

Biden Urges Aliyev to Finalize Peace Deal With Armenia

By Heghine Buniatian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — US President Joe Biden has urged Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to conclude a peace agreement with Armenia before the end of this year.

“A peace agreement would not only ensure Azerbaijan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, it would transform the entire region -- paving the way for increased trade, investment, and connectivity between Europe and Central Asia,” Biden said in a letter delivered to Baku by a senior US administration official on Monday, October 21.

“As the world’s attention turns to Baku for COP29 [climate summit,] you have a unique opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to peace in front of a global audience. As you know, finalizing the remaining articles of the peace agreement will require creativity and compromise on all sides. But I am confident that you will continue to meet this moment, and I encourage you to finalize an agreement this year,” added the letter published by Azerbaijan’s official Azertac news agency.

Meeting with the US official, Michael Carpenter, Aliyev reiterated his main precondition for any peace deal

with Armenia. a change of the Armenian constitution which he claims contains territorial claims to Azerbaijan. He earlier rejected an Armenian proposal to sign a deal containing the vast majority of the 16 articles of a draft peace treaty that have already been agreed upon by the two sides.

Carpenter, who is a special assistant to Biden and senior director for Europe at the US National Security



US President Joe Biden speaks to journalists before boarding Air Force One at Berlin-Brandenburg Airport, October 18, 2024

Council, visited Baku three weeks before the start of COP29 in the Azerbaijani capital. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hosted talks between the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in New York late last month.

see BIDEN, page 4

Elchin Amirbayov Rejects Armenian Proposal for Immediate Peace Agreement

BERLIN (Caucasus Watch) — On October 20, Elchin Amirbayov, the Representative of the Azerbaijani President for Special Assignments, discussed key issues in an interview with a German publication *Berliner Zeitung*, focusing on the peace process and the normalization of relations with Armenia.

In response to a question regarding the Armenian Ambassador to Germany’s statement that Armenia is ready to sign a peace agreement with Azerbaijan “as early as next Monday,” Amirbayov expressed skepticism about the sincerity of this claim. He stated, “The proposal to sign an unfinished, half-complete agreement as early as tomorrow is not only unrealistic and unacceptable but also misleading.” He emphasized that several important provisions of the draft agreement remain unresolved, and without addressing these, the document would be incomplete.

Amirbayov pointed out that the primary obstacle to peace is Armenia’s continued territorial claims against Azerbaijan’s internationally recognized territory, as outlined in the Armenian Constitution. He criticized Armenia for overlooking this critical issue, suggesting that it aims to mislead the international community into believing it is constructively engaged in the peace process while actually stalling negotiations and creating deadlock.

see PROPOSAL, page 5



Elchin Amirbayov

Catholicos Aram I Bestows Medal upon Noubar Afeyan

WATERTOWN — During his October 13 visit to St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia bestowed upon entrepreneur and philanthropist Dr. Noubar Afeyan and his wife Anna Afeyan the Prince of Cilicia award for their contributions to the Armenian nation.

This took place at a banquet following the Divine Liturgy which featured the use for the first time since the Armenian Genocide of an arm reliquary at present part of an exhibition at the nearby Armenian Museum of America.



AUA Raises \$2.7 Million at Boston-Area Fundraiser

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN— The first-ever East Coast fundraiser for the American University of Armenia (AUA), which took place on October 5 at the Oakley Country Club, raised \$2.7 million.

The event, titled “Catalysts for Change,” paid tribute to the Avedisian family, major donors to AUA in the past two decades, with tributes to the late Edward Avedisian, and his widow, Pamela Wood Avedisian, who was present at the event.

see AUA, page 10



AUA Executive and Development Teams

Lavrov Says Russia Is Being Left out of Armenia-Turkey Normalization Talks

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

On Friday, October 18, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted that Armenia had “taken a break” and preferred direct bilateral talks with Turkey to normalize relations.

“There are no meetings planned yet, our Armenian colleagues have taken a break,” the Russian state-run media outlet TASS quoted Lavrov, following the third meeting of the 3+3 Regional Cooperation Platform held in Istanbul, Turkey.

The 3+3 format meeting includes Turkey, Iran, and Russia on one side, and Armenia, Azerbaijan and, theoretically, Georgia on the other. However, Georgia has declined to join the format, citing Russia’s participation. This format was put forward by the presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkey at the end of 2020 following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Lavrov also said on Friday that the Armenian side “believes that they first need to directly communicate with the Turks and understand what needs to be done.”

Russia has been involved in previous attempts to normalize the Armenian-Turkish relationship, with Lavrov calling its role “important” during the 2007–2009 phase.

However, on the sidelines of the most recent session, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirozian met all of his counterparts that were present, except for Lavrov.

see LAVROV, page 4

ARMENIA
Troubled Construction of World’s Tallest Christ Continues
Page 3



WASHINGTON, DC
Human Rights Hearing Adds to Record of Artsakh Ethnic Cleansing
Page 12



MIAMI
Documentary on Karabakh Ethnic Cleaning Nominated For Regional Emmy
Page 13





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

56 Percent Oppose Border Reopening

YEREVAN (news.am) — The International Republican Institute has publicized the results of a survey conducted between September 13 and 25, with the support of Brevis analytical organization about the opening of Armenia’s border with Turkey. Of those polled, 56 percent said they were against the reopening of the Armenian-Turkish border and 46 percent said the uninhibited entry of Turks and Azerbaijanis into Armenia will create an unsafe situation in the country.

A total of 1,500 residents of Armenia, including those forcibly displaced from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), participated in this survey.

Armenia Still Undecided On COP29 in Baku

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Armenian government is yet to decide on its participation in the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku next month, National Assembly Speaker Alen Simonyan said on Tuesday, October 22.

“No decision has yet been made. We need to hold discussions to understand why we should attend the event, what it would give to Armenia,” he told reporters.

Simonyan underscored that COP29 is a UN annual conference and Armenia is a UN member.

He recalled that Armenia dropped its veto for Azerbaijan to host COP29 in exchange for the release of 32 Armenian prisoners.

Boxers Win Medals at Boxing Championships

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Members of the Armenian junior boxing team have won 5 medals, including 2 gold, at the 2024 European Boxing Confederation (EUBC) under-23 Men’s and Women’s Boxing Championships, on October 21, in Sofia, Bulgaria.

In the women’s division, Elida Kocharyan won gold in the 60 kilogram category.

Rudolf Garboyan won gold in the 51 kilogram category of the men’s division, while Ruslan Aslikyan (57 kilograms), Artur Sahakyan (60 kilograms) and Harutyun Hakobkukhyan (67 kilograms category) won silver.

EU Ambassadors Visit Lori Province

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Ambassadors from 14 EU member states in Armenia visited the Lori Province earlier this week.

Lori Mayor Arkady Peleshyan in his welcome spoke about the successful cooperation between the EU and member states with Vanadzor, the Vanadzor city hall said in a press release. Peleshyan highlighted the Alliance for Better City Governance project.

Head of EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Vassilis Maragos also delivered remarks.

The delegation of the ambassadors will also visit other towns in Lori.

Archaeologists Have Uncovered Ruins of Church Dating Back 1,700 Years

YEREVAN (Artnet News) — A team of researchers from Germany’s University of Munster and the Armenian Academy of Sciences first uncovered the site in 2023 before returning in September and October of this year to gather further information. They have labelled it the country’s oldest church that can be “archaeologically attested” and a slice of “sensational evidence for early Christianity in Armenia,” in an announcement on October 11.

The church is located in Artaxata, once the site of a major commercial city that was the Kingdom of Armenia’s capital until the early 2nd century. Wooden platforms discovered onsite have been radiocarbon dated to the middle of the 4th century C.E.

This makes the church concurrent with Echmiadzin Cathedral, a UNESCO heritage structure 20 miles to the north that is widely considered the world’s oldest cathedral. Though, as lead researcher, Achim Lichtenberger, said via email, there is no archaeological data for Echmiadzin’s age. “Armenia is the oldest Christian state in the world,” Lichtenberger said. “Our monument attests to the early Christianization.”

The church is an octagonal building, nearly 100 feet in diameter, which is built from a simple mortar floor laid with terracotta tiles. Onsite, archaeologists discovered significant quantities of marble, which is believed to have been imported from the Mediterranean, thereby suggesting it was once extravagantly and expensively decorated.

“Octagonal churches were unknown here until now, but we are very familiar



Khor Virap Monastery at the foot of Mount Ararat is close to the newly discovered church. Photo: Armenian-German Artaxata Project.

with them from the Eastern Mediterranean region, where they first appeared in the 4th-century C.E.,” Mkrtich Zardaryan, an archaeologist at National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, said in a statement.

The octagon became an important symbol in early Christianity as a representation of Jesus’s eighth day, i.e. his resurrection. The shape was commonly used for early baptisteries and shrines for martyrs.

The Armenian-German research team has been excavating in the Artaxata area of the Ararat Plain since 2018. In addition to once serving as the Kingdom of Armenia’s

capital, it is also the place where Gregory the Illuminator, founder of the Armenian Apostolic Church, is said to have converted the Armenian king Tiridates III to Christianity in 301 C.E. Proof of the area’s long-standing Christian heritage stands with the medieval monastery of Khor Virap which dates to the 7th century.

The excavation project, which receives funding from German Research Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, intends to continue excavations into next year in the hope of uncovering more of the church’s history.

ATP Kicks Off Massive Fall Tree Planting

YEREVAN — As the vibrant hues of autumn take over Armenia, Armenia Tree Project (ATP) is gearing up for one of its most crucial tree-planting seasons yet. With climate change and environmental degradation threatening ecosystems globally, ATP’s mission has never been more urgent or vital. This fall, ATP is set to plant an impressive 330,000 trees, bringing them closer to their ambitious yearly target of 800,000 trees across the country.

Already, ATP has planted 505,000 trees in the spring alone, through its robust Community Tree Planting and Forestry programs. This season’s planting efforts will focus on key areas of Armenia, including the picturesque regions of Koghes and Urasar in Lori, Lernanist in Kotayk, Gavar Town in Gegharkunik, and the Didonian

Memorial Forest in the Mets Saria Community, Shirak Region.

Among these sites, the Didonian Memorial Forest stands as a poignant testament to ATP’s long-term vision. Spanning 46 hectares, ATP has already transformed 38 hectares of barren land here with 165,000 trees, including resilient native species such as oak, pine, birch, wild apple, and pear. As ATP’s autumn planting concludes, the final phase of the reforestation efforts at Didonian will add the finishing touches to this thriving forest ecosystem.

Another exciting milestone is in Gavar Town, Gegharkunik, where ATP is expanding its footprint with a new 80-hectare site, building on their successful planting of 19 hectares in Gegharkunik Village. This initiative is a cornerstone of ATP’s commit-

ment to rejuvenating Armenia’s landscapes and supporting biodiversity.

ATP’s tree-planting season is powered by local communities. By hiring 200 additional seasonal workers from nearby villages, ATP will create much-needed job opportunities, bringing its total workforce to 500+ seasonal planters this year. Many of these workers plant trees with their families, turning each tree into a symbol of shared hope and resilience.

“Planting trees is more than just a job for us,” says one worker from the village of Lernanist. “It’s about giving back to the land that’s given so much to us. We are planting our future.”

This community-driven approach doesn’t just reforest the land — it rebuilds bonds and fosters local pride, reinforcing ATP’s philosophy that a greener Armenia is one that supports its people, economically and socially.

Behind ATP’s planting success lies meticulous preparation. As autumn unfolds, young saplings are carefully moved to lower elevations, a crucial step in acclimatizing them for their new homes. Meanwhile, nursery workers are busy collecting mountain ash and maple seeds from the towering mountains, laying the foundation for trees that will take root in 2-3 years. This cyclical process ensures that Armenia’s reforestation efforts continue for generations to come.

“We don’t just plant trees; we grow them,” explained Vahe Matsakyan, head of ATP’s forestry department. “Each tree is thoughtfully selected to match its environment, ensuring it can support local wildlife and communities.”

Learn more at ArmeniaTree.org



A woman planting trees in Armenia for ATP



ARMENIA

Troubled Construction of World's Tallest Christ Continues

By Thomas Guichard

ZOVUNI, Armenia (La Croix International) — In front of the construction site, everyone wondered why his face looks so sad. The bust of a monumental Jesus in this drab suburb of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, is surprising enough. His seemingly downcast expression, with eyes looking downward, adds to the astonishment of passersby. The lead sculptor is tired of the question. “It’s what was requested,” he grudgingly admitted, refusing to give his name.

After many twists and turns, a giant Christ will indeed soon appear in the Armenian sky. In fact, it’s safe to say it will pierce through it. The statue, set to stand atop Mount Hatis (2,528 meters), will rise 77 meters high, including its concrete base. This will far surpass the current world record holder, Poland’s Christ the King statue, which stands at 52 meters. The aluminum parts, designed to mimic white stone, are ready. According to our sources, the final assembly is scheduled to take place in the coming months, with little fanfare.

The project resumed this summer after being stalled for nearly two years. Atop Mount Hatis, a fortress was built three millennia before Christ’s birth. Several government ministries attempted to halt the project, as it had neither construction permits nor an impact study, and the site was classified as a natural heritage site.

This summer, artifacts and carved arrows were finally removed from the site. Four experts from the National Institute of Archaeology were sent for a rushed excavation of the fortress. They now prefer to remain anonymous, claiming they have faced “intimidation.” From whom? Perhaps Gagik Tsarukyan, the project’s originator and financier, and one of the few true

believers in its value.

The 67-year-old oligarch built his fortune on the ruins of the Soviet Union after 1991. Now heading an empire spanning media to real estate, the businessman—accused of vote-buying during a brief stint in politics—has many allies within the government. His influence, once earning him the title of world arm-wrestling champion, enabled him to push through opposition to his plans.

The main opposition to the statue comes from Echmiadzin, the Holy See of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the national church of Armenia, which criticized the statue’s aesthetic for being more Catholic than Armenian. This church prides itself on simplicity, favoring the construction of khachkars—crosses carved in pink tuff reliefs—without human representation. Never decorative statues, let alone ones covered in phosphorescent material to glow at night like the future Christ of Hatis.

Meetings between high-ranking church officials and the oligarch’s team were held to amend the project but yielded no results. From the garden of his bishopric in Gyumri, the second and oldest diocese in Armenia, Archbishop Mikayel Ajapahi-

an reacted coolly. According to him, “Mr. Tsarukyan has decided to do whatever he wants, and it’s unfortunate: there is nothing Armenian or even religious about it.”

the Yerevan suburb, closed to the public, suddenly open. Two tinted-window SUVs speed up. They are close associates of the oligarch. The head sculptor gives them a



The top portion of the giant statue funded by oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan

After two years of requests from *La Croix*, Tsarukyan finally responded in writing. He described his vision of the statue as dedicated “to the unity of Armenians here and in the diaspora.” He believed that “tens of millions of tourists” will come to admire the monument. “It will make a great spot for Sunday barbecues,” Archbishop Ajapahian commented dryly.

The gates to the construction site in

tour: finally, admirers of his work. The visitors are visibly not in their right state of mind and lavish praise on the statue. “It’s incredible what Gagik has done,” said a woman struggling to stay upright in her high heels. The convoy left as quickly as it arrived, heading for the Tsarukyan villa, they said. Rumor has it that he has built his own church there, along with two giant lions.

Overlooked Weather Phenomenon Produces Gamma Rays in Our Atmosphere

By Michelle Starr

YEREVAN (Nature) — The electrical effects of a thunderstorm are not confined just to high up in the atmosphere. Close to the ground, Earth’s atmosphere hums with intense electric fields that accelerate particles, flinging electrons in ways that force atoms to glow with gamma rays.

From atop a mountain in Armenia, scientists have taken a close look at this mysterious meteorological phenomenon.

At the Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory’s cosmic ray facility on Mount Aragats, physicist Ashot Chilingarian and his colleagues have been working to understand Thunderstorm Ground Enhancements, or TGEs.

This electromagnetic enhancement, Chilingarian says, has been overlooked in thunderstorm research – but it could be a piece of the puzzle in our understanding of the physical Universe, from thunderstorms here on Earth, to the cosmic rays that travel vast distances across space.

“Each day, 40,000 thunderstorms occur. Numerous networks detecting atmospheric discharges and satellites with precise optical instruments are monitoring lightning flashes. Still, when we started TGE research, nobody monitored the huge flux of mega-electronvolt (MeV) electrons bombarding our planet and space above it,” he told ScienceAlert.

“We established the SEVAN particle detector network ten years ago to monitor TGEs in Eastern Europe, Germany, and Ar-

menia. Electron accelerators with energies of tens of MeV cover vast volumes in the atmosphere and many square kilometers on the Earth’s surface.

“This huge flux is accompanied by life on Earth through its billion years of evolution and surely influences all aspects of the geospace and biosphere.”

TGEs consist of electric fields in the atmosphere, generated by thunderstorms. Within these electric fields, electrons are accelerated to high speeds – speeds approaching that of light in a vacuum, or relativistic speeds.

These are known as relativistic runaway electron avalanches, propelled by the electric field both towards the ground and upward into the atmosphere. It’s these electrons that produce the radiation.

When they decelerate suddenly, deflected by a collision with an atomic nucleus in the atmosphere, the loss of energy manifests as gamma rays – a form of radiation known as bremsstrahlung radiation.

Using their network of detectors, Chilingarian and his colleagues collected data on thunderstorms across Europe in 2023, performing detailed measurements of the electrons and the gamma radiation that occurred during the 56 intense TGEs they recorded.

