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Tavush Movement Relaunches Anti- Government Protests

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — The Holy Struggle movement, formerly known as Tavush for the Motherland, has held its first rally in months — this time demanding airtime on Armenia’s public broadcaster to announce the resumption of their protests.

On the evening of October 2, Holy Struggle hosted a rally in Yerevan’s Republic Square, which, according to calculations by local civil society organizations, was attended by around 1,900 people.

Holy Struggle, formerly the Tavush for the Motherland movement, was founded



Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan in Yerevan on October 6. (Yerevan.Today Facebook Photo)

in protest against the border delimitation with Azerbaijan, which began in Tavush, a province located on the border, in April. The movement gradually grew into a series of anti-government protests demanding Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s resignation. The demonstrations were attended by thousands of people, an unprecedented number since the 2018 revolution.

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Vardanyan Is Being Tortured by Azerbaijani Captors, No Trial in Sight, He Tells Family

TBILISI (Reuters) — Lawyers for Ruben Vardanyan, a former top official in the Armenian administration of Nagorno-Karabakh who is now detained in Azerbaijan, on Thursday, October 3, filed legal actions in Baku alleging he had been tortured and denied the right to a speedy trial.

Azerbaijani officials declined to comment on the lawsuits.

Vardanyan was arrested and jailed along with several other top Karabakh officials following a lightning offensive by Baku’s forces in September 2023 to recapture Nagorno-Karabakh, part of Azerbaijan that had been under the control of its ethnic Armenian population since the early 1990s.

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PHOTO COURTESY PHOTO CRYSTAL, BERDJ MERDJANIAN.

MONTREAL — Delegates assembled for the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada 37th convention at the Montreal Tekeyan Center on October 5. Details of the meetings and banquet with photos will be forthcoming in next week’s issue.

Discoveries of Prehistoric Shoes, Winery, And More Unveiled at Boston Talks

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE/BELMONT — Some years ago, when the topic of the prehistory of the Armenian highlands came up, the first things that would come to mind might be the megalithic structures of “the Armenian Stonehenge” — Karahunj or Zorats Karer near Sisian, Armenia, or various petroglyphs (rock carvings).

More recently, Armenia has become famous for the site of the oldest leather shoe and the oldest winery discovered in the world, a cave known as Areni-1.

Furthermore, it seems the Armenian highlands and Georgia contain sites which hold the oldest evidence of humans leaving Africa, and also sites where *Homo sapiens* interacted with Neanderthals.

A Cambridge Science Festival archaeology panel, titled “More than Bones,” at Harvard University’s Science Center on September 23, addressed these topics and more, while Areni-1 was discussed a second time at greater length at a September 26 lecture titled “Treasures of Areni-1 Cave,” at the National Association

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Ani Adigoyzalyan with a slide of the famous ancient leather shoe at her Cambridge talk (photo Aram Arkun)

Bicameral Letter to Blinken Ahead of COP29 Urging US to Hold Azerbaijan Accountable For Crimes Imperils Relations

WASHINGTON/BAKU (Combined Sources) — A bicameral letter spearheaded by Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr (D-NJ) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) to Secretary of State Antony Blinken ahead of the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in November, urged the Biden administration to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its human rights abuses, release all prisoners of war, and take measures to ensure Armenia’s territorial integrity.

Signed by 60 members of the House and Senate, the letter takes a stern tone and does not mince words:

“As COP29 approaches, we request that the State Department press Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and the Government of Azerbaijan to take tangible measures that support regional peace, uphold human rights protections, and adhere to international laws and norms. We urge the State Department to press for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, hostages and POWs, including ethnic Armenians, to enable a more conducive environment for successful diplomacy at COP29,” the letter notes, in part.

“Azerbaijan’s record on human rights remains deeply concerning, with no improvement noted by watchdogs. Human Rights Watch has consistently reported Azerbaijan’s ‘appalling human rights record,’ with abuses escalating unabated through 2023. Freedom House ranks Azerbaijan with a ‘democracy percentage’ of 1 percent and a ‘global freedom score’ of 7 out of 100.3 The State Department’s most recent Human Rights Report

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VATICAN

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian Attends Synod of Catholic Bishops

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ARMENIA

Robert Askaryan: The Artist And His Exhibition in the Tekeyan Center and in His Friend’s Yerevan Studio

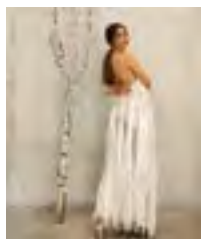
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ARMENIA

Emerging Fashion Designers from Armenia Gain Recognition

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NEWS from ARMENIA

Genocide Memorial to Remain Open during Renovations

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Renovation work has commenced at the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex (Tsitsernakaberd).

Approximately 743 million drams have been allocated from the state budget for the renovations.

The first stage is expected to be completed before the commemorations of the 110th genocide anniversary in April 2025.

The memorial and museum will remain open to visitors and official delegations during the renovations.

Khachaturyan Attends Hamburg Sustainability Conference

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — During a visit to Germany on October 8, Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan took part in the official opening ceremony of the Hamburg Sustainability Conference, his office reported.

The opening of the conference was followed by a working dinner of the Presidents of the participating countries with Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz.

During the working dinner, issues related to opportunities and ways to solve problems of global peace, stability, security and development were discussed.

Yerevan Rejects Baku's Accusation of 'Mass Militarization'

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Yerevan on October 7 rejected allegations from Azerbaijan accusing Armenia of "mass militarization."

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan once again referred to the acquisition of weapons and equipment by Armenia, calling it mass militarization.

"If we compare the military expenditures of Armenia and Azerbaijan both in terms of absolute numbers, proportion, and the types of weapons purchased, we will see who is carrying out mass militarization," Armenian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Anna Badalyan said in response to a media inquiry.

"On the contrary, the top leadership of Armenia declares that it is not going to adopt a security concept based only on the army, and considers the regulation of relations with its neighbors and the establishment of peace in the region to be an important part of its security concept. And the top leadership of Azerbaijan declares that their main task is to strengthen military capabilities.

"Armenia has repeatedly proposed to Azerbaijan — and is still proposing — to create mutual arms control mechanisms, and Azerbaijan leaves this proposal unanswered, instead adopting an aggressive rhetoric towards the Republic of Armenia. The Republic of Armenia has no offensive agenda other than defending itself against possible aggressions," she concluded.

Armenian PM Visits France to Attend Francophonie Conference

PARIS (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan praised France for supporting Armenia on the international stage when he met with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on Thursday, October 3, ahead of a summit of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF).

An Armenian government statement on the talks said Macron reaffirmed that "unconditional support" and his readiness to further deepen French-Armenian relations.

According to the statement, the two leaders discussed not only bilateral ties but also the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, with Pashinyan once again reiterating his desire to sign an initial peace deal with Azerbaijan. Macron was reported to back Yerevan's peace efforts as well as his position on the opening of direct transport links between the two South Caucasus states.

The French presidential Elysee Palace did not immediately release a readout of the talks.

Addressing the UN General Assembly in New York last week, Macron said France "stands firmly" with Armenia "in the face of pressure from Azerbaijan." The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry denounced the remark, saying that Paris must end its "unconstructive actions in our region" and stop "heavily arming" Armenia.

Visiting Yerevan earlier in September,



French President Emmanuel Macron meets with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Paris, October 3, 2024.

then French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne defended France's deepening military ties with Armenia. He also urged Baku to reciprocate Yerevan's desire to promptly sign the peace deal.

Armenia joined the OIF under its previous government. It hosted a summit of the loose grouping of over three dozen mostly French-speaking nations in 2018.

The Francophonie conference took place in the city of Villers-Cotterêts, the new international town of the French language, on

Friday, October 4.

The 19th Summit of the Francophonie is being held in France this year for the first time in 33 years.

The leaders of the OIF member states posed for a family photo, and at the opening of the summit, Macron, the President of Tunisia Kais Saied, OIF Secretary General Louise Mushikiwabo delivered speeches. Within the framework of the event, the chairmanship of the OIF was transferred from Tunisia to France.

Tavush Movement Relaunches Anti-Government Protests

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Their new name, Holy Struggle (Srbazan Paykar) features a play on words, with "srbazan" being the traditional way by which to address an archbishop, such as the movement's leader. It also refers to the movement's so-called 'holy' goal to save Armenia.

Wednesday's rally was the first led by the movement since June. That month, more than 100 people, including several police officers, were injured outside the parliament building in Yerevan after police deployed stun grenades to quash the protests. Following this, the movement seemed to gradually become less active.

In his official speech, Galstanyan announced that Holy Struggle would continue to protest until the government resigned. He also called Armenia's Public TV a "hotbed of propaganda" and a "den of evil."

"We will go there with the demand for a live broadcasting, so that the voice of truth can be heard from there," Galstanyan said. He stated that this would be the first demand of the resumed protests, after which they would decide their next steps.

This move echoed one made by Pashinyan and his supporters in 2018. At that time, during anti-government protests, they forced their way into Armenia's public radio station, and demanded a broadcast by which to make an address to the public.

As the protesters marched to the Armenian Public TV building to state their demands, the broadcaster announced that they were ready 'to host Bagrat Galstanyan or any of the leaders of the movement live in an interview format'.

The broadcaster also noted that since the movement's founding, they had repeatedly sent invitations to its leaders, but had mostly received rejections. They claimed that 'those who did not refuse the interview were hosted on our air.'

After arriving at the station, in front of which were stationed a large number of police, negotiations took place between the head of the station, Hovhannes Movsisyan, and the movement's leaders. While they deliberated, the TV station aired a show featuring host Petros Ghazaryan watching the ongoing negotiations and providing commentary throughout.

Eventually, in a compromise, the station agreed to interview Galstanyan that evening. In the first half of the broadcast, Galstanyan delivered a live address to the Armenian public, during which he criticized the government and called on the

public to join Holy Struggle in a second rally, held on October 6 in Yerevan's Republic Square.

During the interview portion of the broadcast, Galstanyan refused to answer any questions put to him by the show's host. He accused the TV of bias, and claimed that he only stayed for the remainder of the show out of respect to the compromise they had negotiated.

Previously, in September, Galstanyan met with opposition factions in the parliament, as well as with former Armenian presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan.

UN Population Fund Head Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Florence Bauer, the Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), this week made her first official visit to Armenia from October 8 to 10.

"This landmark visit underscores the United Nations Population Fund's commitment to supporting the Government of Armenia and other partners in strengthening demographic resilience and implementing Armenia's new demographic strategy, and addressing pressing challenges related to sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and youth empowerment," UNFPA Armenia office said.

During the visit, Bauer engaged in high-level discussions with government officials, parliament members, the Human Rights Defender, donor representatives, and non-governmental organizations to explore strategies for long-term solutions and for enhancing Armenia's demographic resilience in the face of rapid population changes.

A key focus of the visit was the development of UNFPA's Country Program Document for Armenia for 2026-2030.

UNFPA's visit to Armenia represents a pivotal moment for fostering stronger partnerships and for accelerating progress toward a more resilient, more equitable and healthier future for all Armenians.



Florence Bauer

Inaugural Intl. CMC Conference Kicks off in Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The International CMC Conference, one of the most significant events for Armenian consulting and business communities, kicked off on October 7.

Representatives of leading global consulting companies and esteemed speakers from various countries have arrived in Armenia for the conference. The CMC Conference has become a platform for the exchange of expertise, fostering global collaboration, and promoting professional development, featuring masterclasses and panel discussions with top consultants.

Ucom is the technological partner of the prominent International CMC Conference. Within the scope of the cooperation, the General Director of Ucom Ralph Yirikian joined the event as a speaker sharing his expertise on “The Intersection of Technology and Sustainability.”

“As a telecommunication company, Ucom interacts with innovative technologies every day. Today, technological de-

velopment is an essential part of our lives, and telecommunications is the field that makes technology accessible to everyone. However, environmental sustainability is also vital for us, and through our corporate responsibility projects, we strive to unite these two priorities.”- said Ralph Yirikian, General Director of Ucom.

The agenda of the International CMC Conference is tailored to engage management consultants from all sub-specialties, business representatives interested in the field, consulting firms, and various enterprises.

“It is an honor to host such a prestigious event in Armenia — the International CMC Conference. I am confident that our participants will have significant takeaways from the event and will establish new collaborations and opportunities. Such international events promote the development of the country’s consulting and business communities and create a valuable platform for exchanging new

ideas, fostering cooperation, and forming new partnerships. Our goal is to exchange knowledge and create values that will have long-term significance,” emphasized Silva Mesropyan, IMC Armenia Executive Director.

Joseph Wozniak, head of Trade for Sustainable Development at ITC, gave a speech on “Traceability and Digitalization: The Future of Compliance, Sustainability, and Due Diligence in Business.”

David Yang, Ph.D., a serial entrepreneur from Silicon Valley, delivered a talk headlined as “AI Agents and Humanoid Robots: A New Race on Planet Earth.”

Leonid Kirakosyan, a partner at McKinsey’s Zurich office, spoke about digital transformation, while Lars Sudmann, a leadership consultant, shared valuable insights on fostering sustainability and digitalization within companies.

Sanovbar Ayubova, Wesley Paterson, Dancho Dimkov, Nick Warn and many other distinguished speakers contributed

to talks during the conference and panel discussions.

The conference agenda also includes panel discussions that will cover topics like the transformation of industries through AI, the dynamics of the future workforce, customer engagement, sustainable investments, business ethics, digitalization, and other trendy business areas.

Detailed information about speakers and topics is available on the event’s official website.

The International CMC Conference with the tagline “Digital Horizons: Innovations for a Sustainable Tomorrow,” was organized by the Institute of Management Consulting (IMC Armenia).

On October 9, as a highlight of the International CMC Conference, Armenia hosted the “Constantinus” International Award ceremony, often regarded as the Academy Awards of the consulting industry. The ceremony will honor projects offering innovative solutions in consulting from around the globe, including projects and companies from Armenia.

Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology Appoints Suzanna Shamakhyan as Executive Director, Expands Board of Directors

YEREVAN — The Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST) announced the appointment of Suzanna Shamakhyan as executive director, effective January 1, 2025, following a decision by the Foundation’s Board of Trustees. The current CEO of the Foundation, Armen Orujyan, is joining the FAST Board of Trustees, continuing to contribute to the Foundation’s mission as a member of the Board.

Suzanna has been with FAST for over six years, initially serving as Vice President of Partnerships and later as Vice President of Strategic Programming. Her expertise, deep understanding of FAST’s mission, and strong leadership have been key in shaping and implementing several strategic initiatives, including the Generation AI program.

Dr. Noubar Afeyan, FAST co-founder and member of the Board of Trustees stated, “Suzanna is a capable leader who has helped propel FAST toward its goal of building an ecosystem that drives innovation and scientific advancement in Armenia and beyond. She is well positioned to lead FAST into its next chapter of impact and will build on the strong foundation established by Armen Orujyan, who we thank for his dedication and commitment to FAST.”

Shamakhyan brings more than 12 years of experience in education management and internationalization. Thanks to her efforts, institutional collaborations have been established between Armenia and various institutions across more than 40 countries. Throughout her career, Suzanna has implemented programs that have impacted over 17,000 young people and more than

500 educators and researchers.

