

Harris Expresses Support For Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians’ Right to Return

By Arshaluys Barseghyan and Aytan Farhadova

US Democratic presidential candidate and Vice President Kamala Harris has called for the right to return of displaced Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Harris made her statement on September 23 as part of a letter to the American-Armenian community marking Armenian Independence Day, celebrated annually on 21 September.

“The right for Armenians displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh to return safely to their homes is vital to restoring dignity to the Armenian people and stability to the region,” read the letter.

Harris also paid attention to the Armenian Genocide, which was recognised by the Biden Administration in 2021, noting that they ‘must also never forget’ it.

In the letter, Harris promised to continue to support Armenia ‘in its efforts to strengthen democracy and foster stability in the region’ and that she remained committed to a lasting peace between Armenia and its neighbours, one ‘that respects sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity’.

A Mixed Reception in Armenia

Harris’s statement was met with an ambiguous reception, both in Armenia and within the diaspora.

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Stepanakert 2023 (Marut Vanyan photo)

The Most Terrible Day

By Marut Vanyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Perhaps September 25 can be considered the most terrible and cruel day for the Artsakh Armenians who lived there until 2023, facing the challenges that occurred throughout history, overcoming the second Karabakh war, the Stalinist repressions, and World War II, during which many more Armenians were called to the army percentage-wise than in Nazi Germany. There was a World War II memorial in every single village in Artsakh.

But let’s leave all this to the historians. Anyway, until the last moment, the Artsakh Armenians tried to keep their

land till September 25, 2023, which was fatal for them.

“The most terrible day in my life for me personally. The day when I left home. In those days, one tragedy followed another, and even now I don’t know which



one to remember first,” says Svetlana Danielyan from Stepanakert.

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Armenian Lawmaker Sees Lack of Progress in Fresh Talks With Azerbaijan

By Shogik Galstian and Heghine Buniatian

NEW YORK (Azatutyun) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a trilateral meeting with Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov during a session of the UN General Assembly in New York on Thursday, September 26. According to virtually identical Armenian and Azerbaijani readouts of the talks, the ministers agreed to “put additional efforts towards the conclusion” of the peace treaty.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry has not yet clarified whether the two sides narrowed their differences.

Hovik Aghazaryan, a senior member of the Armenian parliament representing the ruling Civil Contract party, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that they at least made



Trilateral meeting of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers Ararat Mirzoyan and Jeyhun Bayramov, New York, September 26, 2024

no progress towards signing the kind of an agreement which Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan again advocated in a speech at the UN General Assembly delivered just a few hours after the New York talks.

Pashinyan said that Yerevan and Baku should “take what has already been agreed,” sign an interim peace treaty and try to settle their remaining differences

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Azerbaijan Injecting Geopolitical Element into COP29 Climate Conference

Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev is stoking a geopolitical grudge with France, issuing a pledge to fund the participation of small island developing states, some of which have French connections, in the upcoming COP29 environmental conclave.

Azerbaijan’s financial assistance would cover airfare, accommodation and per diems for up to four delegates for each island state participating in COP29, which will be held in Baku in November. The assistance offer comes several months after Aliyev proposed establishing a special fund to help small island states address the effects of climate change.

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Free Upgrades, Campaign Donations and the Bentley Suite: How Eric Adams Allegedly Traveled the World on Turkey’s Dime

By Justin Rohrlich

LONDON (The Independent) — Eric Adams is facing a raft of felony charges as the first-ever federal indictment against a sitting New York City mayor was unsealed Thursday, September 26.

The flamboyant Adams, a former NYPD captain who liked to boast that his ascendance to City Hall brought a sense of “swagger” back to Gotham, was hit with five counts including wire fraud,

bribery, conspiracy, and solicitation of a contribution by a foreign national. He was tripped up, in large part, by his taste for the finer things in life, according to the 57-page indictment.

Prosecutors say Adams, who vehemently denies the charges, has been on the take since at least 2014, when he was elected Brooklyn Borough president. Since then, the indictment alleges, Adams has continued to seek

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New York City Mayor Eric Adams at the Turkish Parade on May 22. (Photo: Twitter/ @NYCMayorsOffice)

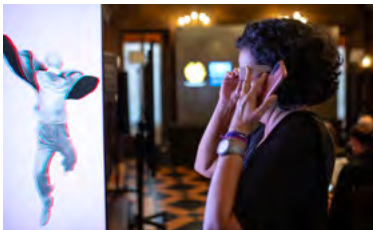
ARMENIA
Memorial to Aurora Mardiganian Unveiled in Yerevan



CANADA
Famous Churchill Portrait, Stolen In Canada and Found in Italy



ITALY
Parajanov 100: A Grand Celebration Of Sergei Parajanov’s Legacy





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Azerbaijan Brings New Charges against Artsakh Leaders

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Fresh charges have been filed against the Imprisoned former military and political leaders of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) by Azerbaijani prosecutors.

Azeri Prosecutor General Kamran Aliyev told reporters on October 1 that they were also charged with “destruction of historical and cultural monuments” in Artsakh.

“The rights of accused persons are ensured. Each of them has several attorneys and rights to access the materials,” the Azerbaijani media quoted him as saying.

Eight Artsakh leaders were illegally arrested and indicted after Azerbaijan launched a military offensive in Karabakh in September 2023, causing its population of 120,000 Armenians to flee.

They were charged with “creation and sustenance of an illegal armed group on Azerbaijani territory, terrorism and acquisition and movement of firearms.”

The political prisoners include former Presidents Arayik Harutyunyan, Bako Sahakyan and Arkady Ghukasyan, former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, former presidential advisor David Babayan, last Artsakh parliament speaker David Ishkhanyan, as well as former Artsakh army commander Levon Mnatsakanyan and former deputy commander David Manukyan.

Justice Minister Steps Down

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian Minister of Justice Grigor Minasyan announced his resignation on October 1.

His decision came after over two dozen lawmakers from the ruling Civil Contract party signed a petition calling for Minasyan’s dismissal.

“Today I also decided to join the petition against my tenure and tendered my resignation to the prime minister,” Minasyan said in a statement.

He thanked all other parliament deputies who “supported” him, his government colleagues and the premier, highlighting the reforms made during his tenure.

Armenian FM Attends Warsaw Security Forum

WARSAW (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan is participating in the Warsaw Security Forum. This is the first time Armenia has been represented at the level of the Foreign Minister.

After the official welcome by the forum’s president, Katajina Pisarskaya, on October 1, Mirzoyan had a meeting with the founder of the forum, the president of the “Kazimir Pulaski” Foundation, Zbigniew Pisarski.

The interlocutors exchanged views on issues of mutual interest, including the possible cooperation between the Warsaw Security Forum and the Yerevan Dialogue International Forum held in September.

World’s Largest Iran Trade Center Opens in Armenia

YEREVAN (news.am) — The first and largest Iranian trade center in the world was opened in Armenia on September 30. Armenian Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan, some other officials, ministers from Iran and Iranian ambassador to Armenia Mehdi Sobhani also participated in the opening of this center.

In his remarks at the event, Sobhani stated that it is a great honor for them to open the world’s largest Iranian trade center in Armenia, and said this proves Iran’s deepest friendship with Armenia.

“I am full of hope that thanks to the Iranian trade center, the economic and trade relations between the two countries will be given a big impetus. The relations between the two countries in trade, economy, transport, and energy domains will create a very serious capital for the peoples of the two countries.

The amount of trade between Iran and Armenia has grown by leaps and bounds; I hope that the opening of this center will



The dignitaries at the opening ceremonies. (Azatutyun photo)

contribute to it even more. We are determined to develop relations in all domains,” stated the Iranian ambassador to Armenia.

“The leaders of the two countries have

set a threshold of \$3 billion for the trade between the two countries, and we must make all our efforts to make it a reality,” Ambassador Sobhani said.

Afeyan Foundation Allocates Funding to Support Families Displaced from Artsakh

YEREVAN — The Afeyan Foundation, an organization building and advancing solutions for a better world, announced on September 24 that it has completed the allocation of its previously announced \$2 million USD commitment to help the more than 100,000 people displaced from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) last year. This financial support follows previous efforts by the Afeyan family to help the people of Artsakh after the forced displacement of the Artsakh population.

“The people of Artsakh have been subject to cruel and unimaginable circumstances for years, and after being forcibly expelled from their homes after undergoing ethnic cleansing are now facing the realities of starting over in an unfamiliar place,” said Noubar and Anna Afeyan, trustees of the Afeyan Foundation. “It will take a large network of public and private support to ensure the people of Artsakh receive the resources and help needed to go from surviving to reviving and ultimately to thriving.”

The Afeyans continued, “We are inspired by the broad group of organizations and individuals working around-the-clock to provide support to the people of Artsakh and are humbled to play a role in ensuring this transition is positive for everyone impacted, including for Armenia as a whole.”

The Afeyan Foundation recently established a grant to UNICEF USA for UNICEF’s work in Armenia centered on the most vulnerable children and adolescents. The program will run for 18 months and focuses on improving access to mental health and psychosocial services, along with social inclusion opportunities, especially in areas where such services are limited. The aim of the program is to empower adolescents and their caregivers with the support systems and networks needed to cope with trauma and stress, reduce stigma, and promote mental wellbeing and social cohesion within their host communities.

In addition, the Afeyan Foundation has committed funding to the following Armenian organizations and programs to support several areas including meeting basic needs, providing medical and psychosocial care, and establishing longer-term educational opportunities.

•AIWA – Supporting the EmpowerPath Program to provide skill training, employ-

ment opportunities, and entrepreneurship support to Artsakhi women.

•AGBU – Programs include extending Camp Nairi; skill-building programs to advance employability for displaced Artsakh populations; winterizing humanitarian and emergency support; and a CIVITTA study of the future of displaced Artsakh people in Armenia.



Anna and Noubar Afeyan

•American University of Armenia / US Embassy – English language education for displaced youth focused on Shirak region.

•Armenia Artsakh Fund – Shipping medications and humanitarian aid for Artsakhi people displaced in Armenia.

•Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation – Programs include providing group and community mental health care services to the displaced Artsakhi population and organizing psycho-social training program for local specialists.

•AYP School – Scholarships for 10 students from Artsakh.

Children for Armenia Foundation (COAF) – Supporting Project Hope for Artsakh, which is focused on early childhood development, school integration, and access to COAF’s SMART center that includes art therapy courses and other resources tailored to refugee populations.

•Teach for Armenia – Implementation of its Education in Emergencies program to help students from Artsakh integrate into new environments. This includes training for educators, after-school activities, mental health, and psychosocial support, and supporting students academically.

•UWC Dilijan – Supporting Artsakhi

students with 2-year scholarships for two eligible students, along with funding for 10 summer camp students.

•Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia (AIFA), an initiative dedicated to building a more vibrant, resilient and prosperous Armenia, will have oversight for the work supported by these grants.

Founded by Noubar and Anna Afeyan in 2000, the Afeyan Foundation believes that the power of imagination and the strength of our communities can create a better world for all. The Foundation designs, builds, and supports innovative organizations and initiatives in the areas of education, science and technology, and humanitarian action. Its programs impact communities around the world including in Armenia and the greater Boston area.

Armenian Lawmaker Sees Lack of Progress in Fresh Talks With Azerbaijan

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later. The Azerbaijani government has repeatedly rejected the idea.

It is not clear whether the United States backs the Armenian proposal. US officials have made no public statements in support of it. In its readout of the New York talks, the US State Department said Blinken “encouraged continued progress by both countries to finalize an agreement as soon as possible.”

“Pashinyan’s proposal has not received support from any side,” Artur Khachatryan, a parliament deputy from the opposition Hayastan alliance, said on Monday.

Baku also makes the signing of a peace deal conditional on a change of Armenia’s constitution which it says contains territorial claims to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s top foreign policy aide, Hikmet Hajiyev, reaffirmed this condition in an interview with Italy’s La Repubblica daily published on Friday.

“We need guarantees [by Armenia,]” Hajiyev said, adding that Armenia’s ongoing “militarization” is another obstacle to peace.

He also said: “The best solution for Armenia would be neutrality, not [membership in] military alliances that threaten Azerbaijan’s security.”



ARMENIA

Armenians Mark 4th Anniversary of Second Karabakh War

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — September 27 marks the third anniversary of the beginning of the Second Karabakh War – the 44-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in the fall of 2020.

The anniversary comes one year after the forced deportation of the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh after Azerbaijan launched another offensive and forced the authorities of Karabakh to accept a ceasefire on Baku’s terms.

In the wee hours of September 27, 2020, the Azerbaijani armed forces launched large-scale hostilities along the entire line of contact and targeted peaceful settlements and civilian infrastructure immediately.

Throughout the six-week war, at least 4000 Armenians, including 88 civilians, were killed, according to official data, and more than ten thousand others were wounded. Nearly 90,000 citizens of Artsakh were displaced, lost their homes and property as a result of the Azerbaijani aggression.

After three unsuccessful attempts at establishing a ceasefire – all of them sabotaged by Azerbaijan – Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Russian and

Azerbaijani Presidents Vladimir Putin and Ilham Aliyev signed a trilateral statement to end the war in Karabakh after almost 45 days. The President of Artsakh, Arayik Harutyunyan, also agreed to end the hostilities. Under the deal, the Armenian side returned all the seven regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, having lost a part of Nagorno-Karabakh proper in hostilities.

Immediately after the ceasefire was declared, approximately 2,000 Russian peacekeepers were deployed along the

Lachin corridor connecting Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as throughout Karabakh proper, for a mandate of at least five years. The warring sides kept control of areas they held within Nagorno-Karabakh at the time of the ceasefire, as well as agreed to open regional communications.

The parties later agreed to release the prisoners of war and civilian captives based on the “all for all” principle, but despite calls for the immediate repatriation by dozens of EU countries and interna-

tional organizations, Azerbaijan prosecuted and tortured the Armenian POWs and imprisoned dozens of them. Today, many Armenians captured during hostilities, as well as former leader of Nagorno-Karabakh are still incarcerated in Azerbaijan.

Since May 2021, Azerbaijan has been constantly violating the ceasefire with Armenia too. As a result of numerous large-scale attacks, dozens of kilometers from the sovereign territory of Armenia have been occupied.

Armenia Wants Azerbaijan to Provide Info about War Victims

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Speaker of the Armenian parliament Alen Simonyan said on October 1 that Azerbaijan should provide information about the victims of Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Simonyan’s comments came after accusations were made by the Prosecutor General of Azerbaijan that Armenia allegedly refuses to provide information about the “4,000 Azerbaijanis who died in the first war” in

Karabakh.

Simonyan said if Azerbaijan demands such information, it should respond in kind to Armenia’s requests, Sputnik Armenia reports.

The official also noted that Armenia’s international partners do not understand why Baku is delaying the signing of a peace treaty with Yerevan.

According to him, foreign colleagues are also interested in the rea-

sons for Baku’s behavior in private conversations. Simonyan emphasized that there are already countries ready to provide a platform for signing, which can be seen as a signal of the need to complete the process.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan continued on September 26 to urge Azerbaijan to sign a partial peace agreement with Armenia despite Baku’s repeated rejections of the idea, RFE/RL’s Armenian service reports.

