

## Pashinyan Speaks With Trump by Phone

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan telephoned US President-elect Donald Trump over the weekend to discuss US-Armenian relations and regional security.

The Armenian government’s press office said Pashinyan briefed Trump on “recent years’ developments in Armenia-US relations and their current state.”

“Issues related to the regional agenda were also discussed,” it added in a short statement.

No other details were reported. Neither Trump nor members of his entourage commented on the call on social media or otherwise.”

Pashinyan was quick to congratulate Trump on his resounding victory in the November 5 presidential election. In a congratulatory message, the Armenian premier expressed confidence that bilateral ties will be “further strengthened” and elevated to “strategic partnership” during Trump’s second presidency.

The administration of outgoing US President Joe Biden has strongly supported Pashinyan in his efforts to reorient Armenia towards the West that have caused unprecedented tensions in the South Caucasus nation’s relations with Russia, its traditional ally. Washington has also repeatedly tried to broker a peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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## Armenian PM Says Declaration Of Independence Implies that Armenia “Cannot Exist”

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said that Armenia’s Declaration of Independence, referenced in its constitution, implies that the “Republic of Armenia cannot exist.”

On Thursday, November 14, Pashinyan said that he had reached a “horrrifying conclusion” that Armenia’s Declaration of Independence implied that the “Republic of Armenia cannot exist.”

The Declaration is referenced in the Constitution’s preamble. Azerbaijani officials, including President Ilham Aliyev, have repeatedly stated that Armenia’s constitution contained territorial claims against Azerbaijan, in an apparent reference to the Declaration.

Armenia’s Declaration of Independence, signed in August 1990, includes a joint decision by the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Karabakh Council to “reunify the Armenian SSR and the Mountainous Region of Karabakh.”

His remarks on the Declaration of Independence followed a series of posts he made on the platform formerly known as Twitter (X) on Wednesday, November 13, in which he also accused Azerbaijan’s constitution of containing territorial claims “amounting [to] approximately 60%” of Armenia.

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## Visiting Armenia, Greta Thunberg Decries Azerbaijan’s Repressive Regime, Ethnic Cleansing in Karabakh

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg arrived in Armenia on November 13 after visiting neighboring Georgia.

Thunberg in the past week has taken actions and spoken out against the COP29 United Nations environmental conference happening in Baku. Speaking Monday at a protest in Tbilisi, she called Azerbaijan “an authoritarian petrostate” and added that the choice of location was “beyond absurd,” according to a *Washington Post* story.

According to the Associated Press, Thunberg described Azerbaijan as “a repressive, occupying state, which has committed ethnic cleansing, and which is continuing cracking down on Azerbaijani civil society.”

She charged that Azerbaijan has used the summit as “a chance to greenwash their crimes and human rights abuses,” AP reported.



Greta Thunberg at a demonstration against COP29 outside the UN offices in Yerevan (Reuters photo)

“We can’t give them any legitimacy in this situation, which is why we are standing here and saying no to greenwashing and no to the Azerbaijani regime,” she said in Tbilisi on Monday.

In Armenia, Thunberg was welcomed by Oleg Dulgaryan, the Head of Centre for Community Mobilization and Support (CCMS).

“Together with colleagues, on the Armenia-Georgia border, it is with great responsibility and joy that we welcomed Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who arrived in Armenia, boycotting the ongoing COP-29 in Baku,” Dulgaryan said in a statement on social media. He added that more information about “upcoming processes” will be provided later.

Thunberg on Thursday, November 14, again condemned the holding of the COP29 summit in Baku, saying that the international community thus let Azerbaijan

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Greta Thunberg speaks at a panel at the American University of Armenia (AUA photo)

## Pashinyan Meets Pope Francis at the Vatican

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan praised Armenia’s “special” relationship with the Vatican as he was received by Pope Francis on Monday, November 18.

The press office of the Holy See did not release a readout of the meeting in the following hours. The official Vatican News portal likewise gave no details of the pontiff’s conversation with Pashinyan.

It said the audience lasted for about 30 minutes and was followed by an exchange of gifts. Its Armenian-language service also noted that Pashinyan’s trip to the Vatican “lasted only a few hours.”

An Armenian government statement on the visit said Pashinyan told Francis that increased contacts between Yerevan and the Vatican testify to their “special interstate relationship.” It said the premier also praised the pontiff’s international peace efforts and briefed him on



Prime Minister Pashinyan bows to Pope Francis I during his visit to the Vatican

the “latest developments in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process.”

“The prime minister thanked His Holiness for the Holy See’s continued efforts to release Armenian prisoners [held in Azerbaijan,]” added the statement. It did not shed light on those efforts.

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### INDIA

Ambassador To India Visits Gwalior



### MASSACHUSETTS

Gomidas Bust Unveiled in Watertown



### CALIFORNIA

Light Show at Burbank Armenian Cathedral Honors Legacy of St. Nerses Shnorhali, St. Grigor Narekatsi







ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

German Foreign Minister Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (News.am) — On Tuesday, November 19, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock arrived in Armenia for meetings with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan.

Bilateral and regional issues were scheduled to be on the agenda of the discussions.

7 Yervand Kochar Paintings Worth \$500,000 Stolen

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Seven paintings have vanished from Yervand Kochar Museum in Yerevan, the Kochar Cultural Foundation reported on November 19. The estimated value of the missing paintings by Kochar, a prominent Armenian artist of the 20th century, is around \$500,000.

The artist's son, filmmaker Ruben Kochar, and lawyer Tigran Atanesyan, plan to provide further details at a news conference this week.

"The Armenian government has been alerted about the incident, and the Investigative Committee is dealing with the case," the foundation said.

It also expressed doubts about the authenticity of the state-owned artworks in the museum, alleging illegal transactions.

"Yervand Kochar's heritage is under threat," the statement added.

Parliament Speaker Visits Vietnam

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary To Lam on Tuesday, November 19, received President of the National Assembly of Armenia Alen Simonyan, who is paying an official visit to Vietnam.

The party chief expressed his confidence that the visit would provide new momentum to enhance the bilateral traditional friendship and multifaceted cooperation in the coming period, [Viet Nam News](#) reported.

Lam expressed his appreciation for Armenia's support for Vietnam's national development efforts.

Praising the fruitful outcomes of Simonyan's talks with Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam Tran Thanh Man, Lam described the event as a milestone in advancing the parliamentary relations. He said room remains tremendous for bilateral cooperation in various fields and suggested key measures to strengthen the friendship toward effectiveness and practical outcomes, contributing to regional and global peace, stability, and development.

Simonyan underscored Armenia's appreciation of its long-standing friendship with Vietnam.

He said this is a pivotal moment to boost bilateral cooperation in diverse areas and expressed agreement with Lam's suggestions of such measures, including fostering joint work in education, training, and people-to-people exchanges.

Armenian Children Lead World in Sugar Consumption, Sparking Health Concerns

YEREVAN (JAM News) — Armenia has the highest rate of sweet consumption among children, according to a recent study conducted in Armenia and 50 other countries, placing the nation as the leading consumer of sweets among 15-year-olds.

"64% of girls and 56% of boys in this age group consume sweets multiple times a day. This is a truly concerning indicator," stated Marina Melkumova, a pediatrician at the Institute of Child and Adolescent Health.

The World Health Organization, together with Armenia's Ministries of Health and Education and the Arabkir Medical Center, conducted this study among school-aged children. The results, presented to journalists earlier in November, included warnings about potential health consequences.

This study on school-aged children's behaviors, which may impact their health, is conducted every four years in 51 countries. In Armenia's latest survey, more than 4,300 children aged 11, 13, 15, and 17 were studied.

Melkumova, a pediatrician at the Arabkir Institute, expressed alarm over the findings. Children's diets are unbalanced, with doctors particularly concerned about adolescents' excessive consumption of sweets and sugary sodas.

"Among 15-year-olds, 32 percent of boys and 22 percent of girls drink sugary carbonated drinks daily," Melkumova reported.

Araik Papoyan, a hygienist at the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention, stated that specific dietary standards are mandatory for schools. Schools receive guidelines on what foods are appropriate for children's diets and which should be excluded.

He emphasized that these standards consider both age groups (6-10, 11-14, 15-18)

and potential physical activity levels.

"School meals should be balanced, including foods with protein, vitamins, and minerals. Students should not be served raw or smoked meats, unpasteurized milk products, or items high in salt and sugar, including sugary sodas."

Experts note that while schools offer relatively balanced food options, children often choose less healthy alternatives. Melkumova points out that children eat few vegetables, favoring fast food and sweets instead.

"Sweets and sugary drinks are high in sugar, leading to problems such as overweight and obesity."

She also reminded that a previous study among children aged 7-8 found 30 percent of boys and 25 percent of girls to be overweight — another troubling statistic. Dr. Melkumova warned parents of possible long-term effects.

Experts believe that schools need stricter controls to ensure compliance with dietary standards and call for more education for students and parents on healthy eating.

Satellite Photos Show Yet Another Church in Karabakh Destroyed

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Satellite imagery shows that between October 5, 2023, and April 30, 2024, the 19th-century Tandzatap church in Kashatagh region of Nagorno-Karabakh sustained major damage, the Caucasus Heritage Watch reported on November 19.

Most of the roof has collapsed, as has the southern wall which featured an embedded stone engraved with a cross.

Photographs taken in the mid-1990s indicate that the entryway in the southern wall was already damaged by that time. Also, the stone facing around the windows was no longer present.

The church remained in damaged but

stable condition for decades until the recent collapse documented by CHW. The engraved cross, pictured below, is to the



Satellite photos showing the destruction of the church in Kashatagh

left of the large hole where the door once stood.

The village came under Azerbaijan's control in the aftermath of the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian PM Says Declaration of Independence Implies that Armenia 'Cannot Exist'

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However, Pashinyan said that Armenia does not demand that Azerbaijan change its constitution because it would lead to a "deadlock" in the peace process, and so that "none of the parties may invoke internal legislation as justification for its failure to implement this agreement."

On the same day, Pashinyan also did not rule out that Armenia might initiate an amendment of the constitution, "if the Constitutional Court decides that the text of the peace agreement does not correspond to the constitution."

In January, Pashinyan warned that if the state policy should be based on the decision of the National Council of Nagorno Karabakh and the Supreme Council of Armenia on the reunification of Karabakh and Armenia, "we will never have peace. Moreover, this means that we will now have a war."

On Friday, November 16, the chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Relations, Sargis Khandanyan, expressed his support for Pashinyan's statement.

"That document was adopted in 1990, when there was no independent Armenia, but the vision described in the Declaration of Independence depicts the independent Republic of Armenia very unrealistically, therefore I share that approach," he said.

Regional Communications and Peace Talks

On Friday, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister, Jeyhun Bayramov, commented on the unblocking of regional transit routes as part of the peace process. He noted that it was not a new development and that Armenia

was supposed to unblock routes connecting Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan as part of the November 9 statement that brought an end to the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020.

"After more than three years of discussions, we believe the term 'agreement reached' is somewhat late," said Bayramov in response to statements made by Pashinyan about reaching a resolution to unblock routes.

"This agreement should have been reached a long time ago. If there is no official document on this yet, if Armenia has not started any work in this direction, then there are still open issues. In Azerbaijan, work has been progressing rapidly for a long time regarding the establishment of transport infrastructure within its territory, and this infrastructure will soon reach the border with Armenia."

Bayramov also stated that currently, Azerbaijan's main focus was the UN COP29 summit, hence "it is impossible to have physical meetings before December."

"December or January is another matter. There is no concrete agreement on this yet. Apart from the physical meetings, the work on the document continues and this work has not stopped yet."

On Sunday, November 17, Aliyev stated during his meeting with August Pfluger, a member of the US House of Representatives, that Armenia's policy of militarization and arms race were "a threat to regional peace and security."

He said it was important that the territorial claims against Azerbaijan in the Armenian Constitution be abandoned for the peace treaty to be signed.

(This article originally appeared on [www.OCMedia.org](http://www.OCMedia.org) on November 18.)

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It remains to be seen whether the incoming Trump administration will show as much interest in helping Yerevan leave Moscow's orbit and ending the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Trump never held face-to-face talks with Pashinyan during his first term in office which ended in the wake of the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Republican courted Armenian American voters during the US presiden-

tial race. In an October 24 statement, he blamed the Biden administration for last year's forced exodus of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population and pledged to end the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict if he wins the election.

"Kamala Harris did NOTHING as 120,000 Armenian Christians were horribly persecuted and forcibly displaced in Artsakh," he said.

Trump went on to call Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia.





## ARMENIA

# Visiting Armenia, Greta Thunberg Decries Azerbaijan's Repressive Regime, Ethnic Cleansing in Karabakh

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“greenwash” ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh and other “extreme human rights abuses” committed by it.

Thunberg decried the world's “hypocrisy” as she visited Armenia to underscore her boycott of the annual UN summit on climate change that began on Monday.

Thunberg pointed to Baku's poor human rights record, “crackdown on civil society” and “terrible crimes” against Armenians. Instead of being held accountable, she said, the Azerbaijani authorities are “given a pass and legitimacy and platform on the world stage to legitimize these extreme human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing.”

“The ethnic cleansing that Azerbaijan is guilty of and the continuous extreme hardships that many Armenians are facing because of the Azerbaijani military aggression, the torture, forced displacements, prisoners of war, hostages, extreme physical and psychological violence that people have experienced can in no way be justified. And the fact that the world remains silent and lets Azerbaijan greenwash these crimes is absolutely unacceptable,” she said.

Armenia was among the countries that approved the choice of Baku as the venue of COP29. The decision was part of a deal that led to the release last December of 32 Armenian soldiers and civilians held in Azerbaijan. Armenian officials were reportedly ready to attend the two-week global summit in return for the release of more Armenian captives. None of them have been released so far.

During her visit to Armenia, Thunberg visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial.

Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI) Edita Gzoyan briefed her on the history of the creation of the memorial. The AGMI Director also touched upon the three khachkars installed in the Tsitsernakaberd area in memory of the Armenians who fell victim to the massacres organized by the Azerbaijani government in the cities of Sumgait, Kirovabad (Gandzak), and Baku late last century, and the stories of the five freedom fighters buried in front of the Memorial Wall during the Artsakh war.

Thunberg honored the memory of the innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide with a moment of silence at the eternal flame.

She also toured the Armenian Genocide Museum, where she got acquainted with the permanent and temporary exhibitions accompanied by AGMI tour guide Elen Hakobyan, after which she made a note in the



Greta Thunberg at the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan

While in Yerevan, Thunberg appeared on a panel organized by the American University of Armenia (AUA). She also met with AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian.

