

Armenian Protest Leader Admits ‘Mistakes’

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, who led massive anti-government protests in May and June, on December 27 apologized to supporters for failing to topple Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and pledged to continue campaigning for regime change.

Galstanyan became the leader of an opposition-backed movement resulting from protests that erupted in Armenia’s northern Tavush province in April following Pashinyan’s decision to cede four local border areas to Azerbaijan. After failing to scuttle the land transfer, he shifted the protests to Yerevan to demand Pashinyan’s resignation.

The outspoken cleric, who until then headed the Tavush Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, attracted fewer people when he resumed the demonstrations in October. He has held no further rallies since then.

“I am not ashamed of apologizing for both what I did and what I didn’t,” Galstanyan told a year-end news conference.



Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan

“Responsibility for various setbacks and the failure to achieve the end result [of the campaign] lies entirely with me, while success and victory belong to my beloved people,” he said, adding that he and his allies will try to oust Pashinyan in 2025.

Commenting on his mistakes, Galstanyan cited “organizational” shortcomings and said he put too much trust in groups that supported him. He did not name any of them.

Virtually all Armenian opposition forces joined or endorsed the Galstanyan-led movement as it gained momentum in May. But some of them subsequently criticized the archbishop for lacking a clear roadmap to regime change and a determination to achieve it.

Galstanyan dismissed the criticism while again refusing to shed light on his next steps. He said that he is now discussing them with members of his entourage. He indicated that they are gearing up for a “prolonged struggle.”

see GALSTANYAN, page 2

Pashinyan and Lukashenko Argue during EAEU Session

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko got into an argument during December 27’s Supreme Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Council session, with Pashinyan announcing that Armenia would also attend next year’s meeting, set to be held in Minsk in May, remotely.

It was the latest public display of tension between Armenia and Belarus.

Pashinyan attended the Thursday EAEU session held in Saint Petersburg remotely after testing positive for COVID-19.

The dispute began when, during the meeting, Lukashenko joked that they perceived Pashinyan as a “new and young-



Aleksandr Lukashenka at the EAEU summit

er” member of the organization because Pashinyan had shaved his beard. He also reproached those preferring to attend the meeting remotely, underscoring that it did not concern Pashinyan’s physical absence on the same day.

In response, Pashinyan stated that the

Armenian delegation would participate in the next meeting of the Supreme EAEU Council in Minsk in May 2025 remotely.

Belarus will chair the economic union, consisting of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, for the next see EAEU, page 2

US Reacts to Aliyev’s Claims About Washington Arming Armenia

WASHINGTON (Azatutyun) — US military assistance to Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot be used for “offensive purposes,” the State Department said on Tuesday, December 24, responding to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s allegations about US arms supplies to Yerevan.

Aliyev claimed last week that the Armenian military is receiving “lethal weapons” from not only France and India but also the United States.

“The US does not acknowledge it,” he

told the state-run Russia Today broadcaster. “However, we have tracked military transport planes landing at Armenian airports, delivering weapons there.”

Aliyev did not offer any proof of the claim or specify the types of US military equipment he said was provided to Armenia.

Commenting on Aliyev’s allegations, a State Department spokesperson said: “US security assistance to both Armenia and Azerbaijan is focused on strengthening

interoperability with US and NATO forces, increasing military professionalization, and securing their borders with Iran.”

“The United States calibrates all its security assistance to Armenia and Azerbaijan to ensure that it is not usable for offensive purposes and does not undermine or hamper ongoing efforts to negotiate a durable and dignified peace,” the official added in a statement to RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

see ALIYEV, page 5

Senators Peters, Cassidy Put Forth Bill Condemning Azerbaijan’s Ethnic Cleansing

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) welcomed the introduction of bipartisan legislation spearheaded by Senators Gary Peters (D-MI) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA) on December 17, which condemns the government of Azerbaijan for perpetrating a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, and calls on the Administration to “impose targeted sanctions on Azerbaijani government officials complicit in human rights abuses.”

“The Assembly applauds Senator Peters and Senator Cassidy for continuing to expose Azerbaijan’s genocidal campaign and ethnic cleansing against the Armenian people of Artsakh, and to hold Azerbaijan accountable,” said Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. “We urge its swift passage.”

The resolution urges the Administration to prohibit the waiver to Section 907, and to “strengthen the see CONDEMNATION, page 20



Assembly Co-Chair Oscar Tatosian, Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, Assembly Grassroots Associate Bettina Saraydaroglu, and Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan meet with Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) the day he introduced the resolution

LOS ANGELES

ABMDR Spreads Holiday Cheer With Two Toy Drives

Page 7



NEW YORK

A Heartwarming Christmas Day At St. Vartan Cathedral

Page 7



LONDON

Is Eleanor Ekserdjian Going To Join the British Royal Family?

Page 13





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

AAIC Announces
Creation of Artsakh
Preservation Front

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Armenian-American Information Center (AAIC) announced on December 30 the creation of the Artsakh Preservation Front.

In their statement, they said “The newly created organization aims to support compatriots relocated from Artsakh to the USA by addressing their challenges, assessing resources, and preserving their identity.

“Recently, the founding assembly of the organization was held in Los Angeles, bringing together Artsakh representatives of the Armenian community. The founders emphasized the importance of establishing a strong public organization in the USA to represent Artsakh Armenians, protect their interests, and amplify their voice at local and federal levels,” the statement noted.

Armenian President
Praises Carter as
Contributor to Peace

YEREVAN (News.am) — Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan on Monday, December 30, wrote on the platform formerly known as Twitter, “Deeply saddened to hear of [US] President [Jimmy] Carter’s passing away and extend my sincerest condolences to the family of former President and the people of the United States of America.

“President Carter – a Nobel Peace Prize receiver, will remain a symbol of tireless humanitarian and diplomatic efforts, a politician who significantly contributed to international peace and security, as well as a committed advocate of democracy & human rights, economic & social development,” added the Armenian president.

Jimmy Carter died on December 29 at the age of 100.

5,500 Displaced
Karabakh Residents
Now Armenian Citizens

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — More than 5,500 displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh have received Armenian citizenship, the Migration and Citizenship Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Armenia reveals, according to Sputnik Armenia.

“As of December 25, 6,724 people forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh have applied for Armenian citizenship. Of these, 5,510 have already received citizenship by decree of the President of Armenia,” the Migration Service noted.

Over the past month, the number of refugees who received citizenship has increased by approximately 1,100 people.

However, the statistics do not include minors, since citizenship for children under 18 is issued automatically along with their parents.

Since September 2023, 115,365 people have been displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. Most of them have settled in the Kotayk (20,331 people), Ararat (14,743 people) and Armavir (10,416 people) provinces.

Pashinyan to Blame for Karabakh
Debacle, Insists Ter-Petrosian

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Former President Ter-Petrosian on December 26 blamed Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for the fall of Nagorno-Karabakh in response to the latter’s critical claims about the former Armenian governments’ policies on the conflict with Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan claimed on Monday, December 23, that all peace plans drafted by international mediators from 1994 onwards and considered by his predecessors were about “returning Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan.” He said that his “big mistake” was not to make this clear to Armenians after coming to power in 2018.

The offices of Ter-Petrosian and two other former presidents, Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan, unanimously countered that Pashinyan continues to distort the history of the Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiation process that was mediated by the United States, Russia and France for decades. They said he keeps trying to absolve himself of blame for the 2020 war in Karabakh and Azerbaijan’s subsequent takeover of the Armenian-populated region.

Pashinyan responded by challenging the three ex-presidents to a televised debate on the issue. They all scoffed at the proposal.

“What should I debate with you when the subject of the debate, the millennia-old Armenian Artsakh, no longer exists due to your adventurism and you have no choice but to make desperate efforts to divert our people’s attention from this bitter reality?” Ter-Petrosian replied in a statement published late on Wednesday.

“Make as much noise as you want. This



Former President Ter-Petrosian

reality is already a historical fact that can no longer be erased,” he said.

Ter-Petrosian also challenged Pashinyan to publicize all peace plans drafted by the US, Russian and French co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group along with Yerevan’s official responses to them.

“That would be a real debate based on facts. And if you don’t do that, you will prove once again that you are running away from the truth and are busy cowardly dodging historical responsibility,” added the 79-year-old ex-president who led Armenia to independence in 1991.

Most of the Karabakh peace proposals were based on so-called Madrid Principles which the US, Russian and French mediators originally put forward in 2007. This framework agreement, repeatedly modified in the following decade, upheld the Karabakh Armenians’ right to self-determination while calling for their withdrawal from Azerbaijani districts around Karabakh occupied in the early 1990s. Karabakh’s internationally recognized status would be determined through a future referendum.

“Nikol is lying when he says that Armenian diplomacy had spoken about incorporating Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan,” said Levon Zurabyan, the deputy chairman of Ter-Petrosian’s Armenian National Congress party. “On the contrary, Armenian diplomacy had spoken only about not incorporating Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan.”

“If what Nikol Pashinyan says were true, the conflict would have already ended in 1992,” Zurabyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on Thursday.

Vartan Oskanian, who served as Armenia’s foreign minister in the Kocharyan administration from 1998-2008, likewise accused Pashinyan of lying about the US-Russian-French peace plans.

“I can show our people that he lies, he deceives them and that he does all this to atone for his sins and justify his mistakes,” Oskanian said.

He challenged Pashinyan to debate with him in place of the ex-presidents. The premier did not respond to the proposal.

Armenian opposition leaders say that Pashinyan made the 2020 war inevitable by rejecting the last version of the Madrid Principles drafted in 2019. In 2021, Serzh Sargsyan publicized the secretly recorded audio of a 2019 meeting during which Pashinyan said he is ready to “play the fool or look a bit insane” in order to avoid such a settlement.

The opposition also holds him responsible for Armenia’s defeat in the six-week war and Azerbaijan’s recapture of Karabakh in September 2023. Pashinyan has put the blame on ex-Presidents Sargsyan and Kocharyan.

Pashinyan and Lukashenko Argue during EAEU Session

EAEU, from page 1

year, taking over from Armenia, which chaired the union over 2024.

“What’s your problem? Is Minsk too far? Is there nobody to give you a ride? We will organize the transportation for your delegation if needed,” Lukashenko said.

Pashinyan responded that he had already made “a public statement on this matter, and this statement remains in force,” adding that he did not consider the EAEU “the right format to discuss these issues.”

“You raised this issue, and I should have responded immediately so there was no misunderstanding,” he added.

Lukashenko said that they would “consider [Pashinyan’s] statement,” to which Pashinyan responded that his statement was “not a subject to consideration. It is already a decision.”

In turn, Lukashenko hinted that technical issues might hinder organizing the remote participation of the Armenian delegation — “Maybe there will be no TV so that you can speak remotely.”

“No problem,” Pashinyan said, adding “I understand, maybe TV has also become a problem for you, we approach it with understanding.”

Following the meeting, Pashinyan posted a video of the dispute, suggesting that the Armenian delegation “will participate remotely or will not participate in the EAEU sessions in Belarus.”

An Increasingly Tense Relationship

Ties between Armenia and Belarus have been in freefall since June, when Pashinyan said that no Armenian officials would visit

Belarus while Lukashenko was in power, due to Lukashenko’s support for Azerbaijan during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020.

Previously in May, amidst the continuing crises between the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Armenia, Pashinyan told parliament that at least two CSTO members, likely referring to Belarus and Russia, participated in preparing for war against Armenia in 2020, with the goal of destroying Armenia’s statehood.

In June, Politico published a report based on leaked documents detailing the alleged supply of advanced military hardware from Belarus to Azerbaijan between 2018 and 2022.

During this period, Azerbaijan launched the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, after which it finalized its military victory when Nagorno-Karabakh surrendered in September 2023.

Several other major clashes took place on the Azerbaijan-Armenia border in 2021 and 2022, during which Azerbaijan gained control over 150 square kilometers of territory inside Armenia, according to Yerevan.

Speaking in November 2022, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev appeared to gloat over the country’s ties to other CSTO members, stating that “the number of our friends in this organization is higher than those of Armenia.”

In August 2024, Lukashenko questioned Armenia’s foreign policy in an interview with Russian TV channel Rossiya, saying “Who needs Armenians besides us? No one.” In response, a group of protesters

threw vegetables and eggs at the Belarusian Embassy in Armenia, calling on them to “get out of Armenia.”

According to Russian presidential aide Yuri Ushakov, Armenia “requested” Thursday’s Supreme EAEU Council session to be held in Russia. Pashinyan commented earlier in December that it would be “inappropriate” to hold the EAEU session in Armenia because not all members are “desirable” for Armenia — a reference to Belarus and Lukashenko.

(The author of this article, Arshaluys Barseghyan, a journalist since 2016, specialises in fact-checking and open-source investigations, with a focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, politics, and social and gender issues. She is also a strong advocate for media literacy and closely follows Armenia’s media landscape.)

Armenian Protest Leader
Admits ‘Mistakes’

GALSTANYAN, from page 1

Galstanyan faced scathing attacks from senior members of the ruling Civil Contract party when he took over the protests against Yerevan’s unilateral territorial concessions to Baku. Pashinyan alleged in May that foreign intelligence “agents” are involved in the protests. Some of his political allies branded Galstanyan as a Russian spy. The 53-year-old clergyman, who also holds Canadian citizenship, laughed off the allegations.



ARMENIA

Looking Back at ATP's Efforts in 2024

YEREVAN — ATP's fall planting season has now been finalized, bringing the total number of trees planted this year to 869,228 across its Forestry and Community Tree Planting programs. Two hundred and ten hectares of land were dedicated to forest restoration in 4 regions — Kotayk, Shirak, Lori, and Gegharkunik. The trees planted in these areas, including pine, oak, ash, maple, apple, pear, birch, and linden, are part of efforts to restore ecosystems, prevent soil erosion, and support wildlife. The remaining trees were planted in local communities, where they will provide long-term benefits to families and the environment.

In addition to the planting efforts, ATP distributed 9,315 fruit trees—such as apples, pears, apricots, plums, cherries, and nuts — to 1,054 families in border villages across Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Ararat, and Gegharkunik.

Though the fall planting season is over, the work continues. Some of the seasonal workers, who were part of the planting process, are still on the hillsides working hard. They are helping with fire prevention, as well as tasks like mowing, cleaning, and soil mineralization to protect the newly planted forests. These measures are key to ensuring the long-term success of the planting efforts.

This year, ATP created 468 seasonal jobs, providing valuable work opportunities for local communities. These workers, many of whom are planting trees alongside their families, are not only involved in the planting process but also in the care of the trees throughout the summer.



ATP staff in rural Armenia

ATP's commitment to reforestation is already showing results. Monitoring has shown a survival rate of 80-85% for the spring plantings, thanks to favorable weather conditions and the careful attention given to the trees. ATP's thoughtful planning and close collaboration with local communities have set these trees up for long-term success.

What makes ATP's approach unique is its focus on working with communities to create sustainable solu-

tions. Beyond planting trees, ATP is planning to expand its programs in the coming years, focusing on improving degraded pastures and working with local people to restore the land and improve their livelihoods. ATP's goal is to help create a greener, more resilient Armenia, one where both the environment and the communities thrive.