Former Constitutional Court Head Convicted in ‘Political Trial’

By Shoghik Galstyan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun.am) — A court in Yerevan found Hrayr Tovmasyan, the former chairman of Armenia’s Constitutional Court, guilty of charges rejected by him as politically motivated at the end of his mara-

thon trial on Friday, September 20.

Tovmasyan avoided a prison sentence because of the statute of limitations. However, he will likely be ousted from the court if the guilty verdict is upheld by higher courts.

Tovmasyan was indicted in December

2019 after he and most other Constitutional Court justices rejected Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s demands to resign. Pashinyan accused them of maintaining close ties to Armenia’s former government and impeding his “judicial reforms.” His critics countered that he is only keen

to purge the judiciary in order to cement grip on power.

Pashinyan and his political team eventually succeeded in significantly changing the court’s composition through constitutional amendments controversially passed by the Armenian parliament in 2020. The

The Most Terrible Day

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While the Artsakh Armenians were stuck on the road to Armenia, another item of terrible news was heard about the Haykazov (Berkadzor) fuel depot explosion, where almost as many people died as during the “one day” war that took place just a week earlier.

In those days, fuel was more important than water for the locals, especially since on the “last day” everyone needed at least enough liters to reach Armenia.

On the morning of September 25, 2023, the Artsakh Info Center reported that citizens who want to move to Armenia will be provided with free fuel at the gas station in Stepanakert. There were long queues to get fuel in the areas near the gas station, because it was already clear to everyone that they have to leave their homes. Thus, everyone rushed to the Haykazov fuel depot to get their share of the liters not realizing that it would unwittingly lead to self-immolation for them.

As a result of this tragedy 218 people died, 120 were injured and 22 are considered missing.

“It was a horror movie scene. Half-naked, burned people crying and shouting tried to escape the fire,” tells Aram, who miraculously survived.

“Losing your parent, losing your brothers, losing your husband of 25 days, losing them all at once, losing them in a second? Losing your whole family? No, I haven’t heard of this, not in a movie, not in a fairy tale. In books, the good always wins in the end,” says Berta.

Today there are different conflicting versions of what actually happened there. Some say that they tried to puncture the barrel with a drill to make a tap, some say that an explosion was caused by a cigarette. People who were there say that they heard the sound of a drone. There are also rumors about a possible Azerbaijani terrorist act. Anyway, no investigation can be done. The fate of the missing is not clear.

Samvel is also considered missing, though his wife claims that he is alive. Any DNA test done does not match him. She

also says that on October 7, she received a phone call from his friend Karin from Shushi.

“We turn to the Red Cross, they say that the Armenian government should deal with this issue, but the government does not do anything. On October 7, 2023, my husband’s friend Karen called us from Shushi and told that he is in Shushi with 4 others with leg injuries. We immediately informed the National Security Service, the Red Cross, the police, but until now no one wants to take it seriously,” she says.

On Monday, September 23, the relatives of the missing and captives protested at the UN office in Yerevan, demanding the return of the missing and captives from Baku before COP29.

Thus, Artsakh Armenians live by knocking on all possible doors and waiting to see which will be the door of success. Almost no one talks about their violated rights in Armenia. Moreover, they are rebuked to behave like guests. Along with this exhausting pain, they continue to face a number of socio-psychological and bureaucratic difficulties in Armenia. During this period, 9,100 Artsakh Armenians emigrated (mainly to Russia). Armenia’s governmental social programs will end at the end of this year. The housing program is considered a failure.

It is very cruel to watch online when your houses are destroyed, turned into student dormitories, and you live on rent in someone else’s house.

Today the international community and superpowers talk more about the right of Artsakh Armenians to return to their property than the authorities of Armenia and Artsakh.

“The unjustified military operation by Azerbaijan followed a nine-month blockade of humanitarian goods to the Lachin corridor, in violation of the International Court of Justice provisional measures orders,” US Vice President Kamala Harris (see Vice President Harris Issues Statement on Armenian Independence Day.)

“Canada stands in solidarity with the people affected by this crisis and is grateful to Armenia for opening its doors. That is why, in 2023, we dedicated more than \$3.9 million in humanitarian assistance to address urgent needs stemming from the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh,” Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly (<https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2024/09/statement-by-minister-joly-one-year-after-azerbaijans-military-operation-in-the-nagorno-karabakh-region.html>).

How and when will the violated rights of Artsakh Armenians be restored from the ashes of Haykazov?



Hrayr Tovmasyan (Photo Press Service of the Armenian Parliament)

amendments forced Tovmasyan to quit as court chairman but remain a judge.

His trial continued in the meantime. It accelerated dramatically in recent weeks as a result of what critics see as heightened government pressure on the presiding judge, Tatevik Grigoryan.

In her verdict, Grigoryan backed prosecutors’ accusations that Tovmasyan had unlawfully privatized an office in Yerevan and forced state notaries to rent other premises “de facto” belonging to him when serving as justice minister from 2010-2014.

“This is not a verdict against me but a step taken on the way to removing another stone from the foundation of justice in our country,” Tovmasyan told reporters. “And this judge has been a false judge through and through.”

She knew from the beginning what decision she was going to make,” he said.

The ruling, Tovmasyan claimed, means that “something bad awaits Armenia, in which the Constitutional Court should be involved.”

The trial prosecutors demanded last month a seven-year prison sentence for Tovmasyan. One of them said he will have to leave the Constitutional Court even if he is convicted by the court but avoids imprisonment.



ARMENIA

Memorial to Aurora Mardiganian and the Martyrs of The Armenian Genocide Unveiled in Yerevan

YEREVAN — On September 30, the Memorial to Aurora Mardiganian and the Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide was unveiled in Yerevan, Armenia, in the park area near the Komitas Museum-Institute. The monument was envisioned and brought to life by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. Its unveiling was followed by a special screening of Aurora’s Sunrise, an award-winning animated documentary depicting Mardiganian’s remarkable journey.

Aurora Mardiganian was a young girl who escaped the horrors of the Armenian Genocide, moving to America, where she became a silent-era Hollywood star and a philanthropist. Her story inspired Noubar Afeyan, Vartan Gregorian and Ruben Vardanyan, co-founders of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, who named the initiative in her honor. The memorial also pays tribute to the 1.5 million canonized martyrs who perished during the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923. Soil from Aurora Mardiganian’s resting place in Los Angeles, along with a relic from the victims of the Deir ez-Zor desert brought from Antelias, Lebanon, have been placed beneath this monument.

“As an Armenian, this monument holds profound significance for me. It embodies our gratitude to Aurora Mardiganian and our joy that she has finally returned home,” said musician and theater critic Marine Ales,



Veronika Zonabend, left, and Anna Afeyan, unveil the memorial to Aurora Mardiganian



Sculptor Vighen Avetis

whose guidance and vision as Chair of Aurora’s Creative Council helped bring the memorial to life. “The memorial is also the symbol of our enduring memory and respect. I feel very strongly that we have a responsibility to the next generation to pass on universal human values, especially today, in a time when the world faces great challenges.”

In this two-sided sculpture, created by Italian-Armenian sculptor Vighen Avetis, each side reflects the life of Aurora Mardiganian — her journey through the atrocities of the Genocide and her salvation in the US. The back of the sculpture depicts women suffering along the paths of the Deir ez-Zor desert, with young Aurora among them. On the front, she stands apart as a woman who overcame death and shared her story with the world, becoming a symbol of courage and survival for generations. The two edges of the sculpture are not aligned — the distance between them allows the two stages of Aurora’s life to connect through light and shadow.

“Designing this sculpture has been a daunting yet deeply inspiring challenge, so I am both humbled and honored to present it today,” stated Avetis. “Dedicated to the remarkable Aurora Mardiganian, this monument is a meaningful addition to Yerevan’s humanitarian landscape, standing as a testament to courage, survival, and enduring hope. I am forever grateful to have been part of this inspiring project.”

The unveiling was attended by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate of Western Europe and Representative of the Catholicos of All Armenians in Vatican; Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder and Chair of the Board of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative; Veronika Zonabend, Founding Partner and Chair of the Board of Governors of UWC Dilijan (and wife of Ruben Vardanyan); Anna



Dr. Nouraf Afeyan

Afeyan, Eric Esrailian and Arman Jilavian, Board Members of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative; and representatives from the city of Yerevan and the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports, among other notable guests.

During the presentation, Veronika Zonabend and Anna Afeyan unveiled the memorial, joining Aurora’s call for humanity and gratitude. The event also featured a moving performance by the Little Singers of Armenia Children’s Choir led by Tigran Hekekyan, who captivated the audience with their heartfelt rendition of traditional Armenian songs.

As part of the event, the Chronicles of Aurora, the first manuscript created in the Matenadaran in the 21st century, was made available to the attendees. This special manuscript, dedicated to the history of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, was displayed with its final page featuring an illustration of the newly unveiled Memorial. The Chronicles of Aurora will be showcased at the Komitas Museum-Institute until October 7, 2024.



Abp. Khajag Barsamian



Memorial to Aurora Mardiganian and the Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide



INTERNATIONAL

Senior U.S. Official Visits Armenia, Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun.am) — A senior US State Department official has discussed with Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders their efforts to negotiate an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal during his visits to Yerevan and Baku.

Joshua Huck, the deputy assistant secretary of state for Southern Europe and the Caucasus, met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday, September 20. Pashinyan's press office said they reviewed US-Armenian relations and "discussions on the peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan." The Armenian government's position on opening transport links with Azerbaijan was also on the agenda, the office said in a statement.

Huck was accompanied by Louis Bono, a US special envoy for Armenia-Azerbaijan peace talks. They met with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan on Thursday.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry's readout of the meeting, Mirzoyan "stressed the importance" of Yerevan's proposal to sign an interim peace deal with Baku that would leave out their remaining disagreements. He also mentioned "artifi-



US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Joshua Huck meets Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Yerevan, September 20, 2024 (public domain)

cial obstacles" to such an arrangement repeatedly rejected by the Azerbaijani side.

Baku also makes the signing of a peace deal conditional on a change of Armenia's constitution which it says contains terri-

torial claims to Azerbaijan. Meeting with Huck and Bono on Wednesday, September 18, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov again said that the constitution is "the most serious obstacle" to peace between the two South Caucasus neighbors. Bayramov also reportedly complained about Armenia's "militarization policy."

According to the US Embassy in Baku, Huck discussed with Bayramov and other senior Azerbaijani officials the "importance of achieving a durable and dignified peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia and recent progress made toward this goal."

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev reiterated his precondition for the peace treaty in a phone call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday, September 16. Blinken spoke with Pashinyan by phone on September 12.

"We continue to support the efforts of both countries to reach a durable and dignified peace agreement," the department spokesman, Matthew Miller, told a news briefing later on Monday, September 16. He said Washington is ready to host more Armenian-Azerbaijani talks for that purpose.

Iran-Armenia Trade Rises 6% in 5 Months Yr/yr

TEHRAN (*Tehran Times*) — The value of non-oil trade between Iran and Armenia rose 6 percent in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-August 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) reported.

The IRICA report put the non-oil trade between the two countries at 885,719 tons worth \$192.108 million, with 60 percent growth in weight, year on year.

Armenia was the 10th top trade partner of Iran among the Islamic Republic's neighbors in the first five months of the present year.

The 18th meeting of the Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee was held in Tehran during February 14-15, in which the two sides signed 19 documents and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to enhance cooperation in various areas.

The mentioned documents covered a variety of areas including trade development, customs cooperation, maritime transportation, food, and medicine.

The 18th meeting of the Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee meeting, hosted by Iran's Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), was attended by senior officials and ministers from the two sides including the PBO former Head Davoud Manzour, Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Mher Grigoryan, Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan, Armenia's Deputy Minister of Economy Narek Teryan, and the former Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mehdi Zeighami.

Speaking at the meeting, Mher Grigoryan said Iran and Armenia can increase their annual trade to \$3 billion.

Underlining the significance of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting, Grigoryan said: "Considering the relations and cooperation between the two countries, we can implement the agreed matters with joint efforts and take the necessary steps for ensuring the interests of the people of the two countries."

"Iran is not just a neighboring country for us, but a very important partner and we have to deepen the relations between the two countries," he stressed.

Prior to attending the second day of the Joint Committee meeting, Grigoryan held a meeting with Iranian Late President Ebrahim Raisi, during which Raisi said his government fully supported the agreements reached with Armenia.

"We support the implementation of all agreements made between Tehran and Yerevan, and (implementing these agreements) requires efforts and diligent follow-up of the Joint Economic Committee of the two countries," the president said.

On the sidelines of the meeting, TPO former Head Mehdi Zeighami held a meeting with Narek Teryan to discuss ways of expanding trade relations.

In this meeting, Zeighami said Iran and Armenia could be the gateway to link east to Eurasia by developing their transportation infrastructure at borders.

"Having a common land border, Iran and Armenia can act as a gateway to Eurasia by developing road infrastructure and transit routes," he said.

In another meeting on the sidelines of the event, Armenian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Vahan Kostanyan met with Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari in which he called on Iranian companies to participate in Armenia's road construction and infrastructure projects.

Earlier on February 13, Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan said that Armenia and Iran could soon increase the volumes of the gas for electricity swap deal.

The gas-for-electricity agreement between Armenia and Iran has been extended until 2030 and enables Armenia to import greater volumes of natural gas and export more electricity.

"I believe that in terms of the legal documentation we have implemented the important phase and soon, as required, according to needs and also infrastructures, we will be able to use that opportunity. New power transmission lines are under construction in order to be able to export greater volumes of electricity to Iran. Both sides have the desire to increase the volumes, and the changes will be visible in various stages," Sanosyan told Armenpress.

The minister also spoke about the involvement of Iranian companies in construction projects in Armenia. He said that the bigger the project the harder it is to find contractors.

Also during the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting, the Head of Iran's Food and Drug Administration (IFDA) Heidar Mohammadi voiced the country's readiness to export domestically produced drugs to Armenia.

Iran enjoys self-sufficiency in the production of drugs and pharmaceutical equipment, he said.

For her part, Deputy Minister of Healthcare of Armenia Lena Nanushyan said that Iran has made significant progress in the production of medicines and medical equipment.

Armenia welcomes cooperation with Iran in the field of health tourism, pharmaceutical insurance, and healthcare, the official added.

In early May, the Armenian government announced that it was going to borrow \$254 million from the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to build a 24-kilometer section of a new highway leading to the Iranian border.

The planned 60-kilometer road will be constructed in the southeastern Syunik province bordering Iran. It will connect the provincial towns of Sisian and Kajaran through a much shorter route. This will in turn shorten travel time between the two neighboring countries.

The new Sisian-Kajaran road is to be cut through mountainous terrain, hence, the high cost of its construction.

Work on the road's first, southern section is slated for completion in 2032.