Thunberg was a featured panelist in the conference titled “The Impact of Azerbaijan's Aggression on Human Rights and Environmental Protection,” which was hosted at AUA and organized in parallel to the 2024 United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference (COP29). The event was a response to the UN's decision to designate Azerbaijan as the host of COP29, despite grave concerns over its track record of aggression toward the people of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), as well as the authoritarian policies and Armenophobic rhetoric of President Ilham Aliyev.

The conference addressed the effects of Azerbaijan's actions on both human rights and environmental protection in the region, including war crimes, blockades, ethnic cleansing, and damage to the environment and cultural heritage. It brought together lawyers, environmentalists, journalists and other experts to discuss these critical issues.

“The American University of Armenia is



and community impact, has always stood at the forefront of such important conversations, and I hope we always will. Indeed, you will have the chance today to hear from some of our own faculty, who are engaged in addressing these issues of human rights and environmental advocacy. I am proud to see them on this stage today,” Boghosian said.

The first panel, moderated by lawyer and human rights defender Luiza Vardanyan, focused on human rights violations and war crimes during the 2020 Artsakh War and featured speakers Ara Ghazaryan (LL.M. '01), international law specialist; Anna Melikyan, legal expert at the Protection of Rights Without Borders NGO; Siranush Sahakyan, AUA lecturer, president of the Center for International and Comparative Law, and representative of the interests of Armenian POWs at the European Court of Human Rights; and Gegham Stepanyan (MPSIA '16), human rights defender of the Republic of Artsakh.

At the end of the session, Thunberg was invited to the stage to deliver her keynote speech. “We need to stop hosting climate conferences in places like Azerbaijan, a country that is repressing its own population to an extreme degree,” she said, highlighting the intersection of climate justice and human rights. She continued by condemning the country's ethnic cleansing of the entire population of Artsakh, Azerbaijan's military

aggressions, and its severe human rights violations, including torture, the keeping of hostages, and widespread violence.

Countries buying Azerbaijani oil and gas are “complicit” in those crimes, she added.

“If we are standing up for justice, that has to mean justice for everyone,” she concluded.

The second panel, moderated by Sona Ayvazyan, director of Transparency International, discussed the consequences of Azerbaijan's aggression on environment and cultural heritage.

Thunberg, 21, became the face of young climate activists after her weekly protests, starting in 2018, next to the Swedish parliament, quickly grew into a global youth movement with large rallies across continents. She has repeatedly been detained during such protests staged in Sweden and other European countries.

Thunberg has been widely credited with raising global awareness about the climate crisis, in what has become known as “The Greta Effect.” She has been included in *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people, named the youngest Time Person of the Year, included in the Forbes list of the World's 100 Most Powerful Women, and been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

(Reports from Armenpress, Azatutun, the American University of Armenia and the Public Radio of Armenia were combined for this story.)



Greta Thunberg in Tbilisi, where she visited before coming to Yerevan (Reuters photo)

museum's guestbook.

At the end of the visit, Gzoyan presented Thunberg with books on the Armenian Genocide and the Artsakh issue.

proud to host these pertinent panel discussions on topics of such pressing concern. Our institution, founded on the principles of academic freedom, intellectual discovery,



## INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL

## Quake Hits Iran, Armenia Border

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — A magnitude 3.8 earthquake hit 65 kilometers northwest of the Iranian city of Ahar at 12:41 local time on November 18.

According to the Seismic Protection Survive of the Armenian Ministry of Interior, the quake was registered at the depth of 10 kilometers, the intensity reached 5 at the epicenter.

The earthquake was felt in the cities of Meghri, Kapan, Kajaran, Agarak of Syunik region, as well as in the villages of Alvank, Shvanidzor, Nrnadzor and Nerkin Hand.

## French Prosecutors Want Pro-Baku Minister to Stand Trial

PARIS (Reuters) — The French prosecutor's office for financial crimes has requested former automobile executive Carlos Ghosn and French Culture Minister Rachida Dati stand trial following its probe into corruption, a judicial source said on Friday, November 15.

A judge must make a decision on the request.

Dati has long been an advocate for establishing closer ties with Baku.

Investigators had been probing the consulting fees Dati once received from the Renault-Nissan auto alliance. The alliance had hired Dati as a consultant after she stepped down as justice minister to stand for the European Parliament.

Dati has denied irregularities in the fees she received during that time and Ghosn, who fled from Japan in a box aboard a private jet to Lebanon, has denied allegations of misconduct against him.

## CoE Urges Azerbaijan To Create Safe Conditions for Return

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in a statement released on November 18 urged the Azerbaijani authorities to create the political, legal and practical conditions necessary for safe, unimpeded and sustainable return of displaced Armenians from Karabakh and to set up a dedicated mechanism to deal with property issues.

The authorities are also urged to inventory, protect and preserve all Armenian religious and cultural sites and artefacts and to investigate all allegations of vandalism, destruction and alteration of historic and cultural monuments and cemeteries used by ethnic Armenians in the region.

Finally, citing a strong public narrative against the Republic of Armenia in the context of the Karabakh conflict and its direct impact on the attitudes towards ethnic Armenians, the Advisory Committee urges the Advisory Committee urges the authorities to refrain from and condemn firmly any manifestation of intolerance and spreading of ethnic hatred.



Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, center, with Sen. Edward Markey at left in Baku

# Markey, Whitehouse, and Pallone Lead Congressional Calls at COP29 for Return of Armenians to Artsakh, Azerbaijan's Release of Armenian Hostages

BAKU/WASHINGTON — Amid Aliyev-government repression and intimidation during the COP29 climate conference in Baku — with their personal safety on the line — Senators Ed Markey (D-MA) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Congressional Armenian Caucus founding Co-Chair Frank Pallone (D-NJ) championed the right of return of Artsakh's ethnically cleansed Armenian population, and advocated for the Azerbaijan's immediate release of Armenian hostages, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"We join with Armenians across our homeland and diaspora in thanking Senators Markey and Whitehouse, and of course, Armenian Caucus founding co-chair Frank Pallone for demanding the freedom of Armenian hostages and the return of Artsakh's Armenians," stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "Baku's attempt to hijack COP29 to greenwash its crimes have backfired — succeeding only in shining a global spotlight on the Aliyev regime's corruption and pollution, aggression and repression."

During press conferences in Baku and Washington DC, Senators Whitehouse and Markey, and Rep. Pallone pressed against Azerbaijani government and pro-Aliyev media efforts to greenwash the genocide of Artsakh's 120,000 indigenous Armenian population and ongoing illegal imprisonment of 23 Armenian hostages and hundreds of Azerbaijani political prisoners.

During a November 16 COP29 press conference in Baku, when confronted by an Azerbaijani TV reporter about why the U.S. had not sanctioned Armenia, Whitehouse replied, "Senator Markey and I support Armenia, both of us. We are very regretful that the dislocation of so many Armenians has taken place. To put it mildly, I'm far from convinced that Armenians are to blame for that. And I don't want to dwell in the home of my hosts on human rights issues, but if that were to be the topic, I would not be very complimentary."

Markey was direct in his response: "We believe that the political prisoners should be released. We believe there should be a right of return of Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh. And we believe that there should be a peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia."

Markey: "We could not ignore the climate of fear and repression just outside the [COP29] conference walls."

Upon their return from Baku on Monday, November 18, at a Capitol Hill press con-

ference, Senator Markey and Rep. Pallone detailed Azerbaijan's worsening human rights violations broadly and their fear for their personal safety during the COP29 climate summit.

"COP29 in Azerbaijan offered a unique opportunity to promote clean energy and regional cooperation but it is critical for the United States to address the significant challenges posed by ongoing human rights violations and unresolved territorial conflicts in Azerbaijan," stated Markey. "We must draw attention to Azerbaijan's unacceptable human rights record and promote positive change. We cannot be silent. We cannot ignore the hostile climate in which the conference is right now still taking place."

In a meeting with Aliyev's presidential advisor Hikmet Hajiyev, Markey was blunt: "The Azerbaijani government must immediately and unconditionally release all Armenian and Azeri political prisoners, guarantee the right of return for ethnic Armenian civilians to Nagorno Karabakh, and negotiate in good faith a peace agreement with Armenia that protects regional peace and internationally agreed-upon borders."

During the Washington, DC press conference, Rep. Pallone described the repeated and "synchronized" efforts by pro-Aliyev "protesters or thugs" at COP29 to assault the thirty-year Congressional Armenian Caucus founding co-chair for his outspoken support for Artsakh self-determination and Armenia security during. "If it wasn't for the fact that US Embassy-hired [bodyguards] protected me, I would have been in the hospital. And, it was serious. I just want to be honest. It was very serious." Sen. Markey concurred, noting, "Like Frank [Pallone], I felt I had to have a bodyguard with me at all times. Even in the lobby of the hotel, even going up to my room." (See related story on this page.)

Pallone described his pre-COP29 hopes that the Azerbaijani government would use the opportunity to release political prisoners. Instead, "a couple of days before the conference, President Aliyev started attacking the French, started attacking the Dutch to the point where they didn't even come to the conference, and started cranking down even more, if that's possible, on human rights and jailing more prisoners," explained Pallone, who called Azerbaijan's actions, "incredibly stupid."

Pallone, who was banned by Azerbaijani authorities from the Congressional delegation meeting with President Aliyev, confirmed that his Republican and Democrat

colleagues told the petrostate dictator, "You cannot be aggressive against Armenia. You have to come to a peace agreement. And it would involve releasing the prisoners," and, predictably, President Aliyev "blamed Armenia for the war, he blamed Armenia for everything. [...] this was not a situation where there was any reason to believe that President Aliyev is moving towards some kind of peaceful settlement, releasing the prisoners, anything of that nature."

In a subsequent press statement, Pallone remarked, "Efforts to stifle myself and Senator Markey only strengthen my resolve to fight for accountability, reform, and the dignity of those who have suffered under Azerbaijan's oppressive regime. I will continue to fight for the release of the Armenian prisoners being held in Baku, the protection of Armenian territorial sovereignty and removal of Azerbaijani troops from Armenian land, and for a fair and lasting peace deal that finally brings calm to the region."

In the month leading up to the COP29 climate conference, Pallone (D-NJ) and Markey (D-MA) led a bicameral letter, cosigned by 60 Senate and House Members, calling for U.S. leadership to hold Azerbaijan accountable for committing war crimes, taking hostages, and illegally occupying Armenian territory. In the October 3rd letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, U.S. Senators and Representatives stated, "As COP29 approaches, we request that the State Department press Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and the Government of Azerbaijan to take tangible measures that support regional peace, uphold human rights protections, and adhere to international laws and norms." They stressed that "Despite overwhelming evidence and international condemnation, Azerbaijan has not faced meaningful consequences for the ethnic cleansing and other actions."

The COP29 summit has been mired in controversy since Azerbaijan was announced as host at last year's COP28 summit hosted in the UAE — making Azerbaijan the second petro-dictatorship with an egregious human rights record to host the conference in a row. Azerbaijan is one of the most fossil fuel-dependent economies in the world, with oil and gas comprising up to 90 percent of its exports and providing 60 percent of the government's budget.

Baku was only granted the privilege of hosting COP29 after Armenia dropped its veto in exchange for the release of 32 Armenian POWs — one of many instances of Azerbaijan resorting to hostage diplomacy to impose demands on Armenia.



INTERNATIONAL

# Pallone Says He Was Targeted by Azerbaijani Government Forces at Baku Climate Conference

By Joey Fox

WASHINGTON (*New Jersey Globe*) — When Rep. Frank Pallone (D-Long Branch) attended the COP29 climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan last weekend, he knew he might be in for a bit of a rough time; the congressman, a co-chairman of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, has been extremely critical of Azerbaijan’s repressive government and its conflict with Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. But the sheer degree of hostility he faced still surprised him.

According to Pallone, he was confronted several times during his stay in Baku by legions of aggressive journalists — whom he said were plants from the Azerbaijani government — and other protesters with an apparent intention to assault him.

“When you arrive at the conference, as I did, and there are 20 to 30 seemingly reporters who are calling you names and synchronizing what they say with their iPhones — they all said the same thing, it was all on their iPhones — and then start gesturing towards what I thought was going to be an assault on me, you know that this is orchestrated by the government,” Pallone said, referencing an incident that was caught on video outside the conference.

“Then we went back to the hotel, and at

the hotel, it was just protestors — thugs, in my opinion,” he continued. “It was clear that they wanted to assault me. There was no question. If it wasn’t for the fact that the security that the embassy hired protected me, I would have been in the hospital. It was serious.”

Pallone and Sen. Ed Markey, who held a press conference yesterday about the incidents, led a letter last month calling on U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to use COP29 as an opportunity to promote peace and human rights in Azerbaijan and Armenia.

“The upcoming COP29 in Azerbaijan offers a unique opportunity to promote clean energy and regional cooperation, but it is critical for the United States to address the significant challenges posed by ongoing human rights violations and unresolved territorial conflicts in Azerbaijan,” Pallone and Markey wrote in the letter, which was co-signed by Senator Cory Booker, Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-Tenafly), and Rep. Rob Menendez (D-Jersey City), among others.

Pallone’s beliefs were enough to get him banned from a meeting at COP29 with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, even as other members of the U.S. House were allowed to go. But he said that despite his alarming reception in Baku over the week-



Rep. Frank Pallone, right, with Sen. Edward Markey at the COP29 Conference (Photo courtesy of Rep. Frank Pallone)

end, he doesn’t intend on letting the issue drop.

“We’re going to keep trying,” he said. “We’re not giving up. Obviously, the Armenian government is not giving up. And we’re going to still demand, as we do to-

day here, that these concerns be addressed. That means the political prisoners are released, the troops leave Armenia, you come to the table with a peace agreement ... and you say that military action is not going to be the way to achieve it.”

## Over 1,700 Coal, Oil and Gas Lobbyists Granted Access to COP29, Says Report

By Dhana Noor

BAKU (*The Guardian*) — At least 1,773 coal, oil, and gas lobbyists have been granted access to the United Nations climate talks in Baku, Azerbaijan, a new report has found, raising concerns about the planet-heating industry’s influence on the negotiations.

Those lobbyists outnumber the delegations of almost every country at the confer-

ence, the analysis from the Kick Big Polluters Out (KBPO) coalition shows, with the only exceptions being this year’s host country, Azerbaijan, next year’s host Brazil, and Turkey.

The finding comes during week one of the climate summit, known as COP29. Days before the talks kicked off, Elnur Sultanov, Azerbaijan’s deputy energy minister and chief executive of COP29, was caught on film agreeing to facilitate oil deals at the negotiations.