“I vividly recall the day FAST first announced its launch. I was truly inspired to see such influential people prioritizing the investment into Armenia’s future with such a bold, long-term vision. My years with Armen and the FAST team have been an incredible journey, and it is with a sense of high responsibility that I assume the role of FAST’s Executive Director. I deeply appreciate the trust and support extended by our entire community. With our collective efforts, I am confident FAST will enter a new phase of growth — strengthening our partnerships and expanding cooperation with the diaspora, and doing targeted work to achieve our mission,” said Shamakhyan. As FAST enters a new phase of transformation and growth, its Board of Trustees will expand to welcome new members.

Joining the existing board members – Dr. Noubar Afeyan, Artur Alaverdyan, Ingrid Hengster, and André Andonian – will be Raffi Festekjian, Managing Partner of NurArca, Talar Kazanjian, Executive Director of the Afeyan Initiatives For Armenia, and Dr. Armen Orujyan, the Founding CEO of FAST, who led the foundation during its first seven years of operation.

FAST was founded in 2017 with the aim of creating a favorable ecosystem to promote technological innovation and scientific advancement in Armenia. FAST develops and pilots programs with the potential for a long-term, sustainable impact on Armenia’s science, technology, and innovation ecosystem. Over its seven years of operation, the foundation has implemented 26 programs and impacted more than 15,000 direct beneficiaries.



From left, Armen Orujyan, Suzanna Shamakhyan, Dr. Noubar Afeyan

Vardanyan Is Being Tortured by Azerbaijani Captors, No Trial in Site, He Tells Family

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In a statement, Vardanyan’s lawyers said one of the cases related to treatment that constituted torture during a hunger strike he mounted in April 2024.

They said that in response Vardanyan was placed in a punishment cell, forced to stand, forbidden to bathe, and deprived of water for two days.

In another action, Vardanyan’s lawyers said that his right to a speedy trial had been violated by his detention since last year. A separate lawsuit accuses a Russian-language Azerbaijani newspaper, the Baku Worker, of defaming Vardanyan.

Baku is gearing up to host the COP29 climate change conference in November. In the run-up to the event, it is expected to face increased scrutiny of its human rights record, including the jailing of journalists and activists which has drawn concern from the United States and the European Union.

Its military victory in Karabakh last year brought an end to a separatist conflict that had begun before the Soviet Union broke up in 1991.

Virtually all of the territory’s 100,000 or so ethnic Armenians have now fled to Armenia, while some ethnic Azeris, hundreds of thousands of whom had previously fled homes in and around Karabakh, have returned.

In the statement, Vardanyan’s lawyers urged Azerbaijan to release all Karabakh Armenian prisoners held in the country before the summit begins.

A billionaire banker who was born in Armenia before making his fortune in Russia, Vardanyan moved to Nagorno-Karabakh in 2022, and was appointed to the number-two position in the breakaway region’s government shortly after.

He resigned from government in February 2023, during a ten-month blockade of the territory by Azerbaijan.

INTERNATIONAL

Karabakh Doc. Wins Top Prize at Festival

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Shoghakat Vardanyan's documentary, "1489," which follows the director's family after her brother goes missing in action, won the best feature-length film prize at the 12th International Documentary Film Festival of Buenos Aires (FIDBA).

The award was handed to Armenian Ambassador to Argentina Hovhannes Virabyan, the embassy reported on October 6.

The documentary revolves around the disappearance of the filmmaker's 21-year-old brother, in the early days of the Artsakh war in 2020.

Azerbaijan Hosts Anti-French Conference

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan last week hosted an anti-French conference, according to local media reports, on October 4.

Titled "French Policy of Neocolonialism in Africa," the conference focused on what Azerbaijan's describes as Paris' "continued meddling in the affairs of its former colonies in Africa."

In the past year, Azerbaijan has launched an "anti-colonial" disinformation campaign against France. An RFE/RL investigation discovered in June that several individuals with links to Azerbaijan's ruling party were involved in what appeared to have been a coordinated social media campaign targeting France over the unrest in the French-ruled Pacific island of New Caledonia.

Yerevan Refuses to Join CIS Statements

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan on October 7 refused to endorse statements by his Russian and other ex-Soviet counterparts denouncing Western sanctions against Russia and calling for a "multipolar" international security architecture.

They adopted the statements at a meeting in Moscow held on the eve of a summit of the leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The press office of the CIS Secretariat in Minsk said one of the documents deplores "unilateral restrictive measures" taken by unnamed nations or blocs for the purpose of "forcing another state to change its policy." It singles out the freezing or confiscation of that state's assets or restrictions on its citizens' freedom of travel. Such sanctions violate international law and the UN Charter in particular, according to the statement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stressed its importance at a news conference held after the ministerial meeting.

"The United States and its satellites are trying to expand sanctions in the form of so-called secondary and tertiary illegal sanctions [against third states]," he said. "We know how to counter that criminal activity."



Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan, Moscow, October 8, 2024.

Putin Meets Armenian, Azeri Leaders in Moscow

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russian President Vladimir Putin held separate talks with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Moscow on Tuesday, October 8, after apparently failing to organize a trilateral meeting with them.

Putin met with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on the sidelines of a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit.

Russia's official TASS news agency reported ahead of the talks that the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict will be high on their agenda. But Putin did not mention the issue in his opening remarks publicized by the Kremlin, speaking instead about Russia's bilateral ties with Armenia and Azerbaijan. He said, in particular, that Russian-Armenian trade is on course to reach a new record this year.

Speaking to journalists earlier in the day,

Putin's foreign policy aide, Yury Ushakov, indicated that Moscow tried to arrange a trilateral meeting of the Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders.

"No, there has been no agreement about a three-party meeting. There was such an idea, but it was not backed by anyone," Ushakov said without elaborating.

Azerbaijani media claimed earlier that Yerevan has refused to hold Russian-mediated talks with Baku during the CIS summit. The Armenian government did not refute the claim.

Putin offered to help Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate a peace deal when he visited Baku in August. Pashinyan effectively declined the offer, saying that he prefers direct negotiations with Baku. He also complained about Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's "totally baseless" criticism of Yerevan's position on Armenian-Azerbaijani transport links.

Yerevan also rejected similar Russian initiatives earlier this year amid mounting tensions with Moscow. It has been far more open to peace talks with Baku mediated or arranged by Western powers.

Pashinyan's most recent meeting with Aliyev was organized by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Munich in February. And US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hosted talks between the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in July and September.

Moscow has been very critical of the Western mediation, saying that its main purpose is to drive Russia out of the South Caucasus, rather than end the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Ushakov on Monday accused the United States and the European Union of "trying to wedge themselves into the process of working on a peace treaty" between the two South Caucasus states.

HRW and Freedom House Slam Azerbaijan for Vicious Assault on Critics ahead of COP29

NEW YORK (Public Radio of Armenia) — Azerbaijan is carrying out a vicious attack on government critics, independent groups, and media, Human Rights Watch and Freedom Now said in a joint report released on October 8.

The crackdown has intensified just months before Azerbaijan is to host COP29, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which opens in Baku on November 11, 2024.

The 74-page report, "'We Try to Stay Invisible': Azerbaijan's Escalating Crackdown on Critics and Civil Society," documents the government's concerted efforts to decimate civil society and silence its critics. The authorities have arrested dozens of people on politically motivated, bogus criminal charges.

They have also arbitrarily enforced repressive laws that push independent groups and media to the margins of the law, heightening their vulnerability to retaliatory criminal prosecution. The groups documented 33 prominent cases of criminal prosecution, detention, and harassment. They found that Azerbaijani authorities have deliberately misused laws regulating nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to deny certain groups registration and funding, exposing people affiliated with them to criminal charges.

"The Azerbaijani government's contempt

for civic freedoms is putting independent groups and critical media on the path of extinction," said Giorgi Gogia, associate Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "This is not the image the government should be projecting of itself on the eve of COP29. It is not too late for the government to improve its reputation by freeing imprisoned critics and immediately ending the use of spurious charges against civil society, but it needs to act now."

Human Rights Watch and Freedom Now interviewed more than 40 Azerbaijani lawyers, detainees' relatives, and staff and leaders of nongovernmental organizations. They reviewed rules and regulations relating to NGOs in Azerbaijan, legal documents relevant to specific criminal cases, European Court of Human Rights judgments, and other documents.

Under international law, the Azerbaijani government has obligations to protect the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. This includes the ability to form a legal entity to act collectively in a field of mutual interest. The European Court of Human Rights has issued numerous judgments finding that the Azerbaijani government's failure to register independent NGOs violated the right to freedom of association. In at least one of these cases, the court found that authorities restricted rights with the "ulterior purpose" of pun-

ishing the applicants for their human rights activities.

"The government should immediately ensure that independent groups can carry out their legitimate work without interference, including by repealing repressive laws regulating independent groups and the media, the groups said. The government should also immediately and unconditionally release all those behind bars on politically motivated charges," the report says.

"Ahead of COP29, member states and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) should emphasize to Azerbaijani authorities the importance of a thriving and independent civil society to realize ambitious climate action. They should stress that all individuals and groups should be free to call for and scrutinize climate action before, during, and after the conference," it notes.

"Through a combination of unjust detention and restrictive NGO rules, the Azerbaijani government is trying to eradicate civil society," said Andrea Prasow, executive director of Freedom Now. "In this critical time before COP29, states and UN officials should urgently call on Azerbaijan to immediately and unconditionally free arbitrarily detained activists and commit to upholding human rights at COP29 and beyond."

INTERNATIONAL

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian Attends Synod of Catholic Bishops in Vatican

VATICAN — The 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is being held at the Vatican from October 2 to 26. This historic assembly, known as the “Synod on Synodality,” gathers more than 400 participants, including bishops, priests, religious and laypeople, to reflect on how the Church can become more inclusive and participatory in its mission and governance.

The Synod aims to explore how the Catholic Church can further embody the spirit of synodality — “walking together” — by fostering deep collaboration among all its members. Pope Francis has underscored the importance of listening to the laity, and marginalized groups, alongside clergy. He emphasized that this process is not about furthering individual agendas but about discerning together how the church can best serve the world in line with its mission.

Pope Francis’ vision for this synodal Church centers on greater collaboration between bishops and laypeople, drawing from the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and seeking to address



A scene from the assembly

contemporary challenges. The presence of lay delegates, especially women, at this Synod marks a significant step forward in promoting more inclusive decision-making within the Church.

The 2024 Synod’s agenda includes: strengthening the role of laypeople in church leadership and decision-making; addressing clericalism by promoting a more humble, service-oriented model of leadership; the role of women in the Church, with a focus on expanding their leadership

roles; and missionary outreach, focusing on how the Church can better support marginalized communities and be a voice for justice and reconciliation. The Synod is intended not just to reflect but to inspire concrete steps toward becoming a more inclusive, synodal, and mission-oriented Church.

An important feature of this Synod is the participation of fraternal delegates from various Christian traditions, highlighting the ecumenical dimension of this gathering. Among these delegates is Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, the representative of the Armenian Church to the Holy See, who is attending the meetings as a “Delegato Fraternal” on behalf of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II. His presence reflects the broader spirit of ecumenical collaboration, emphasizing the importance of unity and cooperation between Christian communities in ad-

ressing shared challenges. At the opening session of the Synod, Archbishop Barsamian had the opportunity to convey the greetings and good wishes of Catholicos Karekin.

As the Synod continues, it is clear that this gathering is a vital step toward the church’s renewal. The discussions and reflections from this assembly will shape the future of the church’s governance, pastoral priorities and missionary outreach. The final report, expected after the Synod’s conclusion, will guide the church as it seeks to implement more synodal forms of leadership and engagement at all levels. The Synod’s proceedings, which will extend through 2025, are expected to provide lasting contributions to the church’s mission of fostering communion, participation and evangelization in an increasingly complex and divided world.



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian speaking with Pope Francis

Bicameral Letter to Blinken Ahead of COP29 Urging US to Hold Azerbaijan Accountable for Crimes

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corroborates these findings, detailing unlawful killings, torture, and severe restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association,” the letter goes on to say.

“Azerbaijan’s deadly attack in Nagorno Karabakh in 2020, the 10-month blockade of the Lachin Corridor and the September 2023 cleansing of ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh blatantly violated international law and led to significant and continued human suffering. The sustained blockade violated a February 2023 order by the International Court of Justice requiring “unimpeded movement . . . along the Lachin Corridor,” the members of Congress wrote.

“Despite overwhelming evidence and international condemnation, Azerbaijan has not faced meaningful consequences for the ethnic cleansing and other actions. Additionally, as of the end of 2023, Azerbaijan had detained several of Nagorno-Karabakh’s political leaders and at least 23 prisoners of war; many others were unaccounted for or captured, some of whom were extrajudicially killed by Azerbaijani soldiers or law enforcement. Azerbaijan must take immediate action to address its poor human rights track record ahead of COP29. Additionally, we urge the State Department to condemn Azerbaijan’s harmful rhetoric criticizing Armenia’s right to self-defense. Azerbaijan has made false and inflammatory allegations that Armenia is preparing for war against Azerbaijan,” it added.

“Additionally, the U.S. should use all

opportunities presented during COP29 to promote a just, durable and dignified peace in the region—particularly in light of Azerbaijan’s recent refusal to sign a preliminary peace treaty with Armenia. Support for human rights, the promotion of regional security, and the preservation of Armenia’s sovereign integrity are crucial not only to uphold our own commitment to democratic ideals, but also to carry out an effective multilateral climate conference.

“The upcoming COP29 in Azerbaijan offers a unique opportunity to promote clean energy and regional cooperation, but it is critical for the United States to address the significant challenges posed by ongoing human rights violations and unresolved territorial conflicts in Azerbaijan. By taking these steps to address Azerbaijan’s detention of political prisoners, hostages, and prisoners of war, as well as deescalate inflammatory accusations against Armenia, the State Department can help ensure that COP29 focuses on sustainable development and genuinely aids clean energy, climate, and economic progress in a region marked by complex diplomatic challenges and untapped potential,” the letter concluded.

The letter was cosigned by Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Senators Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Gary Peters (D-MI), Jack Reed (D-RI), Jacklyn Rosen (D-NV), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Peter Welch (D-VT), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Representatives Gabe Amo (D-RI), Jake Auchincloss (D-MA),

Joyce Beatty (D-OH), Donald Beyer (D-VA), Tony Cárdenas (D-CA), Greg Casar (D-TX), Sean Casten (D-IL), Kathy Castor (D-FL), Joaquin Castro (D-TX), Judy Chu (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Danny Davis (D-IL), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), Anna Eschew (D-CA), Daniel Goldman (D-NY), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Jonathan Jackson (D-IL), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Daniel Kildee (D-MI), John Larson (D-CT), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Susie Lee (D-NV), Mike Levin (D-CA), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Seth Magaziner (D-RI), James McGovern (D-MA), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Grace Meng (D-NY), Kevin Mullin (D-CA), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Scott Peters (D-CA), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Janice Schakowsky (D-IL), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Bradley Schneider (D-IL), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Haley Stevens (D-MI), Thomas Suozzi (D-NY), Dina Titus (D-NV), Lori Trahan (D-MA), David Valadao (R-CA).