Last October, the government awarded a \$215 million contract to a consortium of two Iranian companies to upgrade a 32-kilometer road stretching from the Armenian-Iranian border to the Kajaran mountain pass, the highest in Armenia. About two-thirds of the road is to be expanded and modernized while the remaining 11 kilometers will be built from scratch over the next three years.

The contract was signed in Yerevan in the presence of Iran's former Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash.

INTERNATIONAL

Homenetmen Valence Players Attacked by Turkish Fans

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Two Armenian football (soccer) players of Homenetmen Valence are in critical condition after Turkish fans attacked them on the field after the first half of the match against FC Turquoise in France, Nouvelles Armenie reported on September 30.

FC Turquoise represents the local Turkish community.

Homenetmen Valence was winning 2:0 when Turkish fans stormed the field and attacked the Armenian players.

Jean-Christophe Buisson, the Deputy Director of France's *Le Figaro* Magazine, commented on the incident, stating: "During a district football match, Turkish supporters, unhappy to see their team, FC Turquoise, trailing 2-0 against the French-Armenian club from Valence (Homenetmen), attacked the Armenian-origin players with knives. This is called a racially motivated attack."

Azerbaijan Names New Ambassador to Russia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Rahman Mustafayev has been appointed Azerbaijan's new ambassador to Russia, replacing Polad Bulbuloglu who was recalled from his position last week.

The relevant decree was signed by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on October 1, local media reported.

Armenia, Ukraine Foreign Ministers Discuss Security

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan on October 1 met with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha during the Warsaw Security Forum.

The two ministers exchanged views on the bilateral agenda and other matters of mutual interest.

They discussed efforts to strengthen the political dialogue and cooperation between the two countries.

The ministers also addressed issues related to regional security.

PACE Debates Deteriorating Human Rights in Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) held current affairs debates on "The deteriorating situation of human rights, rule of law and democracy in Azerbaijan", and on the "Situation in the Middle-East: escalation of violence and mounting humanitarian crisis, particularly in Gaza" at its autumn session held in Strasbourg from September 30 to October 4.

Other highlights include debates on the detention and conviction of Julian Assange and their chilling effects on human rights; on propaganda and freedom of information in Europe; and on the 90th anniversary of the Holodomor.



INTERNATIONAL

Free Upgrades, Campaign Donations and the Bentley Suite: How Eric Adams Allegedly Traveled the World on Turkey’s Dime

ADAMS, from page 1

out, and happily accept, “improper valuable benefits, such as luxury international travel, including from wealthy foreign businesspeople and at least one Turkish government official seeking to gain influence over him.”

Eric Adams charged with bribery and wire fraud as indictment unsealed

“As Adams’ prominence and power grew, his foreign-national benefactors sought to cash in on their corrupt relationships with him, particularly when, in 2021, it became clear that Adams would become New York City’s mayor,” the indictment states.

In one particularly egregious episode, prosecutors say Adams turned the screws on New York City Fire Department officials to approve an occupancy permit for a newly constructed Turkish consular building in Manhattan the FDNY did not believe was safe.

In all, the indictment says Adams received free international flights to France, Sri Lanka, Hungary, China, India, and Turkey, deeply discounted stays at opulent hotels, pricey meals, and other perks worth more than \$100,000. He then “repeatedly took steps to shield his solicitation and acceptance of these benefits from public scrutiny,” omitting the gifts from his required annual financial disclosures, paying “nominal” amounts to make it seem as if he had in fact paid for the freebies, and created “fake paper trails” to obfuscate the truth, according to the indictment.

“Adams deleted messages with others involved in his misconduct, including... assuring a co-conspirator in writing that he ‘always’ deleted her messages,” the indictment states.

Adams is also accused of soliciting illegal campaign contributions using “straw donors,” which allowed him to secretly take in cash from foreign entities, wealthy individuals who had already maxed out their allowable yearly contributions, and corporations prohibited by New York City law from donating money to political candidates. He has denied all the charges against him.

Here’s everything you need to know about Thursday’s historic indictment:

It begins...

Adams was elected Brooklyn Borough

President in 2013, and “[w]ithin a year... began building relationships with foreign nationals who were seeking influence with him,” the indictment states. In August 2015, the Turkish Consulate General in New York arranged for Adams to travel to Turkey, where he set about “establish[ing] corrupt relationships,” according to the indictment. It says the trip was paid for by the Turkish consulate and a “for-profit educational conglomerate based in Istanbul.” A second trip that December was financed

businessman. “The St. Regis Istanbul is owned by the Businesswoman, who sought to ingratiate herself with Adams.” Adams stayed in the hotel’s “Bentley Suite,” for which a normal guest would have paid roughly \$7,000 for two nights, according to the indictment. Adams, however, “paid a total of less than \$600,” it says.

Adams pulled similar stunts in 2018 and 2019, paying only a few hundred dollars for more than \$14,000 worth of airline tickets for himself and his partner, and accepting

By 2018, Adams was starting to fundraise for his 2021 mayoral campaign, and set up a byzantine system under which Turkish business leaders secretly funneled tens of thousands of dollars in contributions to Adams, the indictment says.

“The 2021 Campaign requested, and received, Matching Funds for these straw donations,” according to the indictment. “... All told, the 2021 Campaign reaped over \$10 million in Matching Funds based on the false certifications that the campaign complied with the law, when in fact Eric Adams, the defendant, knowingly and repeatedly relied on illegal contributions.”

Political Favors

Adams was swayed by the Turkish largesse, agreeing to “no longer associate” with a Turkish community center in Brooklyn, with which he had an existing relationship, when the Turkish official Adams knew informed him that the center was “affiliated with a Turkish political movement that was hostile to Turkey’s government,” according to the indictment. If Adams wanted to continue “receiving support from the Turkish government,” the official told him, Adams would have to sever ties.

After Adams won the Democratic mayoral primary in July 2021, he “agreed to pressure a New York City agency to help the Turkish Consulate secure a temporary certificate of occupancy (TCO) for a building it owned and operated,” the indictment states. Adams also helped another Turkish businessman settle an issue he was having with the New York City Department of Buildings, and that same year, according to the indictment, “intervened with the FDNY to permit the Turkish Consulate to occupy a skyscraper that had not passed a fire safety inspection.”

On September 10, 2021, the FDNY commissioner messaged Adams, “Letter being drafted now. Everything should be good to go Monday morning.”

Four minutes later, the indictment explains, Adams messaged his contact inside the Turkish government: “From the commissioner: Letter being drafted now. Everything should be good to go Monday morning.”

The Turkish official replied, “You are Great Eric, we are so happy to hear that. You are a true friend of Turkey.”

It continues...

In 2023 and 2024, Adams continued to solicit and accept straw donations for his 2025 re-election campaign, according to the indictment. One fundraiser at a Manhattan hotel, which the indictment says was intentionally left off of Adams’s public calendar, was billed as a dinner “hosted by ‘International Sustainability Leaders’ with the subject ‘Sustainable Destinations’ and an attendance price of \$5,000,” the indictment states. But, on Adams’s private calendar, the event was listed as a “Fund-raiser for Eric Adams 2025,” with “a goal of ‘25k,’ and the note, ‘Total Submitted before the event: \$22,800.’”

On November 6, 2023, FBI agents seized two of Adams’ cellphones, which were city-issued, according to the indictment. Agents, however, were really after Adams’ personal cell, which he promised to deliver the next day. When Adams later showed up with the device, he claimed he “had forgotten the password... and thus was unable to provide the FBI with a password that would unlock the phone.”

As the investigation into Adams continued, the indictment alleges, so did Adams’ “efforts to frustrate that investigation.”

THE INDICTMENT SAYS ADAMS RECEIVED FREE INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO FRANCE, SRI LANKA, HUNGARY, CHINA, INDIA, AND TURKEY, DEEPLY DISCOUNTED STAYS AT OPULENT HOTELS, PRICEY MEALS, AND OTHER PERKS WORTH MORE THAN \$100,000

by a Turkish official and an unidentified Turkish businessman, both of whom later steered illegal contributions to Adams, according to the indictment.

“For both trips, Adams received free business class tickets on the Turkish Airline,” the indictment states.

The Grift Deepens

In 2016 and 2017, Adams, who was still borough president at the time, took three free or “heavily discounted” trips abroad for himself and his live-in partner, which were paid for by Adams’s Turkish benefactors, according to the indictment. The couple accepted \$15,000 worth of free business class upgrades on an October 2016 jaunt to India, it says. In July and August 2017, Adams received free business class tickets to Nice, Istanbul, Sri Lanka, and Beijing for himself and a staffer, worth more than \$35,000, the indictment states. In October of that year, Adams allegedly accepted more than \$16,000 in free flights from his Turkish paymasters.

During his stay in Istanbul in the summer of 2017, the indictment says Adams, a relative of his, and a political liaison “accepted a heavily discounted stay at the St. Regis Istanbul,” arranged by the Turkish

“free hotel stays, dinners, and a boat trip, among other things... including a free two-night stay in the Cosmopolitan Suite of the St. Regis Istanbul.”

“Had Adams paid for a two-day stay in this luxury suite, the cost would have been approximately \$3,000 total,” the indictment states. “Adams also solicited and accepted... free transportation, meals, and entertainment, including a car and driver, a boat tour to the Princes’ Islands in the Sea of Marmara, a Turkish bath at a seaside hotel, and at least one meal at a high-end restaurant.”

Cooking the Books

Adams “sought to conceal the luxury travel benefits he solicited and accepted from foreign nationals by creating fake paper trails, which members of Adams’s staff assisted in at his direction,” the indictment states.

Not only did Adams have his official scheduler phony up his invoices, prosecutors say he directed the city employee “to perform personal tasks for him, such as collecting rent at a Brooklyn property he owned.” He also had the scheduler pay “various personal expenses for him,” after which he would reimburse the scheduler in cash, according to the indictment.

Azerbaijan Injecting Geopolitical Element into COP29 Climate Conference

COP29, from page 1

Azerbaijani officials portray the initiative in altruistic terms, motivated by a desire to “amplify the voices” of nations that stand to be the hardest hit by global warming and rising ocean levels.

“We will not have an inclusive process [at COP29] if we do not take every measure to ensure participation from front-line communities,” said Azerbaijan’s Ecology Minister Mukhtar Babayev, who is also president-designate of the annual UN environmental conference. “We need these perspectives and experiences to guide our approach and strongly believe in our moral duty to support these nations.”

Some observers see a more cynical purpose in packing COP29 with representatives of small island nations — a desire on Aliyev’s part to get under the skin of French President Emmanuel Macron. The two leaders have been engaged in a tit-for-tat feud for more than a year, revolving around the aftermath of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which end-

ed with Azerbaijan’s decisive defeat of Armenian forces and Baku’s reconquest of the territory.

France has been an unwavering supporter of Armenia amid Yerevan’s efforts to negotiate a lasting peace deal with Azerbaijan, rankling Aliyev. In turn, Aliyev’s administration has antagonized the French leadership, accusing France of “neo-colonial” behavior in the Pacific region. In the late spring of this year, Paris accused Baku of stirring up separatist sentiment in the French Pacific dependency of New Caledonia, after earlier recalling the French envoy to Azerbaijan. The initiative to fund a robust islander presence at COP29 can be seen as an extension of Azerbaijan’s antagonism toward France. Aliyev is on record as saying COP29 will “spotlight” the need to protect island states from the consequences of global warming.

In August, Babayev participated in a meeting hosted by the island nation of Tonga during which participants from 56 countries, including 33 island states,

signed a memorandum “aimed at enhancing climate action” beneficial to signatories. Azerbaijan announced in late September a contribution of \$10 million to the group’s joint efforts to promote “climate resilience, improve disaster preparedness and support sustainable development.”

The recent UN General Assembly session in New York witnessed another round of Franco-Azerbaijani verbal sparring. Macron reiterated strong support for Armenia, saying “the international community must be there to ensure that [Armenia-Azerbaijani] peace negotiations are successful and internationally recognized borders are preserved.” The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry portrayed the French stance on the peace process “unconstructive.” Babayev, meanwhile, touted the environmental cause of small island states during the general assembly.

(The article above originally appeared on the website www.eurasianet.org on September 30.)



Community News

First-Ever Delegation Of Armenian-American Young Leaders from LA to Visit Japan

By Diran Avagyan

BURBANK, Calif. — Under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, a delegation of Armenian-American young leaders will visit Japan as part of the Kakehashi Project, coordinated by the Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE).

The Kakehashi Project, meaning “bridge” in Japanese, aims to connect nations, cultures, and communities through peer-to-peer exchange, promoting mutual trust and understanding. It also deepens participants’ knowledge of Japan’s economy, society, history, diverse culture, politics, and diplomatic relations through networking and collaboration.

This trip was made possible through the cooperation of the Japanese Consulate General of Los Angeles and the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, both of which boast a long-standing, deep bilateral relationship. These two organizations have been instrumental in bridging the Armenian and Japanese communities of Los Angeles through a series of joint cultural and educational events.

There is no doubt that through the Kakehashi Project, the friendship and collaboration between the Armenian



Members of the group with Archbishop Hovnan Derderian

and Japanese people will be elevated to new heights—whether on an individual, community, organizational, or national levels.

Elated by the prospect of the Kakehashi Project and with a sense of deep gratitude, the delegation members held their inaugural in-person meeting on September 9 at the Western Diocese.

This was not only an orientation meeting but also a unique team-building opportunity for the delegation. After icebreaker activities and introductions, participants indulged in traditional Japanese milk buns and other delicacies, while an informative presentation packed with important trip details was shared. The objectives and expected outcomes were discussed in detail, followed by the distribution of roles and responsibilities. Understanding that effective communication is one of the project’s key tools, the delegates also deliberated on marketing and promotional strategies for multimedia platforms.

The Armenian-American young leaders look forward to sharing memorable moments from their trip through reflections, blog posts, photos, and videos via a dedicated Facebook group.



Principal Emerita Houry Boyamian

St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School Will Celebrate 40th Anniversary with Gala

WATERTOWN, Mass. — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School (SSAES) will celebrate its 40th anniversary with a gala on Saturday, November 16, at the Hyatt Regency in Cambridge.

The gala will honor Houry Boyamian, who had presided over the school as principal for 35 years, until her retirement over a year ago. Boyamian led the school from its early days with a handful of students to a well-established educational institution.

SSAES alumni have gone on to a myriad of top colleges, including MIT, Tufts, Dartmouth and Northeastern. SSAES is accredited by the Association of Independent Schools in New England. In addition to a challenging bilingual education, students are exposed to a variety of cultural and social events, culminating with the fifth-grade class trip to Armenia. The trip previously included a visit to Karabakh (Artsakh).

“My 35 years at the helm of SSAES were the most fulfilling and rewarding of my life. Serving the school was not a job — it was a mission. It is with great satisfaction that I have watched our students develop their sense of identity, grow, advance and succeed at SSAES and beyond. Their involvement, active participation and leadership role in the Armenian community, both in the US and Armenia, has been a great source of pride for me. SSAES is a magical place. My wish is to see our community and the community at large cherish and protect this beacon of light and hope for many years to come,” Boyamian said.