With 869,228 trees planted this year, ATP is making a lasting difference in Armenia's landscape, and there's much more to come in the years ahead.

Yerevan Mayor Once Again in Hot Water

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The father of Yerevan Mayor Tigran Avinyan has landed him in yet another scandal by insulting owners of inexpensive cars and saying that on-street parking spots in the Armenian capital must be off limits to them.

Avinyan and Yerevan's municipal council sharply raised parking fees in the city center a year ago. In particular, the fixed



Mayor Tigran Avinyan

annual price of on-street parking there jumped from 12,000 drams to 160,000 drams (\$400).

"They should make it 500,000 drams so that every scumbag cannot park his village Opel here," Armen Avinyan told the Oragir.news website on Thursday, December 26.

The mayor, who is still reeling from a scandal caused by the purchase of a \$19,500 air ticket for his recent trip to the United States, rushed to apologize for his father's "rude and ugly" comments.

"I'm sure those answers were given under the influence of nerves, [traffic] congestion and maybe also annoyance by the journalist," Avinyan said in a video message.

Most of the city residents randomly interviewed by RFE/RL's Armenian Service remained furious with the remarks made by the elder Avinyan.

"Who do he and his father think they are?" said one man.

"Who gave him the right to offend Opel drivers?" said another citizen, referring to the owners of old second-hand German cars that have been imported to Armenia in

large numbers since the early 2000s.

He also dismissed the mayor's apology, saying: "Who needs a painted egg after Easter?"

Avinyan's political opponents seized upon the offensive comments, saying that they show what Armenia's current rulers really think of ordinary people.

"This is not accidental," said former Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan. "This is, unfortunately, the worldview, mindset and attitude of individuals holding the most important positions in our country towards the people who have given them power. And no apology can fix this situation."

Some of the angry citizens recalled in this regard the exorbitant cost of Avinyan's flights to and from Los Angeles which was revealed by Marutyan last week. Faced with an uproar, the mayor said on Monday that he will use his personal money to compensate the municipal administration for the 7.7 million drams (\$19,500) spent on his air tickets.

Avinyan, who is a senior member of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian's party, last week branded Armenian media outlets as a "garbage dump" before suing an online publication that effectively accused him and his family of illicit enrichment.

Civilnet.am scrutinized the family's business assets in a journalistic investigation jointly conducted with the international Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). In a November article, the publication said that the 35-year-old mayor's dazzling political career has been "accompanied by the growing prosperity of businesses linked to his family."

The article singled out an agribusiness firm officially owned by Avinyan's father and brother. He received government contracts, grants and loan subsidies when he served as deputy prime minister from 2018-2021. Avinyan denounced the "false article."

Mayor Vows to Compensate Yerevan For \$20,000 Business Class Air Ticket

By Gayane Saribekyan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun.am) — Amid an uproar from his political opponents and media, Yerevan Mayor Tigran Avinyan said on Monday, December 23, that he will pay the municipal administration about \$20,000 to cover the exorbitant cost of his recent flight to the United States.

Avinyan and eight other city officials traveled to Los Angeles late last month on what they called a working visit. It emerged last week that the trip cost the city at least 26.1 million drams (\$66,500). Almost 7.7 million drams (\$19,500) of that was spent on Avinyan's business class ticket.

Hayk Marutyan, a former Yerevan mayor leading the largest opposition group in the city council, exposed the airfare on December 18 during a live debate with Avinyan hosted by the online broadcaster Factor.am. The revelation drew strong condemnation from other opposition figures, media commentators and Armenia's leading anti-corruption watchdog.

Avinyan on December 23 again blamed "irresponsible" officials from the mayor's office for the expensive purchase and claimed to have found out the price of his air ticket after the trip to the US.

"To be honest, I too was a bit astonished by those figures," the 35-year-old mayor told a weekly meeting of senior municipality officials.

Avinyan, who is a senior member of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, went on to announce



Tigran Avinyan (photo Aram Arkun)

that he will use his personal money to fully compensate taxpayers for his air travel expenses. He did not say why he did not do that before the debate with Marutyan and the resulting uproar.

The main focus of the debate was the upcoming sharp increase in the cost of public transportation in the Armenian capital. The mayor's office on Friday postponed the unpopular price hike by one month, until February 1.

The ticket compensation promised by Avinyan is a sum comparable to his annual salary. The mayor said that people interested in the source of that money should "look at my income declaration."

Avinyan's extended family and his father in particular own at least one company that has done well since the 2018 "velvet revolution" in the country. In an investigative article published last month, Civilnet.am suggested that the mayor, who served as deputy prime minister from 2018-2021, used his positions to help the agribusiness company receive government grants and loan subsidies. Avinyan denounced the "false article" and pledged to sue the publication during the debate with Marutyan.



ARMENIA

Stepanakert Mayor to Stand Trial in Armenia for Fraud

By Naira Bulghadarian

YEREVA (Azatutyun) — Armenian law-enforcement authorities have eased but not dropped criminal charges that were brought against the exiled mayor of Nagorno-Karabakh's capital Stepanakert shortly after he signaled support for anti-government protests in Yerevan.

Davit Sargsyan as well as the mayors of two other Karabakh towns, Martakert and Askeran, were among refugees from Karabakh who met with the leader of those protests, Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, on May 21. They were charged with fraud and embezzlement in the following days. They all denied the accusations.

Sargsyan and Martakert's Misha Gyurjyan were arrested pending investigation while Askeran's Hayk Shamiryan was placed under house arrest. Sargsyan and Gyurjyan were subsequently also moved to house arrest. Sargsyan is currently under so-called "administrative surveillance" which does not allow him to leave home after 7 pm.

Investigators said that the three men illegally registered municipal vehicles in their or their relatives' names after fleeing to Armenia together with over 100,000 other Karabakh Armenians in September 2023. The mayors' lawyers countered that the Armenian traffic police themselves had told them earlier this year to change, with their local councils' permission, ownership of those cars in order to have them registered



Mayor Davit Sargsyan meets residents of Stepanakert, August 30, 2019.

in Armenia.

Prosecutors dropped the cases against the Martakert and Askeran mayors in October following an Armenian government decision that essentially legalized the ownership change. As for Sargsyan, they replaced late last week the fraud and embezzlement charges against the Stepanakert mayor by a lighter accusation defined by the Armenian Criminal Code as "arbitrariness." Seven

members of Stepanakert's municipal council were also charged with the same crime.

One of Sargsyan's lawyers, Ruben Melikian, decried the move, saying that the new accusation is just as "absurd." He said the criminal case will be sent to court "very soon."

Melikian told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on December 30 that his client is still being prosecuted because at least one of the

four municipal cars brought by him is not on a government list of vehicles cleared for new ownership.

Sargsyan's wife, Erna Javadyan, claimed, for her part, that the Armenian authorities remain determined to keep him under "house semi-arrest" and put him on trial in order to preclude his political activities.

Armenian opposition figures have likewise said that the authorities indicted the three mayors in a bid to intimidate Karabakh Armenians and discourage them from participating in the Galstanyan-led demonstrations aimed at toppling Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

In June, Pashinyan publicly threatened to crack down on Karabakh's exiled leadership, saying that he is encouraging the refugees to join the protests triggered by his decision to hand over several disputed border areas to Azerbaijan. One week later, police broke into Karabakh's permanent representation in Yerevan to impound a car used by Samvel Shahramanyan, the exiled president.

Karabakh's leading political groups condemned the raid. In a joint statement, they accused Pashinyan's government of unleashing repressions and discriminating against Karabakh Armenians.

Former Artsakh State Minister: Yerevan and Baku Will not Sign Peace Agreement

YEREVAN (ARKA) — There will be no peace document between Armenia and Azerbaijan, former Artsakh state minister and ex-ombudsman Artak Beglaryan said on Thursday, December 26.

"This possible document cannot be a peace treaty or agreement. At best, it will be a document on the restoration or normalization of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but nothing more," Beglaryan said.

According to him, a peace agreement implies a document that addresses and resolves all the key components of the conflict.

"At a minimum, all the major issues of this conflict should be addressed at a fundamental level. The issue of prisoners is one of the smallest. It is the easiest to resolve," the former state minister said.

The Armenian side, he added, has, for example, the issue of the return of the people of Artsakh to their homeland, the protection of their property, cultural heritage, and more.

Speaking at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Council meeting on December 5, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said that Armenia and Azerbaijan have made some progress toward signing a peace agreement, noting that the parties have already agreed on 15 of the 17 articles of the preamble and the draft agreement. With sufficient political will, it can be quickly finalized and signed.

Earlier, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stated that one of the disagreements concerns the non-deployment of third-country forces on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, and the second concerns the withdrawal of lawsuits filed against each other in international courts.

Mirzoyan Meets with UN Resident Coordinator

YEREVAN — On December 20 Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan received the UN Resident Coordinator in Armenia Françoise Jacob.

The interlocutors touched upon the main directions of cooperation between Armenia and the United Nations, as well as the joint programs implemented within this framework. Among other topics, the preparatory work for the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the UN Convention on Biodiversity, to be held in Armenia in 2026, and issues of cooperation with relevant UN bodies were discussed.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Françoise Jacob ex-



Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and UN Resident Coordinator in Armenia Françoise Jacob meet

changed views on ensuring the UN effectiveness in the context of current geopolitical developments, in line with the mandate and goals of the organization.

Steps taken towards implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals were also discussed.

Also discussed were steps aimed at addressing the long-term needs of Armenians forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh and issues of cooperation with international partners.

Court Rejects Yerevan Mayor's Libel Suit

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An Armenian court has refused to consider Yerevan Mayor Tigran Avinyan's libel suit against a media outlet that effectively accused him and his extended family of illicit enrichment.

Civilnet.am had scrutinized the family's business assets in a journalistic investigation jointly conducted with the international Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). In a November article, the publication said that Avinyan's dazzling political career made since the 2018 "velvet revolution" was "accompa-

nied by the growing prosperity of businesses linked to his family."

The article singled out an agribusiness firm officially owned by Avinyan's father and brother. He received government contracts, grants and loan subsidies when he served as deputy prime minister from 2018-2021. Avinyan denounced the "false article" and pledged to sue the publication last week during a live debate with his predecessor and political opponent Hayk Marutian.

It emerged on December 25 that the court decided not to hear the case unless Avinyan pays a legal filing fee of 150,000 drams (\$380). The plaintiff asked for an

exemption, saying that payment of the fee would "cause significant financial hardship to me and my family."

The court rejected the request and gave him three days to pay up. The mayor's press office did not clarify whether he will do so.

Avinyan's reluctance to pay the relatively modest sum came as a surprise given his monthly salary of 1.2 million drams (\$3,000) and officially declared annual income of 45 million drams. The 35-year-old, who is a senior member of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, has also declared more than \$350,000 worth of crypto currency.



INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty Urges Turkey to End Crackdown on Peaceful Dissent Following Journalist Killings

STOCKHOLM (Stockholm Center for Freedom) — Amnesty International condemned Turkey's suppression of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in response to public reaction to the recent deaths of two Kurdish journalists, reportedly in a drone strike, in northern Syria.

In a statement released on December 27, the human rights watchdog called on Turkish authorities to end what it describes as a crackdown on peaceful dissent and to ensure compliance with international human rights obligations.

The statement said that the Turkish authorities must stop weaponizing the criminal justice system against peaceful dissent and drop ongoing investigations targeting journalists and others for exercising their rights and discharging their professional duties.

Protests occurred in Turkey after the deaths of journalists Cihan Bilgin and Nazım Daştan on December 19, 2024. The two journalists from Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast were killed, reportedly targeted in a Turkish drone strike, while covering fighting between members of an Ankara-backed militia group and US-supported Kurdish fighters outside Aleppo.

Authorities responded by banning or limiting demonstrations, detaining protesters and launching criminal investigations against participants and others, including journalists, lawyers, and media organizations.

On December 20, at least 55 people, including 10 journalists, were detained in protests in eastern Turkey. They were released later that day.

The following day, December 21, police in Istanbul prevented protesters from reading a press statement and detained a total of 59 people in three police interventions. Of those detained, 14 were referred to prosecutors, and by December 22, nine individuals — including seven journalists — were remanded to pre-trial detention on charges of “disseminating terrorist propaganda” for displaying photos of the slain journalists.

Amnesty observers reported the use of excessive force by law enforcement, including handcuffing protesters with cable ties and pressing their faces against detention buses.

Female journalists have also alleged that

News outlet T24 and journalist Seyhan Avşar are also under investigation for reports and social media posts related to the deaths.

“The crackdown against lawyers, journalists and protesters amounts to a misuse



A protest in Istanbul on December 19

strip-searches and other ill-treatment occurred during detention, prompting further criticism of the authorities.

Amnesty International urged Turkish authorities to immediately release those detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The organization also called for authorities to “promptly, thoroughly, independently, impartially, transparently and effectively investigate the allegations of human rights violations and other actions of the law enforcement officials on journalists and other protesters.”

Authorities justified the protest bans and detentions under Article 17 of the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations and Article 32/c of the Law on Provincial Administration, citing concerns about public order and security. Critics, however, argue the restrictions were disproportionate and aimed at stifling dissent.

Turkey's crackdown extended to media outlets and legal groups. The Istanbul Bar Association faces a criminal investigation after calling for an inquiry into the journalists' deaths and demanding the release of detained protesters.

of the criminal justice system to intimidate, harass and silence peaceful dissent and as such, is in violation of Türkiye's obligations under international human rights law,” the statement said.

OSCE Minsk Group Could Be Dissolved, Says Moscow

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The mandate of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group on the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement has lost its relevance, Armenia and Azerbaijan can jointly initiate the dissolution of this structure, the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, told a briefing on Wednesday, December 25.

“The mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group on Nagorno-Karabakh has lost its relevance,” Tass cited Zakharova as saying. “Consequently, all relevant structures — the Minsk Group itself, the high-level planning group and the office of the personal representative of the OSCE chairman-in-office for the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement — are subject to dissolution. We believe that the optimal way to make an appropriate decision on this matter is a joint proposal by Baku and Yerevan to liquidate said institutions.”

The official representative of the diplomatic department claimed the West used to “block” the work of the platform. “The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs from the United States and France stopped communicating with the Russian Co-Chairs in February 2022 and did so on their own initiative,” Zakharova said.

“The termination of this communication, Armenia's recognition of Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan following the Armenia-Azerbaijan-European Union-France summit, which took place on October 6, 2022 in Prague, and the radical changes in the situation on the ground in September 2023 ultimately led to the termination of the work of the OSCE Minsk Group.”

INTERNATIONAL

Justice Minister Meets with Iranian Ambassador

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Minister of Justice Srubhi Galyan met with the Iranian Ambassador to Armenia Mehdi Sobhani on December 27.

During the meeting the minister lauded the multifaceted partnership with friendly Iran, highlighting the close cooperation between the ministries of justice, according to a readout issued by the Armenian justice ministry.

Speaking about the warm relationship between Armenia and Iran, the ambassador attached importance to the continuous improvement of the practice of jointly resolving issues, and quoted the saying “When you open the window, dust comes in along with fresh air.” In response, the justice minister reiterated that efforts will be combined to swiftly filter and resolve emerging problems.

