

Iran Warns Russia Against Siding With Azerbaijan in Border Dispute

By Patrick Wintour

TEHRAN (*Guardian*) — Iran’s new reformist government has warned Russia against siding with Azerbaijan in a border dispute as concerns in Tehran persist over its relations with Moscow. (See related story on this page.)

The Iranian foreign minister, Sayeed Abbas Araghchi, took the unusual step of upbraiding Russia after Moscow sided with Azerbaijan over its calls for a land corridor along the Armenia-Iran border

that Tehran fears could limit its access to Europe and the wider world.

“Regional peace, security and stability is not merely a preference, but a pillar of our national security. Any threat from north, south, east, or west to territorial integrity of our neighbors or redrawing of boundaries is totally unacceptable and a red line for Iran,” Araghchi said on the platform formerly known as Twitter on September 7.

The row has wider geo-political implications if it indicates that the newly elected Iranian government is willing to take

a tougher line with Moscow as part of its effort to rebalance its foreign policy.

Russia and Iran are due to sign a new strategic cooperation agreement, but the content is still open for debate, and tensions exist within the Iranian government over the diplomatic price of deepening its military alliance with Russia, which has seen Iranian-made drones used against cities in Ukraine.

Iran earlier this week also summoned the Russian ambassador, Alexey Dedov, to express its displeasure at Moscow’s stance, saying it did not want a conflict created on its borders with Moscow’s encouragement.

Araghchi’s remarks were a clear reference to Moscow’s decision to back a call by Azerbaijan for an east-west corridor to be opened through Armenia to the Nakhichevan exclave in western Azerbaijan.

His rebuke was echoed elsewhere in Iran. Mohsen Rezaei, the former overall commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and the secretary of the Expediency Council, which resolves issues between parliament and the Guardian Council, said: “The behavior of Russian statesman was not acceptable and in clear contradiction with their declaration of friendship with Iran. These ambiguities should be resolved.”

Ahmad Naderi, a hardliner inside the parliament, said: “The lack of appropriate response to the Russians in the cases of previous actions against Iran’s national interests has caused them to be doubly arrogant. They should be made to understand that strategic cooperation does not mean renouncing interests.

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More Cargo Shipped To Azerbaijan from Israeli Air Base

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — An Azerbaijani cargo plane has carried out another flight to and from a military airfield in southern Israel in a sign of continuing Israeli arms supplies to Azerbaijan.

Data available on Flight Radar24, a website tracking international flights, shows that the plane belonging to the Azerbaijani Silk Way airline returned to Baku on September 4, from the Israeli Air Force’s Ovda base. As always, the carrier did not reveal what it transported to Azerbaijan.

Ovda is the only airfield through which explosives can be flown into and out of Israel. It is believed to be a key conduit for Israeli exports of weapons and ammunition to Azerbaijan. They have totaled billions of dollars in the last two decades, making the Jewish state one of Azerbaijan’s main arms suppliers.

Those supplies continued even during the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijani forces heavily used Israeli-made attack drones and multiple-launch rocket systems throughout



An Azerbaijani Silk Way airline cargo plane

the six-week hostilities. Visiting Israel in March 2023, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov thanked the Israeli government for that support.

The Israeli daily Haaretz reported last year that Azerbaijani cargo planes landed at the Ovda air base for at least 92 times from 2016-2023. According to the paper, the frequency of such flights spiked in the run-up to Azerbaijan’s September 2023 military offensive that restored its full control over Karabakh.

The Ovda-Baku flights continued even after the outbreak of the ongoing conflict in Gaza last October which led Israel to seek and receive large-scale military aid from the United States. The Armenian investigative publication Hetq.am counted about a dozen such flights between November 2023 and April 2024.

Azerbaijan’s military spending is reportedly due to reach \$3.7 billion this year, compared with Armenia’s defense budget projected at \$1.4 billion. Despite this disparity and its continuing military

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Armenian Leaders Thank Iran For Opposing Azeri Corridor

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Senior Armenian officials have thanked Iran for reaffirming its strong opposition to land corridors passing through Armenia in response to Russia’s latest push for the opening of such transport links between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave. (See related story on this page.)

Tehran stepped up at the weekend its criticism of Moscow’s position expressed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during President

Vladimir Putin’s August 18-19 visit to Baku. Lavrov accused Armenia of “sabotaging” a Russian-brokered agreement to build a highway and railway connecting Nakhichevan to the

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Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei meets Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Tehran, July 30, 2024.

Azerbaijan Continues Islamization of Karabakh - Also in Virtual Domain

YEREVAN (news.am) — Satellite maps show that the Azerbaijani side has started to artificially increase the number of mosques in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), informs the website MonumentWatch.org, which monitors Artsakh’s Armenian cultural heritage.

In particular, during the monitoring of the villages of Hadrut region through Google Earth, it became noticeable that signs about the presence of mosques were added in the villages of Taghaser, Vardashat, Kamra-

kuch, Sarinshen, Tsamdzor, and Togh.

Moreover, these signs in the aforesaid villages are placed as if arbitrarily because if you zoom in on the images, you can see that they are placed directly on the village houses and yards.

During the monitoring of these satellite photos, it became clear that a marker about the existence of a mosque was placed also in the city of Askeran. According to this map, it is located near the city cemetery.

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Abandoned mosque in Karabakh

TURKEY

Historic Armenian Church Hosts 12th Mass



MICHIGAN

Detroit’s 16th Annual Armenia Fest Attracts Large Crowds



MICHIGAN

How Dan Yessian Came to Compose An Armenian Trilogy on Bacharach’s Piano





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia Sends Team to 45th Chess Olympiad

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The 45th Chess Olympiad will be held in Budapest, Hungary, from September 10 to 23.

The Armenian men's national team is represented by GM Haik Martirosyan, GM Shant Sargsyan, GM Gabriel Sargissian, GM Robert Hovhannisyan and GM Karen Grigoryan. The head coach of the team is GM Arman Pashikian, the Chess Federation of Armenia reports.

The Armenian women's national team includes IM Lilit Mkrtchian, WIM Mariam Mkrtchyan, GM Elina Danielian, IM Anna Sargsyan and WIM Susanna Gaboyan. The head coach of the team is GM Zaven Andriasian.

The men's team ranks 17th among 197 countries while the women's team ranks 11th among 184 countries.

Child's Burial Site from Neolithic Era Found

YEREVAN (News.am) — The leader of an Armenian-American expedition which has been excavating the Masis Hill Neolithic settlement since the beginning of September, said in a post on Facebook that they have found a child's burial site.

The leader of this expedition, Professor Pavel Avetisyan, on September 9 said, "We already have an exceptional result. A child's burial was opened under the wall of the building. The structure is in the layer of the first quarter of the VI millennium BC. That is, the burial either refers to the same time or is earlier. In the territory of Armenia, to this day we have two burials with a clear context and date related to those times: one from Aknashen, one from Masis Hill. DNA analysis of this new site will come to add to our understanding of Neolithic communities north of the Araks [River]."

USAID to Provide \$130m Grant

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The US Agency for International Development (USAID) will allocate an additional \$130 million to Armenia to improve the efficiency of public administration. The project was approved at a meeting of the government on September 5.

Within the agreement concluded between Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Mher Grigoryan and Director of USAID in Armenia John Allelo for 5 years in 2022, a grant of \$120 million was supposed to be allocated to Armenia.

The agreement aims to strengthen democratic values and ensure economic stability.

The government noted that the funds are planned to institutionalize accountable governance, including in the economic sphere, ensure civil participation in strengthening democratic consolidation, increase the competitiveness of target sectors, improve sustainable management of natural resources, preserve democratic achievements, and overcome economic challenges.

Outrage After Russian National Crowned Miss Armenia

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

The announcement that a Russian singer has been crowned Miss Universe Armenia 2024 at a contest in Moscow has led to outcry online.

The result of the competition was announced last week, with 31-year-old singer Irina Zakharova crowned Miss Universe Armenia 2024. She will represent the country in the global Miss Universe competition scheduled to be held in Mexico in November.

"How did that girl earn the right to represent Armenia," asked journalist and feminist activist Zara Ghazaryan on Instagram, noting that if there was nothing to justify this decision, it could be concluded that "they simply used the name of Armenia to participate in the competition."

Ghazaryan also said she believed a rare opportunity was taken from Armenian women.

The former director of the Miss Universe Armenia contest, Gohar Harutyunyan, told Russian state news agency Sputnik Armenia that since Thailand's JKN bought the rights to organize the pageant two years ago, the rules for selecting participants had eased.

"At that time, there were strict laws that I followed. Even those from the diaspora did not have the right to participate in the national contest "Miss Universe Armenia" if they did not live in Armenia. They had to have an Armenian passport, they had to be under 28 years old, unmarried", Harutyunyan said.

Harutyunyan said anyone could now participate, regardless of their age, marriage status, or whether they had children. In addition, the national director of the competition "can also be anyone who can pay the most money to participate".

After the Miss Armenia pageant was suspended in 2022 due to a lack of sponsorship, this change in the statutes allowed Yulia Pavlikova, a Russian national originally from Crimea, to acquire the rights to hold the competition. Palikova also holds the rights to the Miss Universe Estonia competition.

"After my debut at the Miss Universe contest, the organizers saw in me not only a model, but also a successful leader with extensive experience and potential", Pavlikova told KP-Crimea. "After negotiations, we decided to start with [acquiring the rights to the competitions in] Armenia and Estonia, since I have friends and partners there for productive cooperation."

In her statement to Sputnik Armenia, Harutyunyan also raised concerns about the competition being held in Russia, noting that the only participants were Russians or

were not even aware of the competition in Moscow.

Dayana Davtyan, the winner of Miss Universe Armenia 2019, said she learned on social media that this year's winner, Zakharova, and the national director, Pavlikova, have had close ties since 2022.

Mirna Bzdigian, who represented Armenia in Miss World 2022, said that they had contacted the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport because they viewed Zakharova's crowning as Miss Armenia a big problem.



Irina Zakharova (left) during the Miss Universe Armenia 2024 contest. Image via Miss Universe Armenia.

Armenians living in Russia.

"I don't know how she [Irina Zakharova] will represent our country, what problems she will raise because our girls have raised many problems in the past, talked about Artsakh, women's rights. Of course, we did not take a high place, but our voice was heard there," said Harutyunyan, suggesting that in such a situation it would be better if Armenia did not participate in the competition at all.

Previous Armenian Miss World and Miss Universe contestants also raised concerns about the results, telling news.am that they

"This contest is a fantastic platform to talk about what concerns us, be it the problem of Armenia or Artsakh. If we let all this happen to us, that representatives of other countries represent us, we will be lost as a nation, we will lose our identity and our history. This is a catastrophic mistake".

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport neither confirmed nor denied being contacted about the issue, instead asking for an official request to be submitted.

(This article originally ran in OC Media on September 6.)

Karabakh 'Non-Existent' for Armenian Speaker

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azututyun) — Armenia's government does not regard Nagorno-Karabakh's exiled leaders as legal representatives of the region and its displaced population, parliament speaker Alen Simonyan said on September 9.

"Legally, Nagorno-Karabakh does not exist as an entity," he said. "There are only our deported [Karabakh Armenian] compatriots whose problems the Armenian government is addressing in an excellent way."

Simonyan, who is a key member of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's political team, made the comments after opposition members of the Armenian parliament challenged him to explain why he has been blocking sessions of a joint commission of Armenian and Karabakh lawmakers that had existed for decades.

"I think that we must very seriously consider abolishing that format because Nagorno-Karabakh, Artsakh officials don't exist anymore and nobody has such a status in Armenia anymore," he replied.

"The Artsakh Republic disbanded itself by the decision of its officials," he said on the parliament floor, dismissing opposition arguments that the unrecognized republic is referenced in many Armenian legal acts.

Simonyan alluded to a decree which Samvel Shahramanyan, the Karabakh president, signed in September 2023 more than a week after an Azerbaijani military offensive that paved the way for the restoration of Baku's full control of the territory.

Shahramanyan invalidated the decree liquidating the republic in December. He argued that he had to sign it in order to enable the Karabakh Armenians to safely flee to Armenia.

Artur Khachatryan, an Armenian opposition lawmaker, likewise countered on Monday that the decree helped to prevent a "massacre" of Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population. He also described it as null and void.

"The term 'president of Nagorno-Karabakh' is non-existent for me," insisted Simonyan. Speaking to reporters afterwards, he said the Armenian authorities must therefore "review the meaning of that building" housing Karabakh's permanent representation in Yerevan.

A special police squad broke into the representation's compound and seized Shahramanyan's official car on June 21, one week after Pashinyan again threatened to crack down on the exiled Karabakh leader. Pashinyan accused him of encouraging Karabakh refugees to participate in anti-govern-

ment protests in Yerevan.

The threats came the day after Shahramanyan pushed back against Pashinyan's allegations that Karabakh forces did not fight back the Azerbaijani offensive because the authorities in Stepanakert as well as the Armenian opposition wanted the region's population to flee to Armenia to topple him. At least 198 soldiers and 25 civilian residents of Karabakh were killed during the 24-hour hostilities.

Shahramanyan's office did not respond to Simonyan's remarks. Metakse Hakobyan, an outspoken Karabakh lawmaker also exiled in Yerevan, took to Facebook to condemn them.

"The Republic of Artsakh was occupied by the enemy, Azerbaijan, as a result of the policy pursued by the Armenian authorities," she wrote.

Ishkhan Saghatelian, a leading member of Armenia's main opposition Hayastan alliance, said that Pashinyan's administration keeps trying to shift the blame for the fall of Karabakh. It is also executing Azerbaijan's orders, charged Saghatelian.

Pashinyan has repeatedly indicated that the Karabakh issue is closed for his administration. He publicly recognized Azerbaijani sovereignty over the region several months before the Azerbaijani offensive.



ARMENIA

Armagora.am Collaborative Platform Stimulates Discussions During First Month

YEREVAN — Established in 2021, the Future Armenian Development Foundation is dedicated to fostering dialogue and collaboration among Armenians worldwide on pressing national issues. On August 1, the foundation launched its latest initiative — the ArmAgora website, providing a global platform for Armenians to engage in meaningful discussions about current and future challenges, while working together to develop shared solutions based on collective insights and experiences.

Armagora.am, the foundation's trilingual online platform (available in Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian and English), is designed to facilitate these discussions across three key sections. Weekly polls invite users to participate in opinion polls on a wide range of topics. Threads offer an open forum for individuals to share their ideas and initiate discussions. Articles showcase

expert contributions on diverse subjects, ranging from national security to cultural heritage.

In its first month, Armagora.am attracted over 6,500 visitors from more than 30 countries, including several notable figures who actively engaged by initiating discussions and contributing articles to stimulate meaningful debate.

A key insight from the platform's first Weekly Poll was the strong support (61 percent of nearly 750 votes) for involving diaspora representatives in Armenia's National Assembly. While it is unclear where the majority of voters were located (Armenia or the diaspora), the result is thought-provoking.

Another poll assessed the cooperation between Armenia and the diaspora in tackling national challenges. A significant majority (67 percent of 153 votes) rated this collaboration as "poor." When asked about the key barriers to effective engagement, users pointed to a substan-

tial lack of "engagement infrastructure," highlighting the need for improvement on both sides.

Armenian National Committee of America Executive Director Aram Hamparian has led discussions on various topics, including the expectations American Armenians may have from candidates in the upcoming US elections. Other discussions focus on the need for a new national ideology and the future of the Diaspora.

Dr. Eduard Abrahamyan contributed an insightful article titled "War and Peace between Small States in the Age of Competitive Multipolarity." His analysis offers a deep dive into current global upheavals, detailing how the evolving world order impacts small states like Armenia, and what strategies they should adopt to navigate these challenges successfully — a highly relevant issue for Armenia today.

Additionally, the project aims to

deepen discussions with new interactive features, including live Q&A sessions. Starting in September, Armagora.am will launch the "Ask Me Anything" format, inspired by Reddit, allowing users to engage directly with experts, leaders, and prominent figures across various fields.

In summary, Armagora.am, as a new platform, holds the potential to unite Armenians worldwide in serious, fact-based discussions, positioning itself as a central hub for collective intellectual engagement.