The program will feature as keynote speaker Dr. Mary A. Papazian, executive vice president of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. Papazian has been a noted leader of public universities, including serving as former president of San Jose State University, as well as Southern Connecticut State University. In addition, she was the provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Lehman College. She is a scholar of Renaissance and Early Modern Literature.

Guest performer will be powerhouse vocalist Angelina Nazarian, who appeared on the NBC vocal competition program, “The Voice,” in 2023 and is currently a student at the Berklee School of Music.



Keynote speaker Dr. Mary A. Papazian

Armenian National Institute Launches Website Documenting Nagorno-Karabakh Genocide

WASHINGTON — The Armenian National Institute (ANI) recently announced the launch of a new website documenting the unfolding of the genocidal process that resulted in the destruction of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. Housed on the main ANI website, which in over 25 years has become a preeminent authority documenting international affirmation of the World War I era Armenian Genocide, the new site is based entirely on formal records attesting to the genocidal nature of the events that resulted in the complete expulsion of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The new section of the ANI website (<https://www.armenian-genocide.org/nagorno-karabakh.html>) is titled The Ethnic Cleansing and Destruction of Nagorno-Karabakh: The Latest Chapter of the Armenian Genocide.

ANI plans to further expand the posted database as more records are reviewed. The site already contains thousands of pages and photos and more than 370 formal records from official, international, and public entities that observed or reported about the course of events. A wide array of documents are offered ranging from the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to United States, European, and other countries’ legislative and executive documents, human rights organizations’ reports, American universities’ research documentation projects, and other vetted, relevant material.

“The events surrounding the destruction of Nagorno-Karabakh are well documented. Much of the most damning evidence comes from Azeri and Turkish sources, including admissions of genocidal intent before, during, and after September 2023. If there were any reasonable doubts before, today it is clear from their own words and deeds that the perpetrators’ ultimate objective has always been the eventual elimination of the Armenian people, our Christian presence, and culture in Artsakh as a precursor to moving against the current Republic of Armenia. The main pretext for ethnic cleansing against peaceful civilians who were supposed to be protected by Russian peacekeepers is plainly not sustainable,” stated Van Z. Krikorian, chairman of the ANI Board of Governors. “Having achieved their material objectives, genocidal regimes immediately resort to distorting the evidence and manufacturing a denial industry. This site and our ongoing, fact-based, work pre-empt the crude denial efforts to date and the more sophisticated denials and false narratives we expect over time from the authoritarian Aliyev and Erdogan governments.”

With the focus on the final compulsive exodus of the Armenian people in September 2023, the records cover

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see ANI, page 8



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

ANI Launches Website Documenting Nagorno-Karabakh Genocide

ANI, from page 7

widely the consequence of the 44-Day War in 2020 and the succeeding stage by stage complete blockading and threatened starvation of the Armenian population, through the final genocidal ethnic cleansing in September 2023 by Azerbaijan and Turkey and continuing desecration and destruction of historic Armenian churches and Christian presence. It also includes the Columbia University Human Rights and Foreign Terrorist Activities in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) project led by Professor David L. Phillips, which provided primary sources documenting crimes against humanity and other atrocities.

For 33 years, from 1991 to 2023, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, also referred to as the Republic of Artsakh, was a democratic self-governing state. For seventy years prior, from 1921 to 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous district in the USSR. After a millennia of existence as an ethno-geographic region inhabited by

an indigenous Armenian population, in September 2023, Nagorno-Karabakh was entirely depopulated by Azerbaijani and Turkish forces.

“With increasing public attention and reporting on the very late stage of the catastrophic events, the documentation on this website constitutes a strong foundation for understanding how the longer story unfolded,” added ANI Director Dr. Rouben Adalian. “The site is also designed with educators, scholars, and academics for quick access to a collection of reliable sources. The central point of the website is that the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of Artsakh was the latest chapter of the Armenian Genocide, revealing the long arc of overall Turkish-Azeri policies toward Armenians across the past two centuries beginning with the 1890s massacres in the Ottoman Empire.”

Krikorian added: “I take the occasion to thank the academics who helped us with this, and the invaluable Mark Malkasian

for his oversight and structure of the site. The design parallels the documentary facet of the ANI website, which Malkasian, an ANI board member, has long overseen. I take the occasion also to thank the team that worked with the ANI Director over the course of the past year to identify, organize, and post these important records. I want to recognize especially the 2024 summer interns, Shushanik Hayriyan, Lili Mkrtchyan, Nareg Panossian, Mihranush Varzhapetyan, and Sergey Khachatryan, along with former Assistant to the ANI Director Robert Arzoumanian who worked so industriously and conscientiously to assemble this sizable record on the Nagorno-Karabakh genocide.”

The first version of the Nagorno-Karabakh Genocide website is being released in September 2024 to coincide with the one-year anniversary of the forcible depopulation of ethnic Armenians from Artsakh. ANI welcomes constructive comments and suggestions as the site is further expanded.

The Nagorno-Karabakh Genocide website complements the premier Internet resource on the Armenian Genocide that already contains extensive information on the events of 1915 and their consequences, including historic records, an extensive database of affirmation statements from around the world, another database of Armenian Genocide memorials across the continents, freely downloadable exhibits based on authenticated photographic evidence from U.S. archives, an interactive museum component as an introduction to the Armenian Genocide, an entire set of instructional resources for educators to rely upon depending on the needs of their schools and students, as well as an introductory bibliography to the extensive scholarly literature on the subject of human rights and genocide as related to the Armenian Genocide, among many other useful components. The ANI website is also available in Turkish, Arabic, and Spanish, and is constantly expanded as more records are translated.

Harris Expresses Support For Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians’ Right to Return

HARRIS, from page 1

Some social media users expressed appreciation for the statement, with some highlighting that unlike Armenia’s traditional allies, such as Russia, the US had stated ‘a clear position’.

Former State Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh Artak Beglaryan also welcomed the statement, while suggesting that current and former US administrations had failed to support Nagorno-Karabakh.

“Will she correct Trump’s & Biden’s big mistakes if she was a part of it?” he wrote on X.

Others more clearly criticized Harris, including the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), one of the largest and most influential Armenian-American lob-

bying groups.

“As Vice President, Kamala Harris has had a full year to act on Artsakh’s right to return — via a US-led resolution at the UN Security Council — yet she has only started talking (to Armenian Americans, not UN member states) about this right 40 days before an election in which Armenian voters across key swing states may prove decisive,” stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

Hamparian additionally criticized the US administration for arming Azerbaijan in the first place.

“Even at the level of campaign rhetoric, she has not said a word about cutting US military arms and aid to Azerbaijan, or otherwise holding Baku accountable for its

crimes,” said Hamparian, adding that politicians “cannot posture as friends of Armenians while simultaneously refusing to hold Aliyev to account or failing to deter renewed Azerbaijani aggression.”

The only comment from Azerbaijan regarding the letter came from the Western Azerbaijan Community. The organization is the successor to the Azerbaijani Refugee Society, which was founded in 1989 to document the stories of Azerbaijanis displaced from Armenia in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

“Western Azerbaijan” is an irredentist concept used by some in Azerbaijan, including the authorities, to lay claim to the territory of modern-day Armenia.

The group shared a statement, which was

published by state media outlet AZERTAC in both Azerbaijani and English, although it differed in the two languages. In Azerbaijani, specific reference was made to Harris in the opening statement, noting that the US Vice President and presidential candidate “referred to the right of return of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in her address to the American Armenian community.”

In the English document, however, the statement did not mention Harris at all, instead making vague allegations.

Azerbaijani officials have yet to comment on Harris’s letter.

(This article originally appeared on the website oc-media.org on September 25.)

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OBITUARY

Bethel Bilezikian Charkoudian

Descendent of Genocide Survivors

NEWTON, Mass. — Bethel Bilezikian Charkoudian passed away peacefully at her home on September 21, 2024, surrounded by her family. She was 83.

Bethel was known for her creative spirit, dynamic energy and her deep commitment to family, friends and community.

She was tirelessly dedicated to helping people of all walks of life, and was a cherished pillar of the Massachusetts Armenian community. Notably, in working with the Armenian Library Museum of America (ALMA), she conducted countless oral history interviews that will preserve the legacy and stories of Armenian Genocide survivors for generations to come.

Born on October 31, 1940, Bethel proudly embraced being a Halloween baby.

The daughter of the late Peter and Lucille (Jenny) Vartanian Bilezikian, she was a lifelong resident of Newton.

Bethel was an alumna of Newton High School, Radcliffe College and Yale and Columbia Graduate Schools. She served as an English teacher and guidance counselor in Newton and in Boston Public Schools.



She was the beloved wife and life partner to Levon Charkoudian; and loving mother to Nisha, Lorig, Deron and Karoun. Bethel was grandmother to Aline, Raffi, Dylan, Vivian, Josie, Cecile and Jack; great-grandmother to RJ and Lydia; and mother-in-law to Meghan and John. She is also survived by her sister Martha McCool of La Quinta, CA, and her brother James Bilezikian of Jacksonville, FL.

Bethel celebrated her heritage and creative passion for stories and photos on her blog <https://marashgirl.blogspot.com> which we invite you to visit in her memory.

Funeral Services were held at Grace Episcopal Church in Newton on Saturday, September 28. Graveside services took place at Newton Cemetery followed by a Hokeejash (luncheon).

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in Bethel’s memory to the Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), 31 W. Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652 or the Armenia Tree Project, 400 West Cummings Park, Suite 3725, Woburn, MA 01801.

Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home, Watertown.

COMMUNITY NEWS

St. Stephen’s Elementary School Will Celebrate 40th Anniversary with Gala

ANNIVERSARY, from page 7
Mistress of Ceremonies will be Kristina Ayanian, an SSAES alumna and a member of the Forbes 30 under 30 Class of '24. Ayanian is the host of Nasdaq’s “Live From MarketSite,” a weekly listings and

capital markets series where she interviews CEOs and business leaders to discuss company successes, business trends and the latest innovations.
The celebration’s organizing committee is chaired by Nicole Babikian Hajjar, the parent of three SSAES alumni and a longtime supporter of the school. She said, “I am honored to spearhead this event, as it celebrates the school’s mission and honors retiring Principal Boyamian at the same time. SSAES is the only Armenian elementary school left in New England, and *Digin* Houry has dedicated the past 35 years of her life to establishing and growing it. I truly hope the community will join us in celebration and support on November 16.”
SSAES Principal Dr. Garine Palandjian, in an interview with the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* this summer, expressed her



MC Kristina Ayanian



Vocalist Angelina Nazarian



Principal Dr. Garine Palandjian

feelings about SSAES: “The school has a lot to celebrate, and having a moment like the gala gives us the opportunity to just look back and celebrate. The primary thing is to honor Mrs. Houry Boyamian’s retirement, and then considering the 40th anniversary is coming at the same time, it’s a moment to celebrate the school. Kids come to school excited every day and go home eager to tell their families what they have learned that day. And there is nothing more rewarding than hearing that from our parents.”
The gala on November 16 at the Cambridge Hyatt Regency will start with a cocktail reception 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>.
The RSVP deadline is October 28, and various sponsorship opportunities are available, including for businesses.
Checks can be made out to SSAES (Please write “40th Anniversary” on the memo line) and mailed to 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown, MA 02472
To advertise, send business link and high-resolution logo to: 40@ssaes.org
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Tekeyan Cultural Association

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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

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Make check payable to: Tekeyan Cultural Association

Memo: Sponsor a Teacher

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NSA

Your donation is tax deductible.

St John Armenian Church Women’s Guild of Detroit Khunjook 2024

By Karen Torigian Kalajian

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — With grins and giggles, the students of the St. John Armenian Church came out of the church school doors and frolicked into the third annual Khunjook, a picnic tradition that continues to bring the community friendship, laugh-



Mila and Ella Tufenkjian



Members of the Khunjook Committee

ter and joy. The Khunjook has become the kickoff to the beginning of Sunday School, serving as an opportunity for children to reunite and establish bonds to last a lifetime. On September 8, the church grounds were transformed into a festive retreat decorated with colorful balloons, treat stations, games, activities, and fun. Buzzing with

excitement, the kids — and the bees — eagerly dashed from table to table, weaving in and out of the main tent to play, dance, and eat with family and friends while the committee provided something for all parishioners to enjoy. With more than 200 people in attendance, the barbecue grills were cooking

on fire, flipping up fresh hamburgers and roasting hot dogs for all to relish, with countless snacks, goodies, and desserts to satisfy any craving. Our attractions were as popular as ever. Our inflatable bouncy houses were a highlight, as were the freshly made cotton candy, chilled ice cream cart, unique craft station, and raffle. And, as if on cue, laughter played harmony to the sounds of the Nigosian Band, filling the air with our rich and lively traditional Armenian dance music. Committee members loved seeing the youngest members of our Sunday School loosen their grips on their parents’ hands to run hand-in-hand with their newfound Armenian friends. The event was a success, thanks to the efforts of our parishioners, Women’s Guild members, and volunteers who planned and worked to ensure our families would enjoy this delightful day! Thanks go to the numerous committee members and volunteers as well as the



Axsel Ozdamar

many donors: Cindy Amboian, Armen Arslanian, Paulette Apkarian, Renee Apkarian, Christine Atesian, Taleen Baldwin, Brigitte Conti, Marilyn Dadian, Zaven Dadian, Michelle Ducato, Lauren Gershonowicz, Nyree Giragosian, Kathy Haase, Fran Hagopian, Sarah Hagopian, Karen Kalajian, Karen Kazarian, Vanna Kazarian, Lynne Kojamanian, Alexandria Kotlarek, Donna Lafian, Laura Lucassian, Diana Mardigian, Jennifer Morris, Nicole O’Donovan, Laurie Reizian, Suzie Reizian, Jenny Rosenthal, Marie Semarjian, Chuck Semarjian, Christine Sarafian, Jennifer Scappaticci, Karen Shoushanian, Maral Thomas, Brian Thomas and Kathy Torigian.



Nick and Sara Karebian, with their children, Isla and Sevan, with Fr. Aren Jebejian

ST. JAMES ARMENIAN CHURCH

77th Annual

BAZAAR

FRI, OCTOBER 18, 2024

12 – 8 PM

SAT, OCTOBER 19, 2024

11 AM – 7 PM

(KITCHEN OPENS AT 12 PM)

DELICIOUS ARMENIAN FOOD

Shish, Chicken and Losh Kebab | Imam Bayeldi | Eetch Kheyima (available 12-2pm & 4-7pm) | Mezze & More

FABULOUS DELICACIES AND PASTRIES

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ONLINE SILENT AUCTION

Visit [AUCTRIA.EVENTS/STJAMES](https://auctria.events/stjames) to register.

Multiple Items! Artwork, jewelry, services, experiences, and more.

Items will be on display at the Bazaar. Bidding will be online-only.

Online bidding begins at 9 am on Thurs, Oct. 17 and ends at 9 pm on Sun, Oct. 20.

BAZAAR SITE

\$100 RAFFLE

\$5,000, \$1,000, \$750 and three \$500 prizes!

Drawing will take place Saturday, October 19th.