Sarah McArthur, an activist with the environmental group UK Youth Climate Coalition, which is a member of the KBPO coalition, said: “COP29 kicked off with the revelation that fossil fuel deals were on the agenda, laying bare the ways that industry’s constant presence has delayed and weakened progress for years. The fossil fuel industry is driven by their financial bottom line, which is fundamentally opposed to what is needed to stop the climate crisis, namely, the urgent and just phaseout of fossil fuels.”

The 10 most climate-vulnerable nations have only a combined 1,033 delegates at the negotiations. “Industry presence is dwarfing that of those on the frontlines of the climate crisis,” the analysis says.

Many fossil fuel lobbyists were granted access to COP29 as part of trade associations, primarily from the global north. The International Emissions Trading Associ-

ation brought the largest number, with 43 representatives hailing from oil majors like TotalEnergies and Glencore.

Other lobbyists are attending as part of national delegations. Japan brought a representative from coal giant Sumitomo, while Canada brought representatives from Suncor and Tourmaline, and Italy brought employees of energy companies Eni and Enel. The UK alone brought 20 lobbyists, the report says.

“The fossil fuel industry has long manipulated climate negotiations to protect its interests while our planet burns,” said Dawda Cham of the grassroots groups Help Gambia and the Africa Make Big Polluters Pay coalition, who is also a member of the KBPO coalition.

The analysis also says the major oil producers Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP, Shell and Eni, which brought a combined total of 39 lobbyists to COP29, are “linked to enabling genocide in Palestine” because their operations supply oil to Israel.

For the analysis, climate campaigners pored over the UN’s list of registered COP29 attendees and noted their disclosed affiliations.

Last year’s climate talks in Dubai were attended by 2,456 fossil fuel lobbyists — a record number which represented nearly 3 percent of the 85,000 total attendees. This year, turnout is lower, with about 70,000 people granted access, of whom 1.5 per-

cent are fossil fuel-linked lobbyists.

Though the analysis covers only fossil fuel-linked lobbyists, it notes that representatives from other polluting sectors such as agribusiness and transit are also present.

Activists have for years urged the UN to ban representatives of polluting industries from climate talks. Last year, officials imposed a new rule requiring registrants to disclose their affiliations; they were previously able to attend without formally disclosing these relationships.

The US hosted a senior representative from the world’s second largest oilfield services company in its COP29 pavilion on Thursday. In a panel about “industry climate solutions for global partners,” a Baker Hughes vice-president said “we’re not looking to tear down infrastructure” but rather were interested in “incremental change” in the fossil fuel industry.

Baker Hughes provides services and products for geothermal power and carbon capture and storage, yet its main business is providing products and services for on-shore and offshore oilfield operations.

Coal, oil and gas are the top contributors to the climate crisis. To avert the worst consequences of global heating, the world must swiftly phase them out, top climate scientists have long warned.

UN climate negotiators did not agree to “transition away” from fossil fuels until their 28th summit in Dubai last year.

### Pashinyan Meets Pope Francis at the Vatican

POPE, from page 1

Last year, one of those 23 prisoners, Gevorg Sujyan, appealed to Francis to help release him from Azerbaijani custody in a letter forwarded to the Vatican through his family in Armenia. Sujyan’s wife Lilit said on Monday that the family still does not know whether the Pope has read the letter.

Sujyan and a fellow aid worker, Davit Davtyan, were captured by Azerbaijani troops just a few days after a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. An Azerbaijani court subsequently sentenced them to 15 years in prison on a string of criminal charges denied by them.

The Vatican has reacted cautiously to the six-week war and subsequent developments. In January 2023, Francis expressed concerns about Azerbaijan’s blockade of Karabakh’s sole land link with Armenia that caused a serious humanitarian crisis in the Armenian-populated region.

But unlike the United States, the European Union and Russia, he stopped short of explicitly demanding that Baku reopen the corridor. Nor is the pontiff known to have publicly denounced Azerbaijan’s September 2023 military offensive that forced Karabakh’s entire population to flee to Armenia.

### Armenia’s Ambassador Meets with Mayor of Paris

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) — The outgoing Armenian Ambassador to France Hasmik Tolmajian met with the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo on November 19.

During the meeting, Tolmajian expressed her gratitude to Hidalgo for her exceptional attention to issues related to Armenia, solidarity, and continued sup-

port for the Armenian people.

Tolmajian emphasized the numerous resolutions of the Paris City Council in support of Armenia initiated by Anne Hidalgo, the Mayor’s visits to Armenia during a difficult period for the Armenian people, the opening of the Esplanade of Armenia in Paris, and a number of other initiatives.



Ambassador Hasmik Tolmajian, left, with Mayor Anne Hidalgo





## INTERNATIONAL

# Ambassador to India Visits Gwalior

By Arunansh B. Goswami

GWALIOR, India — Armenian Ambassador to India Dr. Vahagn Afyan and his delegation visited Gwalior to further strengthen ties between India and Armenia, at the invitation of the Scindia Research Centre.

Gwalior is located in the state of Madhya Pradesh, and has strong cultural and defense connections with Armenia. While the former is because of the world-famous Armenian artist late Sarkis Kachadourian, the latter is because of army commander Hakob Petrosyan, who served three late Maharajas of Gwalior, Daulatrao, Jankojirao, and Jayajirao, and commanded the First Brigade of Scindia.

The guests were received by Brigadier S. Mukherjee, commander of the 115 Infantry Brigade of the Indian Army, who has renovated the historic Alijah Club at the Morar Cantonment in Gwalior. Mukherjee has also studied Armenian presence in Gwalior and installed the portrait of commander Petrosyan in the Officer's Mess of 115 Infantry Brigade, the Alijah Club. The installation of the portrait of Petrosyan in Gwalior was long a demand of Indo-Armenians.

The original portrait, a beautiful oil painting, in military costume, of the distinguished military commander Hakob Petrosyan, was in the possession of John Michael Reghlini of Agra, a great-grandson of Hakob.

Mukherjee, the ambassador and author of this article, gave lectures at the Alijah Club on historical relations between India and Armenia and why we should strengthen already friendly relations. The Armenian delegation also had detailed discussions with officers of the Indian Army and Indian Air Force on the burgeoning defense ties between India and Armenia.

There were 30 Armenian families in Gwalior, all of whom were in the military service of the Maharaja of Gwalior. Major Johanness left a fortune of 500,0000 rupees; another, Woskan, returned to his native Yerevan. After the battles of Maharajpore and Punniar in 1843, which resulted in the disbandment of the huge army of the Scindia, most of the Armenians quit Gwalior and gave up their martial occupations. Hakob's palatial house at Naumahal-la in Gwalior, where the Armenian Church was located, was bought by an erstwhile aristocratic Maratha family. Prior to her death, Helen, the widow of Hakob, sent to the Armenian Church at Calcutta and to the Cathedral at Julfa (Ispahan), all the sacred vessels and vestments of great intrinsic value, which had belonged to the Gwalior Armenian Church erected by Hakob.

The Armenian delegation also visited cultural landmarks in Gwalior, including the Jai Vilas Palace of the Scindia Maharajas of Gwalior, who employed several Armenians. The Jai Vilas Palace was built in 1874 in Italian style by a Neapolitan army officer in the service of Jayajirao Scindia, the late Sir Michael Filose, whose ancestor worked along with Hakob Petrosyan. It is famous for its Durbar Hall, a chamber 100 feet long, 50 feet wide, and



Armenian Delegation at Gwalior Fort. Image Credit: Arunansh B. Goswami.

40 feet high with several tons of gold used for decoration.

The delegation also visited one of the best boarding schools in India, the Scindia School (at the historic Gwalior Fort, from whose ramparts 95-minute guns, equal in number to the years of the veteran soldier Hakob Petrosyan, were fired when he passed away), established in 1897, where talks were held for possible student exchange programs between Kolkata's 196-year-old Armenian School and the Scindia School.

After a sumptuous lunch at the historic school, the delegation visited the Man Singh Palace at the Gwalior fort. Raja Man Singh built this magnificent palace and the

Gujri Mahal. The latter housed his famous queen, Mri-gnayani; it was here that famous Armenian artist Sarkis Kachadourian organized his exhibition of mural paintings. He was supported by Maharaja Jiwajirao M. Scindia of Gwalior in his artistic endeavor. Recently, an exhibition of his Ajanta paintings was organized at the UNESCO WHC event in New Delhi.

The delegation also visited the Armenian cemetery. In order to preserve this cemetery and convert it into an Indo-Armenian friendship park, the ambassador met the political representative of Gwalior (Member of Legislative Assembly) and Minister of Energy of Madhya Pradesh, Pradhuma Singh Tomar, who has assured the Armenian delegation of support from the government.

(Arunansh B. Goswami is a lawyer, historian and visiting fellow at the Orbeli Center in Armenia.)



Armenian Delegation at Scindia School (photo: Arunansh B. Goswami)



Brigadier S. Mukherjee greeting the Armenian ambassador H. E. Vahagn Afyan (photo Indian Army)





# Community News

## Gomidas Bust Unveiled in Watertown

By Aram Arkun  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

WATERTOWN — Watertown gained another Armenian landmark when a new bust of ethnomusicologist Gomidas Vartabed (Sghomon Sghomonian) was unveiled on November 9 at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC) in Watertown.

ACEC Trustee Josh Tevekalian welcomed a large audience, including numerous Watertown officials, such as State Rep. Steve Owens, Councilman Nicole Gardner, Chair of the Watertown Cultural District Kristen Kenney, Executive Director of the Watertown Community Foundation Athelia “Tia” Tilson and Doug Orifice, cofounder of the Watertown Business Coalition. Tevekalian spoke about the 45 years of activities of ACEC and its importance for Armenian community life.

He said that erecting a statue to Gomidas (also transliterated as Komitas) could promote discussion for generations to come, declaring: “A statue is



The new statue of Gomidas Vartabed (photo Aram Arkun)



Josh Tevekalian (photo Aram Arkun)

immortal, prominent and everlasting, much like the person and the legacy that one wishes to honor.”

Tevekalian related that in 2020, during the Covid pandemic, sculptor Dr. Megerditch Tarakdjian offered to donate the Gomidas bust to ACEC but the subsequent lockdown interfered with the ability to properly showcase it. In fall 2024, contact was reestablished and in a short period of time, the statue was installed. Tevekalian thanked the Montreal-based Tarakdjian and noted that his work is found in see KOMITAS, page 10



The new Khatchkar (Ken Martin photo)

## Armenian Heritage Monument Dedicated in Whitinsville

By Kenneth Martin  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

WHITINSVILLE, Mass. — This tiny village in Central Massachusetts, the oldest Armenian community in the US, recently saw the unveiling of the Armenian Heritage Monument, on the grounds of Pine Grove Cemetery, the resting place of many of the ancestors of those attending the unveiling on November 2.

Members of Soorp Astavadzadzin Armenian Apostolic Church of Whitinsville and the general public took part in the dedication and blessing of the Heritage Monument by Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Church, Rev. Mikael Der Kosrofi-an, pastor of the Whitinsville Armenian church, and Fr. Gomidas Baghsarian and Fr. Aram Stepanian, led a prayer and dedication ceremony for the Armenian Heritage Monument. Attending the event were Northbridge Selectmen an State Representative David Muradian, and many friends of the Armenian of Whitinsville.

Whitinsville is part of the town of Northbridge in Worcester County.

Armenian immigrants and refugees came to America to restart their lives after the long series of massacre and ultimately genocide between 1895 and 1923. Whitinsville and the mill and factory there provided shelter and jobs for several immigrant populations.

The construction of the monument intends to counter the actions that Azerbaijan has launched in the past century against Armenian heritage, first erasing any trace of Armenianness in Nakhijevan, and now, well on their way to doing it in Artsakh (Karabakh), after implanting an ethnic cleansing there of all native people.

As for Turkey, their efforts, of course, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries resulted in the Armenian Genocide.



State Rep. David Muradian (Ken Martin photo)



Local and state dignitaries surround Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian of the Prelacy of the Armenian Church of America (Ken Martin photo)

## Dr. Victoria Abrahamyan Receives SAS Outstanding Dissertation Award

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) announced recently that Dr. Victoria Abrahamyan has been chosen to receive the SAS Distinguished Dissertation Award (2020-2023) for “Between the Homeland and the Hostland: (Re) Claiming the Armenian Refugees in French Mandatory Syria, 1918-1946.” Dr. Jennifer Manoukian’s “In Search of Purity: Language, Ideology and Global Intellectual Movements in Ottoman Armenian History, 1750-1915” and Dr. Nora Lessersohn’s “The Sultan of New York: Instructive Entertainment and Ottoman Armenian Politics in Nineteenth Century America (1818-1895)” each received honorary mention.

Abrahamyan defended her doctorate dissertation at the University



Victoria Abrahamyan

of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, in March 2023. The Distinguished Dissertation Award was established in 2004 to recognize exceptional achievement in research and writing dissertations in Armenian studies and is awarded every three years. The winner is awarded a \$1,000 prize. This year’s competition was for dissertations completed between July 2020 and May 2023. A five-member selection committee of the SAS judged the nominations.

Abrahamyan’s dissertation was judged by the committee to be an exceptionally well-argued and sourced revisionist account of the history of Armenian refugees in the interwar period and beyond, 1918-1946. The committee was impressed with the depth of her sourcing in newspapers during this period. By allowing the voices of the protagonists, both Armenian and Syrian, to speak, she complicated the statist narratives one finds in historical analyses of this period. Past scholarship rarely analyzes the role that Soviet Armenia played in this region. The battle for where the new Armenian national home would be created, in the Caucasus or northern Syria, has been little studied. By studying sources in Russian and Armenian state archives and those of diasporic organizations, Abrahamyan shed much light on this struggle. Finally, the quality of the writing throughout this 565-page manuscript was much admired.

“I am greatly honored and proud of see SAS, page 8





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Dr. Victoria Abrahamyan Receives SAS Outstanding Dissertation Award

SAS, from page 7

the recognition of my dissertation by the SAS and the Selection Committee,” said Abrahamyan. “This dissertation is the result of an intellectual journey driven by the urgency and the desire to study the crucial period in Armenian history that shares many striking similarities with the contemporary period, marked by great uncertainties, competition for resources and new trade routes, and struggle for power and influence. By utilizing primary sources in six languages, and putting the Armenian refugees at the center of the analysis, this dissertation had an ambitious goal to revise the existing Soviet and Western historiographies. In this regard, the SAS award is the most significant recognition for me. I am delighted to be part of a new generation of scholars who are advancing the field of Armenian Studies,” she continued.

