This year's D.C. intern class included: Ani Ajamian, Armenian Assembly of America; David Babigian, Schoening Strategies; Joseph Chelebian, Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA); Hagop Demirjian, Rep. Michael Bost (R-IL); Shushanik Hayriyan, Armenian National Institute and Armenia Tree Project; Sabrina Ishanyan, Rep. Jake Auchincloss (D-MA); Eliza Kalenjian, Armenian Assembly of America; Anna Kalloustian, WANi Organization; Tatevik Kamalyan, Embassy of Armenia to the U.S.; Alexander Kibarian, American Academy of Dermatology; Alex Marootian, Potomac International Partners; Zaven Masih, Ar-

Program in Armenia provided students with the unique opportunity to work in the homeland in noteworthy roles, while immersing themselves in daily life in Yerevan, and exploring the country's symbolic and historic sites.

Adam Sherinian, a recent graduate of George Mason University where he studied Global Affairs, appreciated interning at the Republic of Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs while growing closer to his roots.

"The Summer Internship Program was an enlightening experience for me, as I worked in my chosen field and forged closer connections with my heritage and culture, which was a unique privilege," he said.

Caylyn Kojamanian, a rising senior at Central Michigan University where she studies Political Science, emphasized that the program enriched her professional skills and deepened her appreciation for Armenia's rich culture and history.

"Throughout this memorable summer, I made lifelong friends and connections," she said. "Every challenge faced was a lesson learned and a stepping stone towards personal and professional growth."

Kojamanian enjoyed meeting with various officials in Armenia and learning valuable information from them, noting that the Assembly's internship program in Yerevan was a "lifetime blessing."

In addition to gaining professional work experience, interns also discovered more about their ancestral roots.

During a tour of the Sardarapat Museum, intern Yulia Danielyan inquired if the section on the history and liberation struggle of Sardarapat had any records on her great-great-grandfather, Vladimir Perekrestov, which the guide confirmed and allowed Yulia to take photos with her great-great-grandfather's memorabilia, including his photos and shoulder straps. She noted that unearthing more of her family history was one of her "favorite moments" during the program, alongside the bonds she created with her cohort.

"The one thing I never expected this in-

sandr Mangasarov, RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ani Hekimian, Armenian-American Wellness Center; Caylyn Kojamanian, RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Defender's Office; Sophia Alexanian, Matenadaran; Sosie Scott, RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Victoria Melkonyan, CivilNet; Yulia Danielyan, Matenadaran.

The Assembly's Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program, which marks its 47th year, along with its sister Summer Internship Program in Armenia, has welcomed over 1,200 students over the decades. The programs offer students internships in government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and mass media, as well as meetings with elected officials, community leaders, entrepreneurs and leading professionals in various fields including law, business, and academics.

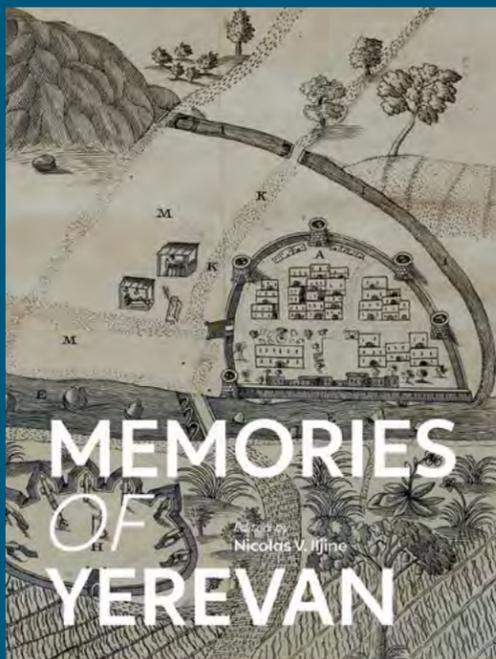
For more information about the Assembly's 2025 Internship Programs, as well as the Assembly's financial aid directory, please click here. The Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program application is available here, and the Summer Internship Program in Armenia application can be found here.

The Armenian Assembly of America Summer Internship Program has been celebrated and strongly supported by the Armenian community with major gifts from the Richard Tufenkian Memorial Fund, the John Hanessian Scholarship Fund, the Armen Astarjian Scholarship Fund, the Ohanian Memorial Fund, Ann Hintlian, Ann Nahigian, James and Connie Melikian, the Knights of Vartan, the Estate of Haig J. Boyadjian, and the Estate of George Judge Karabedian (George Kay), as well as generous contributions in memory of former Assembly Board Members Dr. Lionel Galstaun, Peter Kezirian, and John O'Connor. In 2003, the Armenian Assembly's Summer Internship Program was renamed in honor of Aram and Florence Terjenian and Annie Thomas after the announcement of their pace-setting \$1 million donation to the program.



COMMUNITY NEWS

MEMORIES OF YEREVAN



Edited by
Nicolas V. Iljine

Memories of Yerevan, edited by Nicolas V. Iljine, is a richly illustrated exploration of one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities. Yerevan dates back to 782 BCE. This book brings together the work of twenty authors, each of whom is an expert in their field. It is an accessible look at the history and culture of Armenia through the story of its capital. In 301 CE, Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as an official religion.

Memories of Yerevan provides a detailed description of the religious life of the country as seen through its unique churches and its written heritage, including the precious documents kept in the Matenadaran in Yerevan, the world's largest repository of Armenian manuscripts. As well as ancient history, the book explores the key period of the early 20th century, when Yerevan became the capital of Armenia and the country had a brief period of independence from colonial rule. In 1920, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic was formed. Memories of Yerevan records the changes that then took place in the city, including the creation of its unique early Soviet buildings and the stories of the Yerevan-based architects who designed them.

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

Memories of Yerevan was published by Artguide Editions (Prague) in 2023
496 pages
ISBN 978-80-908899-0-3

Available in hardback on www.amazon.com and as e-book PDF on www.lulu.com





COMMUNITY NEWS

Tim Kurkjian Champions America's National Pastime, One Game at a Time

KURKJIAN, from page 1

spoken in my house growing up," Kurkjian said. "My dad instilled this love of the game inside of me. My mother instilled this love of writing and of words in me. Eventually, I just combined the two and made a career out of baseball writing."

Kurkjian is at the highest level of sports journalism in the US, but the journey was an arduous one. Kurkjian recalled how he had struggled when he started writing for the school paper at Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda, Md.

"I was a terrible writer in high school, but in my junior year, one of my gym teachers, Mr. Klein, came up to me and said, 'Tim, that might have been the worst story I've ever read in the school paper. I hope you're not planning on making this your life's work.' Well, I did make it my life's work, but that day was actually pretty important. It's where I started to think, maybe I am really bad at this, and maybe I need to get way, way, way better. So that was the impetus for me to try to get better as a writer," Kurkjian said.

Kurkjian's job may sound like a dream job for a baseball fan, but it is not as easy as one may imagine; on days he is in a booth calling a game, he could be working 16 hours.

Prolific Writer

Kurkjian has worked at multiple different newspapers and stations throughout his career including the *Dallas Morning News*, and *Baltimore Sun*.

During his time as a print journalist, while at *Sports Illustrated*, he had a chance to write a story in 1995 about infielder Cal Ripken Jr., who had just broken the record of Lou Gehrig for the most consecutive games played. Kurkjian described the story as his proudest work in his career, as he was able to show Ripken as a gracious athlete, hard worker, and family man.

"I wrote a 12-14 page story (for *Sports Illustrated*) on Cal Ripken Jr., and I spent a whole week with him," Kurkjian said. "I drove to and from the ballpark with him. One day, I went to his house and played basketball in his



Kurkjian, center, with son Jeff and Johnny Bench

gym. I stayed with him after the games while he signed autographs. He let me go to different places that others were not allowed to go because he trusted me since I was previously the beat guy covering the Orioles for the *Baltimore Sun*."