The most intense TGEs mostly took place from May to July, and the most powerful was recorded on Mount Lomnický štít in Slovakia in May. For this one event, the particle flux was 100 times the normal, fair-weather level. In total, there were sev-

en events that exceeded the fair weather flux by more than 75 percent.

“We measure the stable electron flux on Earth’s surface, covering a hundred thousand square meters. Some mechanism provides this stability for a minute or more,” Chilingarian explained.

“A huge electron beam emerges in the thundercloud, where the charge structure changes on the second-time scale. Atmospheric discharges kill the potential difference, but the flux is stable. It was exciting to measure!”

Surprisingly, the researchers also found that the electric field is much closer to the ground than they expected to find. They measured a strong electric field strength down to 50 meters (164 feet) above ground.

“This discovery was astonishing to meteorologists, who didn’t believe it until we presented exhaustive proof,” Chilingarian noted.

The consistency of the acceleration, able to maintain particle flux for up to several minutes, as well as the low height of the electric field, reveals new details about the structure of atmospheric electric fields, and thunderstorms, that we didn’t know before.

For example, TGEs might provide a pathway whereby lightning strikes can reach the ground. And their role in geophysics needs to be investigated. The researchers have made an open-access TGE database available for the scientific community to explore and analyze.

Their thunderstorm research is only part

of the work performed on Aragats. This year, the Sun has reached a frenzy as it approaches solar maximum, the peak of its activity cycle, sending particles spewing into space powered by coronal mass ejections.

Chilingarian and his colleagues have also detected solar events with the mountaintop equipment, publishing three papers with a fourth on the way.

“Violent explosions in our galaxy also send ultra-high energy particles to the solar system. Recently, Pevatrons, sources of 1015 eV gamma rays, were discovered. We critically analyzed this discovery based on our knowledge of atmospheric physics,” Chilingarian told ScienceAlert.

“The synergy of atmospheric, space, and solar accelerators is important for understanding nature!”

The findings are due to be published in *Physical Review D*.

(This article originally appeared in *Nature* on September 30.)

Correction

A photo essay in last week’s issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* about the visit of Aram I, Catholicos of the Great See of Cilicia, to the Boston area, misidentified the church in the pictures. He visited St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church, not St. James.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Pashinyan Attends
BRICS Summit

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was scheduled to attend the BRICS summit that will be presided over by Russian President Vladimir Putin, 1lurer.am reported on October 22.

The BRICS summit took place in Kazan on October 22-24.

Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan said on Monday, October 21, that Armenia is not planning to become a BRICS member.

Armenia to Host
Eurovision Young
Musicians 2026

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia will host the Eurovision Young Musicians 2026 competition, showcasing the finest classical artists in the 12 to 21 age range and helping to launch their international careers, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the Public Television Company of Armenia said.

Armenia first joined the competition in 2012 with kanun player Narek Kazazyan and then, after a 12-year break, returned in 2024 with Hayk Hekekyan on the oboe.

The competition is held every other year since 1982.

“Eurovision Young Musicians is an incredible showcase of talent, creativity and diversity that unites people through music,” said Jean Philip De Tender, the EBU’s Director of Media and Deputy Director-General. “We’re pleased to have Armenia hosting in 2026 and look forward to working together on an amazing event.”

Seven Azeris in Israel
Arrested on Espionage
Charges

YEREVAN (news.am) — Seven Azerbaijani born naturalized Israeli citizens are suspected of spying for Iran, reported Today in Israel on October 21.

Over a period of two years, the Israeli citizens carried out some 600 assignments for Iranian handlers, passing on information about strategically important Israeli military sites such as the Nevatim and Ramat David air force bases and Iron Dome positions. These sites were reportedly the targets of a recent Iranian missile strike.

The payment for their services amounted to hundreds of thousands of shekels, paid partly in cash and partly in cryptocurrency. According to the investigation, the suspects transmitted data through encrypted channels and received detailed instructions on which targets to photograph and how much was due.

This is one of the most serious espionage cases in recent years. The detainees were arrested on September 19 and an indictment will soon be filed against them, charging them with espionage and collaboration with the enemy — crimes that carry penalties of up to life imprisonment in Israel.

Turkey Shuttters Independent Radio
Over Armenian Genocide Reference

By Csongor Körömi

ISTANBUL (Politico.eu) — Turkey finally shut down independent radio station Açık Radyo on October 16 after a lengthy legal dispute with the channel.

The Istanbul station’s license had been revoked in July by the Turkish Radio and Television Council, a state media regulator, after a guest on one of its programs referred to the atrocities committed against the country’s Armenian minority during World War I as genocide, a term Turkey vehemently rejects.

Administrative hiccups prevented the station from being shut down before that date. Although its last listenership data dates back to 2001, Açık Radyo has 187,000 followers on the platform former-

ly known as Twitter.

“As millions of listeners can easily attest, Açık Radyo cannot be silenced thanks to the social impact it has created over the years,” the station wrote in a post on X, vowing to return to the airwaves.

“We invite all our listeners, professional organizations and the international community to raise their voices much more clearly and loudly this time against this decision, which has caused an irreparable loss in terms of press and broadcasting freedom in Turkey.”

The media regulator didn’t comment on the closure of the station, but İlhan Taşçı, a member of the main opposition party CHP, said it was “unacceptable” to close the station as it had “complied with all the rules” during its 30 years on the air.

According to Açık Radyo’s post, the community radio station has amplified civic voices in many areas including on climate and environmental issues, gender equality and multiculturalism.

The station’s slogan — “open to all the sounds, colors and vibrations of the universe” — was echoed in the last song it played on the air, the 1966 Beach Boys hit “Good Vibrations.”

Under the autocratic leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey has become a hostile environment for independent media, and several international organizations have called on European Union institutions to protect freedom of expression and the rights of journalists in the country.

Lavrov Says Russia Is Being left out of Armenia-Turkey Talks

LAVROV, from page 1

Armenian-Russian relations have been in freefall since the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, with Yerevan seemingly pushing itself away from the Moscow-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in favor of closer security ties with the West.

Russia has nonetheless attempted to maintain its historical role as a power bro-

sizing the readiness of Russia and Iran to provide “assistance if there is interest from the direct participants.”

Turkey and Armenia’s Long Path
toward Normalization

Turkey unilaterally closed its border with Armenia in 1993. It has only been opened once since then, when the closure of the land border was temporarily lifted for lorries carrying humanitarian aid after a major earthquake hit Turkey in February 2023.

Another round of the normalization process between Armenia and Turkey kicked off at the end of 2021 with the two countries appointing special representatives to hold talks. The representatives held their latest meeting in July, the fifth of its kind, on the Margara-Alican crossing between the two countries.

On Friday, during the bilateral meeting of Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan, the two officials discussed issues on the bilateral agenda and the ongoing Armenia-Turkey dialogue aimed at the full normalization of relations.

Mirzoyan also made a reference to this during his speech at the latest 3+3 meeting, noting that Armenia is “sincerely” interested in unblocking all economic and transport communications in the region.

Based on “the joint assessment” of the bridge and the border checkpoint, Mirzoyan stressed that the facilities have been constructed and technically equipped to allow for the proposed border opening to proceed. He added that the sides have already agreed to “jointly assess the tech-

nical requirements” for reopening the Gyumri-Kars railway.

Mirzoyan also noted the accomplishments of the respective sides, such as the establishment of direct flights and the reciprocal lifting of bans for air cargo trade.

In his own statement on Friday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized that Turkey would continue to provide all possible support towards ensuring a lasting peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia, stressing that “developments in the region make it necessary to strengthen cooperation and solidarity.”

Despite the agreements reached in July 2022 to enable the crossing of the land border by third-country citizens “at the earliest date possible”, the border still remains closed as of October 2024.

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

Biden Urges Aliyev to
Finalize Peace Deal With
Armenia

BIDEN, from page 1

The US State Department spokesman, Matthew Miller, insisted last week that Washington “never tied the [Armenian-Azerbaijani] agreement to COP.” He also said it is “up to the two parties, not the United States” to reach such an agreement.

Armenian officials have expressed concern that Azerbaijan could invade Armenia after the upcoming global summit.

Speaker of Parliament Clarifies Delimitation Regulation Schedule

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan on October 22 addressed the question whether Azerbaijan is undertaking processes regarding the ratification of the border delimitation regulation.

Simonyan stressed that Armenia and Azerbaijan have different legal systems.

“We are a parliamentary country, while Azerbaijan is a presidential country. And after all, this regulation will take effect when the two sides exchange the protocols that the process is completed. This means that if so happens that Azerbaijan doesn’t ratify the regulation, the process done by our side won’t have any legal force. This is a condition. And af-

ter all, we have agreed upon all points. Our ratification of the regulation doesn’t contain any risks because it doesn’t take legal force until we’ve exchanged protocols on the process being completed,” he said.

The Armenian parliament is debating the ratification of the Armenia-Azerbaijan regulation on the joint activity of the border delimitation commissions.

Both opposition factions, the Hayastan and Pativ Unem, have announced that they won’t participate in the debates and the vote. The opposition MPs argued that Azerbaijan could refuse to ratify it, thus Armenia’s ratification is contentious. This argument has been rejected as un-

founded by the ruling Civil Contract MPs.

Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, addressing similar concerns on what would happen in case of risks of escalation after the regulation takes effect, said that the main function of the regulation is for disputes to be resolved in the platform that would be created in the event of approving the regulation, and not through force.

“I think in this case it would be very strange for the parties to resolve any given dispute militarily. ... We consider that this issue must be resolved through bilateral talks, without any mediators,” Grigoryan said.



INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan Strives to Shut down Discussion of Rights Record at COP29 Conference

The hosting agreement signed by Azerbaijan and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) covering the upcoming COP29 conference contains language that potentially gives Azerbaijani authorities the ability to muzzle criticism of their domestic policies, according to a copy of the document obtained by Human Rights Watch.

COP29 is scheduled to run from November 11-22 in the Azerbaijani capital Baku. The hosting agreement was finalized in August. At a meeting in Bonn in 2023, UNFCCC member states issued a report calling for hosting agreements to conform with basic human rights standards and its terms to be publicly available.

The copy obtained and published by Human Rights Watch (HRW) creates a free-speech gray area that can leave COP29 participants uncertain over whether they may face legal consequences for anything they say or do in Baku. One article in the agreement states that participants will have immunity “in respect of words spoken or written and any act performed by them in their official capacity in connection with their participation in the meeting.” But the agreement also creates room for Azerbaijani authorities to punish anyone who raises domestic policies and/or abuses, even if they have a plausible connection to environmental issues.

“All Participants enjoying such privileges and immunities have the duty to respect the laws and regulations in force in the

Republic of Azerbaijan and have the duty not to interfere in its internal affairs,” the agreement states. What might constitute “interference” in internal affairs is not de-

tary Assembly of the Council of Europe and an outspoken critic of President Ilham Aliyev’s regime, described COP29 as a legitimate forum for criticism of the host

interview with Azerbaijani journalists. “They have to talk about the situation in Azerbaijan, but not after COP29 ends. ... Ilham Aliyev may think that COP29 is like Formula1 or some football cup. But it’s a huge political conference.”

Meanwhile, the British Broadcasting Service’s Azeri-language service, citing an unnamed government source in Baku, reported that Russian leader Vladimir Putin will not attend COP29. Putin’s absence would avert a potential complication for COP29’s host, President Ilham Aliyev. Ukraine’s ambassador to the European Union, Vsevolod Chentsov, had called for a boycott of COP29 if Putin had opted to attend.

(This article originally appeared on www.eurasianet.org on October 22.)

HRW CRITICIZED UNFCC FOR HANDLING OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH AZERBAIJAN, ADDING THAT IT SHOULD TAKE STEPS TO FORCE BAKU TO “FACILITATE A RIGHTS-RESPECTING CLIMATE CONFERENCE.”

fined in any of the hosting agreement’s 16 articles.

Over the past year, Azerbaijan has conducted a far-reaching crackdown on all forms of dissent. HRW criticized UNFCC for handling of the negotiations with Azerbaijan, adding that it should take steps to force Baku to “facilitate a rights-respecting climate conference.”

“It is regrettable that these agreements are shrouded in secrecy, and it shouldn’t fall to civil society organizations to share them publicly. In the interests of transparency and accessibility, the UNFCCC should publish past, current, and future agreements on its website,” HRW said in a statement.

Frank Schwabe, a prominent member of the German delegation at the Parliamen-

nation’s human rights record.

“No one should be afraid of criticizing the government,” Schwabe said in an

Turkish Journalist Detained, Fired after Expressing Condolences for Gülen on TV

ISTANBUL (Stockholm Center for Freedom) — A journalist in western Turkey was detained and subsequently fired from her job after she expressed condolences for Turkish-Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen during a live broadcast on Monday, October 21.

The incident shows the extent to which Gülen, an arch-enemy of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has been demonized by Turkish authorities.

Gülen had been living in the United States since 1999 and passed away at a hospital in Pennsylvania on Sunday evening at the age of 83, according to the Gülen-affiliated Herkul website.

Aysin Komitgan, editor-in-chief of the Bursa’da Bugün news website, announced Gülen’s death during a live broadcast on the outlet’s YouTube channel. She said that although there had been earlier unconfirmed reports, the news had now been confirmed. “What can we say? May he rest in heaven,” she said.

Her comments prompted the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office to launch an investigation into Komitgan on accusations of “disseminating terrorist propaganda.”

The Turkish government has labeled Gülen and his movement as a terrorist organization, accusing them of orchestrating corruption investigations in 2013 and a coup attempt in July 2016. Gülen and his followers have denied any involvement in the coup or other terrorist activities.

Komitgan was detained on Monday and is expected to appear in court today. Her brief message of condolence also cost Komitgan her job, with the Bursa’da Bugün news website announcing her dismissal due to “unacceptable” statements made on air.



Aysin Komitgan

Komitgan issued an apology on X, saying she regretted her choice of words during the live broadcast and had no opportunity to correct herself. She expressed sorrow over the manipulation of her remarks, which were made out of humane feelings.

The Bursa branch of Turkey’s Contemporary Journalists’ Association (ÇGD) condemned Komitgan’s detention, describing her comments about Gülen as “a live broadcast accident.”

Meanwhile, many pro-government circles in Turkey celebrated Gülen’s death, reflecting a decade-long campaign against him and his movement, especially following the coup attempt.

Several government officials who had previously praised Gülen for his teachings and the promotion of intercultural dialogue have since issued statements condemning him, promising that the fight against his movement would continue without concession.

Diaspora Commissioner Says 870 Arrived from Beirut in Past Month

YEREVAN (news.am) — From September 28 to October 20, a total of 870 people have arrived in Armenia and 470 have left Armenia on Beirut-Yerevan flights. Armenia’s High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, Zareh Sinanyan, stated this in an interview with Sputnik Armenia — and reflecting on the ongoing Israel-Lebanon confrontation.

According to him, they have been following the developments since the first day of the escalation of the conflict and are trying to find out the disposition of the Lebanese Armenian community.

“Recent developments certainly have caused tension in the community, but it has not reached the level that people are ready to leave the country in a hurry. There are still no intentions in the community to leave Beirut, come to Armenia. People live with their regime, which was not good from the beginning: unstable electricity supply, water supply, deep economic crisis, but also with the hope that it will be good,” said Sinanyan.

“It is clear that the number of people ar-

riving in Armenia [from Lebanon] is twice as many as those leaving [Armenia]. We keep in touch with various organizations and individuals of the Armenian community in Lebanon in order to have as realistic a picture as possible of what is happening there,” he said.

According to Sinanyan, most of the Lebanese Armenians who arrived in Armenia have Armenian citizenship, and some others have applied for Armenian citizenship. As for the dead and wounded persons as a result of shelling, there are no Armenians among them because the military operations are taking place far from the Armenian-inhabited areas of Lebanon.

Sinanyan did not give a clear answer to the question of whether Armenia is ready to accept Lebanese Armenians if there is a need for it, and stated that his opinion will be very subjective. At the same time, however, the official noted that Armenia today has much greater opportunities to accept Lebanese Armenians than it could have accepted Syrian Armenians back in 2011 and 2012.

longer seems to be a priority for Armenia.

When asked about the possibility of separating the issue of opening the so-called “Zangezur corridor” from the peace agreement and whether amendments to the Armenian Constitution could be postponed, Amirbayov argued that it was incorrect to draw parallels between these two issues. He stressed that Armenia’s territorial claims have been a fundamental cause of

the conflict since its inception and must be addressed to establish lasting peace. Amirbayov warned, “If the basic law of this country remains unchanged, the peace agreement will be short-lived,” noting that any future Armenian leadership opposed to peace could easily denounce the agreement due to constitutional inconsistencies.

He emphasized that Azerbaijan seeks to sign a peace agreement not just with Prime

Minister Nikol Pashinyan but with Armenia as a whole, emphasizing the need to eliminate legal loopholes that could reignite conflict and cause further tragedies. Regarding the “Zangezur corridor,” Amirbayov acknowledged its significance to Azerbaijan but explained that its removal from the peace agreement was intended to prevent critics from accusing Azerbaijan of obstructing progress in the overall negotiations.

Elchin Amirbayov Rejects Armenian Proposal for Immediate Peace Agreement

PROPOSAL, from page 1

Furthermore, Amirbayov commented on the impact of Western support for Armenia, stating, “It is obvious that as soon as Armenia started receiving unlimited diplomatic, economic, and military aid from the West, including the European Union (EU) and the US, it lost all interest in constructively participating in negotiations.” He indicated that achieving peace with Azerbaijan no

Community News

LA Fundraiser Supports Vulnerable Children from Armenia, Artsakh Families

LOS ANGELES — Orran, a charitable organization that helps Armenia's most vulnerable children and elderly, will hold its annual "Evening with Orran" gala on October 27, at 5 p.m. at Republic Venue in Sherman Oaks. Supporters will become part of Orran's life-changing work, which has nurtured more than 20,000 children of Armenia and Artsakh since its inception in 2000.