“Victoria Abrahamyan’s dissertation is an outstanding example of original research, insightful analysis, and rhetorical clarity,” said Dr. Christina Maranci, the president of SAS and the holder of Mash-tots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University. “It contributes in important ways to our understanding of the reception of refugees from the Armenian Genocide.”

Manoukian’s dissertation explores the emergence of the standard language known today as Western Armenian. In particular, it examines the intellectual labor that led to the acceptance of this language as the dominant written medium among Ottoman Armenians by 1915. Her study turns away from conventional historical-linguistic treatments of Armenian language history and focuses instead on the social aspects of language use.

Drawing on insights from the fields of historical sociolinguistics, global intellectual history and nationalism studies as well as untapped Armenian-language primary sources, her study uncovers the fundamental role that beliefs about purity played in the formation of Western Armenian. While this focus on purity remained a constant among the intelligentsia throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, she shows how ideas about what was considered “pure” were shaped and reshaped by various actors and interactions with ideas that originated far beyond the Ottoman Empire. “Many thanks to SAS for recognizing my dissertation with an honorable mention. I am delighted to share it with my friend and colleague, Nora Lessersohn,” stated Manoukian.

Manoukian earned her PhD in Armenian studies in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2023. Currently, she is a University of California President’s Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of History (Center for Armenian Studies) at the University of California, Irvine.

Lessersohn’s dissertation is a microhistory of Christopher Oscanyan (1818-1895), the first known Armenian-American citizen. Sent by American missionaries from Ottoman Constantinople to New York City in 1834, Oscanyan became known across the United States as “the Oriental lecturer,” and “the Turk.” Over the course of the century, he used a range of popular media – lectures, books, newspapers, photographs, tableaux vivant, comic opera, and personal costume – to “correct [Americans’] erroneous impressions of the Turks” and to cultivate “mutual diplomatic relations” between his two countries. Through his efforts, he sought not only to create a “friendly”

relationship between the United States and the Ottoman Empire based on mutual understanding between equal nations, but also to promote political reform within the Ottoman Empire itself.

The dissertation, traces the evolution of Oscanyan’s own political views. Oscanyan’s politics and diplomatic work changed radically in the 1870s, when relations between the Ottoman Empire and its Christian populations became more fraught than ever. From the late 1870s until his death, Oscanyan worked exclusively to construct strong diplomatic relations between Ottoman Armenians and Americans, championing, especially, Armenian immigration to the United States.

“I am honored to receive this recognition from the SAS and the Selection Committee,” said Lessersohn. “I so deeply appreciate what Oscanyan can tell us about the 19th-century Armenian past, and I so deeply appreciate that the SAS is moved by his life and work, too.”

Lessersohn earned her PhD from Uni-



Jennifer Manoukian



Nora Lessersohn

versity College London (UCL) in May 2023. Currently she is a Visiting Researcher at Georgetown University and will be the Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian

Visiting Professor of Armenian Studies at Columbia in the spring, where she will be teaching a course called “Leaving the Ottoman Empire.”



## Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter

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OBITUARY

# Gerald ‘Jerry’ Turpanjian

## Benefactor to Numerous Armenian Causes

LOS ANGELES — Gerald “Jerry” Turpanjian, a philanthropist, husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and unwavering advocate for the Armenian community and beyond, died earlier in November.

A child of Armenian Genocide survivors, Turpanjian was born in 1934 in Aleppo, Syria and raised in Beirut, Lebanon. After graduating from Armenian Evangelical Central High School in Beirut, Turpanjian immigrated to Los Angeles. His decades-long involvement with USC began during his time as a student of International Relations.

Turpanjian was married to Patricia Savoian, with whom he had four children. Turpanjian was the founder of Pacific Sales, which became the largest retailer of luxury kitchen and bath appliances in the United States before he sold it to Best Buy in 2006. Until his passing, he served as chairman and CEO of New Spark Holdings, Inc., as well as president of the Turpanjian Family Educational Foundation (TFEF).

He was a big supporter of several universities and their Armenian programs, including the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies and the American University of Armenia.

Turpanjian was a member of the institute’s National Honorary Council since 2014, a body that brought together individuals with extensive experience in diploma-

cy and leadership to advance the Institute’s mission.

A lifelong believer in the power of education, Turpanjian endowed two chairs at USC — the Chair in Civil Society and Social Change and Early Career Chair in Contemporary Armenian Studies.

The Turpanjian Family Educational Foundation played a transformative role in cementing contemporary Armenian Studies into the academic landscape at USC. Stemming from his commitment to Armenia and his Armenian heritage, Turpanjian consistently supported the Institute’s growth and reach.

In 2016, Turpanjian received the Legacy Award during the Institute’s 10th Anniversary Gala for his profound commitment to education and USC.

His was a longtime supporter of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, the American University of Armenia, and numerous initiatives in Armenia’s rural communities stands as a beacon of hope and unity.

Throughout his life, Turpanjian was an active and devoted philanthropist, seizing every opportunity to use his tremendous professional success to strengthen the Armenian homeland. After Armenia gained independence in 1991, he pursued a host of endeavors that demonstrated his commit-



ment to promoting democracy, free enterprise, and entrepreneurship in the country.

AUA benefited enormously from Turpanjian’s emphasis on education in all its forms and his philanthropic vision and activities. In 2021, the Turpanjian family funded AUA’s groundbreaking Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, the first in not only Armenia, but the entire former Soviet Union. In 2017, Turpanjian and his wife named the Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian College of Health Sciences through a major gift to the University. In 1995, the couple established the Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis, which was restructured this year into the Turpanjian Institute of Social Sciences. He also supported the digitization of Armenian literature in order

to make it more accessible and to preserve it for future generations, producing what is known today as the AUA Digital Library.

In 2006, Turpanjian approached AUA with the idea of creating a rural development program for Armenia’s regions, plus Artsakh and Javakhk. That same year, the Turpanjian Rural Development Program (TRDP) launched with the generous support of the TFEF. The Foundation has also funded several programs offered by AUA Extension, providing subsidized tuition for courses in the regions. AUA recognizes the instrumental role the Turpanjian family has played in expanding the academic programs the University offers and in making a sustained impact on the country by producing the scholars, leaders, and citizens of tomorrow. Additionally, since 2008, nearly 1,000 AUA students have benefited from the Turpanjian family’s scholarship support, with an additional 1,000 scholarships administered through AUA and granted to university students all over Armenia.

Beyond AUA, Turpanjian sponsored countless projects throughout Armenia and Artsakh, for which he was recognized with a plethora of awards and honors, including the Presidential Commendation Award presented by the University at the 2021 AUA Commencement Ceremony. In recent years, commenting on what he hoped to see in the next decade of the University and beyond, Turpanjian said, “I am optimistic that AUA will continue to realize innovative programs and persist as a regional leader in education.”

# Michael Ohanian

## Beloved Philanthropist, Engineering Leader, and Devoted Church Leader

POMPANO BEACH, Fla. — Michael Ohanian, 92, died on October 25.

Mike was from Pompano Beach, Fla., and formerly from Andover, Mass. He passed peacefully with excellent care.

He was a dedicated family man, passionate philanthropist, and accomplished engineer who left an indelible mark on communities in both the United States and Armenia. He was well-known for his commitment to helping others and fostering educational opportunities.

Ohanian was born in Haverhill, Mass. and grew up in Methuen. He is survived by his daughter Debbie from Glendale. He was predeceased by his wife and best friend of 69 years, Sonia. He was also predeceased by his parents John and Maritza (immigrants from Armenia) and two broth-

ers, George and Walter. He is also survived by a loving family of sisters-in-law, as well as many cousins, nieces and nephews.

After graduating from Merrimack College with a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering he worked at Raytheon for many years. He was known as a pioneer in his field constantly being promoted to role of greater responsibility. He was the vice president at Litton Industries and Martin Marietta Materials. For the last 15 years of his career, he held executive positions of vice president eventually being promoted to president of Intermec, a leader in Automatic Identification in Seattle.

He was also an avid reader always interested in current events.

He lived a full life of service to others. He was a US Army veteran servicing

during the Korean War (1952-1954). He also served on many boards both corporate and philanthropic.

Ohanian was well known to be very handy and able to fix anything. Fixing and improving things was his hobby and pleasure. Family and friends all benefited from Mike’s help. He showed up with his tools and went to work.

Mike was very passionate about education and lifelong learning. He served on the board for his alma mater, Merrimack College, for many years. He also led the establishment of Automatic Identification Data Capture Laboratory at two Armenian universities, State Engineering University of Armenia and Russian American University. He provided equipment, software and training for both faculty and students.

Ohanian also was very giving to the less fortunate in Armenia. He provided funding for improvements to an orphanage in Dilijan, including building of barn for food supplies and remodeling of children dormitories.

Mike was a life-long advocate for the Armenian Church. Early on serving as Superintendent of Sunday School at Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church, Lawrence in the late 1970s. He later led maintenance and improvement efforts at both the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church, and St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church. He also served as godfather to St. Mary’s Armenian Church in Cooper City, Fla.

Together with his wife Sonia, they became the main Godparents of the new-



ly consecrated Armenian Church at Hye Pointe. Their efforts were so significant the church was named in honor of Mike. The name is Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael and St. Gabriel. This was a tremendous honor and sense of pride for both Mike and Sonia. Truly an impressive legacy of the life they led together.

Service Information:

A wake was held on Friday, November 22, followed by the funeral service at Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael & St. Gabriel, 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill, MA 01835.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael & St. Gabriel, P.O. Box 8069, Ward Hill, MA 01835. Please make checks payable to “Hye Pointe.”

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Gomidas Bust Unveiled in Watertown

KOMITAS, from page 7

several institutions in the US, Canada and Armenia. He also thanked Toros Vosbikian, who sponsored the installation and the beautification of its surrounding area in honor of his father, Hampartsoum Vosbikian.

Chairman of the ACEC Board of Trustees Dr. Vatche Seraderian addressed the assembled in both Armenian and English about Gomidas's significance by providing a brief biography of the composer, singer, musicologist and priest. He said, "Gomidas's main legacy lies in his dedication to preserving and reviving Armenian folk music."

Tarakdjian added further information about Gomidas's musical legacy and re-

cially his friend Vosbikian. He also noted in wonderment that in Montreal it took 9 months to get a permit for the Gomidas statue, while in Watertown, it only took 9 weeks.

Very Rev. Fr. Hrant Tahanian of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church of Watertown spoke about the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide, and recalled that from 2015, the Armenian Church accepted the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide as saints, and so hymns henceforth celebrated them. He also reminded the audience that the next day, November 10, was an international day of prayer on the eve of COP29 being held in Baku to remind the world of the captives of Artsakh still held by Azerbaijan. Despite Azerbaijani crimes,



Priests cut the red ribbon before the unveiling (photo Ken Martin)

marked that the first two sculptures he had created when he started to work with bronze some 27 years ago were of Gomidas and Sayat Nova (and the former ended up at the Gomidas Chamber Music House in Yerevan). On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gomidas's birth, another of his Gomidas statues was erected in Montreal.

Tarakdjian thanked all those involved with the erection of the new statue, espe-

cially his friend Vosbikian. He also noted in wonderment that in Montreal it took 9 months to get a permit for the Gomidas statue, while in Watertown, it only took 9 weeks.

Tahanian then invited the audience to participate in a prayer and blessing outside at the unveiling of the new statue. Armenian clergy from other churches in the area participated, including Fr. Antranig Baljian, Rev. Arakel Aljalian of St. James Arme-



From left, Dr. Vatche Seraderian, Dr. Megerditch Tarakdjian and Toros Vosbikian unveil the statue (photo Aram Arkun)

nian Apostolic Church, Very Rev. Ghazar Bedrossian of Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church and Rev. Avedis Boynerian.

After the unveiling, the audience returned inside for a musical program. Very Rev. Bedrossian sang *Karoun A* [It Is Spring], one of Gomidas's famous songs, with piano accompaniment by Azadouhi Markarian, while several other Gomidas pieces were performed by the Hamazkayin Boston ArtNova Choir, conducted by Artur Veranian.

Guests lingered after the formal program at a reception courtesy of Anoush'ella Kitchen, with dessert provided by Armenian Relief Society members. Books and posters concerning Gomidas Vartabed were on display courtesy of the National

Association for Armenian studies and Research (NAASR). A separate small display of posters of Tarakdjian's sculptural works was set up in the reception area.



Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian singing, with Azadouhi Markarian on piano (photo Aram Arkun)



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Champagne cocktail reception

Invitation

The exhibition will be open on December 14 & 15 from 4 - 8 pm





COMMUNITY NEWS

# San Diego Gala Raises Funds for St. Sarkis Church

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — The successful Bridge to the Future Gala Dinner & Dance was held on Saturday, November 2, at the Westin Carlsbad Resort and Spa, with 170 guests.

The gala raised \$200,000 to support the second building phase of the St. Sarkis Armenian Church campus near Del Mar, that is the new spiritual and cultural home for the Armenian community of San Diego and beyond. Parish priest, Very Rev. Pakrad Berjekian, presided over the evening with his blessing and remarks, under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese.

Entertainment headliners at the Gala this year included the Allen G. Orchestra from Los Angeles, soprano Andria Elam, emcee Zanni Kalaydjian, and auctioneer Suzanne Martin. The event also featured a champagne reception with musicians Mattias Von Herrath and Lynn Talley and youth vocalists performing the national anthems: Vaughn Der-Avakian, Elisa Avanesian, Ani



St. Sarkis Gala Committee

von Herrath, Aram Badalyan, and Arina Badalyan, directed by Sona Baghdasarian, choir director of St. Sarkis Armenian Church.

VIPs included Dr. Karen Israyelyan, Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles, and his wife Anna Grigoryan; David Ojakian, Western Region Director for the Armenian Assembly; Joe Kellejian, former mayor of Solana Beach, and his wife Mary; Harry Krikorian, chairman of the St. Sarkis Trust Fund Committee, and his wife Linda; Jim Sahagian, chairman of the St. Sarkis Building Committee, and his wife Jane; and Bob Barsam, former Chairman of the Diocesan Council of the Western Diocese, and his daughters Tina and Helena; and Greg Martayan, VP of external affairs at Valley Economic Alliance, senior advisor of public safety for Assembly Member Schiavo and former director of public safety for City of Los Angeles.

At the evening’s conclusion, Martayan presented a United States Senate Commendation from California’s Sen. Alex Padilla, in honor of St. Sarkis Armenian Church’s third anniversary.

Gala Chair Kathy Kassardjian thanked everyone for their support of an unforgettable evening: “With faith in God and your support, all things are possible, and our church campus is becoming a reality.”