The Future Armenian, founded in 2021 by Noubar Afeyan, Ruben Vardanyan, Artur Alaverdyan and Richard Azarnia, has successfully engaged more than 110,000 individuals from more than 100 countries. The initiative's overarching goal is to promote meaningful dialogue, foster mutual understanding and work towards building a unified future for all Armenians.

Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia Launched

YEREVAN — The Afeyan Philanthropies, an organization building and advancing solutions for a better world, on September 5 announced the launch of Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia (AIFA), an initiative dedicated to building a more vibrant, resilient and prosperous Armenia. AIFA leverages more than two decades of philanthropic efforts in Armenia by the Afeyan family and serves as the strategic and operational hub for its current and future development initiatives in Armenia. Talar Kazanjian has been appointed its executive director.

Kazanjian joins David Tadevosyan, director of operations for AIFA, who has been working for the past several months to establish the organization in Armenia.

"For more than two decades, we have been dedicated to building a resilient and prosperous future for Armenia: one that champions innovation, fosters inclusivity, and prioritizes the well-being of all its citizens," said Noubar and Anna Afeyan, Trustees of the Afeyan Philanthropies. "Through AIFA, we aim to strengthen our

existing work, implement new programs and forge partnerships and collaborations that scale impact. By harnessing the collective expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders, we seek to drive positive change across wide ranging sectors in Armenia, including health, science and technology, and the arts."

The Afeyans continued: "Talar's impressive career has been characterized by deep expertise and impact, leading numerous development and philanthropic efforts in Armenia and globally. We look forward to the impact Talar will have in accelerating AIFA's efforts to address Armenia's economic and societal needs on a scaled basis by leveraging and working with other organizations with similar goals."

Kazanjian brings a wealth of organizational leadership to AIFA. Most recently, she helped draft Armenia's first science, technology and innovation strategy, advising the Executive Committee chair of the Prime Minister's Science and Technology Development Advisory Council.

Previously, she was chief operating of-

ficer of Armenia 2041, where she oversaw the launch of the Future Armenian initiative. She continues to serve as a member of the Guardians Council for Future Armenian, a position she has held since 2022.

Prior to this role, Kazanjian was executive director of AGBU Armenia. Earlier in her career, she was a consultant for Booz Allen Hamilton, working with public sector and government organizations in various countries, including GCC/MENA countries, the Caucasus, and Central Europe.

Kazanjian currently serves on the boards of two nonprofit organizations in Armenia. She earned a MA in strategic studies and international economics from Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a BA from St. Joseph's University in Beirut. She is fluent in four languages.

"The Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia (AIFA) builds on a strong legacy of impact and support by the Afeyans in Armenia, and a steadfast commitment to contributing to a positive future for Armenia and

Armenians," said Talar Kazanjian, Executive Director, AIFA. "I am honored to join the organization to steward and expand its transformation vision for Armenia."

About Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia (AIFA)

Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia (AIFA) is the Armenia-focused arm of the Afeyan Philanthropies. AIFA leverages more than two decades of philanthropic efforts in Armenia by the Afeyan family and serves as the strategic and operational hub for all current and future development initiatives of the Afeyan family in Armenia. Current projects that are solely or partially supported by Afeyan Philanthropies' activities in Armenia include: Armenia 2041, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, FAST, Future Armenian, HENAR and the Spiritual Revival Foundation.

AIFA is committed to promoting education, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and driving sustainable development in Armenia. Through strategic initiatives, partnerships, and networks, we aim to catalyze positive change across various sectors, with a focus on education, technology, entrepreneurship, healthcare, culture, and humanitarianism.

Our vision for the future of Armenia is one where sustainable development, cultural vibrancy, human welfare, and productive collaboration with the Diaspora are prioritized, creating a prosperous and resilient society for generations to come.

Established by Noubar and Anna Afeyan in 2000, the Afeyan Philanthropies believes that the power of imagination and the strength of our communities can create a better world for all. We design, build, and support innovative organizations and initiatives in the areas of education, science and technology, and humanitarian action. Our programs impact communities around the world including in Armenia and the greater Boston area. The Afeyan Philanthropies provide financial support through multiple vehicles, including the Afeyan Foundation, the Afeyan Foundation for Armenia and a donor-advised fund held at Morgan Stanley. For more information, please visit www.afeyanfoundation.org.

Azerbaijan Continues Islamization of Karabakh

ISLAMIZATION, from page 1

The Azerbaijani side continues the policy of Islamization of Artsakh — also in the virtual domain. These mosque signs are artificially placed on publicly accessible websites that display satellite images.

It is noteworthy that the Hadrut region — most of whose villages were Armenian, had an Armenian population, and there were never Islamic places of worship in them — was chosen as a target for this policy.

It is noticeable that the villages closest to the city of Hadrut were "endowed" with mosques. The abovementioned villages have no population after the Azerbaijani occupation of 2020, and there is no construction — let alone mosque construction — work there.



A satellite photo of mosque construction in Karabakh



ARMENIA

INTERNATIONAL

Kazakhstan again Offers Platform for Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks

YEREVAN (Panorama.am)

— In a phone call with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev reaffirmed his country's readiness to continue hosting peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan, his press office [reported](#) on Monday, September 9.

“The head of state reiterated Kazakhstan's readiness to continue providing the Almaty platform for negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the conclusion of a peace treaty,” the statement said.

Armenia Defense Minister Travels to South Korea

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.

Net) — On September 8, a delegation led by the Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikeyan left for the Republic of Korea on a working visit.

On September 9, Papikeyan attended the opening ceremony of the Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain summit.

The event was organized by the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Singapore and Kenya, with the aim of establishing international mechanisms to regulate the use of artificial intelligence in military technology and military operations.

Pashinyan to Represent Armenia at BRICS Summit

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia will be represented at BRICS summit by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, his Spokesperson Nazeli Bagdasaryan has confirmed.

Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan confirmed earlier this week that Armenia will participate in the summit to be held in Kazan October 22-24.

BRICS, originally formed in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, aims to bring together the world's most important emerging economies, as well as act as a political and economic counterbalance to wealthier nations in the West.

The group of countries expanded earlier this year to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia was invited to join, though the Kingdom is yet to do that.

The group's further enlargement could be discussed during the summit in Kazan, Russia, from October 22-24. Malaysia, Thailand and Azerbaijan are among other countries looking to join.

Turkey has formally applied to join BRICS, as has Azerbaijan.

Historic Armenian Church Hosts 12th Mass

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net)

— The historic Akhtamar Church, a 1,100-year-old Armenian church situated on Akhtamar Island in Lake Van, Turkey, on September 8 hosted its 12th special mass on September 8, Anadolu Agency [reports](#).

People from across Turkey and around the world flocked to the island in the eastern province of Van to attend the annual event, held on the second Sunday of September.

Those who wished to attend the mass were transferred by boat after going through the search stations set up at Akhtamar Pier, while security precautions were also in place for the occasion on the island.

The ceremony, presided over by the

85th Turkish Armenian Patriarch Sahak Maşalyan, commenced with Father Drtad Uzunyan officiating the mass.

The Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry undertook renovation and restoration work to return the medieval church to its former glory in 2005 and declared it a monument museum in 2007. Subsequently, the church was opened to worship with only one day of mass permitted in 2010, after a hiatus of 95 years.

The ancient church,

which is over 1,000 years old, serves as a significant piece of medieval Armenian religious history. It was constructed between 915 and 921 A.D. by architect Bishop



Father Drtad Uzunyan officiating the mass



Akhtamar Church

Manuel under the direction of King Gagik I Artsruni.

Known for its unique place in East-West Christian art, the church boasts remarkable adornments and comprehensive wall reliefs from its time and holds great significance for the Armenian people.

The church's interior part features animal characters in relation to religious and secular incidents, as well as featuring frescoes that have mostly deteriorated with time.

Armenian FM Vague on Key Term of Peace Deal with Azerbaijan

By Astghik Bedevian and Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan on September 9 declined to clarify whether Azerbaijan has agreed to uphold a 1991 declaration championed by Armenia in a draft peace treaty discussed by the two sides.

Two senior Armenian lawmakers made last week conflicting claims on the treaty's likely reference to the Alma-Ata Declaration that committed newly independent Soviet republics to recognizing their Soviet-era borders.

Mirzoyan did not shed more light on the matter when he spoke after talks with Luxembourg's visiting Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel. Echoing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's recent statement, he said only that Baku and Yerevan fully agree on 13 of the treaty's 16 articles and are close

to reaching a common denominator on the other three.

“We don't have disagreements on the text anymore,” he told a joint news conference. “The problem is that sometimes the Azerbaijani side tries to include other preconditions or issues in the overall negotiation process. Our approach is that we can sign the agreed text days very soon.”

A separate Armenian-Azerbaijani agreement publicized by the Armenian government on September 2 says that the Alma-Ata Declaration will serve as a basis for the delimitation of the long border between the two South Caucasus states. But it also makes clear that Baku and Yerevan will discard the 1991 document if they agree “in the future” on other principles of delineating the border. Mirzoyan insisted that they are not discussing any such principles at the moment.

Meanwhile, parliament speaker Alen

Simonyan revealed that the draft peace deal currently under discussion says nothing about the release of at least 23 Armenians, among them eight former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, remaining in Azerbaijani captivity. He argued that the 2020 ceasefire deal that stopped the war in Karabakh already requires Baku to release all of them.

“This issue is one of the important ones [for the Armenian government,]” Simonyan told journalists.

Kristine Vartanyan, an opposition parliamentarian, described Simonyan's revelation as deeply troubling.

“The Armenian negotiators' failure to put a solution to this issue at the top of the agenda of negotiations means that they accepted [Azerbaijan's] rules of the game and can constantly be pressured with threats to harm the individuals held in captivity,” she said.

Top Democrat Expresses Concern with Azerbaijan Hosting COP29

By Brad Dress

WASHINGTON (The Hill) — Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed concern on Monday, September 9, with Azerbaijan hosting the COP29 climate conference in November, pointing to the country imprisoning Armenian and pro-environmental activists.

Cardin, in a statement, said “hosting a major international conference like COP29 should come with responsibilities and expectations that host countries allow frank discussion of information and issues, which requires recognizing freedoms of speech and assembly.”

“Azerbaijan has not done so,” he said, urging the country's president, Ilham Aliyev, “to release those unjustly imprisoned by his government, including Armenian detainees, and community activists who

peacefully demonstrated against poor labor practices and harmful environmental impacts of the Chovdar gold mine operation.”

The Hill has reached out to Azerbaijan's embassy in the U.S. for comment.

Azerbaijan, located between Asia and Europe in the Caucasus Mountains, will host COP29 from Nov. 11-22 in the capital of Baku.

Azerbaijan was announced last December as the next host of the conference that brings together 197 countries and the European Union to advance goals committed to easing the global climate crisis.

The conference comes ahead of the 2025 Paris Agreement deadline for nations to put forward climate targets for the year 2035 that are more ambitious than their existing 2030 targets.

Azerbaijan has seen intense scrutiny as the conference's host because it's an oil and gas producer, and the decision to host

came after Baku captured a breakaway region with Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, in September 2023, which prompted a mass exodus of the ethnic Armenian population.

Baku has also been criticized for jailing critics and independent media. Amnesty International this month called for the release of government critics detained by Azerbaijan, while Human Rights Watch did the same for independent media over the spring.

Cardin said Monday that “Azerbaijan has the potential to be an important member of the international community and partner to the United States,” but that Baku must first release several detainees.

“Ahead of COP29 in November, I urge the Azerbaijani government to demonstrate its commitment to upholding human rights by releasing these individuals without delay,” Cardin said.

Rachel Frazin contributed to this report.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran Warns Russia Against Siding With Azerbaijan in Border Dispute

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The Iranian regime has historically opposed Azerbaijani and Turkish efforts to establish the so-called Zangezur corridor between Azerbaijan proper and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic because such a corridor, going through Armenia's most southern province, might sever Iranian access to Armenia and then [Europe](#).

Azerbaijan has at various times threatened to establish the corridor by force if necessary, which would be likely to provoke a further war with Armenia.

Azerbaijan's military defense budget is more than three times the size of Armenia's, and Baku demonstrated its military superiority in September 2023 by recapturing the occupied territories in Nagorno-Karabakh within 24 hours.

The latest row was prompted by the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, saying on a recent visit to Baku by Vladimir

Putin that Moscow backed the corridor and that Armenia was sabotaging a Russian brokered agreement to open it.

A debate is under way in Tehran about the wisdom of retaining close contacts with Moscow. The tone of Araghchi's "red line" tweet suggests he wants to show his call for a more balanced east-west policy — a key part of the new president, Masoud Pezeshkian's, successful election campaign — has substance.

Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, a former head of Iran's national security and foreign policy commission, warned Moscow's stance on the so-called Zangezur corridor might be a pre-emptive attack by Putin to prevent the possibility of the formation of communication channels between the new government of Iran and the US.

An EU spokesperson made clear that relations between the EU and Iran were unlikely to improve if Iran continued to sup-

ply drones and other weaponry to Russia for use in Ukraine. The Iranian ambassador to the UN, Amir Saeed Iravani, took the unusual step of sending a letter to the UN secretary general, António Guterres, saying talk of such a trade was baseless. The EU spokesperson, Peter Stano, said: "If it becomes clear that Iran provides more military aid to support Russia's illegal actions in Ukraine, the [European Union](#) will undoubtedly react."

Stano said Josep Borrell, head of EU foreign affairs, had been in touch with the new Iranian government to raise the issue of Iran's support for Russia in Ukraine, as well as to discuss Iran's nuclear program.

He added: "Iran's military support for Russia's illegal actions in Ukraine is one of the most important determining issues in our relations with Tehran. That's why we reacted to this issue by imposing sanctions."

Armenian Leaders Thank Iran For Opposing Azeri Corridor

IRAN, from page 1

rest of Azerbaijan via Syunik, the only Armenian province bordering Iran.

The accusation prompted serious concern from Iran, which fears losing its common border with Armenia. The Iranian Foreign Ministry reportedly summoned Russia's ambassador in Tehran last week to warn Moscow against contributing to any "geopolitical changes" in the region.

"We do not accept any changes to borders. My advice to Russia and Azerbaijan is to respect these boundaries," Ali Nikzad, a deputy speaker of the Iranian parliament, said in a weekend post on the platform formerly known as Twitter.

"We have repeatedly communicated to regional nations that the Zangezur Corridor is a red line for Iran, and any alterations will provoke a strong and serious response," Ebrahim Azizi, the chairman of the parliament committee on national security and foreign relations, told the ISNA news agency.

A member of the Iranian panel, Fadahosseini Maleki, went further, calling Russia's perceived support for that corridor a "stab in the back" in comments to another Iranian news agency, Tasnim.

European Union Hails Visa Talks with Armenia as 'Historic'

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Vice President of the European Commission Margarethe Schinas believes it is possible to advance quickly in the Armenia-EU visa liberalization process, given the impressive achievements of the Armenian government in terms of commitments and determination.

"The goal is to reach the endpoint as soon as possible, but there is no automation in this process. It will be demanding and will require a significant degree of commitment from the Armenian government, alongside our support. However, I am confident that, considering the impressive achievements of the Armenian authorities and their determination, we will move forward quickly," Schinas said during a joint statement with Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan on Monday, September 9.

"Today, we have initiated this process at

the political level, and at the technical level, our teams are working together on very specific issues that need to be resolved."

"It is a very important and historic day, and I am very pleased that Armenian parliament lawmakers and deputy ministers are accompanying us during this significant occasion. We are also delighted that Armenia stands as an anchor of stability and sanity in a very turbulent region. The quality and depth of relations between the European Union and Armenia demonstrate that this country is committed to the ideas of peace and stability in the region. Today's step to initiate the dialogue on visa liberalization should not be seen as an isolated initiative. It should be viewed as another manifestation of the European Union's committed attitude towards Armenia," Schinas said, emphasizing the official start

of the dialogue on visa liberalization.

He emphasized that once the negotiation phase is completed, all Armenian citizens will be able to travel freely to the European Union for short visits.

Referring to other areas of cooperation, Schinas noted that, in collaboration with American partners, a new resilience and growth plan amounting to 270 million euros has been announced for Armenia, in addition to the 600 million euros already invested in the country.

"We are now very pleased that, for the first time in history, Armenia is able to receive support for its armed forces under the Instrument for Peace. All this proves that the country has implemented impressive democratic reforms, which have strengthened its resilience in recent years," she concluded.