SILENT AUCTION SITE

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Tekeyan Boston Chapter Demonstrates *Khnkali* and *Kebebet* Preparation

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presented a cooking workshop on September 26 at the Baikar Building in Watertown on how to make *kebebet* and *khnkali*, both foods made of dough containing meat, but prepared differently by Middle Eastern and Eastern Armenians respectively. The demonstrations were led by two teams.

Betty Arouyan and Betty Dimitian demonstrated how to make the *kebebet*, while Boston Chapter Co-chair Rita Balyozian and Maral Der Torossian prepared the *khnkali*. Co-chair Dr. Aida Yavshayan also participated, as did other members of the chapter.

After the demonstrations participants were welcome to try their own hand at making these delicacies, after which the samples and others prepared in advance

were eaten together with some other delicacies. This was the second in a series of cooking demonstrations coordinated by Co-chair Balyozian, The first was dedicat-

ed to *gata/kata* and a third is planned soon for another dessert or sweet item.

For more information, follow the chapter's Facebook page.



Chefs Betty Arouyan, at left, and Betty Dimitian demonstrate the *kebebet* preparation process (photo Aram Arkun)



Audience members join the chefs at the demonstration table (photo Jeanine Shememian)



Behind the scenes working in the Baikar kitchen (photo Jeanine Shememian)



From left, TCA Boston Chapter Co-chair Dr. Aida Yavshayan observes as Maral Der Torossian and Co-chair Rita Balyozian, at right, prepare *khnkali* (photo Aram Arkun)

CELEBRATE WITH

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OCTOBER 12, 2024

NEW YORK CITY

Join us for our General Assembly meeting and welcome to incoming AGBU President Sam Simonian

11:00am – 3:00pm | Mandarin Oriental Hotel



Gala Evening Honoring Berge and Vera Setrakian

Featuring entertainment by Samvel Yervanian

Gotham Hall
7:00pm – 12:00am

agbu.org/general-assembly-reserve



Arts & Culture

University of Michigan Hosts Sona Tatoyan for Azad Storytelling Performance

By Caitlyn Marentette and Vicken Mouradian

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — The University of Michigan’s Center for Armenian Studies (CAS) welcomed Los Angeles-based theater actress, screenwriter, and storyteller Sona Tatoyan to deliver the 2024 Annual Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Distinguished Lecture on September 5.

Her lecture, titled “Paradox and Liberation: Bones, Puppets, and Psychedelic Journeys in the Play of Identity,” explored her family’s history from the early 20th century to the present, weaving a narrative of perseverance in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, the Syrian refugee crisis, and her upbringing in the Armenian diaspora. Held at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, the event drew about 80 attendees, including students, faculty, community members and supporters of the center.

On September 7, Tatoyan and her production team presented a multimedia theatrical performance titled Azad. This project combined personal storytelling, Karagöz shadow puppetry, sound effects, dialogue, and Middle Eastern folk music. Tatoyan was joined by Ayhan Hulagu as puppeteer and Harry Kezelian on the oud. Hulagu is a New York-based actor and founder of the U.S. Karagoz Theatre Company, who has brought Turkish theatre to audiences in over 35 states through performances, workshops, and exhibitions, while also serving as a guest artist at universities such as Harvard, MIT, and UC Berkeley.

Kezelian, a third-generation Armenian-American musician from Metro Detroit, specializes in Anatolian Armenian folk music and liturgical singing, performing for over two decades with the Komitas Choir and his band, the Kef Tones. In this sold-out event, the cast skillfully demonstrated how storytelling can be a vehicle for healing and personal transformation.

During her one-week residency at U-M, Tatoyan visited the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, where she was hosted by Director Diana Abouali and Curator of Education Dave Serio. She also participated in two class visits. In Prof. Sosy Mishoyan’s Intermediate Western Armenian language course, Tatoyan discussed the complexities of a mixed Armenian-American identity. She then visited Dr. Renee Randal’s Comparative Literature course, “Trauma and Healing in the Global South,” where discussions centered on evolving theories of trauma, particularly in the context of generational trauma experienced by genocide survivors.

As one of the premier academic centers in the United States committed to the study of Armenian, CAS see STORYTELLING, page 15



A photograph taken by Yousuf Karsh on December 30, 1941, after Winston Churchill addressed the Canadian Parliament (photo Winston Churchill Estate)

Famous Churchill Portrait, Stolen in Canada and Found in Italy

By Ian Austen

OTTAWA (*New York Times*) — For three decades, a fierce-looking Winston Churchill, a hand on his hip, stared down guests in a lounge at the Fairmont Château Laurier hotel in Ottawa.

It was a legacy of Yousuf Karsh, the portrait photographer of royalty, politicians, artists, actors and authors who long lived in the hotel and operated his studio there.

Just over two years ago, however, a maintenance worker noticed something wrong. The frame on the portrait didn’t match those of other photos Karsh had permanently lent the hotel when he and his wife moved out in 1997.

The photo was a decoy, a poor inkjet copy of the print with an ineptly forged signature of Karsh that had been left behind by a thief.

Now, Churchill’s portrait may end up back in its rightful place.

The Ottawa Police Service said on Wednesday that an international investigation had tracked down the stolen photo in Italy and that it would soon send an officer there to retrieve it.

The police disclosed that a man from a small northern Ontario town was arrested in April and charged with the theft and various other crimes, including forgery.

“I thought this would never be recovered,” said Jerry Fielder, the director of Karsh’s estate. “There didn’t seem to be many leads.” (Karsh died in 2002).

The theft, he added, was “really devastating” to Karsh’s widow, Estrellita Karsh, who is 94. She declined, through Fielder, to be interviewed.

“She’s been following all of the progress of the investigation,” Fielder said. “She was just thrilled that it’s now official that it’s coming home.”

The Ottawa hotel told reporters on Wednesday that it would display the portrait again — this time with better security. The area where it hung, along with Karsh’s portraits of Albert Einstein, Georgia O’Keeffe, Pablo Casals and other notables, is closed for renovation.

Fielder, who identified the replacement photo as a forgery, attributed the photograph’s recovery to the persistence of Acting Detective Sgt. Akiva Geller of the Ottawa Police.

“It was complicated because we were dealing internationally,” Fielder said. “Now it’s been solved. I don’t quite know all the answers — and I’m not even sure they do.”

Detective Sergeant Geller, at the news conference, offered few details about the case, citing a trial that is likely to take place. On Thursday the police identified the man arrested and now facing six criminal charges as Jeffrey Iain James Wood, a 43-year-old from Powassan, Ontario.

Exactly when the forgery replaced the genuine print is not known. After soliciting see KARSH, page 16

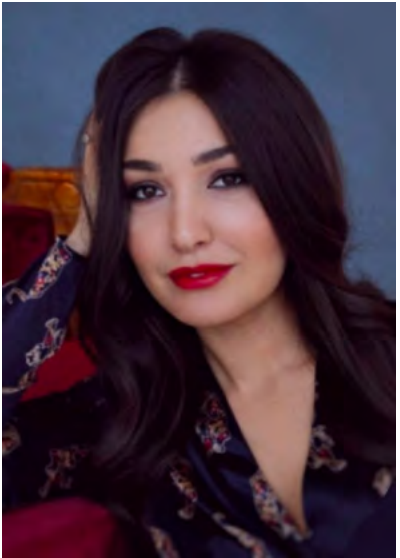
Compelling and Probing ‘Eugene Onegin’ Opera In London

By Erica Jeal

LONDON (*The Guardian*) — Who’s the hotter property in the opera world right now: Ted Huffman the librettist and director of zeitgeisty new works? Or Ted Huffman the director of streamlined, impactful productions of the classics? That second reputation is enhanced by his Royal Opera main stage debut, a new staging of Tchaikovsky’s “Eugene Onegin.”

There’s no real set to speak of in Hyemi Shin’s design, just meters of wide-open stage — a black background, a few chairs, falling snow. The village where country-mouse Tatyana grows up is clothed (by Astrid Klein) in muted pastels; then, at the city ball, penguin-suited sophisticates tango to Tchaikovsky’s polonaise while glowing white chandeliers slowly descend like synchronized jellyfish. That, though, is as fussy as this gets — the focus stays on the compelling performances Huffman has elicited from his cast and the everything-I-know-about-love story they tell.

The relationship drawn in most detail is that of the two sisters. We see more of Olga than usual: as played, vibrantly, by Avery Amereau, she hurls herself at life, clearing a path for Kristina Mkhitarian’s shy Tatyana, and when they are together the bond between them is vividly, beautifully clear. In the letter scene, Tatyana



Kristina Mkhitarian

wakes her up and drags her over to be her scribe; at the end, when Tatyana walks away from the now-repentant Onegin, it’s Auntie Olga who is distracting her two young children.

Occasionally, Huffman goes further than Tchaikovsky in imagining what Pushkin might have written. Here, there’s good reason for Lensky to be suspicious of Onegin and Olga. More controversially, he changes the duel scene in a way that might be either transformative or peripheral, depending on your point of view. It’s undeniably gripping, though. So too is the scene when Onegin rejects Tatyana: her humiliation is no easier to witness for being so clearly mis-spent on the narcissist manspreading next to her.

see OPERA, page 13

Parajanov 100: A Grand Celebration of Sergei Parajanov’s Legacy at Milan’s Bagatti Valsecchi Museum

MILAN, Italy — As part of Armenia’s state jubilee programs, the 100th anniversary of the legendary filmmaker Sergei Parajanov was commemorated in a two-day event at Milan’s prestigious Bagatti Valsecchi Museum. Organized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, the event paid tribute to Parajanov’s lasting influence on global cinema and the arts.

Parajanov, known for his innovative visual style and cinematic genius, left an indelible mark on world cinema. His films, such as “Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors” and “The Color of Pomegranates,” contin-



Karen Avetisyan, Artistic Director of Golden Apricot International Film Festival

ue to inspire with their poetic imagery and visionary narrative techniques. The event was recognized by UNESCO as part of their 2024-2025 Calendar of anniversaries of eminent personalities.

The event included curated screenings, in-depth discussions, a fashion catwalk, and an immersive experience celebrating Parajanov’s artistic contributions.

The celebration opened with the screening of Parajanov’s “Hakob Hovnatanyan” (1967), a poetic documentary exploring the work of the 19th-century Armenian painter,



Guests viewing exhibits (above, right)

as well as the new “Triptych” (2024) video collage. The collage combines scenes from Parajanov’s short films “Kiev Frescoes,” “Hakob Hovnatanyan,” and “Arabesques on the Pirosmeni Themes,” offering an evocative reflection on memory, culture, and art.

The screenings were accompanied by a lecture from Karen Avetisyan, Artistic Director of the Golden Apricot International Film Festival (GAIFF), who discussed Parajanov’s cinematic legacy and his influence on modern storytelling.

The grand finale of the event was an immersive show that brought Parajanov’s art and collages to life. Through cutting-edge projections and interactive elements, the audience was transported into the surreal and dreamlike world of Parajanov’s visual creations. The show provided a powerful conclusion to a celebration that fused art, film, fashion, and music.



Some of the exhibits

Compelling and Probing ‘Eugene Onegin’ Opera in London

OPERA, from page 12

The absence of set, however, means no surfaces to bounce the sound into the auditorium, and when the singers are further back the orchestra tends to be at an advantage. But some of the key passages are sung right up next to the proscenium, which allows for some daringly quiet singing from Mkhitarian’s gleaming, expressive Tatyana and Liparit Avetisyan’s forthright yet nuanced Lensky, the two standout performers in a strong cast. Gordon Bintner’s supple yet hard-edged baritone captures Onegin’s destructive self-importance. There are memorable cameos from Brindley Sherratt, a luxury late stand-in as Gremin, and Rhonda Browne as a comforting Filipyevna, and the chorus is on excellent form. Only Christophe Mortagne’s Triquet, here a slightly sinister outsider figure, feels at all artificial. The orchestra plays warmly and robustly for the conductor Henrik Nánási. It’s not quite as polished and detailed as what’s happening on stage, but that would be a lot to ask.

At the Royal Opera House, London until October 14.



Liparit Avetisyan

Books

Lory Bedikian Grapples with Loss in *Jagadakeer: Apology to the Body*

By Arpi Sarafian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The persona in Lory Bedikian’s recently published collection of poems, *Jagadakeer: Apology to the Body* (University of Nebraska Press, 2024), is angry at the world that “has/the nerve to move us from room to room, so far from where we started.” The poems are intense expressions of the longing of the father and the mother for the old country. The trauma of the displacements, the disruptions to their lives caused by wars, and the ache of “each scar/you brought across the Atlantic,” are vividly imagined and recreated. Going back to the “once upon a time” seems to be the only way out of the “hell” of their “new world” but, as the persona well knows, “the search for the beginning is endless.” Things will not improve. Why then does Bedikian, daughter of immigrant parents herself, try to rebuild a story that cannot be rebuilt?

Acknowledging loss is not easy, yet the speaker in the poems expresses her loss unflinchingly, making no attempt to appear not to be angry. The anger, however, is not conveyed with the hopelessness the epigraph — “even with dry sticks I can’t get started/even with thorns”— from poet Adrienne Rich’s “Phenomenology of Anger” might suggest. In fact, *Jagadakeer*’s affirmation of sorrow and loss as essential ingredients of life awakens the reader to the relevance of pain to her own life and gives her the strength to confront the world — albeit one of sorrow and “bad news again.” “Show me one death that is a complete sentence” resonates with us all. Bedikian’s brilliant compositions evidence the daughter has survived.

In “When Your Mother Dies During a Pandemic” Bedikian writes: “There’s nothing sweet about loss./You embrace no one. The measurement of six feet/is your longitude and latitude and your mother/will soon be side-by-side with your dead father.” Indeed, by the time one gets to “In Lieu of an Epilogue,” part four of the five-part

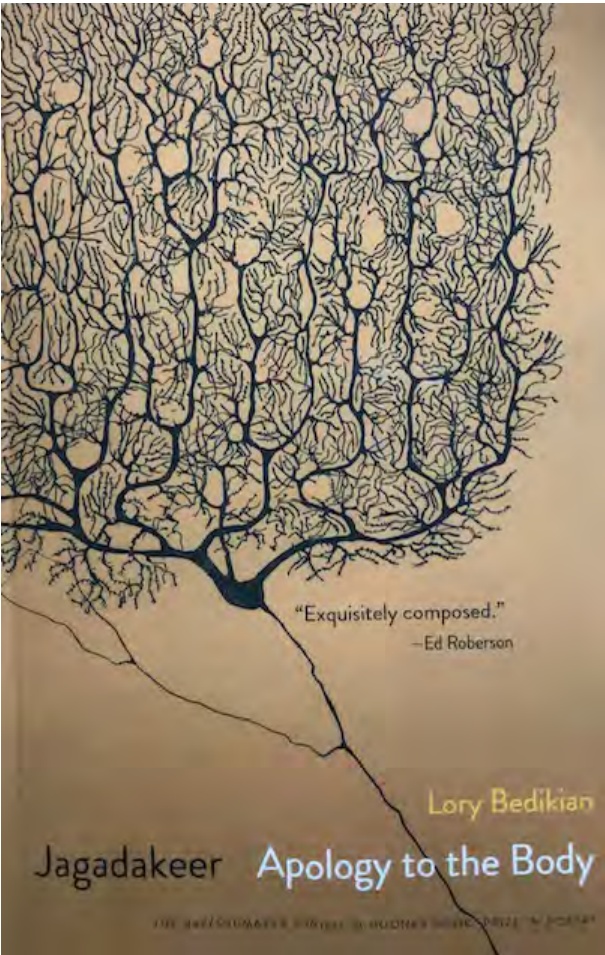
testimony comprising the collection, one has felt the scars forming from moving across the Atlantic. Mother’s Aleppo cannot be saved.