Dr. Matthias Von Herrath performing violin at the Gala Reception with the Champagne Princess!



Gala Chair Kathy Kassardjian and Mistress of Ceremonies Zanni Kalaydjian

“The new church campus established in 2022 has become a landmark for Armenians near and far and an inspirational partner as we support Armenians around the world,” said Consul General Dr. Israyelyan.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, who was in Armenia for meetings of the Supreme Spiritual Council, shared in his congratulatory message that the St. Sarkis parish, “with unrelenting dedication and zeal, has served as the spiritual, educational and cultural center of the faithful community.”

The Gala Committee was chaired by Kathy Kassardjian and Dr. Anna Khatchatrian under the guidance of parish priest, Very Rev. Fr. Pakrad Dz. V. Berjekian. Committee members included Arpy Adourian, Nora Balikian, Zanni Kalaydjian, Rita Kanberian, Nora Kassardjian Belmer, Lisa Kradjian, Harry Krikorian, Mariam Kutukjian, Sylvia Philibbosian, Jim Sahagian, Sonia Serpekian, and Gina Tashjian.



To Our Readers:

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US from 1932. Readers can learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

The *Mirror-Spectator* has covered the violence and political uncertainty affecting Armenia and Artsakh, supported efforts at humanitarian fundraising, and continued to provide periodic video reports online. Send us your email if you wish to receive our weekly updates.

We continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year’s wishes, and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. In case you wish to give gift subscriptions of the *Mirror-Spectator* for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in the newspaper as well as one below. Your support is what keeps us going and we always enjoy hearing from you.

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Alin K. Gregorian  
Editor

Aram Arkun  
Managing Editor

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# ‘Uncle Garabed’ Titles Donated to Yerevan State’s Izmirlian Library

YEREVAN — The family of veteran Armenian-American writer/editor “Uncle Garabed” or CK Garabed (pen names of Charles Garabed Der Kasbarian) has donated a diverse collection of valuable printed books in the English language from Kasbarian’s personal collection to the Sarkis and Marie Izmirlian Library at Yerevan State University (YSU) for permanent use by its student body and faculty.

Der Kasbarian devoted his life to acting in the national interest of both countries. His knowledge and wisdom were vast and sought after by many. He was often referred to as a walking encyclopedia and was dubbed “Uncle of All Armenians” by Rev. Mesrob Lakissian, pastor of St. Illuminator’s Armenian Cathedral of New York City.

It was the late Der Kasbarian’s wishes that a portion of his literary holdings be made available to young, inquiring Armenian minds. “Understanding that the citizens of Armenia did not necessarily have natural exposure to global writings by nature of the Soviet experiment, Uncle Garabed was in favor of the transplantation of a portion of his library to Armenia,” said his daughter, Armenian-American journalist Lucine Kasbarian. His free-thinking philosophy on education, enlightenment and realpolitik was summed up by the English philosopher and statesman Sir Francis Bacon, who said, “Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.”

Many literary subjects are represented in this collection, particularly material not readily available in the United States where these books were published. They include categories such as: art, architecture and photography; biographies and memoir; classic English and American literature; English language reference



Completing the book acquisition process were (L-R): Sima Chazakhetsyan, Lucine Kasbarian, Anahit Mkhitaryan and Lucine Karjian, posing here in front of the pantheon of Armenian literary greats at the YSU Izmirlian Library.

books; geography and travel; hidden histories, global hegemony, geopolitics, war and genocide; metaphysics and science; mystery and crime fiction; mythology;

philosophy and religion; poetry and prose; the works of William Shakespeare; and women’s literature.

Der Kasbarian, who passed away in 2022, had his origins in Dikranagerd, Western Armenia. His grandfather, Kasbar Der Kasbarian, was the priest of St. Asdvadzadzin Church of the village of Ali-pounar, Dikranagerd and martyred during the Hamidian Massacres of 1884-96. Garabed was the son of Genocide survivors who arrived in the US as refugees.

He wrote many articles, essays and short stories about the Armenian national condition. He also authored The Dictionary of Armenian Surnames with special attention given to Diasporan surnames with Persian, Arabic, Assyrian, Kurdish and Turkish etymological roots; The Dikranagerd Vernacular Handbook, containing words, sayings and terms from this endangered dialect of Western Armenia; The Dikranagerd Mystique Armenian Cookbook featuring specific dishes from this regional culture; An Unusual Look at Biblical Subjects about Armenian Christian folk traditions and Oyin Mi Tavli, a one-act play exclusively in the dialect of Dikranagerd.

For 33 years, he was a columnist for the *Armenian Weekly* in Watertown. Within his weekly installments under the name “Uncle Garabed’s Notebook,” he presented an assortment of philosophical ideas written by global thinkers in addition to his own original thoughts; folk tales, anecdotes, poems, riddles, trivia and deconstructions of Armenian surnames.

The YSU Library was founded in 1920. Today this academic library possesses about 2 million books/units, 1 million of which are academic. In 1995, an Armenian sponsor from Switzerland, Dikran Izmirlian, donated \$1 million to the YSU Library for the application of modern techniques after which time it was decided that the Library should bear his name.

## Prayer Service for Artsakh Captives Held At St. Mary Armenian Church

WASHINGTON — On November 10, the parishioners and friends of St. Mary Armenian Church united in a heartfelt prayer service dedicated to the Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) who remain captive in Azerbaijan.

This service was part of a worldwide prayer initiative, led by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, calling Armenian churches around the globe to stand in solidarity for justice, peace, and the protection of those held unlawfully on fabricated charges in Baku.

The service began with a warm welcome from Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, who introduced the guests and expressed gratitude for their solidarity and commitment to the Armenian cause. Special guests, including advocate Nancy Najarian, and President

and CEO of Save the Persecuted Christians, Frank Gaffney, joined the St. Mary community, invited by Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Ecumenical Director and Diocesan Legate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

Najarian and Gaffney shared moving words, inspiring hope and resilience, while urging all present to continue supporting the people of Artsakh. Present were also



Nancy Najarian

Robert Avetisyan, former representative of the Republic of Artsakh to the United States and current director of research and analysis at the Armenian Assembly of America, and Col. Hrayr Geghamyan, Defense Attaché of the Armenian Embassy to the United States, along with members of the Armenian Embassy staff.

This prayer was synchronized with services held across Armenia and its diaspora,



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and Fr. Karapetyan

with the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches urging their communities to join in prayer for the people of Armenia and Artsakh.

St. Mary Armenian Church and com-

munity stands firmly with the people of Artsakh, advocating for the safe return of all captives. We believe that in unity and prayer, we can foster hope, healing and peace in the face of adversity.



Frank Gaffney





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenian Church of Hye Pointe Officially Renamed Holy Archangels

HAVERHILL, Mass. — In a weekend of sacred ceremonies and splendid pageantry, the Eastern Diocese welcomed a new Armenian Church into the world.

Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan led the consecration of the former Armenian Church of Hye Pointe in Haverhill, giving it a new name to match the majestic beauty of the sanctuary: the Armenian Church of the Holy Archangels St. Michael and St. Gabriel.

The occasion was the long-awaited fulfillment of years of planning and effort on the part of the parish faithful. Bishop Mesrop recalled the church's unique history in his sermon during the consecration service on Saturday, October 26.

"This church began as a vision that started with the faithful members of two historic parishes: Holy Cross Church of Lawrence, and St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Haverhill," he said. "They came together in 2002 and created the first merged Armenian Church in North America. And this story of two communities joining together in the service of God was in my prayers as I asked God for inspiration in choosing a name for their new church."

"The answer I received," he said, "was to consecrate the church in the name of the Holy Archangels, Sts. Michael and Gabriel — two heavenly messengers, each bearing a special message of God's power and compassion."

The consecration service was part of a weekend of sacred and celebratory events planned by the community for October 25 through 27. It included a Friday night "opening of doors" service, a consecration and banquet on Saturday, and the church's inaugural Divine Liturgy on Sunday.

Clergy from across the Diocese participated in the ceremonies, as did several distinguished visitors, including the Primate of the United Kingdom, Bishop Hovakim Manukyan.

During both the consecration service and the banquet that followed in the church hall, Parsamyan paid special tribute to a number of people, including parish pastor Fr. Vart Gyozyan; benefactors Michael Ohanian and his daughter Debbie Ohanian; the long-serving members of the Building Committee; the 16 consecration godparents, the donors, and countless volunteers whose faith brought the event to fruition.

## Expressing the Essence of God

During the consecration service, as the Primate pronounced the new name of the church for the first time, his voice expressed deep emotion both for the commu-



A throng outside the Armenian Church of the Holy Archangels St. Michael and St. Gabriel

nity and the significance of the moment.

"This name made my voice tremble with awe, for the Holy Archangels remind us of the very essence of our God. St. Michael's name means, 'Who is equal to God?' For indeed, no power on earth, no situation in life, can measure up to God's greatness and love. This warrior angel reminds us that God stands with us in every battle, surrounding us with His protection. When we're overwhelmed or uncertain, Michael is a reminder that God fights for us."

"And then there's Gabriel, whose name means, 'God is my strength.' As the messenger angel who brought Mary the life-changing announcement that she would give birth to Jesus, the Savior of the world, Gabriel reminds us that God's strength is present in our lives to lift us up, to empower us, to carry us through any trial."

"So, as we honor these Holy Archangels," he concluded, "let's carry their message with us. Let's face every challenge with courage, knowing that we're not alone, that we're empowered by the very strength of heaven."

During both the consecration service and the banquet that followed in the church's beautifully appointed hall, Bishop Mesrop paid special tribute to a number of people.

He offered warm words of congratulations to parish pastor Fr. Vart Gyozyan. "To the people of this parish, *Der Vart* has been your pastor, your leader, your friend," he said. "In the years that it has taken to complete this project, Der Vart has played every conceivable role: from caretaker to cheerleader to peacemaker. He has champi-

oned the vision of this church, and kept that holy vision alive in the hearts of its faithful — even through the uncertain pandemic period. And he did it all with that spirit of humility and gentleness of heart that we have all come to know, love, and admire." The Primate presented Fr. Gyozyan with a hand cross to honor his pastoral leadership of the parish.

He also praised two benefactors of the church project: Michael Ohanian and his daughter Debbie Ohanian. "Thank you both for your incredible generosity, your unwavering support and vision," he said. "Today we also remember with love your dear wife and mother, Sonia Ohanian, who was called to our Lord a little while ago. Her faithful spirit truly lives in your hearts, Michael and Debbie; and it will surely live on in this sanctuary."

The Primate asked Fr. Gyozyan to read an encyclical sent by Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, celebrating the church's consecration, and honoring the Ohanians for their role in making it a reality.

Finally, Bishop Mesrop gave thanks to "the 16 consecration godparents, the donors, and the volunteers — to every person who gave of their time, talent, and treasure: This day would not have been possible without your dedication and love for your church. Thank you for helping to build a spiritual home for generations to come."

## Special Guests and Honors

Bishop Mesrop welcomed the distinguished clergy in attendance, among them Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, the Primate of the United Kingdom, who journeyed to the U.S. especially for the consecration, and to honor his kinsman Fr. Vart Gyozyan, longtime pastor of the Haverhill parish.

Two other visitors from the wider Armenian Church were Fr. Aghan Gogchyan, chancellor of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem; and Fr. Kevork Arakelyan of the Western Diocese, who holds the distinction as the very first St. Nersess graduate to be ordained a priest.

The Primate also thanked the visiting Fr. Stephan Baljian and Reverend Avedis Boynerian for their presence, support, and prayers.

Clergy visiting from across the Eastern Diocese included Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian, Fr. Simeon Odabashian, Fr. Karekin Kasparian, Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, Fr. Arakel Aljalian, Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian, Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, Fr. Shnork Souin, Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, Fr. Hratch Sargsyan, Fr. Khachatur Kes-

ablian, Fr. Tadeos Barseghyan, Fr. Sevak Gabrielyan, Fr. Voski Galstyan, Fr. Andreas Garabedian, Fr. Nigoghos Aznavourian, and Fr. Haroutiun Sabounjian. St. Nersess Seminary dean Fr. Mardiros Cheviaan was joined by the current class of seminarians.

In addition, during the banquet Bishop Mesrop presented special commendations



Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan knocks on the door of the newly-named church as part of the renaming ceremony.

to the members of the Building Committee, for their enduring vision and labor over many years. The committee members were chairman Scott Sahagian; vice chair Ervant Kibarian; treasurer Linda Tanoian Doherty; assistant treasurer Bojan Manich; secretary Andrea Giragosian Korbey; assistant secretary Diane Shadbegian; Michael Bebirian; Mark Kazanjian; Myles Couyoumjian; Kim Kazanjian Dandurant; and Robert Serabian.

Also receiving certificates of recognition for their efforts and generosity were parishioners Andre Garabedian, Andrew Royce Fournier, Andrew Kibarian, Ani Keveryan, Armen Derderian, Barbara Sarkisian Arthur, Carol Bazarian, Charlene Hovanasian, Cynthia Bogosian, Daniel Shad, Daniel Tavitian, David Tavitian, Daniel Shadbegian, Elaine Bebirian, Evan Sahagian, Alison Derderian, Gary Townsend, George Karanian, Jefferson Kim, Joseph Tavitian, Kathy Meranian, Michael Demirchian, Michelle Beeny, Nancy Sahagian, Nathan Kibarian, Robin Colombosian, Rebecca Demirchian, Sarah Tavitian, Stephanie Naroian, Susan Hazarvartian, Kim Eric Hazarvartian, Anahit Kibarian, Vania Mardirossian Kim, Viken Dumecian, Robert Korbey, Kristina Bebirian, Yn. Lusine Aharonian, Lucy Sirmaian, Lynn Kanayan, Emmanuel Baghdayan, and Mary Ann Ohanian.



A procession of clergy walking out of Holy Archangels Church



# Arts & Culture

## Tatiana Podgorskaya

(Not) All About My Armenian Mother



By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

YEREVAN-MOSCOW — Animator Tatiana Olegovna Podgorskaya, 51, graduated from the Moscow Animation Cinematography School in 1994. From 1985 to 1988, she studied at the Serov Art School No. 1, and from 1988 to 1992, she attended the Moscow Theater, Art and Technical College (specializing in theater set design). From 1991 to 1992, she worked as a set designer at the Sovremennik theater. In 1993-1994, she attended courses at the Polygraphic Institute and studied at the Animation Cinematography School. From 1994 to 2006, she worked as an animator at the Argus film studio. Since 2006, she has collaborated with various studios in Moscow, participating in the creation of numerous films. She is the recipient of the Ikar National Animation Award (2016, in the “Animator” category for her work on the film *Andrey Khizhina and His Grief*).