He said, "I got to know him exceptionally well. Other than maybe one five-minute sit down with him, I never wrote down a word of anything that he said while he was talking to me. I just followed him for a week, observed him, and then I put it into a really, really important story about a really important player at a time when baseball really needed a good story because this was right after the strike (1995) and baseball needed a good story. Cal Ripken provided that."

It makes sense that as a baseball love, his favorite event to cover is the World Series.

"I've covered every World Series since 1981. The 1991 World Series, I think, was the most exciting event that I've ever covered... In 1990, the [Atlanta] Braves and the [Minnesota] Twins had finished in last place, and then both teams ended up in the World Series the next year. The first six games of the World Series were tremendous and spectacular, and then we got this epic game 7 with a 1-0 shutout pitched by Jack Morris that could never happen today," Kurkjian said.

"It [The Metrodome in Minnesota] was in the loudest building I've ever been in in my life. It was so unbelievably loud in there, it was wonderful. Steve Rushin of *Sports Illustrated* and I were writing that story. I wrote the sidebar, he wrote the game story, and I couldn't even hear him speak. It was so loud in that building, and I was sitting right next to him. So you add the flavor of the ballpark, the stakes, which is game seven of the World Series, and then you get this amazing 1-0 game that's the most exciting thing I've ever covered," he explained.

Awards and Recognition

His dedication to baseball is such that he has done what few other non-players have done: The National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY, for his work and dedication to baseball, honored him for his achievements. He also became the 73rd writer to win the career excellence award in 2022.

He said, "The Career Excellence Award was the greatest weekend, professional weekend of my life. And there, there is not a close second," Kurkjian said. "I was actually at the grocery store when I got the news that I had won the award. I was dragging a rotisserie chicken through the self-scanner at the Harris Teeter when I got the call from Jack O'Connell of the baseball writers that I had won and right there and the Harris Teeter, I started to cry."

"The next morning, Johnny Bench, the greatest catcher of all time, in my opinion, called me on the phone and said, 'Welcome to The Club, you're one of us now.' ... It is a huge difference obviously, but the greatest catcher of all time called me and he told me, among other things, he said, 'You know, Tim, it's moments like this that take you back to Little League', and I was just about ready to cry again."

Despite all the prestige and recognition, the humble and self-effacing Kurkjian still acknowledges his primary goal is telling stories about baseball.

"I would never sit around and say I don't have to try this week, I'm a Hall of Famer. I can write a lousy story because I'm a Hall of Famer, or I don't have to do a good job on this game or this story or this show that I'm doing on TV because I'm a Hall of Famer. No, you can't do that," Kurkjian said.

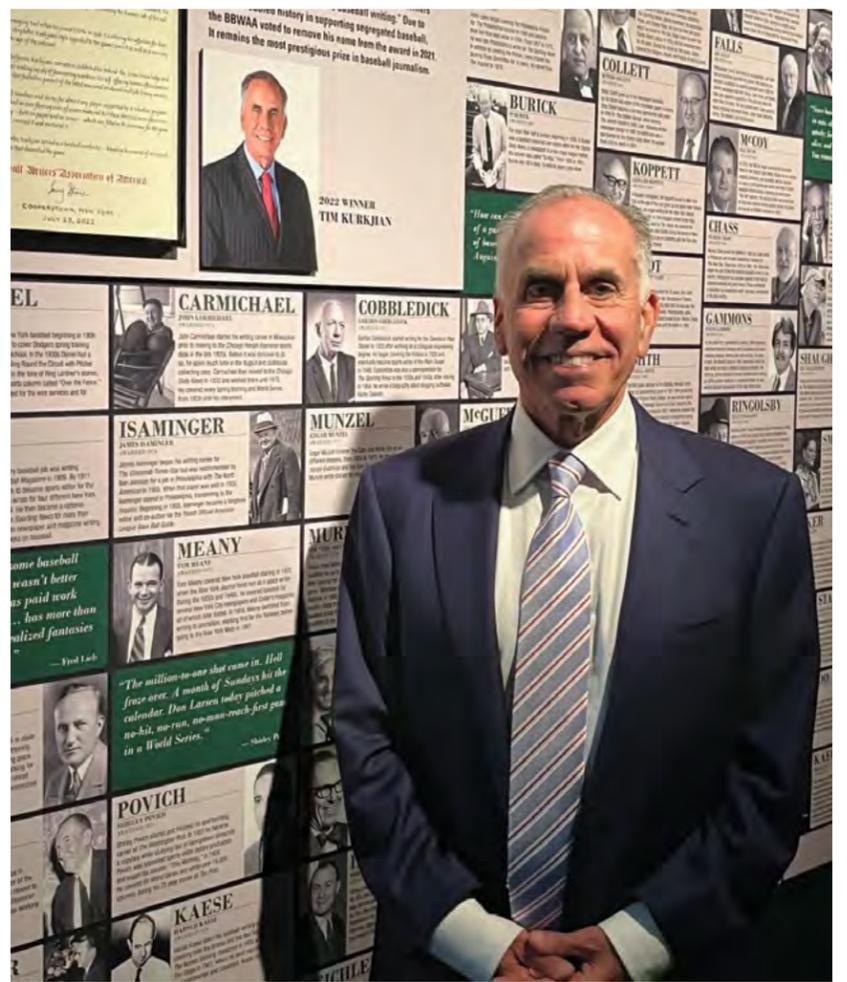
"It doesn't matter what you did before. There's a story to write tonight, there's a game to do, there's a show to do, and it's your job to do it right. At least it doesn't matter to me what I've accomplished up to this point. If I don't do the job tonight, I have failed, and I just can't let that happen, no matter what," he said.

Baseball for Little Ones

Kurkjian is primarily known for his work covering professional baseball, but his reputation has given him the opportunity to cover other levels of baseball beyond the professional level. He is part of ESPN's coverage of the Little League World Series. Kurkjian described the unique experience of seeing kids simply playing for the love of the game.

"The Little League World Series, other than the real World Series, is my favorite event to cover. I just think it is the purest form of baseball. It's a bunch of 12-year-old kids who love the game. It's about mom and dad, little brother, little sister, grandma, and grandpa coming to watch a 12-year-old play on national TV. And I just think it's the most wholesome thing in the world," Kurkjian said.

"I talked to a woman who drove from Oregon to Williamsport, Penn., because she knew it was a bucket list destination, and I hear those stories all the time. It's the



Kurkjian at Cooperstown, 2022

most beautiful story out there, and I just love being a part of it. Television doesn't do justice to going to Williamsport. You actually have to go into that beautiful little ballpark in that ludicrously charming little place to appreciate how great it is," he added.

Kurkjian touched on other topics outside of the major leagues, addressing the proposals to add baseball to the Summer Olympics with the Los Angeles 2028 games four years away.

"I think baseball should be in the Olympics every four years. Baseball is a great game, and when it's played



Todd Frazier, Karl Ravech and Tim Kurkjian, center, at Little League 2023.

in the Olympics, it's really good. The only problem is, there's just no way that I could see that we can play our best players in the Olympics," Kurkjian said.

"We can't ask Bryce Harper, Shohei Ohtani, and all these people to leave their major league teams, which are paying them an enormous amount of money, and leave for two weeks in the heart of the baseball season, in the middle of the pennant race. I just don't see how we're going

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

to be able to do that... So I'm all in favor of the Olympics every year having baseball, but I don't think there's a real way to keep all the major leaguers involved," he explained.

State of Baseball

Kurkjian began covering baseball in 1979. He explained how the perception of the sport has changed throughout his career and how it does not hold the same position at the top for many.