Azerbaijani Reaction

Upon the release of the letter, a story in OC-Media on October 5 noted that 43 Azerbaijani Members of Parliament have appealed to Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov to ‘review’ the country’s relationship with the US, including pulling out of several military agreements.

The MPs signed the statement on that day demanding Bayramov terminate the

Joint Declaration on Future Military and Defense Cooperation, signed in 1997, and the Agreement on the Acquisition of Equipment and Mutual Services, signed in 2013.

They also demanded an immediate stop to any ongoing negotiations on new agreements and the suspension of all projects implemented by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and other US-based organizations.

“We urge the State Department to press for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, hostages, and POWs, including ethnic Armenians, to enable a more conducive environment for successful diplomacy at COP29,” the statement read.

On October 4, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev commented on the letter before parliament.

“This morning, I glanced through that appeal; it is a dirty appeal that cannot influence our will,” he said.

He also alleged that the real author behind the appeal was the US Department of State itself.

“In other words, they are writing letters to themselves to threaten us, to accuse us. After all, what have we done? We have liberated our native lands. Is there an Armenian living here? No, you, the residents of Jabrayil are,” he said.

According to Azerbaijani MP Erkin Gadirli, who did not sign the appeal to Bayramov, the US, as well as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, have “slandered Azerbaijan.”

Community News

Dr. David Zakarian to Speak about Portrayal Of Women in Early Armenian Literature

FRESNO — Dr. David Zakarian, will give his inaugural presentation as Haig & Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies on the topic of “The Portrayal of Women in Early Armenian Literature: Rereading the Classical Texts,” on Thursday, October 17, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center (5245 N Backer Ave.), Alice Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus.

The richness of native literary texts and translations produced by the Armenians in the fifth century CE prompted the Mekhitarist fathers to characterize that century as the “Golden Age” of Armenian literature. This lecture explores the portrayal of women in the most influential texts from this period, evaluating how they present women’s roles within the context of the church and society,



Dr. David Zakarian

reflecting cultural, theological, and social attitudes of the time. A critical examination of these narratives will extend beyond historical analysis, drawing connections to contemporary discussions of gender roles in Armenia. Ultimately, the presentation seeks to highlight the enduring implications of the misinterpretations of these early portrayals and how they have shaped views on women’s roles today.

Zakarian received his DPhil in Oriental Studies from St. Antony’s College, University of Oxford. His dissertation was titled “The Representation of Women in Early Christian Literature: Armenian Texts of the Fifth Century.” He has extensive experience teaching classical and modern Armenian and the focus of his research is on the representation of women in early Christian Armenian sources, as well as the colophons of medieval Armenian manuscripts. He is the co-editor of *Armenia Through the Lens of Time: Multidisciplinary Studies in Honour of Theo Maarten van Lint* (Brill, 2022) and the author of *Women, Too, Were Blessed: The Portrayal of Women in Early Christian Armenian Texts, Armenian Texts and Studies Series* (Brill, 2021)

Admission to the lecture is free. Parking is free, but a parking code is required, and is available at the venue.

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



Marta Batmasian

Marta Batmasian Receives ‘Appeal of Conscience Award’

NEW YORK — On September 23, the Appeal of Conscience Foundation held its 59th annual awards dinner at the Pierre Hotel in New York City. The program — which featured leaders in the religious, civic, business, and diplomatic fields — turned out to be a very Armenian affair.

This year’s prestigious “Appeal of Conscience Award” was conferred on two individuals: Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, leader of the Greek Orthodox Church in the US, who has been a great friend and supporter of the Armenian Church and community; and Marta Batmasian, businesswoman and longtime benefactor of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, whose humanitarian efforts with her husband James have benefitted numerous Armenian projects in the homeland and diaspora. She received the award “for her commitment to religious freedom, global and community philanthropy benefiting education, the underserved and humanity.”

Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan offered an invocation prayer, and former Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian (and vice president of the AOC foundation) gave a gracious introduction to the honoree Batmasian.

The foundation’s founder and longtime president, Rabbi Arthur Schneier, has been a friend and close associate of the Eastern Diocese and its leaders since the 1960s. At his advanced age, he was unable to take part in this year’s function.

A New York-based humanitarian organization, the Appeal of Conscience Foundation has advocated throughout the world on behalf of human rights and religious freedom since its inception in 1965 by Rabbi Schneier. The Eastern Diocese has long played an active leadership role in the organization under the tenures of Diocesan Primate’s Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Archbishop Barsamian and Bishop Daniel Findikyan.

Since her arrival in the United States in 1970, Batmasian has exemplified the true spirit of the American immigrant. Her journey is marked by significant achievements across education, business, politics, and community service, driven by a deep commitment to giving back.

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At the Appeal of Conscience Foundation’s 59th awards dinner, 2024 honorees Marta Batmasian and Abp. Elpidophoros (holding awards) are flanked by program speakers (at left) Abp. Khajag Barsamian, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, John Catsimatidis, and (right) foundation executive vice president Karen Schneier Dresbach.

New Jersey Armenians Host Reception for Rep. Kean

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

A fundraising reception to support the re-election of New Jersey Rep. Tom Kean Jr. (D-7th District), was held at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Larry and Magda Najarian on June 29. The event was co-hosted by John Mardirosian, Armen Morian, Esq., Souren A. Israelyan, Esq.

The event provided attendees with an opportunity to speak directly with the first-term incumbent.

He discussed a myriad of domestic and international issues, including matters that directly impact the lives and safety of Armenians in the homeland and refugees from Artsakh. Among the dignitaries and advocates in attendance from the Armenian community were Bryan Ardouny, present in a personal capacity, and Gev Iskajyan, National Grassroots Director for the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

“Many in our community have asked how we can garner more Congressional support for issues important to Armenians in the U.S. and abroad,” said Najarian. “It is a daunting task to assemble the support of several hundred Representatives who are needed to pass legislation favorable to the Armenian cause. However, the process begins at a grassroots level. It begins with each of us supporting and educating our local representatives. If we all do this in our respective communities, we can build a coalition of support to help ensure a better future for Armenia and the diaspora. For this reason, I am grateful for your contribution and continued support of our activities.”

Kean’s advocacy for Armenia and Artsakh-related humanitarian causes, as well as his support of issues that are of great importance to Armenian-Americans, comes at a critical time when Armenia’s adversaries direct their endless resources of capital and political influence in a campaign intent on dismantling and eradicating Armenia and its Christian population.

Kean was appointed Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), which has jurisdiction over Armenia and the South Caucasus. Last Fall, he delivered the opening statement during the Europe Subcommittee Hearing on Nagorno-Karabakh, titled *The Future of Nagorno-Karabakh*, stating, “The use of force by Azerbaijan against Armenia is completely and totally unacceptable.”

Since assuming office in 2023, Kean has been proactively involved in defending the Armenian cause. Most notably, he co-sponsored House Resolution 108, condemning Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and ongoing human rights violations. Kean also joined the Congressional Caucus on Armenian issues, voted

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Eduard Mirzoian Is 2024 Ladder Award Winner

BIRMINGHAM, Mich. (Restoration and Remediation Magazine) — Four years ago, the R&R [Restoration and Remediation company] team launched the Ladder Award with the goal of recognizing rising young professionals in restoration, who are blazing new trails with innovative leadership, ideas, and technological advancements. [Restoration and remediation includes but is not limited to water and fire damage restoration, mold remediation, catastrophe response and business management.] Ladder Award nominees can come from any background as long as they have had an impact within their company. Each nominee is to exhibit qualities such as leadership, career progress, community involvement, and a clear passion for the industry. Most importantly, nominees should exhibit evidence of high character, integrity, and care for their colleagues and clients.



Eduard Mirzoian, left, and above, the Restorerz team

This knowledge aided in his leadership style in helping him understand the processes and procedures of different positions in the restoration industry leading to him forming a formidable workflow and system for his company and employees. Leadership is Eduard's passion. Not

so he can just say that, he is the boss, but because he truly loves to pour positivity into others and see them be successful in whatever their goals are both personally and professionally.

"Seeing the results of the energy and efforts that I'm putting in, and how it's influencing everyone around me and their

families. That's the best part of being a leader," he said.

In Eduard's free time, he enjoys playing and watching sports with his family and friends, going to the track with his brother who is a car enthusiast, which got him into cars as well, and spending quality time with his wife and baby boy.

Each nomination is carefully scored by a set of industry judges. This year, amongst the restorers nominated for the Ladder Award, one rising young star stood out from this amazing list.

Opening up his own restoration company "Restorerz," at the end of 2019 (right before the pandemic) and being able to keep business flowing during that time and to now, Eduard has demonstrated exponential growth, adding two different office locations since then. Eduard has been in the industry for almost 15 years, starting as a field technician then working his way up to project manager, operations manager, and now CEO.

Although Eduard has had "boots on the ground" experience, it wasn't something that was necessary for his path in the restoration industry given he had some industry knowledge from working with his father at the young age of 15 years old. Nevertheless, given that he wanted to be a thorough leader and understand every aspect of business operations he made sure to start at the most entry-level position to gain first-hand experience.

He said: "I understood that working in other jobs, when you truly know how to do something yourself you know the in's and out's and you're not learning from the experience of others but your own."

New Jersey Armenians Host Reception for Rep. Kean

KEAN, from page 6
for House resolutions supporting Armenian causes and met with representatives from the Armenian Assembly and the Armenian National Committee of America.

Kean also helped pass a resolution in the New Jersey Senate commemorating the Armenian Genocide. From 2001 until 2003, he was a New Jersey General Assemblyman representing the 21st Legislative District. In 2003, Kean was elected a state senator representing the same district, and in January 2008 became Minority Leader of the New Jersey Senate, a position he served until earlier this year. He was appointed to serve on the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, as well as the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Tom also served on several Standing Legislative Committees, including Budget and Appropriations, Commerce, Judiciary, Legislative Oversight, Higher Education and Health and Human Services.

Kean carries on a tradition of awareness and involvement in Armenian and human rights issues that can be traced back to his descendants. His father, Thomas Howard



Dr. Larry Najarian, left, introduces Rep. Tom Kean Jr.

Kean, served as governor of New Jersey from 1982 to 1990, and, in 1997 as President of Drew University, asserted at a school-sponsored Armenian Genocide conference that the tragedy "has to be remembered."

Kean's grandfather, Robert Kean, was a former congressman from New Jersey. In addition, his great-grandfather Hamilton Fish Kean and great-great-uncle John Kean

were both U.S. senators.

"Today, the Armenian-American community is strong in New Jersey and across the country," he said. "I am proud to continue the work and legacy of my father, Governor Tom Kean, in ensuring that these [Armenian Genocide] atrocities are remembered, and that the incredible contributions of the Armenian-American community continue to be recognized."

Marta Batmasian Receives 'Appeal of Conscience Award'

AWARD, from page 6

Born and raised in Istanbul, Turkey, as a Christian Armenian, Marta dreamed of immigrating to the US, a land where minorities could pursue their dreams and integrate more easily. She began her academic journey at Esayan Lycee in Istanbul, where she graduated as the valedictorian. Marta then attended Robert College, an institution founded as a branch of Columbia University in Istanbul. After her junior year, her family relocated to the Netherlands, where she attended Leiden University before moving to the US to complete her education.

She earned her B.A. in English with honors from Emerson College in Boston. She continued her graduate studies at Brandeis University, enrolling in a joint master's and PhD program in Near Eastern Studies. Upon completing her studies, Marta served as the superintendent of a

small private school and later as an adjunct professor at the University of Massachusetts for eight years. Following her move to Boca Raton, Fla., she earned an MBA from Barry University in Miami and received certification from Harvard Business School in nonprofit board governance and management.

During her time in Boston, Marta met her husband, who was attending Harvard Law and Business Schools. Together, they ventured into real estate investments, while Marta also established and managed a travel, insurance, and real estate company in Cambridge. In 1982, she made her foray into politics, running for Massachusetts State Senate, though she did not win.

In 1983, Marta and her husband relocated to Boca Raton and founded Investments Limited, a real estate investment and management company that they continue to operate. Marta's involvement in the com-

munity is extensive. She has founded and funded numerous charitable initiatives, including the Children's Science Explorium, Tri-County Animal Rescue, the League of Educational Awareness of the Holocaust (LEAH), People Reaching Out to Provide Education and Leadership (PROPEL), Garden of Humanity, Kids in New Direction (KND), and the Walk of Recognition, among many others.

Marta has also served on the boards of several organizations, including the Palm Beach County Cultural Council, South Florida PBs, Florida Atlantic University, the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), Armenian Assembly of America, Nova Southeastern University School of Business, YMCA, Florida Symphonic Pops, Caldwell Theatre, the Center for the Arts at Mizner Park, and the Children's Museum of Boca Raton.

Marta is also active in the Cystic Fibrosis Association, American Cancer Society, Boca Raton Regional Hospital, Boca Raton Historical Society, American Heart Association, Impact 100, Junior League of Boca Raton, March of Dimes, Children's Place at Home Safe, Alzheimer's Association, and Take Charge Parkinson's.

Her numerous accolades include the College Club Achievement Award for Excellence in Business and Education (1983), the Junior League or Boca Raton's Woman Volunteer of the Year (1997), the LEAH Bridge Builder Award (1997), the One Community National Conference of Christians and Jews Award (2009), the OPAL Award for Community Service (2011), the Ellis Island Medal of Honor (2018), the Mayor's George Long Award for Service Above Self (2023) and the Palm Beach County Women's History Month Recognition (2024).

Prehistoric Shoes, Winery, And More Unveiled at Boston Talks

PREHISTORY, from page 1
for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) building in nearby Belmont.

The initial panel was cosponsored by the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA), Christina Maranci, Mash-tots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University and NAASR.

The week-long Cambridge Science Festival, an annual celebration of science, technology, engineering, art and math, is founded and produced by the MIT Museum. The stand-alone lecture was cosponsored by CYSCA and NAASR. Marc Magonian, NAASR's academic director, served as moderator for both events.

Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens

Daniel S. Adler, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Connecticut, spoke primarily on Neanderthal-Homo sapiens interactions in the Armenian Highlands and South Caucasus. Adler is a specialist of Paleolithic Archaeology who began research in this field in Europe, the Middle East and the Caucasus, and has directed four interdisciplinary research projects in the Georgian Republic between 1995-2006, and since 2008, has done research in Armenia, primarily in the area of the Hrazdan Gorge. Adler first put to rest negative 19th century stereotypes about Neanderthals as stupid, ugly, and brutish. He observed that due both to new research and changing perspectives, Neanderthals are now considered very intelligent, and innovative and creative. They could speak, had families, and could hunt almost anything.

At Dmanisi in southern Georgia, specimens of *Homo erectus* (an extinct species of ancestors of humans) around two million years old have been found, whereas some 60 km. away, across the border in northern Armenia, lies the site of Haghtanak-3, which has archaeological items of about the same age, though no fossils. This region, Adler said, allows exploring various aspects of human evolution and prehistory.