Nonetheless, rather than elicit hatred for this new world, that has “the nerve/to want to make things better,” the poems help the reader come face-to-face with its realities. Bedikian’s insights into the beauty of the old — the grandmother’s “a happy heart, the best medicine” — and the “hell” of the new — the woman rushed to the emergency room would have died “had she not signed/the paperwork” — expose the irony of “there’s nothing wrong, just leave/ the past alone and you’ll be fine,” the mother mumbles as she cooks to survive in the one-room apartment they find in New York. The poems enlighten us about the meaning of “home.” Perhaps home is hearing the mother’s incessant “moan, the music of the old country.” Home is certainly more than the signing of paperwork and the hospital beds of the new world. It is more than “the oxygen tank and the antibiotics filling the mother’s lungs.”

“Perhaps that’s bitterness, mean/as hell,” to borrow the speaker’s words. Yet, *Jagadakeer* is not about, “What’s the point./It will all be over soon enough.” The persona starts to dream of sun and light again. She even contemplates a new set of MRI pictures that will show “a landslide/of healing.” But the poem that opens the collection, “Ode to Their Leaving,” has set the tone. Khalil Gibran’s inevitable “darkness” remains in the world of *Jagadakeer*. And it is not for lack of trying to find a balm for the body’s lesions either. As they debate their next backgammon move in a roadside cafe, in “Father dreams of Gibran,” Gibran tells the father “they are brothers . . . there is no other way of being.”

Bedikian is marvelously sensitive to the nuances of language. Her meditation on the word “dead” is worth quoting at length:

They didn’t even use
that word



when your father died, instead they told your brother
expired

like a driver’s license, a parking meter, machines
maybe
but not

your father. *Expired* is not good enough to say
what’s done
when he

is done, passed, passed away, no, nothing is adequate
sound-wise

so *dead* must have been coined for its monosyllabic
mean, quick

consonant *d*-sound to consonant d-sound

The Armenian *mehrav*, which means he/she/it died, is almost beautiful, “softer than dead,” she writes. *Mehran*, they died, “sounds like a lovely name of one you met long ago and could/ never/forget,” the poet adds whimsically. The collection also makes one wonder if the word *Jagadakeer*, Armenian for fate, gives the poems a darker coloring. For it is true that when things turn sour, we curse our fate, but seldom invoke destiny when good fortune comes our way. Bedikian’s word choices and her unconventional verse patterns — the line breaks, varying line lengths and the fragments of the poems — create tensions and ambiguities that make the reader pause and think.

The daughter tries to rebuild *Baba*’s story, perhaps because a truthful recreation of the day the mother and father left Lebanon behind — “the passport the husband opens and closes over and over again” — and the “unbelievable days” father and mother died and left the daughter to “watch the world cry itself to sleep” is a way out of the “black hole” that was “home” for father. In “Meditation on Fractured Vertebrae” Bedikian writes:

Hard to believe blessings flow, when you’ve come
so far
from orphaned tenements. The nurses hoist you

in a wheelchair, feed you food coarse as gravel. Hard
to believe so many relatives have gone

from the earth, through the mouth of war, by the
claws
of illness. Unfair.

Whoever said it would be fair?

Jagadakeer: Apology to the Body won the 2023 Raz/Shumaker Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry. Lory’s first collection of poems, the 2011 *The Book of Lamenting*, is the winner of the prestigious Philip Levine Prize for Poetry.

18th Century Armenian Hmayil/Prayer Scroll Translation Published

NEW YORK— Tarkmanean Press recently announced the release of *An Early-Eighteenth-Century Hmayil (Armenian Prayer Scroll): Introduction, Facsimile, Transcription and Annotated Translation* by Matthew J. Sarkisian, edited and with a foreword by Jesse S. Arlen.

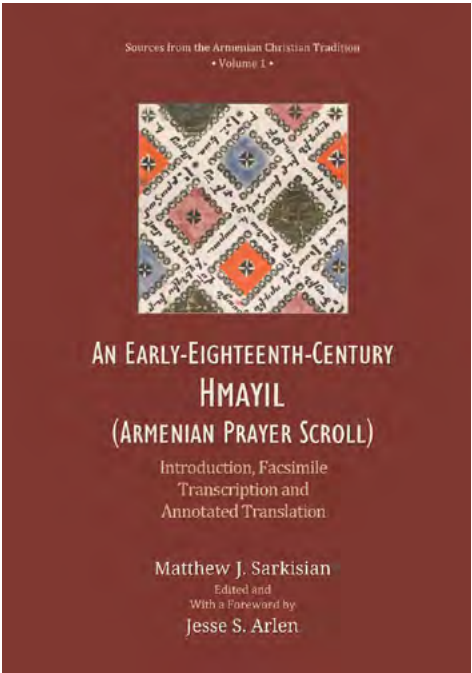
The volume is part of the Sources from the Armenian Christian Tradition series, which presents bilingual editions of classical Armenian texts with annotated English translations, making them available to a wide audience. Originally released online in a digital format in 2022, this slightly revised edition now makes the volume available in print with full color illustrations, in both hardcover and paperback formats. Also part of the same series is *Odes of Saint Nersess the Graceful: Annotated Translation*, which presents the Armenian text and an English translation of 60 of St. Nersess’s liturgical odes (*tagh*), 58 of which have never been previously translated into English.

A *hmayil* is a handwritten or printed scroll contain-

ing prayers, supplications, Psalms, Gospel passages, hymns, and incantations. These scrolls, often richly illustrated, were a popular medium used for protection against maladies and other evils during the ear-

ly modern period and were often carried or worn like a talisman. In this volume, Matthew J. Sarkisian and editor Jesse S. Arlen provide the Armenian text and an English translation of one such scroll printed in Constantinople in 1727, Library of Congress Armenian Prayer Scroll no. 1. Together with facsimile images of the *hmayil*, this volume offers the reader an experience similar to unrolling and reading the original scroll. The translation is accompanied by an introduction, extensive annotation, and appendices, which bring to light the Scriptural and theological background as well as the folk and traditional characteristics of the *hmayil*’s texts and illustrations, making this fascinating artifact accessible to the general reader in the twenty-first century.

The publication of this volume was supported by a grant from Souren A. Israelyan.





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



CAFÉ CAT: Linda Peek's Quick Olive Bread

Linda Peek, who has prepared meals for politicians, rock stars, dignitaries and royalty in her role as a diplomat's wife, is sharing her stories and recipes back home through her popular Canberra, Australia food blog. There are not many bloggers who can list "Diplomat's Spouse" as a previous career. Born in the United Kingdom, Linda was working in Switzerland when she met her husband Matthew, a member of the Australian Diplomatic Service. "We've been very fortunate to live on five continents with exciting assignments and postings to Tel Aviv, Kuala Lumpur, Pretoria, Santiago, Paris and Copenhagen, with home postings to Canberra in between."

While living in Chile, she was Food Editor for an English newspaper, writing a popular weekly column called "The Good Life." She was a member of the Circle of Gastronomic Writers of Chile and a food judge. She runs her own business, which handles imports and exports of food ingredients. Since 2011 she has been writing about food in her weekly blog Café Cat.

"Some of my recipes have been in my family for generations, others were passed on to me by close friends, writers and chefs around the world. Over the years, many recipes have been adapted to make them healthier or to update their ingredients and presentation. Diplomacy involves a lot of entertaining and socializing. With several events to plan and host each week, from small dinners to large receptions, being an ambassador's wife is a bit like managing a restaurant. I've served my recipes to royalty, PMs and other VIPs, and there have been no complaints."

"This is an adaptation of an Irish Soda Bread recipe. It can be made in the time it takes the oven to heat up. Indeed you can whip this up between morning coffee and Sunday brunch. I often serve it with homemade gravlax and some pickled vegetables (see below), and it is delicious. Spread the bread with butter, cream cheese, or mayonnaise, before topping with the gravlax or smoked salmon."

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice or vinegar
1 1/2 cups plain yogurt
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
1 cup sliced olives (black or green or a mix)
1-2 teaspoons salt, to taste
1 tablespoon each sunflower seeds and pepitas (hull-free pumpkin seeds), chia seeds, pine nuts or sesame seeds, if desired

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350°F and line a baking tray with parchment paper.

Mix all the ingredients together, except the seeds, in a mixing bowl. Mix until all the dry bits have been incorporated. With floured hands, form into a ball and place on the baking tray. Use hands to shape into a low flattish round as shown in photo. Sprinkle with the seeds and pat them on.

Bake for 45 minutes or until evenly browned. Cool and then serve immediately. Any leftovers can be served next day, toasted.

Makes 1 loaf

Serves 12

Variation: Use chopped sun dried tomatoes instead of olives or some of each

Linda's Japanese pickled vegetables: Cut vegetables into two-bite pieces and pack into a clean large jar or 2-3 smaller ones: cauliflower florets, red capsicum (pepper) strips, cucumber sticks, carrot sticks, chunks of fennel etc. Heat one cup each of sugar, water and cider or white wine vinegar in a saucepan. Stir to dissolve the sugar, then bring to the boil and pour over the vegetables. If desired, add one or two whole red chilies, then cover with the lid. If you don't have enough liquid to cover the vegetables, make a bit more, using equal quantities of sugar, water and vinegar. Keep for a few days before using. Store in the refrigerator.

Linda recently published her first book: *Malta: A Childhood Under Siege*. It's the story of her mother, Margaret, who grew up in Malta during World War II when the family was posted there with the British Army. It's a story of survival. That tiny island was the most bombed place on earth during World War II and the book, which has been described as "gripping, endearing, moving and enlightening" was successfully launched earlier this year in Australia and Malta.

"Take this lovely, haunting story of war and family as a nudge to preserve the story of your own family, before it disappears into the ether." — Remar Sutton, Former *Washington Post* syndicated columnist and author



For more information go to: <https://woodlandspublishing.au/malta-a-childhood-under-siege/>

To order online, go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Malta-Childhood-Under-Siege-Linda/dp/0645876100/> or ask your local bookstore to order it for you.

For more recipes, go to: <https://cafecat.com.au/>

For Linda's delicious recipe for Apricot Jam with Dried Apricots, see: <https://cafecat.com.au/>

To subscribe and receive a new recipe from Linda by e-mail every Wednesday, go to: <https://cafecat.com.au/subscribe/>

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University of Michigan Hosts Sona Tatoyan for Azad Storytelling Performance

STORYTELLING, from page 12

aims to foster dialogue that engages and shapes intellectual discourse in Armenian Studies. Each year, CAS hosts lectures, workshops, conferences, and events that create opportunities for students, faculty, and community members at U-M and beyond. CAS and its programming are completely funded by a generous pool of donors, including the Haidostian family who support the Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Distinguished lectureship. The outcomes of Tatoyan's residency in Ann Arbor were highly successful, featuring a unique lecture and theatrical performance that brought together the local Armenian community while also creating a space to educate those unfamiliar with the multifaceted nature of Armenian culture.



Harry Kezelian plays the oud.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CANADA

OCTOBER 5 — Banquet of Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada and *Abaka* newspaper at the Tekeyan Center in Montreal with musical program, Saturday 7:30 p.m., ticket \$75 Canadian, call 514 747-6680. See ad page 10.

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

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

OCTOBER 20 — “Armenian Vistas: Diasporic Perspectives and Legacies” Concert at Armenian Cultural Foundation, co-sponsored by the Amaras Art Alliance, the Armenian International Women’s Association. Works for Cello and Piano by Armenian Composers Komitas, A. Babajanyan, A. Hovhaness, E. Melik-Aslanian, S. Elmas, D. Goolkasian Rahbee in Tribute to composer Dianne Goolkasian Rahbee. Alessandra Pompili, piano; Christina Gullans, cello. Sunday, 4 p.m. Free and open to all. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street, Arlington.

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

OCTOBER 25-27 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Church Consecration by His Grace Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan. On Friday, October 25, at 5 p.m. Trnpatsek (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

Gyozalyan, 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 7 — Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Boston Child Care Committee presents a special evening with joy and laughter at the Wellesley Country Club in Wellesley, MA featuring comedian Kev Orkian to benefit Khoren & Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan. For more info and RSVP visit: <https://amaa.org/bostonchildcare2024/>

NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School will celebrate with a 40th Anniversary Gala. Saturday, 6.30 p.m., Hyatt Regency Cambridge. Details to follow.

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

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

December 15 — Yerevan Chorale & Orchestra Christmas Concert, Sunday, 7 pm, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge, MA. Featuring soprano Tatev Baroyan, soloist of Metropolitan Opera and City Opera of New York, winner of numerous international voice competitions; and Rev. Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian, tenor. Details to follow.

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.

Famous Churchill Portrait, Stolen in Canada and Found in Italy

KARSH, from page 12
snapshots from the public, the hotel narrowed down the disappearance to between Dec. 25, 2021, and Jan. 6, 2022. Pandemic restrictions at the time meant that guests were scarce in the hotel.

A photograph of the forgery taken by a *New York Times* reporter in April 2022 — four months before the theft was discovered and while the reporter was on a different assignment — shows that it was dangling from a piece of cord on a crooked wall hook.

Fielder said that the actual print and its frame had been secured to the wall using a hidden locking mount that would have made it difficult to remove.

The genuine 20-by-24 inch, gold-toned print was sold in an online auction in May 2022 by Sotheby’s in London for 5,292 British pounds, or about \$6,900.

Sotheby’s declined to comment. But Detective Sergeant Geller said that because the theft had yet to be reported, neither the auction house nor the buyer, who lives in Genoa, Italy, had any reason to know that it has been stolen.

He added that the cooperation of Sotheby’s and the buyer had been important to solving the theft, as were efforts by the police in Britain and Italy. The

buyer, he said, had received a refund.

The photograph, which came to be known as “Roaring Lion,” transformed Karsh from a local portraitist into an internationally known photographer of the famous. It was widely reproduced and appears today on Britain’s five-pound bank notes. Visitors to the Karsh studio in the hotel, which was closed in 1992, were greeted by an oversize print of the Churchill portrait.

In 1941, William Lyon Mackenzie King, the Canadian prime minister, asked Karsh to photograph Churchill after he spoke to Canada’s Parliament.

Both nations were embroiled in World War II, and the speech took place weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor also brought the United States, which Churchill visited on the same trip, into battle.