Dear Tatiana, we belong to a generation that grew up under the strong influence of Soviet animation cinema, and we are still under its positive inspiration. I have always been against the Soviet regime, yet most of my favorite cartoons remain the best works from the Soyuzmultfilm studio. Isn't it paradoxical — within the “empire of evil,” the most wonderful animated films were made?

The Soyuzmultfilm studio is a completely separate world! A world of kind wizards and brave heroes, a world of adventure lovers and nice fairies. A place where, in the end, good always triumphs. The directors and artists were often very far from politics, and were, in themselves, incredibly witty, kind and intellectual people. Of course, scripts went through very tough censorship, but the screenwriters, directors, and artists were so talented that, even after passing through all the stages, they still managed to create unmatched masterpieces.

How would you characterize contemporary Russian animation cinema — are the traditions of Soviet animation still alive, or did things change after the collapse of the USSR?

The traditions of Soviet animation are gradually fading into oblivion. New technologies, trends and styles are emerging. The old school is almost gone. On one hand, this is very sad, but on the other, life moves on

see TATIANA, page 15



Aviva Barkhourdarian at the screening of her film (Karine Armen photo)

## Animated Documentary Pays Tribute to Iran-Born, Berlin-Based Father

By Karine Armen

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDAL — The film “Vigen, Berlin and the Cold War” was screened on Sunday, November 3, at Laemmle Theatre here, followed by a question-and-answer session with its director and coproducer, Aviva Barkhourdarian.

“Vigen, Berlin and the Cold War” is an animated work based on the life of Barkhourdarian’s father, who moved to Berlin in 1962 from Iran. Barkhourdarian calls it an essay film, not a documentary, because she is in the film, and many parts of it are based on her memory, like a memoir, in addition to historical references.

In Berlin, where he moved, Vigen was able to travel from West Berlin to East Berlin and vice versa, because of his Iranian passport, something the German residents of the divided city were not allowed to do. The Berlin Wall, built in 1961 by East Germany’s government, included guard towers along the large concrete walls. The wall was demolished on November 9, 1989. During the years of its existence, some thousand Germans escaped from the East side, and almost 200 were shot attempting to leave. The opportunity to cross the Iron Curtain influenced Vigen’s life.

The idea for “Vigen, Berlin and the Cold War” started as a personal film for relatives, but it expanded to include background stories of German, Iranian, and Armenian cultures. Vigen’s apartment served as a hub for Armenian and Iranian immigrants, fostering political discussions and community. They had many political discussions and craved to be around familiar faces, and eventually founded an Armenian club.

Vigen supported the human rights movements and was against the Shah’s regime.

“After the screenings, viewers often come up to me and say, ‘you’ve made a movie of our lives,’” Barkhourdarian said after the screening. “Vigen’s life was unique, and at the same time, many immigrants experienced similar stories.” In her pamphlet, she wrote, “It was important to me to tell Vigen’s stories, to give a different perspective on this piece of contemporary history.”

The film includes footage and dialogue in German, Farsi, Armenian, and English. It was screened at the Golden Apricot Film Festival in Armenia in July 2024. It was nominated for Best Feature-Length Documentary at the Arpa IFF and received a Mayor’s Commendation from the City of Glendale at the film festival’s awards ceremony on October 27.

Aviva Barkhourdarian was born in West Berlin. When she was very young, she lived in Iran and California. During the question-and-answer period, Barkhourdarian said, “My father did not like the atmosphere in Iran. After two years, we moved back to Germany.”

This took place before the Iranian Revolution.

Barkhourdarian is fluent in German, English, and Armenian. “I learned Armenian when we lived in Tehran; I needed to communicate and play with my cousins.”

see TRIBUTE, page 14

## Curator Tina Chakarian Advances Armenian Visibility By Launching Endowment at La Biennale di Venezia

BOSTON/VENICE — Boston-based multidisciplinary artist and designer Tina Chakarian has been a groundbreaking force with her curatorial vision. With her 30-plus years of experience in the professional art world, Chakarian’s initiatives have centered themselves around showcasing Armenian culture globally and promoting the voice of Armenian art and design in international dialogue.

One such effort has also been her dedication to elevating the place of Armenian artists at the Venice Biennale, the most prestigious art and cultural event in the world. Chakarian took over as the development director for the Armenian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2018. She worked to raise funds for the exhibit, created a jury for selection, oversaw installations and coordinated events and press conferences.

This year, Chakarian not only serves as the development director and curator of the Armenian National Pavilion at the 19th International Architecture Biennale, but also is estab-



Curated by Carlo Ratti, Venice, Arsenale and Giardini venues, 10 May to 23 November 2025 (pre-opening on 8 and 9 May).



Carlo Ratti Director of MIT Senseable City Lab, Curator of the 19th International Architecture Exhibition Of La Biennale di Venezia

lishing an endowment to help secure Armenia’s place at all future Venice Biennales.

One of the defining features of the Venice Biennale is the “National Pavilions” where each country is given the space to exhibit their own artists’ works around that year’s given theme. At this year’s Architectural Biennale — which occurs on odd-numbered years — Armenian artists will be presenting their own unique concepts and projects around the theme of “Intelligens. Natural. Artificial. Collective.” This theme was set by architect, designer and academic, Prof. Carlo Ratti who was appointed as the curator for 2025. Chakarian’s Armenian Pavilion will run from May 10, 2025 through November 23, 2025. She has already received many submissions for jury selection.

Chakarian’s curatorial conception on the theme leverages Armenia’s

see CHAKARIAN, page 15





ARTS & CULTURE

(Not) All About My Armenian Mother

TATIANA, from page 14

, changes, evolves and improves. However, animators remain wizards, as they always have been. The only thing is that now money, rather than talent, quality of work, and artistry, is what decides everything. Often, the person funding the film dictates its style and content, despite having absolutely no competence in the field. This is incredibly painful. My mother would always openly express her disagreement and refuse to work on such projects.

**You were born into the family of one of the outstanding masters of Soviet animation — animator and artist Marina Voskanyants, who passed away in early October this year. A Merited Artist of the Russian Federation, three times recognized as the best animator in Russia, Marina Voskanyants participated in more than 100 films and became famous for her choreography in animation. What is it like to have a mother who is an animator?**

What is it like to have a mother who is an artist? What is it like to have a mother who is a painter? Or a mother who is a wizard? These are three undeniable qualities every animator must have. And also, animators remain a child at heart for their whole life. My mother had all of these qualities. You ask why wizards? Because they create, draw, perform, and then, on the screen, you see an amazing result that you cannot achieve in live-action films. In animation, you can draw anything. For example, a few of my mother’s scenes: tender flowers transform into beautiful dancing girls (“Nargis”); Ivan dances with Firebirds and then skillfully catches one of them (“The Little Humpbacked Horse”); the dance of the Gypsy bird in “Before We Were Birds” and many others. I remember how my mother worked on the character Gromozeka in “The Secret of the Third Planet.” At first, she was horrified. “He has six arms! What do I do with them?!” His eyes stick out like pencils! He has a door on his belly! How do I work with this? He can’t be

static!!!” And my mother handled the task excellently; Gromozeka turned out to be very expressive. For example, in the scene where he talks to Seleznyov, she invented that Gromozeka feeds the professor a salad, then licks the plate clean and takes it for himself, opening the door on his belly.

This is how my mother worked day and night at home, drawing frame by frame. Around her desk, crumpled sheets of tracing paper piled up because when something didn’t work, it was easier to throw away the drawing and start again with a fresh sheet. Once the scene was ready, she would hand it off for rough phase work and filming. After the scene was viewed on the screen, the director would approve it and send it for further production — detailed drawing, phase line work on the celluloid, and filling in the colors. On average, producing a 10-minute animated film took nine months.

My mother was not just an animator. She was also a talented student and follower of the work of Lyudmila Alekseeva, the founder of Artistic Gymnastics at the House of Scientists in Moscow. If it weren’t for Alekseeva’s gymnastics, which my mother passionately practiced from the age of 15, I’m sure there wouldn’t have been such beautiful and graceful dances drawn by my mother in films like “The Nutcracker,” “The Steadfast Tin Soldier,” “The Doll Dances,” “Vasilisa the Beautiful” and others.

And also, my mother the artist-animator was my pride in front of my classmates. She would come to school, talk about her profession, and organized a field trip to Soyuzmultfilm for my class, where they handed out color phases from animated films, transferred onto celluloid, and everyone was absolutely thrilled. A year ago, I learned that one of the girls didn’t manage to get such a picture. And, 40 years later, she still remembers it.

**Was Marina Konstantinovna familiar with Armenian animation, and do you remember what her opinion on it was?**

My mother always admired Robert Sahakyants. But we never specifically discussed Armenian animation. Therefore, I cannot say what my mother’s opinion was.

**From where did your mother’s ances-**

**tors hail?**

My mother’s father was Konstantin Nikitovich Voskanyants; this name was given to him in Russia, although his birth name was Karapet. Great-grandfather Mkrtich (Nikita) was from the Nakhichevan district, which was part of the Yerevan Governorate at the time, from the village of Tsgghna, which, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was called Chananab (in Turkish). His wife, Parandzem, was from the town of Agulis — a medieval city in the Ordubad region of the Nakhichevan ASSR. In December 1919, all the Armenian population of Agulis and the surrounding villages was massacred by the Turks. It’s possible that some of our relatives who remained there perished. Today, these are Azerbaijani villages — Ashaghy (Lower) Aylys and Yukhary (Upper) Aylys.

Agulis had either 11 or 12 ancient Armenian churches. My great-grandparents were married in the Church of Saint Christopher. All the churches of Agulis were either partially or completely destroyed, but some still stood in the 1970s and 1980s. After the Artsakh Liberation Movement, the Azerbaijanis completely erased them.

My ancestors likely moved to Moscow at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. My grandfather, Karapet, was born in 1894, and we don’t know if he was born in Armenia or in Moscow. Konstantin Nikitovich Voskanyants worked at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, organizing exhibitions. He passed away when my mother was two years old. His wife, my grandmother, Lydia Alexeyevna Voskanyants (maiden name Guchkova, 1912-1974), worked as an English translator. They had twin daughters — Marina and Oksana. My aunt Oksana received higher education and became a pediatrician, while my mother, Marina, became a wonderful and unique animator-artist.

**Although your mother lost her father at a young age, was there something in your family or in her persona that can be called Armenian?**

Konstantin Voskanyants passed away in 1936, when the girls were two years old. The sisters lived with their mother and grandmother, but relatives on their father’s

side were also involved in their upbringing. Grandmother Parandzem and the father’s brothers — Aram, Ivan and Sergey Nikitovich with his wife Arusyak Kevorkova — especially spoiled the twins. Aunt Arussia would gift dolls in traditional costumes, treat them to Armenian halvah, and play various games with them. From her father, Marina inherited distinct Armenian facial features, such as her nose (which she liked to joke about) and her black-as-coal eyebrows.

Marina was an extraordinarily beautiful Armenian girl!

**Marina Konstantinovna never visited Armenia. If you haven’t been to Armenia yet, you are always a welcome guest in the homeland of your grandfather!**

Thank you, Artsvi jan! Yes, unfortunately, my mother never visited Armenia, but I have been there, and I absolutely love this incredibly beautiful country for its landscapes, mountains, canyons, and lakes, as well as its culture, cuisine, and, of course, its people. I love the monasteries of past centuries. I would love to visit the Tatev Monastery and Noravank Monastery again, taking my time without a tour guide, and explore other, less touristy monasteries. Drinking pomegranate wine by the shores of Lake Sevan, enjoying the vastness and the crystal-clear water. Walking around central Yerevan, visiting different cafés, trying local dishes and Armenian wines. I’ve been to Parajanov’s museum three times, and it’s an incredibly atmospheric place. I wished I could have stayed there. I was captivated by the house-museum of Martiros Saryan. The Museum of Contemporary Art also caught my attention with its exhibitions. I still haven’t managed to visit the Matenadaran— the museum of ancient manuscripts, but it must be very interesting! And also, I would love to be in Yerevan during the Vardavar holiday! I really want to visit Armenia many more times, slowly and without hurry!

My dream is to have a little house by the shore of Lake Sevan. And I know that dreams do come true!

**Just as they came true in your mother’s animated films! Thank you for the conversation, Tatiana jan, and God willing, we will meet by the shores of Sevan!**

Curator Tina Chakarian Advances Armenian Visibility by Launching

CHAKARIAN, from page 14

s growing efforts in creating diverse forms of collective knowledge through more sustainable and resiliently-built environments. Through her efforts, this pavilion will demonstrate how Armenian artists and architects can address this discourse through their own experiences and through the



Daniel Danielian - Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Republic of Armenia, and Tina Chakarian

work they have already been doing both in the Republic of Armenia and across the Diaspora.

Chakarian’s practice as an artistic director already predated this set theme. From the time she lived in Armenia and beyond, she built relationships with local artists by

cultivating their work and directing them in ways that would help focus their strengths towards not just the Biennale but the growth of Armenian art on a global scale. At the same time, Chakarian’s work with Armenians of the Diaspora acknowledges their own unique and collective cultural experiences. In many ways, Chakarian’s efforts represent constructive and forward-thinking manners in which the Republic and the Diaspora can find ways to work together for the future of Armenians.

Chakarian’s goal is for Armenia to win another Golden Lion award at the Biennale. The Golden Lion is the highest award an artist or country can receive at each Venice Biennale. There are two categories: one Golden Lion is awarded to the country with the most outstanding exhibition; another is awarded to an individual artist, who the judges believe has showcased the most exceptional exhibi-

tion around that year’s theme.

Armenia won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for the first time in 2015 for an exhibition that explored questions around national identity entitled “Armenity” and curated by Adelina von Fürstenberg. Chakarian was part of this advisory team, assisting Neery Melkonian.

Chakarian’s own artistic creations have been exhibited all over the world, and she has taught at schools of architecture and design in Boston. Currently, she is a finalist for a commissioned mural along the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway celebrating the life and work of Arshile Gorky during his time in Watertown.

Her recent efforts have been focused towards establishing an endowment that would secure a permanent place for an Armenian pavilion at all future Art and Architecture Venice Biennales. In addition to helping to foster the career of emerging Armenian artists from all over the world, securing a place every year at the Venice Biennale offers Armenians global visibility and opportunities for cultural dialogue. A permanent presence can also serve as a marker of legitimacy and continuous recognition. Armenian artists and Armenian cultural history can, in this way, be documented and archived as part of the evolution of contemporary art.