Adler's talk focused on the site of Ortvale Klde in Imeretia, western Georgia, containing archaeological evidence from the period ca. 60,000-21,000 BCE, and Lusakert-1 Cave, from ca. 65,000-45,000



Map slide from Daniel Adler's lecture indicating locations of Lusakert-1 and Ortvale Klde (photo Aram Arkun)

so far do not provide specific information on the date at which Neanderthals appeared in the Caucasus, through analogy with neighboring regions with better fossil records, it is possible to guess that it was at least 100,000 years ago, if not earlier.

Homo sapiens appeared at Ortvale Klde and Lusakert-1 around 45,000 years ago. They had very complex new sociocultural, technological and linguistic capabilities, lived in larger populations that were more integrated, and had very widespread and strong social network – something which Adler said Neanderthals probably did not have. Perhaps due to their greater numbers, they didn't rely simply on language for communication but also used painting on faces or hair styles and adornments for communication at a distance.

Everything was good for Neanderthals in Armenia and Georgia, Adler related, until *Homo sapiens* came into the same area, which very quickly led to the extinction or absorption of the former population.

Adler pointed out that there are many different models for what happened when the

during the break period.

Around 1,000 sediment samples containing both Neanderthal and *Homo sapiens* DNA were extracted (both nuclear and mitochondrial DNA) and these samples are still being analyzed to see who was in which layer. There is already clear evidence for interaction, for at certain layers they were together at the same time. This will then allow looking at archaeological evidence to see if technology and social behaviors changed then. Adler stressed that this is the first site anywhere where such analysis can take place. The first human fossil from this site was only found this summer (2024) in a museum in Tbilisi.

Food, Fuel and Farming in Antiquity

Alexia Smith, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Connecticut, lectured about food, fuel and farming in antiquity in southwest Asia. She spoke primarily about Abu Huyrera, Tell Zeidan and Tell Leilan, three archaeological sites in Mesopotamia and the Middle East, which were important for shifts from hunting and gathering to farming, but made some allusions to Armenia as well. She declared that studies of food allow us to explore culture in different ways.

Abu Huyrera is in the Upper Euphrates Valley in northern Syria, and in the Epi-Paleolithic Era (ca. 11,350-9,450 BCE), people basically were hunters and gatherers, with some experimentation with cultivation and tending animals. In the Neolithic period (ca. 8,650-5850 BCE) cultivation and herding intensify and the population increases. Some questions Smith examined were how plants got on site, and what can be learned from the animal dung found there.

Dung accumulations outside huts suggest tethering and tending of animals some 2,000 years earlier than elsewhere. The animals were not necessarily being domesticated, said Smith, but were being kept to be eaten as meat. Bones found there suggest sheep were the first animals used for this purpose. Bread fragments were found, and human bone deformities, primarily in female skeletons, suggest grinding grain

grown for food, she continued.

Part of Smith's work is to look at seeds and the antiquity of food. Though she is not a specialist in bread antiquity, she showed a slide of the world's earliest bread found at Shubayqa 1 (in northeastern Jordan today), at a Natufian hunter-gatherer site around 14,400 years old. Seed data shows that cereal exploitation was not common at that time, but she said that the consumption of bread-like products preceded the emergence of agriculture by at least 4,000 years.

Since there has been no pottery found at that time, Smith was curious how one could cook bread. She and her Boy Scout sons tried an experiment by throwing dough directly on coals. It came out sweet and salty, and when Smith accidentally left the bread out, it turned into hardtack. This could be a way to assure long term storage, in a period without refrigeration, she speculated.

At Tell Zeidan, also in northern Syria, the site is larger. Like in Armenia, dung was used for fuel there, Smith related. It was used in the *tannurs* (clay bread ovens) and for fertilizer, whereas wood was used for heating. She identified different flat breads there, probably using early domesticated emmer wheat for flour, as the transition occurred to the idea of daily bread.

Tell Leilan, in eastern Syria, is one of the sites that controlled the breadbasket of the Akkadian empire, one of the earliest known empires of the world, which extracted taxes. Crops other than wheat were also grown. The Akkadian period, ca. 2,300-2230 BCE, saw the development of urbanism and state control of agriculture. Perhaps as a result of climate change, Smith speculated, Tell Leilan was abandoned at about 2,200 BCE.

Smith also showed a slide about Tell Beydar, a site in northeastern Syria, where largescale bread production took place in the mid-3rd millennium BCE, again in *tannurs*. Produced daily in a centralized fashion, bread turned almost into a currency itself, she said. There were sites as in the ancient city of Ebla in northwestern Syria with enormous rooms where women, probably slaves, ground out grains to produce these breads. Some of the earliest writing in the world used the word *ninda* for bread to form part of the word for food. Smith pointed out that this usage is similar in languages all around the world, as the word for bread is the word for life itself.

Areni-1's Many Firsts

Panelist Ani Adigoyalyan spoke about the significant finds at Areni-1 cave. She had participated in the excavations there. Adigoyalyan is senior laboratory researcher at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia, and a researcher at the History Museum of Armenia. Born in Armavir, she has a master's degree in archaeology from Yerevan State University. The contents of her two separate talks are presented in an integrated fashion here.

Adigoyalyan observed that the Armenian Highlands are an important crossroads of human activity and migration, with many caves. Geologists in the Soviet period found 3,000 on the territory of Soviet Armenia (during a search for refuges in case of nuclear war). Among them, she said, is Areni-1 — also known as the Birds Cave — a three-chamber cave formed in sedimentary marine limestone formations on the left bank of the Arpa River. It has many archaeological and cultural layers, starting with the Neolithic period (6,400-6,200 BCE) and extending to the Middle Ages (4-18th centuries CE), but the most important artifacts are from the Chalcolithic era (5,200-3,400 BCE).

continued on next page



Panelists at Harvard: from left, Daniel Adler, Ani Adigoyalyan, and Alexia Smith, with skulls broughters and gatherers, with some experimentation with cultivation and tending animals. In the Neolithic period (ca. 8,650-5850 BCE) cultivation and herding intensify and the population increases. Some questions Smith examined were how plants got on site, and what can be learned from the animal dung found there.

BCE in Kotayk Province of Armenia. Adler did his dissertation work at Ortvale Klde and later worked at Lusakert-1 and Nor Geghi-1 caves. Excavation work at these sites have ceased, he said, but papers continue to be published presenting ongoing research. Ortvale Klde and Lusakert-1 are around 250 kilometers (155 miles) apart, and both Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* were in evidence there.

Neanderthals evolved in Eurasia and shared a last common ancestor with *Homo sapiens* around 6-700,000 years ago based on DNA evidence, Adler said. During the question period he added that while the scarcity of Neanderthal fossils uncovered

two interacted: assimilation, disease killing off Neanderthals, competition, or cooperation. However, DNA evidence – in 2010 the Neanderthal genome was sequenced – shows that there was some integration between species in Eurasia. Today, humans of non-African descent have between 1-5 percent Neanderthal DNA on average.

Adler believes the Neanderthal populations were absorbed, genetically swamped, and thus became extinct. In the South Caucasus and Armenian Highlands, at Ortvale Klde there is a break between 47,000 and 45,000 years. At levels below it, there are Neanderthals, and above it, *Homo sapiens*. This indicates the two could have met



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She said that each part of the cave was used for different purposes, with the inner part the site of ritual and ceremonial activities, and the outside dedicated to household and production activities. As the climate was very dry and stable, this helped preserve organic materials, along with a thick layer of animal dung that served as a sealant.

Excavations at Areni-1 began in 2007 and continued till 2014, led by Boris Gasparyan from Armenia and various specialists from abroad. The excavations went down as far as 1.5 meters from the surface and did not extend more than 10 meters inside the cave.

Trench 1 of the excavations revealed the world's oldest winemaking complex (4,223-3,790 Cal. BCE) as well as funerary jars and human remains. Adigyozyan speculated that complex rituals were conducted here, possibly including human sacrifice and the use of wine. Much pottery from the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods were found. Those from the Chalcolithic period have much ornamentation, she indicated through slides, including models of the sky and of the earth. These are painted vessels or pitho-karas. Many bone tools were also found.

Trench 2, also inside the cave, has many of the same clay structures and cremations.

Trench 3 is at the entrance of the cave. This is where the world's oldest leather shoe, carbon dated to 5,500 years old, was found (US size 6.5), filled with grass, which either was to maintain its shape or make it more comfortable. This was a right shoe, made of a single piece of cowhide, while the left one of the pair has not been located. There are leather laces pulled through 15 holes in the upper front part and four holes from the back part. Adigyozyan said that it is similar to a type of footwear called "pampooties" from Western Ireland that was used until the 20th century. The right shoe is now on display at the History Museum of Armenia.

Two leather fragments even older than

the shoe were also found in the same area but it is not known for what purpose they were to be used. There is also a wine production complex dating from 4,000-3,800 Cal. BCE there, where grapes were pressed, and the juice was stored in jars.

Trench 3, Adigyozyan continued, is where the largest amount of archaeological materials were found, and where a huge area has been excavated. The stratigraphy is very complex here, she said, as medieval layers cut Chalcolithic ones and damage them with their dwellings and other structures. A linen fishing net fragment found in Trench 3 dates to 3,520-3,360 Cal. BCE, while late medieval fragments of carpet found there were carbon dated to AD 700-890 (Cal. CE). A fragment probably of a belt was found too.

The fact that Chalcolithic era textiles were discovered in the cave provide evidence that people were weaving with looms. Mats, ropes and baskets were also found. Weapons and tools found at Areni-1 date from the late 5th to the mid-4th millennia BCE. The earliest metal production began in the Chalcolithic period.

Adigyozyan showed a video of a virtual tour of the cave both at the panel discussion and later at her own lecture at NAASR. She noted that excavations outside the cave continued in 2023 and she said when she returns to Armenia she will probably begin work on Trench 5.

In response to a question after her formal talk at NAASR, Adigyozyan said that DNA analysis of the human remains shows that the people in the Areni area were the ancestors of today's Armenians. She also noted that there is no climate control or protections in place against the large numbers of tourists who come to visit, as it requires a lot of money to simultaneously continue excavations and make the site accessible to tourists.

After the question-and-answer session at the Cambridge panel, guests could come up and see various skulls, tools, bread and a model of the ancient leather display, all brought by the panelists.

Marc Mamigonian to Present 'Gaslighting The World' by Azerbaijan in Hybrid Event

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host an in-person and online lecture by Marc A. Mamigonian titled "Gaslighting the World: How Azerbaijan Falsifies History and Denies Armenian Existence," on Wednesday, October 16, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern) / 4:30 (Pacific), at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

The program will be presented as the 5th Annual Prof. Charles B. Garabedian Lecture at NAASR and is also offered under the auspices of the NAASR / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

The three modern nation states of the South Caucasus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, are effectively the same age. Whereas Georgia and Armenia have ancient national churches, large corpora of historical texts dating back to the early centuries of the Christian/Common era, and centuries-long existences as collective entities or ethne, as Stephan Astourian has written, "the Azerbaijani sense of nationhood is fragile" and "combines the image of the Armenian enemy with a narrative of victimization to forge a national identity."

A key element of this process of identity formation, which may be characterized as equal parts Freudian and Orwellian, is the reflexive negation of all things Armenian: millennia of Armenian presence in the region, the Armenian Genocide, Armenian cultural monuments in territory today controlled by Azerbaijan, and the legitimacy of the Republic of Armenia. While such tendencies have been visible for decades, today's Azerbaijani petro-dictatorship engages in triumphalist anti-Armenian denial that is fueled by its military victories in 2020 and 2023 and aims at a kind of

humiliation cum eradication of Armenia and Armenians that demands closer analysis of its rhetoric and impact as well as those in media, academia, think-tanks, and NGOs who enable it.

Marc A. Mamigonian is the director of Academic Affairs of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), where he has worked since 1998. He is the co-author of the volume *Annotations to James Joyce's Ulysses* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2022; with John N. Turner and Sam Slote), is the editor of the volume *The Armenians of New England* (Armenian Heritage Press, 2004) and co-editor with Thomas Kühne and Mary Jane Rein of *Documenting the Armenian Genocide: Essays in Honor of Taner Akçam* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).

Prof. Charles B. Garabedian (1917-1991) was born in Everett, Mass., and graduated magna cum laude from Everett High School and Tufts University (A.B. English and History). He attended Harvard Law School and graduated magna cum laude from Boston University Law School. During World War II he served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and in the late 1940s he began his teaching career at Suffolk University Law School. His expertise was tort litigation and damages, courses which he continuously taught at Suffolk University Law School for over 40 years. At the time of his death, Garabedian was the senior faculty professor at Suffolk University Law School. The annual lecture in his memory has been established at NAASR by his niece, NAASR Board Member Joan E. Kolligian.

This will be an in-person event and also presented online live via Zoom. For more information about this program, contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.

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OBITUARY

Vachik Khachatourian

Loving Family Man, Dedicated to Grandchildren

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Vachik Khachatourian, born to Ardashes and Arousiak Khachatourian in Tehran, Iran, passed away peacefully on October 2, at the age of 90.

He was the husband of Lucine (Kilejian) Khachatourian; the father of Armen and his wife Bella Khachatourian and Rouzan and her husband Sevak Abrahamian; the grandfather of Nairi and her husband Avo Tcholakian, Ani and her fiancé Sevag Khatchadourian, Emin Abrahamian and Maral Abrahamian. He is also survived by his nephews, Zareh Khachatourian and his wife Dr. Arpi Chalian and daughters, Siran and Gayané, and Ara Khachatourian.

Vachik will forever be remembered by his grandchildren as a man of great generosity, humor, kindness and strength — a distinct pillar of their family. He was smart and wise, always eager to be surrounded by loved ones, listening intently to stories of his grandchildren's adventures while sharing his own cherished life experiences. One of the fondest memories they hold is of him doing school pick-ups, announcing his arrival with a unique honk that they all instantly recognized. His presence was always comforting, and the memories of those moments will remain in their hearts forever.



Funeral service will be held at St. Stephen's Armenian Church, 38 Elton Avenue, Watertown, on Thursday, October 17, at 11 a.m., followed by interment services at Westview Cemetery in Lexington. Relatives and friends are kindly invited to attend.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to St. Stephen's Armenian Church or St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School, 47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown, Mass.

Robert Askaryan: The Artist and His Exhibition in the Tekeyan Center and in His Friend's Yerevan Studio

By Marut Vanyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — This fall, the Tekeyan Cultural Center in Yerevan hosted an exhibition of works by award-winning and decorated Karabakh (Artsakh) sculptor and painter Robert Askaryan: He agreed to sit for an interview.

Marut Vanyan: Recently Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev was in Stepanakert with his son. They were standing right in the area where you carved khachkars, in front of your studio. I remember, during the blockade, when there were no cars in the city due to lack of fuel, the sound of your hammer echoed in that void. Now Aliyev is standing in that same place. What is the place in general for you?