"I'm a little worried. When I first started covering baseball in 1979, baseball was the national pastime, and there was no doubt about it. I say this with great regret and sadness. I don't believe it's the national pastime anymore," Kurkjian said. "Obviously, it's still the greatest game ever. It always will be, and there is an exceptionally large pocket of fans that feel the same way that I do, but it's clear to me that football is now King in this country."

He added, "I just think it's in part because the game (baseball) doesn't move quickly enough for today's world in which everyone wants instant gratification. They want something now, they want it to be flashy, they want it to be fast and bright, and baseball doesn't always provide that. To me, it is and always will be the greatest game, I just don't think it's held in as high esteem in this country as maybe it was 40-45 years ago."

Kurkjian analyzed baseball's attempt to bring back fans who have stopped watching over the years with the rule changes that have been implemented, such as efforts to make it faster.

"I'm very much in favor of the pitch clock, and I wasn't sure about that, but after seeing how it has cut out essentially 30 minutes of dead time in every game, that's a



Kurkjian Interviewing Bobby Witt Jr. at HR Derby 2024.

really good thing for baseball," Kurkjian said. "I'm not sure I understand why we need bigger bases. Why can't we throw over to first base more than twice. I really will never understand why we put a ghost runner at second base to start the 10th inning of a tie game. Overall, I think baseball has done a good job identifying that it needed to change, and it has changed. And I think for the most part, it has changed for the better."

Kurkjian has been intrigued, like many other fans, by the close nature of this year's playoff race in baseball. He expressed his excitement and gave his prediction on who would play in the World Series.

"That's the most impossible question because we are so evenly matched right now, it's virtually impossible to figure out. I'm going to say the Phillies are going to play the Orioles in the World Series. So many teams are evenly matched, and I could comfortably pick ten teams to win the World Series. I can't remember a year where I could say that," Kurkjian said. "Baseball is the most unpredictable sport, and I think that is its ultimate beauty."

Tough Questions Facing Baseball

As a well-respected analyst, Kurkjian has had a vote for the National Baseball Hall of Fame for decades, giving him a say in one of the major debates of the 21st century being what to do with the players who used steroids.

"I've been a Hall of Fame voter for 32 years or so, and I don't know how to deal with the steroid guys, but I have to. So, I voted for instance for Barry Bonds and Roger

Clemens all 10 years that they were eligible. I'm not saying for a second that I was correct doing that, and I would never object to anyone who didn't vote for those guys," Kurkjian said. (Both Bonds and Clemens are considered controversial because of their confirmed use of performance enhancing drugs. Neither has been inducted yet into the Baseball Hall of Fame.)

He added, "To me, there was this tacit agreement go-



ing on back then where nobody was testing, nobody was checking and there was no penalty. I think so many players were doing it. So that's why I voted for Bonds and Clemens during that era... But the Hall of Fame steroid users being in or out? Is he a Hall of Famer or isn't he? It is by far the hardest thing that I've had to deal with in all the years that I've covered baseball."

While the steroid era is more a debate about how baseball should be remembered, a new issue that could directly impact the result of the game has emerged in recent years. Many states have loosened restrictions on gambling, increasing popularity of sports betting. It is now easier for fans to bet on games than it ever has been before, and Kurkjian expressed his concern on what it will do to the validity of baseball.

"I'm worried about all the betting that is surrounding baseball and the other sports right now, you know the Black Sox Scandal is something that nearly ruined the game. If you're not sure whether you know that ball went under the first baseman's glove because he wasn't trying, then nothing, nothing else matters. The winning and the losing of the game is all that matters. If in some way that is compromised by a bet or somebody throwing something or not trying to win, then baseball doesn't mean anything," Kurkjian said.

"I covered portions of the Pete Rose suspension for life, and it did real damage to the game that one of the greatest players ever bet on baseball while he was the manager of the Cincinnati Reds. So I think we have to be extra, extra careful that we never have another situation like Pete

Rose, certainly like the Black Sox. Otherwise, I'm not sure baseball will be able to recover from it, because it is such a serious topic," he said.

Outside of Baseball

Kurkjian's job covering baseball varies throughout the year, as the Major League season sees no games from November through the beginning of spring training in February. As such, there is a lot of downtime to be filled throughout the year.

Kurkjian has taken the extra time he has in the offseason to work on other passion projects. Kurkjian has written three books about baseball, *America's Game* (2000), *Is This a Great Game, or What?* (2007), and *I'm Fascinated by Sacrifice Flies* (2016).

"Writing a book is the most satisfying writing experience that I have. I've written three books, I thoroughly enjoyed all three. They were extremely difficult to do because it just requires an enormous amount of work and an enormous amount of discipline. But you know, once those books arrive on your doorstep in a big box and they've got your name on it, it's such a thrill," Kurkjian said.

"Nothing writing-wise gives me greater pleasure than someone who

comes up to me and says, 'I bought your book.' To watch a game on TV or watch baseball tonight doesn't take that much effort. Just sit down on your couch and turn the TV on. For a book, you have to go to the store, buy a book, and read a book. That's commitment, and it's such a thrill," he added.

While Kurkjian has had a long career covering baseball, he is not the only person in his family who has had a stellar career in journalism. His cousin, Stephen Kurkjian, was an investigative reporter for the *Boston Globe* Spotlight team for nearly 40 years, winning Pulitzer prizes for his reporting, and was a part of the group which uncovered the Catholic Church sexual abuse scandal.

"Steve is the greatest investigative reporter in the history of the *Boston Globe*, which is really saying something. He was the ringleader of the Spotlight team, which exposed corruption in Boston. There used to be a joke that for corrupt people in Boston, the five worst words of the English language were 'Stephen Kurkjian is on the phone.' He was absolutely relentless when it came to finding a story. And I'm just so proud to call a Pulitzer Prize winner my cousin," Kurkjian said.

Kurkjian has achieved great success in his career, but he remains the same humble baseball fan that he was as a young man.

"I just want people to look at my career and say that guy cared, that guy tried, and that guy loved the game. To me, that's the most important thing," he said.

To see more of Kurkjian's work, tune in to "Baseball Tonight" and "Sportscenter" on ESPN.

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Arts & Culture

Evanston's Narek Bell Choir Performs in Armenia

YEREVAN — During a concert in Yerevan's prestigious Arno Babajanian Concert Hall, titled "Komitas: Musician and Poet," an ensemble of young musicians from the Eastern Diocese contributed to a celebration of the musical and poetic legacy of one of Armenia's most cherished figures.

The Narek Bell Choir of St. James of Nisibis Church (Evanston, IL), under the direction of pastor Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan, were featured performers in the July 2 event, which was part of an ambitious concert series conceived by singer-songwriter Vahan Artsruni, celebrating the 155th anniversary of Komitas Vardapet.

The concert featured a blend of Komitas' original compositions as well as innovative interpretations of his legacy, by such acclaimed artists as Anna Mayilyan (an "Honored Artist of the Republic of Armenia"); and Vahan Artsruni and the world-renowned KVart Ensemble, who pre-



Members of the Evanston Narek Bell Choir

sented excerpts from Artsruni's "Komitas: Ten Revelations" song series. The Narek Bell Choir performed Komitas' spiritual and secular music as arranged by Fr. Khoja-Eynatyan, himself a distinguished musician and educator.

A focal point of the event was the exhibition of the painting "Komitas" by Valentin Podpomogov, displayed in the concert hall's foyer. The exhibition marked the 100th anniversary of the painter's birth, and the painting (which served as the heart of the concert poster) added a profound visual dimension to the evening's homage to Komitas.

This remarkable opportunity was made possible by the participation of Bell Choir members in this summer's ACYOA Juniors Armenia Service Program, led by Fr. Hratch Sargsyan (pastor of the Diocese's St. Gregory of Narek parish in Cleveland, OH). During their time in the homeland, the young bell ringers engaged in various service activities while sharing the healing power of music with people across Armenia. Performances they gave in Gyumri's Center for Children with Disabilities, at Camp Aragats, and in Yerevan's Arabakir Senior Center, touched the hearts and lifted the spirits of audience members.