Animated Documentary Pays Tribute to Iran-Born, Berlin-Based Father

TRIBUTE, from page 15

Barkhourdarian studied film directing, and her portfolio includes several short films. “Vay Kikos Vay” was inspired by Hovhaness Toumanian’s folktale, which she shot at a village near Khor Virap, using the villagers as actors. It was the first film she produced together with Norik Keshishian, whom she met at an Armenian Film Retrospective in Berlin. In 2008, they founded nurfilm to produce thought-provoking, art-house films on political issues.

Barkhourdarian said, “I wanted to share my father’s story because many immigrants like him came to Berlin, and they shaped society.”

Barkhourdarian expressed her thanks to Dr. Zaven Khatchaturian for promoting the film, supporting the screening, and creating networking opportunities. Khatchaturian is the creator of the Armin T. Wegner Humanitarian Award for the Arpa International Film Festival.

This film was also screened at the Pomegranate Film Festival on November 15 in Toronto, Canada.





ARTS & CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



## Chickpea Burgers and Tahini Sauce

Chickpeas (garbanzo beans) are one of the earliest cultivated legumes. Remains of chickpeas from the Middle East have been found that are roughly 7,500 years old. Chickpeas are healthy, delicious, and packed with plant-based protein, and they’re versatile, too. They can blend into creamy, lemony hummus, bake into crispy, herb-flecked falafel, add protein to a salad, crunch to a grain bowl, and much more. This satisfying falafel-flavored chickpea patty from Edible Paradise is loaded with flavor and is an all-time favorite. With a few slight changes in spices and sauces, the recipe easily adapts to Middle Eastern, Indian, or even Mexican cuisine. Add a few crunchy elements for texture, such as sunflower seeds, red onion, or grated carrot, when the mood strikes. Chickpeas offer a distinct yet semi-neutral flavor, perfect for anything from a vegan tuna or egg salad sandwich to chickpea blondies.

INGREDIENTS:

Patties:

- 1 16-ounce can chickpeas (garbanzo beans), rinsed
- 4-5 scallions, trimmed and sliced
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 6-1/2-inch whole-wheat pitas, halved and warmed, if desired (or naan bread)

Tahini Sauce:

- 1/2 cup low-fat plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/3 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

PREPARATION:

Place chickpeas, scallions, egg, flour, oregano, cumin, and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a food processor. Pulse, stopping once or twice to scrape down the sides, until a coarse mixture forms and holds together when pressed. (The mixture will be moist.)

Using a large spoon, divide mixture into roughly four equal portions. With wet hands, gently form each portion of the sticky mixture into a ball, and place on a square of waxed paper or piece of plastic wrap. Gently flatten the dough evenly, using the palm of your hand. (Using a square of waxed paper will be a great help when it’s time to move the patties for cooking.)

Patties can be refrigerated at this point, if desired.

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat.

Add patties and cook until golden and beginning to crisp, 4 to 5 minutes. Carefully flip and cook until golden brown, 2 to 4 minutes more.

Meanwhile, combine yogurt, tahini, lemon juice, parsley and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl.

To assemble, divide the patties among the pitas and serve with the sauce.

Make-Ahead Tip: Cover and refrigerate the uncooked burger mixture and tahini sauce for up to 2 days.

Variations:

- \* Instead of using tahini sauce, make raita with low-fat plain yogurt, ground cumin, salt, fresh mint, chopped seeded cucumber, and quartered grape tomatoes.
- \* Add some curry powder to the mix and serving with Major Grey Chutney.
- \* After processing, mix in grated carrot and sunflower seeds for added texture.
- \* Add cumin, chile powder, and minced jalapeno to the mix. Make small patties and serve on warm corn tortillas, with taco toppings (lettuce, tomato, salsa, etc.) and guacamole.

## Monterey Bay Certified Farmers Markets

Founded in 1976, the Monterey Bay Certified Farmers Markets are the oldest and largest farmers markets on the Central Coast with four locations: Aptos, Carmel, and two in Monterey. Locals, chefs, and tourists love to shop at bustling certified farmers’ markets in Aptos, Carmel, and Monterey — the premier farmers markets on the Central Coast for over 46 years. With over 90 vendors, our farmers markets offer a stunning array of locally grown produce, a wide selection of delicious specialty products as well as the opportunity to connect with the people who produce it. Come enjoy a fresh experience every week - meet old friends, make new acquaintances and become a part of our friendly community. Learn more at: <https://montereybayfarmers.org/market-news/going-strong-for-44-years-and-growing>

An award-winning family of four certified farmers’ markets serving the Monterey Bay with an unsurpassed selection of premium California grown produce. Go to: <https://montereybayfarmers.org/>



Edible Paradise celebrates the year-round abundance of the highest quality, freshest food grown on the Central Coast by our family farmers at the Monterey Bay Certified Farmers Markets. If you enjoy preparing and eating locally grown food, this blog is for you. Go to: <https://edibleparadise.com/>

For this recipe, go to:

<https://edibleparadise.com/main-courses/chickpea-burgers-and-tahini-sauce-1/>

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

For information about chickpeas, see: <https://toriavey.com/the-history-science-and-uses-of-chickpeas/>

## Nutrition Facts:

Per Serving: 400 calories; protein 14.8g; carbohydrates 54.5g; dietary fiber 9g; sugars 3.2g; fat 15.1g; saturated fat 2.5g; cholesterol 48.3mg; vitamin a iu 808.8IU; vitamin c 18.6mg; folate 132.6mcg; calcium 148.4mg; iron 4.1mg; magnesium 79.2mg; potassium 494.1mg; sodium 714.7mg; thiamin 0.3mg. Exchanges: 3 starch, 1 vegetable, 1 lean meat, 1 1/2 fat

Every donated dollar helps make our local food community stronger. If you appreciate the local fresh produce, small food businesses, cooking demonstrations, special events, and music each week at the farmers market, please consider making a donation. Your donations help immensely with operational expenses and promoting our farmers markets and sustainable food system through our educational programs, website, newsletter, and events. You can make a tax-deductible, secure donation online by using the donation button below, talk to us at the market, or mail a check to the market office at MBCFM, PO Box 955, Freedom, CA 95019-0955. Our Federal Taxpayer ID is 95-0139049.

Go to: <https://montereybayfarmers.org/about-us/donate-to-the-market>

\*SOURCE: Recipe adapted from

<[http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/chickpea\\_burgers\\_tahini\\_sauce.html](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/chickpea_burgers_tahini_sauce.html)>

EatingWell: August/September 2006, The EatingWell Healthy in a Hurry Cookbook (2006).

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# CALENDAR

## OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

### MASSACHUSETTS

**NOVEMBER 23** — Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church 75th Annual Food Festival. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m., 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Eat-in or Take-out. The Food Festival menu includes lamb, chicken, losh kebab, and kheyma dinners, and a vegetarian platter; a country store with a variety of Armenian specialties and deserts. The festival also features a jewelry table, gift items from Armenia as well as tours of the church’s sanctuary and a Backgammon (Nardi) Tournament. For further information, call the church office at 978-256-7234.

**DECEMBER 5** — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents Armenian Cooking Demonstration III: Holiday Desserts Anoushabour and Halawet el Jibn. Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown (Entrance on Norseman Avenue). \$30. RSVP required @Sossy Yogurtian, 617-281-1647 or syogurtian@comcast.net

**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** — Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Boston and Erevan Chorale Society and Orchestra present their Christmas Holiday Concert, Sunday, 7:00 p.m. at Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. The Christmas Concert is dedicated to the 155th anniversary of the birth of Gomidas Vartabed. Composer Konstantin Petrossian, Music Director & Conductor; Tatev Baroyan, soprano; Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian, tenor. For more information contact Konstantin Petrossian at Petroskon@aol.com, or Aida Diloyan, Chorale corresponding secretary at adiloyan@verizon.net.

**DECEMBER 19** — Project Save will host “Holiday Lens and Libations” on December 19, from 6 to 9 p.m. The event will mark the launch of the organization’s 50th anniversary. Gathering will take place at the organization’s headquarters, 600 Pleasant St., Watertown. RSVP at projectsave.org or email archives@projectsave.org.

### RHODE ISLAND

**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](mailto:alin@mirrorspectator.com) or [alin.gregorian@gmail.com](mailto:alin.gregorian@gmail.com). You can also visit our website, [www.mirrorspectator.com](http://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.

# Light Show at Burbank Armenian Cathedral Honors Legacy of St. Nerses Shnorhali, St. Grigor Narekatsi

BURBANK, Calif. — A special evening of light animated light installations entitled Honoring the Legacy of Saint Nerses Shnorhali (1102-1173) was held on November 7 in collaboration with the Narekatsi Chair of Armenian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the Western Armenian Diocese of the Armenian Church and Ardēan. It took place at the St. Leon (Ghevontians) Armenian Cathedral of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church in Burbank. The author of the artworks and projection was Vasken Brudian of Ardēan, a design company based in Yerevan.

The innovative collaboration between art and spirituality was accompanied by ethereal spiritual music, creating a mesmerizing atmosphere that highlighted the rich visual and literary traditions of Armenian culture. Dynamic, moving projections enveloped the church’s façade in brilliant colors and mesmerizing patterns, offering a fresh perspective on Armenian culture.

The light installations were not mere visual displays; they were a blend of intricate Armenian motifs and ornamental designs, seamlessly integrated with the profound words and manuscripts of the renowned Armenian theologians, St. Grigor Narekatsi and St. Nerses Shnorhali. This fusion of ancient art and modern technology offered a striking reinterpretation of Armenian heritage with a purpose of preserving the deep spiritual and cultural roots of the Armenian community.



Light projections at St. Leon Armenian Cathedral





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



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COMMENTARY

# Possible Impact of Trump’s Cabinet Selections on US Foreign Policy

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

Although Trump won’t take office until January 20, his potential appointments already provide valuable insight into his foreign policy direction. While he will have opportunities to clarify his stance through upcoming interviews and his inauguration speech, preliminary information allows us to begin forming ideas about his approach to global affairs. By analyzing the appointments of individuals to various positions and their past statements on specific foreign policy topics, we can gain a clearer understanding of the administration’s potential priorities.

Let’s begin with the potential top diplomat under Trump, who is expected to replace Secretary Blinken early next year. Sen. Marco Rubio has been nominated as secretary of state. Rubio advocates a strong stance against China, unwavering support for Israel, and has cultivated a solid relationship with the Armenian community. He has consistently promoted tough policies towards Turkey and Azerbaijan, as reflected in his statements on Twitter.

While this may not directly impact the Armenian community or its organizations, Rubio’s general advocacy for hardline foreign policies — against China, Iran, and some Latin American and Asian countries — could shape the administration’s approach.

Pete Hegseth has been nominated as secretary of defense. He is known for his firm stance on Iran, strong pro-Israeli policies in the Middle East, and a hard line on China, often emphasizing the latter’s military expansion as a challenge to US dominance. Regarding Russia, Hegseth has remarked, “I don’t want American intervention pushing deeply into Europe, making [Russia] feel cornered enough to consider the use of nukes.” He has also criticized US expenditures in Afghanistan and Iraq, warning against repeating such strategies in Ukraine.

Congressman Mike Waltz, appointed as National Security Advisor, shares a similarly firm approach toward China and Iran. Meanwhile, John Ratcliffe, set to lead the CIA, has prioritized countering China as a key policy focus.

Tulsi Gabbard, a prominent ostensibly pro-Armenian figure in American politics who visited Artsakh in 2017 and contributed

to the All-Armenia Fund, has been chosen to lead the National Intelligence Service. In this role, she will oversee 18 intelligence agencies and serve as the president’s primary intelligence advisor.

Additionally, Robert Kennedy, another ostensibly pro-Armenian figure, is expected to head the Department of Health and Human Services.

These appointments open new opportunities for the Armenian community and organizations to engage actively with Trump’s Republican administration — something they struggled to achieve during his previous presidency. Although some individuals in the administration, like Vivek Ramaswamy, may not be directly involved in foreign policy, their support could still significantly benefit efforts to advance Armenian issues.

Regarding Armenia and its security, several critical factors and scenarios must be considered. If Trump fails to end the war in Ukraine and US-Russia relations deteriorate further while simultaneously intensifying pressure on Iran or engaging in direct military action against it, the consequences for Armenia could be disastrous. Armenia’s interests are better served by a potential warming of US-Russia relations and a reduction in US-Iran tensions, akin to the dynamics under Obama’s presidency.

However, given Trump’s team and the policies of its members, there is a strong likelihood of prioritizing support for Israel and maintaining a hardline approach toward Iran. On the issue of China, there appears to be a consensus within Trump’s political team regarding a tough stance.

Nonetheless, the possibility of improved US-Russia relations during Trump’s presidency remains a potential “window of opportunity” for Armenia. The key question is whether Trump will position himself as a peacemaker and dealmaker, as he promised during his campaign, or if he will lean more towards being an unequivocal and steadfast supporter of Israel, as he has stated previously.

(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.)

## Implications of the US Presidential Elections for the South Caucasus

By Benyamin Poghosyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

As the US presidential elections approached, pundits and politicians worldwide sought to predict the outcome and explore scenarios for US foreign policy under Kamala Harris or Donald Trump. This was unsurprising: Despite the end of the unipolar world order and significant shifts in the global balance of power, the United States remains the

superpower capable of global influence. The South Caucasus was no exception, as pundits debated the potential implications of the election results for the region. The uncertainty ended on November 5, as Donald Trump secured his return to the White House in January 2025.

What might the South Caucasus expect from Trump’s second presidency? To address this, it is crucial to examine the region’s potential role in US foreign policy under his administration. The South Caucasus was notably absent from Trump’s pre-election foreign policy agenda, aside from Trump’s statement on X, where he condemned Harris for doing “nothing as 120,000 Armenian Christians were horrifically persecuted and forcibly displaced in Artsakh” and promised to restore peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Two issues were central to his last campaign — the Russia-Ukraine War and escalating tensions between Iran and Israel — and they could significantly shape future geopolitical dynamics.

One of Donald Trump’s key foreign pol-

icy promises has been to end the war in Ukraine, though he did not disclose how he intended to achieve this. Such an outcome would likely require some form of understanding with Russia. If President Trump succeeds, it could significantly affect the South Caucasus. The war of attrition in Ukraine has consumed nearly all of Russia’s resources, limiting its ability to influence developments in the South Caucasus. It has also driven Russia-West relations to their lowest point since the Cold War, triggering confrontation and making the reduction of Russia’s regional influence a cornerstone of US policy.

This conflict has also elevated the roles of Azerbaijan and Turkey in Russia’s strategy. Ankara facilitates Russian imports of Western goods. Azerbaijan provides access between Iran and Russia with the International North-South Transport Corridor and enables the selling of Russian oil and gas disguised as Azerbaijani products to Europe.