Robert Askaryan: You know, my father's house was there. Let me start a little further back. Earlier, there was a market and a school there, and next to them was my grandfather Arshak's house. As a child, I remember there was also a fabric shop there. I liked the smell of the fabrics, and the owner was a kindly small woman. During the Soviet years, the school and market were destroyed and a park was built named after Azizbekov, who was one of the 26 Baku Commissars. Thus, over the years, that area has changed a lot, but the old picture was always in my mind. Right where you say Ilham Aliyev is standing now, I created several sculptures, *khachkars*, but I know that my *khachkars* no longer exist. I checked via Google Earth, my sculptures are no longer in their place. If a person creates somewhere, that place becomes familiar to him. I finished carving the last *khachkar* on September 2. Soon it will be exactly one year since we left Artsakh. When I came to Yerevan, one of my friends gave me the keys to his studio, and another friend gave him the keys



My mom. I have depicted her suffering with this painting. I created it after she passed away.

and went to the United States. That's how artists should be. If one has two brushes, the other you should give to another artist.

Marut Vanyan: I also follow what is happening in Stepanakert. I see how people's belongings are thrown out of the windows by Azerbaijanis. I asked my sister if she saw that Azerbaijanis converted their house into student dormitories. She said yes, with my Stepanakert neighbor we were watching it. We were crying and laughing at the same time, she said. I know that you had two sculptures in Renaissance Square, a pomegranate tree and a *khachkar* in memory of the 2020 fallen soldiers. They are gone now. What are you doing, crying or laughing?

Robert Askaryan: My response on that is to create more art to open new exhibitions. It's really hard, but that's how I deal with the pain. I realize and understand that, I did not expect anything else, but it is a sign of their weakness, not strength. Usually, the winning side is generous and tolerant, but destroying silent monuments, *khachkars*, it only proves their weakness. A strong man



Robert Askaryan in his Stepanakert studio

does not do such a thing. That's just ridiculous, Aliyev's goal is to erase the Armenian heritage in Artsakh, but there is so much Armenian heritage there that it simply cannot be erased. We have lived on that land for centuries, there are several layers of culture on that land, what can Aliyev do, could he dig whole Artsakh like a garden? I remember my mother's admonition: she said never lie, that when a person lies, he is lying to himself first of all. I didn't understand it then, but she said I will get it when I grew up. It's the same in art, you can't lie. If someone is lying, the other person may not know it, but you know inside that you are lying, so you are hurting yourself not others. Didn't Picasso also said that? I always leave the punishment to God. Lying is a habit, just as telling the truth. It's a choice.

Marut Vanyan: In my archives, I found a video which I took during the Artsakh blockade, where you say that this is a slap on the face, and that we should take away lessons. Have we taken away any lessons?

Robert Askaryan: Have you seen how boxers slap themselves before fighting? They do it to make themselves aware, to prepare for the fight, to concentrate. Many say that everyone is guilty for what happened to Artsakh. I don't think so. In art there are colors that are stronger, when you try to mix it with another color, the strong one is always darker. By the way, it is neither black nor red, they are poisonous colors, that's what I call them.



My dad, as I saw him.

Unfortunately, those toxic colors were in us, we could not get them out of us, that's how I would describe what happened.

Marut Vanyan: During the blockade, you also said that you can create art. You said that you can be inspired by everything. How is it now?

Robert Askaryan: Yes, I have a series of paintings which I created during the Artsakh's blockade. I called this series "Chanaparh (The Road)". Our life is road too, isn't it? You are thinking differently when you are on the road. I felt that we were going to leave... My wife was so angry, "what about are you talking, where are we

to go," she said. In that series, I drew the bread lines as I saw them. I saw women and children keeping line at night in front of a little bakery in Stepanakert, hoping to take home a loaf of bread in the morning. It's a tragedy of course, but I've seen good there as well. There were many exciting scenes in those queues. A pregnant woman would come, everyone would give way, or a small child would come, people would move back to let him be the first. The blockade also had its positive sides, people began to know and help each other.

Marut Vanyan: This week was your solo exhibition at Tekeyan Center in Yerevan. I was there. It was hard for me to listen, Artsakh national anthem and Ara Gevorgyan's Artsakh, how was it for you? The Artsakh anthem ends with "Let's keep our land undefeated." Haven't we lost?

Robert Askaryan: No, I don't think we lost. Maybe most people feel defeated, but

continued on next page



My friend, Vany, during the first Artsakh war, he and his soul were surrounded. Everyone was beheaded. His body was found late, they were able to recognize him because of his sweater.



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

I don't think so. I think we shouldn't give up. We must preserve our identity, dialect, songs, folklore and traditions, we should not limit ourselves to baking zhengalov hats. Books should be published, that the second book for the Armenians of Artsakh should be after the Bible. Our roots must never dry out.

Marut Vanyan: A year has already passed since 2023 September war and ethnic cleansing in Artsakh. What has happened during this time, have we progressed in preserving our culture at least?

Robert Askaryan: I can only talk about myself. I am ready to pass on the talent given by God to the new generation. But it is certainly not enough. I have seen that youth are trying to keep Artsakh culture on-line, of course, this is commendable, but not enough. This should be the problem and goal of all Armenians around the world.

Marut Vanyan: You say your paintings are a message. Do you have a new message one year after?

Robert Askaryan: What is painting? You have some-



Traveling to Paris

me something else?

Marut Vanyan: Did I forget something?

Robert Askaryan: I was waiting you ask me what I miss the most.

Marut Vanyan: Kindly let me know...

Robert Askaryan: The grave of my mom and dad. It is painful that it is not possible to visit them. She did laundry by hand for five boys, while washing my and my brothers' clothes. It wasn't just a day or two, she did it till we grew up. She cared of us and raised us for years. I remember the soapy water, our clothes-line that hung our underwear on. I always visited them on their birthdays. Here in Armenia, I go to church, lit a candles in their memory. Many have taken a handful of soil from the graves of their relatives to keep memories, but I find wrong. I don't want to consider Artsakh lost.



Sad dance of Girls.

thing to say and you don't say it with words, but through the art. What politicians say, they are all bluff. During the blockade, I made a lot of paintings, or as you say, I wrote a lot of messages. This catalog is full of paintings. What I saw, I tried to convey to people through my art. What I saw during the blockade, what I saw on the way to Hakari bridge. I didn't want to add to the pain, I didn't want to make people who were already crying cry more. Crying exhausts a person. Who knows maybe I am the one who cries the most? In any case, I am trying to keep my emotions to myself. I bear my suffering. But I want to give people hope with my art. When your cry, you make others cry too. It can't be like that, every person should carry his pain silently...

Didn't you forget to ask



Bread line during Artsakh's blockade

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Arts & Culture

PARG: Pushing Armenian Pop Music Forward, One Song at a Time

YEREVAN — Armenia's pop music scene is undergoing a revolution, and at its forefront is Pargev Vardanian, better known by his stage name PARG. With his latest single *Araj*, a powerfully experimental track whose title means “forward” in Armenian, PARG has captured the attention of both local and international audiences.

The song, a bold mix of power pop, indie and alternative influences, is more than just a musical statement; it is a declaration of artistic independence, blending personal experiences with cultural heritage.

PARG recently discussed *Araj*, his career journey, and the innovative music video directed by French filmmaker Loïc Foulon.

The video has been nominated for an Armenian Music Video Award. The ceremony will take place in December, in Los Angeles.

PARG said the song was born out of his reconnecting with his roots after spending many years abroad.



Singer Pargev Vardanian, AKA PARG

“The word ‘araj’ means ‘forward’ in Armenian, and that’s exactly what this song represents — moving forward despite the challenges, pushing boundaries both in life and in music. I wanted to capture that feeling of resilience and determination.”

The singer was born in Hayravank, a village in the province of Sevan. His earliest musical experiences were singing in the church choir. He and his family moved to Volgograd, Russia for better educational opportunities for the children. It was there that he started seriously studying music. He later graduated from the Volgograd State Institute of Theatre and Cinema.

He soon formed his first band, Region Chronicles, which performed in Russian and English. The group toured across Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia from 2017 to 2019.

see PARG, page 17



Dress by LOOM Weaving

Emerging Fashion Designers From Armenia Gain Recognition, Make it Work

By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — They’re young, hip and environmentally informed. They mix East and West, minimalism with decorative, artisanal flourishes.

Armenia’s top designers are strutting their stuff on Europe’s runways and creating bold, hand-made wearable fashion for both men and women.

From one of the oldest civilizations in the world, comes some of its newest creators. Leading brands by designers of Armenian origin are nothing new, from French-Armenian icons Stéphane Kélian, Alain Mikli and Karine Arabian, to Lebanese-born wunderkind Krikor Jabotian and Milan’s Serapian luxury bags, to name a few. But today some of the boldest Armenian designers hail from the Republic of Armenia itself, a small country that positively oozes fashion sense.

A New York City friend who works in fashion recently waxed poetic about “the most amazing Dahjeli store” that he serendipitously stumbled upon on his way to meet a friend for coffee in Yerevan. Another colleague told me she has worn a necklace I brought back from Gyumri every night out this month. Part of the Armenian story here has to do with quality. Unlike some fashion capitals such as Paris, Milan or New York, where the emphasis is often on the bottom line and mass production, the designers profiled here tend to make things the old-fashioned way. Yerevan designers employ a small team of master tailors or fashion their own creations themselves. It’s Couture with an Armenian twist, though there is nothing folksy or rustic about their work. Like Armenia itself, the country’s top fashion designers are hip, modern, sophisticated.

Elegant deconstructed tops in black and white: diaphanous chemises and delicate hand-made shoes; baggy open slit black pants worn with a beige shirt top and wave design. Everything Ariga Torosian makes has a little bit of magic to it. She takes a simple shape and tweaks it, adding a new line or detail that sets the piece on end. She uses light textures to reflect both the lived and natural environment, with a particular affection for all things architectural.

Daring designs include a black skirt design that seems to float on air with an open front, worn over black heels with leather straps tied around the ankle. Clean, modern and sophisticated. It’s a memorable look, one whose shape remarkably mimics Torosian’s favorite piece of architecture, Tehran’s Azadi Tower.

Torosian’s brand and identity are, according to her, “inspired by the roots and vision of places where I have lived, mainly Iran and Armenia. You can see these footprints in each collection.” The rigor and quality of her lines display the time and the know-how that go into fashioning each piece. This underscores what the designer calls “the solid roots and culture of the past, compared to our fragile times today.” No trip to Yerevan would be complete without a stop at 20 Marshal Baghramyan Avenue and the gorgeous CONE store, where Ariga sells her work along with another talented designer, Sona Hakobyan and her SONCESS brand.

continued on next page

ACF Pays Tribute To Composer Diane Goolkasian Rahbee

ARLINGTON, Mass. — The second annual Mirak Chamber Music Series will present pianist Alessandra Pompili, from the United Kingdom, and Christina Gullans, on cello, from Washington, DC, on Sunday, October 20, at 4 p.m., at the Armenian Cultural Foundation’s (ACF) John Mirak Hall.

The concert is in tribute to composer, educator and pianist Dianne Goolkasian Rahbee.

The program, titled “Armenian Vistas: Diasporic Perspectives and Legacies,” is co-sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance, the Armenian International Women’s Association and Hamazkain Educational and Cultural Association. It will include works by Armenian composers Stéphan Elmas, Arno Babajanyan, Emanuel Melik-Aslanian, Komitas, Koharik Ghazarossian, Alan Hovhanness and Goolkasian Rahbee.

A first-generation Armenian-American, daughter of Armenian Genocide survivor Peter Aharon Goolkasian and talented violist Zabelle Yeshilian, Dianne Goolkasian was born in Somerville. She had an early love of music and began her piano studies in Boston with Antoine Louis Moeldner. She continued her studies at the Juilliard School in New York as a piano major, and upon completion she went on to the Mozarteum in Salzburg,



Christina Gullans



Alessandra Pompili

Austria to study chamber music.

Returning to Boston, Goolkasian Rahbee engaged for several years in teaching piano privately. In addition, she conducted workshops, gave lectures and master classes internationally before deciding to concentrate

see TRIBUTE, page 16

ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

LOOM Weaving

Inga Manukyan founded LOOM Weaving, a unique Armenian knitwear brand with her sister, Elen, in 2014. The brand successfully revives centuries-old handmade techniques. Its mission: to find a contemporary, new take on the design, development, and creation of Armenian knitwear production. To wit, each item created mixes handmade knitting techniques with thoroughly modern machinery-designed patterns and colors. The results, according to Zoe Magazine, are fashions “cosy and cute, bold and bright, ultra-fashionable and fabulous.” Manukyan draws her greatest inspiration from traditional Armenian carpet weaving, which she studied at the Yerevan Academy of Fine Arts. Her designs reflect the same love of color, nature and line:

Other noteworthy designs include a long sleeveless black dress that hints at skin underneath through its delicate knit screen pattern or below, the strapless white shabby chic dress that flows longingly to the ground.

Not surprisingly, Manukyan most favors Elsa Schiaparelli among the great designers. Interestingly enough, the woman who actually designed and knitted Schiaparelli's

gorgeous knit sweaters in the 1930's, Aroosiag Mikaëlian, was an Armenian Genocide survivor. Everything at LOOM Weaving is handmade using natural raw products. Says Manukyan: “I get inspiration from colors, interlacing yarns and handcrafted knitting techniques that I use in a modern style”

Mischa Simonyan

By the time Ijevan-born standout graduated fashion school in Paris, Simonyan already had three runway shows and several lines under his belt. Posh handbags, flowing silk scarves, elegant dresses, and men's wear reminiscent of the Antwerp 6: this designer can seemingly do it all. He takes traditional Greek and Armenian mythology, for example, and abstracts a shape that embellishes a collar or sleeve on an otherwise sleek, contemporary look. His Aragil scarf uses Armenia's national symbol the white stork to advantage, whether worn around the neck or more suggestively wrapped around one's chest:



Loom Weaving sweater

Currently Simonyan makes all his clothes by hand, whether in his small home atelier in Ijevan or in his Paris apartment. He creates suede and leather handbags in grey or royal red that would look just at home in a science fiction flick as in a chic

Parisian café. Lined in rich suede of the same color, the red version recalls Han Chinese elegance.

Simonyan is also that rara vis, a designer fully engaged with the world beyond fashion. Born with a disability that affects his mobility, Mischa is positioning himself as a leading advocate for disability rights, using his platform to raise awareness and promote inclusivity, as the fashion industry becomes ever more engaged in social issues such as downcycling, recycling and sustainability. Inspired by his idol Coco Chanel, Simonyan's twentysomething eyes are set on using fashion to help change the world.

Other Armenian standouts to look out for include Anjel Darchinyan and her popular Dahjeli brand, whose simple, chic sleekness gives a nod to Jil Sander and Calvin Klein; sustainable designers Ruzanna Vardanyan/Ruzané and Nelly Serobyan; and rising under-30 star Anahid Sarian. For fun hand-embroidered men's shorts, relaxed pants and sexy beaded accessories, be sure to check out Man in Town, designed by Armen Galyan. A 2023 Vogue Italia article also singled out Hagop Shahinian (hagopshahinian.co/) and Armine Ohanyan as well as fab menswear designer Erika Chilingaryan/Platon FF as standouts from Yerevan Fashion Week 2023.