Several issues pertaining to the justice system were discussed.

Putin Extends New Year Greeting to Armenian Leaders

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Russia Vladimir Putin has extended New Year and Christmas greetings to President of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturyan and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, among other world leaders, the Kremlin reported.

According to the press release issued by the Kremlin, Putin also congratulated several former heads of state and government, including former President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan, former President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, former Chancellor of Germany Gerhard Schröder and former President of Cuba Raul Castro.

Russia Says It Can Help Armenia in Rapprochement with BRICS

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russia has completed its chairmanship of BRICS, an intergovernmental organization with members Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as founding members, Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin said Friday, December 27, Sputnik Armenia reported.

Kopyrkin noted that if Armenia shows interest in rapprochement with BRICS, Russia is ready to provide assistance “in the spirit of allied relations.”

Thus, according to him, Russia, as the BRICS chair in 2024, vigorously promoted cooperation in three key areas: “politics and security,” “economics and finance,” and “cultural and humanitarian contacts.”

The culmination of Russia's BRICS presidency was the October summit in Kazan, which was attended by some twenty thousand guests, delegations from thirty-five countries and six international organizations.

US Reacts to Aliyev's Claims about Washington Arming Armenia

ALIYEV, from page 1

Despite its growing military cooperation with Armenia, Washington has not reported any arms supplies to the South Caucasus nation to date. Nor has it signaled plans for such deliveries.

Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan met with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin during a visit to Washington earlier this month. Austin said they discussed “our growing strategic partnership through training and exercises, military education, and capacity-building.”

In his interview with Russia Today, Aliyev also repeated multiple conditions for signing a peace deal with Armenia. Those include an end to Yerevan's arms acquisitions.

“We have repeatedly told Armenia and its sponsors in the US State Department that the armament must stop,” he said.

The Azerbaijani government plans to spend about \$5 billion on defense and national security next year, a fact emphasized by Aliyev. Armenia's 2025 defense budget is projected at \$1.7 billion.

Armenian officials said earlier this year that Baku may be planning to launch another military aggression against Armenia after hosting the COP29 climate summit in November. Some observers in Yerevan say that increased contacts between Azerbaijani and Turkish military officials reported in recent weeks may be a sign of preparations for such military action.



INTERNATIONAL

Georgia’s Outgoing President Refuses to Quit as Successor Sworn in

By George Wright and Sofia Ferreira Santos

TBILISI (BBC News) — Thousands of Georgians protested in the capital Tbilisi on December 29 as a new president allied with the ruling Georgian Dream party was inaugurated.

Mikheil Kavelashvili, a former pro-footballer, has been sworn in during a critical political period for the country after the government suspended its application to join the European Union.

Georgian Dream won parliamentary elections in October, but the victory was mired in allegations of fraud which have since sparked several street protests.

Outgoing president Salome Zourabichvili refused to step down on Sunday, saying she was the “only legitimate president”.

Addressing crowds gathered outside, Zourabichvili said she would leave the presidential palace but branded her successor illegitimate.

“This building was a symbol only as

long as a legitimate president was sitting here,” she said.

A few minutes’ walk away, Kavelashvili was sworn in at a closed-doors ceremony in parliament, where he was accompanied by his family. Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze also attended the inauguration.

Speaking after taking the oath, Kavelashvili went on to praise Georgian “traditions, values, national identity, the sanctity of the family, and faith.”

“Our history clearly shows that, after countless struggles to defend our homeland and traditions, peace has always been one of the main goals and values for the Georgian people,” he said.

Georgia’s four main opposition groups have rejected Kavelashvili and boycotted parliament.

Kavelashvili is a former MP with the Georgian Dream party and was the only candidate for the job. Zourabichvili has previously denounced his election as a travesty.

Georgian Dream has become increasingly authoritarian in recent years, passing Russian-style laws targeting media and non-government groups who receive foreign funding, and the LGBT community.

It refused to join Western sanctions on Russia after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and called the West the “global war party”, making a mockery of its stated

aim of joining the EU and Nato.

An overwhelming majority of Georgians back the country’s path to the EU and it is part of the constitution.

But in November, the country’s ruling party said the government would not seek EU accession talks until 2028.

The announcement sparked days of protests, and riot police used tear gas and water cannon against protesters, who fought back by throwing fireworks and stones.

On Saturday, December 28, protesters waving Georgian and EU flags gathered again ahead of the inauguration, forming a human chain that spanned kilometers.

“I am out in the street together with my whole family trying somehow to tear out this small country out of the claws of the Russian empire,” one protester told the Associated Press.

The US this week [imposed sanctions](#) on Georgia’s former prime minister and billionaire founder of Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Georgia is a parliamentary democracy with the president the head of state, and the prime minister the head of parliament.

When Zourabichvili became president in 2018 she was endorsed by Georgian Dream, but she has since condemned their contested election victory in late October as a “Russian special operation” and backed nightly pro-EU protests outside parliament.



Mikheil Kavelashvili (left) was sworn in as Georgia’s president on Sunday. Outgoing president Salome Zourabichvili (right) has refused to recognise his appointment

Azerbaijan Blames Russia for Plane Crash, Rebukes Kremlin

By Anatoly Kurmanaev

BERLIN (*New York Times*) — The leader of Azerbaijan directly blamed Russia on Sunday, December 29, for the crash of an Azerbaijan Airlines passenger jet last week, calling on Moscow to accept responsibility and offer compensation to victims.

President Ilham Aliyev said in an interview with Azerbaijan’s national broadcaster that a vague apology issued by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia a day earlier would not suffice to preserve friendly relations between the two former Soviet states.

The Embraer 190 airliner was traveling from Baku, Azerbaijan, to Grozny in southern Russia on Wednesday, December 25, but was diverted from its path after encountering interference with its navigation systems and impact with external objects, according to Azerbaijan’s government. The plane crashed in Kazakhstan soon after, resulting in the deaths of 38 of the 67 people on board, more than half of them Azerbaijani citizens.

“Vladimir Putin offered his apologies that the tragic incident took place in the Russian airspace,” the Kremlin said in its summary.

Russia said that as the plane approached Grozny, Russian air defenses had begun to repulse an attack by Ukrainian drones on the airport there and others nearby.

Ukraine, which has targeted Grozny with drones in recent weeks, has not confirmed or denied that such an attack took place.

Aliyev said in the television interview that the airliner was hit by accident. He criticized, however, Moscow’s tardy and noncommittal response, which initially attempted to blame the crash on fog or birds.

“Unfortunately, for the first three days, we heard nothing from Russia except for

some absurd theories,” Mr. Aliyev said.

Analysts said that Mr. Aliyev had taken a strong stand on Russia because he himself accepted responsibility and offered compensation when Azerbaijan’s military mistakenly shot down a Russian military helicopter in 2020, killing two Russian service members.

“Azerbaijan now expects similar actions from Moscow,” said Zaur Shiriyev, a Baku-based foreign policy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a policy research organization.

It remains unclear if Aliyev’s strongly worded demands to the Kremlin signaled a cooling of relations between the two countries, or were meant primarily to satisfy a domestic audience.

Azerbaijan has assumed a neutral position on the war in Ukraine, benefiting from growing trade with Russia while exploiting Moscow’s distraction to pursue its interests in the Caucasus. Analysts have said the country has little incentive to let the crash derail this beneficial status quo with Moscow.

Some analysts have said that Putin could resolve the flare-up of tensions with Aliyev, a fellow autocrat with longstanding ties to Moscow elites, by striking a private deal.

Such a scenario would spare Putin the political cost of assuming responsibility for the crash but it would be likely to breed long-term resentment against Russia among the Azerbaijani public, the analysts say.

The Kremlin did not immediately comment on Aliyev’s demands on Sunday.

Creative Europe Project ‘Transition to 8’ Launches

YEREVAN — How does the human body experience the effects of air pollution? How are digital technology and biometric data woven into artistic creations? How do communities across Europe respond to environmental impacts?

“Transition to 8: European Societies in Flux” (TT8) is an innovative project, implemented within the Creative Europe framework, that integrates social sciences, technology, and contemporary art, through participatory cultural activities, aiming to raise awareness and mobilize large social groups on the effects of air pollution and its social dimensions. It lays the foundation for an expanded role of art in society, using creativity to promote climate action in line with the EU Green Deal and to advance a reimagined, cross-cultural dialogue on the effects of air pollution.

Implemented by the organizations MENTOR, Electroni[k], MoTA Museum and TAI, TT8 offers an unprec-

edented approach to environmental awareness, by inviting European communities to confront pressing environmental issues together.

It draws on information and communication technologies, sociopsychology, and contemporary art practices, integrated with community participatory activities such as bodystorming and sociodrama, designed for participants to recognize their shared challenges and reflect on urban environmental issues.

During these activities, wearable sensors capture biometric data, ‘translating’ participants’ emotional and physical responses into audiovisual elements.

The data then become the raw material for digital and electronic music artists, who create original works that will debut in a series of exhibitions and performances across Greece, France, Slovenia, and Armenia, including high-profile festival events like SONICA in Slovenia and Maintenan in France.

Over the course of two years, the project encompasses a capacity building program, an art residency program for electronic music producers and digital artists, artist workshops, open studio days, community participatory activities all culminating in exhibitions and performances. Local activities are set to unfold throughout 2025, leading up to major festivals and final showcases in 2026!

The project is co-funded by the European Union, and builds upon a specific methodology developed by MENTOR, the University of Athens Department of Psychology and Athena Research Centre during the research project Transition to 8: Bridging Social Issues, Tech and Contemporary Art, that was implemented in Eleusis from 2020 until June 2023 within the framework of the European Fund for Regional Development, under the Operational Program Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation 2014-2020.

On Saturday, Mr. Putin broke the Kremlin’s three-day silence on the crash. He called Mr. Aliyev and apologized, without directly acknowledging Russian responsibility, according to summaries of the call published by the two governments.



Community News

Eastern Prelacy Honors Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian for Four Decades of Service

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — They came from all over the Eastern United States, from Washington D.C. to Chicago, on Sunday, November 24, to show their appreciation, respect and love for their dedicated leader, Eastern Prelate Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian for his 40 years of service, filled with his typical humility to his church and people, Armenia and Artsakh.

The special day had begun that morning when Archbishop Anoushavan celebrated the Divine Liturgy and delivered his inspiring sermon at St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Douglaston, New York. Archpriest Fr. Nareg Terterian read the Letter of Blessing from His Holiness Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia.

The church faithful then joined the sold-out gathering at the Terrace on the Park for the festive banquet.

As the crowd greeted one another in the music filled cocktail hour and in the elegant flower bedecked ballroom, the warm atmosphere was more like a large extended family coming together in the spirit of a thanksgiving celebration. In fact, it was a family gathering for many who had known each other, the Prelate, and had worked together for decades.

The program began with welcoming remarks by Chris Parnagian, Esq. in honor of “our beloved Prelate and his typically warm, positive and engaging manner.” The American and Armenian national anthems were sung a capella by Hooshere Bezdikian.

The Letter of Blessing from Catholicos of the Great See of Cilicia Aram I was read in Armenian and English by Rev. Mesrob Lakissian, pastor of St. Illuminator’s Armenian Cathedral in New York and member of the Religious Council. “Those who have known the Prelate can affirm without hesitation that for 40 years, he has served our Church and people with the utmost dedication, diligence, faith, and loyalty. The quality and scope of the Prelate’s service have never been dictated by the positions he held or the titles he bore. Whether as preacher, pastor, or Prelate, he has always fulfilled his duties with the same spirit and faith. In all his positions, the Prelate has consistently embodied the ideal of the spiritual pastor, bringing God’s word to the people and addressing their needs,” the message declared.

The clergy in attendance included Rev. Dr. Abraham Malkhasian of Holy Martyrs Church, in Bayside, NY, representing Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan; Very Rev. Boghos Tinkjian, pastor, St. Gregory the Illuminator Church, Philadelphia; Archpriest Fr. Nareg and Yn. Annie Terterian; Rev. Fr. Bedros Shetilian of St. Gregory Church, Indian Orchard, Mass.; Rev. Mesrob and see Tanielian, page 12



Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan blesses one of the luncheon's attendees.

A Heartwarming Christmas Day at St. Vartan Cathedral

NEW YORK — The spirit of giving and compassion filled the air at the Diocesan Center in New York City on December 25, Christmas Day. In a beautiful display of community outreach and fellowship, volunteers from St. Vartan Cathedral, in collaboration with the Community of Sant’Egidio, came together to host a special outreach luncheon.

About 300 of New York City’s most vulnerable residents were welcomed with open arms and served a warm, nourishing meal. This gathering took place at the Diocesan Center, in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium, where the air buzzed with the energy of 60 volunteers from the St. Vartan Cathedral and Sant’Egidio communities.

Adding to the significance of the occasion, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, and Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, joined the event. Their presence brought warmth and inspiration, reflecting the true meaning of Christmas — unity, love, and compassion.

The spirit of generosity went beyond the food. Prior to this heartfelt event, volunteers had also gathered warm clothing and various essential items, which were presented as gifts to each visitor.

“This Christmas, we were reminded that the greatest gift one can offer is the gift of love and service to one another,” reflected Bishop Mesrop. “Our luncheon was not just about sharing a meal; it was about sharing our hearts and showing that in our community, no one is ever truly alone. Let us carry this message of unity and compassion throughout the year. Merry Christmas and blessings to all!”



Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan greets visitors to New York's St. Vartan Cathedral complex during an outreach luncheon to vulnerable area residents on Christmas Day.

ABMDR Spreads Holiday Cheer with Two Toy Drives Honoring Teen Cancer Survivor

LOS ANGELES — In recent weeks, the Armenian community of Los Angeles participated in two toy drives, held in Burbank and Pasadena, respectively. Apart from bringing holiday cheer to children, both events helped benefit the life-saving mission of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR).

The first event, the Team Alex Toy Drive, which collects toys for Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, was held in honor of 16-year-old cancer survivor Alex Darbinyan. It took place on December 8, at St. Leon Cathedral of the Western Diocese. During the event, a team of ABMDR Board members and volunteers was on hand to answer questions about



ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan (left) with Rosie Diremsizian. Rosie and her husband, Artem Darbinyan, started the Team Alex Toy Drive seven years ago

the registry and administer a simple, painless swab test, as part of the process of joining the organization.

“It is so gratifying to participate in the Team Alex Toy Drive, and so wonderful to see so many members of our community eager to join the ranks of ABMDR as potential stem cell donors, for a chance to save someone’s life,” said ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan.

ABMDR also participated in the Hye Riders Toy Run, held in Pasadena on December 15 and likewise dedicated to Alex Darbinyan. A beloved Armenian motorcycle club, the Hye Riders are renowned for their support of public-benefit events. During the Toy Run, which featured music, food, and raffles in a fun family atmosphere, attendees donated toys while a team of ABMDR volunteers familiarized them with the life-saving mission of the organization.

see TOYS, page 9



OBITUARY

Dr. Israel Charny

Pioneering Scholar in Genocide Studies

The International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (IIGHRS), A Division of the Zoryan Institute, announces and mourns the passing of Prof. Israel Charny at 93 years of age on December 14, 2024.