Miqayel Voskanyan Brings Armenian Tar to Boston's Stage

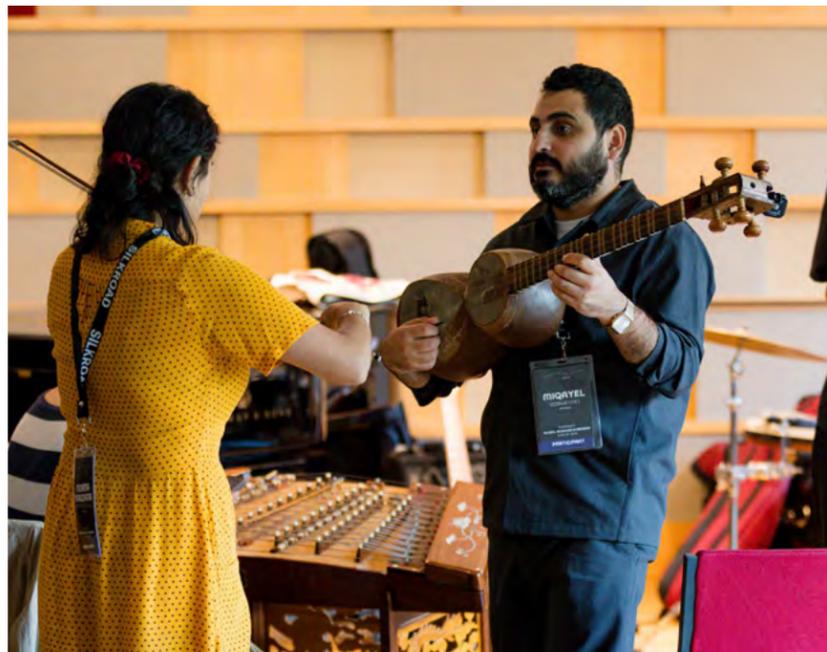
BOSTON — Miqayel Voskanyan, an Armenia-based tar virtuoso and composer, recently completed a successful tour in Boston on August 2-11, highlighted by a sold-out concert titled "Yerevan Nights" at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC) in Watertown and participation in Silkroad's prestigious Global Musician Workshop (GMW) at the New England Conservatory (NEC).

Voskanyan, selected from a competitive pool of 218 applicants representing 51 countries and 45 different instruments, was the first musician from Armenia to join the ranks of 70 world-class participants at the workshop that took place on August 4-11. His presence marked a powerful moment for Armenian culture, as he proudly represented Armenian culture with the Armenian national instrument — tar, that has been his constant companion for over 30 years.

Founded by renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, Silkroad is dedicated to creating music that transcends cultural boundaries and fosters collaboration. The GMW is a flagship program that brings together musicians from around the world to explore new artistic possibilities and share their cultural heritage through group workshops, elective classes, nightly jam sessions, panel discussions, and a multi-night performance festival featuring both faculty and participants.

Reflecting on his participation, Voskanyan remarked: "Silkroad struck a chord with me because of its deep respect for Armenian music. I was deeply moved when

continued on next page



Participating in Silkroad (photo Hanna Rose)

Some Like it Hot...

By Eric Kim

NEW YORK (*New York Times*) — Raised in an Armenian household in Santa Clara, Calif., Levon Minassian recalls trips to the Middle Eastern spice shop where his parents bought Aleppo pepper, the mild, fruity red-chile flakes named after the Syrian city, to use in all manner of dishes at home. Culled from big bins and decanted into bags dragged home, the crimson powder was sprinkled over labneh, baba ghanouj and soups, each pinch a burst of sunlight.

Now, as a founder of Fire Tongue Farms, about 30 miles south in Santa Cruz, Mr. Minassian, 34, grows fresh Aleppo peppers and many other chile varieties, dries them and processes them into flakes. At the moment, his Aleppos are green, but soon they will



Levon Minassian

be red, sun-dried and milled, fragrant with the sweetness of time.

Like Aleppos (also known as Halaby peppers), many of the world's most delicious dried red-chile powders and flakes belong to the *Capiscum annum* species, a plant with many varieties and what the chef and food historian Maricel Presilla calls, in her book "Peppers of the Americas," "both the greatest world traveler of all peppers and the one found in the most incredibly diverse forms." These include jalapeños, cayenne and bell peppers.

You know what else is part of this pepper group? Gochugaru, the sweet, fragrant Korean chile flakes that dye kimchi red; togarashi, a bright-orange powdered chile from Japan; fruity, moderately spiced Espelette pepper, named for a French commune and prevalent in Basque cooking; ground chipotle, jalapeños that have been dried and smoked; paprika, which comes in many styles but especially sweet, hot and smoked; and more.

By viewing chiles not just by heat level but by flavor, we the curious — home cooks who like to linger in the kitchen — can wander a world of culinary possibilities. So my question to you is: What's in your pepper pantry?

There's nothing wrong with the shaker of pizza shop red-pepper flakes — the one next to the oregano and Parmesan — but it's just one color in a spectrum of chile possibilities. see PEPPERS, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

I learned that the anthem for the program was Armenian music — *Offering* by Ara Dinkjian. Every day, I had the profound joy of hearing 70 musicians from across the world playing and singing Armenian melodies together. Many of them were unfamiliar with Armenian music, but they were all captivated and eager to learn more. This reaffirmed my belief that Armenian music is truly universal, capable of touching the hearts of people from any nationality.”

In addition to performing, Voskanyan led a masterclass that took participants on a journey through Armenian music, from its pagan roots to modern times attracting not only participants but program mentors, too. During the GMW program Voskanyan was mentored by accomplished and world-known musicians Jamey Haddad, a percussionist in the fields of jazz and world music, Courtney Hartman, a guitarist, songwriter and producer, Edward Pérez, composer, arranger and

bassist, Marcus Printup, a jazz trumpeter, Mike Block, multi-style cellist, singer, composer, and educator, and many more.

These industry leaders guided his performances at Boston’s legendary Jordan Hall and offered invaluable feedback on his own compositions, opening doors for future collaborations. Following his performances, audience members expressed their awe of him captivated by his intricate techniques, heartfelt vocals, and the rich, evocative tones of the Armenian tar.

Before GMW, Voskanyan also performed at the ACEC Courtyard on August 2 in a concert sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance, Hamazkayin-Boston and Armenian General Benevolent Union New England District. Themed as “Yerevan Nights,” this concert featured his original compositions with new instrumentation supported by local musicians including Maxim Lubarsky on keyboards, Shahan Necessian on bass, Martin Haroutunian on folk instruments



Miqayel Voskanyan at ACEC in Watertown (photo Knar Bedian)



Performing at Jordan Hall in Boston (photo Hannah Rose)

and Alek Surenian on percussion. The sold-out concert attracted not only the Massachusetts Armenian community but also prominent figures, students and professors from Berklee College of Music and the NEC, further cementing Voskanyan’s impact on the local music scene.

Voskanyan’s Boston visit marked a significant step towards his mission of expanding contemporary Armenian music globally not only through tours, performances and streams but through cross-cultural collaborations with accomplished global musicians and artists. He envisions a future where the music of Armenia will be celebrated worldwide, performed not only by himself but also by artists from across the globe who recognize the cultural and artistic value of this rich musical heritage.

Learn more about Miqayel Voskanyan here www.miqayelvoscanyan.com.