These dynamics — Russia’s constrained capacities and strengthened ties with Azerbaijan and Turkey — have shifted the regional balance of power. They emboldened Azerbaijan to launch an offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023, leading to the forced displacement of Armenians and the dissolution of the self-proclaimed republic. Meanwhile, US-Russia tensions have turned Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations into another geopolitical rivalry and competition arena.

Suppose President Trump succeeds in ending the war in Ukraine and reaching

an agreement with Russia. In that case, Moscow will likely redirect resources to the post-Soviet space, including the South Caucasus. This could also reduce US efforts to curb Russian influence in the region, a key factor behind the Biden Administration’s engagement. In such a scenario, Russia might resume — or more actively pursue — its role as the main mediator in Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations. Additionally, Moscow might pressure Azerbaijan to deepen cooperation and join the Eurasian Economic Union. Armenia could face demands to realign its foreign policy, potentially limiting its

expanding ties with the European Union and the United States, including the upgrade of the status of the US-Armenia bilateral dialogue to a strategic partnership commission, which was agreed during the US-Armenia Strategic Dialogue Capstone meeting in June 2024.

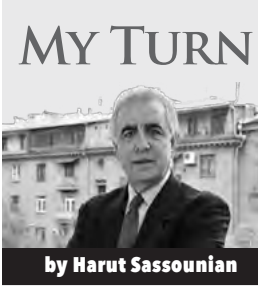
Russia is also likely to push more for implementing Article 9 of the November 10, 2020, statement that ended fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, securing its presence along transit routes connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan and Turkey via Armenia. In Georgia, Russia appears content with the foreign policy of the ruling Georgian Dream Party, which won the October 2024 parliamentary elections and is expected to remain in power through 2028. This could lead to stronger Russia-Georgia economic relations and even discussions on the future of the South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region. It remains to be seen whether

*continued on next page*





COMMENTARY



# MY TURN Armenia Blocks Artsakh Movie From Nomination for Oscars

**by Harut Sassounian**

In my last week’s article I criticized the government of Jordan for buckling under Azerbaijan’s pressure to withdraw its nomination of a documentary about Artsakh as an Oscars entry.

While it is bad enough that a hostile country like Azerbaijan prevents the nomination of a movie about Artsakh, but it is much worse when Armenia itself refuses to present a movie about Artsakh to the Oscars.

The Armenian National Film Academy just chose to nominate for the 2025 Academy Awards a movie titled, “Yasha and Leonid Brezhnev” instead of the one about Artsakh titled, “1489.” Even though I do not have direct evidence that this was done at the request of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan or his government, nevertheless, given their anti-Artsakh positions, we can safely assume that the decision was made at their suggestion. One indication is that the Republic of Armenia’s Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport is the sponsor of “Yasha and Leonid Brezhnev.”

On many occasions, Pashinyan has confirmed his anti-Artsakh position starting with his capitulation that Artsakh belongs to Azerbaijan. Given the fact that Artsakh was occupied by Azerbaijan under Pashinyan’s watch, he is extremely reluctant to talk about his major failure and remind the people of his personal responsibility for not protecting Artsakh. That is why he has not referred to Nagorno-Karabagh as Artsakh since the 2020 war. He declares that the Karabagh refugees, who fled to Armenia after Azerbaijan’s takeover of Artsakh in September 2023, are no longer citizens of Armenia, even though they possess passports of the Republic of Armenia.

Furthermore, given the fact that Pashinyan has been desperately trying to convince President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan to sign a peace treaty with Armenia, he has shied away from taking any actions that he feels would antagonize Azerbaijan. He has warned that unless Armenia complies with Azerbaijan’s escalating demands, Baku will attack Armenia again.

Wikipedia reports that “‘Yasha and Leonid Brezhnev’ is a 2024 absurdist tragicomedy film written and directed by Edgar Baghdasaryan. Starring Mais Sarkisyan as a retired Armenian reluctant to accept the dissolution of the Soviet Union imagines conversations with former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and other communist leaders.” Baghdasaryan is a board member of the Armenian National Film Academy which selected this film as Armenia’s official Os-

cars nomination. “1489” only received two votes out the 30 Armenian National Film Academy board members, causing a major controversy in Armenia.

“1489” is a movie about 21-year-old student and musician Soghomon Vardanyan who disappeared in the 2020 Artsakh war. The number 1489 is assigned to a soldier missing in action. Full Frame Documentary Film Festival’s website explains that Soghomon’s sister Shoghakat Vardanyan, the film’s director, “documents her parents and herself as they search for answers, interviewing soldiers who survived, desperately clinging to hope, and their grief as hope begins to fade. Through raw, intimate moments, “1489” confronts the human cost of war through one family’s unwavering love, quest for closure, and finally, their acceptance of a devastating truth.”

The film won the Best Film Award of the International Film Festival of Amsterdam (receiving a 15,000 euro cash prize), the FIPRESCI Award by the International Federation of Film Critics, Best Documentary Film of Trieste Film Festival, Best Documentary of the Buenos Aires International Documentary Film Festival, and several others.

The “Eye for an Eye” community of Armenian documentary filmmakers, photographers, writers, and artists urged the Armenian National Film Academy to review its decision, claiming that Baghdasaryan’s film (Yasha and Leonid Brezhnev) “has not had international exhibitions and has not won international awards.” They said that “an injustice has occurred in the field of Armenian cinema and it is not the most resonant, prestigious, and strong Armenian production film that will represent Armenia at the Oscars.... Vardanyan’s film (“1489”) could have been the first Armenian film to receive an Oscar.”

The Secretary of the Armenian National Film Academy, Natalya Ghazanchyan, responded: “Film Academicians do not take into account the list of awards received by the film, but are guided by its artistic merits, based on their rich experience in the film industry.” She said that “Yasha and Leonid Brezhnev” “had won five out of nine possible awards at the [Armenian] Film Academy’s Anahit awards. She added that any member of the Film Academy with a connection to a submitted film was not allowed to participate in the voting process,” oc-media.org reported.

The Armenian public should express its outrage at the decision of the Armenian Film Academy to select a whimsical movie instead of the one that portrays an immense tragedy -- the loss of Artsakh. Armenians should accept nothing short of the reversal the Armenian Academy’s incorrect decision.

It is very disturbing that Armenian officials, just like the government of Azerbaijan, has blocked the submission to the Oscars of a high-quality Armenian movie related to Artsakh.

from previous page

Russia would back the regional 3+3 format or instead seek to assert itself as the dominant regional power while curbing the influence of Turkey and Iran.

If President Trump fails to end the war in Ukraine and fighting continues into 2025 and beyond, the balance of power in the South Caucasus is unlikely to change significantly. Trump’s policy toward Iran presents another potential challenge for the region. A return to his “maximum pressure” strategy would likely lead the US to push Armenia to scale back economic ties with Iran while encouraging closer Azerbaijan–Israel cooperation against Tehran. This campaign could further weaken Iran’s economy, reducing its ability to influence South Caucasus geopolitics or uphold its “red lines,” including preserving border integrity and blocking the “Zangezur corridor.” Azerbaijan might then exploit the situation, attempting to open the corridor through Armenia forcibly.

Alternatively, if the US and Iran negotiate a new deal to replace the 2015 joint comprehensive plan of action, Iran’s influence in the South Caucasus could grow as Tehran gains greater resources. This scenario might enable Armenia to expand its economic cooperation with Iran and position itself as a gateway for European and American companies entering the Iranian market. Additionally, a US–Iran agreement could open the door for Armenia to pursue defense collaboration with Iran without facing a backlash from Washington.

Given President Trump’s prioritization of US economic interests, security concerns, and national sovereignty over broader values such as promoting democracy and human rights (another significant impetus for Biden’s South Caucasus foreign policy), a reduction in US funding for civil society, rule of law initiatives, and democratic reforms can be expected. This could negatively affect civil society organizations in the region.

While the South Caucasus may not rank high among US foreign policy priorities under Trump, American policies on the Russia–Ukraine War, Iran, and democracy promotion could significantly shape regional geopolitics. Armenia must prepare for various scenarios under Trump’s presidency while maintaining engagement with the new administration. The November 16, 2024, phone call between Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President-elect Trump represents a promising first step. The strategic partnership commission upgrade announced at the Capstone meeting of June 2024 could become the new baseline of the US–Armenia relationship if an active engagement is maintained with the new Trump administration.

(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.)

## Climate Leaders Were Worried Trump Would Derail Talks. They Didn’t Know Their Host Would Be the Wrecking Ball

By Angela Dewan

From the moment the US election results rolled in, climate leaders knew Donald Trump would be a blow to the COP29 talks in Baku. What they didn’t foresee was the demolition job Azerbaijan’s own leader would do from the inside.

In what should be one of the most urgent meetings of the year — aimed at slowing a global crisis fast spiraling out of control — the talks have descended into a circus of boycotts, political tirades and fossil fuels celebrations. Its host, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, has been its spectacular ringmaster.

Amid the chaos, prominent global climate leaders on Friday, November 15, issued an open letter calling for a “fundamental overhaul” of the entire UN climate process. It was originally published saying the annual talks, known as Conferences of the Parties (COPs), were “no longer fit for purpose,” but that language was quickly removed.

A spokesperson for Sandrine Dixon-Declève, co-president of The Club of Rome — which published the letter — told CNN the edit was made because the authors’ “constructive criticism” had been seized upon by some parties to further their own interests at the talks, though she didn’t name any party in particular.

But the edit doesn’t change the idea that the talks are, indeed, losing their sense of credibility.

COP29 marks the third year in a row that the climate talks have been held in either a petrostate, or economy that relies heavily on oil and gas. The previous two were held in the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, and all three were criticized for alleged human rights abuses in the run-up to their events.

Among the open letter’s recommendations is to implement a “strict eligibility criteria to exclude countries who do not support the phase out/transition away from fossil energy” from holding COP presidencies.

Increasingly, the annual conferences have welcomed fossil fuel interests into the fold. This year, more than 1,700 fossil fuel lobbyists or industry players had been registered to attend the talks, according to an analysis by a coalition of groups called Kick Big Polluters Out.

This is a huge problem, said Alex Scott, a senior associate in climate diplomacy at the Italy-based think tank ECCO.

“[Azerbaijan’s president] doesn’t sound like a guardian of the Paris Agreement. There’s still a week left for this presidency to show that they are fulfilling that role,” she told CNN from Baku. The 2015 Paris Agreement unites most of the world’s countries in a common goal to limit global warming.

“But there are also 1,700 fossil fuel lobbyists walking the halls with us here,” she added, “and they’re also not guardians of the goals of the Paris Agreement.”

Aliyev accuses France of ‘brutal repression’

On Tuesday, Aliyev used his opening remarks at the talks to fend off criticism of Azerbaijan’s human rights record and defended its oil and gas riches as “a gift of the god,” in a speech that explicitly accused Western nations, NGOs and global media of “hypocrisy.”

On Wednesday, he again used his platform to launch a tirade against France and the Netherlands. Speaking to island states facing an existential threat of sea level rise, Aliyev accused both nations of a “brutal repression” of voices in what he called their “colonies,” in reference to overseas territories. He also blamed France for recent deadly unrest on the semi-autonomous island of New Caledonia.

Aliyev’s accusations were built around climate change arguments, but Baku has been at loggerheads with both France and the Netherlands over their stances on the Azerbaijan-Armenia territorial conflict.



## Climate leaders Were Worried Trump Would Derail Talks

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France’s ecology minister, Agnès Pannier-Ru-nacher, was due to lead the French delegation but canceled her trip over the remarks.

The European Union’s foreign affairs chief, Joseph Borrell, chimed in on the platform formerly known as Twitter, and now X, calling Aliyev’s allegations “regrettable.”

“These unacceptable statements risk to under-mine the conference’s vital climate objectives and the credibility of Azerbaijan’s COP29 pres-idency,” he wrote.

The geopolitical chaos comes as global cli-mate leaders scramble to find ways to Trump-proof progress so far, as the president-elect has vowed to again pull the US out of the Paris Agreement.

Already the prospect of Trump is embold-ening like-minded leaders to reconsider their own climate action. On Wednesday, Argenti-na’s foreign ministry pulled out its delegation from COP29 without giving any explanation. A source in President Javier Milei’s government later told CNN that Argentina was considering withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. Milei is a climate denier who has called global warming a “socialist hoax.”

The talks come on the heels of what is set to be the hottest year on record, and as back-to-back hurricanes killed more than 300 people in the US alone.

Some scientists are questioning whether con-taining temperature rise to 1.5 degrees is still possible. To have any chance of doing so, car-bon pollution must halve this decade and the world must reach net zero by mid-century.

(Angela Dewan is the CNN International Climate Editor. This commentary originally ap-peared on CNN.com on November 18.)

## Operation Bear Claw: Four Arrested after Videos Show Fake Bear Attacks for Insurance Payouts

LOS ANGELES (California Department of Insurance) — Four Los Angeles area residents were arrested today after a Department of Insurance investigation found the suspects allegedly committed insurance fraud by claiming a bear had caused damage to their vehicles, but it was actually a person in a bear costume. Ruben Tamrazian, 26, of Glendale, Ara-rat Chirkinian, 39, of Glendale, Vahe Muradkhanyan, 32, of Glendale, and Alfiya Zuckerman, 39, of Valley Village, have all been charged with insurance fraud and conspiracy.

The Department’s investigation began after an insurance company suspected fraud. The suspects claimed on January 28, 2024 in Lake Arrowhead a bear entered their 2010 Rolls Royce Ghost and caused interior damage to the vehicle. They provided [video footage](#) to their insurance company, which showed the alleged bear in the vehicle.

Upon further scrutiny of the video, the investigation de-termined the bear was actually a person in a bear costume. Detectives found two additional insurance claims with two different insurance companies, for the suspects with the same date of loss and at the same location. Each of those claims involved two different vehicles, a 2015 Mercedes G63 AMG and a 2022 Mercedes E350, and the suspects again appeared to use a bear costume to make it appear that a bear also en-tered and damaged those vehicles. They provided the video footage to the other insurance companies as well to substan-tiate their claims.

To further ensure it was not actually a bear in the video, the Department had a biologist from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife review the three alleged bear videos and they also opined it was clearly a human in a bear suit. After executing a search warrant, detectives found the [bear costume](#) in the suspects’ home.

The insurance companies were defrauded of \$141,839, be-cause of the alleged fraud committed by the suspects. Depart-ment detectives were assisted by the Glendale Police Depart-ment and the California Highway Patrol. The San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office is prosecuting this case.



Photo of the bear costume seized by the California Department of Insurance



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