Dr. Charny was one of the early pioneering figures in the field of genocide studies and a steadfast advocate for human rights. He was one of the founding co-editors of the Institute's academic journal, *Genocide Studies International*. He played a key role in shaping the genocide studies discipline not just through the journal, but through co-founding the International Association of Genocide Scholars and writing countless articles, chapters, and books on the subject, even compiling an encyclopedia on genocide. His contributions were so profound, three of his books were awarded the prestigious "Outstanding Academic Book of

the Year" by the American Library Association: *The Encyclopedia of Genocide*, *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, and *Fascism and Democracy in the Human Mind*.

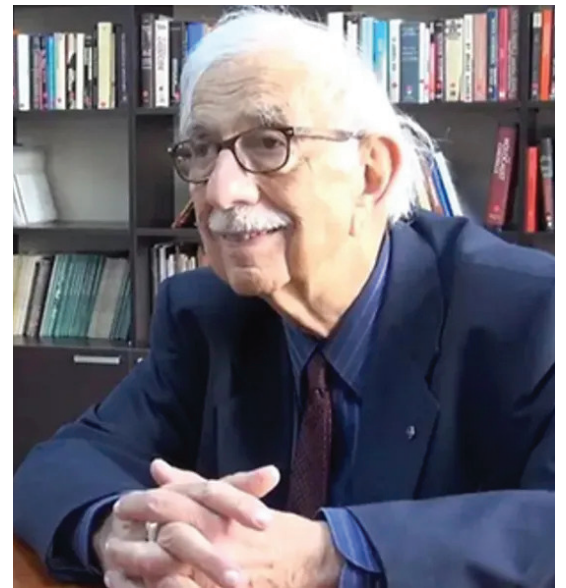
Dr. Charny was a fierce advocate for truth and justice, particularly in his unwavering opposition to genocide denial. Throughout his career, Dr. Charny openly took a stand against all denials of genocide, including the Holocaust and, in particular, the Armenian Genocide. For his tireless efforts in raising awareness and seeking justice for the victims of genocide, Dr. Charny was honored with the Armenian Presidential Gold Medal, a symbol of his profound commitment to human rights.

Dr. Charny was also a faculty member of the Institute's annual Genocide and Human Rights University Program (GHRUP) held at the University of Toron-

to. He was a tireless researcher, educator, public speaker, and scholar who shared his vast knowledge and passion for the study of genocide with young emerging scholars from around the world. His dedication to educating and mentoring the next generation of scholars made an incredible impact on the field, and many who studied under his guidance went on to become leaders in genocide research and advocacy.

He will be remembered not only for his pioneering contributions to the field of genocide studies, but also for his compassionate approach to teaching, his mentorship of young scholars, and his tireless efforts to advance human rights and social justice worldwide. His legacy will continue to inspire all those who seek to understand, prevent, and ultimately to stop the horrors of the heinous crime of genocide.

Charny will be deeply missed by his



family, colleagues, the Zoryan Institute, GHRUP alumni, the broader community of scholars and human rights advocates, and finally by the Armenian community worldwide. His contributions to the field of genocide studies and his commitment to truth, justice, and human rights will endure for many years to come.

George Dulgerian

Home Builder, Dedicated to Family

SPRINGFIELD, Penn. — George Dulgerian, a man who lived his life with the same precision and creativity he used to craft the beautiful homes he built passed peacefully at home December 19, 2024. He was 91.

Born on February 12, 1933, in Philadelphia, George's journey was one filled with love, laughter, and the kind of success that even he would jokingly say couldn't be built in a day.

His wit was as sharp as the tools of his trade, and it was this humor and love that he shared generously with everyone around him. George's role as a family man was his most cherished project and he was the architect of countless family memories.

He leaves behind his wife Kathryn (nee Anzalone) of 30 years; his son Gregory (Jackie, nee Pizio) daughter Heather (Kevin), his grandchildren Claudia, Carli (Matt) Ardashes, and Natalie, along with his great-granddaughter Georgia, gave him his greatest joy.

George's passion and talent as a builder were evident in every home he creat-

ed. He began as Barry Company Custom Kitchens and Baths with his brother Paul and later was the driving force behind G and D Developers. The neighborhoods he helped shape, including Woods of Langford, Aronimink Estates, and Heatherwood



Condominiums, stand as a testament to his vision and dedication. In a move that was pure George, he named the streets after his children and grandchildren, as well as his beloved wife, ensuring that his legacy was literally set in stone.

While George's feet were firmly planted on the ground as a builder, he once soared the skies as a novice pilot. He hung up his wings with the arrival of his son, choosing to navigate the wild blue yonder of fatherhood instead. His love for flight was only matched by his passion for tennis. George could serve up jokes as quickly as aces, and his competitive spirit carried him to an over-55 tennis championship now many years ago, proving that his sense of humor wasn't the only thing that was ageless about him.

George was predeceased by his parents,

Zarouhi and Ardashes, and his siblings Anne, Rose, and Paul. He loved them deeply.

George was loving and generous. He had a knack for lightening the mood, often reminding his family that the secret to a happy life was "to build it with love" and the strongest foundation was the foundation of family.

George Dulgerian's blueprint for life was one of a kind, and while the world may feel a little less sturdy without him, the structures he built and the lives he touched will continue to stand strong.

George's funeral service were held on Saturday, December 28, 2024 at St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Church: 630 Clothier Road, Wynnwood, PA 19096. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Church/

Arsinée Keusseyan

Devoted Teacher

WATERTOWN — Arsinée Keusseyan of Watertown passed away peacefully at age 93 on December 21, 2024.

She was born in Iskenderoun (formerly Syria, now Turkey). After the annexation of the province to Turkey, the family emigrated to Beirut, Lebanon, where Arsinée

graduated from the AGBU Secondary School for Girls, Tarouhie Hagopian. For the following seven years, she was a devoted teacher in the Armenian community school, Giligian. She then continued her career as an employee at the Italian Banco Di Roma. After her retirement she came to join her brother Krikor Keusseyan, editor of the weekly *Baika* in Watertown, where she lived until her last days.

Arsinée was the beloved daughter of late Samuel Keusseyan and Serpouhie (Kouzouyan) Keusseyan, and the late sister of Elise Keusseyan. She is survived by her brother Krikor Keusseyan and many relatives.

Her funeral took place on Saturday, December 28, at St. James Armenian Church (465 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown), with interment at Ridgelawn Cemetery in Watertown.

For those wishing to make a donation in her memory, the family requests they be made to St. James Armenian Church by check or online.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

More than 100 Turn out for Couple’s Night Program

By Rev. Avedis and Arpi Boynerian

WATERTOWN — On November 9, 2024, around 100 people participated at the fourth “couple’s night” program to celebrate the joy of long term marriage. Recognizing the need to strengthen marriages, the organizers have organized the yearly event to support couples. Participating were 13 members of the clergy from Armenian churches in Greater Boston. The team that put together the event was Aline Hagopian, Garin Orchanian,

Josh Tevekelian, Rita Dulgarian, Anoush O’Connor, and Lalig Musserian. Hosting the event was Rev. Arakel Aljalian for hosting the event at St. James Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown. With over 100 attendees, it’s clear that there is a significant need in the community for this support. Guest Speakers included Rev. Fr. Vasken and his wife, Yeretzgin Arpi Kouzouian of Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge, who presented: “There is No Perfect Parent, But There Is Perfect Love.” Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian, MS, a licensed marriage therapist, delivered a talk titled “Upgrade Your Marriage App.” He covered topics such as treating marriage as an evolving Relationship and one that like a smartphone app, requires regular updates and fixes. He cautioned against Gottman’s “Four Horsemen”: Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, Stonewalling. Instead, he urged maintaining a 5:1 positive-to-negative interaction ratio, and validate each other. The Power of Proactivity: Successful marriage requires intentional effort. The evening ended with a survey to help plan future events: 75percent were very satisfied with the topics; 96percent said the musical entertainment enhanced the event



Members of the clergy pray at the couple’s event



Yeretzgin Arpi Kouzouian

(thanks to Levon Hovespian); 67percent wanted this event held more than once a year; 72percent plan to attend next year and 94percent rated the atmosphere as high energy. Topics suggested for future gatherings included parenting young adult children; managing conflict and avoiding divorce; interactive discussions on marriage obstacles and staying sane in a chaotic world.

ABMDR Spreads Holiday Cheer with Two Toy Drives Honoring Teen Cancer Survivor

TOYS, from page 7
“We are delighted for having the opportunity to partner with the Hye Riders and raise public awareness of the work of ABMDR,” Jordan said. Commenting on the success of the Team Alex Toy Drive, Rosie Diremsizian, Alex’s mother, said, “When Alex was diagnosed with leukemia at six years old, it was the hardest time of our lives. During our long stays at the hospital, we discovered that the only thing that could light up Alex’s face was a toy handed to him by the hospital staff. “For every blood draw, procedure, or round of chemotherapy, Alex received a new gift. While nothing could take away the pain of his treatments, these small gestures brought him moments of joy and comfort. “Seven years ago, we started Team Alex’s Toy Drive to spread that same joy to other children. The event has grown year after year, becoming a beautiful tradition that brings our community together. It serves as a powerful reminder for parents and children alike to cherish their blessings, their health, and their happiness.”



Seated: ABMDR Board members and volunteers at the Team Alex Toy Drive, on December 8, in Burbank. Standing behind them are members of the Hye Riders Armenian Motorcycle Club, whose Toy Run, likewise dedicated to Alex Darbinyan, took place on December 15, in Pasadena



Volunteers and organizers at the Team Alex Toy Drive



At the Team Alex Toy Drive: Alex Darbinyan, center, with supporters and family.



Dr. Frieda Jordan with members of the Hye Riders Armenian Motorcycle Club during the Toy Run, December 15, Pasadena



Merry
Christmas
and Happy New Year



Christmas Donations

- The Ajemian Foundation, Bloomfield Hills, MI \$1,000
- Arlene Avakian, Boca Raton, FL \$1,000
- Sirop and Maro Bedrosian, Houston, TX \$500
- Yervant Chekijian, Watertown, MA \$500
- Paul T. Boghosian and Marilyn P. Papazian, Belmont, MA \$250
- Madeline Melkonian, Forest Hills, NY \$200
- Dr. Robert and Rosine Patterson, Lexington, MA \$200
- Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church Cultural Committee, Providence, RI \$200
- Donald and Barbara Tellalian, Newton, MA \$200
- Agavni Yeramyian, Newton Square, PA \$200
- Karekin Arzoomanian, New York, NY \$150
- Jeffrey M. Barasatian, West Chester, PA \$100
- Noyemi and Hagop Isnar, Haworth, NJ \$100
- Dr. John Bilezikian, Rye, NY \$100
- Theodore Touloukian, Boston, MA \$100
- Armen and Brenda Shahinian, Franklin Lakes, NJ \$100
- Dr. Armen and Martha Demerjian, Greenwich, CT \$100
- Jeffrey Barasatian, West Chester, PA \$100
- Hagop and Ruth Koroghlian, Deer Park, NY \$80
- Hayg Boyadjian, Lexington, MA \$35
- Knarik Meneshian, Glenview, IL \$25

Best for the Holidays and for the New Year. Keep up the good work
Hayg Boyadjian
Lexington, MA

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
Jeffrey M. Barasatian
West Chester, PA

Merry Christmas and Peace in the world
Dr. Robert and Rosine Patterson
Lexington, MA

Thank you for your service to the community
Don and Barbara Tellalian
Newton Ctr., MA

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and a Blessed Armenian Christmas
Knarik Meneshian
Glenview, IL

As we start the Year 2025, our best thoughts go to our friends and family members of three generations, and wish them a Happy New Year, and a Year of accomplishment in their endeavors!
Sirop and Maro Bedrosian
Houston, TX

(The donations above arrived after December 16 and thus were not included in the initial list. As always, we are grateful for our readers' support.)





COMMUNITY NEWS

AECP Gala Funds New Eye Clinic in Kotayk Region of Armenia

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — Friends and supporters of the Armenian EyeCare Project (AECP) came together on November 23, 2024, at the Balboa Bay Resort here for the organization’s annual gala. The evening is an opportunity for guests to enjoy themselves with friends and family over dinner and drinks while raising money for a cause they believe in: eliminating preventable blindness in Armenia and making quality eye care accessible to every child and adult in the country. This has been AECP’s mission in Armenia since it was founded in 1992 by Dr. Roger Ohanesian, dedicating over 30 years of service in the country toward this goal since that time.

The goal for this year’s gala was to raise enough funds for AECP to be able to open a new eye clinic in the Kotayk province of Armenia, a region in the country that currently has no eye care facility despite the more than 250,000 residents living there. Recognizing the immense need, guests enthusiastically raised their bid paddles and exceeded the goal, allowing AECP to develop the much-needed clinic. The energy in the air was electric, and there was a huge celebration when the goal was met.

The upcoming clinic in Kotayk will be AECP’s fifth Diagnostic Eye Clinic in Armenia since the nonprofit’s campaign to fund the eye exam clinics began in 2022. The other four clinics include 1) the Jirair S. and Elizabeth Hovnanian Diagnostic Eye Clinic located in Martuni and sponsored by the Jirair S. and Elizabeth Hovnanian Family Foundation; 2) the Don H. and Vardi Vanitzian Diagnostic Eye Clinic located in Armavir and sponsored by the Vanitzian family; 3) the Talin Regional Diagnostic Eye Clinic located in Talin and sponsored by Latter-day Saint Charities and 4) the John and Tanya Hovanesian Diagnostic Eye Clinic located in Ararat and sponsored by Dr. John and Tanya Hovanesian.

Two Foundations Honored

While raising money to continue its sight-saving initiatives, AECP also honored two foundations that have been extraordinarily supportive of the organization’s efforts in Armenia: World Diabetes Foundation (WDF) and the Jirair S. and Elizabeth Hovnanian Family Foundation. World Diabetes Foundation was highlighted at AECP’s Gala as its Corporate



From left, AECP Vice President Dr. John Hovanesian, AECP Founder and President Dr. Roger Ohanesian, Haig Hovnanian and Janeen Hovnanian

Honoree of the Year due to its years-long partnership with the foundation. AECP Country Director Dr. Nune Yeghiazaryan, who works closely with WDF in Armenia, delivered touching remarks about the foundation and its impact in the country at AECP’s event.

The Jirair S. and Elizabeth Hovnanian Family Foundation was highlighted as AECP’s Family Honoree of the Year. The family foundation, based in New Jersey, has been supporting AECP for many years with several of its initiatives. One of the more recent contributions was the foundation’s sponsorship of the Jirair S. and Elizabeth Hovnanian Diagnostic Eye Clinic in Martuni, the first Diagnostic Eye Clinic fully funded and

able to be developed in Armenia. AECP was honored to welcome the grandchildren



Guests raise their bid paddles to pledge donations for a new eye clinic in Kotayk



The night isn’t complete without some dancing!