For nearly 25 year years, Orran — which means "cradle" or "haven" in Armenian — has been a pillar of life for children in need, particularly in Yerevan and Vanadzor, often guiding them off the streets to a safe, fulfilling and productive life. Orran provides not only daily food and clothing, but enriches children with education, vocational training, medical, social and psychological care, and builds their character, self-esteem and vital role in family, community and nation.

The non-governmental organization has, by necessity, expanded its



Wrestling world champion Nazik Avdalyan at Orran with two young people receiving help from the organization

mission to serve thousands of exiled families from Artsakh as well as those in distant villages, ensuring that assistance extends beyond its centers.

Orran also offers apprenticeship programs to people in the regions who want to learn a trade from skilled craftsmen and provides weekly food packages to the elderly.

Gala Co-Chairs are Marina Kuri-an and Hermine Oruncakci. The evening will feature guests including World Champion Armenian Wrestler and Orran supporter Nazik Avdalyan, along with Orran's Founders Raffi K. and Armine Hovannisian, who moved to Armenia more than 30 years. The program will include presentations and auctions of art, sports memorabilia and more. Folk singer Hasmik Harutyunyan and Ensemble will perform. Filmmaker Ani Hovannisian Kevorkian, a frequent visitor to Orran, will serve as the evening's MC.

For more information, tickets, or to make a tax-deductible contribution, visit orran.org.



Assembly Co-Chair Van Krikorian testifies before the Congressional Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Congressional Human Rights Commission Hearing Adds to Record of Artsakh Ethnic Cleansing, Aliyev Genocidal Repression

WASHINGTON — The Congressional Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, led by Co-Chairs Chris Smith (R-NJ) and James McGovern (D-MA), held a hearing on "Human Rights in Azerbaijan Since the Fall of Nagorno-Karabakh," coinciding with the one-year anniversary of Azerbaijan's military assault on the entirety of Artsakh, on Thursday, September 19, 2024. This marked the Commission's third such hearing this Congress.

"We want to especially thank Co-Chairs Jim McGovern and Chris Smith, and the entire Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, who kept the focus on the ongoing genocide of indigenous Christian Armenians as well as the shameful trend of deteriorating human rights globally," said Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian.

Co-Chair Smith (R-NJ) shared remarks on the "human rights violations committed by Azerbaijan" and the importance of the U.S. to "do far more than it has done to try to mitigate the horrific ongoing pervasive human rights abuses committed by Baku."

"This is the one-year anniversary of the fall of Artsakh, and all of us grieve over what has happened in plain sight with very little pushback by the international community, including the US," continued Rep. Smith. "Very few Armenians remain in Nagorno-Karabakh, but we are concerned deeply for the political prisoners and prisoners of war held by the government of Azerbaijan." Rep. Smith also highlighted the high priority of protecting Armenian cultural heritage and upholding the right of return for the Armenians of Artsakh.

Commission Member Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA) noted that the hearing was an "opportunity to continue to shed light on the violations of the injustices that have been taking place for years as a result of Azerbaijan's government and its president."

"The government of Azerbaijan must be held accountable for its crimes and violations of human rights...including ethnic cleansing and forced displacement," continued Rep. Costa, who emphasized that the U.S. Administration needs to "double its efforts" with the peace process.

"America's ability to continue to be the beacon of light and standing up for human rights throughout the world must be a constant," said Costa. "We must continue to be on the side of Armenia and the Armenian people."

Rep. Andy Harris (R-MD) said that he personally saw Azerbaijan's "encroachments" and "heard the stories from those forcibly extracted" when he traveled to Armenia with the Helsinki Commission. He stated that he was "disturbed" by the destruction of cultural heritage, as well as Turkey refusing their airplane from flying over their airspace because they were coming from Armenia.

"This is a NATO ally, and we are traveling on a U.S. government airplane, and a NATO ally refused us air space because we had visited Yerevan," said Harris. "We have to deal with that...because it seems our lengthiest relationship with an ally is the one that is betraying our trust."

He concluded it was "clear" that there was "complicity" among Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan regarding Nagorno-Karabakh and that they "all had a hand to play."

Repression in Azerbaijan

The Commission heard from a broad range of witnesses, which included: Gegham Stepanyan, Former Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Artsakh, who testified on the genocidal policies and crimes committed by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh; Professor Adam T. Smith, Co-Director of Caucasus Heritage Watch, Cornell University, who testified on Azerbaijan's record of deliberately targeting Armenian cultural heritage; Kate Watters, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Crude Accountability, who provided testimony on the human rights issues and corruption in Azerbaijan and its hosting of the upcoming COP29; Sharmagh Mardi, Supervising Lawyer at the Center for Truth & Justice, who testified about

continued on next page

Annual Reconfiguration Of Heritage Park Abstract Sculpture Takes Place

BOSTON — The Abstract Sculpture's annual reconfiguration took place on Sunday, October 13 at Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. The two halves of the split rhomboid dodecahedron were pulled apart by a crane and reconfigured to create a new sculptural shape, symbolic of a new life. The reconfiguration tells the story of all who pulled away or were forced to pull away from their country of origin and came to these Massachusetts shores, establishing themselves in new and different ways. The Abstract Sculpture is dedicated to lives lost during the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 and all genocides.

The Park's Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund supports the annual reconfiguration.



The new configuration of the Abstract Sculpture at the Armenian Heritage Park

A&A Industries, Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros, owners fabricate the Abstract Sculpture, their generous gift-in-kind. Aurelian Mardiros and Gary Mardiros oversee the annual reconfiguration done by Jerry Rigging Corp together with William Martin who, on behalf of the Foundation, coordinates the event and Don Telalian, AIA, the Park's architect/designer.

"The Park has been a brilliant addition to the new Boston with its giant modern sculpture that gets reshaped every spring into a new form as the *Globe* stated, it celebrates 'how public art becomes a part of the city, both permanent and alive,'" commented Stephen Kurkjian, Pulitzer Prize winning investigative journalist, former editor of the *Boston Globe* and author, "...measuring up to the promise each of us makes in living or working in Boston — you are part of this city's great history and expected to honor and contribute to it... And this is the kind of pledge that I see that the Armenian Heritage Park made to itself and to those who supported its drive from the outset."

To learn more about the park, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

the war crimes committed by Azerbaijan against the Armenian people of Artsakh and her collection of over 500 eyewitness testimonies; and Andrea J. Prasow, Executive Director of Freedom Now, whose testimony focused on the suppression of human rights activists in Azerbaijan.

Watters stated that the Aliyev regime is “rife with corruption,” and there has been an increasing crackdown on civil society activists and journalists “who speak in opposition to authorities using fabricated charges and violating rights of those arrested, such as using torture and inhumane treatment.”

She reported that Azerbaijan “regularly detains those it seeks to silence” and currently has 303 political prisoners in custody, which is 49 more than last year.

“The numbers are appalling,” said Watters. “Azerbaijan is party to numerous international human rights treaties... that prohibit the use of torture” yet there are credible records of torture, particularly in police custody where authorities use abusive tactics.

She stated that there is “extensive documentation” from internationally known organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as well as numerous media reports that focus on cases of “arbitrary detention and mistreatment taking place over the last year that provide insights into the scale of human rights abuses in Azerbaijan and the scope of inhumane illegal and violent treatment of civil society and journalists that is occurring.”

Prasow read a statement from human rights activists from Azerbaijan — who could not attend and could not use their names — individuals targeted by the Aliyev regime for their activism.

“The human rights situation in Azerbaijan is dire,” she read. “Azerbaijan is an authoritarian regime for over a decade that has used laws and judicial system to restrict and contain civil society.”

She continued: “Azerbaijan has accelerated its oppression as it approaches COP29 in November...as peace activists have been arrested and charged with treason.”

“So far actions have not impeded Aliyev’s regime, and more serious actions must be taken in order for Azerbaijan to release political prisoners and relax its grip on civil society, including targeted sanctions,” concluded Prasow. “Otherwise, we fear more of our friends will see the inside of a prison.”

Professor Smith stated that the role of archaeologists is to “provide a voice for the irreplaceable remains of the human past” and to “stand against heritage abuse.”

He emphasized the importance of human rights to culture and that “attacks on heritage monuments are not just violence against buildings, but against a people and their collective identity.”

Smith noted that Caucasus Heritage Watch has documented the fate of Armenian cultural heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh and determined 14 destroyed sites including historic cemeteries and churches, 12 significantly damaged sites, and 31 in immediate threat of destruction, and stated that there is “deep concern for what is going on in Nagorno-Karabakh from the perspective of archaeologists.”

“The real need is amplification,” said Smith. “The world community needs to be aware of the heritage destruction, and there needs to be a reputation cost that undertakes to revise the historical record through obliteration of archaeological and historical monuments.”

In his testimony, Stepanyan shared that he has personally witnessed and experienced “Azerbaijan’s systematic genocidal policy,” and was forcibly displaced from his ancestral lands, while serving as a doc-

umentarian of “horrific crimes against humanity.”

“I was a human rights defender who could not go to the people whose rights I was meant to protect,” he said in reference to Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor in December 2022. “I saw with my own eyes how people, including over 30,000 children were living in cold conditions without gas.”

“I tried to tell the world as much as possible hoping to break down the wall of indifference that had been created against the Artsakh people who were driven by despair and chaos while forced to leave their homes,” stated Stepanyan, who emphasized that genocide was occurring in front of everyone’s eyes, while Azerbaijan “erased all remnants of Armenian traces from Artsakh.”

As Azerbaijan continues to illegally detain Armenian hostages and prisoners of war, Stepanyan said the Aliyev regime is “not being held accountable for the ongoing crimes” and instead is allowed to organize prestigious events like COP29.

“Today the people of Nagorno-Karabakh continue to face numerous challenges,” said Stepanyan, who proposed ensuring proper international support for forcibly displaced persons from Artsakh and targeted sanctions against Azerbaijan “for its aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh and war crimes committed against them.”

Mardi shared stories of victims of Azerbaijan’s crimes against humanity, and noted that in the room were several of those victims, who she referred to as “warriors for justice” who have the “courage to come forward with their truth.”

She spoke about Rev. Herant Hovanian, who protected the ancient Dadivank Monastery and its artifacts for 44 days while surrounded by Azerbaijan’s troops as he held communion. He had no choice but to leave when a bomb fell into his home and he was severely injured.

“With stitches in his torso and back, he left for safety, without food, water, or medicine, and traveled over 35 hours with his family to escape to Armenia,” said Mardi. “Today, despite Azerbaijan’s goal of destroying all Armenian heritage and removing Armenians from their lands, he stands in defense of Armenian culture, church and religion.”

Mardi shared additional stories about a woman who lost her son, the child of a hostage still being held in Baku without due process, and a woman whose sister was tortured, mutilated and murdered.

“Azerbaijan must be held accountable otherwise they will continue to commit violence without impunity,” said Mardi. “Today, for the first time in history, Nagorno-Karabakh stands devoid of Armenians, and I urge the U.S. government and international community to take decisive action and hold Azerbaijan accountable for its crimes against humanity.”

Assembly’s Van Krikorian Testifies

Framing the Armenia and Azerbaijan conflict as one between democracy and authoritarianism, Krikorian offered 10 public recommendations for actions to address the situation and reverse course of the downward spiral. His testimony delved into the ethnic cleansing of Armenians, the destruction of cultural heritage sites, and the continued illegal imprisonment of Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives by Azerbaijan.

Emphasizing the “ongoing pattern of deteriorating human rights in Azerbaijan and Turkey [that] are well-established,” Krikorian offered at the outset support to all political prisoners and victims in those countries, regardless of ethnicity or religion, noting that “the pattern of sham elections in Azerbaijan, most recently this month, confirms that Azeri citizens deserve better.”

He referred to a new poster exhibit that conveyed some of the atrocities and graphic evidence that are on record of Azerbaijan’s brutal treatment of Armenians. He noted that most of the evidence on social media comes from Turkish and Azeri sources themselves, who boasted about their violence.

“All of the evidence is of genocidal intent and of genocidal actions,” said Krikorian. “Aliyev and Erdogan are actually bragging about eliminating the entire Armenian presence and destroying churches and the whole cultural presence.” He also referred to a new website launched by the Armenian National Institute that attested to the Nagorno-Karabakh Genocide.

Citing a September 14, 2023 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Nagorno-Karabakh, where Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Yuri Kim stated “the United States will not countenance any action or effort — short-term or long-term — to ethnically cleanse or commit other atrocities against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. The current humanitarian situation is not acceptable,” Krikorian emphasized that the failure to follow up on that position had “dire consequences.”

Less than a week later, on September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan — with the support of Turkey and in coordination with Russia — launched a military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh, resulting in the death and injury of innocent civilians and the forced displacement of some 120,000 indigenous Christian Armenians, including 30,000 children who fled to Armenia.

“This assault was the culmination of Azerbaijan’s genocidal campaign against the Armenian people that started with the illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor in December 2022 and placed the entire Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh under siege and threat of starvation,” stated Krikorian. He elaborated that these instances of violence, along with the 2020 War, which overturned decades of U.S. efforts and support for a peaceful resolution to the conflict through the OSCE Minsk Group, highlighted “Azerbaijan’s public disdain for the U.S.”

“The reality is that the Aliyev government persists in outright racism and destruction of churches and the Armenian Christian presence, rather than respecting basic human rights, advancing mutual respect, or acting democratically,” said Krikorian. He stated that Armenians need to be returned to their homes, churches, cemeteries, and other homeland attributes in freedom and security.

To that end, he pointed out that “America does not whitewash human rights violations,” and requested that the Commission Co-Chairs go on record officially to recognize and call for the reversal of the genocidal ethnic cleansing of Christian Armenians.

“When the leader of a friendly country makes such a public warning and the perpetrators are clearly taking genocidal actions, we would hope the United States would do more, not just because of obligations under the Genocide Convention but because that is what Americans stand for,” said Krikorian, who also recommended increasing the number and frequency of Congressional visits to Armenia and its border regions, and adding American presence in the region, similar to the successful EU monitoring missions. He went on to discuss the need to supplement the Genocide Convention and US law to do more to prevent genocide and punish perpetrators, with several options.

Another issue Krikorian emphasized in addition to the Aliyev regime’s illegal blockades, existential threats, and blackmailing tactics against Nagorno-Karabakh,

is its illegal detainment of Armenian prisoners of war, civilian captives, and high profile figures, including the former State Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh, Ruben Vardanyan, whose US-based lawyer outlined torture issues to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel and Degrading Treatment.

An additional point of contention was the improper balance of U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan prior to the 2020 War, which helped facilitate the brutality of violence against Armenians, and that “denying Armenia balanced military assistance is a recipe for future disaster.”

Krikorian added that “numerous U.S. laws on the books are not being enforced,” such as Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act that continued to be waived for decades, “costing Armenian lives, culture, and American credibility.”

He also drew attention to the fraudulent, state-sponsored positions of the Azeri government and witnesses appearing in Congress on its behalf, particularly the English lawyer Rodney Dixon who submitted denialist under pretext of legal testimony at the Commission’s September 6, 2023 hearing on the eve of the September 2023 final ethnic cleansing of Armenians that was completely belied by events.

COP29

Regarding Azerbaijan’s upcoming controversial hosting of COP29, Krikorian offered specific recommendations for delegations to follow, such as publicly reading the names of all political prisoners as part of their presentations and call for their release, as well as calling out names of those involved in war crimes and atrocities. He also recommended that delegations “not stay in properties formerly owned by Armenians that were converted into hotels,” and should “call for the re-establishment in freedom and security of the indigenous Armenian population and not acquiesce to ethnic cleansing.”

Reflecting on history, Krikorian pointed out that in the aftermath of World War I, the U.S. was offered the mandate for an independent Armenia, which he stated would have “changed the history of the Cold War and more of the region would have been westernized and democratized.”

“We are at another one of these windows and not repeating that mistake in the 21st century strikes us as paramount,” said Krikorian, as he touched upon the “new reality” of the world that has been divided into authoritarian states and democracies, alongside capitalism and command economies.

“Failure to recognize differences has caused damage to countries who play by the rules,” he said.

Krikorian concluded that the “status quo is unsustainable,” and that “atrocities, desecration of churches, corruption and rest of the current characteristics Aliyev and Erdogan have chosen are the curses of Pandora’s box,” and thanked the Commission for their efforts.

In response, Smith said Krikorian’s testimony was a “learning experience.”

“Every time [we hear you speak] we learn something new, and we all thank you for the extensive knowledge and wisdom you bring,” said Smith.

Following the witness testimonies, the panel engaged in questions and answers with the witnesses specifics of cultural erasure, atrocities and the political prisoners, available for viewing on YouTube. Co-Chair Smith’s calls for action included an instructive reminder of the parallel with denialist lobbying for Nicolae Ceausescu before the facts were widely accepted, and the need for war crimes trials for Aliyev and Erdogan. The written testimonies are posted on the Commission site as they are available.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Catholicos Aram I Visits Chicago Armenian Honorary Consulate

CHICAGO — Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia visited the Honorary Consulate of Armenia in Chicago. Honorary Consul Oscar S. Tatosian hosted a reception and luncheon in his honor on Friday, October 18, 2024.

The remarks of Catholicos Aram I focused on the Armenian Seminary of the Great House of Cilicia and the importance of education as key for Armenian leadership. Guests included civic and community leaders and Consular Corps members.