"I am grateful for Iran's concern," Alen Simonyan, the Armenian parliament speaker told reporters on Monday. "I thank them for the statements."

"We always live with the understanding that an attack and [aggressive] steps are possible against the sovereign territory of Armenia," he added without elaborating.

Earlier on Monday, the Iranian Embassy in Yerevan tweeted that the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, thanked Tehran for "supporting Armenia's territorial integrity" during a meeting with Ambassador Mehdi Sobhani. The embassy also quoted Grigoryan as saying that "no force can break the territorial connection between Iran and Armenia."

Grigoryan's office issued no readout of the meeting. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan made it clear that Armenia continues to oppose the extraterritorial corridor to Nakhichevan.

"Nothing that involves creating a corridor and handing over control of it to another party is being discussed," he told a news conference. "We have said that for Armenia the presence of third powers and control [of its transit routes] by third powers is out of question."

Decision to Reduce Russian Classes in Schools Leads to Debate in Armenia

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

A July decision by the Armenian Government to reduce mandatory Russian classes in schools has led to debate in the country, after a report by Sputnik Armenia suggested Armenia may intend to phase out compulsory Russian from schools entirely.

On Friday, September 6, the Russian state-owned news agency published a report about the decision citing anonymous teachers and education specialists.

The report was misinterpreted by some online who thought the government was completely removing Russian language from its state curricula, with some criticizing this and others celebrating it.

Sputnik was citing a July directive instructing schools to allow students their choice of languages to learn in two separate foreign language courses, instead of having their first foreign language course default to Russian.

The changes apply to most grades between the second and tenth grades, while grades 4, 9, 11, and 12 will continue to learn Russian as a first foreign language.

In an interview with Sputnik Armenia, education expert Serob Khachatryan argued that the ministry's directive was not 'significant', citing the general education

state standard adopted in 2021, which made Russian language classes mandatory.

According to the standard, Russian is a mandatory subject for all students between the second and twelfth grades, with students being allowed to choose at least one more foreign language to study as of the third grade.

Khachatryan noted that the ministry's directive would not allow schools to completely remove Russian from their curricula, despite making it optional. He said that schools are still obliged to allocate at least two hours a week to each foreign language course.

Sputnik Armenia also interviewed several anonymous Russian language teachers who expressed concern that the number of Russian lessons would be reduced over the years until the subject's complete removal from Armenian curricula.

Battle for Education

The debate around the number of Russian language classes in Armenian schools is not the only point of contention between Russia and Armenia in the field of education.

In August Armenia's Education Ministry announced it was removing mentions of Russia's annexation of Armenia from

a history textbook following complaints from Sputnik Armenia and Russia's Foreign Ministry.

Russia has also long pushed for an increase in the number of Russian medium schools in the country; CivilNet has reported that there are three Russian state-owned schools in Armenia. According to the Armenian Education Ministry, 46 Armenian schools teach in Russian, while at least 60 language schools providing advanced Russian classes.

In October 2023, Russian MPs decided to indefinitely postpone discussions of recognizing Armenian driving licenses used for work purposes. Russian Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said the decision was related to Russian language having no 'official status' in Armenia, as well as recent decisions running contrary to the development of such relations.

It comes amidst deteriorating relations between the two countries, and Armenia's ratification of the International Criminal Court's Rome Statute despite the Kremlin warning that it would have 'the most negative consequences for bilateral relations'.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on September 9.)

Mirzoyan seemed to allude to Lavrov's references to a Russian-brokered ceasefire deal that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war. It says that Russian border guards stationed in Syunik will "control" the movement of people, vehicles and goods between Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan.

Moscow and Yerevan have different interpretations of this provision. Armenian officials have said that it only allows the Russians to "monitor" the traffic, rather than escort it, let alone be involved in border controls. They have also accused Moscow of turning a blind eye to Baku's failure to comply with other, more important terms of the truce accord.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on August 31 Yerevan is ready to let a foreign private company provide "additional security" along the would-be transport links for Nakhichevan. In Mirzoyan's words, it would "escort passengers or cargo," rather than replace Armenian border and customs officers.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry indicated later on Monday that such an arrangement would not satisfy Baku. A ministry spokesman said the Armenian side must honor its "obligations" regarding the transport links for Nakhichevan.



INTERNATIONAL

Does Turkey Have a Duty to Turn off the Taps on Oil Supplies to Israel?

By Ragip Soylu in Ankara

ANKARA (Middle East Eye) — When the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline was inaugurated in 2006, it was hailed as a crucial commercial bridge that would connect Asia to Europe.

The 1,768km pipeline, which transports oil from Azerbaijan to Turkey, carried around 30 million tonnes of crude oil in 2023, with 227 million barrels of oil lifted at the port of Ceyhan and loaded onto 313 tankers.

But in recent months, as Israel’s war on Gaza has continued to rage, the pipeline has come under fire from pro-Palestine activists who claim it’s fueling Israel’s war effort in the enclave, and that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan must act to shut it down.

“Erdogan, turn off the oil valves,” said a banner carried by the activist group called “One Thousand Youth for Palestine” outside the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) headquarters in Istanbul last Friday.

“End your participation in Israel’s genocide.”

Amid the protests, Turkey has been forced to face legal questions as to whether it has a duty to disrupt oil shipments to Israel through a pipeline it doesn’t own and oil it doesn’t produce.

The questions are of particular importance should the International Court of Justice (ICJ) determine Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Countries such as Turkey, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan could be viewed as violating the duty to prevent genocide by supplying fuel and raw materials to Israel.

Last week, Oil Change International, an anti-fossil fuel advocacy group, reported that 28 percent of the crude oil supplied to Israel between 21 October 2023 and 12 July 2024 came from Azerbaijan.

“Azeri crude is delivered via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, majority-owned and operated by BP,” the group

said. “The crude oil is loaded onto tankers at the Turkish port of Ceyhan for delivery to Israel.”

Turkish officials, speaking on condition of anonymity due to government protocol, told Middle East Eye that Ankara’s responsibility was limited.

“We don’t own the pipeline, BP does,” one Turkish official said. “It is Azerbaijani or Kazakhstan oil and we don’t own them either.”

Destinations Unclear

The official said that under a 2000 host government agreement, Turkey was unconditionally bound to provide the free flow of oil through the pipeline and could not stop it otherwise it would be forced to pay substantial amounts of monetary compensation.

The agreement makes Ankara liable for any construction or oil transport delays irrespective of the cause.

“On top of that, Turkey’s long-term commitment and credibility as a neutral energy provider would be at stake,” the official added.

Many in Ankara have pointed out that countries have to honour past contracts, citing examples such as Ukraine, which continues to allow Russian gas to pass through its territory to Europe.

Some have also noted that once the barrels are loaded onto tankers at Ceyhan, Turkish authorities are not aware whether they will head directly to Israel or if they will dock at its ports.

When it comes to shipping, some ships fly the flag of their own country, meaning it is owned, operated, and manned by nationals of that country.

International oil tankers usually register under the flags of different countries, usually small island states, for the purpose of tax avoidance and legal responsibilities.

However, ship owners can also easily and quickly change the flag of their vessel in a bid to reduce costs and avoid laws.

“The destinations of the ships departing from Ceyhan are not under our initiative or

control,” Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar told reporters earlier this year.

The Turkish official told MEE: “The oil is sold to intermediary companies by BP and it has nothing to do with Ankara. The intermediary companies pick up oil with their tankers without declaring their final destination.”

The official said that in most cases, the oil would be sold to a buyer while the tanker is in the open sea.

Tayab Ali, a director at the International Centre for Justice for Palestinians (ICJP) and deputy managing partner at the London-based law firm Bindmans, said the Turkish government could not simply dismiss its possible liability under international law.

“The test will be whether Turkey has any control over the pipeline,” he told MEE.

The ICJ and Provisional Measures

Even though the Turkish government doesn’t have any direct stakes in the pipeline’s management, Turkish Petroleum Corporation, a public company, has a six percent minority share.

“The Turkish six percent company and its directors are likely to carry liability more directly than the state,” Ali added.

However, two attorneys that represent Ankara in the international courts disagree.

Speaking on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to the media, they said that Turkish Petroleum’s six percent stake doesn’t afford them any control in the company, since BP has the majority shareholder along with the Azerbaijani state oil company.

“For instance, if there was a UN level sanction preventing oil being delivered to Israel – could Turkey prevent it being delivered via the pipeline?” Ali said.

“The answer would be yes. Why would they behave differently in the case of facilitating war crimes?”

For more than 10 months, Israel has been relentlessly bombing Gaza, with air strikes and artillery fire targeting civilian infra-

structure, including schools, banks, residential towers and hospitals.

More than 40,860 Palestinians have been killed, including at least 16,825 children, following the Hamas-led attacks on October 7.

Yusuf Akseker, a Turkish lawyer who sympathizes with the pro-Palestine protesters calling for the closure of the BTC pipeline, recently argued that Ankara could stop oil shipments from heading to Israel using ICJ provisional measures as a legal justification.

“It is clear that Turkey, if it closes the valves in line with these judgements, will not face a compensation lawsuit due to BTC-related contracts,” he said.

In January, the ICJ ordered Israel to take all necessary measures to protect civilians in Gaza, including using all its power to stop incitement of genocide. In March, the court ordered Israel to take all necessary measures to ensure unhindered provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinians throughout Gaza.

And in May, the body ordered Israel to immediately halt its military offensive and any other action in Rafah that could inflict physical destruction of Palestinians in whole or in part in Gaza.

Prior to joining South Africa’s case against Israel, Turkey announced that it was suspending all imports and exports to Israel over its ongoing military action in Gaza, ending around \$7bn worth of trade.

Since then, Erdogan has intensified his criticism of Israel, comparing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Adolf Hitler and labelling Israel a “terror state” that threatens “all humanity”.

Still, the final question remains whether Turkey could convince Azerbaijan, which enjoys a very close relationship with Israel, to shut off the oil flow to Israel.

Turkish officials, in background conversations, have acknowledged that the Azerbaijani government also isn’t happy with the violence in Gaza, but have also said that Baku doesn’t want to shy away from com-

Czech Company Excalibur Army to Begin Deliveries Of 70 DITA Howitzers to Azerbaijan

PRAGUE (Defense News Army) — On September 7, 2024, [Turan](#) reported that Azerbaijan received its first DITA 155mm self-propelled howitzer from the Czech company Excalibur Army, marking the beginning of a planned delivery of over 70 units as indicated by [AZE.media](#) on May 6, 2024. As clarified by [Praise The Steph](#) on September 9, 2024, this unit will be on display at the Azerbaijan ADEX International Defense Exhibition, scheduled for September 24-26, 2024.

This delivery was later indirectly confirmed by Slovak parliamentarian Juraj Krupa, a member of the Slovak National Council, who mentioned that state companies are currently prioritizing the production of barrels for Azerbaijan over supplying components for the Zuzana self-propelled howitzers intended for Ukraine.

The addition of these self-propelled howitzers comes as the Azerbaijani armed forces continue to enhance their artillery capabilities. As of 2023, the Azerbaijani Army’s artillery inventory includes 1,251 units. Among these, there are 153 self-propelled howitzers.

This current inventory represents a substantial increase from the previous year. In 2022, Azerbaijan’s armed forces had 630 artillery pieces, including 102 self-pro-

pelled artillery units. These included 46 units of the 122mm 2S1 Gvozdika, six units of the 152mm 2S3 Akatsiya, 18 units of the 2S19 Msta-S, 15 units of the Dana-M1M, five units of the 155mm ATMOS 2000, and 12 units of the 203mm 2S7 Pion. The army also maintained 233 towed artillery pieces, comprising 129 units of the 122mm D-30, 36 units of the 130mm M-46, and 68 units in the 152mm category, with 44 units of the 2A36 Giatsint-B and 24 units of the D-20.

Furthermore, in 2022, the inventory included 36 gun/mortars of the 120mm category, consisting of 18 units of the 2S9 Nona-S and 18 units of the 2S31 Vena. The multiple rocket launcher inventory numbered 147 units, including several units of the 107mm T-107, more than 60 units in the 122mm category, with 43 BM-21 Grad, over nine IMI Lynx, and more than eight RM-70 Vampir. Additionally, there were 12 units of the 128mm RAK12, 18 units of the 220mm TOS-1A, and 36 units in the 300mm category, including 30 units of the 9A52 Smerch, over six units of the Polonez, and 21 units of the 302mm T-300 Kasirga. The mortar inventory in 2022 included 112 units of the 120mm type, with five Cardom, 107 M-1938 (PM-38), and a self-propelled 120mm Sand Cat with Spear.

Looking ahead, Azerbaijan plans to

significantly increase its defense budget, aiming to reach approximately \$4 billion by 2028. The country is focusing on modernizing its military capabilities, reducing reliance on imports, and enhancing domestic production. This modernization effort includes acquiring new defense systems, such as missile defense systems and light attack aircraft, and upgrading existing hardware through partnerships with countries like Turkey. Azerbaijan’s strategy is aimed at maintaining a military advantage amid unresolved disputes with Armenia, particularly concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh region and border demarcations.

On the other hand, Armenia has also increased its defense spending, allocating \$1.4 billion for 2024. This marks a substantial rise compared to previous years, although it still remains lower than Azerbaijan’s projected defense budget. Armenia’s focus is primarily on territorial defense, acquiring modern weapons systems from countries like India and France to strengthen its military capacity. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has expressed concerns over what he perceives as Azerbaijan’s preparation for more extensive military operations, citing recent incidents along the border and Azerbaijan’s rejection of peace proposals related to border delimitation.

More Cargo Shipped To Azerbaijan from Israeli Air Base

CARGO, from page 1
build-up, Baku has angrily denounced Armenia’s recent arms deal with a number of other countries and France in particular. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan rejected the criticism late last week.

“They say that the European Union, the West are arming Armenia, but Azerbaijan is buying weapons from Slovakia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Italy, France’s neighbor,” Pashinyan told a news conference. “Why can Azerbaijan get weapons from Italy but Armenia can’t get them from France?” At least three EU member states have military-technical cooperation with Azerbaijan.”

Pashinyan did not mention Baku’s deals with Israeli arms manufacturers which led his government to recall the Armenian ambassador in Tel Aviv just days after the outbreak of the 2020 Karabakh war. Although Azerbaijani-Israeli military cooperation appears to have continued unabated since then, Yerevan sent a new ambassador to Israel in April 2022.



Community News

Dr. Simon Maghakyan Named 20th Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies

FRESNO — Dr. Simon Maghakyan, a political scientist known for his pioneering forensic and theoretical research on heritage and security, has been named the 20th Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at California State University, Fresno for the Fall 2024 semester.

“It is a humbling honor to hold the distinguished position of Kazan Visiting Professor,” stated Maghakyan. “Being entrusted with a position inaugurally held by the late Richard Hovannisian — the giant of modern Armenian studies — is a heavy yet heartwarming responsibility. At Fresno State, I look forward to exploring heritage and conflict with students, faculty, and the at-large community, including assessing stakeholder agency in the present and future of the indigenous material past in post-genocide Turkey and Azerbaijan.”

“We are happy to welcome Dr. Maghakyan for the fall semester,” said Prof. Barlow Der Mugdechian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program. “Dr. Maghakyan will provide students with an opportunity to learn more about the significance of Armenian cultural monuments and efforts to erase or distort their historical importance.”

In addition to serving as the 20th Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at California State Uni-



versity, Fresno, Maghakyan is a Community Scholar at the University of Denver’s Korbel School of International Studies, and a

Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Oxford. Previously, he was affiliated with Tufts University, the University of Colorado, Denver, and Cranfield University, where he earned a PhD in defense and security, focusing on heritage crime. His practical experiences range from founding Heritage Intel consultancy to spearheading Colorado’s capitol genocide memorial.

Maghakyan’s publications include a *Hyperallergic* exposé of Nakhichevan’s cultural erasure, acclaimed as “groundbreaking” by Forbes and “rock-solid” by the *Guardian*. His analyses have been featured by the BBC, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post* and *Time*. His forthcoming book, *Sovereign Heritage Crime: Security, Autocracy, and the Material Past*, is a critical heritage studies element of Cambridge University Press.

As the 20th Kazan Visiting Professor, Maghakyan will teach an upper-division course titled “Armenian Heritage and Conflict in Fall 2024,” and will give three public lectures at Fresno State on the past, present, and future of Turkey’s Armenian past.