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

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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

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Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Aliza Sokolow's Chocolate Chunk, Oatmeal & Prune Cookies

ROSEVILLE, CA - After its initial development, the industry first organized under the Dried Fruit Association of California in 1908. The association oversaw sales contracts, transportation, pure food laws, and legislation. As the industry grew it needed an organization specifically focused on California Prunes.

The State Marketing Order for California Prunes was established in January 1952, and the California Prune Board has been operating continuously ever since. The California Prune Board represents approximately 800 prune growers and 28 prune, juice, and ingredient handlers to support and protect the health, growth, and integrity of the California Prune industry. California supports 1.2 million agriculture-related jobs and produces 400 different crops, roughly 50 percent of the overall U.S. produce supply, and nearly all domestically grown prunes.

California Prunes are the not-so-secret ingredients that make everything from appetizers and salads to entrées and desserts irresistible-and good for you, too. California Prunes offer an endless array of applications whether whole, chopped and diced, as puree, paste, concentrate, juice, or powder. They offer surprising versatility as an ingredient and can go from sweet to savory. Consumers are looking for great taste and added health benefits in their food. California Prunes deliver a fresh, sweet, and smooth flavor that pairs well with a variety of flavor profiles.

A standard serving size of prunes (approximately 4 prunes) delivers about 11% of the daily value of fiber, 6% of the daily value of potassium and 20% of the daily value of vitamin K. Prunes also contain important antioxidants that offer immune support and provide heart health benefits. This combination of nutrients really makes the fruit shine when it comes to bone health. According to research by scientists at Penn State University, eating 50 to 100 grams of prunes daily for six months prevented total loss of bone density.

Additionally, California Prunes have no cholesterol, sodium, fat, or added sugars.

Aliza J. Sokolow is an award-winning food stylist, author, and photographer for both digital and print media who is based in Los Angeles. She shared her beloved recipe for Chocolate Chunk, Oatmeal & Prune Cookies, so we can share it with you. This recipe yields 3 dozen cookies - perfect for holiday sharing, or freezing a few for the next time you need a sweet snack. Aliza uses dark chocolate chunks and flour from another California favorite, the <<https://www.tehachapigrain-project.org/>> Tehachapi Heritage Grain Project.*

Aliza got her start working for Jamie Oliver on his "Food Revolution" project. Her work has won 1 Emmy, earned 2 Emmy nominations and a James Beard literary award. Her photography has been published in the New York Times, Architectural Digest, Bon Appetit, Wall Street Journal, and Los Angeles Times. Aliza is a proud alumna of the University of California, Berkeley, and loves to give back to the community and the world. She serves on the council for the <<https://food.berkeley.edu/>> UC Berkeley Food Institute, and she is a leadership fellow with the <<https://www.jdc.org/>> Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Her book, *This is What I Eat*, was published by Random House Kids in early 2023.



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup butter (2 sticks)
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla bean paste or vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 1/2 cups California prunes
- 1 cup chocolate chunks

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Cream butter and sugars together. Crack eggs in separate bowl. Add to butter and sugar mixture. Stir the vanilla into wet mixture and set aside. Combine all dry ingredients, except oats. Set aside. Chop up your California prunes.

Combine dry ingredients with wet. Add in oats and mix. Add in prunes and chocolate chunks. Scoop cookies onto baking sheet in about 2 tablespoon-sized balls.

Bake for 12 minutes. Turn baking sheet and bake for 2 more minutes. Let cool.

The cultivation of plums that are then dried into prunes began in ancient western Asia and gradually spread to Europe and, by the mid-1800s, America. The 19th century was a time of many new arrivals in the young country as the California Gold Rush was on and the state was a hub of immigration, innovation, optimism, and fortune-seeking in general. It was here and then that the California Prune industry was born.

Generations of growers have brought expert craftsmanship to growing California Prunes that surpasses the most stringent agricultural standards of any other nation. In the process, they have created an unrivaled heritage of pride and premium quality. California Prunes are a versatile fruit available in retail stores in various forms including whole prunes, pitted prunes, diced prunes, and prune juice. California Prunes enhance savory and sweet dishes alike and can easily go with proteins and grains, on salads and in sauces and baked goods. Try one of our unique recipes for your next meal. You can find prunes in the bulk and baking aisles at most retail stores.

For this recipe, go to: <https://californiaprunes.org/recipe/aliza-sokolows-chocolate-chunk-oatmeal-prune-cookies/>

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Some Like it Hot...

PEPPERS, from page 14

The joy of cooking with dried chiles is mixing and matching. Why paint in gray when you can access a full palette of brilliant colors?

It all comes down to preference, in the end. "Do you want it sweet or do you want it hot or do you want it red or do you want it yellow?" said Ethan Frisch, a founder and chief executive of Burlap & Barrel, a company that sells single-origin spices.

For Mr. Frisch, 37, who has bought various red peppers from Mr. Minassian's farm for Burlap & Barrel, said each dried chile flake has a story: As with coffee and wine, terroir is a key determinant in the ultimate flavor of a chile. "It doesn't take long for the chile to start evolving, to meet the demands of its local climate," he said. "And that, of course, changes the flavor and also is, of course, shaped by human interest."

As an example: An old friend from high school, James Dong, recently gave me a plastic resealable sandwich bag of Korean red chiles he had grown in Georgia (from seeds he bought on Etsy), smoked and crushed himself to make gochugaru. His chile flakes had the same red glint and jammy savoriness of those grown in Asia, but through the smoking process, they had taken on the fragrance of Mexican chipotles. The blazing perfume was so strong, it felt like I was carrying around a flame. I reached into that bag to sprinkle over all kinds of meals throughout the month, but the most delicious use of it was in this tomato sauce.

Whichever pepper you choose to stock, this recipe takes full advantage of Capsicum annum's flavor and heat, and celebrates its journey. Using a mix of dried chile flakes, and accepting that it's all right to have more than one in your pantry (they all taste so different!), leads to exciting results.



A homage to Marcella Hazan's famous tomato sauce, this recipe has you switch the order: First, the butter is melted, so it can bloom a heaping tablespoon or two of your favorite mix of chile powders and flakes to bring out their fruity heat. In lieu of red-pepper flakes made by a childhood

beyond just their spiciness. All it takes is a little playful tinkering in the kitchen to bring out those coveted qualities.

Eric Kim has been a food and cooking columnist for The Times since 2021. You can find his recipes on New York Times Cooking. More about Eric Kim

friend, you can use regular gochugaru, Aleppo pepper or even togarashi, among others, along with a little smoked paprika to replicate the explosive flavor that smoking gives beautiful red chiles.

At the end of the day, dried chiles have so much to offer, be-



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CANADA

OCTOBER 5 — Banquet of Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada and *Abaka* newspaper at the Tekeyan Center in Montreal with musical program, Saturday 7:30 p.m., ticket \$75 Canadian, call 514 747-6680. See ad page 20.

MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 5 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association, Armenian Mirror-Spectator and National Association for Armenian Studies and Research/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Topics present "Fighting Misinformation Amid a Security Crisis: The Armenian Media Landscape," a lecture by Maria Titizian, editor-in-chief of the weekly online magazine EVN Report in Yerevan. Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Baikar Building, Main Hall downstairs (Norseman Ave. entrance), 755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. Free admission. RSVP tcadirector@aol.com.