Catholicos Aram I arrives at the Honorary Consulate of Armenia in Chicago to be greeted by Honorary Consul Oscar Tatosian



Artist Jackie Kazarian presented a painting to Catholicos Aram; at her right, her husband Peter Cunningham, former Deputy Secretary of Education, Obama Administration and political consultant



Catholicos Aram I, accompanied by Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian and Archbishop Papken Tcharian, with Honorary Consul Oscar Tatosian and other dignitaries in front of the Honorary Consulate of Armenia in Chicago



From left, Honorary Consul of Armenia in Fresno Berj Apkarian, Catholicos Aram I, Honorary Consul of Armenia in Chicago Oscar Tatosian

Istanbul Armenian Group Hosts Zulal Concerts to Raise Funds for Schools

ARLINGTON, Mass. — The Boston Society of Istanbul Armenians on Friday, October 4, organized a concert featuring the award-winning acapella trio Zulal, in support of Istanbul's Armenian-language schools.

The program took place at the First Parish Unitarian Sanctuary in Arlington.

The three members of Zulal are Ani Ape- lian, Anais Alexandra Tekerian and Yeraz Markarian. The trio brings their intricate harmonies to the old songs of Armenian villages, with a modern twist. Their most recent album is "By the Shepherd's Clock," released in 2023.

At the Arlington program, the songs they performed were from different parts of Western Armenia, including Van, Palu and Sassoun.

The event was chaired by Aida Yavshayan, chair of the Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston, with committee, with event co-chairs Arto Kurkjian and Mardik Merdinian. Other members in the planning committee include Manouk Akmezikian, Nektar Ashjian, Suzy Gigiyan, Miran Guler, Hrach Ucuzian and Berc Yildirim.

According to Yavshayan, the mission of the organization is to provide an annual scholarship and financial aid to students who attend Armenian schools in Istanbul. Over the years, the group has donated tens of thousands of dollars to these students.

Yavshayan said currently there are 16 Armenian schools in Turkey, all in Istanbul, and vie that are high schools. Each is affiliated with an Armenian foundation and depends on it.



The acapella trio Zulal performs. (Photo Credit: Arev Kaligian)



Aida Yavshayan and Mardik Merdinian (Photo Credit: Arev Kaligian)



The members of Zulal as well as committee members and supporters (Photo Credit: Arev Kaligian)



COMMUNITY NEWS

Researching Armenian Roots with George Aghjayan on Zoom

ANDOVER, Mass. — The common misconception that all records related to Armenian heritage have been completely erased has been disproved with the help of social media, DNA testing and crowd-sourced translation projects. Many new Armenian documents are now coming to light.

On Tuesday, November 12, in an online program sponsored by Memorial Hall Library and the Friends of Memorial Hall Library in Andover, Mass., George Aghjayan will review how available records can help the Armenian community reclaim its identity and find agency in the face of the crimes that misplaced and separated families over the last 125 years.

Aghjayan has been researching Armenian genealogy

for several decades. He is the director of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Archives and certificate holder from the Boston University Genealogical Studies Program. After a career in both insurance and finance, Aghjayan retired in 2014 to concentrate on Armenian-related research and projects including family history work. He is a frequent contributor to the *Armenian Weekly* and Houshamadyan.org, and the creator and curator of west-armenia.weebly.com, a website dedicated to the preservation of Armenian culture in Western Armenia.

The virtual program will be recorded. A link to the recording will be shared with everyone who registers.

Register online at <https://mhl.libnet.info/event/11792327>

Research Your Armenian Roots
an online program with George Aghjayan



Tuesday November 12th, 7 PM
Information & Registration:
<https://mhl.org/ZZH>



OBITUARY

Anna Nshanian, the Voice That Reached the Heavens

By Sevag Derderian

The passing this summer of Anna Nshanian has left the world of Armenian opera and sacred music in mourning. Her extraordinary vocal abilities and her deep connection to Armenian music, especially the works of Komitas, will forever be remembered. Nshanian possessed a voice capable of great versatility — seamlessly shifting between the lyric and coloratura styles, a rare talent that allowed her to master the most challenging of compositions.

Nshanian was born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1931. She died in Los Angeles on July 23, 2024.

From a very early age, I was captivated by her voice. I would often fall asleep as my mother and the choir, under Anna's expert direction, rehearsed at our house in Los Angeles during the early 1990s. Those moments, listening to her operatic voice soar in harmony with the choir, left an indelible mark on my heart. Her voice, clear

yet powerful, filled the room with a divine quality that transcended the music itself.

Years later, as an adult, I had the privilege of working under Anna's guidance. She became my teacher, and it was through her that I learned to understand and appreciate the spiritual depth embedded in Armenian sacred and secular music. Nshanian's mastery of repertoire was unparalleled, particularly her performances of Komitas' compositions. These works are famously challenging — requiring both technical expertise and emotional depth. Anna possessed both in abundance. She could bring out the profound spirituality of each note, imbuing the music with a sense of the divine. Her understanding of Komitas' complex intervals and harmonies allowed her to perform his pieces with ease and grace, effortlessly weaving emotion into the most intricate passages.

Nshanian's exceptional career began in 1959, marking the start of a decades-long contribution to the world of opera. Her

repertoire included iconic roles such as Princess Anna in Harutyunyan's "Sayat Nova," Shushan in Tigranyan's "David Bek" and the title role in "Anoush." She also brought to life characters like Olympia in Chukhachyan's "Arshak II," Violetta in Verdi's "La Traviata" and Desdemona in "Othello," showcasing her versatile talent and mastery of both Armenian and international operatic works.

Throughout her career, Nshanian was recognized for her extraordinary artistic contributions. She was honored with the prestigious title of Honored Artist of Armenia, received a certificate of recognition from the USSR, and was awarded the gold medal by the Ministry of Culture of Armenia. Her legacy as a trailblazing performer leaves an indelible mark on the Armenian cultural world, inspiring future generations of artists.

(Sevag Derderian heads the Institute of Armenian Sacred Music.)



Hagop 'Jack' Bekarian

Descendent of Genocide Survivors Born in Syria

BELMONT, Mass. — Hagop "Jack" Bekarian of Belmont, passed away on October 14, 2024.

He was the husband of Stella (Derlugian); father of Peter Bekarian and his wife Jennifer, Christina Bekarian, Nyree Bekarian Mack and her husband Hunter and Papik (grandfather) of Zoey, Emmett, Reyna and Asya. He was the brother of the late Elizabeth, Rose, and Virginia. He is also survived by many loving nieces and nephews.

Hagop was born in Amman Jordan on March 13, 1932 to Garabed and Jamileh Bekarian, both survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

In his youth he excelled in his studies. Early on he aspired to something beyond his life in Amman as the son of a miller. At the age of 20 he left Jordan for America. Once here he worked tirelessly, saving enough money to eventually arrange for his family to emigrate as well. Thanks to his efforts, Hagop's mother, three sisters, and five nieces and nephews all emigrated to the US over the coming years.

For more than 40 years Hagop owned and operated an auto repair business in West Newton, where he became a trusted part of the business community.

He was a kind and generous person who was always there to help friends or family in need. He gave tirelessly to his Armenian community and church.

Hagop was an avid gardener with an enviable vegetable garden and fruit trees. He



was a lifelong learner, spoke four languages, loved reading biographies, and enjoyed playing violin and singing.

Funeral services were on October 18 at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Belmont. Interment followed at Highland Meadows Cemetery, Belmont.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Belmont.

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS

Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

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

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME

576 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472, Tel: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

COMMUNITY NEWS

AUA Raises \$2.7 Million at Boston-Area Fundraiser

AUA, from page 1

During an evening offering camaraderie and harkening back to AUA's accomplishments and looking toward a more ambitious future, several alumni spoke, as did the current president, Dr. Bruce Boghosian. Most placed the university within the context of the Republic of Armenia's future preparedness and prosperity, and stressed the role of the diaspora in this endeavor.

Event co-chairs Katrina Menzighian and Armine Manukyan Humphrey welcomed the guests, thanking the AUA team for their work executing the event.

Menzighian recalled how her personal connection with AUA, when she became "employee number one of AUA in Oakland."

"Thirty years later, AUA graduates are doing what the university founders hoped they would. Mission accomplished," she said.

One of those students is Alisa Chalakhyan, class of 2019, who after getting a master's degree in enterprise risk management from Columbia, is working toward a doctorate in entrepreneurship at Pennsylvania State University. Chalakhyan said that she planned to go back to teach at AUA upon completing her PhD.

"Your support has had not only a magnificent impact on my life, but through people like myself, it continues its impact on thousands and thousands of young professionals," Chalakhyan said. "With your support, you're not only changing lives, but you're helping shape the future of Armenia."

Next, Boghosian, now in his second stint as president of AUA, addressed the assembled.

"There is a great deal happening at the AUA. In February we received notice that

AUA was reaccredited by the Western As-

The university, under Gharabegian, will

sity."

He said AUA offers need-blind financial aid. "We are committed to the principle that all deserving students who have the merit in their academic record to be accepted at AUA should have the opportunity to study at AUA."

Pivoting to the university's Armenian character, Boghosian said AUA is focused on "producing graduates who will contribute to the defense, economy and future of Armenia."

Ambitious plans are underway, he added. Next year, AUA, in collaboration with Washington State University, will add a master's degree in journalism. Other degrees in the works include a master's degree in education and doctoral programs in aerospace engineering, machine learning and artificial intelligence.

He thanked diasporan donors who have made the programs possible, adding, "AUA has sometimes been described as the most important and significant gift that the Armenian diaspora has given the Republic of Armenia."

As he thanked all the diaspora donors, he paid tribute to the evening's honoree, Pamela Avedisian. "AUA would not be close to the size and the success that it has achieved today without the generosity of



Dr. Naira Campbell-Kyureghyan, Dr. Aram Adourian, Dr. Anna Ohanyan and Dr. Areg Danagoularian

sociation of Schools and Colleges [WASC] for the maximum possible period of 10 years," Boghosian said. "AUA is currently the only university in Armenia — or in the former Soviet Union — that has earned regional accreditation recognized by the US."

AUA operates under the structure of the University of California system. Noted Boghosian, "The University of California is one of the founding organizations of the AUA. They've been a source of guidance and help for us over the decades."

He paid tribute to the university's new provost, Dr. Alina Gharabegian, who was not at the program. She was named provost in July after teaching for several years at New Jersey State University.

Said Boghosian, "She has hit the ground running as provost and we are delighted to have her on board."

He then related developments at AUA, including the inauguration of Najarian Center for Social Entrepreneurship, which houses the university's extension program, and a simulation laboratory for the nursing program, and the new student dormitories, which houses students from the provinces

look to increase cooperation and faculty and student exchanges with international universities, he noted. One of the successful programs already in place at AUA involves Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), in Massachusetts.



Members of the Avedisian Family and AUA community



AUA Alumni Elizabeth Vickery (BSER '24), Lida Asilyan (BAEC '24), Alisa Chalakhyan (BAB '19), and Hakob Janesian (BSDS '24)



AUA Alums Lida Asilyan, right, and Anahit Melkonyan



Dr. Boghosian and Pamela Avedisian

as well as refugees from Artsakh. Benefactors K. George and Dr. Carolann Najarian were present and received hearty thanks for their contributions.

He spoke about the AUA Media Lab, which recently received a donation from the USAID's American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) program. Altogether, ASHA has donated a total of \$17 million over the years.

In addition, AUA has broken ground for a new sports center, Boghosian said.

(Former WPI Provost Dr. Diran Apelian was at the event.)

Boghosian said it is how the school operates that makes it different from other universities in Armenia. "It is a truly American institution of higher education located in Yerevan. ... Among other things, it means our faculty enjoys the privilege academic freedom, which is a unique concept in American higher education," he said. "The style of teaching is similar to what you would see at any major American univer-

the Avedisian family," he said.

Pamela Avedisian, picking up her Visionary Philanthropist Award, spoke about the origins of her husband's large donations to AUA. (His notable donations to Boston University School of Medicine and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research have made news over the past decade.)

"Education was paramount to living a fulfilling life. Edward recognized that the success he had achieved in life was in large part due to his parents, the great sacrifices they had made for their children and the loving and nurturing environment that was their home," she said.

Edward Avedisian, an AUA board member starting in 1999, died at age 85 in 2022.

"Our family is pleased to support the students of AUA as they successfully navigate their paths toward a rich and rewarding life," she said. "Ed and I both looked forward each year to attending commencement and the launch of a new class of graduates. It was truly the highlight of our year."

"Our aim is for the Avedisian family legacy to continue to grow and support AUA as a leader in new and exciting interdisciplinary fields that will educate the students of today into the leaders of tomorrow," she said.

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

Edward Avedisian was notable not only for his donations to a spectrum of organizations, but also for never naming them for himself, but his parents, siblings and friends. At AUA, the buildings are named for his parents and siblings. A \$20-million donation from Pamela Avedisian in 2023 will lead to the creation of several new buildings, including the Edward and Pamela Avedisian Building for Humanities and Social Science.

Panel Discussion

A short panel discussion on technology took place during the reception, featuring Dr. Aram Adourian, senior scientific advisor at Flagship Pioneering, Dr. Areg Danagoulian, associate professor of nuclear science and engineering at MIT, and Dr. Naira Campbell-Kyureghyan, C. Judson King Endowed Visiting Professor at AUA at the Akian College of Science and Engineering.



The acapella trio Zual performed.

Moderator Dr. Anna Ohanyan, professor of political science and Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Stonehill College, asked the panelists how AUA can help position Armenia within the

technological waves sweeping the world and how it can help the survival of the Armenian nation.

Campbell-Kyureghyan is not only on the faculty of AUA now, but she is an alumna. It was there she met her future husband, the late Dr. Scott Campbell, who was a professor there.

Adourian, who serves on the board of advisors of the Akian College, said, “What excites me is the potential for innovation at the intersection of fields. What’s exciting about AUA is the opportunity of a mathematician interacting with a biology student, or interacting with an engineer and picking up something innovative and new. It’s these multidisciplinary interactions that throughout my career have attracted me and are what I do for a living.”

Danagoulian, a native of Armenia, left the country at age 16 when his father found a job in the US. “I have taught a variety of short programs at AUA over the past couple of years.” He added that he is the faculty co-director for the program that sends MIT students to Armenia, MISTI Armenia (MIT International Science and Technology Initiative). About 70 MIT students have visited Armenia in the past couple of years, and 12-15 of those students have taught at AUA.

He called his interaction with young people in Armenia “amazing.”

In addition, the panel members suggested AI was the most important technological change facing the world.

Campbell-Kyureghyan said issues facing Armenia include energy and healthcare. “I’m very proud that the American Univer-



Event Committee Co-Chairs Katrina Menzigian and Arminé Manukyan Humphrey

sity is the only university in Armenia that actually touches on all of those aspects of deficiencies.”

Adourian agreed that the intersection of healthcare and AI is fascinating. “A place like AUA is where you can do that in a meaningful and directed way where people aren’t just trying to figure things out by themselves but can actually undertake projects ... overseen by faculty.”

Other areas important for Armenia are the “application of big data or AI, application of these quantitative approaches to real world societal problems,” he said, “will become more and more important. Communities that can master these approaches are going to have a head start.”

A strong base in math and science is needed, he added. “The more we can

strengthen that foundation, the more talent we will have to actually apply some of those advanced computational approaches,” Adourian said.

Danagoulian said he agreed with Adourian’s comments, adding that it is not just new technology that a society has to embrace, but also train users. “One place where there is a big difference in people’s capabilities is user knowledge of technology and developer knowledge of technology,” he said. “If all you have is user knowledge, you are competing with seven billion people. ... Where you develop a real competitive advantage is where you have developer, researcher level of understanding of the technology so you can create the technology. ... or do things that other people can’t.”

Campbell-Kyureghyan noted, “Every institution of higher education must be connected to industry. We are manufacturing product: talent for industry. We are producing students that will be the future workforce. The better we do, the better it is for our students.”

She paid tribute to the creativity and spirit of the undergraduate students there. “Ninety percent of my class has some sort of idea for a startup. I have never seen anything like this and I have taught in many countries,” she added. “These students create and innovate, but they are also guided by faculty. What’s important is to cultivate that entrepreneurship. AUA is the only institution that has such a center for faculty and students,” referring to [EPIC or the Entrepreneurship and Product Development Center].

She added that 19 major start-ups in Armenia were spun out of AUA.

The program finished with a performance by the acapella trio Zual, to the delight of the audience.



Tekeyan Cultural Association Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia

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



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

☐ \$240 ☐ \$480 ☐ \$700 ☐ other _____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email _____

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

Your donation is tax deductible.



Arts & Culture

The Michael Arlen We Never Knew

New Biography Offers New Revelations

By Harry Keyishian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Dikran Sarkis Kouyoumdjian was born in Ruse, Bulgaria in 1895. His father, Sarkis Kouyoumdjian, had established a successful import company in the city of Plovdiv, but moved his family to Southport, in Lancashire, England, in 1901, fearing local conditions in Bulgaria. Dikran, the youngest of five children, was sent to Malvern College and, briefly, to Edinburgh University, but in 1913, abandoned his studies and moved to London to seek a career as a writer. He wrote on Armenian themes for *Ararat: A Spotlight on Armenia*, a London journal deeply engaged with the massacres and deportations of Armenians in Turkey. Dikran Kouyoumdjian went on to write for the well-established London journal *The New Age*, edited by A. R. Orage, from which he reached a wider audience on a wider variety of topics and genres.

