

Shocking Fall of Assad Regime Assessed as Syria Enters Unrest

ALEPPO (Combined Sources) — The Islamist rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which on November 27 launched a lightning offensive alongside allied groups, in less than two weeks reached Damascus on Sunday, December 8, and toppled the regime of President Bashar al-Assad more than 13 years after an uprising against his rule erupted and descended into war. The president and his family have fled to Russia.

AFP correspondents in Aleppo saw workers removing piles of garbage as others repaired the city's electricity and communications networks, while volunteers distributed bread and security patrols roamed the streets at night.

Official institutions had stopped working when the rebels overran the city.

"Electricity and water services have started to reach homes" again after they were cut off for days, said housewife Disbina Bidouri, who lives in the city's Sulaimaniyeh neighborhood.

"We're now able to get bread very easily, because there are people distributing it... I've even put some bags of it in the fridge," she told AFP.

Abdelrahman Mohammed, an official in the "Salvation Government" which had been administering HTS-controlled Idlib



On December 9, 2024, the leaders of the military administration of Aleppo met with the heads of the Armenian and Christian communities, Kantsasar newspaper reported.

and parts of adjacent provinces, said they had sent people to Aleppo city to ensure "continuity of services".

The Salvation Government, which has ministries, departments, judicial and secu-

urity authorities, was set up in 2017 to assist people cut off from government services in the rebels' Idlib bastion.

Walid Othman, 27, a displaced local see SYRIA, page 4

Armenian PM Insists Country Has Irrevocably Broken With Russia-Led CSTO

By Ani Avetisyan

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan insists his country's break with the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has passed the "point of no return." But Russian officials are playing a waiting game, apparently believing Moscow's gravitational force remains sufficiently strong to prevent Yerevan from escaping its orbit.

Speaking at a parliamentary session in Yerevan on December 4, Pashinyan reiterated that Armenia now considers itself effectively outside the military alliance, having suspended its participation and choosing not to veto documents under discussion at the CSTO's most recent meeting. He also criticized other CSTO members for failing to fulfill their treaty obligations by not coming to Armenia's aid during the Second Karabakh War, which resulted in Azerbaijan's reconquest of the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

"We have fulfilled all our allied obligations accurately, both morally, politically, and legally, but the allied obligations towards us have not been fulfilled," the Armenpress news agency quoted Pashinyan as saying. "In a difficult moment, they [the CSTO] left us alone, they abandoned us, and yes, there are opinions that we were betrayed."

The CSTO came into being in 1992 comprising six former Soviet republics — Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Envisioned as a counterbalance to NATO, the alliance was meant to ensure collective security among its members.

But for many Armenians, the CSTO is now a symbol of unfulfilled promises.

Pashinyan's efforts to sever ties with the CSTO are part of a broader effort to move Armenia toward integration with Western political, economic and security institutions, and out from under Russia's security and economic umbrella.

Russia's response to Pashinyan's latest verbal salvo was relatively muted. On December 5, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the CSTO had not received any official communication from Armenian leader concerning the country's organizational status, adding that Armenia remains a welcome member of the group.

"We hear these rumors that the prime minister of Armenia spoke and discussed many things on this topic in the parliament," Lavrov told journalists. "We are convinced that making

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Pashinyan Meets with Macron, Trump at Notre Dame Opening

PARIS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The reopening ceremony of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris provided a good opportunity to interact with US President-elect Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Sunday, December 8.

Pashinyan and his wife, Anna Hakobyan, attended the reopening ceremony of Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris.

The event was attended by Macron, Trump, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Italian President Sergio Mattarella, Polish President Andrzej Duda, Croatian President Zoran Milanović, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev and leaders of other countries and heads of government.

Macron delivered a speech during the event, in which he touched upon the restoration work of Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris and emphasized the importance of the reopening of the cathedral for his country and people. Next, Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris performed a church service.

The high-ranking guests toured Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris. In the evening, Pashinyan and his wife participated in the official dinner hosted by Emmanuel and Brigitte Macron at the Élysée Palace for the Heads of State and Government participating in the reopening ceremony of Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris.



From left, French President Emmanuel Macron, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and US President-elect Donald

US, Armenian Defense Chiefs Discuss 'Strategic Partnership'

WASHINGTON (Azatutyun) — US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin discussed with Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan what he described as "strategic partnership" between their countries during talks held in Washington late on Thursday, December 5.

Austin said after the talks that he welcomed Papikyan to the Pentagon to "reaffirm our shared goal of peace in the South Caucasus."

"We also discussed our growing strategic partnership through training and exercises, military education, and capacity-building," he wrote on the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

Pentagon spokesman Pat Ryder issued a similar readout of the meeting. He noted see PARTNERSHIP, page 7



Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin meets Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan at the Pentagon, Washington, December 5, 2024.

SOFIA
Sofia AGBU Ushers In Christmas Season With Song



Mirror-Spectator Winter Break

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will be closed for one week between Christmas and New Year. The last issue of the will be dated Saturday, December 21 and the first issue back will be dated Saturday, January 4. The annual Christmas Greetings will appear in the last issue of the year.



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

US Names Armenia Justice Minister 2024 Anti-Corruption Champion

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The US Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs on December 10 recognized Armenian Minister of Justice Srubhi Galyan as a 2024 Anti-Corruption Champion for her work to establish asset forfeiture as a crucial tool in the fight against corruption.

“Congratulations to Srubhi Galyan, one of Department of State’s 2024 Anti-Corruption Champions!” the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan said in a short statement on December 10.

Demarcation Process to Continue

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia is preparing for the next meeting on the delimitation and demarcation of the border with Azerbaijan, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan said during an appearance on Factor TV program on December 9.

According to him, no exact date has been agreed to yet.

Grigoryan heads the Commission on the Demarcation of the State Border and Border Security between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

He noted that there have been discussions about where the next stage of demarcation should begin.

Armenia Rep Says Four Cases Against Azerbaijan at ECHR

YEREVAN (News.am) — Yeghishe Kirakosyan, representative of Armenia in international legal affairs, on December 9, said there are four cases filed by Armenia against Azerbaijan at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

“We have four general interstate processes against Azerbaijan at the European Court, and we also have two interstate processes against Armenia at the European Court. The four interstate processes, which are conducted by Armenia against Azerbaijan at the European Court, refer to the 44-day [Nagorno-Karabakh] war [in 2020] and the period following it, they refer to the illegal judicial processes carried out against captured persons, the illegal deprivation of liberty, they refer to the presence of Azerbaijani armed units in the sovereign territory of Armenia and the gross violations of human rights as a result, they refer as well as to the forced deportation of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh and all the violations accompanying it,” Kirakosyan said.

According to him, in Armenia’s first lawsuit at the ECHR, and which was related to the war itself, “we have already passed the written procedures, the objections have been exchanged in writing, which means that we are already expecting the verbal hearings at this court.

“We will expect substantive, public hearings by the court, with the composition of the large chamber,” Kirakosyan noted.

Fresh Turkish-Armenian Talks Revealed

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Turkish and Armenian officials met last month to explore the possibility of restoring a rail link between their countries as part of attempts to normalize bilateral relations, Armenia’s deputy parliament speaker Ruben Rubinyan said on Tuesday, December 10.

Rubinyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that the meeting took place on the Armenian-Turkish border “in a positive and constructive atmosphere.” It focused on “technical requirements” for restoring the railway that has not functioned since 1993, he said without giving details. Neither Ankara nor Yerevan had reported the meeting earlier.

Negotiators from the two sides led by Rubinyan and Turkish diplomat Serdar Kilic agreed to “assess” the feasibility of restoring the rail link when they met

on the border in July. They also “reconfirmed the agreements reached at their previous meetings,” according to identical Turkish and Armenian readouts of that meeting.

One of those agreements reached in July 2022 called for the opening of the border for Armenian and Turkish diplomatic passport holders as well as citizens of third countries. The Turkish side remains reluctant to do that.

Ankara has for decades made the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border and the establishment of diplomatic relations with Yerevan conditional on a resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict acceptable to Azerbaijan. Turkish leaders stuck to this condition even after the start of normalization talks with the current Armenian government in early 2022.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan expressed in October “cautious

optimism” about prospects for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations. He expressed hope that the two neighboring nations will soon boast “new tangible achievements” in the normalization process.

On Sunday, December 8, the chairman of the Turkish parliament committee on foreign relations, Fuat Oktay, added his voice to Baku’s demands for a change of Armenia’s constitution and the opening of a land corridor that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave as well as Turkey through a strategic Armenian region.

Ruben Safrastyan, a leading Armenian expert on Turkey, said on Tuesday that Ankara would take real steps to normalize relations with Yerevan only after the signing of an Armenian-Azerbaijani treaty. Even in that case, he said, the Turks would link a full normalization to the opening of the “Zangezur corridor” sought by Baku.

Legendary Freedom Fighter David Sarapyan Remembered on December 10

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — December 10 marks the commemoration day of legendary freedom fighter of the Artsakh Liberation War, writer David Sarapyan, better known as Dev.

David was born in Yerevan in 1966. His father, Edward Sarapyan, was the chief architect of Yerevan, while his mother, Emma Sarapyan, was a prominent scientist. Upon graduation from high school, David entered Cybernetics Department of

Yerevan Polytechnic Institute.

He worked as a film director and wrote the novel *300 Seconds*, which was adapted into a screenplay and later a film acclaimed by critics.

In 1990 David went to the front and joined the Independence Army of Leonid Azgaldyan, then Tigran the Great detachment. He participated in self-defense battles in the Shahumian region’s villages of Buglukh, Manashid, Gharachinar, Sarisu and Erkej. Azerbaijanis called him Davit the Terrible.

On October 30, 1991, David participated in the liberation of Togh village in the Hadrut region.

David was well familiar with that village. It was the native village of his mother, and Azerbaijanis set up headquarters in his grandfather’s house. As it grew dark, David cautiously approached the village, neutralized

the sentries and walked

towards the only house where the light was on — his grandfather’s home where special unit members were having a noisy party. David called out their chief’s name. When the chief looked out of the window, David shouted ‘Catch!’ and threw a grenade at him. There was a blast and the house exploded. This was followed by an attack of our troops, forcing the special unit members to leave the village. This operation is mentioned in the fundamental work *The History of Armenia* of the National Academy of Sciences. The work has a photo of David Sarapyan, with the words written below it: “Togh village of strategic importance was liberated on October 30, 1991. Davit Sarapyan, Dev, was noted for his exceptional bravery.”

After returning home, David gladly told his mother: “Your native village was liberated. Now we need to liberate father’s native town – Erzurum.” It was their last meeting...

Shortly afterwards, David again went to Shahumian where he participated in his last battle for Todan village that was used to heavily shell Armenian villages. There he died on December 10, 1991, as he courageously performed his military task.

He was laid to rest at Yerablur Military Pantheon in Yerevan.



David Sarapyan

US, Armenian Defense Chiefs Discuss ‘Strategic Partnership’

PARTNERSHIP, from page 1 that it was “the first such meeting in two decades.”

In a statement released on Friday morning, Papikyan said he “highlighted the priority areas” of growing US-Armenian military cooperation. He said they include “transforming” Armenia’s armed forces and enhancing their interoperability with the US military through military training and education and joint exercises.

“The meeting also addressed international and regional security issues,” the statement added without elaborating.

The top generals of the two nations also met in Washington in October. General CQ Brown, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, praised growing US-Armenian military ties and called for countering Russia’s “malign influence in the region.”

In July, US and Armenian troops held a

joint exercise in Armenia for the second time in less than a year. They practiced a joint peacekeeping operation in the presence of three US generals who arrived in the South Caucasus country on the occasion.

Russia denounced the drills, saying they will deal another blow to Russian-Armenian military ties and put Armenia’s security at greater risk. The US State Department announced, meanwhile, that it will soon appoint a resident adviser to the Armenian Defense Ministry in line with an ongoing “upgrade of US-Armenia relations to strategic partnership.”

As part of his efforts to reorient Armenia towards the West, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan froze earlier this year his country’s membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Pashinyan again indicated on

Wednesday that Yerevan will eventually leave the military alliance altogether. Senior Russian officials have repeatedly said in recent months that Western powers cannot offer any viable alternatives to Armenia’s security and economic development.

So far the United States has signaled no plans to provide Armenia with weapons or other significant military support. Papikyan did not say whether he discussed the possibility of US arms supplies during the talks with Austin.

On December 4, Papikyan met in Washington with senior executives of Milliken & Company, a US manufacturer of protective textiles, specialty chemicals and floor covering. The Armenian Defense Ministry said they explored “potential cooperation in the development of new uniforms for the Armenian Armed Forces.”

Armenia’s CRD Hosts International Physics Conference

YEREVAN — The 14th annual meeting of “Thunderstorms and Elementary Particle Acceleration” (TEPA, Yerevan, Armenia, October 14-17), was organized by the Cosmic Ray Division (CRD) at the Yerevan Physics Institute. Attendees were from research institutes Armenia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Russia.

The traditional topics of observations of particle fluxes in the troposphere, in space, and on the earth’s surface was discussed. With the approach of the “solar maximum,” a period of maximum activity of the 25th 11-year solar activity cycle in 2024, the detection of solar events was included. Observations of solar activity have been conducted since the early 17th century, with the first telescopic observation of sunspots by Galileo Galilei and Christoph Scheiner around 1810.

The conference highlighted the synergy between cosmic ray physics and high-energy atmospheric physics, particularly through the interaction of processes in space and in the earth’s atmosphere. Acceleration processes in space supply the earth’s atmosphere with seed cosmic ray particles, resulting in Extensive Air Showers (EASs). These cascades of subatomic particles are produced when high energy primary cosmic ray particles interact with the earth’s atmosphere. Strong electric fields within thunderclouds can enhance this process, called Thunderstorm Ground Enhancements (TGEs). This significantly increases the number of electrons detected by instruments on the earth’s surface, thereby making it difficult to estimate the characteristics of the primary cosmic ray particles.

Since the inception of Thunderstorm Ground Enhancement (TGE) research in 2009, the CRD has consistently organized international conferences to explore problems in high-energy atmospheric physics

ble electron fluxes spanning 50,000 square meters were observed. A massive electron beam emerged within a thundercloud, triggering gigantic avalanches of electrons,

joint operation of these detectors on Mt. Aragats ensures that detectors for future balloon, aircraft, and space missions will be calibrated using the detectors and fa-

dardized terminology to streamline future research endeavors. The continued efforts of the CRD and its partners promise significant advancements in our comprehension



Participants at TEPA Conference

photons, and neutrons. This newly identified source of energetic radiation from thunderclouds represents a significant factor in geophysics and warrants inclusion in comprehensive Earth models.

Studies of particle fluxes from thunderclouds measured by orbiting satellites, high flying aircraft, and by instrumentation on the ground often use different terminology. Conference participants strongly advocated for a community-wide discussion on standardizing the terminology to describe these phenomena. This revision aims to



Dr. Johannes Knapp, left, physicist at DESY Accelerator Laboratory, Germany, and Chair of CRD Advisory Committee; and Dr. Razmik Mirzoyan, Experimental Astro-Particle physicist at the Max Planck Institute for Physics in Germany



Zara Asaturyan, communications and public relations director of CRD of Yerevan Physics Institute noting the 80th university of the Aragats Research Center, and discussing its significance

and to advance collaborative studies.

In 2009, the CRD initiated TGE research on Mt. Aragats and established the SEVAN particle detector network to monitor TGEs across Eastern Europe, Germany, and Armenia. Atmospheric electron accelerators produce copious particles with energies of tens of million electron volts (MeV), covering vast atmospheric volumes and expansive areas on Earth’s surface. This substantial flux of electrons and gamma rays has coexisted with life on Earth for billions of years, undoubtedly influencing various aspects of the geospace and biosphere.