Governor Healey Appoints Sheriff Peter Koutoujian as Member of MBTA Board of Directors

BOSTON — Gov. Maura Healey appointed Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian on December 17, 2024 to serve as the newest member of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Board of Directors. Sheriff Koutoujian will be the public safety designee. Earlier this year, Governor Healey appointed Tom McGee to serve as Chair of the Board, following the resignation of Chair Tom Glynn.

“I’m proud to be appointing Sheriff Koutoujian to the MBTA Board of Directors, where he will work with this strong team of leaders to move us forward in our mission to deliver the high-quality MBTA service that riders deserve,” said Governor Healey. “As a legislator and a Sheriff, he has always prioritized the health and safety of the people of Massachusetts, which is an important perspective to have on the Board.”

“Sheriff Koutoujian is a highly respected and trusted leader, and we are excited that he will join the team at the MBTA Board of Directors,” said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. “We look forward to continuing to work with the Board, Secretary Tibbitts-Nutt and General Manager Eng to make the T more safe and reliable for all of our communities.”

“The Healey-Driscoll Administration values leaders who have strong working relationships with community members,

and Peter Koutoujian has demonstrated during his career that he is approachable and sensitive to the needs of the public,” said Transportation Secretary Monica Tibbitts-Nutt. “We look forward to working with him as we transform the MBTA into a public transportation system that is safe, reliable, and equitable.”

“I’ve worked with Sheriff Koutoujian for years, and I know him to be an exceptionally talented leader who is committed to the

safety and wellbeing of the people of Massachusetts,” said former MBTA Board of Directors Chair Tom Glynn. “The MBTA’s top priority is delivering safe and reliable service, and his extensive experience in public safety and law enforcement will be a valuable addition to the Board.”

Koutoujian is currently the Middlesex County sheriff. A former public defender, prosecutor, legislator, professor, and law enforcement leader, Sheriff Koutoujian has

worked on leading issues in public safety and public health throughout his career. His work has earned him local and national recognition, including being named the national Sheriff of the Year for 2023 by the Major County Sheriffs of America.

Koutoujian previously served as a state representative from 1997-2011. He served as chair of the Committee on Health Care and created the Commission on Oxycontin and Other Drug Abuse and the Commission to End Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities. He holds a master’s degree in public administration from Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, a law degree from the New England School of Law, and a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Bridgewater State University.

Koutoujian has also earned honors as one of the nation’s most prominent Armenian-American officials, including the US Ellis Island Medal of Honor as well as the Mkhitar Gosh Medal and Medal of Gratitude from the Armenian government. While the sheriff still lives in his hometown of Waltham, he enjoys traveling to his wife Elizabeth’s hometown in Madrid, Spain with their three children: Peter, Cristian, and Isabel.

Koutoujian will continue to serve as sheriff, in addition to his new role on the MBTA Board of Directors.



Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian at left (Photo Credit: State House News Service)



COMMUNITY NEWS

Eastern Prelacy Honors Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian for Four Decades of Service

TANIELIAN, from page 7

Yn. Ojeen Lakissian, and Rev. Fr. Dr. Vahan and Yn. Maggie Kouyoumdjian, Pastor, Holy Cross Church of Troy.

Remarks from Executive Council Chairman Col. Aram Sarafian and Steering Committee representative Susan Chitjian Erickson, praised the Prelate's commitment, overflowing heart, humility and love. Sarafian noted that the service of Tanielian, devoted to the people, occupies a special place in the history of the Eastern Prelacy. With emotion, he spoke of the Prelate's dedication "which knew no limits as he drove for hours almost every weekend to be with the people, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy or to ordain deacons. He truly has no boundaries even when he was recovering from his operation."

Remarkable Milestone

The Very Rev. Boghos Tinkjian, Deputy Chairman of the Religious Council, spoke of "us all gathering today as one family to celebrate a truly remarkable milestone – forty years of devoted service by His Eminence, as we reflect on his unwavering commitment to God and the growth of His Church." The Prelate has been "a guiding shepherd to his flock. His ministry has touched countless lives bringing God's love into the hearts of parishioners who recount all their memories with him in all the communities across the Eastern Prelacy."

Father Boghos pointed out that Archbishop Anoushavan "usually reminds new pastors that a pastor's role is to tend to the flock which he has done over 40 years and continues to lead by example. Today we honor not only his visible achievements, but the unseen sacrifices he has made for the sake of his calling."

On behalf of all the clergy, Fr. Boghos presented Archbishop Anoushavan with a beautiful medallion, a Panagia (small folding case with an image of the Virgin Mary), which only Prelates can wear.

Before the sumptuous dinner, Archbishop Anoushavan gave the invocation, and in his familiar family-devoted manner visited every table, speaking with the people and being photographed with them.

After lunch, the Pillars of the community who are the bedrock of the fund-raising community were presented, including Karnig and Alice Alajajian, Drs. Carlo and Aurora Bayrakdarian, Veh and Arpine Bezdikian, Antranik Boudakian, John Daghl-ian, Dr. Houry Daghl-ian, Hon. David and Susan Erickson, Tamar Harutunian, Esq., Karen Jehanian, Rev. Fr Vahan and Yn. Maggie Kouyoumdjian, Drs. Arthur and Louiza Kubikian, Alice Movsesian, Sarkis and Mary Ohanessian, Chris Parnagian, Esq., Col. Aram Sarafian, Richard and Nora Sarafian, Dr. Aram and Seta Semerdjian, Sarkis and Marie-Jeanne Shirinian, and Nayda Voskerijian.

A video, "Forty Years of Service" narrated by Karine Kocharyan, related and displayed the remarkable dedicated service of Archbishop Anoushavan in America.

Musical artists at the event were vocalists Hooshere Bezdikian, Karine Vartanian, who performed a soulful Dele Yaman by Gomidas, and violinist Lisa Dodakian, whose rendition of Yerevan- Erebuni brought the crowd to their feet. Flower bouquets were presented to the musicians.

And finally, the man of the hour took the stage, and in his usual and very personal manner, speaking without notes in Armenian and English, related his words of



Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian at the gathering

gratitude to all, the Prelacy achievements, and emotional fight to health after his operation.

A cheering and lengthy standing ovation followed, concluding the unforgettable event with the joyous singing of Giligia.

The booklet and video production were prepared by Dr. Vartan Matiossian and Greg Dosttur, and the printing by Delta Printing.

Monumental 40-Year Journey

In 1984, Vartabed Tanielian was assigned to the United States, following 12 years of service at the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia by Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia, starting his new journey under Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian.

Appointed preacher of the St. Gregory the Illuminator Church in Philadelphia, the first of several churches he served, his service continued at St. Vartanantz Church in New Jersey, receiving the degree of Dzayrakun Vartabed. In 1988 to 1991, his service continued at St. Sarkis Church of Bayside (later Douglaston, New York), becoming its pastor in 1991, even though he had suffered a life-threatening car accident, but bravely continuing his mission.

His roles were elevated when he became Vicar General and Ecumenical Representative of the Catholicosate in the United States. He also participated in meetings of the Oriental and Catholic Church in Vienna, and the World Council of Churches in South Korea.

Throughout his service in every church and community, he inspired support to Bible studies, choir, and youth conferences, and taught at several Armenian schools, creating Ladies' Guilds, Men's Clubs, and different sports clubs. He also founded the St. Gregory of Datev Institute, which he led for 25 years.

Always pursuing his love of learning, he continued his religious studies at Princeton, where he earned a master's degree in theology, and then Columbia University, where he was awarded a master's degree and following that, a Ph.D. in 2003.

In 2006, he was consecrated Bishop by Catholicos Aram I, and expanded the role of the Prelacy everywhere, attending ecumenical conferences, visiting Armenia and supervising summer camps, and organizing pilgrimages to Lebanon, Deir Zor, Jerusalem, Armenia, and Artsakh for Datev students and parishioners.

On September 8, 2018, Bishop Tanielian was elected Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy and received the title of archbishop. His focus was prioritized and strengthened for the development of the youth, his spiritual brothers, and the pursuit of higher education. He continued the blessing of homes, the regular visitations of all parishes, and encouraged and welcomed the ordination of acolytes, stole bearers, subdeacons, deacons, and priests.

As Prelate, he was invited to open a session of the House of Representatives as guest chaplain. He also met with Pope Francis as representative of the Holy See of Cilicia. And as President of CAMECT (Christian Arab Middle Eastern Churches Together), he took part in events on Capitol Hill.

He has supported many sister organizations, including the Armenian Relief Society, Hamazkayin, Homenetmen, AYPF, and the Armenian National Education Committee, promoting innovation in their work.

Now, with various human crises throughout the world, Archbishop Anoushavan has provided great support for Armenia, Artsakh, Lebanon and Syria, "to help our less fortunate brethren."

In October 2023, he met personally with the refugees from Artsakh in Armenia and distributed aid to them. Following this, he directed the Hope and Light NGO to make monthly distributions to them.

In 2023 and 2024, Archbishop led the planning and organization of the Pontifical visit of Catholicos Aram I to all the Prelacy parishes in the eastern United States.

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ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR

Arts & Culture

Is Eleanor Ekserdjian Going to Join the British Royal Family?

By Elmira Tanatarova

LONDON (*Daily Mail*) — He’s known for his love of pottery and would much sooner be found in a ceramics studio than a royal event - so it’s perhaps no wonder that Princess Margaret’s grandson fell in love with a fellow artist, who he brought with him to Sandringham this year.

Since 2021, Samuel Chatto, 28, has been seeing fellow Edinburgh University graduate Eleanor Ekserdjian, who is an accomplished painter and is not known to have any aristocratic or royal connections.

And with their joint appearance at the regal Norfolk festivities on Christmas Day this year, the happy couple are sure to have sparked engagement rumors.

King Charles appears to have followed the example of his late mother, Queen Elizabeth, who permitted Meghan Markle to join the festive gathering in 2017, five months before



Eleanor Eskerdjian and Samuel Chatto

she exchanged vows with Prince Harry at St George’s Chapel, Windsor.

Meghan was the first person to be allowed to spend Christmas at Sandringham before marrying into the Royal Family.

Kate Middleton, for instance, had to wait until after she became the Duchess of Cambridge and Sophie Rhys-Jones did not stay before she married Prince Edward and received the Countess of Wessex title.

Samuel and Eleanor, also 28, are both passionate about their creative ventures. The eldest son of Lady Sarah Chatto, Princess Margaret’s only daughter, he completed an apprenticeship in Japan under professional potter Yagi Akira just last year.

And his partner is just as ardent about her work, having her pieces held in several private collections including the Redfern Gallery in London. Her parents are also in the field, with her father being renowned art historian Professor David Ekserdjian, who is married to *Financial Times* art critic Susan Moore. David is Professor of History of Art and

see ROYALTY, page 16



George Tossikian’s Small, Great World Of the Guitar

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/ATHENS — George (Giorgos) Tossikian is one of the most creative and talented Greek guitarists. He was born in 1981 in Piraeus to an Armenian father and a Pontian Greek mother. He studied guitar under Iakovos Kolanian at the Contemporary Music Education Conservatory of Athens. Since 2005, he has given recitals and participated in festivals in Greece and abroad. Since 2008, he has been a permanent collaborator and member of the orchestra of composer George Varsamakis. His discography includes “Guitar Music by Greek Composers” (2010), “Mosaic” (2013), “Suite for Guitar and String Ensemble” (2015), “La Plage” (2021) and “Cuatro Argentinas” (2023). During the period 2010-2022, he had the privilege of collaborating with distinguished guitarist, songwriter and composer Notis Mavroudis. He teaches classical guitar at the Contemporary Music Education Conservatory and at the Philippos Nakas Conservatory.

His accolades are innumerable. Here are a few: “A burning new talent, certainly one of the finest of his generation, a restless mind” (Kostas Grigoreas, guitarist-composer). “A solid technique that allows his innate and well-developed musicality to express itself with absolute precision” (Kornilios Diamantopoulos, Jazz & TZAZ). “George Tossikian proves that he is justly considered one of our most remarkable young guitarists” (Liana Malandrenioti, Difono). “One of the most talented musicians of the new times, gives the mature sound of a soloist within the thin boundary between emotion and technique” (Nikos Vatopoulos, Kathimerini). “Having conquered technique at the maximum level, Giorgos Tosikian entered naturally and confidence to every aesthetic particularity of the works he interpreted” (Giorgos V. Monemvasitis, Eleftherotypia). “Tossikian, with an assured technique and sense of musicality, salty and without pretense, direct and cutting, then velvety and sweet, excels at bringing music to life.” (American Record Guide).

Dear George, many musicians and poets tried to characterize the magic of the guitar’s six chords. What is your characterization?

I cannot fail to mention the famous quote by eminent Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia, stating that the guitar is a small orchestra. It reminds me of a poem by Odysseas Elytis that says, “This small, this great world!” Indeed, the guitar’s capabilities — its polyphony and tonal colors — make it akin to a miniature orchestra, capable of standing as a solo instrument in sophisticated compositions. Moreover, its dynamic range and timbre make it ideal for accompanying the human voice. These qualities are just some of the reasons why it is one of the most beloved instruments worldwide, transcending all genres of music. For me, the guitar is a means to communicate with people, to journey through time, to experience profound emotions, and perhaps even to feel a connection with God.

see GUITAR, page 17

Matossian’s ‘Outbreak’ in Theaters Now

LOS ANGELES (Immersive) — Producer Kevin Matossian is the founder and CEO of SilverCrest Entertainment LLC, a Los Angeles-based film and television production company. Matossian’s extensive background in production includes “The Promise,” “September Dawn” and “Lost.” His latest project “Outbreak” is the story of a park ranger, mourning the loss of his son who is also contending with a horrific outbreak that is consuming his small town that only he seems prepared to deal with. The film is now in theaters. Matossian recently spoke to Immersive via Zoom.

[Note: This conversation has been edited for length and clarity]



How did you first get involved with the project?

I got involved with “Outbreak” more than five years ago. It was pre-pandemic. I was playing golf with my friend Jeff Wolfe. He told me his idea for a horror zombie film that’s not a horror zombie film and how it wrapped up with the big reveal, and I was blown away.

Talk a little bit about working through COVID-19 on this.

We had the vision and the basis of a script early on. It’s difficult to get these stories right, especially when it’s a genre film, but it’s supposed to be more. This is really about the relationship of a husband and wife dealing with loss. And we’ve thrown it into this world of zombies and horror and thrills, but it’s not only that. It’s more than that and the issue was hiring the right writer early on... Lance Ochsner was fantastic to work with.

How far did you get pre-covid?

We had financiers attached but the pandemic shut everything down, and financing fell out. We shut things down, but we still had the project, so we talked about doing it during the pandemic on a lower budget but everything got more expensive so we had to pull the plug.

A couple of years later Jeff called me and said he still wanted to make it. We hatched an idea to make it for a lot less money... That’s essentially what we did with “Outbreak” and to all his credit, Jeff, his wife, Jennifer, his family, his friends, myself included, ended up financing the film personally.

see OUTBREAK, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

COAF’s 21st Annual Gala Raises Over \$7M To Transform Lives in Rural Armenia

NEW YORK CITY— The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) hosted its 21st Annual Holiday Gala on December 14 at Cipriani’s in New York City, uniting over 450 supporters for an elegant evening dedicated to transforming lives in rural Armenia. The event raised more than \$7 million to fund education, healthcare, and community development programs for children and families in under-served regions of the country.