Karsh wrote that Churchill would not get rid of his cigar for the photo despite offers of an ashtray. So “without premeditation,” he plucked it out of the British leader’s mouth.

The unintended result was the defiant expression that came to symbolize Britain’s resistance against Nazi Germany.

“By the time I got back to my camera, he looked so belligerent he could have devoured me,” Karsh wrote. “It was at that instant that I took the photograph.”



In its original location in Ottawa (Photo Ian Austen/*The New York Times*)



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



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Small Modular Reactors: A Geopolitical Dilemma for Armenia's Energy Future

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

Among the important political priorities of the Biden administration is the creation of a carbon-free electricity sector by 2035. To accomplish this objective, the US authorities are considering nuclear energy, which accounted for 19% of the country's total energy production in 2023.

Nevertheless, the construction of new reactors is a costly and time-consuming endeavor, prompting the United States to look for alternatives. One such option, now actively supported and promoted by the US authorities, are the so-called Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). Currently, only Russia and China have successfully built SMRs. Thus, given the fact that the only operating SMRs are located in the countries that the US deems as its geopolitical rivals, it becomes increasingly vital for the US to build its first SMR, even though, according to experts, these power plants will not reach their commercial stage until 2030s.

Taking into account the high priority of the issue, the idea of SMRs is widely promoted in the US, particularly by the US Department of Energy. According to the Office of Nuclear Energy of the US Department of Energy, SMRs are expected to feature simpler designs, shorter construction timelines, and lower deployment costs. Typically, SMRs can generate between several dozen to 300 megawatts of power. According to the department, SMRs offer a number of advantages: they are smaller in size and can occupy a small area compared to large nuclear power plants and require less investment. In addition, SMRs offer enhanced security benefits. For this reason, the Department has provided significant support to the emerging SMRs that are undergoing licensing review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and are likely to be operational by the late 2020s to early 2030s.

As the energy sector evolves, the need and demand for cleaner and cheaper energy solutions are increasing. That is the reason why SMRs have become such a popular topic of discussion. In spite of the fact that SMR proponents claim that these technologies can play a revolutionary role in the field of nuclear energy, becoming a safer alternative to traditional reactors, deeper research by some analysts offers a less positive picture fraught with economic, safety and other challenges.

Probably the most important challenge is the economic challenge. SMRs are promoted as being more economical than large reactors. However, the research shows that smaller reactors will in general produce more expensive electricity than larger reactors. The price factor has played a decisive role in canceling two US SMR projects- "NuScale Power" and "Generation mPower." The "NuScale" project, which planned to build a 460-megawatt, 6-unit SMR in Idaho, was estimated at more than \$20,000 per kilowatt. This figure is significantly higher than the cost of "Vogtle" large reactor design, which costs around \$15,000 per kilowatt, much cheaper than the smaller reactor design. For the other project, "Generation mPower", the joint venture companies spent more than \$375 million in addition to a \$111 million contribution from the US Department of Energy, which is a significant investment but did not result in any SMR built.

It is also assumed that generating less electricity will bring less revenue and construction costs will be much more expensive. Thus, due to their unprofitability, SMRs are shut down even before they are operational and don't enter the commercial phase.

It is no coincidence that almost all of the more than 70 initiatives under development around the world are still in the design phase.

Apart from the economic considerations there are also issues in terms of safety and radioactive waste. SMRs are promoted as a safer option than large reactors, but smaller size does not mean higher resistance towards natural disasters and they are as vulnerable to them as today's large nuclear power plants. Also, the amount of radioactive waste is not going to experience serious changes, as small reactors will produce just as many highly radioactive isotopes as large reactors per unit of heat generated.

Both projects for the construction of SMRs in the United States originally envisaged different costs and assumed the sale of electricity to consumers at a more affordable price, but in the end the initial costs of building the reactors doubled, making it a very expensive source of electricity. Now the US administration is promoting the idea of building SMRs in Armenia. However, taking into account the fact that the plans for the construction of SMRs in the USA have not been successful, despite the significant support of the US government, the issue of the construction of SMRs in Armenia should become a subject of serious discussion.

Recently the prime minister of Armenia confirmed that they have made a strategic decision that Armenia should possess SMR. The PM mentioned in his speech that Armenia has received several offers from different countries. But apparently Armenian authorities are more inclined to work with the US on this issue based largely on geopolitical considerations. This might be a way to build closer relations with the West and diversify the energy sector thus reducing Armenia's energy dependence on Russia.

However, it is also important to highlight that the US was not the first to offer Armenia to build an SMR. Such a proposal was also made by Russia, but the Armenian experts conducted research and concluded that Armenia should abstain from building an SMR instead of the nuclear power plant as Armenia needs a powerful one. Today, Metsamor nuclear power plant also acts as a shield for Armenia since no state, including Azerbaijan, is going to attack Armenia. It is no coincidence that Turkey and Azerbaijan spend a lot of money in an effort to shut down the Armenian power plant sooner than it is promulgated. Having a powerful power plant is also geopolitically important for Armenia as a restraining mechanism from aggression.

The Armenian prime minister's speech makes it apparent that Armenia's decision to build an SMR is also a concession to Turkey's and Azerbaijan's demands to shut down Metsamor nuclear power plant. According to him the new SMR should "not in any way be assessed as a threat to the neighboring countries" (obviously implying Azerbaijan and Turkey).

In this regard the top priority should be the security and the well-being of Armenia and not the demands of the rival and unfriendly countries. Thus, before making such an important decision Armenian authorities should weigh all the factors and possible geopolitical consequences making Armenia's security number one priority in this issue.

(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.)

Recent Mineral Treatment Advances in Armenia: Ensuring Future Progress

By Vicken Aprahamian & Lori Manoukian

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

Setting the Stage

Armenia's involvement with mining dates back thousands of years. By 5000 B.C., the region's inhabitants had discovered copper, marking one of the earliest uses of metal in human history. This early engagement with mining laid the groundwork for technological advancements. The development of metal for cutting tools followed the advancement of metallurgy and the discovery of bronze around 3000 B.C. This progression from early copper use to bronze metallurgy played an important

role in shaping Armenia's historical and economic development.

Modern mining in Armenia began at the onset of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, in the early 1800s, with the extraction of copper minerals in the Lori and Syunik provinces. A French-owned company significantly expanded the mining activity, eventually establishing a local copper smelter that supplied copper metal to Tsarist Russia in the lead-up to World War I. By the late 1940s, molybdenum, a metal used to enhance the strength and durability of steel alloys, became increasingly important as a by-product of the copper mines. Gold mining began in the 1950s

with the Sotk mine establishment. These developments, along with the installation of a copper smelter in the 1960s, significantly contributed to the Soviet economy at the height of its industrial era.

During the mid-1900s, amid conventional metal mining, the quarrying of non-metallic minerals like basalt, salt and perlite was ramped up to meet growing demand. Mining contributes to the country's economy (3.8% of GDP, 50% of exports), creates jobs (up to 11,000), maintains communities, and helps populate distant regions such as Syunik province. Currently, Armenia has six active, see MINERALS, page 18



COMMENTARY

Recent Mineral Treatment Advances in Armenia: Ensuring Future Progress

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medium to large metal mines – Akhtala, Agarak, Kajaran, Teghout, Shahumyan and Sotk. The Kajaran mine, operated by Zangezur Copper Molybdenum Combine (ZCMC), is the largest, with a capacity to treat 22.5 Mt of ore per year, producing copper and molybdenum concentrate. Armenia's abundant copper and molybdenum reserves ensure production well into the next century. This historical evolution from ancient metallurgy to modern mining underscores Armenia's enduring connection with metal resources and its growing role in the global mining industry.

This article does not aim to debate the complexities of mining, including its necessity, environmental and social impacts, governance gaps or legacy site management. Instead, it reviews how some recent mineral processing challenges have been addressed and provides an overview of important areas of mineral treatment research in Armenia. The focus is on highlighting and celebrating these achievements. This article makes suggestions for enhancing positive visibility of mining and mineral science professions, while maintaining a forward-looking momentum in this field.

Recent Novel Processes and a Selection of Advances in Minerals Research

Armenia experienced several disruptive events beginning with the 1988 earthquake, followed by the Soviet Union breakup, and subsequent conflict in the 1990s. The 1988 earthquake damaged or destroyed over 150 major industrial facilities, including the Metsamor nuclear power plant, which provided 30% of the country's electricity and was forced to shut down. These immense changes complicated governance and ultimately led to the emigration of mining specialists.

Despite these challenges, around the year 2000, the Armenian mining industry began to regain its footing. This resurgence included efforts to introduce new technologies for mineral processing. The first major advancement was the technological upgrade at the Pure Iron plant, then operated by Germany's Cronimet. In the late 1990s, the facility shifted from iron processing to molybdenum concentrate transformation, producing molybdenum, ferro-molybdenum and ammonium perrhenate, a rhenium salt. The installation of roasters and a hydro-metallurgical circuit eliminated the need to ship molybdenum concentrates to foreign facilities. This value addition through refined molybdenum production and its by-products increased company earnings, eliminated the need for low-value concentrate shipments and created local jobs.

In 2011, Geoprom selected the Albion process system for implementation at the Ararat gold recovery plant. This state-of-the-art technology, offered by Glencore of Canada, features fine grinding equipment capable of breaking down gold bearing sulphide minerals before cyanidation. The process extended the life of the Sotk mine and enabled exceptional gold recovery, achieving a 95% yield from leftover sulphide minerals that only yielded 20% through direct cyanidation.

In 2016, Lydian International, a Canadian company, decided to proceed with mining the Amulsar deposit, to recover gold and silver from low-grade oxide mineral despite a pushback from environmental activists. The selected process, known as heap leaching, is widely used and proven technique globally, though this is the first operation of its kind in Armenia. After many delays, the operation is scheduled to begin in 2025.

The abovementioned three new industrial facilities are likely equipped with pollution abatement equipment that adhere to best practices. Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) principles are increasingly being enforced across the industry, and companies that do not strive for improvement may face sanctions. At the time of writing this article, the authors could not fully verify this information.

On the research and development front, particularly regarding the final transformation of concentrates or low-grade mineral facilities, several examples highlight progress. The National Polytechnic University of Armenia (NPUA) Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Chemical Technology, Armenia's sole institution specializing in mining and metallurgy, has made notable contributions. It played a key role in advancing the process development

at the brownfield Pure Iron Plant, including the implementation of pyro- and hydro-metallurgical steps in the processing circuit.

Another notable area of research by NPUA was the mechano-chemical activation of slag wastes, copper and chromium concentrates, followed by a metallothermic step to produce refined metals. Mechano-chemistry gained prominence in the 1990s as a method to accelerate mineral treatment, with several European institutes conducting experiments. This technique has also found applications in other fields of chemistry and remains a promising research area due to the ongoing development of low-energy and more efficient milling equipment.

Armbiotechnology, a division of the Department of Microbiology at the Armenian Academy of Sciences has regularly contributed to research on the bio-leaching of metals from mineral ores using bacteria. More recently, the focus has included bio-absorption of dissolved metals. Much of this research has been driven by Dr Arevik Vardanyan, who has collaborated with several research teams in European institutes. Although some of the bio-leaching findings have piqued the interest of Armenian mining companies, particularly those looking to treat sulphur-bearing minerals, no studies have advanced to a more developed stage. Bio-leaching technologies have been successfully applied in other countries, especially for gold and copper recovery. It can even be combined with heap leaching techniques.

Lernametallurgiai laboratories have conducted numerous studies on copper and precious metals processing, as well as their by-products, over the past 20 years. Their research includes a low-temperature hydro-metallurgical process that could potentially replace conventional copper smelting. Unlike smelting, which generates sulphuric acid as a by-product, this process captures sulphur released during mineral processing as elemental sulphur, making it easier to transport safely and to store. This method offers flexibility for smaller-scale refining, allows treatment of lower-grade concentrates and more complex mineral systems, and facilitates faster recovery of accompanying elements, such as precious metals. A key area for achieving favourable economics is converting the separated iron from chalcopyrite, a copper iron sulfide mineral, into a saleable high purity by-product. This research has strategic importance for Armenia, where large quantities of copper concentrates are currently exported for smelting and refining. Local pure copper production could secure premiums on refined copper and provide freedom to sell on the international market. It would also create opportunities to manufacture value-added copper products such as copper sulphate salt and copper plate and tubing.

These examples demonstrate a willingness and openness of Armenian research facilities to embrace the risks associated with adopting new minerals transformation techniques and pioneering innovative treatment pathways. Specialists are essential, not only for driving scientific advancement but also for implementing industry standards and translating cutting-edge research into practical applications. To sustain and encourage these efforts, the next section will delve into future considerations and strategies for fostering continued progress and excellence in the field.

Future Considerations

Mining worldwide faces several pressing challenges that are shaping its future landscape: a growing demand for metals driven by electrification; decreasing ore grades impacting process economics, increasing material handling needs and requiring larger landmasses to store tailings; a decline in new large metal ore discoveries; increased focus on complex ores, wastes and tailings as investment targets; water scarcity exacerbated by climate change; a sense of urgency for technology breakthroughs in mineral process research; a shortage of skilled personnel to operate the mines effectively; a polarized world requiring shorter, end-to-end supply chains; and stricter ESG standards for mined product sales.

These global trends are already being felt in Armenia, specifically the sixth and seventh items. Many specialists are nearing retirement, and the mineral sciences programs are struggling to attract new talent. Decades of underfunding in geosciences, mining and chemical education

programs have diminished the quality of education. Many graduates from these programs are turning to the IT industry, rather than remaining in the mining sector. Public awareness and educational outreach about careers in mineral science — which often offer quite competitive salaries and benefits — remain insufficient. Strengthening these areas is crucial for Armenia to sustain and advance its mining industry in the face of these global challenges.

The authors want to highlight that geology, chemistry and minerals/mining engineering are as crucial to Armenia's strategic outlook as robotics, AI and computer engineering. Copper, in particular, holds a value comparable to that of oil and gas, with Armenia possessing important reserves. Enhancing the quality of these mining-related academic programs and attracting more candidates is a topic worthy of its own in-depth discussion. Addressing the current deficiencies in Armenia may require a generational effort.

To further advance the field, active support from major companies, as well as government ministries is essential. Several initiatives are already underway, such as the newly created International Chamber of Mines of Armenia (ICMA), and ZCMC's 2023 support for funding student internships, mentorships, modernizing the NPUA Institute of Mining and Metallurgy and Chemical Technology laboratory facilities, and continuing education for current ZCMC employees (<https://iravaban.net/en/435620.html>).

The establishment of the ICMA marks a significant step in advancing the country's mining sector. As an independent non-profit institution, the ICMA collaborates with all stakeholders in Armenia's mining industry, focusing on the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the nation's mineral resources. The ICMA is committed to ensuring that Armenia adheres to international standards of sustainability and competitiveness, drawing on the expertise of international professionals who are integral to its mission. Initiatives in progress, such as student exchange programs with institutions like the Metallurgy and Materials Society (METSOC) of the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum (CIM) in Canada can motivate and stimulate the exchange of knowledge between Armenia and the global mining community.