In 2023, at CRD’s Aragats research station, several episodes of minute-long sta-

eliminate confusion in future research and agree on a proper citation practice in publications.

During an excursion to the Aragats Research Station atop Armenia’s Mt. Aragats at 3,200 meters (9,800 feet) altitude, conference participants visited new facilities and particle detectors from various countries hosted at this prime location. A Czech Group from the Nuclear Physics Institute in Prague installed a new detector at Aragats. A group from the French National Centre for Space Studies (CNES) installed their detector in November, and in 2025 additional groups from Norway and France plan to deploy a particle spectrometer. The

cilities on Aragats. The station is expected to register tens of TGEs annually, with the strongest events exhibiting significant electron content.

The meeting underscored the critical interplay between cosmic rays and atmospheric physics. The conference facilitated international collaborations, showcased advancements at the Aragats Research Station, and emphasized the need for stan-

of high-energy atmospheric phenomena and their broader impacts on Earth’s geospace and biosphere.

For additional information on TEPA is at http://www.crd.yerphi.am/files/Program_TEPA%202024.pdf

Pashinyan Insists Armenia Has Broken Ties with CSTO

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the most of [CSTO] membership is in the interests of Armenia’s security. Russia and other CSTO members have not taken and are not going to take any action that will be perceived as closing the doors to Yerevan.”

Earlier, at a CSTO summit in Kazakhstan on November 28, Russian leader Vladimir Putin expressed a belief that Armenia ultimately would not quit the CSTO, suggesting that Pashinyan’s statements were aimed at a domestic audience, motivated by internal factors relating to Armenia’s crushing defeat in the Karabakh conflict. He added that it would have been improper for the CSTO to intervene in the Karabakh conflict.

(This article originally appeared on the news site www.eurasianet.org on December 6.)



Dr. Tigran Karapetyan, physicist, deputy director of Cosmic Ray Division of Yerevan Physics Institute,



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

French Ambassador Joins EU Patrol on Armenia-Azerbaijan Border

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — French Ambassador to Armenia Olivier Decottignies visited the EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA) headquarters in Yeghegnadzor and joined a patrol in the border village of Khachik on Sunday, December 7, the mission reported on December 9.

“Honored to host the Ambassador of France to Armenia, Olivier Decottignies, at our headquarters, where he was briefed on the latest work of the Mission. He also joined a patrol in Khachik village to witness our efforts on the ground. Grateful for the continued support and collaboration,” EUMA said in a post on the platform formerly known as Twitter.

In February 2023, the European Union launched a civilian mission in Armenia, which is tasked to promote settlement of the situation with Azerbaijan. The mission’s two-year mandate envisages patrolling and reporting about the situation to Brussels to raise its awareness of the situation on the ground.

Gymnast Davtyan Wins Gold at Moscow Tournament

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia’s Artur Davtyan, an Olympic silver medalist and a world champion, clinched a gold medal at the 2024 Mikhail Voronin Cup international gymnastics tournament in Moscow, on December 10.

Davtyan won the all-around gymnastics gold on Saturday.

Young Armenian gymnast Hamlet Manukyan finished third in the all-around event.

The tournament brought together 100 athletes.

Putin: Russia Committed to Strengthening CSTO

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russian President Vladimir Putin said on December 9 that Moscow is committed to strengthening the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Putin made the remarks at talks with the parliament speakers of the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly. Armenia did not take part in the meeting, as Yerevan suspended its participation in the CSTO earlier this year.

“We are firmly committed to the task of strengthening the organization, increasing its authority in ensuring peace and stability throughout the vast Eurasian space,” Putin said during the meeting held in Moscow.

He told the parliament speakers that cooperation within the Russia-led intergovernmental military alliance is built in the “spirit of alliance, military brotherhood and mutual assistance.”

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journalist who has now returned to Aleppo, said when he arrived he had trouble working “because the local internet networks were cut”.

The new authorities have since reactivated some communications infrastructure in the city, which “helped fix the problem in part... except the network needs to be expanded” and improved, Othman added.

Qotaiba Issa, who runs local charity Banafsay, said associations in the first week were dealing with the sudden change, focusing on medical and emergency services, as well as food security.

“Thank God, now Aleppo has started to return to its people, and its vitality” is returning, he told AFP.

Doctor Yasser Darwish, 45, has come back to Aleppo’s Al-Razi hospital where he used to work, volunteering with the new authorities.

At first, “there were no more than 15 or 20 doctors and nurses” at the hospital, but after a few more days “work returned to normal”, he said.

Aaron Zelin from the Washington Institute said it seemed the rebels had been able to scale up their institutions “quickly, with civilians already taking control of governance days after its military apparatus took” Aleppo city.

“The model built in northwest Syria will be carbon-copied to the new ‘liberated areas’,” he told AFP.

But services and bread are not the only things people need after years of war have devastated the country’s economy and infrastructure.

“We have water and electricity but we are facing a very difficult financial crisis -- all the young people are unemployed,” said Nour Shamani, 52.

“Nobody has any money,” said the mother of three.

Message from Aram I

On December 3, Catholicos of the Great See of Cilicia Aram I issued a message to the Armenian residents of Aleppo. The message said, in page, “From the Motherland of Antelias, we will welcome the beloved children of our people of Aleppo with warm fatherly love. Aleppo is in trouble again. In the course of the past decades, this historic city of the coexistence of cultures, religions and nations in the Middle East has experienced the severe consequences of all the troubles.

“Aleppo has always been a central presence on the main page of the history of the Armenian people, in an economic, cultural, religious and national sense.

“Leaders, teachers, intellectuals, clergymen and public figures, from Lebanon to Yerevan, from European ports to the shores of the Atlantic, have their deep roots in Aleppo.

“Today, the Armenians of Aleppo are not alone. We are all on the path of prayer, love and solidarity. Aleppo is not past for our people, with its important achievements and key role. Aleppo will always remain present and also in the future,” he said.

Calm in Aleppo

An Armenian member of parliament in Syria, Maria Gabrielyan, said in an interview that the situation in Aleppo remains largely the same and efforts are being made to lead a normal life in the city.

“A while ago, they [the Islamic insur-

gents who toppled the regime] appointed a transitional prime minister to form a government,” she noted.

“This is probably the first step toward establishing a legitimate government. It was a very positive development that the current administration continued to govern during the transitional period. Therefore, this was a good step to ensure the smooth and legitimate transfer of state structures and infrastructure, which also instilled some confidence.

Today, a transitional body has already been created, or, in my opinion, it is called the Motherland Salvation Body,” said Gabrielyan.

The editor of the Armenian-language newspaper *Kantsasar* Zarmig Boghigian said in an interview concurred that Aleppo appeared calm. “It is quiet, calm, there are no militants, nor are there any sounds of gunfire,” she said in an interview.

“In general, it is a state of waiting. We are waiting to see how the interim government will be formed so that law and order will be established in the city and people’s concerns will be resolved. You know, the government is not formed yet, people are careful not to create insecurity in the country. Normal life has not yet returned; people do not go to work, but there is no concern about food, goods, etc.,” said Boghigian.

She mentioned that the new governors are meeting with the constituents, the church and community leaders and say: “Don’t be afraid, we have nothing to do with the people, the minorities can carry out their national intra-religious activities freely, we will preserve the rights of the national minorities, the social mosaic of Syria,” Boghigian emphasized.

“The embassies are closed in Damascus; the Armenian embassy operates from Beirut,” she added.

And when asked if she believes the Armenians in Syria will be able to continue to live under the new authorities and will not leave the country, Boghigian responded: “Yes. I believe they will continue to live [in Syria] because the Armenian community has tried to cooperate with various authorities over the years. The main thing for Armenians is the stability of the Syrian state, the preservation of the state.”

Israel, US and Turkey Launch Strikes in Syria

Bombing raids hit sites across Syria as regional actors in the Middle East scrambled to defend their interests in the country after the sudden fall of its president, Bashar al-Assad, who fled to Moscow.

As rebels led by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) freed regime prisoners, including from the notorious Sednaya jail – often referred to as the “human slaughterhouse” – Israel, Turkey and the US carried out military action as Assad’s former backers in Russia and Iran also engaged in efforts to shape a future Syria.

With events moving at an often dizzying pace, the rebels who toppled Assad announced on Telegram that they were issuing a general amnesty for regime military conscripts, as former Syrian prime minister Mohammed al-Jalali told al-Arabiya television he had agreed to hand over power to the rebel “salvation government”.

The US has struck targets associated with Islamic State in central Syria, while Turkey has attacked US-backed Kurdish forces. A deal for the Kurdish forces to withdraw

from the northern city of Manbij was reportedly struck on Monday after an advance by Turkish-backed Syrian National Army.

Israel also confirmed that it had sent forces into the buffer zone beyond the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and into former Syrian military positions on Mount Hermon in what it described as a “temporary measure.”

It said it would continue with airstrikes on former regime sites associated with missiles and chemical weapons, with airstrikes reported on Monday evening at an air defense installation near the port of Latakia.

The UN security council was due to meet later on Monday, December 9, to discuss the Syrian crisis in a closed session and at Russia’s request. The strikes reflect the perilous path forward for Syria as it transitions from five decades of brutal rule by the Assad family.

With sharply competing agendas, Turkey and Israel have already laid out what they say are their red lines regarding Syria, with Turkey saying it would not accept the Kurdish PKK or Islamic State benefiting from the new situation, even as it promised to help Syrian migrants in Turkey, which hosts 3 million refugees, to return.

The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, however insisted that Turkey has no interest in expanding its reach into Syria, despite its backing of the Syrian rebels.

“Turkey has no eye on the territory of any other country,” said Erdoğan. “The only aim for our cross-border operations is to save our homeland from the terrorist attacks,” he added, referring to raids targeting the Kurdish-led YPG, based in northeastern Syria.

Turkey’s foreign minister and the UN secretary general, António Guterres, also discussed the transition and rebuilding in Syria on Monday, a Turkish foreign ministry source said, as hundreds of Syrian refugees had gathered at two border crossings in southern Turkey hoping to return home.

For its part, justifying Israel’s latest strikes on sites in Syria, Gideon Saar, the country’s foreign minister, said it struck suspected chemical weapons sites and long-range rockets in Syria in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of hostile actors.

Saar said on Monday that “the only interest we have is the security of Israel and its citizens.”

Iran, which backed Assad in the country’s brutal civil war in order to preserve its land corridor to Hezbollah in Lebanon, also indicated that it had quickly opened a direct line of communication with the rebels who ousted Assad, in an attempt to “prevent a hostile trajectory” between the countries.

Hours after Assad’s fall on Sunday morning, Iran said it expected relations with Damascus to continue based on the two countries’ “far-sighted and wise approach” and called for the establishment of an inclusive government representing all segments of Syrian society.

And in its own warning, the Russian news agency Interfax, citing a lawmaker, said Moscow would respond harshly to any attack on its military bases in Syria.

Armenian Embassy Staff Evacuated

Armenia evacuated its embassy from Damascus as Islamist-led rebels entered the Syrian capital and overthrew the country’s long-time President Bashar al-Assad at the weekend.

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INTERNATIONAL

Georgia: Government Using ‘Excessive Force’ against Protestors

By Giorgi Lomsadze

Georgia appears caught in a vicious cycle in which intensifying anti-government protests prompt authorities to respond with the escalating use of force and repression. Government efforts to contain resistance to its policies have expanded to raids on opposition offices and activists’ homes, widening arrests and the saturation of central Tbilisi with tear gas.

The Georgian Dream government, whose legitimacy and anti-Western track are being challenged by the political opposition and large part of Georgian society, has steadily increased its use of repressive tactics in recent days to quell the rising popular resistance.

On the night of December 4, for example, police set up an ambush at a downtown subway station, frisking and detaining young men as they emerged from the es-

Gvaramia was later released, but several opposition figures and activists remain in custody.

The government crackdown is helping to galvanize a stronger spirit of cooperation among opposition parties. On December 5, the four main opposition forces that competed in the October 26 parliamentary elections announced they were joining forces to establish an information center concerning fast-moving events, with the aim of

Antony Blinken, adding that Washington was going to respond with sanctions.

The EU called on Georgian authorities to “stop using excessive force and ensure freedom of assembly,” while the bloc’s individual members took their own measures against Georgian Dream.

Three Baltic states slapped entry bans on Georgians officials, including Interior Minister Vakhtang Gomelauri, his deputies, and notorious special troops chief Zviad Kharazshvili, aka Khareba. Most prominently, the list includes oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, the creator and informal boss of Georgian Dream. “Opponents of democracy and violators of human rights are not welcome in our countries,” Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania said in a joint statement.

On December 5, Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp announced he would propose that Brussels suspend the right of visa-free travel for Georgians to the EU in response to the government’s “unacceptable” crackdown on peaceful protesters.

Earlier on, Germany suspended development collaboration with Georgia, citing concerns over democratic backsliding and Georgia’s walking away from the path of European integration. For its part, the US suspended the strategic partnership agreement with Georgia. On December 5, Ukraine announced sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes, against Ivanishvili and his associates.

Protests have occurred nightly since November 28. Immediately after the government’s announcement about the suspension of EU accession efforts, crowds poured into the streets in main cities, with Tbilisi’s Rustaveli Avenue becoming the focal point of opposition. Riot police have countered protesters using water cannons, tear gas and pepper sprays, but also hunting down and beating demonstrators. Protesters throw firecrackers and brickbats back at the police force.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and other Georgian Dream officials accuse forces in the EU and US of conspiring to stage a revolution in Georgia. He threatened opposition groups and civil society organizations, accusing them of participating in an alleged coup. Kobakhidze also says that his government is battling what he calls global liberal fascism.

(This article originally appeared on www.eurasianet.org on December 5.)



Protests in Tbilisi against the government (Photo: newsgeorgia.ge)

Special riot troops have detained more than 300 citizens during a week of protests, which were sparked by the ruling Georgian Dream party’s decision to halt European Union integration efforts. Most detainees assert they have been tortured while in custody, with some requiring hospitalization.

“We are witnessing systematic and mass acts of torture committed against civilian population,” a prominent human rights group, the Georgian Young Lawyers Association, said in a statement.

calators to join the demonstration on central Rustaveli Avenue. Commuters, mainly older women, wrestled with the police to defend the young men from arrests.

Earlier on the same day, police raided offices of opposition groups and apartments of activists, making several arrests. A group of police officers beat opposition leader Nika Gvaramia in front of his Ahali party headquarters in Tbilisi. Masked officers carried an unconscious Gvaramia by his limbs and shoved him into a vehicle.

countering government disinformation efforts. Opposition leaders, for instance, insist that reports that police discovered Molotov cocktails during raids conducted on December 4 are made up.

Condemnations of Georgian authorities’ actions has poured in from the United States and the European Union. “We call on Georgian Dream to cease its repressive tactics, including the use of arbitrary detention and physical violence, to attempt to silence its critics,” said US State Secretary

from previous page

“Due to the security situation in Syria, the diplomatic staff of the Armenian Embassy in Damascus will temporarily continue its work from Beirut,” the Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a statement released on Sunday, December 8.

Armenia also effectively shut down its consulate in Aleppo shortly before the northern Syrian city fell late last month to the rebels led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) Islamist militant group. Both diplomatic missions had functioned throughout the Syrian civil war.

An estimated 80,000 ethnic Armenians lived in the Middle Eastern country when the war broke out in 2011. The once thriving community is believed to have shrunk by more than half since then. Thousands of its members took refuge in Armenia over a decade ago.

Armenia’s Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs said on December 5 that the “first group” of Syrian Armenians that managed to flee Aleppo is due to be flown to Yerevan from Damascus on December 14. The Armenian Foreign Ministry statement indicated, however, that the flight has been cancelled. It said that there is no “safe possibility” of evacuating Syrian Armenians at the moment.