His first public lecture will take place on September 27, the fourth anniversary of the start of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war.



Ed and Janet Mardigian are seen cutting the ribbon at the newly renovated Berd Daycare Center, part of FAR’s Breaking the Cycle of Poverty Program, which they proudly sponsor

Ed and Janet Mardigian Continue Philanthropic Mission in Armenia

Ed and Janet Mardigian, longtime champions of the Armenian community, have dedicated their lives to philanthropy, building on a legacy of compassion and service that spans generations. Raised in families with deep ties to both the Armenian diaspora and a commitment to giving back, they have helped lead efforts that have made a lasting difference in Armenia, particularly in the challenging regions of Tavush. Their ongoing work with the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and their unwavering support for Armenia’s most vulnerable reflect their profound sense of duty and humanity.

The Mardigians recently discussed their journey in philanthropy, the state of Armenia today and the importance of addressing the urgent needs of displaced families and children during the ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan.

A Legacy of Giving

Philanthropy runs deep in the Mardigian family. Ed’s father, an immigrant from Istanbul, established the family’s eponymous foundation in 1956 after finding success as an engineer in the US auto industry. Janet’s mother, who was also from Istanbul, passed on a strong sense of compassion, particularly for those in need within the Armenian community.

“I remember when my parents started the foundation, I hadn’t any exposure to charity work and I didn’t understand why they were giving money away,” Ed Mardigian said.

Over time, he came to understand his parent’s motives and took over running the foundation in 1990. Under his leadership, the family has expanded its support to include hospitals, schools and various Armenian and non-Armenian organizations.

For Janet Mardigian, the moment that ignited her commitment to Armenia came during a trip to the country in 2008 as part of her work with the Diocesan Council in New York. What she saw there — particularly the plight of orphaned, displaced and single-parent children — left a lasting impression.

“When you see things like that, you don’t have an option,” Janet said. “How can you turn your back on people who are desperate and need help? If you can make a difference, you do your best.”

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

In response to Janet’s experience in Armenia, the couple established the FAR Edward and Helen Mardigian Child Protection Foundation in 2007, focusing on vulnerable children. Their efforts soon expanded into the broader Breaking the Cycle of Poverty Program (BCPP), launched by FAR in 2013, with the goal of rebuilding the rural Tavush region.

The BCPP worked in partnership with the Armenian government, private sector, and civil society, addressing a range of needs from improving healthcare to developing sustainable industry and creating educational opportunities. By stabilizing families and promoting self-reliance, the program has given many in Tavush a chance to escape the grip of poverty.

Ed and Janet are humble about their contributions. “We haven’t done anything but write a check and maybe provide opportunities,” Ed remarked, acknowledging the on-the-ground efforts of FAR and its dedicated teams. “They were the ones who truly accomplished incredible things.”

Challenges in Armenia Today

Despite the progress made through BCPP, the Mardigians emphasize that the need in Armenia remains great. The country continues to grapple with the aftermath of its long-standing conflict with Azerbaijan, which has left thousands displaced from Artsakh. Meanwhile, communities in Tavush and Lori provinces struggle to recover from recent floods, and many rural areas remain impoverished.

“There’s still so much to do,” Janet said. “In some areas, people are still living in

see PHILANTHROPY, page 12

Quarter-Century of Life Saving Mission of Bone Marrow Donor Registry Celebrated

LOS ANGELES — On Sunday, August 25, the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) celebrated its 25th anniversary, with a jubilant “Match for Life Gala” at the Glendale Hilton. The event was attended by more than 300 supporters.

The silver-jubilee award recipients included Serj Tankian, while media personalities participating in the event included Araksya Karapetyan and Amanda Salas.

ABMDR’s life-saving mission was commended by featured speakers and dignitaries, including California State Sen. Anthony Portantino. A longtime supporter of ABMDR, Portantino presented ABMDR president Dr. Frieda Jordan with a Certificate of Recognition on behalf of the California Senate.

After a cocktail hour and silent auction, the evening’s main program got underway.

Welcome remarks were delivered by Gala co-chairs Amy Boyadjian and Hilda Gourdikian.

The evening’s invocation was performed by Father Zaven Markosyan.

Opening remarks were delivered by Master of Ceremonies Dr. Vicken



Master of Ceremonies Dr. Vicken Sepilian (Photos by Arka Photography)

Sepilian, president of the Armenian Medical International Committee. Sepilian said, “We’re here tonight not only to celebrate 25 years of great achievements, but to kick off the next 25 years of success, generosity, and helping save the lives of people struck by debilitating cancers.”

Sepilian went on to acknowledge the presence of distinguished guests, including Father Zaven Markosyan of the Western Diocese; Araksya Karapetyan, Emmy award-winning co-anchor of Fox 11’s “Good Day LA” and co-host of “Good Day LA Plus;” Amanda Salas, entertainment anchor and reporter on “Good Day LA;” Senator Anthony Portantino; Glendale City Council members Mayor Elen Asatryan, Ara Najarian, Vartan Gharpetian, and Ardy Kassakhian; former California State Assembly member Adrin Nazarian; Mary Hovagimian, representing US Congressman Adam Schiff; Dr. Evgeni Sokurenko, founder and

see ABMDR, page 10



OBITUARY

Edward Balassanian

Supporter of Contemporary Art in Armenia, US

NEW YORK — The death of Edward Balassanian of Manhattan was announced by the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs. The date of death was not announced. He was 88.

Edward Balassanian was born in Iran in 1936. He was an architect and city planner by training.

Balassanian graduated as an architect from the University of Tehran (1963), and later as a Master of City Planning (1968) and Doctor of Philosophy in City and Regional Planning (1975) from the University of Pennsylvania. Balassanian was on the Roster of the International Experts of the United Nations.

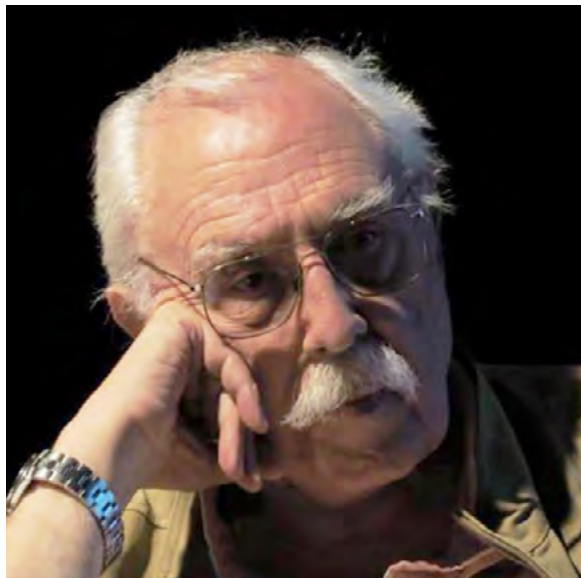
In 1970 Balassanian founded Research and Planning Corp. architectural and planning consulting company in Iran, which in a very short period acquired status of one of the most authoritative research and consulting agencies particularly in the field of city and regional planning.

In 1980 Balassanian relocated to the United States with his family and acquired U.S. citizenship.

He served as chairman of the Board of Directors of the Armenian Assembly of America (1992), Deputy Executive Director, and Director of Construction Department of “Hayastan” All-Armenian Fund, in Yerevan, (1993-1995), executive director of Armenia Fund USA Inc (1996), and executive director of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of the Eastern United States (1997-1998).

In his youth in Iran, he performed in many plays. He also had a deep love for poetry recitation.

In 1995, Balassanian, together with his wife, painter and poet Sonia Balassanian, co-founded the Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (ACCEA-NPAK in Armenian acronym) in Yerevan. ACCEA/NPAK is dedicated to promotion of the Armenian avant-garde art



throughout the world, and facilitation of quest for new frontiers by Armenian artists.

By appointment of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia, the Balassanians organized the Armenian Pavilions at the International Art Biennale of Venice through ACCEA/NPAK until 2009.

In 1998, Catholicos of All Armenians

Karekin I, of blessed memory, appointed him as the representative of Holy Mother See of Echmiadzin, to manage the construction of Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral of Yerevan, with the assignment of completing it in 2001 for the occasion of 1700th anniversary of Armenia accepting Christianity as state religion.

He is survived by his wife, Sonia Balassanian and one child, Arnè Balassanian, as well as a brother, Zareh Balassanian.

Funeral Service was at the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs, Bayside, NY on Thursday, September 12, followed by a graveside service at Cedar Grove Cemetery, Flushing.

Upon the request of the family, in lieu of flower donations may be made to the Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art, Yerevan, Armenia.

Frank Avakian Stoneson

NAPLES, Fla. — Frank Avakian Stoneson died on September 4, 2024. He was 89.

He was born to Charles and Vartouhi Avakian Stoneson (née Arevigian) in New York on December 17, 1934.

The family later moved to Cliffside, NJ. It was here that Frank met his wife Susan after falling in love with her from a single photograph. The couple wed in 1962.



Frank graduated from New York University and began his career at American Standard Corporation, where he worked for more than two decades. He and Susan settled in Tenafly, NJ, where they raised their family and became an integral part of St. Thomas Armenian Church. Frank followed his calling to serve the Armenian Church in a lay capacity, when he became a member of the church's parish council. He served for eight years, including two as parish council chair.

Frank's desire to work in the church then led him to accept a position as Executive Director of the Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern), where he directed its Department of Finance and served in other staff positions in later years.

Frank's love for the Armenian community was also evident when he was elected President of the Central Committee of the Evereg-Fenese Society, where he served for three years. In the early 1990s, Frank and Susan had the great privilege of co-chairing the annual Diocesan Assembly hosted by St. Thomas Church. Through the Armenian Church, in parishes across the United States, Frank's big personality and jovial spirit touched countless lives.

In retirement, Frank and Susan moved to Naples, FL. Here, Frank found his true and final ministry to the Armenian Church and its people through his leadership in the mission parish of the Armenian Church of Naples. There, he took on many of the responsibilities of creating a viable and dynamic community life for those who made Naples their home or a vacation spot.

As much as Frank loved the Armenian Church and its people, his greatest love was for his family. Spending his golden

years in Naples surrounded by his loving wife, children, their spouses and grandchildren, was the most cherished gift God could have ever given him. Family was everything to Frank and he adored not only his immediate family, but his extended relatives in the tri-state area as well.

Frank was an active presence in the Eastern Diocese throughout his life. He and his wife, Susan, were deeply involved in the life of St. Thomas Church of Tenafly, NJ, where Frank served as parish council chair, and where the couple jointly chaired a successful Diocesan Assembly in 1991.

Always dapper and professional, Frank was blessed with a welcoming, informal manner and delightful sense of humor. His avuncular personality made him a friend and confidant to his coworkers at the Diocesan Center, where he remains fondly remembered, and will be sorely missed.

“I knew Frank from his leadership of our community in Naples,” said Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan. “But every day at the Diocesan Center I encounter the fruits of his long and valuable service here. He truly loved our church and its people, and the people he worked with returned that love.”

Frank is survived by his wife Susan Stoneson (née Hovhanesian); his son Richard Stoneson and his wife Carol; his daughter Diana O'Donnell and her husband Donnacha; and two granddaughters, Violet O'Donnell and Palesa Stoneson.

Plans call for a private funeral and burial, with a memorial service to be scheduled at a later date. In-lieu-of-flowers donations be made in Frank's name to the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (630 Second Ave., New York, NY 10016); or online at armenianchurch.us.

Marlene (Nigohsian) Paul

Dedicated to Family

CANTON, Mass. — Marlene (Nigohsian) Paul, 92, of Canton, formerly of Needham, passed away peacefully at home on September 6, 2024.

She was the wife of Edward Paul, to whom she was married for 68 years, and the mother of Sharon McDonnell and husband Frank, Deborah Paul and husband Tom Meyers, and Cheryl Farhat and husband Khalil.

Marlene is survived by her grandchildren: Frank McDonnell, Ryan McDonnell, Kristin McDonnell, Alex McDonnell, Lucas Farhat, Audrey Farhat, Sydney Meyers and Abby Meyers. She was also blessed with many great grandchildren: Frankie, Penelope, Henry, Doratheia, and James.

She was predeceased by her parents John and Catherine Nigohsian, and her siblings, twin sister Marguerite Kurkjian and her late husband, Dr. John Kurkjian, her sister Miriam Boyajian and her late husband Jack, and her brother Charles Nigohsian, who is survived by his wife Peggy. Marlene

is also survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Marlene's greatest joy was spending time with her family. She was an incredibly strong woman with a playful sense of humor and quick wit, even during challenging times. She loved nature, mystery novels, music, holidays and family visits. Marlene was a generous person in countless ways and perhaps her greatest gift was her empathy to others. She will be forever missed.

Funeral service was on September 12 at Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown. Interment followed at Needham Cemetery, 128 Nehoiden Street, Needham.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Detroit’s 16th Annual Armenia Fest Attracts Large Crowds

ROYAL OAK, Mich. — On a beautiful balmy summer evening in July, the metro Detroit Armenia Fest Committee, in collaboration with the Detroit Knights of Vartan, hosted the 16th Annual Armenia Fest at the Royal Oak Farmers Market.

The festival began with the American and Armenian Anthems followed by a ribbon cutting ceremony with special guests including Royal Oak Mayor Pro Tem Monica Hunt and Sen. Gary Peters’s District Representative Michael Schmid. Fest Co-Chair David Terzibashian welcomed attendees to the Fest, Hunt offered greetings from the City of Royal Oak and Schmid extended warm well wishes from the Senator for a successful evening.

Generous major donors who helped make this year’s Fest possible included the Hagopian World of Rugs, Mardigian Foundation, Robert Ajemian Foundation, Mark Artinian for Crispelli’s Bakery and Pizzeria, Herman Hintiryan Family and Helen Parnagian Corrigan.

The popular silent auction, chaired by Angela Hagopian Snow and Elise Papazian, had wonderful gifts donated by supporters which were on view during the Fest, with excited winning bidders announced at the end of the evening.

The many vendors participating included St. John Ladies Guild, St. Sarkis Ladies Guild and the Detroit Armenian Women’s



Massive crowd numbering over 2000 attended

Armenian Congregational Church, Elizabeth Boladian and Mr. Basterma.

Among others who participated in the Fest and hosted booths were artist Zabel



Ribbon cutting with Armenia Fest Committee Members and guests, from left, Hagop Alexanian, Pam Coultis, Michael Schmid (Representing Sen. Gary Peters), Greg Mamassian, Vaughn Masropian, Co-Chair David Terzibashian, Monica Hunt (Royal Oak Mayor Pro Tem), Madeline Thomasian, Corinne Khederian, Angela Hagopian Snow, Noreen Masropian, Elise Papazian (Committee Members Not Pictured: Co-Chair Ed Bedikian, Ray Boujoulian, Paul Kulhanjian, Ken Khezarjian)



Judges of the Great Choreg Bake Off Contest L. to R. Deacon Garo Balian, Rev Fr Hrant Kevorkian, Rev. Hagop Haroutunian

Club which all offered wonderful Armenian home baked pastries and breads. Additional food vendors providing Armenian appetizers and dinners included Gary Reizian’s Uptown Catering, the Farm Grill, the

Belian with son Ara, the Daughters and Knights of Vartan, the Armenian Community Center and the Armenian Heritage Cruise and Manoogian Manor. Face painting and “Mr. Mouse” inspired the delight of children attending.

A beer and wine garden including American and Armenian selections were featured this year. The 2024 Great Choreg Bake Off contest took place at the Fest. The panel of judges declared the winner to be Noreen Masropian representing the Detroit Armenian Women’s Association.

Live traditional and contemporary Armenian music was performed all evening by the Armenia Fest All-Stars under the skillful direction of popular Armenian vocalist, oudist and percussionist, Vaughn Masropian, who also was the master of ceremonies for the evening. The dynamic rhythm of the All-Stars performances inspired all attending to participate in popular Armenian line dances.

A major highlight of the evening was the performance of the Hamazkayin Arax Dance Troupe composed of local Armenian youth trained in the art of Armenian folk dance. Children ranging from grade



Hamazkayin Dance Troupe

school to college age wore beautifully tailored traditional Armenian costumes and performed authentic Armenian choreographed dance routines.