SEPTEMBER 8 — The Istanbul Armenians of Boston are hosting their annual picnic on Sunday. AGBU Center, 247 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. 1 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 9 — St. James Men's Club is kicking off the season with a joint meeting with the Trinity Men's Union at the Holy Trinity Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Guest speaker will be Jim Kalustian to discuss the Armenian Heritage Park, all are welcome. Monday, mezza 5.45 p.m., dinner 6.45 p.m. Losh, Kheyra or combo meal is \$20. Please call the church office to rsvp. 617-354-0632

SEPTEMBER 12 — Tekeyan Cultural Association of Boston and the Shahbazian Foundation invite you to a lecture on "The Development and Future of Artificial Intelligence (and AI in Armenia)" featuring Prof. Joseph Shahbazian and Harry Glorikian, author of *The Future You: How Artificial Intelligence Can Help You Get Healthier, Stress Less, and Live Longer*. Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown (or via Zoom), RSVP at tcadirector@aol.com, Zoom link <https://us05web.zoom.us/j/86485218660?pwd=caBEqHO04LdBPMtBmZd972jVfSDai.1>

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?vrid=WmF-PNXZnPT06OmVjYmIzOTQ2NGMxMjg4NTM0YmFjZjI2M2JmYzE2N2Fk&showall=1> For additional ticketing inquires:617-923-0100, tickets@mosesianarts.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 4 — The Istanbul Armenians of Boston are hosting a benefit concert featuring the acapella trio Zula. First Parish Church, 630 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington. 7.30 p.m.

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. Event held at 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 20 — Classical Music Concert, Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street, Arlington, Sunday, 4 p.m. Alessandra Pompili, Piano; Christina Gulans, Cello. Works by: Knarik Ghazarossian, Komitas, Emanuel Melik Aslanian, Stephan Elmas, Alan Hovhanness, Diane Goolkasian-Rahbee, Arno Babajanian.

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 1 — Save the date. City of Smile is hosting A Night of Wine Tastings from Around the World. Oakley Country Club, Watertown. All proceeds will be donated to the City of Smile - USA, an organization dedicated to treating the children of Armenia who have cancer.

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 14 — Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs Armenian, Bayside, NY, will hold its annual "Armenia Way Festival" on Saturday, from 12 noon to 7 p.m., on the church property and its surroundings (209-15 Horace Harding Expy., Bayside). Enjoy Armenian food, homemade desserts, street vendors, raffles, games for kids, live music and more. Rain or shine. For information, call the church at (718) 225-0235 or visit holy-martyrs.org.

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.

Screening of 'Strangers in a Promised Land-Remastered' at Fresno State

FRESNO — The Armenian Studies Program will host a screening of the 1982 documentary classic, "Strangers in a Promised Land-Remastered," directed by J. Michael Hagopian, on Friday, September 20, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center (5245 N. Backer Ave.), Alice Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus. A reception will precede the screening at 6 p.m. in the University Business Center Gallery.

The event is co-sponsored by the Armenian Film Foundation and the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research.

Following the screening of the film, a panel discussion will be held with Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State, Dr. Carla Garapedian from the Armenian Film Foundation, and special guests.

"Strangers in a Promised Land" is the story of the Fresno Armenian community over a hundred-year period. This newly remastered film from the original 16mm print, depicts the universal experience of immigration, the overcoming of adversity, discrimination and the achievement

of success by Fresno Armenians.

Narrated by Gov. George Deukmejian, the film tells the story of the first Armenian settlers in Fresno and their struggle to create a new homeland in the legendary Central Valley, the richest farmland in the world. It includes, amongst others, the story of the Seropian family; Malcolm Markarian, the "fig king" of America; the Bedrosians and Pakchoians, who became leaders in the raisin industry; and artists like William Saroyan and Varaz Samuelian.

Both nostalgic and bittersweet, this hour-long film is a rare portrait of the Fresno community forged in adversity, hope and promise.

The screening and reception are free and open to the public. Free parking is available in Fresno State Lot P6, near the University Business Center. Parking permits are not required on Friday nights.

The presentation will also be live-streamed on YouTube at: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesyoutube>.

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, visit <https://fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies>.



Early Fresno Armenians

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**

SINCE 1932



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Putin in Baku and the Role of Azerbaijan for Russia

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On August 18-19, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Azerbaijan, coinciding with ongoing battles in the Kursk region of Russia after the Ukrainian army invaded Russia. The official Kremlin statement proclaimed that discussions will focus on strengthening allied and strategic relations between Azerbaijan and Russia. Putin also addressed the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia with President Ilham Aliyev, a critical issue for Armenia.

In general, relations between Azerbaijan and Russia have grown closer since the onset of the war in Ukraine. According to official sources, Russians are the top source of visitors to Azerbaijan, with over 600,000 arrivals in 2023. Russia accounts for two-thirds of Azerbaijan's foreign trade turnover with CIS countries around \$4.4 billion annually. Furthermore, Russia-Azerbaijan relations are experiencing dynamic growth in all directions.

For Russia, selling gas to European Union countries through Baku became crucial after sanctions halted direct sales, forcing Moscow to rely on intermediaries. As Kiril Krivosheev argues, "Russian exports of oil and gas through Azerbaijan rose significantly after Russia lost access to much of the European market following the invasion of Ukraine. This means that in winter, Azerbaijan can export more of its own gas and meet internal demand with Russian gas."

"Similarly, Russian oil exports to Azerbaijan quadrupled in 2023. In both cases, the total volume of exports is not huge, but the war in Ukraine means it is of disproportionate significance for Moscow. Azerbaijan has also become an irreplaceable partner for Russia when it comes to transporting goods to and from Iran and the ports of the Persian Gulf. It's no coincidence that transport along the North-South Corridor was one of the main points of discussion between Putin and Aliyev at their April 2023 meeting."

So, Baku effectively has been supporting Moscow in this situation. Along the same lines, during the meeting with Aliyev in Baku, Putin mentioned that discussions can take place not only about energy but also about industrial cooperation, transportation, logistics, and light industry.

In recent years, a geopolitical shift influenced by Russia's strategic plans was not properly recognized in Armenia, leading to the current circumstances. In February 2023, Azerbaijan and Russia signed a strategic alliance agreement, formally acknowledging Azerbaijan's importance to Russia, a reality already recognized in practice. On the other hand, Yerevan ceased to obstruct the strategic development of Moscow-Baku relations. In fact, the landscape of Russian-Azerbaijani relations dramatically changed after the 2020 war, when Turkey's ally Azerbaijan defeated Russia's ally Armenia.

The strategic alliance between Yerevan and Moscow was effectively damaged, allowing Russia to engage more freely with

Baku, without fear of creating complications with Yerevan. Russia, preparing for the war in Ukraine, sought to avoid additional tensions in the South Caucasus and minimize Turkey's influence in Baku and the broader South Caucasus region. Simultaneously, Moscow aimed to maintain its position in the South Caucasus, especially after losing its role as a mediator in Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations when Yerevan and Baku began direct talks.

Russia's possible involvement in the so-called Zangezur corridor appears unclear. Such involvement would provide Russia with a strategic foothold in the South Caucasus, but this prospect is opposed by Yerevan, Brussels, Tehran and Washington.

Let's not forget that Georgia and Azerbaijan have a common border with Russia but Armenia does not. If Russia would have to choose, of course it would prioritize Baku and Tbilisi instead of Yerevan which has nothing else to give to Moscow.

It is also important to remember that after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the imposition of Western sanctions, Moscow halted gas exports to European countries. In response, Azerbaijan signed an agreement with the European Union and agreed to increase gas exports to supply European countries that were left without Russian gas. But in fact, Russia was supplying gas to Europe via Azerbaijan as Azerbaijan does not have as much gas as Russia has to cover European gas demand.

Coming back to the Baku meeting, Putin said, "Of course — we touched on this topic yesterday, and today we will continue — this concerns the resolution of the situation in the South Caucasus. It is clear and well-known that Russia is facing crises, including, and primarily, in the Ukrainian direction. But Russia's historical involvement in the situation in the South Caucasus, especially in recent years, necessitates our participation in these events — of course, in the areas where it is desired by the parties, without a doubt. If we can do something to help achieve the signing of a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, to move forward with border delimitation and demarcation, and to unblock the relevant logistics and economic routes, as we have discussed many times — we would be very glad to do so. Of course, after my visit to Azerbaijan, I will get in touch with Prime Minister [Nikol] Pashinyan to share the results of our talks. I know that Azerbaijan is focused on completing all procedures related to full resolution, this is well-known to me. We will discuss this."