Meanwhile, the spiritual leadership of the local Armenian community urged its members to stay “discreet and cautious” in the current circumstances and leave their homes “only if necessary.” It also said that the community will continue to strive for Syria’s territorial integrity and welfare and assist in its “reconstruction efforts.”

There are widespread concerns in Armenia about the security of the community and the uncertain future facing it after the

rebel takeover.

“The situation is calm right now. It was much worse yesterday and the day before,” Hagop Khajarian, an ethnic Armenian resident of Damascus, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on Monday.

“But things are uncertain and we don’t know how this will end,” he said.

Khajarian said that although no Armenian is known to have been hurt in recent days, many community members plan to leave Syria.

“Everyone I have spoken to has the following plan: when things calm down and there is an opportunity, they will think about getting out,” added the man.

HTS is a US- and EU-designated terrorist organization. In recent years, the group severed ties with Al-Qaeda and sought to remake itself as a pragmatic alternative to the Syrian government.

But concerns remain over its alleged rights abuses and ties to terrorist groups. Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, the HTS leader, has sought to reassure Shi’ite Alawites and other Syrian minorities, including Christians, that he will not discriminate against them.

Turkey’s support for the rebels is another source of Armenian fears. Before its lighting offensive that toppled Assad’s regime, HTS controlled much of Syria’s northern Idlib province where Ankara reportedly recruited thousands of mercenaries and sent them to fight on Azerbaijan’s side in the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

(This story was compiled using material from Agence France Presse, news.am, Armenpress, *The Guardian*, Azatutyun and Public Radio of Armenia.)

INTERNATIONAL

Sofia AGBU Ushers in Christmas Season with Song

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

SOFIA — On the first of December, the AGBU Sofia Chamber Orchestra accompanied two accomplished soprano soloists in its final concert for the year, ringing in the festive Christmas season with “warm, bright, and beautiful musical experiences,” as the AGBU characterized it. The first-class orchestra, which regularly invites artists from all over the world, performed in the Central Military Club of Sofia under the direction of renowned conductor Maestro Levon Manukyan,

The guest artists were the Armenian Lusine Arakelyan and the Bulgarian Rositsa Matanieva; the former is a soprano with a rich, dramatic voice who has performed widely in Yerevan, where she also teaches, and on opera and concert stages internationally for many years. The latter, with a more lyrical soprano voice, is at the beginning of a promising career, and has taken part in a variety of projects, mainly related to musicals. The program reflected the variety of their musical accomplishments, with arias from classical works of opera, -- as well as operetta--, film music, and selections from Armenian music.

Arakelyan displayed her wide-ranging repertoire with Rusalka’s aria from the opera “Rusalka” by Antonin Dvorak, Sylva’s song from the operetta “Die Csardaszfürstin” (The Csardasz Princess) by Emmerich Kalman, Luigi Arditi’s song, “Il bacio” (The Kiss), and the popular song by Agustin



Lusine Arakelyan

Lara, “Granada.” The orchestra appeared to be particularly excited and joyous when she sang two Armenian pieces, *Im Mayrig* (My Mother) by Alexander Adjemyan and

Agavniner (Doves) by Geghuni Chitchyan.

The second soloist, Matanieva, added musical nuances to the program with her presentation of works by Pietro Mascagni and Ennio Morricone, as well as the Neapolitan favorite *O sole mio*. In a duet, the sopranos sang Jacques Offenbach’s *Barcarolle* from his opera, “The Tales of Hoffmann.”

As a special musical surprise for the audience, the orchestra and conductor had prepared and arrangement by Michael Hopkins, *I’ll be Bach for Christmas*. The festive spirit of the piece, which brings together excerpts from the most famous string works by Bach and popular Christmas songs into a single composition, delighted the audience of about 300 people.

(Material from the AGBU was used in this report.)



Lusine Arakelyan, Rositsa Matanieva, Levon Manukyan and the AGBU Sofia Chamber Orchestra

Despite Threats Sorbonne Conference Highlights Crimes of Azerbaijan

By Robert Aydabirian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — Organized and hosted by the Sorbonne for the United Nations (SONU), Humanitas Prima and the Association de soutien à l’Artsakh (Association for the Support of Artsakh, or ASA), a remarkable conference on geopolitics in the South Caucasus was held on Friday, December 6, at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

In front of an audience mainly composed of students who came in large numbers, Argentine founding prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo, environmental activist and French politician Senator Yannick Jadot, Paris-based international lawyer Catalina de la Sota, researcher at the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO, the National Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilizations located in Paris) Elodie Gavrilof-Dernigorossian, and Representative of the Republic of Artsakh in France Hovhannès Guevorkian analyzed the relations among Armenia, Artsakh, Azerbaijan and France, with an assessment of the scandalous COP29.

The catastrophic situation in Azerbai-

jan, a country compared to North Korea in terms of both human rights and ecology, was highlighted.

Guevorkian on behalf of the speakers thanked the organizers, who despite a threatening and intimidating letter received that very morning, insisted, in the name of freedom of expression and universalist values, that the conference take

place.

He conveyed the best wishes for success to Gavrilof-Dernigorossian, who will defend her thesis very soon, and made the following significant statement: “The defense of Armenia and the Armenian people is also a fight for humanity, for universal values that are unfortunately so quickly flouted.”



From left, speakers Elodie Gavrilof-Dernigorossian, Yannick Jadot, Catalina de la Sota, and Hovhannès Guevorkian (photo courtesy Representation of the Republic of Artsakh in France)

Azerbaijan: Crackdown On Dissents Continuing After COP29

Police in Azerbaijani have arrested prominent human rights activist Rufat Safarov and are charging him with fraud and hooliganism, according to friends and relatives.

Safarov, the director of the rights group Defense Line, was one of the last human rights defenders still active in Azerbaijan, until his arrest on December 3. He was supposed to travel to the United States later in December to accept a Global Human Rights Defender Award from US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken.

“I would like to state from the outset that the accusation is completely libelous and slanderous and is related to my activities as a human rights defender,” Safarov said in a message transmitted via his friends and posted on social media. “I am happy to defend political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. My request to the public is to devote more time to their defense.”

The Ministry of Internal Affairs told Voice of America that Safarov was arrested because of a conflict involving him and another individual regarding an alleged real estate dispute, adding that an official investigation had been opened. Safarov’s mother stated that the dispute is fictitious, as her son does not have title to any land.

The activist’s father, Eldar Sabiroğlu, indicated the detention was specifically timed to prevent Safarov from traveling to the United States, adding that his son had received his visa from the US embassy shortly before being taken into custody.

“The man [Safarov] is not a criminal, he was detained because of his professional activities,” Sabiroğlu said.

Safarov was also arrested in 2016 on charges of bribery and sentenced to a nine-year prison term. In 2019, he was set free under a presidential amnesty.

State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said the United States is closely monitoring Safarov’s case.

“It is imperative that human rights defenders everywhere are able to conduct their work without hindrance and free from fear of retribution,” Patel stated. “And we continue to urge Azerbaijan to release all of those unjustly detained and to cease its crackdown on civil society, including human rights defenders and journalists.”

Safarov’s arrest comes on the heels of a crackdown on the opposition Popular Front Party. Starting in late November, three prominent party figures were arrested separately on administrative charges that carry penalties ranging from 15 to 25 days in jail.

And on December 2, a Baku court fined party leader Ali Karimli 1,500 manats (about \$880) for a slander offense. Prior to the proceedings, police broke up a rally in support of Karimli outside the courthouse, with a few of the protesters receiving administrative detention and others being fined.

(This article originally appeared on the site eurasianet.org on December 4.)



Community News

Armenian American Museum Young Leaders Council to Host New York Life Managing Partner

GLENDALE — The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California Young Leaders Council (YLC) will host a presentation by Tigran Basmadjyan, managing partner of New York Life Southern California. The event will take place on Sunday, December 15, at 2 p.m., at the Adult Recreation Center in Glendale.

Basmadjyan is a seasoned financial professional with more than 20 years of experience in the insurance and financial services industry. As a Managing Partner with New York Life's Southern California office, he focuses on guiding ambitious individuals in building successful careers as financial advisors. His expertise spans life insurance, long-term care, investment management, annuities, and wealth management. Beyond his professional achievements, Basmadjyan is dedicated to fostering community development and personal growth through his work.

This gathering offers an opportunity to hear Basmadjyan's inspirational story of leadership and success, participate in an interactive discussion. Attendees will also enjoy a sneak peek into the construction progress of the Armenian American Museum, an iconic landmark in the making.



Tigran Basmadjyan

Guests will enjoy complimentary coffee and refreshments while connecting with peers in a welcoming and professional atmosphere. Business casual attire is recommended for the event.

"This Winter Speaker Series exemplifies the museum's commitment to inspiring and empowering the next generation of leaders," stated Chair of the Young Leaders Council Aleen Ohanian. "We are proud to host Tigran Basmadjyan, whose story resonates with the values of hard work, determination, and community impact."

This event is free to attend, and advance registration is required to secure your spot. For more information and to register, visit ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org/SpeakerSeries.

The Armenian American Museum's Young Leaders Council aims to engage the community through educational programs, networking events, and community initiatives. By creating meaningful opportunities for growth and development, the Young Leaders Council plays a vital role in supporting the museum's mission and vision.

To learn more about the museum project, visit ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org.



The participants outside St. James of Nisibis Church in Evanston.

A Celebration of Armenian Sacred Music in Illinois

EVANSTON, ILL. — The Eastern Diocese's Sacred Music Council held its "Sacred Music Day"—an uplifting day-long celebration of Armenian Church music—on Saturday, November 16, at St. James of Nisibis Church here.

The event featured instructional workshops, educational seminars, and a lecture-recital. Presenters and instructors included Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian, Deacon Rubik Mailian and Deacon Hovhannes Khosdeghian.

Among the formal presentations were "Sacred Chanting and Meditation," by the Primate; "From Listener to Performer: How Active Music Listening Can Improve Your Singing Skills," by Deacon Rubik Mailian; and a special lecture-recital by Deacon Hovhannes Khosdeghian, titled, "Psalmody and Cantilena in Armenian Sacred Music," featuring vocal performances by Fr. Andreas Garabedian and Fr. Guregh Hambardzumyan.

In addition to the presentations and workshops, the day was an opportunity to honor Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian for his many years of service as the Diocesan music instructor.

"It was a profound honor to preside as Primate over our Diocese's Sacred Music Day in Evanston," said Bishop Mesrop. "I felt privileged to share the ancient Armenian tradition of singing as meditation, exploring how the melodies of our church draw us closer to God."

The Primate went on: "It was an event dedicated to the heart and soul of our worship: the *sharagans*, our sacred chants, that have carried the prayers of our people for centuries. I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Sacred Music Council, the amazing presenters, and every participant who made this day unforgettable."

Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan, pastor of St. James and leader of the Sacred Music Council, organized the proceedings. Evanston parishioners eagerly welcomed the visiting clergy, Deacon s, choir members, and altar servers from sister communities for the occasion.

This year's Sacred Music Day built on the success of the multi-day Sacred Music Festivals that the Diocese has sponsored in past years. "This year's program was a new format: more of a sacred music retreat," explained Fr. Khoja-Eynatyan. "It's more adaptable to the local parish setting, and the Sacred Music Council plans to continue offering the program in the regions across our Diocese."



Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan



Deacon Rubik Mailian

Deadlines Extended For Armenian Assembly Summer Internship Programs

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) announced today that the application deadlines for the 2025 Terjirian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program in Washington, D.C. has been extended to December 17, 2024, and the Assembly Summer Internship Program in Yerevan, Armenia to January 10, 2025.

The eight-week summer program in Washington, DC, is designed to provide college students of Armenian descent the opportunity to live and work in the nation's capital, while taking part in a full schedule of educational, social, and cultural activities. Students accepted are assisted in securing internships with congressional offices, think tanks, media outlets, government agencies or non-governmental organizations based on their educational background and interests.

In addition, Assembly interns will have the opportunity to discuss Armenian-American issues during meetings with Members of Congress and other government officials, industry professionals, and noted academics through the Capitol Ideas and Lecture Series programs.

"The Terjirian-Thomas Internship Program was a rewarding and fulfilling experience," said 2024 intern participant Sabrina Ishanyan, who interned with Rep. Jack Auchincloss (D-MA), and is a senior at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she studies History and Economics. "The people I met on the Hill, while being directly immersed in the federal legislative process, helped guide me towards realizing my professional and personal pursuits," she said. "I was incredibly grateful to be in D.C. with the Assembly, where I met and was empowered by my fellow Armenians to continue to advocate for pro-Armenian issues."

Founded in 1977, the Armenian Assembly Summer Internship Program was the first internship program offered by an Armenian organization in America. To date, over 1,200 students of Armenian descent have graduated through the Assembly ranks. From its earliest phases, the Armenian community has consistently supported the Assembly Summer Internship Program with major gifts from the Richard Tufenkian Memorial Fund, the John Hanessian Scholarship Fund, the Armen Astarjian Scholarship Fund, the Ohanian Memorial Fund, James and Connie Melikian, and the Knights of Vartan. In 2003, the Assembly's Summer Internship Program was renamed in honor of Aram and Florence Terjirian and Annie Thomas after the announcement of their pace-setting \$1 million donation to the program.

Partial housing scholarships for the Terjirian-Thomas Summer Internship Program in Washington, D.C. are available to qualified students on a competitive basis. Applications are

see INTERNSHIPS, page 11



OBITUARY

Barkev Kaligian

Violinist, Engineer, ARF Member

WORCESTER — Barkev Hrayr Kaligian passed away Sunday, December 1, 2024, at UMass Memorial Hospital in Worcester. He was 95 years old.

Barkev was born in 1929, the only child of Mesrob and Pavagan (Nenejanian) Kaligian, both the sole survivors of their families of the Armenian Genocide.

Barkev was raised in Watertown and Newton, Mass., and graduated from Newton High School in 1946. He joined the US Army and was posted across the country.

Upon completion of his military service in 1952, Barkev was admitted to the College of Engineering at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1956 and spent most of his career working for the US National Park Service. He was very proud to have worked on projects at National Parks all over the US, from Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, to Smoky Mountain National Park in Tennessee, to the Cape Cod National Seashore, as well as on projects at Ellis Island, Minuteman National Park in Concord, Mass., and Acadia National Park in Maine.

Barkev was a great lover of music and was well-known for his violin-playing. He started playing violin at a young age and was most grateful for his longtime teacher Mary Scipioni (who gave him a French violin made in 1880, which he played throughout his life). It was his beloved fiddle playing at country music jams throughout Massachusetts, sometimes three or four

a longtime member of the ARF Boston Sardarabad gomideh.

He was also an active member of the St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown, Mass, where he sang in the choir almost every Sunday throughout his life. Barkev joined the AYF when young and was a member of its Central Executive in the late 1950s, and met many of his life-long Armenian friends during those years.

He was actively involved in the development of AYF Camp Haiastan, in Franklin, Mass., and served on its Board of Directors for three decades. Barkev was also an active member of the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center in Watertown Mass,

and the Armenian Relief Society. In recognition of his many decades of service to the Greater Boston Armenian community, he was awarded the Armenian National Committee's Vahan Cardashian Award in 2023.

In 1960 he met Seta Tamzarian, through mutual friends, and recruited her to be the staff nurse at Camp Haiastan during the summer of 1960, and they immediately hit it off. They were married in September in San Francisco where their oldest son Dikran was born the following year. They moved back to the East Coast in 1962, where their other three sons Zohrab, Aram and Garin were born. They moved to Lexington in December 1967, where they lived for the next 50 years.

He leaves behind his four sons and their wives, and 11 grandchildren: Dikran and his wife Seda of Watertown Mass., and their

children Keri, Rosdom and Yeraz; Zohrab and his wife Holly of Kenosha, Wisc. and their children Areknaz, Arakel, Azniv and Alidz; Aram and his wife Lenna of Belmont, Mass. and their daughters Gayane and Arev; and Garin and his wife Hooshere of Manhasset, NY, and their children Araxi and Masis. He also leaves behind many beloved cousins, nephews, and nieces.