This year’s proceeds will sustain COAF’s programs through 2025 and support the construction of a new COAF SMART Center in the Armavir region. Modeled after the flagship SMART Center in Lori, the new facility will offer innovative educational programs to rural youth. Plans are also underway for two additional centers in the Syunik region. A key priority for 2025 will be integrating artificial intelligence into COAF’s curriculum, preparing students with the skills needed to thrive in a technology-driven world.

The evening showcased a distinguished lineup of guests and honorees. COAF Board Member and acclaimed actor Joe Manganiello, honored at last year’s Gala, reflected on his life-changing pilgrimage to Armenia last Spring. Succession actor Eric Bogosian presented the 2024 Cultural Advocacy Award to Karren Karagulian and Vache Tovmasyan, stars of the Golden Globe-nominated film “Anora.” Highlights also included a special appearance



COAF Founder, Dr. Garo Armen, gala hosts, performers, and special guests including actor Joe Manganiello, celebrate another successful annual COAF gala having raised \$7M. Left to right: Haig Boyadjian, Araksya Karapetyan, Gabriel Buntu, Maria Nersisyan, Dr. Garo Armen, Artyom Avetisyan, Samvel Zakoyan, Joe Manganiello, Karren Karagulian, Vache Tovmasyan, Maksim Yervandyan



Maria Nersisyan, a talented pianist from Armenia, performed Arno Babajanian’s Elegy at the 21st Annual COAF Holiday Gala

by actress Andrea Martin and a show-stopping headline performance by music icon Gloria Gaynor.

This year’s Save a Generation Award honored longtime COAF Board members Shaké and Vahé Nahapetian for their enduring contributions. The evening also featured Maksim Yervandyan, an 18-year-old Harvard undergraduate and COAF beneficiary, who shared, “Tonight, I am living proof that your support transforms lives. Thank you for believing in us, and for your faith in what the future holds for my generation back home.”

The evening was hosted by COAF VP of Development Haig Boyadjian and Araksya Karapetyan, anchor of KTTV FOX11’s Good Day LA. The event culminated in a live auction led by celebrity auctioneer Gabriel Butu,



The 21st Annual COAF Holiday Gala was hosted by COAF VP of Development Haig Boyadjian and Araksya Karapetyan, anchor of KTTV FOX11’s Good Day LA

inspiring generous contributions from the crowd. COAF Founder Garo Armen remarked, “For over two decades, our community’s unwavering commitment has driven remarkable impact, and this year’s gala reflects that dedication.”

Following the event, COAF’s Executive Director Liana Ghaltaghchyan added: “Our goal is to expand access to the opportunities in life that every child deserves. The



The legendary Gloria Gaynor brought the house down at the 21st Annual COAF Holiday Gala with her iconic performance of “I Will Survive” for over 440 guests at Cipriani in Downtown New York City

generosity of our supporters brings us closer to making that vision a reality.”

For those unable to attend, there’s still time to make a difference. Visit www.coaf.org to learn more about COAF’s transformative work and how you can contribute to shaping Armenia’s future.



Actor Eric Bogosian, Armenian actor Karren Karagulian, COAF Board Member and actor Joe Manganiello, and Armenian actor and comedian Vache Tovmasyan at the 21st Annual COAF Holiday Gala



Beloved actress, longtime COAF friend, and previous host of the Annual COAF Holiday Gala Andrea Martin and Shaké Nahapetian, who, along with her husband Vahé Nahapetian, was the recipient of the Save a Generation award this year at the gala



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Diane Boyajian's Braided Bread

Serving Fresno's St. Paul Armenian Church was something Diane Boyajian learned at a young age. One of her fondest memories of her mother, Helen Shehrian, took place around 1943 at the church which was then located at Santa Clara and L. Streets. There were no crosses on the altar curtains, so one day, her mother obtained permission, got on a ladder, took her needle and thread, and sewed crosses on each curtain as little Diane watched on in amazement. Growing up, church services, Sunday school, Armenian Church Youth Organization (ACYO), and parish dinners were part of Diane's childhood. Her talented mother was often the first to volunteer, and would help with many church activities with her young children in tow. She recalls her mother helping with anything and everything, and, of course, there was always lots of cooking and baking in the church kitchen.

In 1949, Diane was a charter member of the first Junior ACYO at St. Paul Church, and held various positions including president. When she was 15, she

met a handsome young man named York Boyajian, who was a member of the Senior ACYO. York and Diane later became close friends, and when he offered Diane the keys to drive his beloved red convertible Chevy, everyone knew it was serious. The couple was married in 1957 at St. Paul Church, and their marriage was blessed with three children, Tamara, David, and Karen.

As Diane settled into life with her husband and children on their farm, serving in various positions at church remained important to her. She joined the Junior Ladies Society in 1967, and was elected as vice president within one year. One of her early efforts was chairing the annual Mother's Day Luncheon, a signature event of the Ladies Society. "We invited all the

mothers, in-laws, and grandmothers to enjoy a homemade Armenian meal together," Diane says. She and her committee planned the menu, purchased the food, decorated the hall, prepared the dishes, and often served over 200 guests on each holiday. "It was an amazing experience to see so many men and women come together every year to honor their cherished mothers and grandmothers at our church."

Diane became involved with the Raisin Wives of California, where she served as president for four terms. "At that time, the organization worked to promote Fresno raisins locally and globally while providing scholarships to agricultural students at Reedley College and Fresno State, and running a country store each fall," she says. Guided by the guidance from her mother, Diane continued to

improve her cooking skills and prepare family recipes. She would often consult the Ladies Society Procedure Books, the binders that documented cherished recipes, measurements, and instructions for cooking and serving at the church. When St. Paul Church hosted the California State Assembly gathering for the Diocese, she agreed to coordinate the menus for over 400 attendees. "Three days of breakfast, lunch and dinner events were managed with a remarkable committee, solid organizational and management skills, and the gift of making outstanding Armenian food," she says.

Through the years, Diane has cooked for many Mother's Day luncheons, the annual Blessing of the Grapes Picnic, and California State Assembly meetings. One of her favorite meals was for the annual luncheon for members of the California Armenian Home in Fresno. Diane and her fellow members planned an authentic Armenian menu that the residents were invited to enjoy with their families. After eating a plate of traditional dolma and madzoon one year, one of the elderly residents said to Diane, "This is just like my mother used to make for us." For Diane, that was the sweetest thing you could say to her. Diane taught Sunday school and served on the Parish Council for 14 years. She is grateful for the close friends she has enjoyed at her church, and for her three loving children and four grandchildren.

"In the true Armenian tradition of abundance, our appetites and our church have been blessed by Diane and her countless contributions through the years," says Ladies Society member Tracy Beberian.

This is one of her favorite recipes for braided bread Diane has made for over 30 years. "The dough is from an authentic bierocks recipe. It came to me from my sister's in-laws who are Russian-Germans and who lived in Fresno. One day, I had extra dough so I made a loaf of this bread. It was so good I use it as a bread recipe now. Bierock is a yeast dough pastry pocket sandwich with savory filling, originating in Russia, she adds. The dish is common among the Volga German community in the United States and Argentina. It was brought to the United States in the 1870s by German Russian Mennonite immigrants. The bierock originated in Russia, and is known there as pirogi. It spread throughout eastern Europe, constant in form but changing in name."

"I often take this bread to church bake sales, and everyone loves it. I even use this recipe and form it into Armenian chorag, it is very tasty," she adds.

INGREDIENTS:

2 envelopes yeast (about 2 scant tablespoons)

1 cup warm water

1 tablespoon sugar

Combine yeast, water and sugar in a medium bowl, and set aside to proof, until it starts bubbling.

Dough:

1 cup scalded milk

1 cube butter (add butter to the scalded milk and let cool)

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup sugar

2 large eggs, beaten

6 – 6 1/2 cups King Arthur Flour*

1 egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water for egg wash

PREPARATION:

Combine the cooled milk/butter mixture with salt, sugar, and eggs.

Here's Diane's process for the next step: "In a large bowl, I put in the milk/butter, sugar, eggs, and salt, and beat well with an electric mixer. Then I add the proofed yeast mixture and beat well again. I start adding the flour, about one cup at a time, and beat in with the mixer. After two or so cups of flour, the dough gets too thick so I start using a spatula until I can get my hand in to begin kneading. I add the last cup of flour a little at a time; when the dough feels sticky to the touch but doesn't stick to your hands, it is ready."

Place kneaded dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise until double the size, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

For the bread:

Divide dough into 3 or 4 portions, each will be a loaf. Shape as desired; brush with egg wash. Let dough rise again on a parchment-lined baking sheet.

For the braids: Divide each portion of dough into thirds, make ropes about 12 to 14 inches long and braid. Tuck in ends. Bake at 350°F for 15-18 minutes, until golden brown. Do not overbake. Test as you would for a cake, and let cool on racks. Makes 4 small loaves or 3 large loaves.

*This story originally appeared in the St. Paul Armenian Church Dajar Newsletter, July/August 2021 edition. The story is contributed by Tracy Beberian, and has been updated for this publication.

For questions or to donate, contact:

St. Paul Armenian Church

3767 N. First Street

Fresno, CA 93726

Phone: (559) 226-6343

ORDER TODAY: Some of Diane's favorite recipes are featured in this church cookbook. To purchase A Taste of Fresno Armenian and American Cuisine Cookbook for holiday gifts for family and friends, contact: St. Paul Armenian Church, 3767 N. First St, Fresno, California 93726, (559) 226-6343. Each cookbook costs \$20.00 each plus shipping and handling. Make checks payable to: St. Paul Armenian Church Ladies Society.

Photos and recipe are courtesy of Fresno's Diane Boyajian and Tami Boyajian.*



Diane Boyajian (Photo credit Tami Boyajian)

Is Eleanor Ekserdjian Going to Join the British Royal Family?

ROYALTY, from page 13

Film at the University of Leicester, focusing particularly on the art of the Italian Renaissance. He is a Trustee of Art UK as well as the Sir John Soane’s Museum. The academic was also once a Trustee of the National Gallery and of Tate.

Eleanor herself has also completed residencies at the Hauser & Wirth Residency in Braemar and the Sokyo Gallery in Kyoto, Japan.

According to her website, Eleanor is “an abstract painter and film artist” whose practice “involves projecting the moving image onto paper or canvas and drawing from and over it, her physical and emotional responses being made visible through rapid mark-making.”

Her most recent project explored “cultural memory through landscape” and was created while she was at a six-week artist residency in Armenia.

In an Instagram post about the project — which included a video interview with both her and Sam — she penned: ‘Images from the opening night of the exhibition “Imagined Landscapes” with @samchatto.

“I did a live performance drawing from the film I shot over six weeks travelling through Armenia. I cannot express how much it meant to me to see Armenia for the first time, or what it meant to share the experience with my father. Thank you to everyone at the Yerevan My Love Foundation and to all of the friends we made along the way who made this possible,” she wrote.

And it would seem other famous faces in The Firm are fans. Just this summer Sarah Ferguson — the mother of Princesses Eugenie and Beatrice — took to Instagram to praise the pair.

“I believe in supporting young artists and really pushing them to show off the talent that they have to as big an audience as they can,” she penned.

“My friend Samuel Chatto’s sculptures and the artwork of both Eleanor Ekserdjian and Nouneh Sarkissian are currently showing at The Redfern Gallery, and I’d urge you to go and have a look up close at the skill and craftsmanship that goes into creating such wonderful art.”

In 2021 Richard Eden revealed that Sam had started going out with Eleanor — and he had also become her muse.

Eleanor told the Diary Editor of the Daily Mail at the time: “We are a couple.”

Inspired by her new love, the arts professor’s daughter had started depicting Sam in her work.

Eton-educated ceramicist Sam comes from an arty family himself: his mother, the King’s cousin Lady Sarah Chatto (nee Armstrong-Jones), often submits her artworks for the Royal Academy’s summer exhibition, and his father is the actor-turned-artist Daniel Chatto. His grandfather was renowned photographer Lord Snowdon.

Sam, who was left heartbroken when he split up with his first serious girlfriend during the Covid lockdowns, was invited to Buckingham Palace earlier this year for the State Banquet in honor of the emperor and empress of Japan.

Some of Sam’s porcelain formed part of an exhibition in Somerset, mounted by Hauser & Wirth, the gallery of which his cousin, Princess Eugenie, is associate director.

Like many of his royal relatives - includ-

ing younger brother Arthur and Princes William and Harry - Sam was sent to Eton College when he was 11 years old.

Sam, whose mother is a professional artist, went on to study a History of Art degree at Edinburgh University.

After a three-month stint in commercial art marketing, he channeled his creativity into ceramics.

He has a studio in West Sussex and his work has been displayed in several exhibitions.

Sam is also a qualified yoga instructor - having trained for six weeks in India with then-girlfriend Sophie Pipe, who also studied at Edinburgh University.

Sam grew up mostly away from the royal spotlight in Kensington, London. As his grandmother once said about his mother and uncle: “My children aren’t royal, they just happen to have the Queen as an aunt.”

However, his latest appearance with Eleanor at Sandringham appears to have put the couple on everyone’s minds.

‘This is a clear sign that there will be a royal wedding in the new year,’ an excited observer of the Windsors said on Christmas Day.

Save the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem East Coast Tour to Raise Awareness and Support

JERUSALEM — The founders of the SavetheArQ Movement, Hagop Djernazian and Setrag Balian, will embark on an East Coast tour from January 22 to January 30, 2025 to raise awareness and funds for the movement’s legal defense efforts.

The SavetheArQ movement was launched in May 2023 and is dedicated to preserving and protecting the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem. Following the discovery of an illegal 98 year lease signed by the Armenian Patriarchate of this treasured, historic property, the Armenian community of Jerusalem initiated legal proceedings a year ago to nullify this unlawful agreement.

As part of the ongoing effort to continue forward with legal proceedings, events and meetings are planned in New York, Boston, Washington D.C. and Chicago as part of the visit.

On January 23, starting at 7 p.m. at Dean NYC, SavetheArq and Justice Armenia invite members of the community to “Shaken, Not Silent: A Night of Resistance.” The event will provide an opportunity to socialize, meet the movement’s co-founders and raise money for legal proceedings. Tickets are \$85 and include an open bar for two hours.

Stay tuned for more public events by staying in touch with our social media accounts. Follow the Movement on Instagram at @save_the_arq_jlm or on X at @SaveTheArQ

All those who wish to help the movement in organizing events during this visit are welcome to email the SavetheArQ Campaign at savethearqjlm@gmail.com

Together, we can ensure that the legacy of the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem endures for future generations.



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

Matossian’s ‘Outbreak’ in Theaters Now

OUTBREAK, from page 13

It’s harder to get these kinds of projects made now in the current market, even with horror having a big moment...