The Armenian community of metro Detroit numbers well over 70,000 within the tri-county regions of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. The Armenia Fest Committee actively sponsors events and programs which focus on Armenian culture, faith and history. Each year proceeds from the Festival are donated by the Committee to humanitarian Armenian causes.



Armenia Fest All Star Band led by Vaughn Masropian

This year the Fest honored Manoogian Manor, a nonprofit home for the Armenian aged, and member of the Livonia Business Hall of Fame, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary.



St. Sarkis Armenian Church Ladies Guild

Quarter-Century of Life Saving Mission of Bone Marrow Donor Registry Celebrated

ABMDR, from page 7

president of ID Genomics and the ArmGen project; Adventist Health Glendale president Alice Issai and vice president of Business Development Dr. Ramella Markarian; Dr. Neena Kapoor, director of the Bone Marrow Transplant Center Laboratory at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles; Houri Sadler, founder of the Persian American Cancer Institute, and her husband, Dr. Charles Sadler; Dr. Boris Bagdasarian and Dr. Nubar Boghossian of the LA Cancer Network; Steve Chelebian and George Titizian of the Triple X Fraternity; Armenian American Medical Society president Garni Barkhoudarian and past president Dr. Varouj Alahverdian; Family Rescue Fund chair Naz Atikian and Board members Linda Vartanian, Sonia Nersissian, Jassik Jerzeyan, and Henrik Sahakyan; Christina Khanjian and Jasmen Jerahian of the ARS Western Region; former ARS Central Executive Board chair Nyree Derderian; Zaven Kazazian, vice chair of the Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California; and Angel Matevossian and Houri Tanashian of the Armenian American Nurses Association.

Sepilian then invited the evening’s keynote speaker, Dr. Frieda Jordan, to the podium. “Our journey began 25 years ago, with a young patient in need of help, and a handful of brave individuals who, despite many daunting challenges, came together to establish the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry,” Jordan said. “Since that time, ABMDR, as a pan-Armenian organization, integrated into the global network of registries and transplant centers, drew donors from all over the world, and has been saving lives all over the world.”

“Over the years, we have also become a center of progress in Armenia’s medical field,” Dr. Jordan continued. “We have advocated for and introduced many DNA-based



State Sen. Anthony Portantino presenting a California Senate Certificate of Appreciation to ABMDR president Dr. Frieda Jordan. Photos by Arka Photography

tests and procedures, which have advanced and supported the practice of data-based medicine in the entire Caucasus region. None of these strides would be possible without our donors, volunteers, Boards of Advisors and Directors,

and you, our family of supporters. So I’m here to thank you: thank you for your trust, your support, and your generosity.”

continued on next page



Tekeyan Cultural Association

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia

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



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

☐ \$240 ☐ \$480 ☐ \$700 ☐ other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

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Memo: Sponsor a Teacher
Mail your check to:
TCA Sponsor a Teacher
5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056



Your donation is tax deductible.



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

The next speaker was Dr. Sevak Avagyan, ABMDR's executive director. "Our work continues to thrive," Dr. Avagyan said. "We continue to recruit donors, serve new patients, find matches, and perform harvests. Simultaneously, in Armenia, we provide tissue-typing for the hematology institute, as well as matching for the kidney institute, and constantly expand our repertoire of molecular tests to help the medical community."

Avagyan continued: "In addition, we remain focused on the continuing education and international certifications of our Lab personnel, while two of my colleagues, Dr. Frieda Jordan and lab supervisor Armine Hyusssyan, in their capacity as inspectors certified by the European Federation of Immunogenetics, inspect labs throughout Europe. With your support and encouragement, we will continue our work, keep our standards high, and serve our communities worldwide."

Sepilian invited Eric Markarian, the founder and president of NextGen, ABMDR's youth group, as well as all NextGen members in attendance, to the stage. "In just two years, NextGen has become a global movement, engaging college students in the US and Armenia," Markarian said. "We've recruited a large number of donors, helped members receive lab internships and training, and spread the message about ABMDR. Looking ahead, we're determined to expand our recruitments and fundraising. Your support is invaluable to us, and we thank you sincerely for helping us advance ABMDR's life-saving work."

At this juncture, the attendees were shown a documentary video about the work of ABMDR. The production of the video, dedicated to families of ABMDR patients, was donated by acclaimed filmmaker Garen Mirzaian, of Friendly Filmworks.

Following the screening of the video, Sepilian invited Araksya Karapetyan to present the ABMDR Visionary Award to musician, author, activist, and longtime ABMDR supporter Serj Tankian.

In her introduction of the honoree, Karapetyan said, "When someone like Serj has a following like he does — he's looked up to, he has the audience, he has the reach — and he does something good with it, that is a sign of a good human being. When you are in that type of position, it is not only your privilege, but it is your duty, it is your responsibility, to do good for others."

Karapetyan continued: "Whether Serj writes an article, he's in an interview, or posts something on social media, his voice carries a great deal of weight. And his support for ABMDR has undoubtedly made a difference."

Tankian's acceptance speech was presented in a recorded video.



Houri Sadler introducing the young ABMDR Angels (Photos by Arka Photography)

your registry, all signed up to save a life. As somebody who has been blessed with a second chance at life, I'm using my voice, my heart, and my story to see if we can give others, too, that second chance."

Following Salas' remarks, the ABMDR Inspiration Award was presented to Dr. Alique Topalian. In 1999, as a child struck by cancer, Topalian became the inspiration behind the launch of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry. Today, she is a patient advocate, research scientist and supportive-service promoter at the University of Cincinnati.

In her remarks, Topalian spoke of the extreme difficulty of finding a donor match for patients who need a transplant as their last chance of survival. She said, "Even though so many people have registered as potential bone-marrow donors, it's not enough. We need more... We can save so many lives by just being a match. We need to come together, figure out how we can help each other. Get swapped to be a match, see if you can save a life, donate to ABMDR."

Topalian concluded her remarks by touching on the significant contributions of Armenian oncologists to medical

an Angel, Save a Life" fundraising portion of the evening, featuring the young ABMDR Angels. The program was introduced by Houri Sadler of the Persian American Cancer Institute. As this segment was underway, Allen G and his band delighted the guests with performances of Armenian and world classics.



"Good Day LA" co-anchor and "Good Day LA Plus" co-host Araksya Karapetyan. (Photos by Arka Photography)



Alique Topalian, center, Inspiration Award recipient (Photos by Arka Photography)

Afterwards Karapetyan invited Amanda Salas, her "Good Day LA" colleague and a cancer survivor, to the stage. Only days prior to the Gala, Karapetyan and Salas had interviewed Dr. Frieda Jordan and ABMDR Board member and bone-marrow donor Arpine Zohrabyan on "Good Day LA Plus."

In her remarks, Salas expressed her admiration for ABMDR's life-saving mission. Addressing the guests, she said, "It is so impressive to have over 33,000 names in

science. "We Armenians are changing the field of oncology," she said. "I went to one of the largest oncology conferences in the world this year to present my research, and I was blown away by how many of the participants were Armenian. From St. Jude to Dana-Farber, the best cancer hospitals in the country, some of the best minds, both nationally and internationally, are Armenian. And that is something to be deeply proud of."

Topalian's acceptance speech was followed by the "Be

The evening's main awards ceremony followed the musical interlude. The ABMDR Business of the Year Award was presented to the Comedy Store. The award was accepted by Sam Tripoli. The Volunteer of the Year Awards were presented to Maral Der Torossian and Gayaneh Kostikyan. The Woman of the Year Award was bestowed on Rosie Diremsizian, and the Man of the Year Award was conferred on Armond Mehdikhani. The ABMDR Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred on Stepan Vartanian, and the ABMDR Legacy Award was presented to Diana Artunian.

The festivities resumed, with guests dancing to the music of Allen G and his band.

Commenting on the significance of the event, Jordan said, "After the extraordinary setbacks that we've faced in the past few years — from the pandemic to the devastation of Artsakh and the loss of our heroic servicemen who were ABMDR donors — our Gala tonight comes as an occasion to renew our commitment to our work: to replenishing our donor ranks, continuing to grow as a national and global health organization, and, ultimately, saving more lives. In fact, as we speak, our Lab team in Yerevan is preparing a donor for harvesting. The donor's stem cells will be collected and transported to Moscow, to save the life of a five-year-old patient. This will be our 44th transplant."

For more information, visit abmdr.am.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Second Annual Kerr Family Lecture At UCLA on October 18

LOS ANGELES —The UCLA Promise Armenian Institute is pleased to announce the second annual Kerr Family Endowed Lecture. The lecture, titled “‘The Very Limit of Our Endurance’: Rev. Hovhannes Eskijian and his network of resisters during the Armenian Genocide” will be delivered by Dr. Khatchig Mouradian of Columbia University and the U.S. Library of Congress, with introductory remarks by Dr. Antranik Dakessian of Haigazian University, on Friday, October 18, at 7 p.m. (Pacific Time) at UCLA’s Mong Learning Center, with simultaneous remote access via Zoom and YouTube.

Pre-registration is required for this hybrid event. To register for in-person attendance or for participation via the Zoom webinar platform, please visit the event webpage at bit.ly/kerrfamilylecture2024.

This lecture will explore the role of Rev. Hovhannes Eskijian and his associates in the underground network of humanitarians, missionaries, and diplomats who resisted the destruction of the Armenian people during World War I. Piecing together hundreds of accounts, official documents, and missionary records — including Eskijian’s and his associates’ family archives — Mouradian will present a social history of genocide and resistance in Ottoman Syria.

Mouradian will argue that despite the violent and systematic mechanisms of control and destruction in the cities, concentration camps, and massacre sites in this region, the genocide of the Armenians did not progress unhindered — unarmed resistance proved an important factor in saving lives and laying the groundwork for post-war rebuilding.

This event is co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum (AEM), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Re-



Rev. Hovhannes Eskijian

search (NAASR), Haigazian University, and the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies.

For registration and event details, visit the event webpage at bit.ly/kerrfamilylecture2024.

The Kerr Family Lectureship was created by the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute (PAI) and the Kerr Family with the aim of amplifying the stories of heroes and heroines who dedicated themselves to providing humanitarian support for victims and survivors of violence and mass atrocities in times of crisis.

For more information on this event, visit www.international.ucla.edu/armenia.

ABMDR New England Celebrates 13th Annual Walk of Life

WATERTOWN — On September 21, the Armenian community of New England will come together in support of the 13th annual Walk of Life of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR). Every year this beloved pan-Armenian event in Watertown draws an avid youth participation, with large numbers of students from area schools and colleges. It also attracts the support of numerous community organizations and many public figures.

Established in 1999, ABMDR, a non-profit organization, helps save lives by recruiting and providing matched unrelated donors for bone marrow or stem cell transplantation to all Armenian and non-Armenian patients worldwide who are suffering from leukemia and other life-threatening blood related illnesses. Due to the unique genetic make-up of Armenians, it is nearly impossible to find suitable matches among the existing international registries. Hence the importance of establishing a registry

that would help facilitate recruiting and identifying matched unrelated bone marrow donors.

The walkathon’s opening ceremony will be held on the grounds of St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center, on September 21, at 10:30 a.m. and will conclude at Faire on the Square, in Watertown Square, where participants will gather to celebrate the day’s achievements and enjoy great music, dancing, and food.

The funds raised at the walk and all other donations go a long way to ensure ABMDR stays loyal to its mission, by educating the public, recruiting donors and thus building a robust donor registry, and facilitating bone marrow stem cell transplants for patients worldwide.

ABMDR New England is encouraging community members to join the Walk of Life by clicking [here](#). Interested readers can reach out to: abmdrnewengland@gmail.com.

Mardigians Continue Philanthropic Mission in Armenia

PHILANTHROPY, from page 7

Schools are being renovated, but some children still have to use outdoor toilets in the winter. It’s heartbreaking.”

Yet, the Mardigians are optimistic. They believe the model of success established through BCPP can be replicated to address the current crisis. “Organizations like FAR have done an incredible job of getting

things moving when others are bogged down in politics,” Ed said. “By the time we hear about a project, it’s often shovel-ready.”

The couple hopes that their efforts will inspire others in the Armenian diaspora to step up. “If more Armenians saw what was happening, they would want to help,” Ed added. “It’s truly humbling how appreciative the

people are. They deserve our support.”

A Call to Action

As the Mardigians reflect on their years of service, one message stands out: The work is far from over. Both Ed and Janet stress the need for ongoing support, particularly from the Armenian diaspora, which they believe has the resources to make a difference.

“There are so many wealthy Armenians

in America who could help,” Janet said. “You can’t turn your back on our people, our children. That’s our future.”

With the unwavering support of philanthropists like Ed and Janet Mardigian and the continued efforts of organizations like FAR, there is hope that Armenia’s most vulnerable can find a path forward. To the Mardigians, the mission is clear — hope, dignity, and opportunity to those who need it most.



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,

Arts & Culture

Hyper-Realistic Paintings at Armenian Museum of America Explore Artist's Innate Quest for Creative Autonomy

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America recently announced the opening of its next contemporary art exhibition, Tigran Tsitoghdzian's "Filtered Identity."

Tsitoghdzian is a New York-based artist whose oversized photo-realistic paintings merge an interest in classical and modern art with an emphasis on his own experiences as a father and an immigrant. At first look, his artworks appear to be photographs, but the portraits are hyper-realistic oil paintings.

There will be an Opening Reception with the artist on Thursday, September 19, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

"We cannot wait for the community to experience this new exhibit in our contemporary art galleries. You will be amazed to see these giant works. Most people will assume they are photographs and be completely surprised that they are oil paintings," said Executive Director Jason Sohi-



Tigran Tsitoghdzian's oversized photo-realistic paintings merge an interest in classical and modern art. Image credit: "Self-Isolation IV" (2022), 80" x 80", oil on canvas.

gian. "Tigran is exhibiting all over the world and it is an honor to share his art in our galleries in Greater Boston. When his studio in Yerevan is open to the public, nearly a thousand people stream in on a single day to view these pieces."

Tsitoghdzian's work has been exhibited widely including Art Basel Miami, Cube Art Fair in Times Square, and globally in Dubai, Singapore, Istanbul, Cannes, Zurich, Monaco and Brussels.

"These breakout works have catapulted Tsitoghdzian to A-list status as a portrait and multi-media artist. His high productivity has sustained his success in high-end markets across the globe — from prominent galleries and prestigious art fairs to major foundations, renowned auction houses, biennales, and festivals," wrote Laura L. Constantine in a profile for the AGBU Insider. "While the name Tsitoghdzian may be impossible for most to pronounce, his works are impossible to ignore, as they bring a new dimension of intensity, intrigue, and insight to contemporary portraiture."

see EXHIBIT, page 14



Dan Yessian, an award-winning American composer, producer, musician, and founder of Yessian Music, at the Steinway previously owned by Burt Bacharach

How Dan Yessian Came to Compose *An Armenian Trilogy* On Bacharach's Piano

By Christine Vartanian Datian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

MILFORD, Mich. — What do a Milford man, the Armenian Genocide and Burt Bacharach's piano have in common? They are all crucial elements in the making of "An Armenian Trilogy," a PBS documentary that premiered last March on Channel 56, Detroit Public TV, based on his symphony of the same name.

Dan Yessian, 78, is a Milford resident who took an unconventional path to becoming a success, composing award-winning music for television, movies, theme parks, Fortune 500 companies and memorials including the One World Observatory in New York City. Yessian Music has an office in New York City, as well as Los Angeles and Hamburg, Germany, but the company is based in Farmington Hills. It got its start in 1971 when Yessian risked disappointing his parents and gave up a teaching career after only four years to compose music that to this day he is unable to read or write.

"I don't read or write music, I play music," said Yessian, who had lessons in clarinet and saxophone as a child, but played by ear. He later did the same with the piano. "What I had to do producing music — I would tell them (instrumentalists) what I want to hear — chords I wanted. For years, I didn't know where middle C was on the piano. Somehow or other, I banged out a career doing it this way."

What is *An Armenian Trilogy*? The 22-minute symphony Yessian composed at the request of his church priest in 2014 was a three-year project commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. In this horrific event, 1.5 million Armenian citizens were massacred by the Ottoman Empire, in an act Yessian said was not unlike the Holocaust. "There were no ovens to destroy them," he said, "but the Armenians were forced to march through the desert until they dropped dead."