When I was writing this article, I was waiting to read the transcript of the conversation between the aforementioned Russian and Armenian leaders to gain some more information about the meeting in Baku. As of August 21, the telephone conversation did not take place or was done privately.

(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.)

Jerusalem's Armenian Quarter under Threat: Urgent Call for Protection

By Nadav Tamir

Jerusalem's special status as one of the world's cultural centers and an attractive tourist destination stems from it being the cradle of three monotheistic religions. It is center to which a significant number of the world's citizens feel a religious, cultural, or historical connection. The strength and uniqueness of Jerusalem, as well as its economic potential for residents, depends on the ability of the capital's leaders and the state to maintain its interreligious and cultural identity.

The Armenian community is one of Jerusalem's oldest, with the first Armenians arriving as early as the 4th century CE and the Armenian Patriarchate being active in the city since the 7th century. Jerusalem is the most important center of the Armenian community outside its homeland; and the Armenians were the first to convert to Christianity as a nation in 301 AD. But this glorious history does not help the small community in dealing with the ambitions

of the far-Right to take over the Armenian Quarter.

The Armenians in Jerusalem are one of the smallest and most vulnerable communities; they are neither Palestinian nor Israeli, and have no interest in being dragged into the ongoing conflict. They do not have the support of strong churches or states such as the Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Russian Provo Slavs or Protestants. Being in this vulnerable position, they are reluctantly at the forefront of an ongoing struggle to prevent settlers and real estate moguls from harming the multiculturalism and multi-religiosity of Jerusalem — the city's most important resource and what makes it a lodestone to the entire world.

Though a small community of only 2,000 people, their real estate is in high demand and is causing them to experience distress and harassment. This is the reality of Jerusalem's Armenian Quarter, situated in a highly desirable location on the road leading from the Jaffa Gate to the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall.

A major distress for Armenian Quarter residents is that it is the last undeveloped space of the Old City, a plot of 11.5 dunam (3 acres) that has been the focus of takeover efforts by Jewish settler organizations. Recently, a company owned by an Israeli-Australian businessman has managed to lease the plot and several adjacent buildings from the Armenian Patriarchate into the next century, for the laughable sum of only \$2 million. The entrepreneurs have denied any connection to right-wing NGOs, but were seen meeting with Mati Dan, head of the 40-year-old Ateret Cohanim, the self-defined "leading urban land reclamation organization in Jerusalem," the leader of settlement efforts in the heart of the east Jerusalem neighborhoods.

For two years, the space continued to serve as a parking lot for residents and visitors, until a few months ago when developers attempted to begin preparations for the construction of a hotel.

Issues surrounding the deal have led to see JERUSALEM, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Turkish Textbooks Brainwash Students By Denying Genocide Against Minorities

Turkish investigative journalist Uzey Bulut published on the Gatestone Institute's website an article titled, "Turkish Textbooks: Turning History on Its Head."

Bulut wrote: "Turkish government authorities have targeted their own indigenous peoples of Anatolia, namely the Pontic Greeks and Armenians. In the twentieth century, Ottoman Turkey largely exterminated these peoples through a genocide."

Bulut explained: "The government of Turkey, however, refers to the genocide as the 'unfounded claims' of Greeks and Armenians. The titles in the Turkish history textbooks were previously called the 'Pontus Issue' and the 'Armenian Question.' They are now changed to the 'Unfounded Pontus Claims' and the 'Unfounded Armenian Claims.'"

Turkey also denies that Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks are indigenous peoples of the land where Turks settled centuries later, occupied the land and exterminated those already living there.

"Muslim Turks from Central Asia arrived in the Armenian highlands and Anatolia, which was the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire at the time, only during the 11th century. Through military invasions, Muslim Turks seized the towns and cities where indigenous Christians had lived for centuries. Ottoman Turks finally invaded Constantinople (today's Istanbul) in the fifteenth century, bringing the destruction of the Byzantine Empire. After that, abuses against Christian religious and cultural heritage became widespread," Bulut wrote.

The sad part is that young Turkish schoolchildren, who have no idea about the real history of their country, are brainwashed with falsehoods about their country's origin, and fed hatred about the remnants of the minorities. Consequently, these children become adults parroting the lies taught to them in their schools by denying that the Ottoman government committed genocide against indigenous Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks. These Turkish children have no fault for not knowing the true history of their country nor the facts about the genocide committed against the minorities. They are fed the lies that the minorities lived happily in the Ottoman Empire for centuries until European powers instigated them to rebel against their government. On the contrary, minorities living in the Ottoman Empire were always oppressed, enslaved, attacked, robbed, kidnapped, raped, and massacred, cul-

minating in the genocide of 1915. These minorities were not even considered to be second class citizens. They had no rights whatsoever and were at the mercy of their brutal rulers. Bulut correctly described the education of the Turkish schoolchildren as "misinformation, willful distortion, and historic revisionism."

This is not just a dispute between Armenians and Turks. The Turkish government knows better than anyone that the accusations of genocide are factual, since the Ottoman archives in its possession reveal the truth, even after being selectively cleansed of any incriminating evidence.

In 2007, the International Association of Genocide Scholars issued a resolution, which said, in part: "It is the conviction of the International Association of Genocide Scholars that the Ottoman campaign against Christian minorities of the Empire between 1914 and 1923 constituted a genocide against Armenians, Assyrians, and Pontian and Anatolian Greeks."

According to Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, President of Genocide Watch, denial is the last stage of genocide: "Denial is a continuation of a genocide because it is a continuing attempt to destroy the victim group psychologically and culturally, to deny its members even the memory of the murders of their relatives."

More importantly, I suggest that the proud citizens of Turkey listen carefully to the truthful admission of the founder of the modern Republic of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, who told the Los Angeles Examiner newspaper in an interview published on August 1, 1926: "These leftovers from the former Young Turk Party, who should have been made to account for the lives of millions of our Christian subjects who were ruthlessly driven en masse from their homes and massacred." I hope no Turkish citizen would be foolish enough to call Ataturk a liar, otherwise they will be jailed immediately if they live in Turkey and if they are currently outside the country, they will be promptly arrested upon returning home.

The Turkish government, at long last, should face the truth and teach the innocent Turkish students the tragic facts of history about the massacres and genocide for which neither today's young generation nor the current Turkish government were responsible for since they did not even exist during these murders. All nations have dark stains in their history, but instead of hiding them, they come clean and face their true history, including both the tragic and glorious episodes. Only then nations can overcome their shadowy pasts and move forward. Look at the example of Germany which accepted its guilt for the Holocaust and made amends. Otherwise, future generations of Turks will grow up trying to deny and lie about their ignominious past and will always have a guilty conscience for something they played no part in. However, their lies and denials make them accomplices of these crimes after the fact.

US and EU in the South Caucasus: Active Engagement, Uncertain Future

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war and the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022 have dramatically disrupted the status quo in the South Caucasus, thrusting the region into the center of regional and global power rivalries. To varying degrees, Russia, the United States, the European Union, Turkey, Iran, Israel, France, India, China, and Pakistan are involved in the South Caucasus, creating a complex nexus of overlapping and diverging interests shaping the region's geopolitical present and future. In recent years, the United States and the European Union have increased their presence in the South Caucasus. However, potential change in leadership in Washington and the shifting priorities in the forthcoming EU legislative cycle could significantly alter their engagement in the region.