Jeff had a vision that drove me to the story, which was this relationship with dealing with the most horrible thing in the world; the loss of a child. We see the decomposition of characters, especially our hero who falls apart, and I don’t want to get into any spoilers, but we watch this happen in the confines of a horror film.

So anyway, we set out to do something more than just a simple genre film. We do think there’s a market for it. What’s cool is if you take nothing from the film and just wanted to watch it as a horror film, in any language, in any part of the world, you can do that. But it’s so much more.

How did you get your start producing?

My mentor in the film business is Ralph Winter (“Star Trek,” “X-Men”). He took me under his wing early on. He’s such a legendary producer, and I learned so much just watching him work.

Ralph said to me years ago, “Do you know what truly makes a great producer? Common sense. To know that a camera shouldn’t cost you a million dollars a week. To know that you shouldn’t pay a thousand dollars an hour to have prosthetic teeth cleaned.” That stuck with me.

These things can get pretty crazy, fairly easily...



Scene from “Outbreak”

I remember looking at scripts that Ralph had read. He would read through a script in 45 minutes or an hour, whatever it was, with a little pencil. He’d both enjoy it, and he’d make quick notes, dollar signs for something very expensive, “soap” for something that’s soap opera or whatever. He would just make little notations. That’s how I learned to break down a script.

I would look at these giant set pieces in a script and go, you know what? Three of those six make sense. Three of them don’t

do anything for the story and cost exponentially more than should be spent. Cut ’em. Go back with the writer and the director and rework them.

How much did you have to adapt the script to the new budget?

Not too much. It was such a joy because

you have Jeff Wolfe. He and his team, people whose careers he has helped launch, came back and stepped up to make this happen safely and on budget. Jeff had the expertise and experience, that made my life a lot easier to be able to support this and get it done.

Do you have any favorite scenes in the movie?

Absolutely, the very end! We bring all the loose ends together, and the emotion that we were able to pack into that last two or three minutes, is goosebump-worthy. The emotion that we were able to pack up into those very last moments by bar none.

What’s it like being on the other end of this now?

It feels great to finally have it come out. This is a psychological thriller from beginning to end. I just want to take you on a rollercoaster ride. If you laugh, or if you cry, I’ve done my job. That’s what we strive for. I want you to finish watching the movie and go wow, I didn’t see that coming.

I’m excited for people to watch Outbreak because the screenings that we’ve done so far have had overwhelmingly great responses. That’s what I hope that the world sees out of it. I think Jeff did a great job.

George Tossikian’s Small, Great World of the Guitar

GUITAR, from page 13

Before you in Greece there were two guitarists of Armenian descent, the late Hrach Ghukassian, who practiced Hawaiian guitar, and your teacher Iakovos Kolanian. What they have brought to Greek guitar playing culture?

I must admit I am not familiar with Hrach Ghukassian, but I will make an effort to learn about him right away.

Iakovos Kolanian was my teacher, and we have maintained a very close relationship. He passed on to me extensive knowledge of guitar technique and instilled in me a deep love and respect for music. Without a doubt, he served as a role model of integrity, ethos, and a deeply serious approach to his art. Additionally, he gifted us his wonderful arrangements of Armenian traditional music for the guitar.

Recently, I had the chance to meet guitarist Sampson Chatsatrian, a very kind man with great knowledge about music. Also, it was a pleasure to meet his daughter Anahit, also a very talented young guitarist.

And what are your connections to Armenian music?

From a young age, I was often asked, “Where are you from?” This question inspired me to explore my roots through the lens of history and culture. Armenian music moves me profoundly. My latest project is centered on the music of Georgi Gurdjieff. I have arranged 13 of his pieces, which will soon be released. Gurdjieff’s music is so profoundly rich that it often leaves me wondering about its origins. Its depth is almost incomprehensible, yet I feel it deeply on an emotional level. Besides him, I cry to Komitas, I respect Aram Khachaturian, I love Tigran Hamasyan.

Are you related to the Istanbul Armenian musician Majak Tosikyan? Where are your Armenian ancestors from?

Unfortunately, no, we haven’t had the chance to communicate, and I don’t know if we are related. My grandfather, Daniel Tossikian, arrived in Piraeus as a child orphan, entirely alone, in 1922. He was born in Yozgat and witnessed the brutal murder of his entire family during the Armenian Genocide.

I often reflect on how it was possible that the grandson of someone who endured such unimaginable hardship could live a fulfilling life as a musician. Certainly, the connection to culture — through music, literature, and food — was preserved and remains strong in my family. Yet, I also believe that qualities like hard work, dedication, and a passion for music and the arts are deeply rooted in my Armenian heritage.



Years ago, you were awarded First Prize at the International Renaissance Music Festival of Armenia. Please tell us about that and your trip there and your connections with the musicians of Armenia.

Visiting Armenia was a profound experience. I traveled to Gyumri and Yerevan, and I fell in love with the atmosphere of the cities and the warmth of their people. The life and the art of Sergei Parajanov move me deeply. His films are true masterpieces.

I maintain connections with Armenian guitarists from all over the world, and I am eagerly looking forward to visiting Armenia again soon.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

JANUARY 13 — Saint James Men’s Club Dinner 6:15 mezza , 7:00pm dinner Losh-Kebab and Kheyma, joint dinner with the Knights, Guest speakers; Attorneys Vasken Babigian and Shawn Keefe will discuss real estate law [including condominium conversions]. Having a combined 40+ years of experience, Vasken and Shawn possess a wealth of experience. \$25 dinner. All are welcome. Monday, St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mount Auburn Street Watertown.

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 1 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter Valentine’s Soiree: dining, wine and music. Pianist Marina Margarian, violinist Armenuhi Hovakimyan, 8 p.m. Baika Center, 755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, \$75/person, RSVP: Sossy Yogurtian 617 281-1647 or syogurtian@comcast.net

FEBRUARY 8 — Valentine’s with Frank Sinatra, featuring Rich DiMare, hosted by Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church. An unforgettable evening featuring a specially crafted dinner sponsored by Fiorella’s. Saturday, 6 p.m., Nishan and Margrit Atinizian Hall, 200 Lexington St., Belmont. Tickets \$85. (617) 489-2280 or email:holycrossbostonma@gmail.com.

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

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, \$58www.globalartslive.org/content/event_page/10301

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.

To send Calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the “calendar” section under the heading “More.” You can also mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication.



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
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— SINCE 1932 —



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Creating a Pan-Armenian Structure for National Survival Is Imperative

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, C.M.

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The year 2024 is coming to its end.

Like all perceptive people, the Armenian people are stunned, witnessing increasingly shocking political developments that take place from the East to the West and all points in between, and that just a short time ago appeared almost impossible.

For any attentive individual, and much more so for a collectivity bearing responsibility, it is simply not permissible to stand stunned and weakened in the face of danger. In fact, for the latter, this could be considered an unforgivable crime.

Any subject with the instinct to survive, and an active intelligence, and especially a collectivity endowed with resourcefulness, is driven with a fierce power and urgency arising from responsibility to assembly all means available to it to organize itself and prevent a danger which clearly threatens its destruction.

Recently, we have seen the entire world, in a state of indifference or perhaps numbness, observing the extermination of hundreds and thousands of the helpless Palestinian people, including their children, sick and elderly, by the formidable regular armed forces of Israel. Not too far away, a respectable state, still called Syria until recently, a member of the UN, disappeared from the map silently, with the cooperation of the so-called “great powers,” each pursuing their own interests that are different from each other. In view of the same uncaring observers, the country called Lebanon, like a helpless corpse, has become a doormat for the incoming and exiting armed forces of its neighbors. Moreover, the world is watching in amazement the unimaginable political vicissitudes in the more “civilized and democratic” large countries. France, where the far-right and xenophobic Marine Le Pen, with the promise of removing France from the international stage, appears to be able to come to power at any time now. We have also seen the Trumpian victory in the United States, which similarly leads the country towards an unpredictable new era of governance that may largely distance it from the world stage.

Considering all this, dear compatriots, we are obliged, without exception, to consider whether in the political Babylonian state of today’s world described above, the next big blow will soon fall on us. The indisputable reality is that in the recent past, it was also to be expected that our Artsakh, which had no more fortitude than an autumn leaf, would be doomed to disappear. And so it happened, without the slightest concern of the big or small, friendly or observer states of the world.

Meanwhile how shameful that all of us in Armenia and the diaspora, in our helpless state, only beat our breasts and made barely audible protests. In reality, we remained completely helpless in the face of that great crime against humanity and committed before our eyes. We neither could resist, nor could we shape world opinion in our favor.

However, the danger is much more serious and weighty today. The leadership of the Armenian world must collectively realize that today, it is our only homeland, Armenia, together with some of our flourishing and most important diasporan communities of the recent past, that are about to be subjected to the same fate.

This observation is not simply alarmist, dear compatriots. When Azerbaijan, through the mouths of its most responsible representatives, several times publicly calls the territory of Armenia “Western Azerbaijan,” when it allocates three times more resources in its military preparation budget than Armenia, the responsible people of the Armenian world, and most of all the leaders of the Armenian government, simply should not be allowed to continue their current course of action without taking correspondingly exceptional serious initiatives.

Will it be only when suddenly the Azerbaijani army invades

and completely occupies Armenia, and converts Holy Echmiadzin, following the examples in Artsakh, into a mosque, that, weakened even further, we will run left and right and write protest letters, if we find addressees willing to accept such a letters?

Dear compatriots, as worthy heirs of our glorious history, culture and past, we are obliged to prepare without hesitation and take action to stand guard over our land and our heritage.

First of all, as soon as possible, the entire Armenian nation must be brought out of its current stunned and completely disorganized state.

In order to become organized, it is necessary to mobilize the most effective means available to the Armenian people.

The first condition for undertaking this work is to create a pan-national structure which must develop a national survival strategy program, and then supervise its implementation.

This structure must bring together representatives who are the most acceptable to the Armenian people.

While we know that unfortunately, in the Armenian reality it is difficult to find parties that are acceptable to all, it is clear that the first one indisputably is the current government of Armenia, followed by Armenian spiritual leaders, then leaders of party, philanthropic and cultural organizations operating in Armenia or the diaspora with, and finally — if there are any — exceptional personalities who have earned indisputable national or international recognition. Alas, we know that Victor Hambardzumyan and Paruyr Sevak are not with us today.

So, at the end of the year and on the eve of the New Year, this message of urgency is addressed first of all to the venerable authorities of the Republic of Armenia, headed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and in immediate succession to our esteemed spiritual leaders, headed by Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and Catholicos Aram I of the Great See of Cilicia. After them, it is addressed to the leaders of the large party and public organizations with a long tradition, mentioned above. We call on all of them to cooperate with the authorities to as soon as possible form a supervisory council for the development and implementation of the above-described national security and survival strategy. Naturally, it will be necessary to create specialized substructures alongside this council, consisting of experienced specialists in diplomatic, financial, legal, journalistic and military matters. Armenia and the diaspora can provide such respected specialists in abundance.

At the same time, we address a special appeal to our press and the intelligent people of Armenia and the diaspora, so that they too join us and they too, with their available means, vigorously express this demand, addressing it first of all to the respected government of the Republic of Armenia headed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, as well as the other responsible parties clearly specified above.

Indeed, it is not the first time that, in the days of an obviously alarming national existential threat, we have called for national united and organized work from these pages. However, until today such appeals have remained without consequences. Today we must reflect that the danger has reached the highest degree. The creation of an organized operational structure is at the top of the list of priorities.

It is no longer possible to confront today’s greatest dangers separately by any of our organizations, nor by their uncoordinated random initiatives.

The demand for pan-Armenian organization is urgent.

I conclude this heartfelt discourse by emphasizing that this time, in the event of a possible national disaster, if we are still left in a disorganized state, the addresses of those responsible can be found clearly indicated here.

May Almighty God protect our nation — but we know that God first helps those who know how to help themselves!

How ‘Historical’ Was the Papikyan-Austin Meeting?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Since 2018, the heads of the defense departments of Armenia and the US have not held any meetings. The absence of such high-level meetings suggests that there are no issues on the bilateral agenda that warrant the attention of the US Secretary of Defense for discussion with his Armenian counterpart. However, on

December 5, 2024, Armenian Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan met with the outgoing US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in Washington. During the meeting, according to official reports, “US Secretary of Defense Austin emphasized the historic significance of the Armenian Defense Minister’s visit.” This statement sparked significant debate in Armenia, with pro-government media and figures portraying the meeting as a major suc-

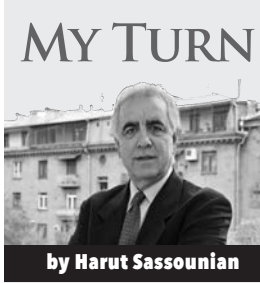
cess, citing the Defense Secretary’s remarks.

However, to better assess the significance of this meeting, it should be analyzed in the broader context of US-Armenia high level visits between the heads of Defense agencies of over the last 25 years while also including the 2024 US-Armenia defense cooperation under the Biden administration.

see AUSTIN, page 20



COMMENTARY



Aliyevs Own Many Buildings in London Valued at Hundreds of Millions of Dollars

The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) selected President Ilham Aliyev in 2012 for its first “Person of the Year Award [which] recognizes the individual or institution that has done the most to advance organized criminal activity and corruption in the world.”

OCCRP is a worldwide network of investigative journalists that has been exposing for over a decade the appropriation of state funds by President Aliyev’s family and close associates to purchase real estate overseas.

While there are numerous groups that report about Azerbaijan’s jailing of journalists, opposition members and human rights activists, OCCRP is one of the rare groups that has documented the secret acquisitions of valuable real estate in the heart of London by the Aliyev clan. Many of these holdings are hidden behind foreign offshore trusts, making the true owners of the properties difficult to identify.

However, in 2022, the British government adopted new laws that help reveal the owners of some of these properties. In an article titled, “Luxury London Properties Linked to Family of Azerbaijan’s President Are Hidden Behind an Offshore Trust,” OCCRP’s James O’Brien reported this month that the Aliyev family “acquired U.K. real estate worth hundreds of millions of dollars.” The article stated: “newly available data reveals that Aliyev’s daughters own six luxury apartments in London. But the current ownership of 10 [other] properties, acquired by the family for \$160 million, remains unknown because they were moved into an offshore trust. Trust structures are currently exempt from public scrutiny.”

OCCRP reported that the Aliyevs own in London “A hotel building near the British Museum. Penthouse apartments just steps away from Hyde Park. A mansion overlooking the green expanse of Hampstead Heath. And much more. In 2021, OCCRP revealed that a nearly \$700-million collection of London real estate had been acquired by the family and close associates of Ilham Aliyev, the longtime authoritarian president of Azerbaijan. Having leveraged two decades of unchallenged political power into vast wealth, this elite group had chosen to spend a fortune in one of the financial centers of the democratic world. The properties they purchased were owned by dozens of secretive offshore companies, hiding their ownership from public scrutiny. It was only thanks to the

Pandora Papers, a leak of secret offshore documents obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, that reporters were able to link them to the Aliyevs.”