Funeral services were held on Saturday, December 7, at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church. Graveside services followed at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Armenian Relief Society of Eastern USA, 80 Bigelow Avenue, Watertown MA 02472, or to Camp Haiastan Inc, PO Box C, Franklin MA 02038, or to St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church.

Nubar Kupelian

Veteran Eastern Diocese Staff Member

NEW YORK — Nubar Kupelian passed away on November 29, following a brief period of illness. He was 91.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Anahid Kupelian, his niece Lillian Kupelian of Montreal, as well as his nephews and nieces Dicran Haroutiounian, Hilda Semerdjian, Maida Garabedian, Dr. George Haroutiounian, and their families.

Kupelian was born in Egypt on November 1, 1933, to Armenian Genocide survivors Megerditch and Araxi. He was one of three children, with an older sister Anahid and a younger brother Berj, both of whom predeceased him.

At 16 years of age, Nubar attended the Antelias Jemaran in Beirut, Lebanon, where he spent five years studying Armenian history, language, and religion. There, he met and formed life-long friendships with numerous fellow students who would go on to serve the Armenian Church as bishops, *vartabeds* and priests.

Nubar returned to Egypt to take up a teaching position at the Nubarian Armenian School in Heliopolis, where he taught middle-school and high-school students for more than 18 years. At the Nubarian School he met his future wife Anahid, who was a kindergarten teacher at the time. He often told his family heartfelt stories about his wonderful students, many of whom he kept in touch with over the years.

Nubar and Anahid were married on May 31, 1959, at the Armenian Church of Egypt, surrounded by their families and their students. In 1970, they immigrated to the United States, and settled into their home in Woodside, NY.

Soon after his arrival to the US, Nubar obtained a position at St. Vartan Cathedral in New York City, as the assistant to Diocesan Primate Archbishop Torkom Manoogian — a role in which he served faithfully until Archbishop Torkom's departure for Jerusalem, to serve as the 96th Armenian Patriarch of the Holy City. He went on to serve under two further Diocesan Primates: Archbishop



Nubar Kupelian and his wife Anahid

Khajag Barsamian for 28 years, and Bishop Daniel Findikyan for two years, before retiring in 2020 at age 87 — after having served the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America for more than 50 years.

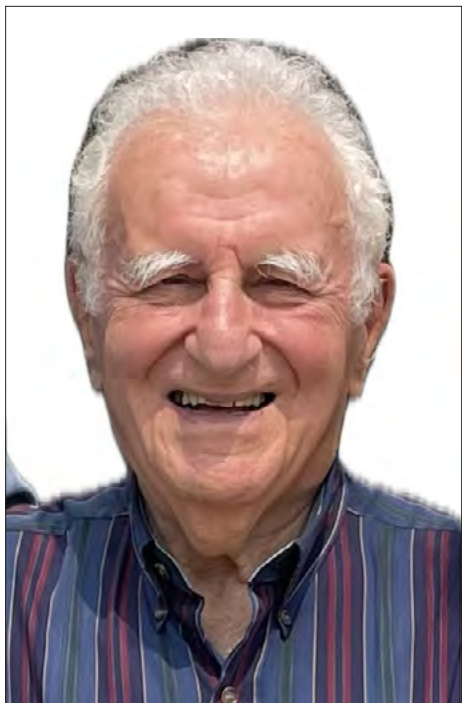
Throughout that time, Nubar was a leader, inspiration, and friend to his colleagues on the Diocesan staff. Additionally, for 25 years, he served as parish council chairman of the Armenian Church of Sunnyside, NY, led by the late Fr. Mamigon Vosganian.

During his lifetime, he garnered several recognitions and honors for his devotion to the Armenian Church and community, including the St. Nersess Shnorhali medal on two occasions: in 1991 presented by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian by the order of Catholicos Vasken I, and in 2023 presented

by Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan by the order of Catholicos Karekin II.

Nubar was loved and respected by everyone who knew him. He was a published author and revered translator in the Armenian Church community. He had an incredible sense of humor and was known for telling jokes and making people laugh. He was patient, kind, humble, and a man of great integrity. Above all, he was a devoted husband, the patriarch of the family, and someone everyone respected and adored.

The funeral service took place at Holy Martyrs Armenian Church in Oakland Gardens, NY on December 6, with Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan presiding and delivering a eulogy. The family has asked that memorial donations be made to the St. Vartan Cathedral Restoration Project, or to Holy Martyrs Armenian Church in Bayside, Queens.



times a week, that sustained him most in his later years, especially after his wife, Seta, passed away in 2018.

Barkev was raised an integral part of the Boston Armenian community, which grew out of being raised in an ARF family. His father Mesrob was a "gamavor" (volunteer) who returned from Boston to Armenia in 1915 to fight with General Antranig's volunteer regiment of the Russian Army against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Barkev was a founding member of the ARF Boston Roupen gomideh and was

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OBITUARY

Thomas Najarian, MD

Medical Pioneer, Dedicated to Family

INCLINE VILLAGE, Nev. — Dr. Thomas Najarian died on November 17, 2024. He was 76.

Tom resided with, and is survived by his wife, Sue Unkel, of Incline Village, Nevada; his brother and wife, Robert and Christine Najarian; his children (grandchildren): Nova Silver and Jeffrey Silver (Gabriel and Anna Young), Mono and Jacqueline Veissid (Stella Maritza, Olivia Christel, and Fiona Colette), Sina Lucia and Kent Skates (Armenie Melinda, William Kent, and Evelyn Lucinda); his step-children (step-grandchildren), Christopher Unkel, Jana Unkel (Rosa Coot, and Lisandro Coot); and his former spouse, Sina Maritza Dinjian. He was predeceased by his parents Armenie and Albert Najarian and his sister, Ann Najarian.

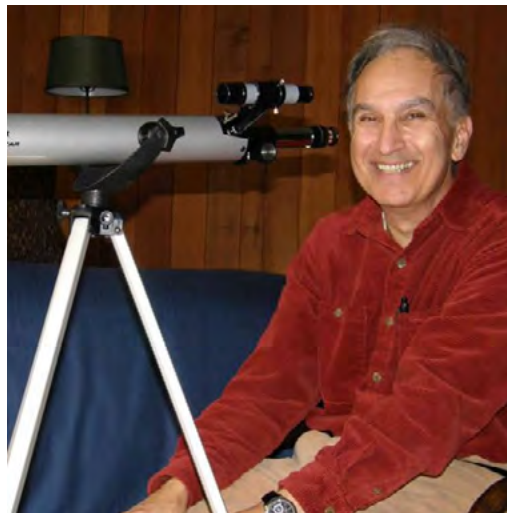
At an early age Tom demonstrated both athletic and academic scholarship. He was top of his class at Rockland High School, while simultaneously lettering in multiple varsity sports. Tom was well-loved, grew up in a close-knit community of cousins, which he kept in close contact with over the years.

engineering degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1969, and applied those reasoning skills to Harvard University School of Medicine graduating in 1974, Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Hematology.

From his early days of investigating the sewer systems of downtown Boston in an effort to curb Charles River pollution, to nuclear radiation studies at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, to designing and building the first passive solar home in New England, to developing cures for Hepatitis B and C that are still used today, to his later endeavors, impacting the life expectancy of a whole community through his innovative weight loss technologies, Tom was an incredible man.

He was active in the Armenian community throughout his younger years and following completion of his medical residency, Tom opened up a private practice in Belmont serving many of the Armenian community, including many beloved members of the clergy over the years.

Among his notable recognitions in the press, he was featured on the front page



of the *New York Times*, spotlighted on the front page of regional newspapers countless times, featured in magazines, interviewed on network news shows, testified to Congress about the dangers of low-level radiation as an expert in the field and published in multiple scientific journals as lead author. But more than his nationwide accomplishments in healthcare, public policy, and design, he was dedicated to helping his family and loved ones. Wherever he went he developed a thriving practice, coupled with on-going speaking engagements at prestigious medical schools around the country. Through his dedication to the field of medicine, many can say, “Tom saved my life.” That’s who he was.

Tom had a unique way of looking at health and longevity. When faced with a problem, he welcomed the challenge. He had an uncanny ability to find a solution that no one else could think of. He was always competitive and strived to be the best, but he also understood that life on

this planet is precious. He loved to laugh and make jokes with his friends and family. He loved to travel and be in beautiful places with his wife, his family, his wife’s family, and his friends.

On these many vacations, Tom was often found outside biking, hiking, body surfing, rafting, playing tennis, and games with his children and many grandchildren. Indoors, he could be found gathered around a table playing competitive family board games, card games, chess, and most of all he loved backgammon. In his younger years, even entering backgammon and chess competitions, and doing quite well. Many nights, you could find Tom sitting quietly outside, marveling at the beauty and peacefulness of the night sky. He was fascinated by astronomy and often made special plans to view meteor showers, comets, eclipse, and other astronomical events.

He had a magnetic personality; when he spoke people would listen to what he had to say. He and his wife built a beautiful life together over the last 25 years. They supported each other with love and companionship, and stood by each other through thick and thin. Towards the end, over the last year, his body began to slow down, but his mind stayed alive and active until the end. He wouldn’t have had it any other way.

Tom passed peacefully in the hospital surrounded by the love and support of his family.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations made to a charity of the donor’s choosing. Private services were held.

Andrew ‘Andy’ Torigian

Longtime Leader of Armenian Missionary Association

Tom was intelligent, charismatic, and a master of many skills. Following high school, he went on to receive a mechanical MOORESTOWN, N.J. — Andrew “Andy” Torigian, 100, passed away on November 25, 2024.

Andy was born and raised in the Bronx, NY.

The son of Armenians who emigrated to the United States following the genocide of 1915-1916, Andy graduated from the Stinson School of Aviation as an aircraft mechanic and worked for the civil air service before volunteering in 1944 to serve in the US Navy as a pilot during World War II.

Following the war, Andy continued his education, attending New York University to receive a bachelor’s degree in psychology as well as a bachelor’s degree in industrial and electrical engineering.

After college, he worked with several companies in the aviation and electronics industries including United Aircraft Corporation and United Technologies before eventually starting his own businesses that included Rical Associates and Technolease Corporation.

He was a lifetime member of IEEE, member and past vice president of the New York Metro Electronics Representatives Association and past Chairman of the Board for Electro.

In the 1960’s, Andy migrated to New Jersey, and ultimately settled in Paramus, where he was a resident for over 50 years before moving to Moorestown, NJ in 2021 to be closer to his children.

Although Andy led a long and distinguished career in aviation and electronics, volunteerism was a major hallmark of Andy’s life. As a young adult, he was highly active with the YMCA of New York rising to chair the International Department of the McBurney YMCA. He was an ardent supporter of veterans, eventually serving as president of the Paramus Veterans Association and Commander of American Legion Post Number 207. He was an active member and past vice president of the Paramus Republican Club as well as a member of the Paramus Planning Board.

He was also a passionate advocate and servant to the Armenian Community. Among his many contributions, he served



as commander of the Knights of Vartan, Trustee of the Armenian Assembly, Trustee of Haigazian University in Beirut, Trustee of the Hovnanian School, Trustee, Treasurer, and Elder of the Armenian Presbyterian Church, trustee, president and executive director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, and most recently, trustee and chairman of the Board for the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Emerson, NJ.

Recognizing his service to many different members of the community, he was awarded the NCCJ Bergen Humanitarian of the Year Award in 2002. In all his roles, Andy was loved and respected by all who knew him.

Andy is survived by his wife Rose, daughter Catherine Torigian, PhD, and her husband Anthony Gini, PhD, Esq., son Drew Torigian, MD, daughter Christine Torigian, MD, and her husband Michael Milone, MD, PhD, and grandchildren Lizzie, Sierra, and Sam, and his sister Sylvia Muserlian.

Family and friends celebrated his legacy at the Armenian Presbyterian Church, 140 Forest Avenue in Paramus, NJ, on Wednesday, December 4. Funeral services were held at the church on December 5. Interment followed at George Washington Memorial Park, Paramus, NJ.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that you consider donating in Andy’s memory to the Armenian Missionary Association of America: Orphan & Child Care Fund, to the Torigian Fund or to the Armenian Presbyterian Church.

Sylvia B. Tavitian

Dedicated to Family

PLAISTOW, N.H. — Sylvia Barbadian Tavitian, age 90, and a 53-year resident of Plaistow, died on November 16, 2024, at her daughter’s home in Cranston RI.

Sylvia was born June 16, 1934, in Lowell, Mass., daughter of the late Hagop and Siranoosh (Sarkisian) Barbadian. She grew up in a loving and caring family, the youngest of five, one brother and three sisters.

Sylvia graduated from Lowell High School in 1952 and worked various jobs (Raytheon, WHAV in Haverhill) until she found employment at Associates and Orthopedics in Haverhill, in 1974. She worked as a receptionist, scheduler and unpaid claims researcher until being furloughed at age 85 along with many others due to Covid-19 in 2020.

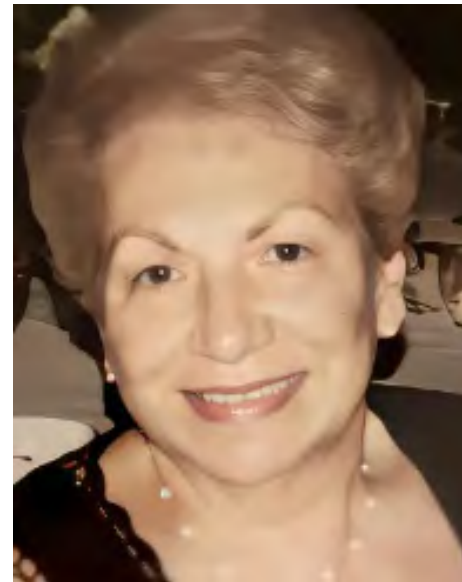
Sylvia and her husband, Paul, along with family members, built their home 62 years ago, raising their three children there.

Family get-togethers were memorable, and often included fruits of their labor from the garden, peach and apple trees, blueberry bushes and grapevines. Sylvia loved cooking for family and friends, and the dinner table was a comforting source of peace, joy and connection.

Sylvia was heavily involved in her Armenian church and culture. Starting in 1948, Sylvia was a church organist and choir member at St. Vartanantz Armenian Church in Lowell. When she married in 1959, she became a church organist and choir member at St. Gregory the Illuminator Apostolic Armenian Church in Haverhill.

Sylvia also was the first Dirouhie (Matron) of the local Daughters of Vartan chapter in 1971. Sylvia served two 2-year terms on the Grand Council, 1977 - 1979 and 2011 - 2013.

Sylvia is survived by her three children, David and Diane Tavitian of Hampton NH;



Debra and John Megrdochian of Cranston RI; and son Daniel Tavitian of Manchester NH; grandchildren Dillon Tavitian of Hampton, NH; Melissa Megrdochian of New York City; Peter Megrdochian of Cranston RI. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews and closely related family and friends. Sylvia was also predeceased by her husband of 53 years Paul; brother Nelson, and sisters Bette, Sue and Eva.

The funeral service took place on November 25 at the Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael & St. Gabriel, Haverhill with interment immediately following at Plaistow Cemetery, Elm St., Plaistow, NH. Funeral arrangements were by H. L. Farmer and Sons Funeral Homes, Bradford~Haverhill.

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”.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Knights of Vartan Boston Event Raises Funds for Armenia Sustainability Project

LEXINGTON, Mass. — On November 22, the Ararat Lodge of the Knights of Vartan hosted a comedy night fundraiser with more than 150 guests from all over the Massachusetts community at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Lexington.