Finding it difficult to gain literary fame as Dikran Kouyoumdjian, he changed his name to Michael Arlen, thereby, as he put it, depriving the reading public of any excuse for denying him literary fame. After producing a couple of reasonably successful books of fiction, he got his wish with *The Green Hat* (1924), a commercial best seller that translated well into a play and several movies (starring the likes of Katharine Cornell, Tallulah Bankhead, Greta Garbo and Constance Bennet, among others). *The Green Hat* succeeded mightily by using the familiar literary trope of the woman of noble heart whose goodness is unappreciated by society. (The novel's heroine, Iris March, might be described as Camille with a driver's license.)

Other novels followed, though none as successful, and Arlen eventually found his way to Hollywood, where his detective character Gay Falcon solved crimes in a successful series of movies from 1940-1946, starring George Sanders and, later, Tom Conway. Arlen died in New York City in 1956, largely forgotten by the literary world.

However, in 1970, Arlen's son, Michael J. Arlen, writer for the *New Yorker* and one of the founders of modern media studies with his book *Living Room War* (1969) wrote *Exiles* (1970), a vivid and deeply felt account of his parents' life that was nominated for a National Book Award, and he won the National Book Award in 1975 for his book *Passage to Ararat*, which describes his visit to Armenia and his own encounter with his Armenian heritage. In 1976, my book *Michael Arlen* appeared, a study of the older Arlen's novels, stories, plays and scripts. And that was about it on the Michael Arlen front.

see ARLEN, page 13



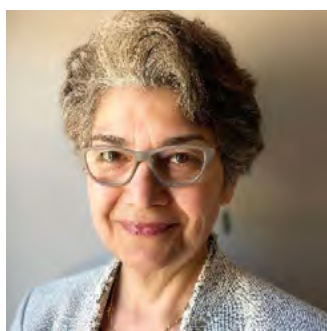
Documentary on Karabakh Ethnic Cleaning Nominated for Regional Emmy Award

MIAMI — Armenoid Productions, producers of the documentary series “Faces of Persecution,” announced earlier this month that the short preview of its “Genocide 2.0: Artsakh Ethnic Cleansing” episode has been nominated by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for its Annual Suncoast Regional Emmy Awards in Religion - Short Form Content category.

The 7.5-minute short preview of the 60-minute feature documentary is an episode of “Faces of Persecution: Exploring Global Religious Oppressions” documentary series that seeks funding to finalize production. The episode features interviews with prominent public and global figures and the forcibly displaced, including: Luis Moreno Ocampo (First Prosecutor, International Criminal Court (2003-2012), Baroness Caroline Cox, Member, British House of Lords (Founder, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), David L Phillips, Adjunct Professor (Conflict Resolution and Mediation, Georgetown University), Judge Gassia Apkarian (California State Jurist Orange County, CA), Karnig Kerkonian (International Lawyer), Michael Rubin, Senior Fellow (American Enterprise Institute, Director of Policy Analysis, Middle East Forum (MEF)), Thomas Becker, PhD (Legal and Policy Director, University Network for Human Rights), Joel Veldkamp, PhD (Christian Solidarity International), Ambassador Sam Brownback (Former Ambassador at Large, International Religious Freedom) and Simon Meghakyian, PhD (Security and Defense Studies/Heritage Crime, Cranfield University).

Forcibly displaced Artsakh residents participating in the episode include Tigran Petrosyan, a cinematographer, whose father was killed in the gas depot explosion and whose son suffered severe burns, Siranush Sargsyan an independent journalist, Anahit Gevorkyan, whose children, 8 and 2, were killed during Azerbaijan bombings and Archbishop Pargev Martirosyan, Primate, Diocese of Artsakh Armenian Apostolic Church.

The team behind the episode are director/producer—four-time Emmy award-winning documentary filmmaker Bared Maronian, and writer/producer—seasoned corporate communications strategist and a magazine contributor on social justice issues Jackie Abramian.



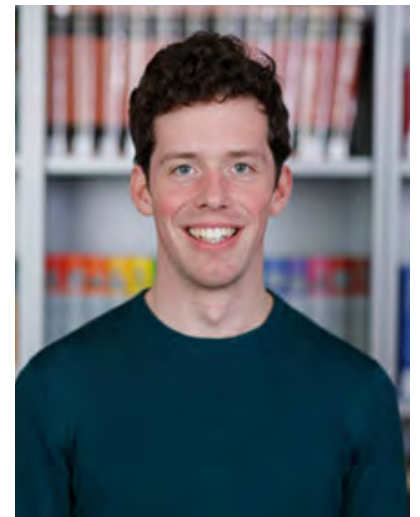
Jackie Abramian



Bared Maronian

Jonas Löffler

Studying Armenian and Georgian cultures



By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/VIENNA — German musicologist, musician and translator Jonas Löffler, 36, studied classical guitar and musicology at the Conservatoire and the University of Basel, in Switzerland, as well as at Oxford University. He completed his doctoral studies at the University of Cologne in Germany, where he defended his doctoral dissertation, titled “Sounds of Empire: Musical Change in Tiflis/Tbilisi between 1880 and 1917,” in 2024. As a classical guitar performer, he has received various scholarships and awards. From 2006 to 2017, he maintained an international concert career as a guitar soloist and chamber musician, performing in Europe and the US. His solo album, “Terra,” was released in 2014. As a researcher, he has presented his work in numerous talks and conferences in countries including Germany, Austria, Georgia, the United Kingdom, Japan, and the US, and has published academic papers in English and German, as well as translations from Georgian to German. Currently he lives in Vienna, where he is a lecturer at the Department of Musicology of the University of Vienna.

Dear Jonas, there's a joke that people can be divided into two groups: those who love Paris and those who love London. I've heard a similar sentiment about Armenia and Georgia, with few who can genuinely appreciate both. I believe you are one of those rare individuals. What sparked your interest in the Caucasus?

My interest in the region was initiated by a figure who somehow brings together both countries as he was an Armenian born in Tiflis: Sergei Parajanov. I was still in high school and saw Parajanov's “The Color of Pomegranates” at Wiesbaden film festival in Germany. I believe the director of the Yerevan Parajanov Museum was also present at the festival. I was blown away by the film and Parajanov's work in general in a way only 19-year-olds can be blown away. That day I decided I had to visit the Caucasus, which I did for the first

see LÖFFLER page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Jonas Löffler: Studying Armenian and Georgian cultures

LÖFFLER, from page 12

time in 2010, travelling all the way from Istanbul to Goris/Syunik overland. The fascination never waned and I kept returning to Armenia, Georgia, the Russian North Caucasus, Eastern Turkey and Iran as much as I could, visiting a great number of historic sites in all countries and eventually deciding to dedicate myself to the region academically and linguistically, a decision I have never regretted.

The subject of your dissertation was the musical life of Tiflis during the late tsarist era. As a musicologist, how would you characterize the role of Armenians in this context?

Armenians were politically and, in a way, culturally, the dominant group in Tiflis at the time. Tiflis was the cultural center for the Armenians who were living in the Russian Empire and the neighboring regions and thus figured as a magnet for Armenians who wanted to achieve something in the cultural fields. Consequently, there were a great number of Armenians present in all layers of Tiflis musical culture, from Western-style classical music to newly emerging “national” forms of folk music and all the way to what I call the “Persianate” urban music tradition of Tiflis – *sazandars*, *zurna* ensembles and ashughs. While figures like the Pitoev (Pitoyan) brothers (Isai and Ivan) were crucial in the establishment of Western-style art music and opera in the city and Vasilii Korganov (Ghorghanyan) almost single-handedly established (Western) music criticism and scholarship in the local (and imperial) press, others, like Kristapor Kara-Murza were focused on establishing decidedly national forms of music making. Both among Georgians and Armenians, the first steps within these national musical endeavors were made in the forms of choirs that were seen as representatives of their nation. Armenians were also central in lower-class entertainment culture. Ashughs like Hazira (Abram Abramov/Abrahamyan), who sang in both Armenian and Georgian (mostly the latter, though), were superstars in modern terms and could publish their songs in countless editions

and print runs that outnumbered those of the poets of the local intelligentsias like Hovhannes Tumanyan, or the Georgian Akaki Tsereteli.

You have a working knowledge of dozens of languages. When we first met in 2019, you barely spoke Armenian, but a year later, during our meeting, our conversation was entirely in Armenian, and you continue to write to me in Armenian. How did you achieve this proficiency?

I love learning languages and it is true what people say: The more (different) languages one learns the easier it does get. Regarding Armenian, I was lucky to be with an absolutely fantastic teacher during my first research stay in Yerevan. Tereza Hovhannisyanyan — who now teaches at UCLA — was probably the best language teacher I’ve ever had. What also helped, psychologically, was that I had learnt Georgian and Russian before Armenian (in that order). After Georgian, which as a non-Indo-European language poses many difficulties to native speakers of Indo-European languages, Russian already felt like a relief. Armenian, even though coming with a whole new set of vocabulary, felt rather easy afterwards. Even though I’m a fluent reader of Modern Eastern Armenian (and Western Armenian, to a lesser degree), I’m lacking practice in speaking. I hope I’ll be able to spend more time in Armenia in the future!

So, did your knowledge of the Georgian language help you to learn Armenian, even if they belong to different language families and use entirely different alphabets?

Yes, I think it somehow did, even though only marginally and mostly in terms of “learning a language that is less commonly taught in Western Europe.” Besides, it helped mostly with regard to the lexicon of the languages. There is a shared vocabulary among the (big) languages of the South Caucasus that’s mostly of Persian or Arabic origin (even though a lot of this tends to be dialectal in Armenian if it’s not part of an older layer of Middle Persian vocabulary). Also, there is a rather great number of Ar-

menian loanwords and cognates in Georgian, including very central words such as the word for “speaking/talking” (*laparak*), which apparently derives from *hraparak*, or the word for “tomorrow,” which is *khval* in Georgian – a cognate of the Armenian *vagh(e)*. With regard to grammar, of course, both languages are very different. One has to start from scratch with both of them, unfortunately.

Having visited both Armenia and Georgia periodically, you’re quite familiar with both cultures. I always wish for a strong friendship between Armenia and Georgia. However, American researcher Asbed Kochikian titled his paper on Georgian-Armenian relations “Neither Enemies, Nor Friends.” What is your opinion on this issue?

It’s complicated. From an external, non-involved perspective, it seems odd that there are no deeper connections between Georgians and Armenians, two people who seem to share so many things on the surface. But I assume almost two centuries of Russian-backed “divide and conquer” policies in the South Caucasus added additional layers to earlier animosities that are just really hard to overcome. Speaking to Georgians, I was often baffled how little they knew about the Armenian presence in Tiflis and other parts of modern Georgia — Armenians, on the other hand, mostly seemed to care about the Armenian parts of Georgian history. Of course, that’s a generalization and there are many great experts on Georgian history and culture in Armenia and vice versa. But it would be great if people were focusing on the interconnections of Armenian and Georgian history and culture, of which there are so many. Linguistic abilities are certainly a central issue here. A good start would be normalizing the status of “minority” languages in Georgia, widely offering Armenian language teaching in secondary schools, also to Georgians, and doing the same thing with Georgian at least in the northern regions of Armenia bordering Georgia. School exchanges work wonders, too, at least in my personal experience. Maybe that again is a very Western-European perspective on

these matters.

I assume your interest in Armenian music regards not only to the past, but also present?

My interests are mostly focused on older music. Although I have to admit that I also love listening to therapeutic doses of *rabiz* music from time to time as some kind of guilty pleasure. For me it’s one of the musical remnants of a shared South Caucasian culture that’s almost completely lost among Georgians and only exists in some pockets of Armenian culture that are often considered to be of “lower” standing. Of course, I did not grow up with this and its specific connotations – so I’m free to just like it as it is.

What about Armenian literature? You have translated and published a collection of Georgian short stories in German. I am sure you could translate from Armenian as well. In general, after your dissertation, do you have any projects related to Armenia?

I’ve enjoyed translating Georgian literature a lot. It was a great way to get a grip on the language and delve deeper into the culture. I would love to translate Armenian literature into German! Back then, the Georgian translations happened because Georgia was the guest country of the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2018, so there was money and the necessary infrastructure, that I did not have to build up myself. After this I was too involved with my thesis and did not have the time to look for suitable Armenian texts. In general, I think there is a huge potential in Armenian literature both with regard to older works (Raffi, for example has not been translated into German, to my knowledge) and current literature (which I know far too little about). Besides literature, I will certainly remain academically attached to the Caucasus region and Armenia in the future. I have some ideas for possible research projects, all incorporating an interconnected view on the Caucasus region. It now all depends on the discipline I will eventually end up in — it could be history, musicology, or some other, related field. We will see!

The Michael Arlen We Never Knew

ARLEN, from page 12

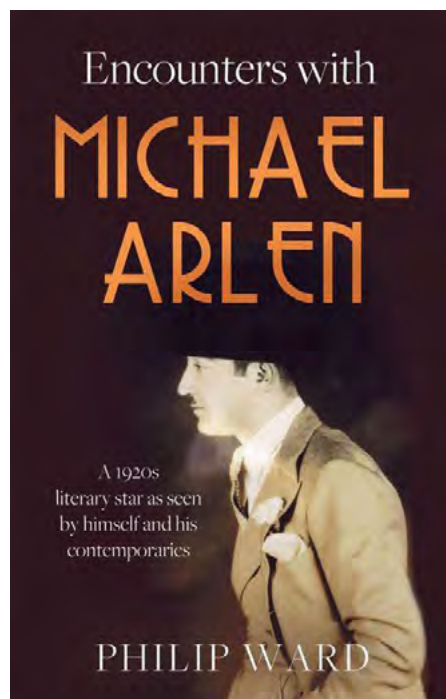
What was missing, of course, was a proper biography of Arlen, one he deserved for his many-faceted writing career, his life among literary celebrities and his journey through eventful eras of history. Stepping into the breach is Philip Ward, a prolific British author, critic, translator, and biographer with a keen eye for what is interesting in the world of letters and culture. The result is *Encounters with Michael Arlen: A 1920s Literary star as Seen by Himself and His Contemporaries* (Market Harborough, Leicestershire: Troubador Publishing Ltd., 2023).

Ward lists four sources of information for his knowledge of Arlen’s life: what he said about himself; what appears in his correspondence; the extensive press coverage he received in his years of fame; and, finally, his interactions with others — for example, D. H. Lawrence (who made him a character in the novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*); F. Scott Fitzgerald

(who lectured Ernest Hemingway on his plots); and Aldous Huxley (who was his rival for the affections of Nancy Cunard) — among many others.

Ward’s descriptive powers are strong: he draws vivid pictures of the physical and social settings into which Arlen was thrust by his fame, which hit Arlen early and hit him hard. He was up to the challenge of being the celebrity of the moment, offering quotable quips, getting invited to the right parties and, though suffering his share of British class/cultural snobbery, holding his own. (He met and survived the Algonquin Circle in New York.)

What is likely to interest *Mirror-Spectator* readers most is the light Ward sheds on Arlen’s relationship with his Armenian identity, with special reference to a controversy over Arlen’s short story “Confessions of a Naturalized Englishman,” which he published in 1929. Some phrases he expressed about the Armenian people infuriated Armenian readers — references to Armenia as “an unlovely courtesan”; as an ignoble race”; as an “outcast people” who were “inheritors of centuries of ignoble martyrdoms and mean escapes.” The narrator of the story asks, “What art could come from an Armenian? What greatness? What even of



worth?” The piece concludes, with reference to Armenia, “Why could you not die with dignity, why did you not die with Ninevah, Carchemish, Babylon?”

This piece aroused as much fury among Armenian readers as one might imagine, but Ward carefully and excellently explicates the context and aim of the piece. The narrator of the story is a young man

— let’s assume, Dikran Kouyoumdjian — who has just been “stood up” by a woman he had fancied and was feeling very, very sorry for himself, his sorrow taking the form of an adolescent self-flagellation that lit on his Armenian identity. The story portrays one of those moments in youth when the world seems determinedly in opposition to one’s dreams and one’s prospects in life look hopeless. And who is to blame for that?

Ward’s account of this incident, and the material he has uncovered and reprints in his book, offer tremendous insight not only into the mind of Dikran/Michael, but also of a host of broader cultural issues and understandings. One should read the whole to understand what it meant to carry a cultural identity into a context that never quite becomes home to the soul.

Despite these explorations and revelations, Ward tells us that the book is not quite what he had in mind at the start, “not a full-scale biography of Michael Arlen.” In fact, he concludes that “such a book may never be written.” To this I say, “never mind,” because Philip Ward has given us as much as can be known about his often seen, if never fully encountered, subject.

(Harry Keyishian is Professor Emeritus of English at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey.)



ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Reading the Body: Elyse Semerdjian's *Remnants*: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Of all the tomes written about the Armenian Genocide, none has had such a profound effect on me than this newest volume by Elyse Semerdjian, *Remnants*, published in 2023 on Stanford University Press.

Semerdjian is an assistant professor of history at Whitman College, a former Fulbright scholar and one of the most dynamic scholars in the field of Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

The reasons for her book's impact are multiple. The first simply that I have never been a great fan of traditional dry date-and-place historical accounts, which is what populates much of the field of Armenian Genocide studies. This was of course necessary at first as virtually no descriptions of the *Aghed* existed until the late Richard Hovannisian came around, followed by other remarkable historians such as Vahakn Dadrian. The tone and tenor of what was researched and how it was presented began to change only in the last few decades with the novel work of a new generation of theorists and historians like Marc Nichanian, Raymond Kevorkian and Denis Donikian — and now Elyse Semerdjian — who analyze the Armenian Genocide through the lens of literature, gender, sexuality, narratology and literary theory. As a result, these scholars arrive at a more nuanced and rich account of how the *Medz Yeghern* was actually carried out. Using the body as a physical human archive, Semerdjian stretches the boundaries of traditional archival research.