Watching over all this wonderfully eclectic Yerevan-based talent are Vahan Khachatryan and an amazing fashion den mother of sorts, Elen Manukyan. Together, the duo heads up the all-powerful Fashion

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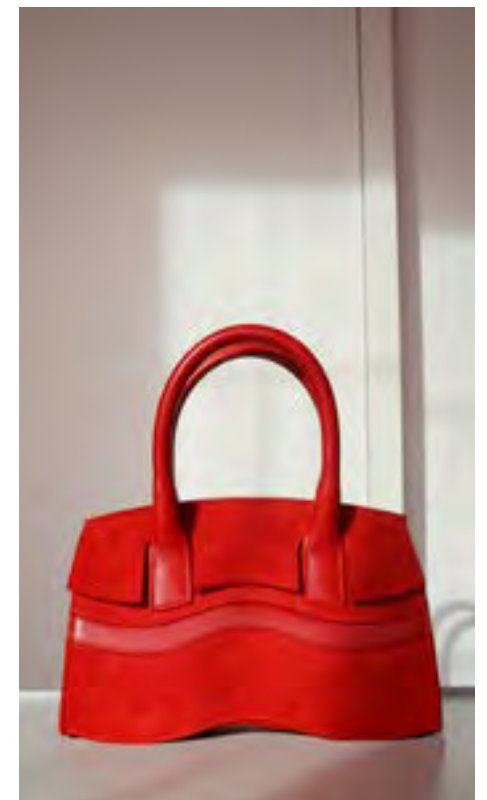
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Red handbag by Mischa Simonyan

and Garment Chamber of Armenia. The chamber and its team of eight people also produce Yerevan Fashion Week annually. The 2024 edition will take place this coming November 7-10 in several locations, including the 100,000 square-foot Meridian Expo & Event Center. The Chamber also keeps an up-to-date website of over forty top designers including bios and all relevant links—the perfect launching point for anyone interested in Armenian fashion.

The main challenge for Manukyan and her designers lies in making their designs cost-effective. Armenia is a small market and shipping designs internationally can be prohibitively expensive: “Logistics, fabrics, marketing/promotion and import/export formalities are challenging,” explains Manukyan. On the flip side, Armenian designers are a great investment for anyone looking to support talented designers without the large capital investments required to launch brands in Europe or America. Hopefully Armenian designers will soon become better known internationally, with Yerevan serving as a dynamic regional fashion hub.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Chef David Vartanian's Roasted Whole Baby Pumpkins

VISALIA, Calif. — Born in Burbank, California, David Vartanian was ninth in a family of 11 children. In 1966, his father, John Vartanian, moved the family to Visalia where they created The Vintage Press Restaurant. At first, David dreamed of being a carpenter, but as he grew older the family business grew, and David found his true passion. In time, he learned every aspect of the restaurant business through experience, training, and culinary education. The carte du jour is classically French with a California influence. The menu offers traditional Armenian dishes, drawing from David's family heritage. The Vintage Press has received awards and accolades from the nation's restaurant and wine aficionados, and is credited for featuring one of the best restaurant wine lists in the world. In addition to The Vintage Press Restaurant and Catering, David co-owns Jack and Charlie's, The Southern Pacific Depot, and Le Boulevard Coffee Market—all located in Visalia.

Living in the heartland of American agriculture, the menu at The Vintage Press revolves to include a wide range of seasonal fruit and vegetables. This recipe is simple enough, but is one of those alchemic mixtures that ends up being greater than the mere sum of its parts. A small, scooped-out, whole pumpkin is filled with smoked chicken, cheese, sautéed onion, and chives (plus a hit of chili sauce), before being topped up with a not-insignificant dose of heavy cream. Lids back on, into the oven until tender—and then each lucky eater experiences sweet, tender pumpkin flesh in combination with now-melded, savory filling. David uses tender roasted chicken, Jarlsberg cheese and pistachios to create his signature dish — a magical fall or winter entrée.

INGREDIENTS:

6 baby pumpkins
4 ounces Jarlsberg cheese
8 ounces smoked (or regular) chicken, diced
2 tablespoons hot chili sauce
1 medium onion, chopped
1 tablespoon butter
6 ounces heavy cream
1 tablespoon chives, to taste
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Rough chopped pistachios

* Jarlsberg is a mild cheese made from cow's milk, with large, regular eyes, originating from Jarlsberg, Norway. It is produced in Norway, as well as in Ireland and in the state of Ohio, licensed from Norwegian dairy producers. It is classified as a Swiss-type cheese.

Makes 6 servings

PREPARATION:

Place pumpkins whole into a baking pan, cover with foil and bake in a 325°F oven for 45 minutes or until the pumpkins are soft.

Using a sharp knife remove the tops of the pumpkin, discard the seeds and season the inside of the pumpkins with salt and pepper. Heat the butter in a sauté pan and cook the onion over medium heat until soft. In a bowl combine the smoked chicken, Jarlsberg cheese, and cooked onion and chive. Mix well and then season with salt. Add chili sauce and pepper to taste.

Fill the pumpkin with the smoked chicken mixture and pour one ounce of heavy cream into each pumpkin. Place the tops back onto each pumpkin, cover with aluminum foil and roast the pumpkins in a 350°F oven for 15-20 minutes. To serve, place one ounce of lemon butter sauce on each of the warm plates and place a pumpkin on each plate.

Lemon Butter Sauce

INGREDIENTS:

2 shallots, diced
1 cup white wine
1 ounce champagne vinegar
2 ounces heavy cream
6 ounces sweet butter
Juice of one lemon
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 tablespoon chives

Combine the shallots, wine and vinegar in a sauce pan. Bring to a simmer and reduce by one half. Add the heavy cream and reduce again. Over low heat whisk in the sweet butter piece by piece. Season with the salt, pepper and lemon juice. Add the chives just before serving.

From steak and sirloin grilled to perfection, premium quality fish, hearty soups and garden fresh salads to tantalizing desserts, extraordinary appetizers for sharing, and a wine list that Wine Spectator writes "is one of the best in the world," The Los Angeles Times called the restaurant "...a bastion of culinary merit." For over 50 years, the Vartanian family has offered fine dining balanced with genuine charm and a sense of community. "As founders of several local cultural events, we savor our role in Visalia. And as the venue for many special moments and events, the family cherishes the ability to make every meal distinctive, as well as meaningful."



Research suggests that pistachios have numerous benefits and may help to maintain good health, support an active lifestyle and reduce the risk of nutrition-related diseases. A new study conducted by Cornell University and published in the journal, *Nutrients*, determined that pistachios have a very high antioxidant capacity, among the highest when compared to values reported in research of many foods commonly known for their antioxidant capacity, such as blueberries, pomegranates, cherries, beets, and red wine.

The Vintage Press Restaurant

216 N. Willis St.

Visalia, CA 93291

Website: <http://www.thevintagepress.com/>

Menus: <https://www.thevintagepress.com/menu>

Phone: (559) 733-3033

For Chef David's recipes featured in The Armenian Mirror-Spectator Newspaper, see: <https://mirrorspectator.com/?s=david+vartanian>

*David Vartanian was named one of America's Best Chefs, see: <https://www.bestchefsamerica.com/david-vartanian>

Go to:

<https://www.thevintagepress.com/recipe-club>

<https://www.instagram.com/vintagepressvisalia/>

<https://www.facebook.com/tvpvisalia>

For this recipe:

<https://americanpistachios.org/recipes-and-snacking/recipes/roasted-whole-baby-pumpkins>

<https://kmp.com/great-day/kitchen/chef-david-cooks-up-roasted-baby-pumpkins>

See:

<https://americanpistachios.org/>

<https://americanpistachios.org/recipes-and-snacking>

<https://americanpistachios.org/food-professionals/meet-the-chefs/david-vartanian>

<https://orangecoast.com/news/pumpkins-good-for-cooking-as-well-as-looking1>

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<https://www.tota.world/article/3473/>

Books

Genocide: Personal Stories, Big Questions, Book by Kingstone Published

LONDON — Yellow Press has published *Genocide: Personal Stories, Big Questions*, by journalist and author, Heidi Kingstone. The book tells the story of the last 120 years of genocide, its impact on the world and its relevance today.

Kingstone takes the reader on a journey from the Herero and Nama genocide of 1904, through the Armenian Genocide, Ukrainian terror-famine and the Holocaust to the Cambodia, Rwanda and Srebrenica genocides of the late 20th century. She also explores the Darfur, Yazidi and Rohingya genocides of the 21st century, starkly illustrating that, while some lessons have been learnt, mankind seems to possess a propensity to dehumanize fellow human

beings — all too visible in today's global conflicts. This human failing, argues Kingstone, is fueled by fear, greed and propaganda, and the refusal to learn from the past.

The book builds on Kingstone's 20 years as a foreign correspondent for national and international media and is informed by survivors, witnesses, academics and activists. It is a collection of vignettes that link one instance of tragedy to another — a compendium of stories centered around people that Kingstone has met, observing connections that weave their way through relationships, cultures, and continents across time, leading to salutary parallels, past and present.

Kingstone provides the origin and definition of the



Author Heidi Kingstone

term genocide — it transpires that the word itself did not emerge until the winter of 1944 when Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer born in 1900, coined the term. In 1945 Lemkin went to Nuremberg to establish the crime of genocide. Ben Ferencz, the youngest prosecutor at Nuremberg — interviewed for the book by Kingstone just before his death, aged 103 in 2023 — was one of the first people to use the term. It wasn't until 1948, we are told, that the definition was enshrined in the United Nations Genocide Convention.

Other characters we meet in the book include two remarkable women who spoke to the world — Anne Frank, and Arshaluys Aurora Mardiganian who survived the 1915 Armenian Genocide, escaped to the US, and became a global sensation with her story, serialized in the media and turned into a film.

Having met a woman born in Bergen-Belsen, the former Nazi concentration camp, Kingstone talks about life after liberation and how people can rise from the ashes. Haunted by ghosts, children of survivors talk about their lives and the impact of their families' legacy. And we learn about the 'Heart of Auschwitz' — the amazing story of a purple origami heart made by prisoners that survived the Death March. Kingstone's work also explores the psychology of a perpetrator — how people justify mass murder — and draws parallels between leaders from Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler to Josef Stalin.

The book quotes leading authorities on the complex and perplexing history of genocide, including Professor Menachem Z. Rosensaft, former general counsel of the World Jewish Congress and adjunct professor in law at Columbia Law School; Dr Ümit Kurt, the historian whose awakening to genocide took place in his own hometown of Gaziantep, which he discovered was formerly home to



a thriving Armenian community; and Dr. Jan Ilhan Kizilhan who is a psychologist, psychotherapist, trauma expert and orientalist.

Commenting on the book, Professor André Singer, President Emeritus, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, stated, "In her beautifully penned and wide-ranging book *Genocide - Personal Stories, Big Questions*, Heidi Kingstone takes up the challenge of not only reflecting on the Holocaust but on genocides worldwide to paint a fresh and comprehensive picture for the world to learn from. It is her personalized journey covering genocides in so many countries that makes this such a gripping read and fulfils her ambition to help change things and remind us in such a compelling way that we must never look away."

Genocide: Personal Stories, Big Questions is published by Yellow Press (www.yellowpress.co) and is available as a download from Amazon: <https://a.co/d/02a4feW4>.

Daniel Kapelian

A French Armenian from Korea

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/SEOUL — Daniel Kapelian is a French creative director, curator and producer, based in Seoul. Before living in Korea, he had a long career in the arts and culture sector in Paris as an independent author and producer in TV and multimedia. From 1998 to 2005, he was an associate professor in the Hypermedia Department at the University Paris 8, and vice president of multimedia of the SACD (French Authors' Guild). The former audio-visual attaché of the French Embassy in Korea (2010-2015), he was the head of the cinema, TV, digital content and electronic music department. In 2015, he became the international cultural advisor for Hyundai Card CEO Ted Chung. For two years, he published a quarterly Trends Report (Art, Culture, Lifestyle, Innovation, Signals). In 2017, Kapelian became the art director of OMA Space creative art and design studio in Seoul, creating contemporary artworks. He also provides strategy, curation, conception and production of art and culture events for brands, private groups and international institutions.

Dear Daniel, how do you describe contemporary art scene in Korea?

The Korean art scene is vibrant, offering a large spec-



trum of expressions: pop culture, music, cinema, contemporary art and design, digital art, and also craft. It's an interesting blend of tradition and innovation. For the last 14 years, it has been a fantastic playground for me. Even though there aren't too many foreigners involved in this scene, I had the chance to work on some very exciting projects and exhibitions, whether as an artist, curator, or art director here in Korea, or abroad to promote the artistic and cultural Korean soft power.

What makes OMA Space unique in the cultural mosaic of Korea?

Oma is a Korean artist and designer with deep expertise in textiles. She worked with Alexander McQueen while she was in London in the 2000s. She returned to her roots in Korea in 2010, opened her own studio and began creating exceptional garments handmade with traditional, rare fabrics and contemporary cuts and designs. I joined the studio in 2017 to help her transpose her experience and knowledge into contemporary art and design, blending traditional techniques with new technologies, sound, and video. She stands out as a unique figure in the Korean art landscape.

OMA Space also creates immersive installations. At the Venice biennial pavilions, I attended the immersive installations with pleasure, navigating their virtual environments. What is special about this art form?

We started creating immersive installations in 2019 with Google. We were among the first to make what's called "Phygital Installations," a combination of physical and digital elements, meaning that the technology is seamlessly embedded into real, tangible architecture. Our installations are quite unique in the sense that we create "transformative art," addressing both body and soul and elevating the state of mind of those who experience our meditative works. We've been very suc-

cessful with this approach, and we are planning a new global, itinerant program that goes beyond the current boundaries of art.

Your studio brings together a group of artists and producers, activating a broad global network of resources and talents. Have you ever cooperated with Armenian artists worldwide?

So far, I've had the privilege of working on a music collaboration with Arsen Petrosyan, a grandmaster of the Armenian *duduk*. You can listen to the track here: <https://soundcloud.com/kay-dorsay/arsen-petrosyan-9-new-mix>. He is now internationally well-known. He's a maestro capable of playing a wide variety of repertoires with a unique touch and sound. I hope to collaborate with him again and with more artists from Armenia.

Do you know any Armenian-born people in Korea?

Not really. I've never actively searched for them in Korea. My life is driven by chance encounters with remarkable people from all over the world. Maybe I'll save meeting Armenians for the later stages of my life...

What do you know about your Armenian ancestors?

I carry the name of my paternal grandfather, Daniel Kapelian. He fled Sebastopol in 1921 to Bizerte, Tunisia, with the French Navy. He got married there and had two sons. The two brothers married two sisters and fled the war for independence in 1957, eventually seeking refuge in the south of France in Vaison La Romaine, where the whole family lived together. The only tradition I inherited from my family is this "exile DNA" that runs through my mind. I've spent almost half of my life abroad. I guess I'm still processing that exile trauma...

Have you ever been in Armenia? I think our contemporary art should be interesting for you.

I've never been to Armenia. I've traveled around the world, always knowing that one day I would go there. I feel that day is approaching, and I plan to visit with my son and daughter. I'm sure good people and good art await us there. I'm curious to discover the scene!