In addition to the ICMA's efforts, the Armenian diaspora can play a crucial role in furthering Armenia's mining industry. Visiting lecturers, joint research projects, and industry partnerships can also foster innovation and elevate the country's standing in the international mining arena. Through active involvement, members of the diaspora with various technical expertise, including policy development and expertise in ESG can help the government and Armenian mining companies align with global standards. By leveraging our global connections, Armenia can build a more resilient mining sector.

Furthermore, based on numerous discussions with Armenian specialists, the following additional measures could further enhance the sector. 1) Facilitating exchange programs where employed engineers spend several months working facilities who process Armenian concentrate; 2) Establishing a yearly program to fully fund talented students or professional engineers for advanced studies or post graduate assignments in foreign universities. Upon completion, these individuals would return to Armenia to fulfill a contract with the sponsor, focusing on the area of research and potentially serving as lecturers at NPUA; 3) Cultivating a culture of inclusion in the workplace culture, to improve outcomes and attract and retain new talent, in both industry and academia; 4) Encouraging mastery of English to facilitate communication with the international network and facilitate global collaborations; 5) Having all mineralogical analysis equipment available in Armenia, as well as mineralogists trained on the equipment. This will enable them to guide process specialists in making optimal decisions; 6) Increasing public awareness about the changing face of mining, its societal value, and the global ESG principles now being enforced.

Many of these guidelines are echoed in a recent presentation to the Republic of Armenia government from the World Bank. All these actions are achievable, but one crucial element is needed to bring them to fruition: a driving force.



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Turkish Diplomats Accused In D.C. Court of Violating U.S. Laws

Turkish investigative reporter Abdullah Bozkurt wrote in the Nordic Monitor an article titled, “Senior

Turkish diplomats accused of human trafficking, fraud in Washington, D.C., court.”

Bozkurt reported that Husnu Sinan Ertay, the former deputy chief of mission — the second-highest ranking diplomat at the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C., — and his wife, Anil Ozge Ertay, a diplomatic Counselor at the Embassy, were “accused of human trafficking, fraud, unjust enrichment, breach of contract and violations of U.S. labor and wage laws.” The civil suit was filed in May in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia by their nanny, Philippine national Sharon Thomas Agdipa. If the judge agrees to accept the case, the court will determine the couple’s guilt or innocence.

The Turkish diplomats lived in a million-dollar, 1,330-square-foot townhouse in a gated community on Embassy Park Drive, in the Washington neighborhood of Wesley Heights. Their babysitter claims that “she was lured from the Philippines to the U.S. with promises of a job, fair wages and a private room, only to be subjected to forced labor.” According to her lawyers, “she endured emotional and physical suffering, was deprived of regular meals, denied a private bedroom, grossly underpaid, threatened with deportation and frequently subjected to verbal abuse.”

Bozkurt wrote that his “sources in the Turkish diplomatic community who spoke to Nordic Monitor expressed little surprise at the charges, citing the nature and character of the Ertay couple. ‘Mrs. Ertay is known to be a vicious person among her colleagues,’ one source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Other sources claimed that her husband secured his position at the foreign ministry largely due to his father’s influential role as deputy undersecretary responsible for personnel.”

Bozkurt wrote that “Agdipa’s ordeal began in November 2019, when Mrs. Ertay offered her a job in Washington, D.C. However, when Agdipa began working for the couple in February 2020, her duties extended beyond caring for their 5-year-old son, to include various housekeeping tasks, from cleaning and cooking to gardening.”

Bozkurt reported: “Although her contract specified a 35-hour workweek at

\$14 an hour, Agdipa was working over 80 hours a week and was required to remain on standby at all hours to accommodate the couple’s demands. She received no compensation for overtime, a clear violation of the contract’s terms. The suit alleges that the couple compelled Agdipa to return a portion of her salary by instructing her to withdraw cash from an ATM and hand it back to them.... Over the course of 15 months of working for the couple, Agdipa was required to return approximately one-third of her total wages, amounting to \$9,450.”

The lawsuit alleges that the Turkish couple “was abusive toward her, using insults and curses, threatening to evict her and inflicting emotional and psychological distress. She was told that she would be deported from the country if she complained about the working conditions.”

Agdipa alleges that she was denied regular meals contrary to the contract, was not allowed to prepare her own food and was refused medical care and sick leave when needed. Bozkurt reported: “Although the contract stipulated that she would receive private room and board, Agdipa was assigned to sleep in a windowless basement. This space was regularly accessed by the Turkish deputy chief of mission.”

On May 5, 2021, the babysitter fled from the diplomats’ house, leaving most of her belongings behind. The labor attaché for the Embassy of Philippines in Washington, learning of her situation, referred Agdipa to a law firm to defend her.

The law firm notified the U.S. government of the case after Agdipa testified about the abuse and forced labor she had endured. However, to date, no criminal charges have been filed against the diplomats by the U.S. authorities.

The lawsuit alleges that “the actions of the Ertays — ranging from recruiting Agdipa and convincing her to travel to the US, to threatening her with deportation and stealing her wages — violate multiple laws.... Moreover, their conduct is alleged to have involved breaches of contract, unjust enrichment, intentional infliction of emotional distress and fraud.”

On May 20, 2024, Agdipa’s attorneys — Olamide S. Orebamjo, Melissa L. Patterson and Elizabeth S. Fassih of the Jones Day law firm in Washington, D.C. — asked the court for a jury trial.

It is not known how the judge will deal with the case, given the fact the Turkish couple had returned to Turkey and enjoyed diplomatic immunity.

Bozkurt reported that the Turkish couple is working at the Turkish Foreign Ministry in Ankara. “Mr. Ertay currently serves as head of department at the Directorate General for East Asia” while Mrs. Ertay is “head of department at the Directorate General for North America.”

Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy Strategy in the Post-September 2023 Period

By Benyamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

From September 2020 to September 2023, Azerbaijan surprised many outside Armenia by taking control of the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, first during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and later in a military operation in September 2023. The “liberation of Karabakh” was a cornerstone of Azerbaijan’s domestic and foreign policy throughout the post-Soviet period, and resolving the conflict on Azerbaijan’s terms became a national priority for Baku. After September 2023, Azerbaijan faces a new challenge: to formulate a new national idea to gather the subjects around the ruling elite, as articulated by President Ilham Aliyev during his campaign ahead of the February 2024 snap presidential elections.

Two directions of new foreign policy supporting the “new national idea” are emerging. The first pillar is the development of relations with the Turkic world, portrayed as “the gateway to Central Asia.” This includes growing relations with Turkey and the Central Asian Turkic countries. In recent years, Azerbaijan has significantly increased its interactions with Central Asian republics, including high-level visits and enhanced economic cooperation. The Middle Corridor, a route that could connect China to Europe via Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, is one of the economic projects jointly promoted by Azerbaijan and Central

Asian republics. Azerbaijan has also emphasized the importance of the Organization of Turkic States. President Aliyev has underscored Azerbaijan’s commitment to strengthening relations with Turkic states as a key foreign policy priority, notably during the meeting with parliamentary officials from Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and Hungary.

In the same speech Aliyev emphasized that the Turkic world has great power, with its vast geography and potential — encompassing transportation routes, energy resources, human capital, and a growing population and called for unified efforts to transform this potential into a global influence. These themes were reiterated during the informal summit of the heads of state of the Organization of Turkic States, held in Azerbaijan in July 2024.

Azerbaijan is taking steps to connect Central Asia with the South Caucasus, potentially establishing a wider Caucasus-Caspian region and offering a new integration model as an alternative to those proposed by the European Union and Russia. Additionally, Azerbaijan has increased its cooperation with the Global South, establishing a strategic partnership with China and officially applying to join BRICS (the intergovernmental organization comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates).

The second pillar of Azerbaijan’s new foreign policy strategy is the development of the concept of “Western Azerbaijan,” which claims significant parts of the Armenian territory as historical Azerbaijani lands. The concept serves two primary goals. First, it maintains Armenia and Armenians as the external enemies of Azerbaijani society, rallying the population around President Aliyev’s rule. For the past 20 years, the promise to “liberate Karabakh” was the primary tool used to consolidate support for Aliyev and to divert attention from systemic problems in Azerbaijan, such as unequal distribution of oil and gas wealth, rampant corruption, the lack of political and individual freedoms, and constant human rights violations committed by the regime.

However, after the military takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023, this issue ceased to exist, and the concept of “Western Azerbai-

jan” may replace it as a new rallying point, requiring consolidation around the ruling dynasty. Domestic political considerations are not the only motivation behind this concept. The second goal is geopolitical: to create a “justification” for future attacks against Armenia.

These two visions intersect in the creation of a united Turkic world and the concept of Western Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani leaders frequently claim that the Soviet government severed Armenia’s Syunik region, which they refer to as “Zangezur,” from Azerbaijan and handed it to Armenia in 1920. Thus, a potential attack on Syunik in 2025 could be justified as a step toward uniting the Turkic world and establishing “Western Azerbaijan.”

The two directions of Azerbaijan’s new foreign policy strategy do not envisage peace with Armenia. This explains Azerbaijan’s tactics in the peace negotiations with Yerevan to make statements signaling progress while undermining it with insurmountable preconditions. Azerbaijan’s leadership needs Armenia as an adversary for domestic and foreign policy reasons. Both directions can also justify new acts of aggression against Armenia.

In current circumstances, while continuing its efforts to sign a peace agreement with Azerbaijan, the Armenian government should send a clear message to its international partners about the growing likelihood of new Azerbaijani attacks against Armenia after the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), and negative implications not only for Armenia but for the entire region, including jeopardizing the region’s potential to become a transport hub. As military balance continues to be in favor of Azerbaijan, despite recent armament purchase deals by Armenia, the Armenian government should realistically assess the capacities and willingness of its different foreign partners to deter new Azerbaijani aggression and make its foreign policy decisions based on those calculations.

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

Armenians, Too, Have a Formidable History in the Holy Land

By Bedross Der Matossian

In 1894, the American archeologist Frederick J. Bliss made a seminal discovery: a richly decorated sixth-century mosaic from an Armenian mortuary chapel dating to the Byzantine period. Discovered in Musrara, a few hundred meters from the Damascus Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem, it is the only intact mosaic ever found outside Armenia proper with Armenian inscriptions — which in turn are the oldest examples of Armenian writing to have survived over the centuries.

I am reminded of these startling facts as I reflect on the controversy raging over the sale of the “Cow’s Garden” in the Old City of Jerusalem, which has stirred up Armenian anger amid charges of corruption, and in turn has agitated Jewish radicals against Armenians. As an Armenian born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem (now teaching at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln), I feel compelled to set the record straight, for things are much misunderstood.

I think many would be surprised to learn not only of the profundity of the Armenian presence in the Holy Land, but of how many similarities there are between both peoples, being diasporic groups scattered around the globe in the course of history that suffered the most horrendous genocides of the 20th Century: The Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) and the Shoah (1941-1945).

Even though the Holy Land was never part of Historic Armenia, our historical roots here are deep; our place should be not only protected but cherished.

The first recorded Armenian pilgrimage to the Holy Land occurred in the early 4th century AD when a delegation of priests arrived in the Holy City. When Anastas Vartabed Akoretsi (c. 636-650) visited Jerusalem several centuries later, he could already count 70 monasteries in and around Jerusalem built by Armenians (as well as Caucasian Albanians).

Such archeological and historical facts attest to the connection of Armenians to the Holy Land and the Old City of Jerusalem in particular. Indeed, outside historic Armenia, the Armenian presence in Jerusalem is the oldest. Our community uses the term “Armenian Jerusalem” due to the solid historical presence of the Armenian Patri-

archate as well as of the lay community, the core of which are the descendants of those first Armenian pilgrims.

In a way, Jerusalem can be viewed as the most important religious and cultural center in Armenian history. Armenian kingdoms and principalities in historical Armenia fell one after another, the last being the Cilician Kingdom (1098-1375). That left only today’s small rump state in the South Caucasus, whose borders were defined by the Soviet Union. But our corner of Jerusalem remained intact.

Over the centuries, it survived many rulers: Roman, Byzantine, Persian, Arab, Crusaders, Ayyubids, Mamluks, Ottomans, British, and Jordanians. Despite political upheavals in the region, “Armenian Jerusalem” persevered.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem in its present form came into being in the first decade of the 14th century when the Brotherhood of St. James was founded. Today, it shares guardianship of Christianity’s holy sites — including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Church of the Nativity — with the Greek Orthodox and Latin (Roman Catholic) churches.

This critical function helps explain the resilience of the Armenians in Jerusalem. Of all the “Little Armenias” scattered not around the world, the one in Jerusalem is perhaps the most authentic — driven by its role for all Christendom and symbolized by the physical presence of countless cultural treasures.

The beautiful Church of St. James, the Convent of Holy Archangels and the Church of St. Toros are spiritual and artistic gems. The Patriarchate houses 4,000 manuscripts, considered as the second-largest collection of Armenian manuscripts outside Armenia. The Gulbenkian Library in Jerusalem is regarded as the largest Armenian library outside Armenia, housing more than one hundred thousand books. The Mardigian Museum contains the most important artifacts, detailing the history of the Armenians of Jerusalem.

The Armenian Patriarchate has also played a dominant role in resurrecting the Armenian nation from the brink of extinction. It housed and fed thousands of refugees who survived the 1915 Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottomans and established orphanages in the Armenian Cathedral and other nearby places. Some stayed

on, enriching the Armenian community here. Community members excelled in photography, ceramics, goldsmith, and silversmith, among other professions.

The community began a dramatic decline due to the 1948 and 1967 wars when many Armenians lost their homes and businesses in West Jerusalem as well as other areas in Israel. Sadly, for decades, spitting and harassing Armenian priests has become the norm among some within the Ultra-Orthodox community.

I know that the abuses by radicals do not represent the general attitude of Israeli society towards Armenians. Some groups of Israelis have visited the encampment site on multiple occasions to show solidarity. But this entire situation is endangering our valuable and longstanding presence in Jerusalem. Without international pressure on the Israeli government, Jewish religious leaders, and Israeli society, the Armenian community and the Armenian Patriarchate will continue to suffer these abuses.

During the 1948 War an editorial in Sion (the organ of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem), described well the deep attachment of Armenians to this corner of the world: “Considered in conventional [military] terms, (we) did not engage in an epic battle during the bloody events in Palestine. (Yet it) still can be seen as an epic stance, as the Brotherhood and the civilian population, united, demonstrated their resolve in defending our spiritual and national heritage, our lives and possessions, and, above all, our honor, which for centuries has always been illustrious and praiseworthy in these Holy Lands.”

Today, the Armenian Community of Jerusalem and the Armenian Patriarchate are united once more, in preserving the 1,700 years of Armenian presence in Jerusalem. The dispute is not only about a land deal but about preserving a great cultural heritage.

And that mosaic from Musrara? It has been relocated from Musrara to the newly renovated Mardigian Museum in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem. Let’s hope that’s where it stays.

(Bedross Der Matossian is a professor of Middle East History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The above article first appeared in the Christian Post on September 15, 2024.)



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