The event was a fund raiser for the refugees that survived the ethnic cleansing in the Republic of Artsakh during September 2023.

Five well-known local comedians participated to provide laughter and entertainment for the crowd. When asked to help, the Master of Ceremony Johnny Pizzi, immediately said yes, and “we will make this a great success for you and your people!” Comedians from the Boston area,

Mike Duggan, Kenny Rogerson, Jason Merrill and Steve Sweeney, also performed and kept the attendees laughing the entire night. Pizzi added to the entertainment by performing his dazzling magic tricks with the audience throughout the performance.

Prior to the comedians, Dro Kanayan made a presentation about the Knights of Vartan and the Economic Sustainability Project. The audience watched a newly released video on the 2023 mass deportations of the Armenians from Artsakh and highlighted the indomitable spirit of the Armenian people that have survived genocides by Turkey and other Turkic countries over the centuries. “We hope other Armenian communities embrace this initiative and



The assembled



From left, Karnig Ostayan, Arman Manoukian, Johnny Pizzi (Comedian, Magician and MC), Dro Kanayan, Aram Orchanian and Jiro Eskandarian

support Knights of Vartan Economic Sustainability Program to provide hope and a better future for the Artsakh refugees” said Kanayan.

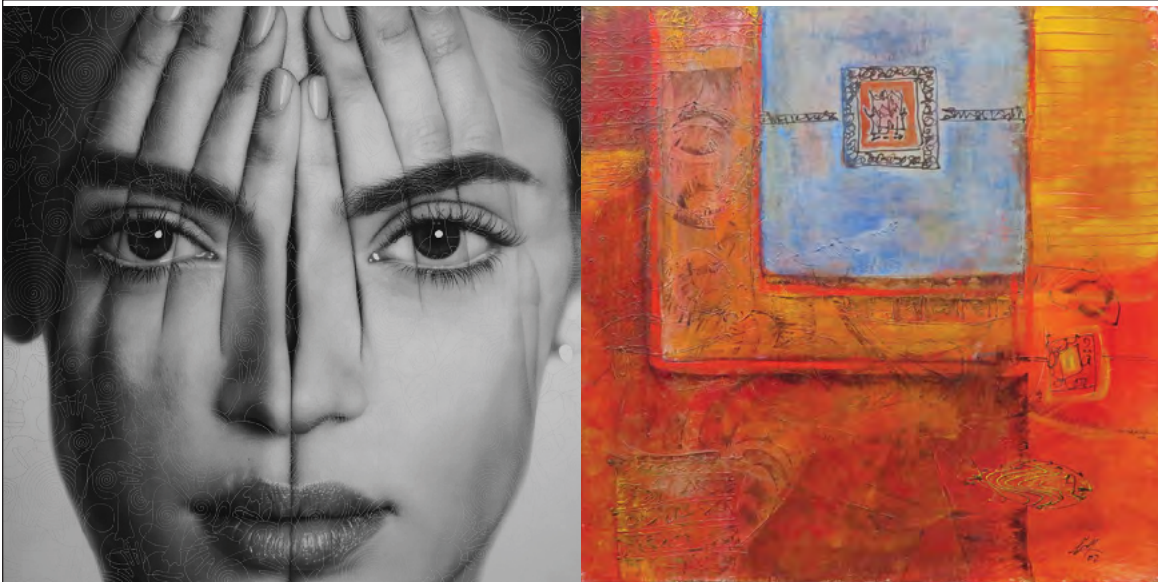
The event raised \$12,000 at the program, bringing the total raised for the Economic Sustainability Program by members of the Ararat Lodge to \$25,000. This program provides economic assistance to the Artsakh refugees by purchasing tools and equipment so they can work and find employment in the Republic of Armenia. The Knights of Vartan program goals is to help Artsakh refugees works and sustain themselves in Armenia so they can begin a new life in a country that has the same language and culture.

Since October 2023, the Knights of Vartan provided over \$160,000 in humanitarian assistance to the refugees. By December 2023,

the emphasis shifted from direct humanitarian and welfare aid to economic development and the Economic Sustainability Program (ESP) was launched in January 2024.

The Program aims to provide economic assistance to Artsakh refugees and other permanent residents in the Republic of Armenia to create jobs, develop and support trade skills to increase opportunities for employment and contribute to the socio-economic development of the Republic of Armenia.

Since January 2024, the Knights of Vartan have provided over \$90,000 in economic assistance that have helped 30 refugee families that include over 40 children. These families are now sustaining themselves by finding jobs or starting small family businesses and integrating in the Armenian communities where they reside.



▲ Tigran Tsitoghdzian “Armenian Mirror,” is part of our “Filtered Identity” exhibition on view in the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries through February.

▼ In 2023-2024, we mounted an impressive mixed media installation by Ara Oshagan titled “Disrupted, Borders” including hmayil prayer scrolls that were altered by the artist to reflect his own experiences and travels.

▲ Kevork Mourad’s “Age of the World” acrylic on canvas painting was one of 39 pieces in our contemporary exhibition, “Gandzaran! Notable Works from Our Collection”.

▼ This 18th-19th century brass reliquary was recently used in the Divine Liturgy by Catholicos Aram I at St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church. This marked its first use in a church service since being rescued from looting during the Armenian Genocide.



Thank you for your support of the Armenian Museum of America!

Members are the foundation of the Museum, enabling us to share Armenia’s rich history and culture while preserving and showcasing our artifacts. Your support plays a vital role in sharing Armenia’s cultural heritage. Thanks to you, we’ve expanded our galleries and online presence, offering rotating exhibitions and digital content on topics like contemporary art, textiles, the Genocide, human rights, live concerts, and much more.

Key 2024 Highlights:

- **Record Attendance:** Thousands visit our galleries each year to explore Armenian art.
- **Exciting Exhibitions:** “Filtered Identity” by Tigran Tsitoghdzian blends classical and modern art with hyper-realistic life-sized paintings.
- **Growing Digital Reach:** Our online programming connects Armenian culture globally.
- **Thriving Membership:** Join us and support this vital work.
- **Collaborative Success:** We partnered with the Matenadaran and Bank of America to restore rare manuscripts.

We encourage you to join or renew your support. Please visit our website or call (617) 926-2562 x102. Thank you for being a part of our success!

This holiday season, give the gift of museum membership, offering unlimited access to our exhibitions, special events, and exclusive behind-the-scenes experiences all year long.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Joyful New Year!



Armenian Museum of America
65 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472
armenianmuseum.org



COMMUNITY NEWS

LA Mayor Bass Appoints Council President Emeritus Paul Krekorian to lead the Office of Major Events

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass on December 5 announced the appointment of Council President Emeritus Paul Krekorian as executive director of the Office of Major Events. In this role, Council President Emeritus Krekorian will coordinate city departments and engage external stakeholders — working to ensure the 2028 Games and other major events create positive economic impacts for the city and advance other crucial priorities to make sure all Angelenos benefit from these coming opportunities. L.A. is preparing for the 2026 FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cup and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

This appointment represents a new phase of preparations ahead of major events and came into effect on Monday, December 9, after Krekorian completed his 15 years of service on the Los Angeles City Council (for more on his career, see “Krekorian Brings Political Savvy and Experience to LA City Council” by Aram Arkun in the *Mirror-Spectator*, January 22, 2024).

“President Emeritus Krekorian’s expertise and leadership are both vital as we evolve our readiness for the major events Los Angeles will host in the coming years,” said Mayor Bass. “When we met with officials from Paris, they stressed the importance of pulling the entire city together to make sure all City departments were aligned and operating under the same vision. President Krekorian is uniquely positioned to do just that — drawing on his decades of experience handling local and statewide budgets and firsthand institutional knowledge of city government as well as the Olympic bid process. Today marks a new phase of urgent preparations for Los Angeles. Thank you President Krekorian for partnering with me to create a Games for all.”

“As I conclude my service on the City Council, I know how much more work needs to be done ahead of the 2028 Games. I’m honored that Mayor Bass is entrusting me to lead preparations for major events coming to Los Angeles and to deliver a successful 2028 Games to Angelenos and visitors from around the world,” said Council President Emeritus Paul Krekorian. “I look forward to hitting the ground running and partnering with Mayor Bass, the City Council, our city departments, and LA28 to deliver the 2028 Games in a way that benefits everyone.”

“Council President Emeritus Paul Krekorian has proven time and again that he thrives under pressure and leads with vision, especially during challenging moments,” said City Council President Marqueece Harris Dawson. “His ability to plan, coordinate across departments and sectors, and manage complex budgets is second to none. These skills make him the perfect choice to oversee major world

events for Los Angeles. I’m confident his leadership will shine in this new role, showcasing the best of our city on a global stage. Congratulations!”

“Paul Krekorian is a longtime advocate of the Olympic and Paralympic Movement and has been a champion of the Games’ return to Los Angeles for over a decade while serving as a member and president of the City Council,” said Reynold Hoover, LA28 Chief Executive Officer. “His dedication and leadership will undoubtedly continue to drive excellence in his new role as executive director, Office of Major Events in this next chapter of our journey to deliver an incredible Games in 2028.”

Council President Emeritus Krekorian is a respected leader, and in this role, he is uniquely suited to draw on his historical expertise as well as his unparalleled experience to organize city departments and external stakeholders as we prepare for major events.

As executive director of the Office of Major Events, Council President Emeritus Krekorian will: lead efforts to ensure the 2028 Games and other major events create positive economic impacts for the city; help coordinate city planning and operations within the City family and serve as the primary liaison between the Mayor’s Office and LA28, and other cities in the region, as well as community and commercial stakeholders; and ensure the mayor and City Council’s city policy priorities are being implemented. The latter includes but are not limited to supporting small and local community businesses with opportunities to compete for contracts and grow; ensuring Angelenos can find career-enhancing training and job opportunities; investing in sustainable infrastructure and transportation; and engaging the entire city in preparing for and celebrating these major events in ways that benefit all Angelenos.

Deadlines Extended for Armenian Assembly Summer Internship Programs

INTERNSHIPS, from page 7
available on the Assembly’s website.

The Assembly also offers a similar internship program, the Assembly Summer Internship Program in Yerevan, Armenia, that provides students the opportunity to live and work in one of the most historically and culturally rich countries in the world. Students will work in Armenian government agencies, non-governmental organizations, medical centers, or media outlets, as well as meet with Armenia government officials and tour historical sites in and around the country.

“The Summer Internship Program in Yerevan was an enlightening experience for me, as I worked in my chosen field and forged closer connections with my heritage and culture, which was a unique privilege,” said participant Adam Sherinian, a graduate of George Mason University where he studied Global Affairs, who interned at the Republic of Armenia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

For more information on the Assembly internship programs or assistance with the application process, write to jpiatt@aaainc.org.



Osheen Keshishian Celebrates 90th Birthday at Tekeyan’s Beshgeturian Center

By Kevork Keushkerian

ALTADENA, Calif. — The 90th anniversary birthday celebration of well-known journalist, editor, teacher, counselor and public speaker Osheen Keshishian took place on Sunday, November 24, at the Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Beshgeturian Center in Altadena, California.

This unique celebration was organized by two people, namely Avedis Markarian and Joseph Ganimian, who had known and worked with Osheen for a long time. Osheen’s family members and a limited number of Osheen’s close friends, 70 all in all, were invited to this event.

Master of ceremonies Ganimian took to the podium and invited Rev. Fr. Manoog Markarian to bless the food. During the serving of the food, musician Razmik Khat-chikyan entertained the audience with selections from Armenian and other composers on the piano.

After the food was served, Ganimian took to the podium again and this time, he gave a brief biographical sketch of the honoree. He then noted that it was going to be an open forum, where everyone was invited to speak about the honoree and recall their relations with him.

Osheen Keshishian was born in Jerusalem. He attended the Holy Translators school there until 1948, the Arab-Israeli war, when his family first fled to Amman, Jordan and a year later to Beirut, Lebanon.

Osheen graduated from the Armenian General Benevolent Union’s Hovagimian-Manougian high school for boys in 1955. He attended the American University of Beirut for one year and then immigrated to the United States of America, settling in California.

Osheen graduated from California State University, Los Angeles, and the University of La Verne with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Anthropology and American Studies. He served in the US Army for two years, 1959-61, as a medic, working in Madigan General Hospital, outside Lakewood, Washington.

Osheen was the owner and editor-in-chief of the English language weekly newspaper *The Armenian Observer*,

which was founded in 1969. Aside from his editorial job, he was a professor in the Language Department of Los Angeles City College, following which, he was on the faculty of Glendale Community College for 27 years.

Osheen was a member of the Board of Directors of Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada for a number of years. He was also a long time member of the Board of Trustees of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Arshag Dickranian school in Los Angeles.

He served on the Committee of the Armenian Genocide Monument, which was erected in 1968, in Montebello. Osheen was entrusted with the transfer of the remains of the famous author William Saroyan to Yerevan, Armenia in 1982. He was invited three times to the White House, once to accompany President of the Republic of Armenia Levon Ter Petrossian.

Keshishian is the recipient of the St. Sahag-St. Mesrob Medal, with its accompanying encyclical, from the late Catholicos of All Armenians Vasken I. He has also received the Vartkes Balian award for Journalism, from the Central Board of Directors of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada.

Now, back to the 90th anniversary celebration. One by one, the following individuals took to the podium to remember how they had met Osheen, how long they had known him, in what capacity they had worked with him and of course to pay tribute to this one-of-a-kind person, who has left his mark in the Armenian community of Southern California.

Dr. Hovhannes Avedikian praised Keshishian for his contributions to the Armenian community in Southern California and presented him with a letter of appreciation, on behalf of the Organization of Istanbul Armenians.

Dr. Avedikian was followed by Dr. Hovig, Melidonian, Dr. Guiragos Minassian, Dr. Raffi Balian, Dr. Minas Kojayan, Khatchig Janoyan, Hratch Sepetjian, Mayda Kuredjian, the West Coast Executive Secretary of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, and Osheen’s older brother Dr. Onnig Keshishian. Kevork Keushkerian read a letter addressed to



From left, Osheen Keshishian, Dr. Raffi Balian, Avedis Markarian

Osheen by the late Kasbar Derderian of Beirut, Lebanon. It was written in 2015. All of the above addressees paid tribute to Osheen for his tireless and valued contributions to the Armenian community.

At the end, the two organizers, Markarian and Ganimian, presented Osheen with a pen, to continue writing articles and especially his memoirs, until he becomes a centennial celebrant. The 90th anniversary cake was cut by Osheen and distributed to the invited guests, who wished him good health and a productive life.

Ganimian hinted that a more public 90th anniversary celebration is being organized, probably by the *Nor Or* publishing company, which will take place in February or March of next year.



Tekeyan Cultural Association

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia

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



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

☐ \$240 ☐ \$480 ☐ \$700 ☐ other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

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



Your donation is tax deductible.

Arts & Culture

All for the Children Of Artsakh: Sareen Hairabedian’s ‘My Sweet Land’

By Arpi Sarafian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Recently, Jordan withdrew its submission of “My Sweet Land,” winner of the Grand Jury Award at the First Film Feature Competition at Sheffield International Documentary Festival, from consideration for Best International Feature Film at the 97th Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Awards. A film honored at the Amman International Film Festival as Best Feature Length Arab Documentary and funded by Jordan’s Royal Film Commission was suddenly dropped as Jordan’s entry for the Academy Awards, reportedly “due to diplomatic pressures” from Azerbaijan, for its sympathetic portrayal of displaced Armenians in the decades-long conflict between the Republic of Artsakh, an enclave in Nagorno Karabagh whose highlands ethnic Armenians have inhabited for millennia, and Azerbaijan that claims the enclave as its own.