Pegasus The Orchestra's Upcoming Season Takes on Americana, Gershwin

NEW YORK — As Part of its 2024-2025 season, Pegasus: The Orchestra presents two concerts focused on some of the most iconic works of American Music in Merkin Hall on Lincoln Center Campus.

On Saturday, November 2, at 8 p.m., Pegasus: the Orchestra, led by artistic director and principal conductor, Karén Hakobyan, will bring together 20 of its core members to present “Americana: Gershwin, Copland, Price & Piatigorsky,” celebrating four American masters.

Through history and geography, Americana reflects on the American landscape in its triumph and turbulence, with a presentation of Florence Price’s stunning *Andante Moderato for String Orchestra* and brilliant American cello virtuoso and composer, Gregor Piatigorsky’s exhilarating *Variations on a Paganini Theme* arranged for cello and orchestra featuring 2007 International Tchaikovsky Competition gold medalist and Grammy Nominated cellist, Sergey Antonov.

The second half opens with Aaron Copland’s monumental *Appalachian Spring Suite* (1970 version). Pegasus: The Orchestra also celebrates the Centennial of George Gershwin’s iconic *Rhapsody in Blue* conducted by Karén Hakobyan from the piano, an arrangement done by Hakobyan especially for Pegasus for 10 of its members, a bold and exuberant jewel of classical jazz. A nod to America’s past, Pegasus: the Orchestra reminds audiences of the American music melting pot.

Sergey Antonov, the 2007 Tchaikovsky international competition gold medalist, and a cellist with Hermitage Trio, has been called “destined for cello superstardom” by the Washington Post.

Hakobyan and the orchestra have also nabbed raves. *Fanfare Magazine* wrote, “Karén Hakobyan’s Brahms



Karen Hakobyan rehearsing with Pegasus: The Orchestra

Next, on April 19, 2025, at 7:30 p.m., Hakobyan will conduct Pegasus: the Orchestra’s season finale in a program that takes the listener through a “Journey of American Music.” The evening will include the stunning *Piano Concerto* of Amy Beach performed by celebrated pianist Asiya Korepanova. This rarely performed masterpiece was premiered by Boston Symphony with the composer herself at the piano in 1900.

Following a brief intermission, Hakobyan will conclude the concert with Antonin Dvorak’s great *Symphony No. 9 in E minor; “From the New World,” Op. 95* (1893). The symphony was premiered by the New York Philharmonic in 1893 at Carnegie Hall.

The concert will take

place at the Kaufman Music Center.

A reviewer for the *Boston Musical Intelligencer*, called Asiya Korepanova, a pianistic powerhouse, as “more than I could’ve ever imagined.”

For more information about the orchestra, visit pegasustheorchestra.org. For more on Hakobyan, visit www.karenhakobyan.com.



Pianist Asiya Korepanova

Fourth is a shattering experience not to be missed.” And the *New York Concert Review* wrote, “Pegasus is truly a first-rate ensemble.”

Pegasus: The Orchestra, was founded in 2017 by Hakobyan, with a mission to empower rising musicians with artistic freedom and promote innovative repertoire in an environment of creative thought and expression.



Cellist Sergey Antonov

ACF Pays Tribute to Composer Diane Goolkasian Rahbee

TRIBUTE, from page 12

more seriously on composing. Over the years Goolkasian Rahbee created an impressive and diverse body of over 300 works. Her repertoire consisted of different forms of music for piano solo, orchestra, instrumental ensembles, percussion, voice, concertos (for violin and orchestra, piano and orchestra, flute and orchestra), tone poems, bagatelles (for flute, mandolin, wind instruments), fanfares, toccatas, trios of various combinations, and even a wedding march.

“Hers is a compositional style in which neo-classicism and neo-romanticism meet, along with an ethnic flavor — the influence of Armenian, her first spoken language,” said one critic about the music of Goolkasian Rahbee. Goolkasian Rahbee explained in a recent interview, “My musical language is indicative of everything I’ve experienced—it’s a mixture.” Performing in tribute to Goolkasian Rahbee, are two musicians who are themselves highly accomplished.

Alessandra Pompili has performed for years as a soloist to critical and public acclaim in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the US. She is the artistic director and co-founder

of the concert series “Ashle Notes” (UK), and the pianist-in residence of the Società Dante Alighieri (Manchester). Beside the traditional repertoire, Alessandra is especially known as a champion of the music of Alan Hovhaness.

She is a graduate with high honors of L’Aquila “Alfredo Casella” Conservatoire and the École Normale de Musique de Paris A. Cortot, where she was awarded the first prize with special mention.

Gullans is praised for her “incredible depth” [*Broadway World Review*], “haunting sound” [*Boston Arts Review*], “exemplary musicianship” [Guy Rickards, *Musical Opinion*]. A Washington-based chamber musician with an interest in music semiology, her playing has been heard in top concert halls around the world. In 2020, she released “Across the Ages,” an album of works written by Alan Hovhaness, with Albany Records. The CD has been praised as a much-needed and overdue addition to the American cello discography, and as an important act of rehabilitation for music that is almost unknown.

Gullans holds an M.M. from Indiana University where she was awarded a Music Merit Award and E. Heinz



Diane Goolkasian Rahbee

Scholarship. Her past teachers include Janos Starker, Helga Winold, Csaba Onczay and John Sant’Ambrogio.

The concert is free and open to the public. It will be held on Sunday, October 20, at 4 p.m. at the Cultural Foundation (441 Mystic Street, Arlington). For questions and reservations, email armeniancultural.fdn@gmail.com.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

OCTOBER 19 — The Massis Guild of Ararat Home will host a Malt Shoppe Diner Fundraiser to benefit Ararat Home, On Saturday, 5 to 10 p.m. Tickets \$65, at Whittier Elks' Lodge, 1362 Whittier Blvd., Whittier.

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 18-19 — St. James Armenian Church 77th Annual bazaar: Fri. 12-8 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. Delicious Armenian food, mezze, pastries, and baked goods. Silent Auction, Raffle, Children's Activities, Booths and Local Vendors. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information please visit www.stjameswatertown.org/bazaar.

OCTOBER 19 — AFA Kef Time is here again! Join the fun at the Armenian Friends of America (AFA) Dance. Open to all. Saturday, 6.30 p.m. to midnight. Featuring the live music of: Leon Janikian, Jason Naroian, John Berberian, Bruce Gigarjian and Bob Raphaelian. Event held at The Armenian Church at Hye Pointe; 1280 Boston Road; Haverhill. Individual tickets \$55; Tables of 8 - \$425. Ticket price includes Dance, Individual Mezza platters, coffee & dessert. Advanced tickets only - no tickets sold at door. There is a capacity limit. Online Ticket Sales at www.Armenianfriendsofamerica.org or call Mary Ann #603-770-3375 or Kathy #978-902-3198.

OCTOBER 20 — "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 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Church Consecration by His Grace Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan. On Friday, October 25, at 5 p.m. Trn-patsek (Opening of Church Doors), 6:30 p.m. Cocktail Reception, Ermonian Hall. On Saturday, October 26, 3 p.m. Consecration Service, 5 p.m. Gala Banquet, Ermonian Hall. On Sunday, October 27, 9 a.m. Morning Service, 10 a.m. Inaugural Divine Liturgy/Antranig Holy Badarak, Celebrant Fr. Vart Gyozyalyan, Fellowship following the Divine Liturgy. Due to limited seating capacity, please RSVP for all events by September 21. Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill MA 01835, Tel. (978) 372-9227, email:hyepointearmenianchurch.org

OCTOBER 26 — First Armenian Church FALLFEST! Saturday 12 noon. At the church grounds, 380 Concord Ave., Belmont. Freshly cooked Losh, Lamb, Beef and Chicken Kebabs on our outdoor grills! Combo meals, Vegetarian meals and Pastries like mom made.

NOVEMBER 1 — City of Smile hosts Sip & Savor, a night of wine tastings from around the world. 7-10 p.m., Oakley Country Club, 410 Belmont St., Water-

town. All proceeds will be donated to City of Smile- USA, an organization dedicated to treating children in Armenia suffering from cancer. Tickets are \$150 per person. RSVP to Joanne Tashjian (781) 249-6688 or Cynthia Kazanjian (339) 222-9900.

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. Tribute will be paid to retired longtime Principal Houry Boyamian. Program to feature Dr. Mary Papazian as keynote speaker. Vocalist Angelina Nazarian will perform. MC will be Kristina Ayanian. Cocktail reception to start at 6.30 p.m., followed by dinner and program at 7.30 p.m. Tickets for the event are \$250 (\$150 for alumni and students) available at <https://ssaes.square.site/product/tickets/2?cs=true&cst=custom>

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

DECEMBER 15 — Rehearsals begin on Tuesday, October 22 at 7.30 p.m., every Thursday and Tuesday, for the Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra of Greater Boston, as they get ready for their annual Christmas concert, which will take place this year on Sunday, December 15, at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge. Concert will feature soloists Tatev Baroyan (soprano) of Metropolitan Opera, and the New York City Opera, and Rev. Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian (Tenor) of Holy Cross Armenian Church in Belmont. Dedicated to the 155th anniversary of the birthday of Komitas Vardapet. The Erevan Choral Society, which soon will celebrate its 60th anniversary, invites new singers and members who are willing to take part in the Christmas concert. For more information contact either Konstantin Petrossian, musical director of the Choral Society e-mail: Petroskon@aol.com, or Aida Diloyan, corresponding secretary of the chorale e-mail: adiloyan@verizon.net

RHODE ISLAND

OCTOBER 27 — The 100th Anniversary of the Choir of Saints Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, following the Divine Liturgy (approx. 12 noon), Sunday, Egavian Hall, 70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI 02908. Complimentary lunch. Everyone is invited and welcome. Donations are gratefully appreciated.

DECEMBER 13 — Christmas Concert @ Sanctuary of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, 70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI, featuring Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, Junior Choir, Soloists. 7 p.m. Details to follow.

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.

PARG: Pushing Armenian Pop Music Forward

PARG, from page 12

At the same time, he was teaching himself to play string instruments like guitar and banjo.

Soon he started incorporating Armenian words and poetry into his songs.

"I think the further I was from Armenia, the more I craved that connection to my heritage. I started reading Armenian poetry and was inspired by the depth of emotion and beauty in the language. Even though I was naturally fluent in Russian, there was something about singing in Armenian that resonated with me on a deeper level. So I began blending Armenian poetry with modern beats and harmonies, creating something new out of the old," he said.

He has been influenced by artists such as Glen Hansard, Stromae, Hozier and Masego. "These artists are fearless when it comes to merging musical traditions, and I felt I could do the same by incorporating R&B, pop, and even neo-folk into my work. It's all about finding that balance between the familiar and the innovative," he added.

In 2022, he moved back to Armenia. "Moving back to Armenia was one of the best decisions I've made. Being closer to my roots has given me a new kind of inspiration. There's something special about being here — the culture, the landscapes, the people — that feeds into my creativity. *Araj* was born out of that experience, of returning home but also pushing myself forward as an artist," PARG noted.

Director Loïc Foulon traveled to Armenia to shoot the video for *Araj*. "Loïc brought a fresh perspective as an outsider, which I think added to the dream-like quality of the video. It's both grounded in Armenian tradition and also a bit surreal, which fits the themes of *Araj* perfectly," he noted.



PARG with his team and director Loïc Foulon



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The Middle East on Fire

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The Middle East has always been one of the hottest regions in the entire world, but recent direct tensions between Iran and Israel have made the region even more tense. The recent rocket attacks from Iran towards Israel have exacerbated the situation, highlighting significant friction between both parties. This is not merely about saving face for Tehran or Tel Aviv; both countries continue to threaten each other by releasing lists of potential targets for annihilation and bombing. Such actions could potentially lead to a larger-scale war, though this outcome seemed still avoidable days before.

Israeli land operations in Lebanon and Iran's rocket responses have brought the region closer to full-scale war, as Israel has stated it will respond to Iranian rocket attacks. In turn, Iran threatens to escalate its rocket fire if necessary, potentially setting off a lasting cycle of conflict. These attacks are shutting down all avenues for negotiation among Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and other regional players, leaving very small windows for other countries to mediate.

Without a doubt, the Middle Eastern issue holds a significant importance in Washington, especially during the election period. Notably, the situation was the first question posed to both candidates during the vice presidential debate that took place hours after the Iranian rocket attack. The Biden administration asserts that the US is prepared to support Israel's self-defense while carefully avoiding actions that could jeopardize the presidential campaign. In contrast, the Republicans and Trump openly support Israel and criticize Democrats for not taking a tougher stance on Iran and failing to adequately protect Israel. The US appears to avoid direct involvement in a potential conflict between Israel and Iran. While Israel will receive necessary assistance, it is unlikely that the US will deploy troops against Iran.

Escalation between Iran and Israel could directly affect the

South Caucasus region. Azerbaijan's interest in implementing the so-called "Zangezur corridor" could be heightened if Iran's position weakens due to a full-scale war with Israel and its allies, potentially allowing Azerbaijan to launch operations against Armenian territory. If Iran is preoccupied with Israel, Azerbaijan might trigger another attack on Armenia, crossing a significant red line that Tehran will not tolerate, compelling a strong Iranian response to any attempts to establish the "Zangezur corridor." Such a response may prompt Turkey, as Azerbaijan's ally, to take action, although it remains unclear whether Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will fully engage against Iran. Erdogan had pledged to oppose Israel if it attacked Lebanon, yet Turkey has remained silent since Israel's actions there. Israel may benefit from opening another front against Iran to exert pressure on it from multiple directions as part of its military strategy. However, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev must tread carefully, as Turkey's support could be unexpectedly late, similar to the situation in Lebanon.

Armenia appears to be in a challenging position, as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan frequently assert that Azerbaijan is unwilling to engage in the peace process and is seeking to evade peace treaty commitments. They contend that Azerbaijan is instead pursuing military action against Armenia. These statements seem aimed at preparing the Armenian public for the possibility of war or unilateral concessions. Armenia should ideally be prepared to defend its territory by any means necessary; however, the leadership has consistently lost to Azerbaijan in past wars and military campaigns, with this trend since the 2020 conflict likely continuing.

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

Azerbaijan's Cooling Relations with Turkey

By Bahruz Samadov

Despite long being "brotherly" nations, the Israel-Gaza war appears to have exacerbated existing tensions between Turkey and Azerbaijan, potentially pushing the two countries apart irrevocably.

In recent months, relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey have been uncharacteristically cool. To observers who have heard the rhetoric around the two countries' alliance — most prominently, the phrase that they are "two states" but "one nation" — this may come as a surprise.

It might also surprise the observer that a significant factor in this estrangement has been Turkey's unconditional support for Palestine compared to Azerbaijan's relatively neutral stance.

One example of this came in late July, when President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statement about Turkey's decisive role in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War prompted anger, albeit not official, in Azerbaijan. Erdoğan made his statement in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, suggesting that Turkey might take a similar role in that conflict, and effectively positioning Palestine and Azerbaijan as equally oppressed nations. Erdoğan's claim was met with discomfort in part because it factually contested Azerbaijan's narrative around the war, and its "monopoly over victory".