Yessian completed a symphony with three movements, *The Freedom*, *The Fear* and *The Faith*. With little patience for historical data, he sought to convey in his music the emotions the Armenian people felt. "We are supposed to learn from history, but that doesn't seem to happen. The thought was, 'Let me lay this out, so people might understand what they are going through.'"

How does Burt Bacharach's piano come into play? Bacharach, who died in February 2023 after a lifetime of fame composing such popular hits as *Rain Drops Keep Fallin on My Head*, *I Say a Little Prayer* and *What the World Needs Now Is Love* was a musical hero for Yessian. In addition to creating music, Yessian has a huge appreciation for the talent of others. In 2006, he bought Burt Bacharach's Steinway grand piano. The instrument used for composing Bacharach hits like *The Look of Love* is still the one Yessian plays at home.

see PIANO, page 17



Burt Bacharach's piano that Dan Yessian purchased in 2006

Applications Being Accepted for IALA's 2024 Creative Writing and Literary Translation Grants

The applications for the International Armenian Literary Alliance's three literary grants are now open. The grants for creative writing and literary translation — worth \$2,500 and \$3,000, respectfully — will be offered to one writer and two translators. Applications are now open until September 30, 2024, and the winners will be announced in December 2024.

The International Armenian Literary Alliance's Creative Writing Grant will award \$2,500 annually to one Armenian writer whose work-in-progress shows exceptional literary and creative ability. After awarding poets and fiction writers in previous years, the grant will be awarded in 2024 for a work of creative nonfiction. The 2024 grant will be judged by Susan Barba, Aram Mrjoian, and Nadia Owusu.

IALA's Creative Writing Grant, made possible by a generous donation from the Armenian Allied Arts Association, is meant to foster the development of contemporary Armenian literature in English through an annual monetary award, and support Armenian writers who have historically lacked resources in the publishing world. Additionally, IALA will support grant recipients in promoting their publications through marketing on our website and social media channels, book reviews, readings and discussions.

The Israelyan English Translation Grant from the International Armenian Literary Alliance will award \$3,000 to one translator working from Armenian (either Western or Eastern) source texts into English, whose work-in-progress shows exceptional literary and creative ability. In 2024, the grant will be awarded for a work of literature (in any literary genre) written in Armenian and published any time after 1900. The grant will be judged by Tamar M. Boyadjian, Karen Jallatyan, and Garen Torikian.

Many in the Armenian diaspora, for a complex set of reasons, are unable to read works in the original Armenian, and therefore, have centuries of literature inaccessible to them. Translators working with Armenian texts have traditionally lacked resources in the publishing world, as well as access to other funding, due to the overwhelming influence of so-called "majority languages." IALA's Israelyan English Translation Grant supports translators working with contemporary Armenian literature through a monetary award. Additionally, IALA will support grant recipients in promoting their publications through marketing on our website and social media channels, book reviews, readings and discussions.

The Israelyan Armenian Translation Grant from the International Armenian Literary Alliance will award \$3,000 to one translator working from English source text into Eastern

see APPLICATIONS, page 15

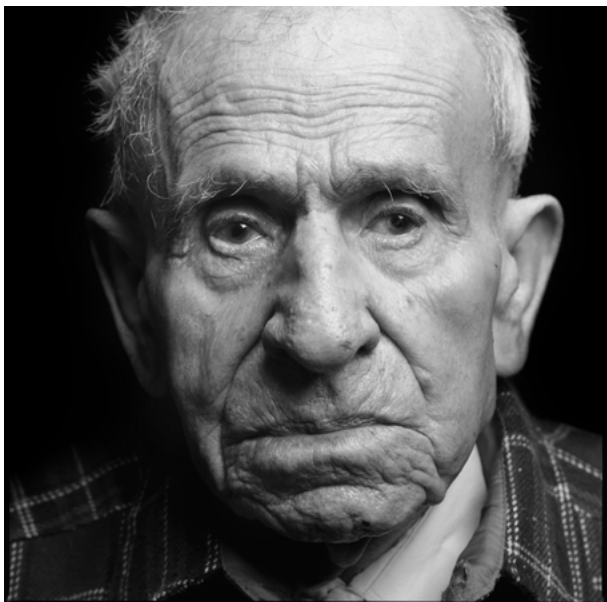


ARTS & CULTURE

iwitness: Narratives of Resistance at Cal State Northridge

LOS ANGELES — The Art Galleries at California State University, Northridge are hosting “iwitness: Narratives of Resistance in its West Gallery.” This exhibition by the iwitness Project tells the story of the genocide of the Western Armenian population (1915-23) through the portraits and narratives of survivor witnesses using photography, oral history, installation and sound.

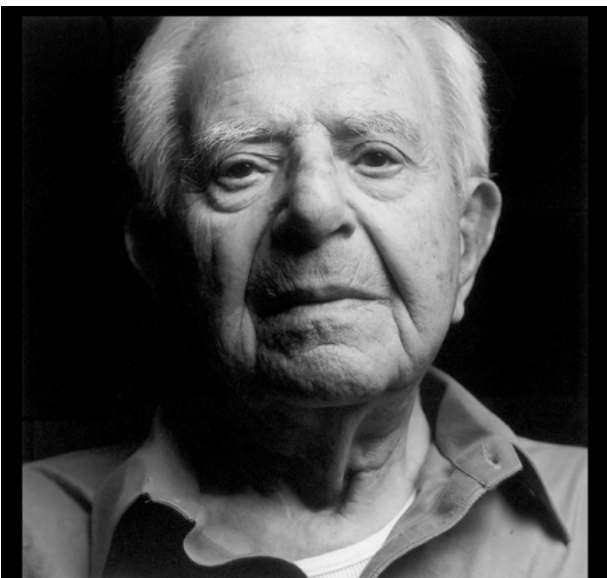
For almost three decades, the iwitness Project has engaged in a multidimensional effort to resist the denial of the history of the Armenian Genocide. Led by artists Ara Oshagan, Levon Parian, and architect Vahagn



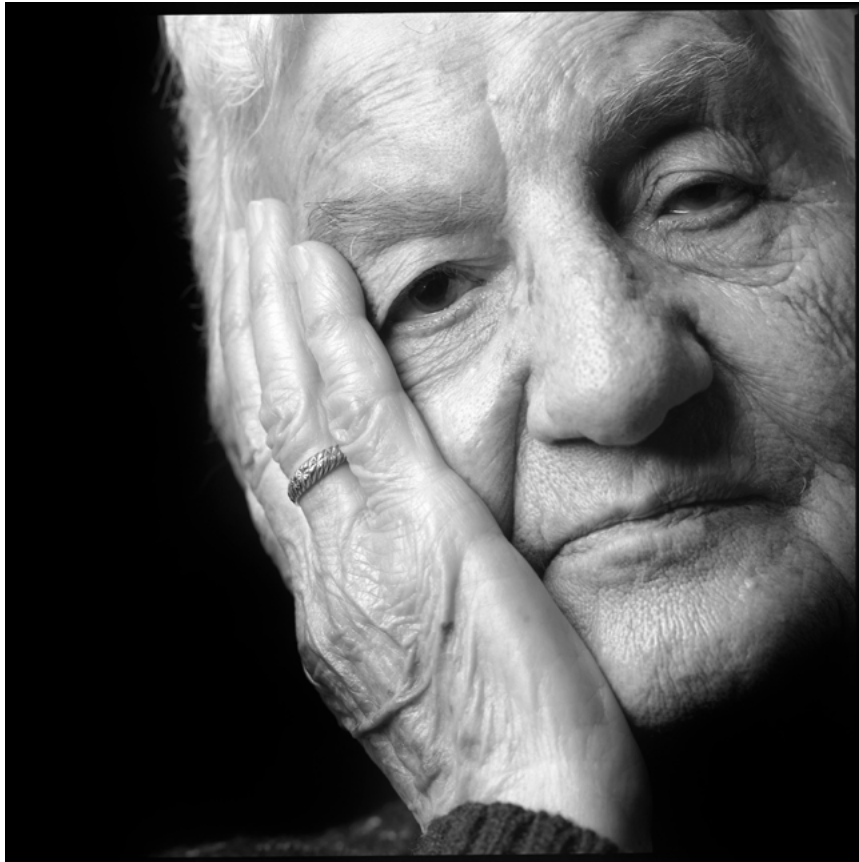
Seneke Arakelian, b. Erzurum, 1902-2000

Thomasian—all descendants from Western Armenia—the project has photographed, recorded, archived, and shared the images and stories of Armenian Genocide survivors in poignant, unprecedented, and unexpected ways.

“In these photographs, the eyes of the survivors meet those of their witnesses,” writes Dr. Ramela Abbamontian, professor of art at Pierce College, “In that



Arpiar Missakian, b. Kessab, 1894-1996



Sion Abajian, b. Marash, 1908-1996

momentary instance of the gaze, the Genocide survivor is bequeathing his/her story to the new generation of witnesses.” Oshagan and Parian’s photographs focus on the eyes and place the survivors in front a black background that symbolizes the Genocide. A single light lifts them out that darkness into the light of survival. “The testimony of these survivors then becomes the testimony of the artists,” writes Abbamontian, “who inherit the stories and the responsibility, and then in turn, transfer that to the viewers.”

The exhibit will enable viewers to bear witness to one of the darkest chapters in human history. It will also be a unique space to educate and create discourse on critical contemporary social justice issues, mass atrocities, human rights, and the continued denial of genocidal responsibility by governments such as Turkey.

The iwitness Project has taken multiple artistic and educational forms over the years: from intimate portrait exhibitions to displays at the U.S. Senate Rotunda in Washington D.C. to massive public art installations in Los Angeles and Glendale to the first permanent monument dedicated to the Armenian Genocide in the City of Los Angeles. The Project’s work has also

been used by teachers at all educational levels.

The current exhibition at CSUN Art Galleries’ West Gallery presents a survey of this multifaceted endeavor. Through each iteration, the iwitness Project continues to fight the erasure of the Genocide by uplifting the images and voices of survivors and creating new generations of witnesses to their stories.

“iwitness: Narratives of Resistance” will run through October 22.

The Art Galleries at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) serve the campus and larger Los Angeles area audiences through innovative contemporary art exhibitions and related programs. Our multifaceted and culturally-relevant exhibitions of professional and student artists reflect the diverse communities that make up CSUN and greater Los Angeles.

As one of the few art institutions in the San Fernando Valley, CSUN Art Galleries are a unique

regional resource where visitors can connect in-person with art, artists, and each other. For more information, visit www.csun.edu/art-galleries.



Armenouhi Bedrossian, b. Aintab, 1894-2002

CSUN Art Galleries is located at 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge. Admission is free.

Hyper-Realistic Paintings at Armenian Museum of America Explore Artist’s Innate Quest for Creative Autonomy

EXHIBIT, from page 13

“Filtered Identity” is curated by Ryann Casey. Ryann is a New Jersey-based artist and educator. She is an adjunct Professor of Photography, Art History and Critical Theory at Stockton University, and her current photographic and curatorial projects focus on themes of loss, trauma, and memory.

“Filtered Identity” runs from September 19, 2024 to February 23, 2025 in the AMA’s third floor Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries.

To RSVP for attending the opening reception, visit www.armenianmuseum.org/rsvp.

For more information, visit www.armenianmuseum.org/tigran. The Armenian Museum of America is located at 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA, and the gallery hours are Thursday through Sunday from 12:00 noon to 6:00 pm.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Armenian Dish's Armenian Ainteb Manti/Meat Dumplings

TORONTO — Sylvia Hagopian, the founder at ArmenianDish.com says, “My beloved grandmother, Hélène Yacoubian (née Seykeljian), passed away in 2006, and I miss her every day. She loved visits with her many friends and taking care of her flowers and balcony garden. She had a limitless love for her daughters and four grandchildren. She was spiritual and held a strong Christian faith, and lived by giving generously to others. She lived for us. She was our anchor and our unwavering champion. She survived the Armenian Genocide and passed her love and strength on to us so that we would be strong and give back to the world.”

“During the Armenian Genocide, my grandmother’s family went into hiding and were forced to abandon their ancestral home in Aintab, Turkey. When my great-grandfather, a skilled tailor, didn’t return home, they knew he was killed. My grandmother always told us that they knew deep in their hearts he was killed since he would have stopped at nothing to return to them. They eventually fled and luckily survived the march to Aleppo, Syria. My grandmother was raised in Aleppo and went to a school run by French nuns, where she was given her name Hélène.”

“My brother and sister would agree — manti is a personal family favorite. My grandmother would spend all day baking these delectable morsels of joy and we would devour them. I can still hear her laughing and saying, ‘Chor, chor mi udek!’ (‘Don’t eat them all dry, dry.’) The traditional way to serve these baked dumplings is in a hot yogurt and chicken broth with mint. We couldn’t wait for this soup to be prepared. Manti would never last in our home. This recipe is special – and the spices are exactly what my grandmother flavored her meat with.”



Hélène Yacoubian, Sylvia's Hagopian's late grandmother (Photos courtesy of www.armeniandish.com)

“These dumplings are in the traditional style from my grandmother’s birthplace in Ainteb. I remember traveling to Armenia looking everywhere for manti, only to be disappointed. This is not something you traditionally find on Armenian menus in our motherland today. This dish is for members of the Armenian Diaspora community that may make it slightly different based on the preferences of their country. Some Armenians boil manti and add them to a tomato broth, and some add warm chicken broth and a dollop of yogurt and spices on top.”

“I love my manti baked crispy with tangy yogurt and of course in a hot yogurt and chicken broth with mint. However you like yours, I know you have a sentimental spot in your heart for how your grandparent or mother make them. Manti dough is as simple as it gets — flour, oil, water and salt. The trick for perfect dough is to pour in just enough water and just enough oil. When your ‘atchkee tchapov’ (or eyeballing skills) are broken, I recommend just under a 1/4 cup of oil and just under one cup of water. The dough should not be too wet and not too dry so that you can roll it out nice and thinly. Add just enough water so the dough no longer sticks to your hands while kneading. Once you’ve mixed the ingredients, let the dough rest in a ball under a towel while you mix up the meat.”

“I use lean ground beef for this recipe. I find that extra lean gets too dry before the dough is cooked to the crispness I like. I’ve never used lamb before, but I’ve heard it’s also used instead of beef. To the lean ground beef, my grandmother added a generous tablespoon of seasoned tomato sauce. It is important to chop the onion as finely as possible,” she adds.

INGREDIENTS:

Dough:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup (a little less) olive oil
1 cup (a little less) water
1 teaspoon salt
Flour for rolling/kneading as needed
Olive oil for baking tray

Filling:

1 pound lean ground beef
1 small onion, finely diced
1/8 teaspoon allspice
1/8 teaspoon crushed cloves
1/8 teaspoon dried basil
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
1 heaping tablespoon seasoned tomato sauce
3/4 teaspoon salt

PREPARATION:

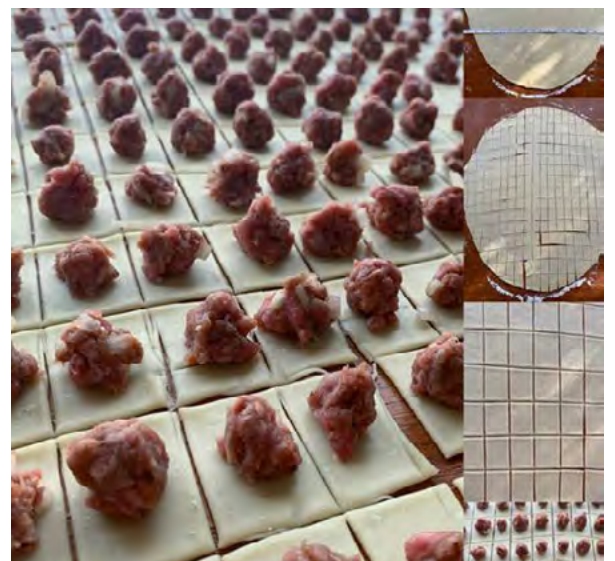
Dough: Mix dough ingredients and knead by hand on floured surface. Dough should not stick to hand. Form a ball and allow to rest covered with plastic wrap and towel. Prepare meat filling.

Filling: Mix together meat, onion, tomato sauce and seasonings. Set aside.