Through a simple story of growing up, director Sareen Hairabedian tackles the age-old question: Why do we engage in violence and wars when they only beget more violence? Rather than sensationalize the barbarity and the bloodshed that have been part of the lives of the natives of Artsakh for decades, however, Hair-



Director Sareen Hairabedian

abedian foregrounds the intimacies and the quiet of the everyday lives of the inhabitants of a small village, home to the eleven-year-old protagonist Vrej, to depict the disruptions caused by perpetual wars. It is “the warmth of the family bond” that the film highlights, Hairabedian said in an interview with Documentary magazine. After being forced to flee during the 2020 Artsakh War, Vrej returns to a hometown littered with mines and gaping holes where missiles had hit the walls. Yet, he goes about playing with his toy gun imitating the sounds of the real guns the kids in the new militarized schools were learning to operate in preparation for the next war.

“My Sweet Land” opens with the breathtakingly beautiful scene of a 2008 mass wedding of seven hundred couples tying the knot, the harbinger of new families and new children that will repopulate the land. The purity of the white bridal gowns

see FILM, page 17



From left: Music director Greg Hosharian, singer Giselle Hosharian, vocalist Aretha Scruggs, the music director of the choir Jonte Moore, and Aretha’s

‘Portraits of the Homeland’ Concert Held in Glendale

By Karine Armen
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDALE — Greg Hosharian produced and conducted “Portraits of the Homeland,” a concert held at the Alex Theatre, on November 10.

Hosharian is a composer, keyboardist, educator and conductor. He began studying music and playing piano under the guidance of his father, composer and conductor Edward Hosharian. Growing up with diverse musical influences, he attended the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. He holds a bachelor’s degree in music composition from the California Institute of the Arts and a master’s degree in Composition from California State University, Northridge.

In 2010, he founded the Armenian Pops Orchestra, a 40-member orchestra.

The Mistress of Ceremonies for the concert was anchorwoman Araksya Karapetyan.

Performing at the concert was the Voice of Hope Collective Gospel Choir, known for blending gospel, jazz, and R&B, performed Armenian songs such as *Bari Aragil* and *Azg Parabantz*. Directed by Jonté Moore, a versatile pianist, organist, and music director, the choir brought a unique energy to the evening. Aretha Scruggs performed a solo in English and a duet in Armenian alongside Natalie Buickians.

Throughout the evening, Greg Hosharian spoke to the audience between songs. He shared, “I had a dream that one day I would combine gospel and Armenian music. Tonight, I made that happen.” The orchestra featured concertmaster Angela Amirian, virtuoso flutist Salpy Kerkonian, guest conductor and pianist Armen Keyvanyan, and sopranos Giselle Hosharian and Natalie Buickians. Giselle, Greg’s niece, was recognized by Hosharian during the concert. He announced, “Giselle is following in her grandfather’s footsteps. I am proud of how she pursues her passion.”

At the conclusion of the program, children, including Greg’s daughter, Holly, presented flowers to the soloists. The 5-year-olds lingered on stage, drawing smiles from the audience. Hosharian remarked, “Why not? They are the future musicians.” The audience responded with enthusiastic applause as the orchestra and choir performed two more Armenian songs to end the evening.

All proceeds from the concert benefited the Edward Hosharian Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving Armenian music by providing financial assistance to college students of Armenian descent who are pursuing studies in music or composition. These students carry forward the passion and dedication exemplified by Maestro Hosharian, ensuring that his musical legacy continues to inspire future generations.

For more information about the foundation, visit <https://www.edwardhosharian.org/>



Greg Hosharian (Karine Armen photo)

Romik Hovanessian

With Flamenco Music From Iran



By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — On November 15, Yerevan was the site of a Flamenco concert. What made it surprising was that the ensemble came from Iran. The leader of the group is Iranian-Armenian guitarist, guitar teacher and composer Romik Hovanessian, whose works were performed during the evening.

Hovanessian, 48, studied electronics but learned to play piano and later guitar from a young age. He has regularly met master guitarists in Spain (such as Víctor Monge “Serranito,” Dani de Morón, Diego del Morao, Pedro Sierra and El Amir) and participated in workshops by Oscar Herre-ro. In Turkey, he attended a flamenco guitar festival and masterclasses by Serranito and Pedro Sierra.

Two days after the concert of the “Romik Hovanessian and Friends Ensemble,” we met with Romik, joined by his wife and muse, Narine Keshishian, who occasionally supplemented his words during our conversation.

Romik, allow me to congratulate you on your debut in Armenia, hoping that your concerts here will continue, as Yerevan’s audience has warmly embraced and appreciated you.

I also want to thank the organizers of our concert and the leadership of Yerevan Chamber Music House. When the concert ended, I couldn’t believe that after so many years of dreaming about this, it had finally come true. We were all deeply moved, inspired, and thrilled by the audience’s enthusiastic reception. It was a leap forward for us. I told my musicians, “Know this: in Yerevan, people are strong in music, their musical taste is refined. No matter how much applause you get in Iran, don’t get too excited.” Now I’ve told them again, “Still, don’t get too excited. Always aim higher.”

My mood is great. When the musicians walked on stage one by one, they were astonished to see a packed hall in a different country, a different culture, where no one knew them personally. There wasn’t a single empty seat, and when people began encouraging them

see ROMIK, page 16

Tekeyan Boston Cooks Anoushabour and *Halawet el Jibn* with Holiday Cheer

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presented the third in this year’s cooking demonstration series with holiday desserts *anoushabour* and *halawet el-Jibn* on Thursday, December 5 at the Baikar Building. The series is coordinated by Chapter Co-chair Rita Balyozian.

Chapter Co-chair Dr. Aida Yavshayan welcomed guests and provided some information on the Armenian traditions connect-



The two desserts ready to eat (photo Suzy Naroian)



Halawet el Jibn (photo Aram Arkun)



Betty Arouyan prepares the *halawet el Jibn* as Betty Dimitian, left, and Rita Balyozian, right, watch (photo Sossy Yogurtian)

ed with *anoushabour*, which is a type of pudding made with wheat, fruits and nuts, usually for Armenian Christmas or New Year. One legend has it that right before Noah’s Ark reached land in Armenia, Noah boiled everything left when running out of food, so that this dessert is also called Noah’s pudding in the Middle East. Yavshayan demonstrated how to prepare her own version of *anoushabour* which guests were later able to taste.

Guest chef Betty Arouyan demonstrated with good humor how to prepare the second dessert, *halawet el-Jibn*, which is a sweet prepared with farina, mozzarella cheese, syrup and other ingredients.

The audience after witnessing the demonstration then got to ask questions of the chefs and taste their products along with some other items and drinks.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter plans a fourth cooking demonstration of savory items soon after its Valentine’s Soiree musical evening, Saturday, February 1 at 8 p.m. at the Baikar Building. Follow its Facebook page for more information.



Dr. Aida Yavshayan, at left, shows an ingredient for *anoushabour*, with Betty Arouyan to her right (photo Aram Arkun)





TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION PASADENA GLENDALE CHAPTER

Join Us for an Inspiring Evening

Elegance in Harmony

Painting Exhibition

December 13, 14, 15

By

The Internationally Renowned Artist

HRAIR

The artist will be painting live creating a masterpiece for all present to enjoy and witness his unique talent.

Friday, December 13 at 7:00 pm at the TCA Beshgeturian Center, 1901 N Allen Avenue, Altadena

Champagne cocktail reception

Invitation

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





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe
Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



California Walnut Board’s Walnut-Crusted Pork Tenderloin

FOLSOM, CA — Established in 1948, the California Walnut Board represents the walnut growers and handlers of California. In fact, California’s walnuts supply over half of the world’s walnut trade. Many people are surprised to learn that over 99 percent of the walnuts in U.S. are grown in the rich fertile soils of California’s San Joaquin Valley.

There are over 4,400 California walnut growers, and most farms are owned and operated by families who have been in the walnut business for several generations. “California’s walnuts provide the goodness of a natural whole food while adding unique flavor and texture to a variety of foods from a variety of ethnic and culinary backgrounds. Known for their place in premium cooking and baking, they can also be used in snacking applications, and in unexpected ways from meat substitutes to thickeners for soups and sauces. Walnuts offer a unique flavor and texture that makes them a perfect addition to salads, sauces and spreads, and many favorite desserts and pastries,” says Jennifer Olmstead, Sr. Director of U.S. Marketing & Communications at California Walnuts.

For over 30 years, California Walnuts has supported health-related research examining the effect of walnut consumption on areas including heart health, cognition, cancer, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, gut health, body weight/composition, reproductive health and more. Published by the New England Journal of Medicine, findings from the landmark Spanish PREDIMED (PREvención con Dieta MEDiterranea) trial, report that a Mediterranean diet including nuts, primarily walnuts, reduced the risk of cardiovascular diseases (myocardial infarction, stroke or cardiovascular death) by 30 percent and specifically reduced the risk of stroke by 49 percent when compared to a reference diet consisting of

advice on a low-fat diet (American Heart Association Guidelines).*

The walnut was first cultivated in California by the Franciscan Fathers in the late 1700s. The earliest walnuts to enter California were known as “mission” walnuts. Unlike today’s walnuts, these first entries were small with hard shells. The trees flourished in the Mediterranean-like climate zones of California, and by the 1870s modern walnut production had begun with orchard plantings in southern California, near Santa Barbara. In the next 70 years the center of California’s walnut production shifted with successful plantings in the central and northern parts of the state. Many of today’s improved cultivars are descendants of early plantings. Luther Burbank is credited with early research in California walnut cultivation.

This recipe from California Walnuts was created by Chef Joey Kistler, the former chef at the renowned Cutting Horse Restaurant in San Juan Bautista, California (now closed). It incorporates tender, juicy pork tenderloin with a fragrant Maple Syrup Walnut Sauce that makes for a distinctive entrée for any family dinner or holiday celebration.

Walnut-Crusted Pork Tenderloin

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground
- 1 pound pork tenderloin, cleaned and trimmed
- 2 large eggs beaten with 1 tablespoon water
- 1 1/2 cups walnuts, chopped
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, to taste
- Maple Syrup Walnut Sauce (recipe follows)

PREPARATION:

Toss together the flour, salt and pepper. Cut the tenderloin into two equal portions. Roll the tenderloin in the flour, shaking to remove excess. Dip the tenderloin in the beaten egg wash and roll to coat thoroughly. Drain off excess. Roll the coated tenderloin in the crushed walnuts, pressing gently to secure the crust. Set aside for 5-10 minutes for the coating to set.

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed pan. Add the tenderloin pieces and sear well on all sides.

Add 1 to 1 1/2 cups of the warm Maple Syrup Walnut Sauce and cook over medium heat, turning the tenderloins often to coat with sauce and keep the crust from burning.

The sauce will reduce to a thick glaze; add more if necessary to keep the desired consistency. When the pork is just pink in the center, remove from the pan and reserve.

Reduce the sauce if necessary to get a thick glaze. Slice the pork on the diagonal and drizzle with the thick glaze.

Serves 4.

For this recipe, go to: <https://walnuts.org/recipe/california-walnut-crust-ed-pork-loin-with-apple-maple-reduction/>

Maple Syrup Walnut Sauce

Here’s a festive sauce to serve on roasted meats like pork, beef, elk or venison.

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup walnuts, toasted
- 2 cups maple syrup
- 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme

Add all ingredients to a small pot, bring to a boil and set aside. Serve warm with Walnut-Crusted Pork Tenderloin. Serves 4.

For information about California Walnuts and more walnut recipes, go to: walnuts.org/recipes/

*As one of the world’s largest and longest dietary intervention studies, PREDIMED is a multicenter, randomized, primary prevention trial of cardiovascular disease funded by the Spanish Ministry of Health. See: https://www.todaysdietitian.com/news/022713_news.shtml#:~:text=%22Extensive%20research%20has%20found%20walnuts,includ%20walnuts%2C%22%20states%20Beckerman.

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‘Serenade with a Dandelion’ Named a Top Classical Album in 2024

LOS ANGELES — The long-running and influential online magazine *Textura* has just released its top 20 lists for classical and jazz recordings of 2024. Coming in at number three on the list for quartet, ensemble or orchestral classical recordings is “Serenade with a Dandelion,” a four-disc set of new recordings of Armenian music, led by Movses Pogossian, professor of violin performance. The recording featured a number of University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) faculty, including violinists Varty Manouelian and Movses Pogossian, violist Che-Yen Chen and saxophonist Jan Berry Baker. The disc also features UCLA’s VEM String Quartet.

Textura writes about the album “**Movses Pogossian & Varty Manouelian: ‘Serenade with a Dandelion’**” (New Focus Recordings): “Arriving four years after the inaugural ‘Modulation Necklace’ collection, violinists Varty Manouelian and Movses Pogossian present a four-volume sequel

offering a panoramic overview of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Armenian music. ‘Serenade with a Dandelion’ is a stunning act of curation on the part of the married couple and captures the incredible richness of Armenian music, past and present. Chamber pieces, solo piano works, and art songs collectively attest to the breadth of music originating out of the mountainous Caucasus region between Asia and Europe. However daunting the prospect of digesting 270 minutes of Armenian classical material might be, the four-disc set proves to be extremely accessible, and one comes away from the release’s performances with a clear grasp of the Armenian musical spirit the creators have dedicated themselves to presenting and preserving.”

Textura reviewed the album in September 2024. The album is available through New Focus Recordings, is available for purchase and on all major streaming applications.



Still from the world premiere concert in Lani Hall on March 4, 2024



ARTS & CULTURE

ASA Announces 2024 Scholarship Recipients

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — This year the Armenian Student Association (ASA) awarded nearly \$160,000 in scholarships to 32 students of Armenian descent enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States of America.

The Board of Trustees thank the many benefactors who have made it possible for the ASA to assist our young men and women in their educational pursuits. During the past decade, the Association through its Scholarship Committee has been able to award well over \$1,000,000 in outright scholarship grants.

The Scholarship Grant Program is the hallmark of the Association’s mission. Please consider supporting this vital program, especially as tuition continues to increase. Your gift will have an immediate impact and give a lifetime of returns. Checks should be made payable to: Armenian Students’ Association of America, Inc.

ASA Scholarship Applications for the 2025-2026 academic year will be available in January at www.asainc.org or by emailing headasa@asainc.org. Completed application with all documentation must be submitted to the ASA, 588 Boston Post Road Suite 364, Weston, MA 02493 by April 1, 2025.

2024 Recipients

- Adrineh Aris, University of Illinois, Chicago, MHA Healthcare Policy & Admin
- Hayk Azoyan, University of Minnesota, Finance
- Ofelya Baghdasaryan, University of California, Davis, PhD Biomedical Engineering
- Sona Bardakjian, Boston College, Communications
- Lena Bardakjian, Northeastern University, Law
- Aren Bedrossian, Fairfield University, Accounting & Finance
- Emilie Besnilian, Pepperdine University, MA in Marriage & Family Therapy
- Karo Boyadzhyan, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, Religious Studies

- Diana Gabrielyan, The Catholic University of America, PhD Piano Performance
- Lori Ganjian, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Biology & Biotechnology
- Hannah Gantz, Wake Forest University, Doctor of Medicine
- Anna Harutyunyan, New York University, MS in Communicative Sciences
- Hakob Janesian, Boston University, MS in Data Science
- Aris Kalpakgian, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Economics
- Lenna Kevorkian, George Mason University, Business – Accounting & Finance
- Davit Khachatryan, Northwestern University, MS in Robotics
- Lusine Kirakosyan, NYU Tisch School of Arts, MPS in Interactive Telecommunications
- Cecile Koceyan, Michigan State University, Veterinary Medicine
- Nikolas Kojoian, Northeastern University, Industrial Engineering
- Ava Kooloian, Tulane University, Communications
- Zareh Mirzayan, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, Religious Studies
- Ani Mkrtchyan, University of Maryland, International Business & Marketing
- Ejmin Panoosian, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Aeronautical Science
- Angineh Parsadanians, Virginia Tech University, PhD Crop, Soil, Environmental Science
- Arin Parsanian, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, Religious Studies
- Armine Poghosyan, Virginia Tech University, MA in Economics
- Elina Sargsyan, University of St. Thomas, MA in Counseling Psychology
- Nairi Sarkissian, Biola University, Nursing
- Davit Shadunts, Columbia University, MS in Electrical Engineering

- Arin Shahbazian, Virginia Tech University, PhD Economics
- Arman Shirikyan, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, Religious Studies
- Michael Trivino, St. John’s University, Homeland Security

ASA Gold Medal Awards

The ASA Gold Medal Award is recognized as the highest Scholastic Award within the ASA. Any member of the ASA who is an undergraduate student and is at least a sophomore in an accredited college or university within the United States is eligible for consideration for this award.