Not only Erdoğan's claim, but also Turkey's support of the Palestinian cause has irritated Azerbaijan. Soon after Erdoğan's statement, Turkey declared a day of mourning over Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh — a sentiment that Azerbaijani society neither shares nor comprehends.

While differences between Azerbaijan and Turkey are noticeable to both nations, Azerbaijan's unwillingness to join anti-Israel rhetoric has become an increasingly significant factor contributing to airing

their grievances.

Azerbaijan's Attitude towards Israel

For many Turks, Azerbaijan's positive attitude towards Israel and its very limited support for Palestine — for example an absence of any public events or virtual discourse — is frustrating. But the reasons for Azerbaijan's difference in attitudes and behavior to those of Turkey are multifaceted, and not only attributable to rational self-interest.

While hostilities between Azerbaijanis and Armenians living in the territories of present-day Azerbaijan began more than a century ago, Azerbaijanis and Jews living in Azerbaijan have never shared negative sentiments towards each other. Azerbaijan's present-day Jewish community is centered around the Red Village, where a Mountainous Jewish community has existed for over two hundred years.

Another reason for the particular affection that Muslim-majority Azerbaijanis have towards Jewish people and Israel is connected to the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988–1994). In 1992, ethnic Mountainous Jew Albert Agarunov died defending the town of Shusha. In an interview conducted that year, Agarunov was asked what made him "defend Azerbaijani lands" despite not being ethnically Azerbaijani. He replied that he was "protect[ing] his homeland", and that he was ready to fight "until the very end of the war."

This episode gained widespread public attention, and had a huge impact on the formation of the image of Jews as a friendly nation in the Azerbaijani social imagination, which is haunted by an obsessive friend-enemy distinction based on anti-Armenian antagonism and loyalty to the state as a sacral and security-providing entity.

Alongside such emotional associations, Israel has also very materially contributed to Azerbaijan's military achievements.

Israel's arms exports played a profound role in Azerbaijan's victory in the 2020 war and the 2023 September clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh; specifically the Israel-produced HAROP, a loitering munition. Azerbaijan, in turn, supplies oil to Israel, and also domestically suppresses Iran-sympathizing Shia dissidents, leveraging the bogeyman of Islamist extremism with Western partners.

Pan-Turkic anti-Arabism

Attitudes towards Arabic states and culture also factor into Azerbaijan's positioning. Since the 2020 war especially, secular loyalty to the state has been accompanied by pan-Turkist ideas: the Azerbaijani state is a Turkic state and a part of the Turkic world, a view stressed by President Aliyev in his 2024 inaugural speech. Pan-Turkic and pan-national Turanist ideas have left deep traces in Azerbaijan's self-perception since the 1990s.

Alongside such ideas, many Azerbaijanis believe that Arabs brought Islam to them by force, and they in turn fought against Arabic expansionism in the 9th century. Such a perspective on Islam is very marginal in Turkey. In Azerbaijan, however, this narrative has been taught since the Soviet times, when myth-making was a part of the nativization and anti-religious secularization policy. For example, Babak, the leader of a neo-Zoroastrian cult who led the resistance movement in the region against the Arabs, was presented as an ethnic Azerbaijani in Soviet Azerbaijani history textbooks as well as in a famous 1979 film, to prove that Azerbaijanis were native to the territory.

The final reason for Azerbaijan's positioning in favor of Israel brings us back to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Many Azerbaijanis believe that Palestinians supported Armenia, especially the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat; a claim

continued on next page

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Jerusalem Patriarchate Wins Lawsuit to Recover its Vast Properties in Turkey

In 2019, I wrote about the status of the lawsuit filed in 2012 in Turkey by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem to recover its over one thousand real estate properties confiscated decades ago.

After going through various legal maneuvers in Turkey for years, the Patriarchate finally won last week a major victory.

Ishan Erdinc reported the good news on October 4, 2024 in *Agos*, an Armenian newspaper of Istanbul in an article titled, “Critical development for the properties of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Turkey: Mar Yakoup Foundation is gaining legal personality.” Mar Yakoup refers to the Armenian Patriarchate of St. James (Sourp Hagop) in Jerusalem.

Turkey’s General Directorate of Foundations (GDF) confiscated the Jerusalem Patriarchate’s properties in 1973, describing the Mar Yakoup Armenian Church Foundation, established during the Ottoman Empire, as no longer functional.

Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Nourhan Manougian’s 2012 lawsuit was initially rejected by both a lower court in Ankara and the court of appeal. The Patriarch then appealed to the Constitutional Court of Turkey, the highest court in the country, which decided that the lower court had violated the rights of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The lower court then reversed the frozen status of the Armenian Patriarchate’s properties.

Ali Elbeyoglu, the Turkish lawyer of the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate, told *Agos* newspaper that the Patriarchate now has two options. It will either appoint a Turkish citizen as its representative in Turkey to manage the properties, as it was before their confiscation, or they will be managed from Jerusalem.

Over the years, most of the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate’s confiscated properties were sold to third parties without any compensation to the Patriarchate.

Patriarch Manougian has never made a public announcement over the years about the lawsuit he had filed in Turkey. The only media reports were about his multiple visits to Istanbul for undisclosed reasons. Even though attorney Elbeyoglu told *Agos* that the Jerusalem Patriarchate has over 100 properties in Turkey, Patriarch Manougian, in an exclusive interview, told me in 2019 that the Patriarchate had owned 1,200 properties in Istanbul alone and dozens more throughout Turkey. The Patriarch also informed me that

a very large and valuable property owned by the Jerusalem Patriarchate in Yalova, Turkey, formerly a part of Istanbul, was sold by a Turkish-Armenian in the 1950’s to a Turk and then fled to the United States. The Patriarch said he is interested in filing a lawsuit against the heirs of that Turkish-Armenian.

Attorney Elbeyoglu told *Agos* last week that the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate owned a highly valuable “mansion in Kuzguncuk [Istanbul], the title of which was transferred to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, was then demolished.” The Attorney also said that there are “21 properties seized from the Armenian Patriarchate Foundation in Altunizade [Istanbul], [the prominent] Istiklal Boulevard of Istanbul, the Fatih [region of Istanbul] and the City of Adana.”

It remains to be seen what the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate will do with the recovered properties and the compensations it will receive for the properties sold long ago to third parties.

I suggest the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate form an international commission of highly respected Armenian individuals to oversee the management of these properties and the compensations paid to the Patriarchate. Given the controversy revolving around the sale or lease of the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate’s properties in Israel, it would be in the Patriarch’s interest to exhibit transparency to avoid secretive business deals and accusations of corruption.

The anticipated return of these properties is a very positive development since the Turkish government has rarely agreed to give back to their Armenian owners the properties it had confiscated decades ago. In 2011, the Turkish government announced that real estate confiscated from Armenian, Greek and Jewish charitable foundations would be either returned to them or pay compensation for the value of the properties if they have been sold to third parties.

However, after a number of properties were given back to these minorities, the government halted the process, even though some court cases are still pending.

I view Turkish efforts to return some of the confiscated Armenian properties as a means to whitewash their historic crimes. Even though we should be wary of such clever Turkish ploys, we should take advantage of every opportunity to recover a portion of what we lost during the Genocide, such as territories, properties, and other assets. And whatever we cannot recover, we need to receive restitution for them.

This is why Armenians should never forget past injustices and do everything possible to preserve the memory of their losses as long as necessary. Nothing is lost forever. History will take twists and turns and no one knows when the tide will turn in our favor. However, if we ourselves give up our claims, they will be lost forever.

from previous pager

that has been debunked. One source of this association comes from the involvement of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia in Lebanese affairs against Israel in the 1970s. The notorious group organized several attacks against Turkish diplomats and was designated as a terrorist organization in Azerbaijan. One of the leaders, Monte Melkonyan, fought and died in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, and was accused of war crimes by Azerbaijan. The group has consequently been associated with Arabic peoples and states without further investigation.

For these reasons, many Azerbaijanis see themselves as alienated by or opposed to Turkey’s support for Palestine. As a result, the conflict has produced a marked shift in the perception of Turkey’s Erdoğan as Azerbaijan’s main ally since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Responding to Erdoğan

On August 1, two days after Erdoğan’s statement, official state-owned newspaper Azerbaijan published a de facto response. The article’s title was “The author of the Karabakh victory is The Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief and the Azerbaijani Army.” The article describes Erdoğan’s statement using a metaphor widely recognized in Azerbaijan: “pouring water into the Armenian watermill.”

The article stressed the unity of the people, army, and president of Azerbaijan in the victory. The author also reminded readers of the different favours Azerbaijan has done for Turkey, such as providing assistance after the earthquake in the Turkish city of Kahramanmaraş, and inviting Turkish companies to operate in Nagorno-Karabakh, while stressing that “brotherhood requires mutual responsibilities”. Another point made is that Azerbaijan bought weapons from Turkey. The article does not discuss Turkey’s involvement in Palestine.

As such rifts appear and threaten to widen, the future of Azerbaijan’s ties with Turkey will likely remain pragmatic and practical — something similar to Azerbaijan’s energy-based politics with the European Union. It appears that the ‘special brotherhood’ is no longer required, and the two countries have chosen different paths.

(Bahruz is a political activist and PhD candidate at Charles University in Prague. He submitted this article to OC-Media shortly before his arrest on August 21. He was charged with treason on August 23, and could face 12–20 years in prison or a life sentence if found guilty. See the analysis released by Human Rights Watch on many arrests of Azerbaijani dissidents.)

Armenian-Azerbaijani Peace Process Hits a New Speed Bump

By Ani Avetisyan

After several months of incremental progress that raised hopes a durable settlement was at hand, the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process appears to have entered another retrograde phase.

Recent comments by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev suggest that Baku has pressed pause on negotiations. In an October 4 speech made in Jabrayil, a city that Azerbaijan regained control of in 2020, Aliyev cautioned Armenia against trying to rearm with the aim of reversing Yerevan’s loss of Nagorno-Karabakh.

“Let them not forget the history of the Second Karabakh War. Let them not forget how they begged us on their knees for mercy, how they appealed to Russia at the highest level 10 times a day, asking to stop the war,” said Aliyev, referring to the 44-day conflict in 2020, in which Azerbaijani forces recaptured from Armenia most of the territory it had lost during the First Karabakh War, which ended in 1994.

Aliyev’s speech occurred just days after a meeting between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in New York, mediated by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Following those discussions both sides pledged to intensify efforts to conclude a peace treaty.

Aliyev’s speech seemed to back off that pledge, given that it also featured pointed criticism of the United States and Blinken personally. The Azerbaijani leader noted that earlier on October 4, 60 pro-Armenian members of the US Congress had appealed to the US administration to release political prisoners and possibly impose sanctions on Azerbaijan.

“It is a vile appeal and cannot influence our will,” Aliyev stated. “The policy of hostility against us does not stop.”

“When I looked at this document, I suspected

that its author and addressee are the same person, the Secretary of State of the United States,” Aliyev added, implying that Washington was playing a double game by touting peace while pushing for sanctions against Baku. Aliyev also slammed other Western nations, particularly France, which has been a strong backer of Armenia in recent years.

Armenia’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement in response to Aliyev’s speech emphasizing that recent arms acquisitions were solely for defensive purposes. A ministry spokesperson added that Yerevan recognizes the territorial integrity of all neighboring countries, including Azerbaijan. “Yerevan has no aggressive intentions towards any of its neighbors,” the ministry spokesperson said.

In his speech at the UN General Assembly in late September, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that the peace deal with Azerbaijan was “within reach.” But just days later, and prior to Aliyev’s speech, the prime minister expressed doubts about Baku’s commitment to finalizing a peace treaty. Pashinyan’s seemingly contradictory statements only underscored the zig-zag nature of the peace process.

Following Aliyev’s October 4 speech, Armenian officials asked publicly whether Azerbaijan remained committed to the establish framework for peace, outlined in a document known as the Alma-Ata Declaration. Baku has not yet officially responded. However, Aykhan Hajizade, an Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesperson, dismissed Armenian assertions that its arms procurement is purely defensive as disingenuous.

Officials in Yerevan have continuously claimed that they are ready to sign a peace treaty based on agreements already reached during negotiations, while setting unresolved issues aside for further discussion at a later date. Baku, for its part, says no deal is possible unless Armenia amends its constitution to unequivocally recognize Azerbaijan’s sovereignty over Karabakh.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.eurasianet.org on October 7.)



Sparkles Foundation Hosts Fashion Show to Fight Human Trafficking, Support Homeless and Refugees

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — The Sparkles Foundation presented its 3rd Annual Children’s Benefit Fashion Show luncheon on Saturday, September 14th, at the Torrey Pines Hilton La Jolla.

The exciting afternoon of elegance, entertainment, and philanthropy featured high profile speakers, musical performances, live auction and a fashion show produced

by San Diego Visual Productions, featuring 40 models of all ages, wearing designs from Macy’s Fashion Valley. Many students from nearby high schools modelled the latest fashions, including Ava Grace Nichole, the current Miss La Jolla and a student at Cathedral Catholic High School.

The event, emceed by Zanni Kalaydjian and co-chaired by Kathy Kassardjian and Dr. Anna Khachatryan, supported charities that fight human trafficking and support homeless, orphans and refugees, locally and around the world.

Guest of Honor San Diego District Attorney Summer Stephan, spoke about the importance of being vigilant to fight sex trafficking in San Diego and beyond. She also acknowledged and cel-



Fashion Show Models

brated her Armenian heritage, as a descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors.

More than \$100,000 was raised to sup-

port multiple charities: Armenian Missionary Association of American Orphan Fund, serving children in Donbas, Ukraine, Lebanon, Armenia and Artsakh; Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition, fighting child trafficking in San Diego; Trek2Share Foundation, providing health care to international war-wounded; Monarch School, supporting unhoused students and families;



Miss La Jolla Ava Grace Nichole with committee members

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ONLINE SILENT AUCTION
 Visit AUCTRIA.EVENTS/STJAMES to register.
 Multiple Items! Artwork, jewelry, services, experiences, and more.
 Items will be on display at the Bazaar. Bidding will be online-only.
 Online bidding begins at 9 am on Thurs, Oct. 17 and ends at 9 pm on Sun, Oct. 20.

BAZAAR SITE

\$100 RAFFLE
 \$5,000, \$1,000, \$750 and three \$500 prizes!
 Drawing will take place Saturday, October 19th.

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(L-R) Kathy Kassardjian, Dr. Anna Khachatryan, San Diego District Attorney Summer Stephan



Emcee Zanni Kalaydjian

and Armenian General Benevolent Union, serving humanity with care and compassion.

The event committee included Kathy Kassardjian, Dr. Anna Khachatryan, and Arpy Adourian, Nora Balikian, Thalia Hagopian, Viviane Hagopian, Zanni Kalaydjian, Rita Kanberian, Nora Kassardjian Belmer, Mariam Kutukjian, Suzanne Meader, Jesus Nunez, Sonia Serpekian, Gina Tashjian and Marisa Ugarte.

To donate or get more information, visit SDSparklesfoundation.org, or San Diego Sparkles Foundation Inc/Facebook.

The next fashion show will be September 27, 2025.