The Biden Administration has pursued active engagement in the South Caucasus. The United States has been one of the main mediators in Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations, organizing several meetings between Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in Washington from 2022-2024 and the meeting between Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Ilham Aliyev in February 2023 in Munich. US engagement with Armenia has also increased, aligning with the administration's broader efforts to support democracy worldwide. The confrontation between US and Russia has further influenced their policy in the region, as Washington views the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process and Armenia-Turkey normalization as a tool to reduce the South Caucasus and Central Asian countries' dependency on Russia.

With the upcoming US presidential elections in November 2024, the potential impact on American for-

eign policy in the South Caucasus cannot be overstated. Should Vice President Kamala Harris, the candidate of the Democratic party, win, it is unlikely that US foreign policy will undergo drastic changes, although sustained interest in the South Caucasus is not guaranteed.

In the event of a second Trump presidency, the situation becomes more uncertain. Many experts find assessing Trump's foreign policy challenging, particularly his views toward the South Caucasus. However, a prevailing perception is that the US involvement in the South Caucasus would likely decrease under a Trump Administration. The key drivers of the Biden Administration's approach — support for democracy and countering Russia — may not be as relevant to a Trump Administration.

The South Caucasus, including Armenia, should be prepared for the possibility of reduced US involvement. This change could occur swiftly if Trump returns to the White House in January 2025, necessitating proactive preparation from the region.

The European Union has increased its involvement in the South Caucasus following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. Bogdan Aurescu, Romania's foreign minister, along with Alexander Schallenberg, Austria's foreign minister, and Gabrielius Landsbergis, Lithuania's foreign minister, conducted a regional tour of the South Caucasus from June 24 to 26, 2021 as special envoys of Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The EU Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, visited the South Caucasus from July 6 to 9, 2021, to discuss EU relations with the region. Additionally, President of the European Council Charles Michel visited the South Caucasus from July 17-19, 2021.

Before the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, the European Union had no direct involvement in the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiation process. In late 2021, the EU established the Brussels format of negotiations. Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders held six meetings facilitated by President of the European Council Michel (in December 2021, April, May, and August 2022, May and July 2023). Additionally, two meetings took place on the sidelines of the European Political Community summits (in October 2022 and June 2023). As a result of these meetings, Armenia and Azerbaijan stated their recognition of each other's territorial integrity per the 1991 Alma-Ata decla-

ration, and the EU launched a short-term observer mission in Armenia in October 2022. A subsequent two-year mission began its activities in February 2023.

The EU and Armenia initiated a dialogue to strengthen and deepen EU-Armenia relations after the fallout of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023. In February 2024, they launched work on the EU-Armenia New Partnership Agenda. The EU agreed to start a visa liberalization dialogue and provided 10 million euros in support through the European Peace Facility. The EU also significantly increased its engagement with Georgia, granting Tbilisi candidate status in December 2023.

However, the EU's future role in the region remains unclear. The EU needs a more cohesive regional policy as different member states pursue varying objectives. This divergence of interests and nature of the relationship with the three regional countries has hindered the EU from developing a unified strategy for the South Caucasus, as APRI Armenia argued in its research report.

Moreover, Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for the next European Commission (2024-2029), which emphasize the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Mediterranean region, exclude the South Caucasus. This may signal reduced EU interest in the region. Following the adopting of the foreign influence law in Georgia, growing tensions with the Georgian Dream government could further alienate the EU from the region.

As a result, there is a likelihood that both the US and the EU involvement and interest in the South Caucasus will decrease in the upcoming years compared to their active engagement of 2021-2024. The question then arises as to which powers would benefit from this possible vacuum. This vacuum could be filled by Russia, Turkey, and Iran, positioning them as the primary powers shaping the region's future.

This may align with Azerbaijan's strategic interests, as Baku does not want to see growing Western presence in the region, while relying on its alliance with Turkey, increasing cooperation with Russia, and establishing strategic partnership with China. It could create complications for Georgia, which, despite growing tensions with the West, does not want to cut all ties with the US and the EU, viewing them as partners for its balanced foreign policy.

This future configuration could be challenging for
see CAUCASUS, page 20



Jerusalem's Armenian Quarter under Threat

JERUSALEM, from page 18
the departure of the Armenian Patriarchy's real estate manager who headed the deal, and a public and legal struggle has been initiated by residents of the quarter to stop the takeover attempt.

The questions hovering over the deal are many, from transferring half of the ownership from the buyer to a third party (which is legal but suspicious); documents proving that the Patriarchate had no authority to sell the land; the price of the deal which is a fraction of the real value of the land; to the strange timing of increased harassment against quarter residents.

Now is the time for the State of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality to intervene.

Turning this charming and unique quarter into an arena for interreligious confrontations will only continue to harm Jerusalem's status. The defense of the quarter is not only a moral imperative to protect a small but rooted minority that has tied its fate to the city, but a basic need to protect the name, image, and location of Jerusalem as a city that constitutes a spiritual and religious center for three different monotheistic religions.

The state and the municipality have a moral and strategic obligation to prevent the expulsion of Armenians from the quarter and to turn the crisis into an opportunity by helping the Armenian community turn the disputed territory into a site that will attract Christians from all over the world to Jerusalem as this holy and beautiful city deserves.

(The writer is J Street Israel's executive director. He has served as an Israeli diplomat in Washington and Boston and as a political adviser to the president of Israel. This commentary originally appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* on August 27.)

UEFA Highlights GOALS as Best Amateur Club of 2023/24 For Empowering Girls Through Sports in Armenia

CAMBRIDGE/YEREVAN — GOALS, an Armenia-based sports-for-social-impact organization, has been recognized by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) in their latest video celebrating the organization's profound work in underserved communities.

Founded in 2015, GOALS empowers girls in rural Armenia through soccer, breaking down gender barriers, fostering leadership, and promoting social integration, especially for children displaced by the Artsakh war.

With more than 1,000 girls playing on 80 teams across 8 of Armenia's 10 regions, GOALS provides safe and inclusive spaces where sports become a tool for empowerment and unity. In addition to promoting gender equality, the organization uses soccer to integrate refugee children into new communities. Displaced by the Artsakh war, these children face numerous challenges, including social isolation. GOALS addresses this by offering structured sports programs that bring together local and displaced children, fostering friendship, belonging, and community resilience.

"We are honored to be recognized by UEFA for the work we do to empower girls and support displaced children through soccer," said Teny Avakian, CEO of GOALS. "Our mission is to create strong, collaborative leaders who can shape a brighter future for Armenia, and we believe that sports, particularly soccer, are a powerful tool to achieve that."

To celebrate this recognition and fundraise for the expansion of their programs, GOALS will host the "10-for-10" Cocktail Reception on Wednesday, September 18th at 6:30 p.m. at the Sheraton Commander in Cambridge. Attendees will learn more about how GOALS uses sports to empower



Young girls in Armenia in the GOALS soccer camp

underserved girls, support displaced children, and integrate communities. Funds raised will support GOALS' goal of expanding into all 10 regions of Armenia by their 10th anniversary next year.

Tickets can be purchased on <https://www.goalsarmenia.org/>. Those who are interested in donating can also donate on the website.

GOALS (Girls of Armenia Leadership Sports) is a sports-for-social-impact organization founded in 2015. GOALS uses soccer as a tool to empower girls in rural Armenian communities, helping them develop leadership skills and create strong community bonds. With over 1,000 girls involved, GOALS is driving a new generation of leaders in Armenia through the power of sport. GOALS is a registered non-profit and a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization.

US and EU in the South Caucasus: Active Engagement, Uncertain Future

CAUCASUS, from page 19
Armenia to continue pursuing its "pivot to world policy," as coined by Armen Grigoryan, secretary of the Security Council during the 2024 APRI Forum. The Armenian government should prepare for this

scenario in its contingency planning by elaborating a strategy of interaction with the global South, activating contacts with the new leadership in Iran, and reaching out to Western partners for better understanding of the future of their policy in the

region beyond 2024.

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



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