The following three students were selected to receive the award this year: Ania Baghoomian, Burbank, CA, majoring in human biology and society at UCLA; Andrew Boldi, San Carlos, CA, majoring in chemical engineering with a minor in electrical engineering/computer science at the University of California, Berkeley; Michael Trivino, Carle Place, NY, majoring in homeland security at St. John’s University.

ASA Silver Medal Awards

The Silver Medal Awards are given annually to high school seniors who have demonstrated outstanding scholastic ability. The Armenian Students’ Association Silver Medal Award Committee selected five (5) seniors to receive the Silver Medal Award.

The following students were selected to receive this award: Christina Andreopoulos, Haworth, NJ, Paramus Catholic High School, she will be attending the University of Scranton; Joshua Barsolian, San Bruno, CA, St. Ignatius College Preparatory School, he will be attending Stanford University; Ethan Boldi, San Carlos, CA, Carlmont High School, he will be attending the University of California, Berkeley; Alique Tufenkjian, Pasadena, CA, Marshall Fundamental, she will be attending UCLA; Nora Vartanian, Arlington, MA, Arlington High School, she will be attending the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Applications for Gold and Silver Medal Awards can be obtained at: www.asainc.org. Deadline for submitting applications and documentation is May 1, 2025.

Romik Hovanessian: With Flamenco Music from Iran

ROMIK, from page 13
from the first piece, it energized them immensely. If their playing in Tehran was at a level of 100, here it reached 1,000! They absorbed the audience’s energy, and their performance was quite different in a positive way. It was a fascinating experience.

In 2012, my first concert featuring my works was held at Tehran’s Ararat Club. All the tickets were sold out. I also released an album titled “Tolue Eshgh” (The Dawn of Love). But years passed, and I didn’t have any other concerts. Once, one of my guitar students, an older Persian woman, emotionally shared that in her youth, she used to sing well but now regrets not pursuing her passion. Her words had a profound impact on me and motivated me to start giving concerts. My second concert came 12 years later, with 470 people in attendance. Over the past year, we’ve had six concerts in Tehran, after which we decided to come to Armenia at our own expense to perform here.

Please introduce your musicians.

Our concert included local drummer Arthur Manukyan, while the rest are from Tehran: Sayed Alamdari (guitar), Pouria Babai (violin), my students Amir Bakhtiyari (guitar), Arsham Zakizadeh (bass guitar), and Sara Alimirzai (percussions). The young Armenian percussionist Ariel Boghוזian, who was highly praised by the audience, used to play Latin American percussion but started exploring flamenco with me.

So, is Flamenco popular and appreciated in Iran?

There are many enthusiasts, few performers, and even fewer who truly understand it. True Flamenco, like jazz or classical music, is a way of life. I played the piano at home until I was 20, but at 17, when I first heard The Gipsy Kings, I fell in love with that music. Later, my piano teacher, Miss Hermine, gifted me an album by Flamenco guitar legend Paco de Lucía. That day, my life completely changed. I often switched guitar teachers because many taught incorrectly, and back then, there was no internet for self-learning. Fortunately, Dr. Marina from the Yerevan Conservatory came to Tehran, taught us harmony and counterpoint for a few years, and introduced us to real musical education. Later, I attended Paco de Lucía’s concert in Turkey, met him, and made several trips to Spain for further training.

Must one be born Spanish to perform perfect Flamenco?

Years ago, I was uncertain about that, but now I understand it’s not essential. What matters is loving and deeply understanding Spanish culture and language. While you may not play exactly like a Spaniard, you can reach a level where a flamenco master like Óscar Guzmán invites you to perform together. If you pour your emotions into your playing, that foreign culture becomes your own.

I always send recordings of my performances to Spanish masters for guidance. They might say, for example, that a piece should be played in the Flamenco *farruca* style rather than, say, *soleares* or *fandango*. No matter how much you learn, there’s always more. On the other hand, I don’t play others’ com-

positions; I only perform my own works, 80 percent of which are Flamenco guitar, while the rest mix various styles.

During the concert, a Russian friend noticed an Armenian style in your music.

If you listen to a piece individually, there’s no distinct Armenian or Persian style, but it’s not far removed from Armenian influences because it reflects my feelings. An Armenian’s culture outside their homeland can differ.

Indeed, there are no explicit Armenian melodies, yet the pieces are titled *Yerevan, Sebastia*, etc.

Armenian melodies should be studied in Armenia, just as we study Spanish ones in Spain. I first compose my pieces, assign parts to my musicians, and then decide on titles. *Sebastia* is named after my great-grandfather Aram Hovanessian’s birthplace. As a child, I heard stories about how he lost his family during the Genocide at age eight, fled with his sister, but later lost her too. The piece starts with deep

emotion, followed by the sound of a heartbeat — fear, soldiers approaching, war.

One of your compositions, dedicated to your wife, was based on your Spanish poem. ¿Escribes poesía en español? (Do you write poetry in Spanish?)

Sí, hablo, escribo y leo en español, aunque necesito mejorar (Yes, I speak, write, and read Spanish, though I need to improve). (Switching to Armenian) At the Ararat Club, a young Armenian woman performed one of the Flamenco songs, but sadly, we don’t have Flamenco singers or dancers in Iran. Playing alongside them teaches you so much.

What new projects do you have in the works?

I’m composing new pieces, planning to record new albums, and continuing my private lessons and Flamenco educational courses. However, the most exciting news is that starting next September, I’ll begin conducting courses at the Yerevan Conservatory.

Donations

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* thanks the following individuals for their donations this year supporting the newspaper: Adour Adrouny, Dicran Antreassian, Charlotte Ermoian, Mike Kalajian, Stephon Keochakian, Karen Kondazian, Elise Lavoie, Margarita Laurinaitis, Irina Lazarian, Gerald Meuse, Stephen S. Nigohosian, Peter Sbarbaro, Jack Ouzounian, Koruin Vartevan, and Alan Whitehorn. We appreciate you very much!



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

DECEMBER 15 — The Getty Center will host a talk about Armenian cultural heritage sites called *Survivor Objects and Captive Sites: Art and Cultural Heritage in Genocide*. This lecture is free with a reservation and will be presented from 4 to 5 p.m. (PST) in person and online at <https://www.youtube.com/c/gettyresearch>. As scholars of genocide have shown, the genocidal process extends beyond the physical extinction of the targeted community to include the erasure, appropriation, or transfer of the community's cultural assets. During the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath, sites associated with Armenian culture, particularly religious sites, were destroyed, repurposed, appropriated, sold or transferred. Some became cultural heritage sites sundered from their connection to any remaining Armenian communities, while certain sacred objects were looted or relocated to museums far from the Armenian homeland. These sites and objects eventually acquire a "second life as heritage" and as works of art. This lecture considers the implications of genocide with the processes of making sites into patrimony and objects into museum pieces. It reflects on extinction and transformation into art and what this portends for art history and museums in the 21st century. 1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 800, Los Angeles. (310) 440-7300 visitorservices@getty.edu

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 14 — Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston presents *Dinner Dance With Barteve Garyan*. First time in Boston @ Al Wadi Restaurant, 1249 VFW Parkway West Roxbury. Doors open at 7 p.m. RSVP by mailing checks no later than December 1 to PO BOX 331 Belmont, MA 02478. Tickets \$125. RSVP Arto 857 222 2212 or Garo 617 620 9899

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.

MARCH 15 — Global Arts Live, in collaboration with The Friends of Armenian Culture Society presents: The Naghash Ensemble - First Boston Appearance! With its eye on the 21st century, the Naghash Ensemble combines the earthy spirituality of Armenian folk song, new classical music, and medieval polyphonic vocal music. 8 PM, Berklee Performance Center - 136 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston. Tickets: \$30, \$38, \$48, \$58 www.globalartslive.org/content/event_page/10301

2025

JANUARY 29 — GIFT PLANNING FOR AN ENDURING LEGACY. WEDNESDAY, 5 TO 6 P.M. VIRTUAL PRESENTATION BY KEN DOLBASHIAN, NOTED EXPERT IN CHARITABLE GIFT PLANNING. PROGRAM OF THE FRIENDS OF ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK. FOR DETAILS AND TO REGISTER, ARMENIANHERITAGEPARK.ORG/CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 24 — UNDER THE SNOW MOON. Monday, 4 p.m., virtually, to keep connected. Program of the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park. For details and to register, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar

APRIL 10 — LET'S PARTY FOR THE PARK! Thursday, 7-9 p.m. Abigail Adams Ballroom, InterContinental Hotel, Boston. Benefit to raise funds to Care for & Maintain Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway. Advance Reservations only. For reservations, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support

SEPTEMBER 20 — CELEBRATE ARMENIA! Culture, Heritage & Traditions. Saturday, 12noon-8pm. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Program of the KAMURJNER ("Bridges") Cultural Connections and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park. Rain Date: September 27. Details forthcoming.

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More." You can also mail them to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472.

All for the Children of Artsakh: Sareen Hairabedian's 'My Sweet Land'

FILM, from page 13

is invoked throughout by the gaggles of white geese strolling the green meadows of the "sweet land" and the flocks of white birds gliding through its skies. These images highlight the peaceful village where, while dad is fighting on the frontline, grandma is cultivating her land, harvesting her beans and cooking in the back with the chickens scratching around. "Nothing is imposed," says Hairabedian. Everything, including the beautiful score by the world-renowned Armenian jazz pianist and composer Tigran Hamasyan, is "part of the land of the people."

The filmmaker portrays it all with genuineness. The 11-year-old Vrej Khatchatryan, a kid from the small village of Tsaghkashen in the Martakert region of Artsakh, born to a couple who participated in the mass wedding, "plays" his part with an astonishing naturalness. When asked how she managed to achieve such authenticity, "It took years of trust and relationship building with Vrej and his family," confided Hairabedian who travelled to Artsakh in 2018 to see "what kind of life the children born during that time were living." "Children have hopes and dreams and deserve to live in peace — not as prisoners to inherited wars," she notes in a director's statement. "Their right to a place that is theirs and that is safe [is] the fundamental truth of humanity," she affirms.

Knowing that the villagers have already been forcibly removed from their "sweet land" — the entire population of Artsakh was uprooted from its ancestral lands during the September 2023 exodus following a nine-month blockade — makes the experience of watching the documentary extremely poignant. Even as the young hero attests that "We will get our lands back," the village, as Vrej has known it, will most likely be erased from existence.

In movies heroes often survive, but Vrej's "Will I live to die?" does not bode a happy ending. In fact, learning of the latest atrocity, that Azerbaijan has handed over Artsakh's iconic medieval Armenian monastery Dadivank to the "administration" of the Udi community, only reinforces the unbearable feeling of helplessness in the face of Evil. For nothing less than sheer Evil can explain the ongoing lies and the destruction of the millennia-old religious and cultural heritage of the land to justify the attempts to appropriate its Armenian cultural heritage.

At the end of "My Sweet Land," Vrej celebrates his 13th birthday. The playful eleven-year-old has turned into a pensive thirteen-year-old. Two years of disruption have robbed him of a purpose in life. The boy is agonized with questions. Will he become the dentist he always dreamed of becoming? As his grandmother well knows, "Living in

wars."

"My Sweet Land" may provide no consolation for the lands usurped and the lives lost. It may accomplish nothing in terms of returning our lands to us, or even of waking up the conscience of the world to the savagery it has reduced itself to. Yet, the documentary does highlight the human in



Still from "My Sweet Land"

Artsakh means that one day there will be a war and my grandson will participate in that war."

Commenting on the relevance of her story to what is happening in the world today, Hairabedian told the *Movable Fest*: "As we live in these very hard times, I think it's just important for stories like this to bring us together for some collective thinking about empathy and understanding the other." It does indeed take peace, not wars to rebuild our lives and our communities. And as Hairabedian notes in a director's statement, "Children have hopes and dreams and deserve to live in peace — not as prisoners to inherited

Hairabedian. It testifies that the artist cares, and that she cares deeply. Perhaps, caring is all we have left to manifest our humanity. Caring shows that we have not devolved into another species — not yet. Who would want to ban a story that has respect for human values and the sanctity of human life?

What ultimately comes through is the artist's connection to her people, her homeland and her own history of displacement and exile. Hairabedian is of mixed Armenian-Palestinian-Jordanian heritage, born in Jordan, now a US citizen.



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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— SINCE 1932 —



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Refugee Support Groups Ask UN, UNESCO Chiefs to Help Artsakh People

(The following letter was sent to Antonio Guterres, the secretary-general of the United Nations, and Audrey Azoulay, director-general of UNESCO.)

The undersigned non-governmental organizations, representing the people displaced by the 2020 war against the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and the consequent forced deportation in 2023, write to you to identify the deliberate and targeted destruction and expropriation of Armenian cultural heritage in the occupied territories of Artsakh.

There are grave examples of cultural genocide carried out by the Azerbaijani authorities in the occupied regions of Artsakh, both during the 2020 44-day war and after it.

Numerous cases of crimes against the Armenian heritage have been recorded: Holy Mother of God Church of Mekhakavan (Jabrayil), Saint Sarkis Church of Mokhrenes (Susanliq), Church of Holy Resurrection of Berdzor (Lachin), and Church of John the Baptist of Shushi (Shusha) have been completely destroyed. Armenian spiritual centers were and are being desecrated along with hundreds of khachkars (cross-stones) being destroyed. Over 30 art and museum collections, comprising thousands of exhibits, were looted by Azerbaijan.

Crimes against cultural heritage are considered to be affiliated with genocide according to the Rome Statute's Guidelines for the Examination of Crimes Against Cultural Heritage, which states: "Crimes against or affecting cultural heritage are often linked to genocide or committed as part of it."

Numerous memorial complexes built in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, World War II, and the Artsakh wars, as well as memorial stones honoring various individuals, bridges of historical significance, cultural centers, libraries, schools, and other places, have been destroyed. The villages of Karin Tak (Dashalty) in the Shushi region and Mokhrenes in the Hadrut region, as well as the historic district of Hadrut city, have been completely demolished.

Recently, entire districts of Stepanakert (Khankendi), including the 19th-century historic district, have been razed to the ground. The deliberate destruction of the city, its historical buildings, and heritage violates Article 8 of the Rome Statute and is considered a grave crime against humanity.

The acts of destruction of cultural property are prohibited under the four 1949 Geneva Conventions on the protection of war victims, the laws and customs of war, their protocols, as well as relevant UN resolutions and human rights protection treaties.

The acts of destruction of cultural property are prohibited under the four 1949 Geneva Conventions on the protection of war victims, the laws and customs of war, their protocols, as well as relevant UN resolutions and human rights protection treaties.

The widespread dissemination of videos depicting these destructions by Azerbaijanis has become a means of psychological pressure on the Armenians of Artsakh.

Cemeteries in the villages of Mets Tagher in Hadrut region, Sghnakh in Askeran region, Haterk (Hasanriz) in Martakert region, and the city of Shushi have been destroyed by Azerbaijanis. The destruction of cemeteries is a crime against personal dignity and human memory.