The OCCRP reported that it “teamed up with researchers from Transparency International UK, an anti-corruption advocacy group, to reexamine the 23 London properties our earlier investigation had linked to the Aliyevs.” They found out that “President Aliyev’s daughters, Leyla and Arzu Aliyeva, personally own six luxury apartments just across the street from Hyde Park. But the Register [of Overseas Entities] fails to establish who ultimately owns 10 properties the Aliyevs and their associates had acquired for \$160 million: the Hampstead Heath mansion, two townhouses, multiple flats [apartments] and penthouses, and a six-story building in Central London. It only reveals that they are owned by a trust registered in the Isle of Man.”

Aliyev’s office “did not respond to [OCCRP’s] requests for comment, but President Aliyev has previously attributed his wealth to success in business.”

OCCRP reported that on his presidential website in 2021, President Aliyev “acknowledged that he was ‘not a poor man’ when he became president, but said this was due to his business achievements. (The son of Azerbaijan’s first post-independence leader, Aliyev served as a vice-president of Azerbaijan’s state oil company before succeeding his father as president in 2003). ‘Unlike some other people in the West who dedicate all their fortune to their cats and dogs, in Italy and Azerbaijan we value family values,’ he said at the time. ‘Therefore, I transferred all my business to my children.’”

In 2015, OCCRP reported that “Leyla Aliyeva, the Azerbaijani president’s then 29-year-old elder daughter, was one of the directors of the British company that managed the [five-story luxury] building, worth over \$33 million.”

Although the trust hides the ownership of 10 high-end London properties, for nine of them, “the Register of Overseas Entities lists the same person as having ‘significant influence or control’ over the offshore companies that own them: Mir Pashayev...a cousin of President Ilham Aliyev’s wife. The 54-year-old-banker is closely linked to the Aliyev family’s business interests. He is a board chairman of Pasha Bank, a major lender owned by the president’s daughters Leyla and Arzu, and deputy chairman of the board of directors of their entire Pasha Holding business conglomerate, which spans interests in banking, insurance, and construction.” OCCRP reported that “in October 2014, he [Pashayev] took over from Leyla Aliyeva the directorship of the company that manages her mansion on Speakers’ Corner [in London].”

President Aliyev’s constant threats to attack Armenia, if Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan does not agree to make concessions, are meant to distract attention away from Aliyev’s violations of human rights and embezzlement of Azerbaijan’s state funds which deprives his citizens of massive amounts of income from the country’s billions of dollars in oil and gas revenues.

Prospects and Challenges in Armenia–Azerbaijan Peace Talks

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The start of a new year is traditionally a time for reflection and forecasting, which extends to geopolitics and foreign policy. Armenia–Azerbaijan relations are no exception. Since the First Nagorno-Karabakh War ended in 1994, experts, academics, and politicians have sought to assess and forecast the trajectory of these relations. Such efforts have gained momentum during active negotiations, as seen in the discussions of Key West (2001) and Kazan (2011). With negotiations ongoing since the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War to finalize a peace agreement, year-end speculations about the coming year’s developments are unsurprising. The author believes that Armenia and Azerbaijan are unlikely to sign a peace agreement soon.

Currently, the situation is intriguing. Both sides claim substantial progress in peace talks. At the December 5 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Council, Armenia’s foreign minister announced that the preamble to the peace agreement text and 15 out of its 17 articles had been finalized. The Armenian prime minister later stated that 90% of the text was agreed.

However, according to the Azerbaijani state-affiliated think tank AIR Center, at least three contentious issues remain unresolved: the presence of the European Union (EU) mission in Armenia, constitutional and legal changes in Armenia, and the withdrawal of Armenia’s legal cases against Azerbaijan in international courts. Baku has also proposed two other preconditions to any peace agreement. These include dissolving the OSCE Minsk Group and establishing a “Zangezur corridor” free of Armenian control.

Despite progress, Azerbaijan’s ever-changing preconditions make the signing of a peace agreement elusive.

In 2024, Armenia offered concessions, such as a phased withdrawal of EU observers from the delimited border areas and a readiness to withdraw legal cases against Azerbaijan post-agreement. Armenia has also initiated constitutional reforms aimed for completion in 2027 and indicated its openness to dissolving the OSCE Minsk Group after an agreement is signed. Yet Azerbaijan insists these steps must occur before a peace deal.

Azerbaijan’s approach, characterized by the steady addition of preconditions and rebuke of any Armenian offer, casts doubt on the likelihood of an agreement soon. Strong external pressure on Azerbaijan could shift its stance, though efforts by the US, the EU, and partly by Kazakhstan in 2023 and 2024 have largely failed. Whether the Trump administration will prioritize this issue remains unclear, especially given other foreign policy focuses, including China, the Russia–Ukraine War, and Iran. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev sabotaged the Brussels format after the military takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 by refusing to go to Granada and Brussels, and most probably, the Brussels format ended with Charles Michel’s departure from the European Council Presidency.

Russia’s potential leverage to facilitate the signing of a peace agreement depends on the resolution of the Ukraine War on terms favorable to or at least neutral for Moscow. Russia may also seek to use the regional 3+3 format as an Armenia–Azerbaijan negotiation platform. Meanwhile, other actors, including Turkey, Iran, Israel, France, India, and China, lack either the leverage or the strategic interest to compel Azerbaijan to sign an agreement. Thus, as we begin 2025, the author believes that a new geopolitical configuration following a historical year of election campaigns increases the risk of a new escalation.

Two types of escalation may occur. The first involves small to medium-scale incidents, ranging from isolated border skirmishes to active hostilities lasting several days, potentially aimed at seizing additional Armenian territory — similar to the events of September 2022. Recent Azerbaijani state-affiliated media reports have alleged that Armenia is preparing for an attack on Azerbaijan; this allegation is probably being used to pave the way for a preemptive strike on Yerevan and also suggests that Baku is likely laying the groundwork for escalation in 2025. It

should be emphasized that Armenia has no intention of attacking Azerbaijan, as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly stated. Thus, the likelihood of small to medium-scale escalations in 2025 is moderate to high.

The second scenario is a large-scale escalation intended to forcibly open the “Zangezur corridor,” potentially targeting either the southern or northern parts of Armenia’s Syunik region or the Vayots Dzor region. Several factors that restrained Azerbaijan in 2024, including the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) and senior Iranian officials’ repeated statements that they will intervene if there is a threat to Armenia’s border with Iran, will either be absent or diminished in 2025. Iran’s perceived failure to prevent the erosion of its influence in Syria, coupled with the potential return of the US “maximum pressure” campaign against Tehran, may decrease the risk of a strong reaction by Tehran in case of Azerbaijani incursion in southern Armenia. Other, broader geopolitical considerations — such as US–Russia relations, the outcome of the war in Ukraine, and the Trump administration’s policies in the South Caucasus — will likely play a decisive role, too. These dynamics remain too uncertain to predict accurately. While the probability of large-scale escalation in 2024 was low, in 2025 it is expected to rise slightly, ranging from low to moderate.

In this context, the Armenian government must vigilantly monitor shifts in the global and regional balance of power and the intricate interplay of relations among Russia, the US, the EU, Turkey, and Iran. Suppose Russia gains additional influence in the region as a result of the stopping of the war in Ukraine, while Georgia–West relations continue to deteriorate. In that case, recalibrating Armenia’s Western-oriented foreign policy diversification may be necessary to avoid a situation in which Armenia is the only state in the region calling for an increased Western presence. This situation may result in a consensus among the region’s states to pressure Armenia to change its position. A new escalation by Azerbaijan might be perceived as an option to inflict pressure.

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How ‘Historical’ Was the Papikyan-Austin Meeting?

AUSTIN, from page 18

Overall, the early 2000s marked one of the most active periods of military cooperation between the USA and Armenia. It was undoubtedly caused by the historical, political and security issues of the time, but nevertheless, it was crucial to seize the moment and use the window of opportunity to get the most of the situation in the best interests of Armenia. As seen below there were a number of high-level meetings between Armenian defense ministers and the US secretaries of states. Apart from that, there were new cooperation areas established between the USA and Armenia during those years, which are still ongoing to this day.

The first meeting of the 21st century was between Armenian Defense Minister Serzh Sargsyan and US Secretary of Defense William Cohen on July 24, 2000 in Washington. During their meeting Sargsyan and Cohen signed an agreement on ending the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction which promulgated provision of \$300,000 of equipment and training for Armenia. That was a significant visit representing an important step in the deepening of military relations between Armenia and the US in the post-Soviet era.

Two years later, on March 20, 2002, Defense Minister Sargsyan made his second visit to the US capital, meeting with US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld at the Pentagon. This was the second meeting between the two since Secretary Rumsfeld had made a visit to Armenia back in 2001. Sargsyan considered this meeting as the “start of US-Armenian military consultations,” while Secretary Rumsfeld thanked Armenia for supporting the war on terror. Apart from meeting with the Secretary himself, a number of other high-level meetings were organized for Sargsyan, including a meeting with US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. These negotiations were quite fruitful, leading to significant outcomes such as the establishment of the Humanitarian Demining Center of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia in 2002.

Moreover, in 2003, the state of Kansas and the Republic of Armenia were linked under the National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program, facilitating cooperation between the Kansas National Guard and Armenian governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Health, and the Rescue Service.

Only one month after Sargsyan’s visit to the US, another visit of Armenian officials was organized. From October 31 to November 5, 2004, the visit of First Deputy

National Security Advisor of the US and the Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld assessed the prospects of development of Armenian-American military relations as “very good” and the visit of Sargsyan as “positive.” Rumsfeld also stressed that he appreciated US-Armenian relations and “events organized in the course of the visit are an evidence of it. We do not have the right to miss these good opportunities of reforming our army.”

As the next minister of defense, Harutyunyan did not make any official trips to the US, perhaps because he only held his position for one year. Seyran Ohanyan, who followed Harutyunyan in office, continued the tradition of high-level meetings with US officials. In March 2012 Ohanyan made an official visit to the USA during which he met with his counterpart Leon Panetta. Panetta expressed gratitude for Armenia’s participation in NATO missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Ohanyan also met with David H. Petraeus, director of the CIA.

Now the recent meeting between Papikyan and Austin can be reviewed in context. Austin described the meeting as “historic” considering that it was the first such meeting

to take place since he was in the office and also since the revolution in Armenia in 2018. Though the US had shown an increased interest in Armenia and the region since the revolution, there were no high-level meetings between the heads of defense agencies.

However, the timing of the meeting is significant. Only a little more than 40 days were left until the Trump administration comes to power – an administration which is apparently going to have approaches to US foreign policy. There were no essential cooperation projects proposed by Armenia to US counterparts. The agenda largely revolved around US assistance provided to Armenia.

Thus, the meeting was historical in the

sense that it broke the decade hiatus in high-level meetings. However, the lack of concrete results or proposals raises questions about its impact for Armenia and Armenian interests overall.

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Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Mikael Harutyunyan (who became Minister of Defense 2007-2008) to the United States took place. Harutyunyan visited the Central Command in Florida, the Kansas National Guard, and held meetings in Washington. Meetings were also organized with almost the entire American military leadership, such as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Wagner. This further solidified Armenia’s commitment to strengthening its military ties with the US.

In 2005, just one year later, one more visit of Armenian Defense Minister Sargsyan was organized. In October, 2005, he held separate meetings with Stephen Hadley,

Senators Peters, Cassidy Put Forth Bill Condemning Azerbaijan’s Ethnic Cleansing

CONDEMNATION, from page 1

United States-Armenia security partnership through the provision of military aid, joint military exercises, and intelligence and logistical support.”

It also calls for “robust humanitarian assistance to respond to the refugee crisis in Armenia,” and urges facilitation of “diplomacy to achieve a just and lasting peace in the South Caucasus that provides for the release of all Armenians unjustly imprisoned by the Government of Azerbaijan, establishes a right of return and security guarantees for the displaced Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, and preserves the Armenian cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

The resolution “recognizes that Azerbaijan’s blockade and subsequent military offensive against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh constitute acts of ethnic cleansing,” and “condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the atrocities perpetrated by the Government of Azerbaijan against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

On September 19, 2023 the Government of Azerbaijan “launched a full-scale military offensive against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh that took the lives of hundreds of soldiers and dozens of civilians,” according to the resolution, despite the fact that the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh - which has been the center of Armenian life and culture for millennia - established a de facto independent republic following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The full-scale military offensive followed a “grueling blockade” for nearly 10 months that was initiated on December 12, 2022, by Azerbaijan, that deprived the region’s population of food, medicine, fuel, and other necessities.

As Azerbaijan used the “threat of further violence to coerce the Armenian leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh to surrender their autonomy and dissolve their governing institutions...over 100,000 Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, facing the threat of further ethnic violence, fled to Armenia as refugees within 2 weeks of Azerbaijan’s assault.”

The Aliyev regime’s anti-Armenian aggression was underscored, as well as Azerbaijan’s systematic destruction of Armenian cultural heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh, including churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and other cultural monuments. The continued imprisonment of Armenian prisoners of war, civilian captives, and members of the political leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh, who remain unjustly imprisoned in Azerbaijan, was also emphasized.

WINNET Goris Foundation Asks for Help for the Armenian Elderly

GORIS, Armenia — This Christmas season, when love and hope fill the air, the WINNET Goris Foundation invites you to be part of a heartwarming initiative that aims to bring light into the lives of our cherished elderly people. We have already provided essential care to 100 elderly individuals displaced from Artsakh, offering them basic necessities and medical assistance. As we approach the Christmas holidays, we have a new dream: to establish a “Center for the Elderly Generation” in the Goris community — a place of warmth and support for hundreds of lonely senior citizens.

To bring this vision to life, we need to raise 30 million drams. The Amaryan Charitable Foundation, believing in our mission, has generously contributed 18 million drams to get us started. Now, we need your help to raise the remaining 30 million drams. This will enable us to create a space where our beloved elderly, particu-

larly those displaced from Artsakh, can find a second home.

Our history

Established in 2009 by using the concept of “support circles of women in the region” (Swedish best practice), the WINNET Goris Foundation (formerly Women’s Development Resource Center Foundation), jointly with peer Women Resource Centers (WRCs) in Kapan and Meghri, has been the key actor engaging women in sustainable local and regional development of Syunik region. Appreciating the power and capacities of a network, these three Women Resource Centers united into Syunik Women’s Resource Centers Network in 2010. The commitment and capacity of its team has been critical for becoming the first ever and still the only non-EU based member of the European Association of Women Resource Centres (WINNET Europe)

(www.winneteurope.org) in 2014, subsequently renaming as WINNET Armenia Network of Women Resource Centers, which is currently lead by WINNET Goris Foundation.

In the next two years WINNET Armenia expanded the network. In 2015 it established new Women’s Resource Centers in three other communities of Armenia: Sisian (Syunik region), Yeghegnadzor (Vayots Dzor region) and Ijevan (Tavush region). Recently three more Women Resource Centers were formed in Vanadzor (Lori region), Berd (Tavush region) and Gyumri (Shirak region). Thus, today, with the leadership of WINNET Goris, WINNET Armenia umbrella organization unifying 9 Women Resource Centers in five regions countrywide.

To donate, visit <https://test.winnetgoris.org/am/donate>