Semerdjian's book is divided into three parts, appropriately titled "Bodies," "Skin" and "Bones." Each chapter within these parts is supplemented by a short, fascinating supplementary entry titled a "remnant," as

in "remnant 1" or "remnant 2." The latter are as varied as a poster of Genocide-survivor-turned-Hollywood-star from the 1920s Aurora Mardiganian; or Siamanto's heart-rending poem, "The Dance;" or pictures-cum-analysis of tattoos from different Arab and Bedouin tribes.

"Part I: Bodies" includes at least three fascinating chapters. "Chapter 1: Zabel's pen: Gender, Body Snatching" uses the work of the Constantinopolitan writer Zabel Yesayan, who had already been sent by the Armenian Patriarch to Adana after the 1909 massacres, to account for the many killed during that precursor to 1915. Yessayan spent time after the Armenian Genocide in Tbilisi writing down the testimonies of survivor after survivor, then repatriated to Soviet Armenia where she was murdered by the local KGB. "Chapter 2: Weaponizing Shame: Dis-Memberment the Armenian Collective Body," analyzes how Talaat pasha and the other architects of the Armenian Genocide almost literally dismembered the Armenian polity, starting from its "head" during the roundup of intellectuals in 1915, down to the women (and men) who were raped and tortured so that the community would all apart and be unable to reproduce itself, metaphorically and literally. The medical vocabulary that the Turks used when talking about the carnage is itself instructive. Finally, "Chapter 5: 'Changlings' and 'Halflings'" Finding the Armenian Body inside Islamized Child" examines the use of conversion to further destroy the Ottoman Armenian communities. Some may previously know the particularly insidious Ottoman nationalist writer and educator Halide Edib Adivar who placed thousands of Armenian children in Turkish orphanages under the guise of "rescuing" them. Many were forever lost to Turkish families who successfully assimilated them. Of particular interest to many given the recent documentary film "Aurora's Sunrise," will be "Chapter 6: Aurora's Body, Humanitarianism and the

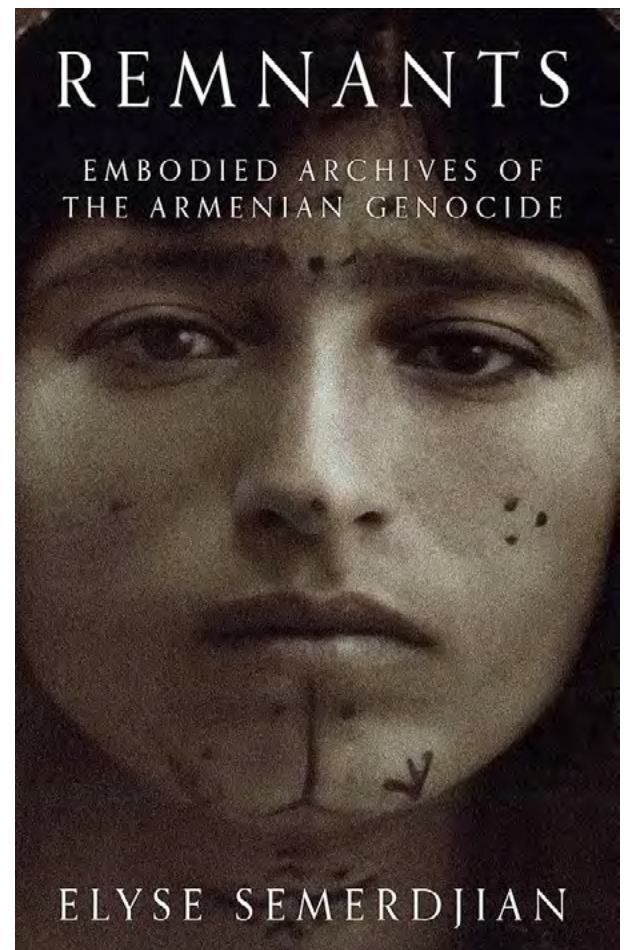
Pornography of Suffering." Aurora Mardiganian, was a beautiful young survivor who was "discovered" by Hollywood and then forced under sometimes insufferable conditions to finish a film titled "The Auction of Souls." The documentary recreation of her experience during the Armenian Genocide helped the Near East Foundation raise the equivalent of billions of dollars in today's money and save a generation of Armenian orphans, but Mardiganian died in obscurity and poverty.

Without going into detail about Semerdjian's thesis, for fear of turning the current review into a long synopsis, I would only comment that I too have always been fascinated by the will to shock through the use of still or moving images. This includes the release of Holocaust footage of emaciated Jews on the death's doorstep after WWII or recently of some of the more disturbing images of Palestinian deaths in Gaza, as if repeating to display them would somehow make viewers more sensitive to human tragedy. Quite to the contrary, as Susan Sontag convincingly argues in "On Photography," the repetition of war photography has acted as a kind of vaccination against the horrors being shown, perhaps one might think as a form of defense mechanism. When combined with the scopophilic and sexualized pleasure derived from looking at a person or object, used by feminist scholars such as Laura Mulvey

to describe the male gaze in Hollywood cinema in objectifying the female body, one gets an approximate idea of what the sometimes lurid images of naked crucified Armenian women in "Auction of the Soul's" actually achieved, in tandem with sensitizing American audiences to the horrors of 1915.

In Part II of *Remnants*, Semerdjian continues her analysis with brio. "Chapter 8: Wounded Whiteness: Branded Captives from the Old West to the Ottoman East" takes a geographical

time out to compare the use of body and face tattoos by Native American tribes on captured Anglo colonizers with those that Bedouin and Arab tribes inscribed onto Armenian women in their new state of slavery. The case of Olive Oates, a white woman who escaped from her captives provides a particularly interesting example, because she learned the language of her captors and even expressed the desire to return to them. Semerdjian points out that in both cases, tattooing was often considered a mark of honor for the women by the tribes who practiced this art. As is the case today when people voluntarily tattoo themselves, tattooing at the time was also considered beautiful by the tribes, apart from being a way to brand their human chattel. Be that as it may, in "Chapter 9: Removing the 'Brand of Shame,' Rehabilitating Armenian Skin," and in a "remnant" on the use of carbonic acid, Semerdjian shows that for most Armenian women the tattoos constituted a mark of ignominy during and after the Armenian Genocide. Here Semerdjian references the work of another brilliant scholar in the field of Ottoman Armenian studies, MIT professor Lerna Ekmekcioglu, who points out that the women's shame was partly unfounded as it was not always shared by other Armenians: "We have little information about how everyday Armenians felt about the formerly captive women bearing tribal tattoos. One of the few scholars to address this historical lacuna is Lerna Ekmekcioglu, who argues that as shameful as marked skin may have been for some, 'the tattoos that many bore on their faces and hands (and Arab and Kurdish tradition) did not necessarily leave them unmarriageable.' In her reading of International Red Cross archives, Armenian memoirs, and dairies, Ekmekcioglu has found that at an institutional level, Armenian relief organizations did not view the tattoos as stigmatizing and warranting exclusion from the reconstituted postwar Armenian community."



Finally in the last part of *Remnants*, Semerdjian analyzes the Armenian equivalent of WWII concentration camps, namely the fields of now petrified and sometimes whole bones and skulls found in the Syrian desert of Der Zor. Like other brave Armenians who have made the trip to Syria for this purpose, Semerdjian, whose family is Syrian-Armenian, travelled there to witness what I see as the "negative" evidence of the Armenian Genocide if you will, negative in the sense of a photo negative or something that is missing, given the actual absence of bodies and proper burial makers for the hundreds of thousands of Armenians who perished there.

The last chapter in the book — "Bone Memory: Community, Ritual and Memory Work in the Syrian Desert" delves deep into the pain that Semerdjian experienced during the visit she made there with a Turkish colleague who, by expressing sincere feelings of mourning for the departed Armenian souls, may have helped her psychic wounds to heal. The recent ethnic cleansing imposed on Armenians in Artsakh by the evil tripartite governmental alliance of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia — which came on the heels of this tome's publication — has of course reopened the wounds that Semerdjian's work and methodology may otherwise have helped to heal for Armenians around the world.

Semerdjian's book should be on every Holocaust and Genocide curriculum globally, given its innovative findings and methodology. Her next work, according to the author, will examine in more detail the sexual violence done to men young and old during the Genocide. Discussing the violence done to the native Aztec and Maya tribes in the Americas, the writer Julia Alvarez has elsewhere urged everyone to remember that — divisions of race, ethnicity and religions to the contrary — at base we all belong to one human race that emerged out of Africa some two million years ago. In this vein, I would ask everyone to stare long and hard at the breathtakingly beautiful face on the cover of *Remnants*, which belongs to survivor Loutfie Bilemdjian: she might just as easily be Polynesian or Native American as Armenian, with her expressive dark eyes, full lips and high cheekbones.

Reading Semerdjian's work is not easy because she goes beyond simple facts and figures and centuries-old recriminations to a much more central physical place. Her findings and analyses hit the reader in the gut, as all truly good writing should. Semerdjian also carefully avoids the type of racist anti-Turkish statements that would blanket a whole population that was not directly responsible for the murder and dispossession of the Armenian people in 1915-1923. *Remnants* is a bracing remember of man's inhumanity towards man, but also a cautionary tale. There are reasons for the violence that people inflict one each other. If we understand why and how such violence is carried out, first in the mind of the perpetrators and then on the bodies of their innocent victims, perhaps we may perhaps find a way of circumventing it in the future.

Order Elyse Semerdjian's *Remnants* at www.thriftbooks.com/w/remnants-embodied-archives-of-the-armenian-genocide/37271489/#edition=65276758&idq=54022486

ARTS & CULTURE

English Translation of Hagop Baronian's *My Ledger*: A Revolutionary First

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

To offer a first ever high school elective course that requires students to translate a hitherto untranslated nineteenth Century Armenian language satirical text into English while fully aware of the gap that exists between the potential audience for the translation and the original text, and to make the students fall in love with the task to boot, is nothing short of phenomenal. The newly published translation of Hagop Baronian's *Im Tseradedres* (better known as *Hosshosi Tseradedreh*), *My Ledger* (Bread & Onions Press, 2024), credits the Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian School students, who collectively performed the task, as translators and contributors, with their instructor Hratch Demiurge being hailed as head translator and editor. Included in the volume are a preface and an Introduction by Demiurge.

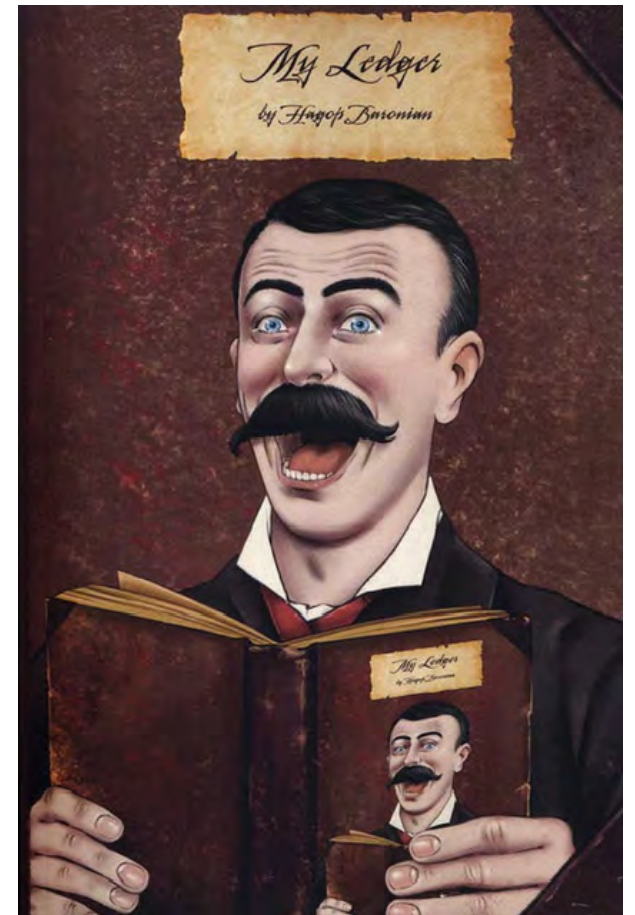
My Ledger chronicles the life of 1880's Constantinople, then the capital of the Ottoman Empire, in a ledger/literary diary Baronian keeps during a six-month period — June 1, 1880 to November 30, 1880 — to expose the corruption of government officials, the censorship of the press, the condition of schools and much more, all “as a spectator to the show without being involved in the performance.” The diary pokes fun at the incidents of theft

and, on that account, the more laughs I get, the less vice I'll find.”

If satire is about highlighting the vices in order to correct them then, by association, the course itself can be said to be a huge success. Indeed the class that came to be known as “Hratch class” gave the young scholars insights into their own contexts. They realized, for example, that “fun” need not be confined to, in contributor Mikael Hamladjian's words, “superficial matters of no real importance, such as showing off wealth . . . many Armenians tend to focus more on.” They also saw the disunity and the stagnation that Baronian deplores in Armenian life and culture as “problems that plague our country and people” to this day.

Both Demiurge and his students are aware of the difficulty of reading satire without a knowledge of the topical issues. Generous footnotes are thus provided to explain the contemporary relevance of the matter in question. The fledgling translators do an excellent job of annotating the documents and of contextualizing the entries by providing the relevant cultural and historical references.

Most engaging is the Afterword to the book which sums up the students' impressions of their experience of the course. Their comments evidence classroom discussions of an amazing openness. Students are aware, for example, that “some readers may feel judged or offended by



tion process,” she adds. The young scholars' passion for the project goes to show that by guiding properly and by creating relevance to their lives a teacher can motivate students to learn, no matter what the subject matter being taught. “I felt really proud when I started to understand Baronian,” writes Adriana Pembejian. “I am honored to have been tasked with translating these vignettes,” echoes Shant Melkonian.

Demiurge's presentation of his book at the Armenian Arts Center in Glendale, at the book event organized by ABRIL bookstore, was much in the spirit of the whole undertaking, a match indeed for any hit comedy show. Photoshopping the twelve student translators' group photograph projected overhead by adding a dinosaur here and a hat there to reveal the idiosyncrasies of each was hilariously funny and had the audience in stitches to the very end. Demiurge concluded his presentation by juxtaposing the Karakashian sisters, famed actresses of the Armenian theater in 1880's Constantinople, with our own globally celebrated Kardashian sisters to show that, perhaps, “nothing has really changed.”



that occurred in the metropolis on a daily basis. In the July 2 entry, for example, an officer and a Greek hurriedly enter the police station under the watchful eyes of a huge crowd assembled outside the station, and when it is confirmed that the officer was responsible for the theft, “There was a time when the police would arrest thieves, but now thieves arrest the police,” jokes Baronian.

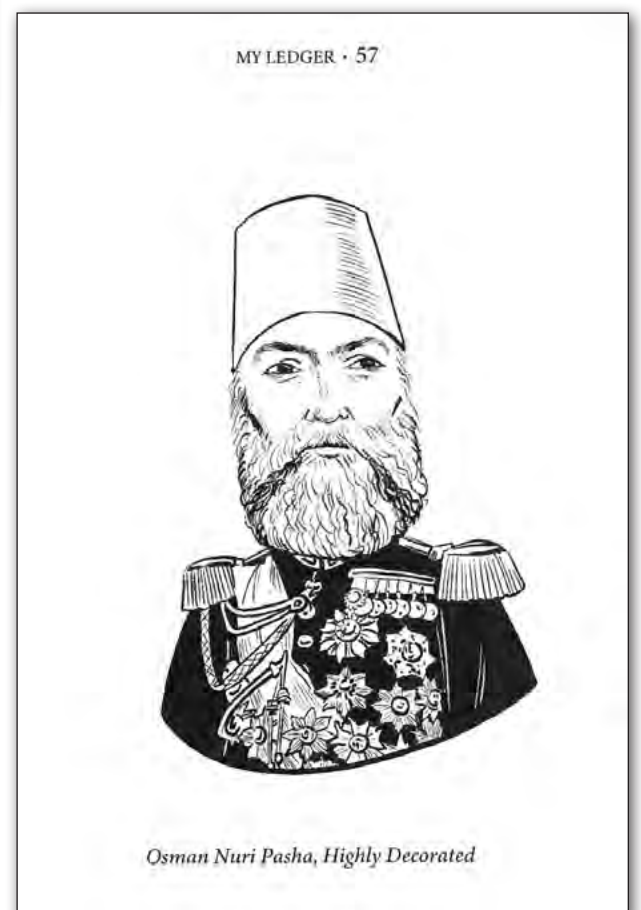
More importantly, Baronian satirizes the Ottoman government's internal policy with regard to Armenians. He caricatures the endless plans the Great European Powers draw to address the Armenian Question, which the Turkish government refuses to implement. At the same time, the satirist derides the stagnant state and the disunity of the Armenian church leaders who do nothing to address the issues. The Holy Patriarch does not show up at the Assembly meetings, yet he believes “the Armenian Question was not hopeless,” writes Baronian ironically. No one is spared.

Baronian's accounts may at times be brutal but he is neither bitter nor contemptuous. If he exaggerates the wrongdoing it is to draw attention to the vices of his contemporaries who, in fact, contemplate the seriousness of the issues as they laugh. It is Baronian's firm belief that “To laugh at vice presumes we are on the road to virtue,

the contents of the book.” They may also have been aware of their instructor's occasional harsh judgments regarding the “moral high ground” and the “moral low ground.” Nonetheless, as translator Noy Hovaghimian's reminds us, “It is important to engage in difficult conversations about the issues that divide us, and this book provides an excellent opportunity to do so.”