According to Article 4 of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, any act of vandalism, appropriation, looting, hatred, or reprisal against cultural heritage is prohibited.

According to the first Hague Protocol of 1954, it is forbidden to destroy cultural or spiritual values in the occupied territories. The policy of deliberate destruction of cultural heritage is condemned by UNESCO's 2003 Declaration on the Deliberate Destruction of Cultural Heritage.

However, during 2020-2024, UNESCO has not fulfilled the mandate entrusted to it by the United Nations to protect global cultural heritage and has not sent a mission to Artsakh to document the current state of the region's heritage and thereby prevent further destruction by Azerbaijan. Instead, it has limited itself to issuing statements and expressing concerns.

We, the undersigned, are residents displaced from the occupied territories of the Republic of Artsakh, therefore request the UN to make every possible effort to ensure that UNESCO, in accordance with its mandate from the United

Nations to protect cultural heritage, sends a mission to Artsakh to document the cultural crimes committed against humanity and implement mechanisms to prevent further violations.

1. "Return to Karvachar" NGO
2. "Return to Dizak" NGO
3. "For the sake of Hadrut" NGO
4. "Return to Kashatagh" NGO
5. "Deoccupation of Shushi" NGO
6. "Harmony" Shushi Women's NGO
7. "Dizak Art" Cultural NGO
8. "KrunK" NGO for the protection of the rights of Artsakh Armenians
9. "Union of Arts workers of Artsakh" NGO
10. "MediaStep" NGO
11. Artsakh historical and cultural heritage protection service
12. Center for Support of mothers of Artsakh
13. Power of Thought" Scientific Public Organization
14. "Askeran Development Center" Public Organization
15. "In the Name of Hadrut" Public Organization
16. "Dizak Art" Cultural Public Organization
17. "Harmony" Shushi women's NGO
18. "Root and Branches" Public Organization
19. "Motherhood" Public Organization
20. "Young Lawyers" Public Organization
21. "Independent Center for Strategic Research" Public Organization
22. "Development" Public Organization
23. "Union of Afghan War Veterans" Public Organization
24. "Refugee Women's Association"
25. "Union of Journalists of Artsakh" Public Organization
26. "Union of Artists of Artsakh"
27. "Center for Youth Public Research" Public Organization
28. "Artsakh Cultural Heritage Protection Council" Public Organization
29. "Unified Armenia" Patriotic Public Organization
30. "Union of Wounded Freedom Fighters" Social-Legal NGO
31. "KrunK" NGO For the Protection of the Rights of Artsakh Armenians
32. "Center for Support of Mothers of Artsakh"
33. "Artsakh Historical and Cultural Heritage Protection Service"
34. "Our Home Artsakh" NGO
35. Union of Violently Displaced Artsakh Armenians
36. "Eagles of Artsakh" Public Organization
37. "My Right" Civil Movement
38. "From Artsakh to Artsakh" informational, analytical, investigative, human rights center
39. "Vita" NGO
40. "GEN" initiative center NGO
41. "Artsakh people displaced from Artsakh" NGO
42. "MediaStep" NGO
43. Press Club of Stepanakert NGO
44. "Reborn Motherland" NGO
45. "Council of Elders" NGO
46. "Artsakh Youth Development Center" NGO
47. "Union of Relatives of Servicemen Killed and Missing in Action in the Third Artsakh War"
48. "Artsakh Awakening Movement"
49. "Kachar" Scientific Center NGO
50. "Forward Artsakh"
51. "Educational and Psychological Support" NGO
52. "Art and Women" NGO
53. "Tekeyan Cultural Union of Artsakh"
54. 6. "Return to Kashatagh" Public Organization
55. "Artsakh Culture and Tourism Development Agency" NGO
56. "Bridge of Dialogue Research" NGO
57. "Union of Reserve Officers of Artsakh" NGO
58. "Union of Refugees of the NKR"
59. "Motherhood" Public Organization
60. Public Council for protection of cultural heritage NGO
61. Youth Public Research Center NGO
62. "Armada" Donation Center NGO



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Every Time Pashinyan Opens his Mouth, He Harms Armenia's Interests

I just received the first volume of a valuable book published in Yerevan in 2021 that makes public for the first time some of the 8,000 handwritten letters by survivors of the 1894-96 Turkish massacres of 300,000 Armenians in Western Armenia (present-day Turkey), organized by Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

This unique book, authored by Vera Sahakyan and published by the Matenadaran, the repository of ancient manuscripts and documents in Yerevan, reproduces the eyewitness testimonies of 200 Armenian survivors of the Turkish massacres from the 28 villages in the Bulanekh province of the Mush region who had fled to Eastern Armenia. The heart-wrenching letters were sent to Catholicos of All-Armenians Mkrtich Khrimian (1893-1907), known endearingly as Khrimian Hayrig, located in Echmiadzin, the headquarters of the Armenian Apostolic Church, seeking his compassionate aid for their basic necessities of food and lodging.

The letters of the Armenian survivors were kept for several decades in the archives of Etchmiadzin and subsequently transferred to Matenadaran. The author plans to publish several more volumes in the future to cover the rest of the 8,000 letters. Many of the letters in volume 1 were translated into English by Lucine Minasian.

Here are excerpts from some of the letters written to the Catholicos by the Armenian survivors of the 1894-96 Turkish massacres:

— On October 29, 1896, Yeghiazar Hagopian, a refugee from Bulanekh's Kakarlu village of Mush, wrote: "I was able to flee the barbaric Kurdish killings. Besides totally looting us, they murdered my son, and I barely escaped, only losing the fingers of my right hand. It's already been four months that I have been wandering around here begging for alms.... My family, famished and naked, is impatiently waiting for me back in the homeland. I beseech you to at least grant me some travel money."

— On October 14, 1894, Mardiros Mouradian, an inhabitant from Khoshgaldi village of Lower Bulanekh, wrote: "The unlawful Tajiks [Turks] attacked my lamentable and poor family beating us with stones on the one hand, and fatally shooting my 20-year-old son on the other hand. They pillaged my whole fortune and even disrobed us."

— On July 11, 1895, Parish Priest Hovhannes Der Bedrossian from Molahkant village of Mush wrote: "Being attacked by Kurds and Hamidian troops, we abandoned our homes and possessions and barely fled secretly to Russia to survive. Now, we are wandering poor, delusional, famished... bereft of a single piece of dry bread."

— On January 2, 1896, Hagop Levonians from Bulanekh's Liz village

wrote: "Our intention is self-defense -- we appeal to you that you will free us, our people, and our homeland from the Turkish iron yoke. Hand us a few weapons so we can go and reach our eight friends who have been writing us letter after letter, asking us to reach them soon."

— On January 13, 1897, Mkrtich Haroutyounyan from Bulanekh's Khris-tam Kadouk village wrote: "We barely survived the atrocities...and freed ourselves from the pitiless claws of the furious Ottoman government.... I plead for some rags and some rubles that will cover my travel costs, so I can protect my family from the frost and attain daily sustenance for them during the winter-time."

— On September 30, 1895, Yaghush Mkrtichian (five people) and Yalduz Mardirosian (six people), two widows of refugee families from Bulanekh's Kharakhlo village of Mush, wrote: "Both of us have been widowed for almost two years, as the heads [of our families] were killed by the Kurds. Being frightened, we fled here. They took everything we owned. They didn't leave anything -- neither cattle nor possessions."

— On March 15, 1894, Baghdasar Margosian from Keakarlou village of Mush wrote: "Enduring numerous tortures and sufferings, we could barely free ourselves from death. The unlawful warden released us from prison, demanding 80 pieces of gold. Afterwards, they looted all my movable and immovable property and forcibly imprisoned my son."

— On July 17, 1895, Sahag Garabedian from Hamzasheikh village of Bulanekh Province wrote: "Because of the barbarity committed by the government and the Turks, we left our homeland and fled to Russia. My father died. Now there are five of us, including my old mother. Presently, my family lives in a hut with lice in the Armidlu village."

— On April 19, 1894, Priest Mateos Der Kevorkian from Bulanekh village and Sahag Serovpian from Karakilise village wrote: "Since September 1893, the Kurds and Turks of Turkey have been torturing our Armenians intensely and oppressing them. They have been looting our harvested wheat. They have been pillaging our stored wheat. At nights they commit adultery with our wives and then kill them. When the Armenian laborers come back from abroad, they rob their money and homes and kill them. Eighteen families from Hamzasheikh village were forcibly converted into Turkish religion. Three of them were killed and now there is an order to hang 28 people.... Effendis and aghas forcibly demand 40-50 gold pieces from Armenian peasants or kill them. Prelate Priest Necess has been sentenced to two years in jail. They forcibly demanded from him 450 gold pieces which were collected by passing a plate [in church] and now he is in prison. Effendis and aghas are forcibly taking over the Armenian villages, harming and torturing people...."

This is a valuable book because it:

- 1) Documents the 1894-96 massacres of Armenians through eyewitness accounts of the survivors;
- 2) Gives present-day Armenians the opportunity to find the names of their ancestors who used to live in Western Armenia;
- 3) Reveals that some of the little-known villages in the region were indeed inhabited by Armenians.

An Appeal on Brotherhood, Enmity and Treason

By Robert Aydabirian

No, my Armenian brother is not my enemy!

When we read the words and messages circulating on social networks, when we hear the insults that are uttered in the streets of Yerevan, at various Armenian demonstrations outside the Republic of Armenia, between individuals or in front of public buildings, we wonder why and for what purpose are these slanderous words uttered?

When we ask a Turk or a Jew who his best friend is, for the first, he answers the Turk; for the second, he answers the Jew. If we ask the same question to an Armenian, his answer is often more ambiguous, and the most often heard is the following: "We are our worst enemies."

When, for some time now, in the Republic of Armenia as in Armenian circles outside the country we hear insults, outrages vociferations, invectives, in short, all kinds of words that come from the gutter and display a zero level of decency in social relations and politics, we are all going backwards together, we all become losers, we all regress together; and we are severing our connection with the values the Armenian people have achieved over more than 3000 years of history: developing a civilization recognized for the high quality of

its culture, its writings, and its architectural heritage.

Of course, we are still paying the price of the military defeat of 2020. Of course, defeat is an orphan and brings out the worst in a people: hatred, baseness, ignominy, intolerance, infamy, and excess.

Of course, military defeat generates the defeat of the debate which, in turn, generates the defeat of ideas. But let this spiral of chaos of thought stop, let this individual and collective stupidity stop and let each of us, bearers of a part of this multi-millennial history, become the advocate of tolerance, of a sense of proportion and respect for oneself and others. Because insulting others is first and foremost insulting oneself.

No, my Armenian brother is neither my enemy nor a traitor! He has the right not to think like me and to

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express ideas different from mine in the same way that I have the right to express myself freely with respect and tolerance.

Nor do you have to be a fortune teller to understand that all this benefits our opponents who, arrogant and sure of themselves, intend to dominate us, or even reduce us to a people on the way to complete assimilation

or to total despair. It is up to each of us – without a monopoly on the cause that requires defense, nor self-proclaimed exclusive authority – to continue to be the custodians of a living identity, a living language, a living cultural heritage, a living history and collective rights.

More than ever in a world in turmoil, where the dividing lines of the great powers pass through the South Caucasus, we need internal unity in diversity. That is to say, respect, listening, rationality, and courage. By definitively putting an end to invectives, autism, hubris, emotion and fear.

And that we, Armenians, whatever our convictions and our geographical position, look at the Other as our brother and not as our enemy. He is the only one to share with us our past, our present and especially the future of our children and grandchildren.

"We are accountable to our elders, our contemporaries and those to come," said Amilcar Cabral, revolutionary leader of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. And in his speech in Havana in 1966 he called on the people to "Fight against their own weaknesses... whatever the difficulties created by the enemy."

As the author of these few lines, I would like to point out that I am as much a child of the diaspora, son and grandson of survivors of the 1915 genocide, as I am a French citizen who has long been involved in the economic and social development of the Republic of Armenia. I also have a background as an activist, having held, in the past, responsible positions in the Committee for the Defense of the Armenian Cause (ANCA) and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, and as one who still respects the commitment of each.

It is with this desire to surpass oneself that I address this invitation to all of you, which I hope will find a positive echo in each reader.

(Robert Aydabirian of Paris, France, has published this letter also previously in French through Arme-News and in Armenian in *Nor Haratch*, both based in France.)

Barlow Der Mugrdechian Elected President of the Society for Armenian Studies

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) has elected Barlow Der Mugrdechian as its new president, following a meeting of the SAS Executive Council on Saturday, November 30. Der Mugrdechian, Berberian Director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno, succeeds outgoing president Christina Maranci (Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies, Harvard University) in the leadership role.

The election of new officers also saw Elyse Semerdjian (Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies, Clark University) named vice president, Helen Makhdounian (Collaborative Humanities Postdoctoral Program Fellow, Vanderbilt University) as secretary, and Armen T. Marsoobian (Professor of Philosophy, Southern Connecticut State University), taking on the role of treasurer. Melanie S. Tanielian (Associate Professor of History, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Asya Darbinyan (Executive Director of Chhange [Center for Holocaust, Human Rights & Genocide Education] at Brookdale Community College, New Jersey), and Bedros Torosian (UC Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Fellow, History Department, UC Davis) were appointed as advisors.

Incoming *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* (JSAS) editors Houri Berberian (Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies and Director of the Center for Armenian Studies, University of California, Irvine) and Talinn Grigor (Professor of Art and Architectural History, University of California, Davis, will serve as ex-officio officers of the SAS Executive Council.

In his remarks, Der Mugrdechian thanked the outgoing leadership team, including Maranci, vice president Rachel Goshgarian (Associate Professor of History, Lafayette College), secretary Shushan Karapetian (director, Institute of Armenian Studies, University of Southern California), and Tamar Boyadjian, editor-in-chief of the *Journal for the Society for Armenian Studies* (Stanford University), for their years of service.

“It is a privilege to be elected as the new president of the Society for Armenian Studies and I look forward to collaboratively working with my colleagues,” said Der Mugrdechian. “SAS plays a vital role in providing a forum for scholars to exchange ideas. Our members work across a range of disciplines, but all their research is rooted in the study of Armenia and the Armenian people. This research, shared with the academic community and the public, helps raise awareness about Armenian culture.”

Der Mugrdechian served previously as SAS President in 2001-2004 and 2015-2017.

The announcement comes on the heels of a milestone year for SAS, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2024. The anniversary was marked by a major international conference, “Armenian Studies: Evolving Connections and Conversations,” held at Harvard University from September 13-15. The conference, organized by SAS in collaboration with the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), was co-sponsored by multiple Armenian Studies Chairs and Programs in the United States. Over fifty scholars from Armenia, Turkey, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, England, Australia, and the United States participated in the three-day conference. The conference dealt with established and emerging areas of focus within Armenian Studies, making connections and conversations with related areas of research. They

included — but were not limited to — the study of diaspora, migration, and forced displacement; collective violence, trauma, memory, and genocide; race and ethnicity; women, gender, and sexuality; environment; transnational and global mobility of people and ideas; art, architecture, and material culture; print and other established and emerging foci.

Under Der Mugrdechian’s leadership, SAS is expected to continue its commitment to advancing Armenian Studies and fostering collaboration among scholars globally.

The SAS website, societyforarmenianstudies.com, provides information about events and activities. Readers who wish to financially support the SAS can become a member. The secretariat of the SAS is based in the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno. For more information, e-mail barlowd@csufresno.edu.



Top row, left to right: Armen Marsoobian, Asya Darbinyan, Melanie Tanielian
Middle row, left to right: Elyse Semerdjian, Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Helen Makhdounian
Bottom row, left to right: Talinn Grigor, Houri Berberian, Bedros



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.

Sincerely,

Alin K. Gregorian
Editor

Aram Arkun
Managing Editor

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