Forming Dumplings: Preheat oven to 350°F. Flour surface and dough ball and roll out dough until just a few millimeters thick. With a measuring tape or ruler, cut out 1 1/2 inch squares with a pizza cutter. Stick edge pieces together with a bit of water along the edge to help stick. Add a small ball of meat to the middle of each square. Fold up sides, tap meat gently to tuck inside pocket and press down to form a bow-tie shape. Align dumplings closely in an oiled tray. Bake at 350°F for about 25 minutes and edges have nicely browned.

Note: Sylvia likes her manti crispy so that when she adds them to the soup, they don’t get soggy. “I like baking mine until they are nice and crisp, however, you can make yours softer if you prefer. Serve plain or with yogurt and paprika/Aleppo pepper in the soup.”

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The assembly of the Ainteb Manti (Photos courtesy of www.armeniandish.com)

Applications Being Accepted for IALA’s 2024 Creative Writing and Literary Translation Grants

APPLICATIONS, from page 13

Armenian, whose work-in-progress shows exceptional literary and creative ability. In 2024, the grant will be awarded for a work of contemporary literature written by an Armenian in English. The complete list of texts which we would like to see translated feature authors who represent and support the Armenian literary community; their works were selected for their diversity in voices and subject matters. The

grant will be judged by Ovsanna Babayan, Sevak Ghazaryan and Armen Ohanyan.

Despite the growing number of translated works from English to Eastern Armenian in recent years, translated literature remains an area that needs further attention and development. IALA’s Israelyan Armenian Translation Grant, made possible by a generous donation from Souren A. Israelyan, supports translators working with literature

written in the English language through a monetary award. Additionally, IALA will support grant recipients in promoting their publications through marketing on our website and social media channels, book reviews, readings and discussions.

For more details, full eligibility criteria and more information on past grant recipients, visit: www.armenianliterary.org.

Books

Local Author Explores Armenian Heritage in New Trilogy *Odar*

By Barbara Adams

ITHACA, N.Y. (*Ithaca Times*) — At the age of 12, surrounded by her extensive Syrian-American family, Denice Karamardian attended the funeral of her beloved grandfather, Jido. Afterward, at a traditional family poker game, one aunt remarked, “Pa wasn’t Syrian, you know; he was Armenian.” The girl had never heard the word before, and the next day after school rushed to the library to look it up. That marked the beginning of Karamardian’s research into their little-discussed Armenian heritage.

Older family members knew, of course, but they had so thoroughly assimilated into Syrian-American communities that the long-ago past wasn’t a cultural legacy so much as the source of remembered and often contradictory comic anecdotes, like the day the new horses bolted, breaking a kid’s teeth. But for Karamardian, the mystery of her family’s origins (and her own sense of

identity) was enough to send her on a mission, exploring family history off and on for the rest of her life.

“I had an epiphany in my late 50s,” she says, “that now was the time to prioritize the mission and plunged (rather bumbled) through the next 12 years, at times so overwhelmed I was paralyzed. When that happened, I went back to notes, read something else, dove down rabbit holes of research that often yielded miraculous tidbits and repeatedly ignited the flame in inspiration.”

After actively researching, interviewing, writing, and visiting sources throughout the U.S. and France, Karamardian has just self-published three volumes of her family story, “*Odar*,” through Paper Raven Books: “*Jido*,” “*Silence*,” and “*Amirkans*.” She considers them historical fiction: Though some facts were documented, she had to resolve conflicting or vague accounts, omit many characters and some problematic issues, and fictionalize scenes, especially



from the old country. The chapters interweave stories from the 1890s to late 1960s, from different family members’ perspectives.

Karamardian credits the pandemic as the impetus for her finally buckling down to this lifelong project. She’d been drafting material sporadically for several years, but in 2020, when she found herself stuck inside, she wrote daily from her sunroom, working online with an editing coach from California. Two editors and many revisions

later, she had a lengthy work, which her publisher convinced her to split into three books.

“I resisted at first,” she says, “because I love sagas. But I realized that I seldom get through them. This complicated family story is more digestible, more absorbable in three sections — and I believe more resonant.”

Born in Ithaca, Karamardian moved away for about three decades, earning a degree at the New England Conservatory of Music and establishing a singing and directing career, which led her to Boston, New York and Denver. In 1999, she returned to Ithaca permanently — both for its arts community and “to raise my son where I could find a village to help,” she says. Here she taught voice full time, opened the Coddington Guest House, and founded Crossing Borders LIVE, a live radio broadcast music series with an international emphasis, which ran 10 years to 2014.

Prior to these books, Karamardian had written music and theater reviews and journalistic stories, but nothing of this length. Driven by a desire to fully understand the Armenian part of her family, she read history and as many key works as she could find, like Peter Balakian’s memoir, *Black Dog of Fate*.

Karamardian wondered what she might have to contribute to the topic of immigration, since “immigration stories are familiar, often not unique. I grew up in Ithaca as a third-gen kid like everybody else; Greeks, Italians, Irish, Syrians — all my friends were third generation. In the tiny Syrian community here, everybody had a grandmother who spoke another language. In the 1950s, these turn-of-the-century immigrants were still alive as the first generation.”

Because the lives of these elders and their cultures were less known, Karamardian says, she wanted to discover and share them — “how many continents they moved through, how convoluted their stories were.” She believes few people today know much about Armenian history but also hopes her family’s story will be read universally.

The heart of the trilogy is Jido (“grandfather”), a Christian Armenian born in Syria as Hovsep Karamardian. As a young boy he was caught on the street without wearing the required fez and pursued by Turkish police. Their father shipped him and his brother away in the dead of that same night, a voyage that would take them to New York’s Ellis Island in 1904, where the now-named “Joe Peter” was accepted but his brother rejected. That led to their sojourn as peddlers in the Dominican Republic.

When the brothers later parted, Joe returned to New York City. Mispronouncing his destination of Utica, Joe found himself on a train to Ithaca, and so his upstate dynasty starts from here, with interludes in Detroit. Over his lifetime, Joe straddled multiple countries, towns, homes, and languages, always “*odar*” — “other/stranger/foreigner” — until settling in this area, where he and his wife Helen raised eight children and Joe became a citizen. (From Joe’s work at the salt mine to his eventual South Danby Road farm, these novels are full of intriguing local references.)

This family history, often joyous and even triumphant, is inevitably threaded with tragedy — memories of distance and displacement, persecution and murder. Quite unforgettable is the story of Joe’s young sisters, Mary and Martha, who were kidnapped and used as Turkish household and sex slaves. Once rescued, they finally reached the U.S., married and had children; one a silent survivor, the other broken. Ultimately, Karamardian’s family stories of resilience remind us of the endless flux of events and moments and influences that shape us all.



Tekeyan Cultural Association
of Boston

Proudly Presents

Sept.

26

Thursday
7 p.m.



ARMENIAN COOKING DEMONSTRATION:

CHEFS Betty Aroyan, Rita Balyozian

Learn how to prepare kebebet and khnkali and afterwards enjoy samples with coffee/tea and socialize

2nd in a series coordinated by Rita Balyozian

AT THE BAIKAR BUILDING 755 MT. AUBURN ST.
WATERTOWN, MA, SIDE ENTRANCE ON NORSEMAN AVE.

\$25 per person
RSVP necessary

For more information or tickets
call Sossy at 617 281-1647
or email syogurtian@comcast.net



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 14 — Shish Kebob Picnic, Ararat Church, 2 Salem Street, Salem, NH. Open to All. Kids events start at 2:30 PM; meals served 3 PM to 7 PM. Kids Magic Show: 5:30 PM. Live Armenian Music, Luke's Goldies IG Influencer Meet & Greet, Face Painting, Bounce House, Magician and more! \$25 for two skewers of meat. Meals include a choice of lamb, beef or chicken plus sides of rice pilaf, salad, hummus, tabouleh, pita bread and dessert. Meal tickets sold online and at the door. <https://shish.ararat.church> or Call Mary Ann @ 603-770-3375 for more information.

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

SEPTEMBER 25 — **CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US!** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. highlights Vietnam. Monthly series offered in collaboration with the City of Boston Office of Immigrant Advancement and Age Friendly Boston. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

OCTOBER 4 — The Istanbul Armenians of Boston are hosting a benefit concert featuring the acapella trio Zulal. First Parish Church, 630 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington. 7.30 p.m.

OCTOBER 9 — **TEA & TRANQUILITY.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday at 4 p.m. Meet & Greet featuring BIG JOE, the storyteller, performance for all ages. Enjoy a refreshing Citrus Spritzer & luscious Italian Cookies, hosted by Modern Pastry. RSVP appreciated, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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 Raphalian. 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 — “Armenian Vistas: Diasporic Perspectives and Legacies” Concert at Armenian Cultural Foundation, co-sponsored by the Amaras Art Alliance, the Armenian International Women's Association. Works for Cello and Piano by Armenian Composers Komitas, A. Babajanyan, A. Hovhaness, E. Melik-Aslanian, S. Elmas, D. Goolkasian Rahbee in Tribute to composer Dianne Goolkasian Rahbee. Alessandra Pompili, piano; Christina Gullans, cello. Sunday, 4 p.m. Free and open to all. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street, Arlington.

OCTOBER 23 — **CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US!** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. highlights Haiti. Monthly series in collaboration with the City of Boston Office of Immigrant Advancement and Age Friendly Boston RSVP appreciated, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org **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.

NOVEMBER 17 — **GIVING THANKS: TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday at 2 p.m. Meet & Greet. Sing! Share the Warmth: Bring hat, gloves, scarf for the ABCD Winter Drive. Enjoy light refreshments. RSVP appreciated, hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

DECEMBER 8 — **CANDLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY.** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday at 4:45pm. Meet & Greet. Enjoy Hot Chocolate & Holiday Cookies. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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.

How Dan Yessian Came to Compose *An Armenian Trilogy* on Bacharach's Piano

PIANO, from page 13

“I compare Bacharach to Rogers and Hart. He was just that good,” he says. Bacharach signed the instrument and added a message: “I wrote a lot of good music on this piano.”

“The piano was originally purchased for a young Burt as a gift from his father, Bert, a syndicated columnist (same name but different spelling), and that the instrument initially resided in the family's residence in Manhattan. When Burt later married actress Angie Dickinson, the piano followed them to California. Bacharach wrote a letter of authenticity to Yessian, in which he mentions that the piano had stayed at the home of his former wife for many years. Yessian recalled that when he asked Dickinson if he could buy the piano's bench, she declined, telling him, ‘No, that is where Burt's butt was.’”

Yessian traveled to Armenia in 2017 to work on the film that describes his own life. *An Armenian Trilogy* debuted in Yere-

van on October 14, 2017. The composition was performed by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra (ANPO) and conducted by Eduard Topchjan. “The documentary takes you from the beginnings of a budding clarinetist and saxophonist through a progression of time that leads up to what I would suggest would be my legacy now, which is *An Armenian Trilogy*,” Yessian said. “It's important to know where we've been and where we're going. There is something about music that creates emotion and that was my aim through all of this.”

Founded in 1925, the ANPO has always been considered one of the leading orchestras of the former Soviet Union. Today, the ensemble with more than 100 members makes its home in Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall. The orchestra draws its members from the ranks of graduates of the Yerevan Komitas Conservatory and from the leading conservatories in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The documentary “An Armenian Trilo-



A performances of the Armenian Trilogy

gy” has been released on Amazon Prime. In addition, the live recording of the symphony, “An Armenian Trilogy – Live in Yerevan,” performed by the ANPO, is now

available on iTunes, Spotify and Amazon. This concert is included as bonus footage at the end of the film.

Learn more at armeniantrilogy.com

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

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New Book Presents US Press Coverage Of Azerbaijani Aggression against Armenians 1905-1921

By Gayane Barseghyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The second and expanded edition of the book, *Azeri Aggression against Armenians in Transcaucasia, Reports from the U.S. Press (1905-1921)* (Yerevan, 2023), by Ara Ketibian has come out, an imprint of Areg Publishing House. The present volume is a compilation of US news reports, eyewitness accounts, editorial opinions and political analyses which unfold and trigger deep understanding of the massacres committed against Armenians by Tatars (as Azerbaijanis were known then) from 1905 to 1921.

This volume comprises 505 US press original articles, extracted from both best-known US newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Boston Daily Globe*, *The Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, *The Los Angeles Times*) and numerous smaller state and county-based ones. The compiled articles spell out in great precision the incessant hostilities towards Armenians by Tatars - the brutal suppression, repeated instances of outrageous cruelty, destruction of life and property, plunder and arson, slaughter and extermination of entire Armenian population from Armenian villages and towns. The articles as well reveal the instances of triple siege of Armenians from three sides by Tatars, Turks and Kurds.

The US media coverage from 1905 to 1921 alludes to exclusive stories in the Armenian Highlands and Transcaucasia in line with the regional developments, hitting the headlines upon breaking. In 1905 and 1917 there was a revolution in the Russian Empire, followed by a breakup and collapse of the Empire in 1917. The latter gave rise to the escalation of inter-ethnic and inter-religious clashes. Moreover, in 1918 the Ottoman Empire captured the city of Baku, which led to the massacre of thousands of Armenians. Thus, in the light of the foregoing, the subsumed US press back copies narrate about Russia in revolt, Baku plunged into anarchy and chaos, pillage and fighting, leading to the massacres of hundreds of Armenians by Tatars, ghastly street murders, accompanied by mutilation of the dead in Baku streets. Next, the town Shushi was besieged by Tatars, leaving the city racked with pain and anguish, filling every corner with the agony of loss. The streets of Shushi were filled with the dead and wounded, asylum seeker and starving people, mutilated Armenian children thrown to dogs.

Furthermore, the compiled articles showcase the collapse of oil industry in Transcaucasia, Russia's Civil War, the ravage by fire and sword of the Armenian quarter in Shushi, the renewal of Tatar-Armenian war, the reasons behind the massacre of Armenians, the plight of Armenians: fleeing from Kurds and being harried by Tatars. Hence, they reveal appalling bloodsheds, Tatar ferocity, and demolishment of Armenian churches.

The articles also bring to light the Turkish advance and their deadly menace in the Caucasus, British presence in Baku and their subsequent evacuation, the deportation by Turks of 8000 Armenians from Alexandropol and Transcaucasia, the disarming of Armenians in Gandzak. Meanwhile, Russia was playing both ends against the middle. Thus, it will not come as a surprise to learn that the articles under study underscore the helpless state of Armenians, in great need of speedy relief. As a result of all this ill-treatment, thousands of asylum seeker and assistance-beseeching Armenians were dying from famine, starvation and cholera. In the midst of which a brave couple, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel E. Newman salvaged twenty thousand orphans.

On the other side of the coin, the back copies included in the second and expanded edition showcase not only the massacres committed against Armenians from 1905 to 1921, but they also indicate Armenian's heroic fighting in withstanding the siege. Albeit the numerous attacks and escalated tensions of unprecedented scale, being on the brink of extinction Armenians displayed incredible bravery against the volatile and uncontrollable backdrop.

Among all the compiled back copies of US periodicals, The

Christian Science Monitor best sheds light on Armenian's heroism in an article titled "Armenia's Daring General," issued on March 30, 1920. The article highlights the bravery of Armenia's General Andranik Ozanyan, introducing him as a general who "stands upon the highest pinnacle of Armenian heroism." The article reveals instances of being outnumbered by Turks, but defeating them totally. In 1901 in a monastery near Mush Andranik's forces of 39 men were surrounded by an army of 5000 Turks. Joined by 40 men from Sassoun, General Andranik utterly defeated Turks. Next, "Two years later Abdul Hamid sent 60,000 men against Andranik, who had about 200. European representatives intervened, but the Turks attacked Sassoun. Andranik and his 200 reinforced by the 1000 in Sassoun, descended into the plain and defeated the Turks," the Christian Science Monitor reports. Moreover, as the article progresses, the Christian Science Monitor narrates about the message received from General Thomson of the British Army, requesting General Andranik to cease fighting: "But for this request, the Armenians say that the general would have utterly defeated the Tartars and pacified the country. General Andranik sheathed his sword reluctantly."

The first edition of the book was compiled during 2020's Azerbaijani-initiated 44-day Artsakh war. The current expanded edition was compiled during Artsakh blockade by Azerbaijan in 2022. "As this book goes to print, the entire population of Artsakh, numbering 120,000, including 30,000 children, are facing death by starvation - a direct and intended consequence of Azerbaijan's illegal closure of the Lachin corridor," writes Ara Ketibian in the preface of the book.