Working on the project helped everyone connect with Armenia's cultural and historical background. “Learn[ing] more of the language as [they] translated” also contributed to the ongoing effort of preserving Western Armenian. A lengthy footnote on “an untranslatable pun” they encounter in the Armenian original, for example, betrays the students' enthusiasm about their new awareness of the meanings of words and of the nuances of those meanings.

Demiurge is right to characterize his course as revolutionary. When student apathy is rampant, he makes learning fun. Students admit to actually appreciating working collaboratively, sharing resources and supporting one another. Sometimes “we spent days sitting and speaking to one another to see whose translation made more sense comedically and logically,” writes contributor Satenik Ghasabyan. “Despite the hard work we managed to have lots of fun (italics mine) throughout the transla-





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Pochapoor Tail Soup (Photo courtesy Café Osharak)

Cafe Osharak’s Pochapoor: Armenian Lenten Soup With Red Kidney Beans

SAN FRANCISCO — “The Great Lent is approaching and the Christian world is preparing for the season of fasting and self-reflection. The recipe is modified to suit the taste of the cook and you are free to make changes based on your own preferences. A strict Lenten fast in the Armenian Church prohibits animal products, but if your health or circumstances cannot allow for it, start smaller. It shouldn’t become an obsession, but a precursor to spiritual growth,” says Fr. Mesrop Ash, Parish Priest at St. John Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco since 2012.

In the Armenian Orthodox tradition, Lent is observed by abstaining from all meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products from the day after Poon Paragentan through Easter Eve Badarak. Because it is often difficult to keep this strict tradition, most individuals and families choose to modify their diets. A good alternative many people choose is to observe this rule on Wednesdays and Fridays, while abstaining from meat only on the other days of the week.

“In our spiritual life, may Lent be synonymous with spring and its meaning, emphasizing reawakening, renewal and re-birth for all of us—a time to reject our old, tired selves and to recreate anew our image. But most of all may it be a season to revive and reaffirm our faith in God,” says Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian, Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council.

This rustic Armenian soup features red kidney beans, toasted pasta, walnuts, and more. It is a delicious vegan dish perfect for any season of the year.



Nouné Jihanian, the Armenian blogger at Café Osharak (Photo courtesy Café Osharak)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup orzo or pasta, toasted*
- 2-3 tablespoons oil
- 1 large carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 large turnip, peeled and diced
- 1 large stalk celery, diced
- 1 or 2 medium onions, diced
- 1-2 garlic cloves, finally minced, more to taste
- 2 -16 oz. cans red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 cups water or vegetable stock, more to taste
- 2 tablespoons walnuts, chopped and toasted, more to taste
- 1-2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Pesto:

- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced
- 1/4 cup walnuts
- 1/4 cup cilantro

PREPARATION:

Place a dry frying pan on the stove and preheat it. Add the pasta and stir constantly. (You want the pasta evenly and lightly browned but not burnt.)

Once the pasta is nicely toasted, remove from the pan and let it cool on a plate. Heat the oil in a pot over the medium heat. Add the onions and sauté for 3-4 minutes until soft and translucent. Add the rest of the vegetables and continue to stir. After 4-5 minutes, add the minced garlic and cook for a few seconds.

Pour in the beans and add the water or stock. Season with salt and pepper, cover, and let it come to a full boil. Once the soup starts boiling, add the toasted pasta and stir, cover the pot, and cook until the pasta is cooked for 10-20 minutes longer. Add more water or stock as needed. Taste for seasonings and serve.

For Pesto:

On a cutting board, mince the garlic. Next to it, chop the walnuts and cilantro. With your knife: bring garlic, walnuts and cilantro together. With a rocking motion, chop until they are uniformly cut and combined. Serve separately with the soup.

*Orzo is an Italian type of pasta. It is often made from semolina flour, a type of flour that comes from durum wheat. It can also be made from all-purpose or whole wheat flour. None of these are gluten-free, so neither is orzo. Quinoa, arborio rice, wild rice, brown rice, white rice, jasmine rice, corn, green lentils and cauliflower rice are all gluten free-alternatives. See: <https://myriadrecipes.com/>

This recipe comes from Nouné Jihanian, the Armenian food blogger at Café Osharak. “At my blog, you’ll find globally-inspired dishes with an emphasis on Armenian and Italian cuisine. ‘Osharak’ is the Armenian word that means ‘the nectar of the fruit,’ typically known as a drink that is refreshing, energizing and colorful. Food doesn’t have to be boring nor does preparing a meal have to be a chore; it can be a creative and relaxing process. The more you cook and experiment in the kitchen, the more you discover the freedom of working with different ingredients — ultimately finding yourself comfortable deviating from the recipe and adapting it to your own tastes. Healthy vegetarian recipes are what I cook most of the time for my family. I am an Armenian native living and working in Colorado, and I am happily married to an Italian from New York. Many of my recipes are handed down from both our families, and have become staples and favorites over the years. To make the vegetable broth richer for this recipe, you can use any vegetables. Diced onions, carrots, and celery are staple vegetables, but I use turnips for this recipe. Feel free to add other hearty vegetables that complement the beans.”

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.osharak.com/pochapoor-tail-soup-lenten/>
For Armenian recipes, see: https://www.osharak.com/category/armenian_food/

For Lenten or vegan recipes, see:

- <https://stjohnarmenianchurch.com/categories/fasting>
- <https://mirrorspectator.com/2023/03/15/recipe-corner-lenten-recipes-from-st-john-armenian-apostolic-church-in-san-francisco/>
- <https://mirrorspectator.com/2022/03/31/lenten-recipes-from-st-john-armenian-apostolic-church-in-san-francisco/>
- <https://mirrorspectator.com/2022/03/24/lenten-recipes-from-thearmeniankitchen-com/>

- <https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/03/29/more-lenten-recipes-elise-kazanji-ans-beet-leaves-with-rice-jaguntegh-yev-purintz/>
- <https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/02/24/recipe-corner-recipe-for-great-lent-medz-bahk-courtesy-of-st-gregory-armenian-church/>
- <https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/06/04/recipe-corner-basoots-dolma-lenten-tolma/>
- <https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/04/23/recipe-corner-mshosh-a-lentil-and-dried-fruit-dish/>
- <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/category/meatless-lenten-dishes/>
- <http://armenianorthodoxy.org/Lent/40%20Recipes%20by%20Varoujan.html>
- <https://armenianweekly.com/2024/02/13/the-lenten-season-2/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/armenianandmiddleeasterncooking>

Connect at:

- <https://twitter.com/Osharak/status/1386051237196353538>
- <https://www.facebook.com/CafeOsharak>
- <https://www.pinterest.com/cafeosharak/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/osharak.cafe/>

ARTS & CULTURE

History Is Not Capricious: Exploring Root Causes

Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The anniversary of the expulsion of Armenians from Artsakh just weeks ago was met with sadness and mourning, political disputes, and attempts to identify those to blame for the catastrophe. It was also a time for reflection, and searching for the deeper causes behind developments. On this anniversary, a new book appeared, both in Germany and Norway, which offers a serious approach to finding answers to these questions.

Entitled, *Das geopolitische Schicksal Armeniens: Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (*Armenian's Geopolitical Fate: Past and Present*), the book is the result of a collaborative effort by Norwegian geologist and ethnologist Winfried K. Dallmann and German sociologist, genocide researcher and human rights proponent Tessa Hofmann. In their foreword, they state bluntly that, in answer to the search for the “causes, the development, and above all the possible ways out” of the crisis, both political analysts and mass media have failed to be measured or objective. With their book they seek to provide an alternative.

Although since August 2022 several authoritative institutional voices, like the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, the International Association of Genocide Scholars and former International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Luis More-

no Ocampo, have explicitly warned of genocide in the Azerbaijani aggression and expulsion of the Artsakh Armenians, in the western media the echo has been faint. Perhaps with the world focus on the Ukraine-Russia war, Armenia, close to the latter, is considered “on the wrong side” — despite the shifts in Russian President Vladimir Putin’s own posture towards Armenia and Azerbaijan, claiming strategic partnership with both.

This makes the point, which is the thrust of the book, that this crisis can only be understood in terms of geopolitics; not in the short term, but rather from the earliest times. The authors explore the historical background in the 11th century invasion of Turkic peoples in the Caucasus and discuss Armenia under successive foreign empires, its independence as a kingdom, further subjugation, up to the Ottoman and Iranian dynasties. Following treatment of Russia and Armenia from 1828 to 1914, they move to 20th century Ottoman empire, with the incisive chapter devoted to World War I and the genocide. “But, not only,” they write; in the Soviet period too, Armenia’s elites were subjected to the “great cleansing” of 1936-39, From this standpoint, what the post-Soviet Azerbaijan regime is engaged in must be seen as a “genocidal depopulation, supported by its ‘brotherly’ Turkish people, the remains of the once 300,000 square kilometer Armenian highlands.” The name of the campaign is “Pan-Tur-



ism.”

While documenting their historical excursus, the authors attack the reign of “fake news” as well as more subtle means of compromising historical truth. Whereas autocratic regimes cheerfully deploy lying coverage, press organs in democratic nations may simply ignore political realities or engage in “false balance” or “both-sidesism” or “whataboutism,” whereby controversial themes are treated as if victim and perpetrator were on an equal plane. This produces erroneous judgments and priv-

ileges the aggressor. Such manipulation generates what the authors call “geopolitically motivated double standards.”

Taking the Russia-Ukraine conflict as an example, the authors note the facility with which mass media may condemn any analyst who seeks root causes behind the conflict, as a “Putin-Versteher” — someone who “understands” Putin, instead of denouncing him. With reference to the second Karabakh war in 2020, mass media tended to argue that “both sides accuse the other of starting the conflict, both sides are called upon to come to reason,” etc. Double standards reign in the sanctions policy of the European Union, which has refused to stop importing gas from Azerbaijan, as well as in the interpretation of sovereignty according to international law. Here, Stalin’s arbitrary territorial decisions on Karabakh win legitimacy; Kosovo is granted self-determination, but Karabakh not.

The hefty volume — 450 pages long and richly illustrated with maps — documents the historical process culminating in the Karabakh catastrophe. More than half the book deals with the Republic of Armenia and the Karabakh conflict, from 1991 to the present. Having provided a substantial overview of a history stretching back to Urartu, the authors demonstrate the importance of the geopolitical dynamic governing the entire process and conclude with consideration of new aspects in the peace negotiations between Yerevan and Baku.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

- 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 Gyozyan, 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., Watertown. 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 4** — Saint James Men’s Club, Monday. Guest Speaker Radio Personality Karen Blake, a Boston native who proudly grew up attending St. James. Her voice and energetic personality have been heard on Boston radio for over 35 years! Karen can be heard on Magic 106.7 weekdays from 2-7 p.m. Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner 6:15 p.m. Mezze, 7 p.m. Dinner \$20.00 per person, all are welcome. 465 Mount Auburn street, Watertown, Ma. 617-923-8860
- 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
- NOVEMBER 23** — Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church 75th Annual Food Festival. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m., 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Eat-in or Take-out. The Food Festival menu includes lamb, chicken, losh kebab, and kheyma dinners, and a vegetarian platter; a country store with a variety of Armenian specialties and deserts. The festival also features a jewelry table, gift items from Armenia as well as tours of the church’s sanctuary and a Backgammon (Nardi) Tournament. For further information, call the church office at 978-256-7234.
- 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.



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
— SINCE 1932 —



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL
CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepiyan, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is
published weekly, except two weeks in
July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.A.	\$80 one year
Canada	\$125 one year
Other Countries	\$200 one year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston,
MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

Postmaster: Send address
changes to The Armenian
Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount
Auburn St.,
Watertown, MA 02472

Other than the Editorial, views
and opinions expressed in this
newspaper do not necessarily
reflect the policies of the
publisher.

Will the US-Armenia Bilateral Agenda Evolve Under a Trump or Harris Administration?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The South Caucasus has historically lacked strategic importance for the United States, with no president since George H.W. Bush prioritizing it in national security strategies. However, the US recognizes the region’s significance due to its geography and the potential to diminish Russia’s influence. American political and analytical circles believe that resolving conflicts in the South Caucasus could reduce Russian dominance. The region’s proximity to Russia, a persistent rival, Iran, an unwavering adversary, and Turkey, a strategic ally, further enhances its importance to the US. Since Armenia gained independence, the US has aimed to facilitate conflict resolution in the Armenian-Turkish and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. When opportunities arose, American diplomacy actively engaged in these efforts.

Under Armenia’s first president, the Clinton administration found Armenian positions on the Karabakh conflict and relations with Turkey acceptable, leading to US diplomatic involvement. During Robert Kocharyan’s presidency, the US perceived a chance to resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and invited the leaders of both countries to Key West and later Washington for negotiations. Under President Serzh Sargsyan, there was also strong US support, especially regarding Armenian-Turkish relations, a process known as “football diplomacy,” which received backing from the Obama administration and Secretary Hillary Clinton herself.

Under the Biden administration, US policy toward Armenia has remained active for several reasons. Firstly, Russian influence has weakened due to its involvement in the Ukraine crisis. Secondly, Armenia has shown a willingness to make unilateral concessions in normalizing relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. However, the lack of high-level meetings between Biden and Armenian President Nikol Pashinyan suggests that key bilateral issues are not prioritized. This indicates that US interests in the region are more regional than bilateral.

The Trump and Biden administrations are the only US administrations which did not engage in direct contact with Armenia, as neither President Trump nor President Biden held meetings

or phone calls with Prime Minister Pashinyan. The only notable conversation took place between Vice President-elect Mike Pence and President Serzh Sargsyan prior to the Armenian change in regime or “Velvet Revolution.” Pashinyan is the only Armenian leader who hasn’t had direct contact with a US President, although lower-level communications are intense. This indicates a lack of a high-level bilateral agenda.

What Is Next?

In 20 days, the US will hold elections, and the prospects of a second Trump or a first Harris administration remain uncertain. Trump’s “America First” policies prioritized certain foreign relations while neglecting others, particularly the South Caucasus, leading to stagnant relations exemplified by his limited engagement with Armenia, mainly consisting of a few formal handshakes. The Trump administration notably did not intervene in any way during Azerbaijan’s attacks on Artsakh and Armenia amidst the 2020 presidential election.

The Biden administration also failed to take concrete steps to protect Artsakh Armenians from ethnic cleansing by Azerbaijan. While US-Armenian military drills appear to mark progress, military ties remain underdeveloped, as there have been no bilateral meetings between US Secretaries of Defense and their Armenian counterparts since the Obama administration. This suggests a lack of high-level agenda items to discuss.

Kamala Harris’s foreign policy may diverge from Biden’s, yet both are likely to align on global concerns such as countering Russia and China. There appear to be no plans for new elements in the US-Armenia agenda or for deeper engagement. After all, unlike Harris, Biden had significant foreign policy experience, a strong understanding of the South Caucasus conflicts, connections to the Armenian community, and worked closely with Armenian lobbyists, enabling his personal knowledge and involvement in Armenian issues.

(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.)

Island Hopping: Why Azerbaijan’s Meddling in the Comoros Should Worry the EU

By Daria Jankiel

Last month, the Azerbaijani government hosted a conference on the “illegal occupation of Mayotte by France.” It was a curious gathering: over a dozen activists from the Comoros, a tiny country comprising a cluster of islands between Madagascar and Mozambique, pitching up in Baku, a capital in the Caucasus. It resulted in a memorandum of cooperation with a group advocating the return of one island, Mayotte, from France to the Comoros. It was also followed by a communication campaign on various social media channels aimed at Comorians. Curious though it was, the conference pointed to Russia’s growing influence over some of Europe’s far-flung outposts.

The Union of the Comoros is a long way from Europe. But its distant location and modest size should not discourage European policymakers from paying more attention to the archipelago, as it is located at an important crossroads in the Indian Ocean and has proven to be a loyal ally to the West. It comprises four islands. Three of those are Comorian territory and the fourth, Mayotte, is a French overseas territory over which the Union claims sovereignty.

In a 1974 referendum, the majority of Comorians chose to quit France, but Mayotte voted to remain with the former colonial power. This was confirmed in a 2009 referendum when it chose to become an overseas department. Both referendums are rejected by the Comorian government, as well as the United Nations and the African Union which recognize Mayotte as part of

the Comoros.

Half century on, the Baku Initiative Group (BIG), launched in 2023, is seeking to confirm the claim. It purports to be an international NGO “dedicated to fostering international partnerships in the fields of decolonization and human rights” but is funded by the government of Azerbaijan and has links to various other independence movements, notably in New Caledonia, another French territory.

Those who returned from Baku characterized the BIG event as a major step towards the return of Mayotte to the Union of the Comoros and a “relaunch of the debate on the international level.” While it may not necessarily be any kind of step towards the return of Mayotte to the Comoros, the conference was certainly a step towards further destabilization of Comorian attitudes towards France and, by extension, Europe.

To be clear: the Comoros have no diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan, no evidence exists of any prior interaction between the two, and there is no legitimate reason why Azerbaijan would suddenly express interest in a very remote country of less than one million people. Rather, it appears that the main goal of the BIG is to challenge French influence in its overseas territories as a direct response to French rapprochement with Armenia, Azerbaijan’s regional rival.

Such sudden Azeri interest in undermining French influence abroad is a strategy straight out of the Russian playbook. The BIG’s efforts in France’s overseas terri-

tories align closely with Moscow’s foreign policy goals, including undermining France’s influence in its former colonies. The BIG’s strategy and events are inspired by Russia, which has been working hard to get more attention from the Comorian government.

The Comoros has proven to be a loyal European ally, especially on the war in Ukraine; including in UN general assembly votes and President Azali Assoumani’s missions to Kyiv and Moscow in June 2023. Azali continues to yield influence on the continent after his successful chairmanship of the African Union and has been an advocate for closer cooperation with Europe.

The Comoros cannot be neglected by the West just because it may seem too small and too far away. This makes it easy prey for Russia and its allies. Moscow is currently planning to open a fully-fledged diplomatic mission in the capital Moroni.

Russia has previously played territorial disputes in the region to its advantage. It meddled heavily in the 2018 presidential campaign in neighboring Madagascar and successfully unearthed a largely forgotten dispute between Antananarivo and Paris over the uninhabited Scattered Islands. Ever since, the topic has been a thorn in the Franco-Malagasy relations and to a lesser extent Malagasy-European relations. Russian diplomats never miss an opportunity to point out that Russia has always considered the Scattered Islands as part of Madagascar, the same way as the BIG is doing with Mayotte.

see MEDDLING, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Text of UN-Azerbaijan Agreement Revealed For the Climate Summit to be Held In Baku

As the UN Climate Summit (COP29) is set to be held in Baku starting on November 11, it is becoming increasingly clear that Azerbaijan should not have been allowed to host such a prestigious gathering. In addition to Armenian protests about ethnic cleansing and the illegal detention of Armenian prisoners in Baku, there have been worldwide objections about the conference being held in Baku because of Azerbaijan's flagrant and persistent violations of human rights.

On October 10, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published an article titled, "COP29 Host Country Agreement Lacks Rights Protections: Azerbaijan Should Guarantee Rights of Civil Society Participants at Climate Conference." HRW expressed its serious concerns about Baku hosting the Conference.

HRW obtained a copy of the signed UN-Azerbaijan Agreement which has not been made public, despite the fact that UN members had insisted "that host country agreements should be made publicly available and should uphold international human rights law."

HRW urged the UN to "publicly call upon the Azerbaijani government to respect its human rights obligations and facilitate a rights-respecting climate conference." Amnesty International also issued a similar request in July. It is important that the Agreement protect not only the rights of Azerbaijani citizens, but also the safety and security of thousands of international participants of the Conference.

When I clicked on the link that HRW had included in its article, I found the text of the 20-page-long Agreement signed between the UN and the Government of Azerbaijan in August 2024. HRW complained that the Agreement "is replete with significant shortcomings and ambiguities on the protections for participants' rights." For example, while the Agreement states that Conference participants "shall enjoy immunity from legal process in respect of words spoken or written and any act performed by them," it requires that they "respect Azerbaijani laws and not interfere in its 'internal affairs.'"

Here are the highlights of the signed Agreement:

—The Government [of Azerbaijan] is committed to uphold the fundamental human rights, dignity and worth of the human person, and equal rights of all participants participating in the Pre-sessional Meetings/Conference/UNFCCC Meetings [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change]."

— "The area within the Baku Olympic Stadium where the conference and the Pre-sessional Meetings shall be held, including any area immediately outside it, will be under the direct supervision and control of the United Nations

Department of Safety and Security...."

— "Host country support and technical personnel shall be guided by the highest ethical and professional standards and are expected to behave with integrity and respect. The Government shall ensure that relevant standards are fully understood."

— "The Government shall be responsible, at its expense, for such police protection and security as may be required to ensure the efficient running...of the Conference without interference of any kind."

— "Security within the conference premises shall be the responsibility of the UN Department of Safety and Security.... Security outside the Conference premises shall be the responsibility of the Government.... Such security personnel shall be guided by the highest ethical and professional standards and are expected to behave with integrity and respect. The Government shall ensure that relevant standards are fully understood."

— All Participants "shall enjoy the privileges and immunities within the Republic of Azerbaijan," under the UN "Convention on the Privileges and Immunities.... The representatives of observer organizations/other persons... shall enjoy immunity from legal process in respect of words spoken or written and any act performed by them in connection with their participation" in the Conference.

—All Participants "have the right of entry into and exit from the Republic of Azerbaijan and no impediments shall be imposed on their transit to and from the Conference premises." Exceptions can be made in case the Government presents to the UN "well founded objections based on law concerning the entry of a particular individual. Such objections must relate to specific criminal, security matters and not to nationality, religion, professional or political affiliation."

— The conference premises are "protected...and access thereto is subject to the authority and control of the [UN] secretariat. These premises shall be inviolable for the duration of the Conference."

— All Participants enjoying "privileges and immunities provided by this Agreement...have the duty to respect the laws and regulations in force in the Republic of Azerbaijan and have the duty not to interfere in its internal affairs."

—In addition to paying the expenses of hosting the Conference, the Government of Azerbaijan will reimburse the UN \$5,811,800 for the costs incurred in planning the Conference, airfare for UN personnel, and technical services.

The Agreement finally states that "upon the conclusion of the Conference, the [UN] secretariat will issue a report regarding the implementation of the terms of this Agreement, including on lessons learned and challenges faced, to the [UN] Bureau."

We will find out at the end of the Conference if Azerbaijan has abided by the terms of the Agreement, particularly in respect to human rights, including suppression by police of public protests by Azerbaijani citizens during the conference.

ECHR Rules Turkey Violated Right to Fair Trial of 10 Judges and Prosecutors

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled on Tuesday, October 22, that Turkey had violated the right to a fair trial of 10 judges and prosecutors.

The court found that Turkey's Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) failed to provide sufficient procedural safeguards, such as formal hearings, rules for evidence and detailed reasoning in its decisions regarding the 10 applicants, undermining the applicants' right to a fair hearing.

The case, Şişman and Others v. Turkey, involved 10 judges and prosecutors who were involuntarily transferred to other cities or, in one instance, demoted in the same city. These transfers occurred between 2014 and 2015 through a series of decisions by the HSYK.

In one instance, applicant İlker Çetin was transferred without his consent from the office of the chief public prosecutor in Diyarbakır to a deputy role in Uşak and later demoted to a public prosecutor position in the same city. Another applicant, Ahmet Karaca, had requested a transfer to a location closer to his sick mother. While his request was partially granted, the applicants claimed the process lacked transparency and fairness, highlighting broader procedural issues in the HSYK's handling of transfers.

The Turkish government contested the ECtHR's jurisdiction, arguing that the applicants did not explicitly request access to a court during the domestic proceedings and that the decisions were administrative matters outside the purview of Article 6. It also claimed that following an attempted coup in 2016, the applicants were dismissed due to alleged affiliation with the Gülen movement, considered responsible for the coup

attempt by the Turkish government, justifying the exclusion of judicial review on national security grounds.

The ECtHR rejected these arguments, emphasizing that the HSYK could not be considered a "tribunal" due to the procedural shortcomings in its process. The court referenced its own precedents, including the Bilgen and Eminağaoğlu cases, to support the view that the absence of a fair procedure rendered the HSYK's decisions invalid under the European Convention on Human Rights' (ECHR) standards.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been targeting followers of the Gülen movement, inspired by the late Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen, since the corruption investigations of 2013, which implicated then-prime minister Erdoğan, his family members and his inner circle.

Dismissing the investigations as a Gülenist coup and conspiracy against his government, Erdoğan designated the movement as a terrorist organization and began targeting its members. He intensified the crackdown on the movement following an abortive putsch in 2016, which he accused Gülen of masterminding. Gülen and the movement strongly deny involvement in the coup attempt or any terrorist activity.

Following the abortive putsch, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency and carried out a massive purge of state institutions on the pretext of an anti-coup fight. Over 130,000 public servants, including 4,156 judges and prosecutors, as well as 29,444 members of the armed forces were summarily removed from their jobs for alleged membership in or relation-

ships with "terrorist organizations" by emergency decree-laws subject to neither judicial nor parliamentary scrutiny.

Former public servants were not only fired from their jobs; they were also banned from working again in the public sector and getting a passport. The government also made it difficult for them to work formally in the private sector. Notes were put on the social security database about dismissed public servants to deter potential employers.

Since the 2016 coup attempt, the ECtHR has ruled against the Turkish government in numerous cases, many of which involve the treatment of judges, prosecutors and other public officials. These cases often center on rights violations tied to dismissals, detentions and transfers carried out during widespread purges in the judiciary and civil service.

A significant number of the cases before the ECtHR have involved individuals accused of affiliation with the Gülen movement. The ECtHR has consistently emphasized the importance of fair trial guarantees, procedural safeguards and the right to an independent tribunal, even in situations where national security concerns are invoked. In these cases the court has ruled that Turkey's actions fell short of the standards set by the ECHR, reinforcing the need for adherence to due process.

(This report originally appeared on the website for Stockholm Center for Freedom, www.stockholmcf.org, on October 22.)



Armenian Speaker Accused of Justifying Azeri Takeover of Karabakh

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Parliament speaker Alen Simonyan faced strong opposition criticism on Tuesday, October 22, after implying that Azerbaijan had a legitimate right to recapture Nagorno-Karabakh by force.

“When the second Karabakh war started [in 2020] we were very upset because the world did not respond to that war the way we wanted,” Simonyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service in a weekend interview. “The reason [for that response] was also the lack of legitimacy, the lack of legitimacy on our side.”

“Attacking Karabakh and occupying territories from Armenia are different things from the legal point of view,” he said. “Azerbaijan carried out an operation in Karabakh behind which it had at least three or four UN [Security Council] resolutions.”

Gegham Manukyan, a lawmaker from the main opposition Hayastan alliance, condemned the remarks during a session of the Armenian parliament, challenging Simonyan to say who advised him to make that “very stupid point.” Manukyan argued that the UN resolutions adopted in the early 1990s did not relate to Karabakh’s status.

“They were about halting hostilities,” said Manukyan. “The UN resolutions did not give Azerbaijan any semi-legitimate, even insignificant, legal basis for attacking and occupying Artsakh.”

Simonyan rejected the criticism and stood by his remarks. “We are talking about a legitimate right, and there is nothing new in what I said,” he said.

“The fact is that the territory in question was and is an internationally part of Azerbaijan,” added the controversial speaker



Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan allied to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Pashinyan publicly recognized Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh in May 2023 about three years after holding a rally in Stepanakert and declaring. “Artsakh is Armenia. Period.” His political opponents say that recognition precipitated Azerbaijan’s September 2023 military offensive that restored Azerbaijani control over Karabakh and forced the region’s population to flee to Armenia.

They also hold Pashinyan responsible for Armenia’s defeat in the 2020 war. Responding to this accusation, the premier stated in April 2022 that he “could have averted the war, as a result of which we would have had the same situation, but of course without the casualties.”

That statement angered the families of some of at least 3,825 Armenian soldiers killed during the six-week hostilities. They said Pashinyan thus publicly admitted deliberately sacrificing thousands of lives and must be prosecuted for that.

For his part, Simonyan made disparaging comments in 2021 about other Armenian soldiers who were taken prisoner during the 2020 war. Some of their relatives staged angry protests against the speaker.

Women in Armenia Earn 30 Percent Less than Men for Same Work, World Bank Study Finds

YEREVAN — Less than half of working age women in Armenia participate in the labor force mainly due to caregiving responsibilities for children and disabled family members. Those who do earn on average, from 25 to 30 percent less than their male counterparts engaged in the same work, according to a new report released on October 16 by the World Bank.

The study, titled “Armenia Country Gender Assessment,” also found that women’s low level of participation in the labor market comes despite the fact that 68 percent of women are pursuing tertiary education, compared to 52 percent of men, and proposes actionable policy recommendations to drive systemic change.

“Armenia is foregoing important growth dividends by not encouraging more women to join the labor force,” said Carolin Geginat, World Bank Country Manager for Armenia. “Achieving gender parity in labor force participation alone could increase Armenia’s level of GDP by 4 to 6 percent. Ensuring equal wages should be an essential part of a strategy that encourages women to enter the workforce. Today, women are paid only around 70 percent of the hourly wage paid to a man in the same occupation.”

The report also highlights that men’s enrollment in higher education remains stagnant at around 44 percent (in contrast to 65 percent for women). Men are also affected by higher mortality. Despite potential economic gains from women’s participation in decision-making roles, women are still underrepresented, including in roles such as ministers, deputy ministers and community heads. While women currently make up 35.5 percent of the National Assembly, still only 17 percent among ministers and

18 percent of deputy ministers are women.

Considering the higher educational achievements of women, labor market trends for women are likely influenced by social beliefs around gender roles rather than actual skills. Although the share of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields has grown over time, women are still concentrated in traditionally lower-paid sectors such as education and social work, while men dominate fields like engineering and technology.

The report also highlights that gender-based violence persists as a serious and underreported issue in Armenia. For example, 18 percent of partnered women aged 15-59 suffered from domestic violence in their lifetime.

“The Armenia Country Gender Assessment offers the latest evidence on gender gap,” said Natsuko Kiso Nozaki, World Bank Economist, lead author of the report. “It also puts forward policy recommendations that can help to close remaining gender gaps in Armenia such as addressing social norms, bridging gaps in the legal framework and policy implementation.”

Increasing the number of women in the workforce would require promoting a more equitable sharing of caregiving responsibilities and encouraging men to take on these roles. Effective interventions include: raising awareness among men and women about the benefits of women’s employment; offering adequate parental leave; providing incentives for fathers to engage in childcare; improving access to and use of childcare services, and offering vocational training, especially in sectors where women have been traditionally underrepresented.

Why Azerbaijan’s Meddling in the Comoros Should Worry the EU

MEDDLING, from page 18

Parallels between the two cases can be easily drawn especially that the Russian embassy in Antananarivo is also accredited to Moroni. Just as in the Malagasy case, Russia officially recognizes Mayotte as integral part of the Union of the Comoros and has been positioning itself as the only partner of the Comoros who cares about the return of Mayotte to the administration in Moroni. This could soon grow into a multilateral foreign policy issue between the Comoros and the European Union.

Diverging from their government’s general position, many Comorians want to move on from France as their main partner and resentment towards the former colonial power remains high. On the other hand, what Russia, China, and their proxies do have to offer is a sense of partnership and equal treatment that simply comes with the lack of colonial past. But Comorians recognize that there is more to Europe than France. It is therefore critical that EU member states with no colonial past engage more in sub-Saharan Africa. Recruiting more diverse staff in delegations, as well as in development and humanitarian agencies, is crucial to fostering more equal relations. It will help convey the message that the EU is committed to the social and economic development of sub-Saharan countries, the Comoros included, and that this is not another tool of neo-colonialist agenda — a common perception in the former colonies. But given the geopolitical positioning of Moroni up until now, especially on the war in Ukraine, relatively little work is required from European diplomats to

keep Comorians close.

Although combatting violence against women and children, entrepreneurial programs, and the blue economy, which are currently the focus of EU programs, are issues crucial to the development of the Comoros, the EU should also invest more in security sector reform; better tools for surveillance of porous maritime borders; countering trafficking and extremism; and support to the education system at all levels. The current work done by Expertise France on the Arms Trade Treaty is a good start, but a comprehensive security sector reform is long overdue amid political violence, trafficking, and extremism in the country. The EU could also expand its cooperation in the field of agriculture given the weak food security in the Comoros and European expertise in that area, especially of individual member states such as Poland or Ireland which have no colonial legacies. Promotion and of private sector investment opportunities and incentives would also strengthen European soft power in the region.

More widely, Europeans need a more diversified and sustainable long-term strategy for their engagement with the Comoros, and other sub-Saharan African countries — something that Russia cannot and does not want to offer. Europeans need to prove that they want and can create an equal partnership that will benefit sub-Saharan Africans and their economies.

(This analysis originally appeared on the website for the European Council on Foreign Relations, www.ecfr.eu on October 18.)

Belarusian Man Avoids Extradition From Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Armenian government has granted asylum to a Belarusian citizen who has faced extradition to his home country since being arrested in Armenia in March.

The 36-year-old man, Vladimir Balandin, is wanted in Belarus on embezzlement charges denied by him. The Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly (HCA), an Armenian human rights group, says that he is being prosecuted for participating in 2020 anti-government protests in Minsk sparked by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko’s reelection which the West regards as fraudulent.

Armenian prosecutors formally agreed to extradite Balandin on May 31, saying that Belarusian authorities have assured them that they will respect the suspect’s rights. Armenian courts refused to overturn that decision, leading the arrested man to apply for asylum in the country. The Armenian Interior Ministry’s Migration Service granted the request on Tuesday, according to the HCA.

“Balandin is no longer at risk of extradition as he has the status of a refugee in Armenia,” the Vanadzor-based group said in a statement.

Belarus’s Prosecutor-General Andrei Shved visited Yerevan and met with his Armenian counterpart Anna Vardapetyan earlier this month. They reportedly discussed mutual extradition of fugitive suspects and convicts.

The authorities in Yerevan had earlier

refused to extradite at least two other Belarusians, who were charged at home with draft evasion. The HCA says that they too participated in the 2020 demonstrations in support of Lukashenko’s main election challenger, Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

Balandin was granted asylum amid heightened tensions between Armenia and Belarus. Yerevan recalled the Armenian ambassador in Minsk for consulta-



Vladimir Balandin, a Belarusian man wanted by authorities in Belarus.

tions in June after Lukashenko made fresh pro-Azerbaijani statements during a visit to Azerbaijan. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan declared that he and other Armenian officials will not visit Belarus as long as Lukashenko remains in power.

The Belarusian strongman, who has been in power since 1994, mocked Armenia and denounced its political leadership for seeking closer ties with the West in an August interview with Russian state television.