With hindsight, the author also alludes to the 44-day war in 2020, military aggression of Azerbaijan and the general indifference displayed by the international community. Ketibian

highlights in the Preface that after signing the trilateral ceasefire agreement in November 2020, Azerbaijan has refused to return the Armenian POWs, approved for its military's illegal crossing into Armenian sovereign territory, condoned the mistreatment of Armenian military and civilian captives, continuously harassed the Armenian civilian population living in border villages, carried out its policy of Armenophobia, continued with its practice of destroying Armenian religious and cultural assets under the guise of "restoration" (p. VII).

Ketibian is a renowned Australian-Armenian researcher, specializing in the study of international newspaper archives, in particular the American press. He graduated from Mekhitarist Congregation College in Venice, majoring in Armenian studies. Ketibian has delivered lectures on the Armenian language and history at the Melkonyan Educational Institute in Nicosia, Cyprus. He has also been a member of the editorial team of the *Ararat Daily* newspaper in Beirut, Lebanon. He has published 14 volumes on the theme of the Genocide of the Christian minorities (Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians), perpetrated by the Ottoman and later the Turkish nationalist authorities. Thus, the huge collection of works comprises volumes on the Armenian Genocide, prelude and aftermath, forced conversions in Ottoman Turkey, the Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks, orphans of Genocide, the Assyrian Genocide, the Adana massacres, as reported in the U.S. Press, and other monumental volumes.

"Ketibian's work is truly unique in its extent and contents. With this particular volume and the numerous other volumes which he has already published, he has almost single-handedly carried out the work of an entire research group. I am sure that this volume will be followed by many other useful publications," stated Ara Papyan, head of Modus Vivendi Center, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Canada (2000-2006).

(Gayane Barseghyan is a lecturer at Brusov State University, Yerevan in the Chair of English. The scope of her research comprises studies in Linguistics and Romano-Germanic Philology.)





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Armenia Should Exploit Rifts Between Azerbaijan and Turkey

Countries must have various tools in their arsenal to counter or weaken their enemies. The most obvious one is the use of force. However, Armenia is unable to do that successfully because of its weak military.

Another possible tool is destabilizing enemy states by creating internal turmoil and inciting their oppressed minorities.

The third tool is to cause a rift between a hostile nation and its allies using the well-known method of divide and conquer. Armenia is surrounded by Azerbaijan and Turkey, two hostile neighbors that call themselves “one nation, two states.” Therefore, Armenia should try to drive a wedge between them by deepening their disagreements when such opportunities arise.

In the last 30 years, there have been at least three occasions when Armenia’s two enemies were at odds with each other.

The first opportunity was in March 1995, when members of Azerbaijan’s military, supported by some factions in Turkey, attempted to carry out a coup d’état against President Heydar Aliyev. They wanted to return to power former President Abulfaz Elchibey who was toppled by Aliyev in 1993.

Prime Minister of Turkey Tansu Ciller, whose top aides were involved in the coup, gave the green light to get rid of President Aliyev. The coup was foiled when Turkish President Suleyman Demirel became aware of the plot and alerted President Aliyev. According to Wikipedia, the attempted coup “provoked a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Azerbaijan.”

This was a missed opportunity for the Armenian government in 1995 to take advantage of the attempted coup and the consequent chaos in Azerbaijan to further alienate the two enemies from each other by publicizing and accentuating the rift.

The second crisis between Azerbaijan and Turkey happened in 2009 in the midst of signing the Armenia and Turkey Protocols, which envisioned normalizing relations between the two countries, including the establishment of formal diplomatic relations, opening of the Armenian-Turkish border and forming a joint historical commission to study the Armenian Genocide issue. These Protocols were brokered by the United States, Russia and France.

Azerbaijan opposed the Protocols, fearing that if Turkey normalized relations with Armenia, it would weaken Azerbaijan’s pressure on Armenia in the Artsakh conflict.

Turkey was caught in the middle of several conflicting interests:

- 1) Turkey wanted to pursue its self-interest which was the softening of its antagonistic relations with Armenia to eliminate long-standing Armenian demands for the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide;
- 2) Turkey was being pressured by the United States, Russia, and France to ratify these Protocols;
- 3) Azerbaijan, Turkey’s junior partner, initially applied diplomatic pressure on Turkey and subsequently threatened to cut off the export of gas or increase its price. When that didn’t have the desired effect, Azerbaijan closed down several Turkish-funded mosques in Baku and took down Turkish flags.

Azerbaijan’s foreign ministry declared that improving Armenia-Azerbaijan relations “directly contradicts the national interests of Azerbaijan and overshadows the spirit of brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey built on deep historical roots.”

Once again, Armenia was merely a spectator in this conflict. Eventually, Turkey succumbed to the Azeri pressures and refused to ratify the Protocols.

The third dispute between Ankara and Baku is happening at the moment after President Erdogan embarrassed Azerbaijan by declaring on July 28: “Just as we entered Karabagh, just as we entered Libya, we should do the same with Israel. There is nothing stopping us. We just need to be strong to take this step.”

Azerbaijan’s officials vehemently objected to Erdogan’s statement because it was exposing the Azeri myth that they won the Artsakh War without any outside help. The fact is that Azerbaijan was supported in the 2020 War by the Turkish military and commanders as well as the thousands of Jihadist mercenaries that Turkey brought to Azerbaijan from Syria to fight against Armenians.

Despite the Azeri denials, Erdogan continued to repeat his statement about Turkish military’s involvement in the Artsakh conflict. On August 1, he said: “In Azerbaijan’s Karabagh, together with our Azerbaijani brothers, we completely eliminated the enemy forces.”

Azerbaijan’s official Gazette responded in an editorial: “Our people, army and commander view with disappointment and deep sorrow the attempts to claim and take ownership of our rightful victory. Azerbaijan’s victory is for the entire Turkic world, but Turkey is not its architect. The Architects of the Karabagh victory are Commander-in-Chief Aliyev and the Azerbaijani Army.” The Azerbaijani Gazette described Erdogan’s words as “a heavy moral blow.”

Baku pursued its disagreement with Turkey through diplomatic channels. On July 29, Azerbaijan’s ambassador to Turkey, Rashad Mammadov, met with Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Mehmet Kemal Bozay to complain about Erdogan’s statement. Amb. Mammadov then paid a visit to Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Berris Ekinci the following day to complain for the second time about Erdogan’s statement.

Fortunately, Armenia’s Prime Minister reacted to this latest Azerbaijan-Turkey dispute when answering a reporter’s question during his August 31 press conference: “During the 44-day War [in 2020], in many locations, our military, our explorers saw Turkish flags, Turkish soldiers, Turkish Special Squadrons and Turkish high-ranking officers. Let’s not forget that prior to the 44-day War, there were large-scale military exercises between Azerbaijan and Turkey. And during the entire war, F-16 jets belonging to Turkey were literally in the air and drones belonging to Turkey were maintained by Turkish personnel.”

Modern wars are not fought just with weapons. Nations also use psychological warfare, spread disinformation, instigate internal turmoil in hostile countries, and engage in divide and conquer tactics. Armenia needs to use all of these tools to undermine its enemies and defend its national interests.

If Armenia lacks the expertise in such specialized operations, there are consulting firms that Armenia can hire, for a fraction of the millions spent on weapons, to weaken the enemy from within.

Cracks in Russia’s Influence in South Caucasus Offer Opening to Middle East

By Emil Avdaliani

TBILISI (AI-Monitor) — The South Caucasus has for the past two centuries been considered part of Russia’s exclusive sphere of influence. Even the end of the Soviet Union failed to radically change the dynamic. Although Turkey and Iran were actively involved with the newly established republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the 1990s and early 2000s, Russia remained the dominant force, exerting control both economically and in terms of security.

Things have changed in the past several years, with evident cracks in Russia’s influence in the South Caucasus emerging. While Moscow’s influence is not collapsing, it is in “managed decline” amid an uncomfortable repositioning in the last two years. One reason is Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which consumed almost all of Moscow’s military resources from the South Caucasus and compromised its prestige as a great power.

Turkey and Iran Expand Influence

Another is Turkey and Iran’s growing power; the two countries are among the first to have benefited from the emerging power vacuum. Ankara has been Azerbaijan’s

traditional ally, and the Turkish military was instrumental in helping Baku regain control in 2020 over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and the surrounding territories that were lost in the early 1990s, after the first war with Armenia. Since 2020, Turkey has expanded its alliance with Azerbaijan in military and economic areas. For instance, Ankara has pushed for the opening of a new trade and transit corridor across Armenia’s southernmost territory, which would allow Turkey to connect via Nakhichevan with Azerbaijan proper.

This has unnerved Iran, which has looked at Armenia not only as a way to balance Azerbaijan but also as the only physical link to the Caucasus not under Turkic influence. The fear of a potentially emerging, uninterrupted corridor running from Turkey to the Caspian Sea pushed Tehran to build closer ties with Armenia and claim that, if necessary, the Islamic Republic will intervene. Iran is still constrained in its economic ability to project power northward compared with what Turkey and Russia can do. Yet the level of intensity of Iran’s involvement in the region is unprecedented.

Geography Matters

The corollary of Russia’s relative decline and the growing interconnectedness of the South Caucasus with the Middle East could also be a return to the historical norm. Indeed, seen from a millennia-long perspective, Russian domination could be regarded as an aberration — a rather short period in the otherwise long tradition of Middle East powers dominating the South Caucasus. Indeed, Achaemenids, Romans (Byzantines), Sasanians, Ottomans, Safavids along with other Iranian dynasties for millennia played a central role in the history of the region. And they were Middle East powers. Each tried to dominate the South Caucasus, a vital trade route connection and an extensive base for raising armies, as was aptly done by Iranian and Ottoman rulers. The region also served as a buffer zone against the barbarous Eurasian steppe zone and later the growing Russian power.

Geography also matters. Though often seen as linked to Russia, the South Caucasus is in fact a geopolitical continuation of the wider Middle East. Russia is beyond the powerful Caucasus mountains, which continue to play a constraining role in regional geopolitics. The Middle East, on the contrary, is far more easily accessible.

Moreover, increasingly the growing links between the Middle East and the South Caucasus now go beyond Turkey’s and Iran’s rising influence. There is an intensifying trend of cooperation between the Gulf Cooperation Council with Georgia and especially Azerbaijan. The latter approved the Joint Action Plan 2024-2028, with the GCC envisaging the development of political, energy and commercial links. The Joint Intergovernmental Commission is actively working between Azerbaijan and the United Arab Emirates, which facilitated the purchase of a stake in the Absheron gas field in the Caspian Sea by the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company. Meanwhile, the Saudi ACWA made massive investments in the renewable energy of the South Caucasus state and pledged to add a further \$5 billion in the coming years.

With Georgia, the GCC has likewise intensified investment and trade ties. In early 2024, AD Ports Group — the operator of industrial towns and free zones in Abu Dhabi — purchased a controlling share (60 percent) in a major dry port in Tbilisi. Moreover, in January, Georgia and Saudi Arabia set up the Intergovernmental Coordination Council, aiming to advance investment and political cooperation.

New Trade Route for Eurasia

The logic here is clear. The GCC, one of the biggest global investors, sees the growing potential in the South Caucasus where the Eurasia-wide trade route, dubbed the Middle Corridor, is being developed. Envisaged as a corridor from the Black Sea to Central Asia, it is set to attract up to 20 percent of the containerized overland shipment between the EU and China.

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Cracks in Russia’s Influence in South Caucasus Offer Opening to Middle East

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The South Caucasus countries, on the other hand, look toward the Middle East countries as potential balancers in their struggle to limit Russia’s influence. A multivector foreign policy is an increasingly attractive tool to diversify their foreign policy. The larger the number of actors involved in the South Caucasus, the easier it is for the local countries to maneuver.

Other Middle East actors are also growing increasingly interested in the South Caucasus. Israel is one of them, enjoying close security and political ties with Azerbaijan. Spearheaded with Israeli military high-tech, Azerbaijani forces were quick to retake the lost territories in 2020 and again in 2023. More importantly, the Israeli factor worries Iran and bears heavily on Tehran’s relations with Azerbaijan, reflecting growing geopolitical links between the Middle East and the South Caucasus. There is also an energy component, with most of South Caucasus’ energy potential now tied to the Middle East. Turkey is a major benefactor, but there is also Israel, which is being supplied from Azerbaijan via Turkish Mediterranean ports.

Then there is growing connectivity. Pipelines from Azerbaijan to Turkey or the Middle Corridor are just part of shifting infrastructure in the South Caucasus, which has traditionally been directed toward Russia. The International North-South Trade Corridor that runs from Russia to Iran goes mostly via Azerbaijan. Iran is also actively engaging in discussion on another corridor to the Black Sea via Armenia and Georgia, while Turkey — as mentioned — pushes forward with its own plans to connect to Azerbaijan. In this race for new trade corridors, the tendency highlights the growing ties between the South Caucasus and the Middle East.

These expanding links lead to a peculiar development when geopolitical instability in the Middle East impacts the South Caucasus. Whether it is the war in Gaza or spiraling tensions between Iran and Israel, South Caucasus countries find themselves in a precarious position, as they are expected to take sides or position themselves as neutral. Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan or Azerbaijan and Iran equally invite Middle East powers to seek more active political involvement.

Thus, the age of exclusive Russian dominance in the South Caucasus has come to an end, opening the way for other actors. In a highly congested geopolitical area, Middle East powers now play an increasingly active role — a clear sign that the old order has ended and the new one is dawning.

Armenia Sending Signals that it Wants to Back Out of a Nuclear-Energy Deal with Russia

By Brawley Benson

The future of nuclear energy in Armenia is fast emerging as another flashpoint of acrimony between Armenian and Russian leaders.

The country’s aging Metsamor nuclear power plant, the first unit of which went online in 1976, is nearing the end of its lifespan. Armenia in late 2023 struck a deal with Russia to upgrade the facility and extend its operations until 2036. But with bilateral relations now experiencing a quick freeze, underscored by Armenia’s efforts to ice Russia out of the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process, officials in Yerevan are openly exploring other nuclear-energy options.

Metsamor’s two units generate about 40 percent of Armenia’s electricity needs, and the facility already received one upgrade in 2016 that extended its lifespan a decade. For much of the 21st century, it has been plagued by safety concerns. In late August, for example, the plant experienced a lightning strike forcing it to disconnect for several days from the country’s electricity grid as a safety precaution.

Consistent with Armenia’s continuing geopolitical pivot away from Russia toward the West, senior Armenians government officials began signaling in July that they were in discussions with US officials to build a new plant.

The first step in this process is to put in place what officials describe as a “legal framework.” The transfer of nuclear technology is heavily regulated under US law, and certain safeguards must be in place before any firm commitments are made and construction breaks ground.

“[We] cannot move forward without this legal framework,” said Armen Grigoryan, secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, in July. “At this point, I can say that the ball is in the United States’ court.”

In August, a State Department official con-

firmed to Armenian news agency CivilNet that the US government was considering Armenia’s request to sign a bilateral nuclear compact, known as a 123 Agreement, which would allow the United States to transfer nuclear technology to Armenia, as well as share research and technical knowledge. The deal would be contingent on Armenia’s adherence to specified nonproliferation principles.

The State Department did not respond to a Eurasianet request in time for publication seeking to clarify the timeline of its review of Armenia’s application.

Yerevan at this point has stopped short of confirming that a US firm will get the contract to build a new nuclear facility. Officials have hinted that they are keeping the door open for competitive bids from entities headquartered in China, France and even Russia. So far, Russian officials haven’t specifically commented on the potential US involvement in the construction of a new Armenian nuclear facility.

For Armenia, the new power plant represents an opportunity to both achieve a symbolic split from Russia and reduce very real concerns of energy dependence on the Kremlin. Armenia presently imports fossil fuels from Russia to meet 80 percent of its energy needs, according to the International Energy Agency.

“Nuclear energy stands as a cornerstone in our strategy, ensuring both the energy security of our nation and the mitigation of climate change,” said Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels in March.

(Brawley Benson is a Tbilisi-based reporter and recent graduate of the Columbia Journalism School who writes about Russia and the countries around it. This article originally appeared on September 5 on www.eurasianet.org.)



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