

# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932

Volume LXXXII, No. 29, Issue 4869

FEBRUARY 8, 2025

\$2.00

## Pashinyan Reveals Details of Proposal to Unblock Regional Railway Connections

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

On Friday, January 31, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during a press conference revealed the details of the proposal sent to Azerbaijan regarding the unblocking of regional railway connections, while earlier this week Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stated that they were taking “practical steps” to open the “Zangezur Corridor.”

Pashinyan claimed that it was “not even a proposal,” but “a solution” that “takes into account the positions” and “simultaneously resolves the issues raised” by both Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Pashinyan revealed that they had proposed to establish a railway cargo connection from Azerbaijan’s western regions to its exclave of Nakhichevan and back through the city of Meghri in the Armenian Syunik region, as well as from Yerashk, in the Ararat region, through the territory of Nakhichevan to Meghri and back. The connections would be used by both sides for international trade or cargo shipments.

The railroad between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been blocked since the early 1990s, with the last train passing through Meghri in April 1992.

Armenia announced its proposal in mid-November 2024, following the talks between Pashinyan and Aliyev held at a BRICS summit in Russia in October, af-



Electrified railway corridor in Azerbaijan

ter which both sides expressed increasing positivity about the progress of the negotiations.

During the press conference, Pashinyan elaborated that they chose the railway passing through Meghri over another possible route through the northern Tavush region, as it is a “cheap and realistic option,” considering that the second railway through Tavush sustained severe destruction as a result of a landslide, and “would require huge investments for restoration.”

Pashinyan said that they proposed to start with cargo shipments, and when the atmosphere allows, to consider the possibility of passenger routes.

“We have made this proposal and we are waiting for a positive response from Azerbaijan. Frankly speaking, I can’t imagine why they would decline this, knowing Azerbaijan’s positions,” Pashinyan said, adding that their solution solved “the objectives of both sides.”

see PROPOSAL, page 2

## Russia Warns of Armenia’s ‘Total Impoverishment’

MOSCOW (Azatutyun) — Armenia’s government risks plunging the country into widespread poverty with plans to seek its membership in the European Union, Russia said on Friday, January 31, in yet another warning to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, spoke at length about Armenia’s economic dependence on and increased trade with Russia. Zakharova pointed to Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk’s repeated warnings that an EU membership bid would mark the beginning of its withdrawal from the Eurasian Economic (EEU), a Russian-led trade bloc. She said the South Caucasus nation would thus lose access to Russia’s vast market vital for its economy.

“According to some estimates, the export of Armenian goods would shrink by around 80 percent,” Zakharova told reporters.

see WARNING, page 3

## Armenian Priest Killed in Lebanon

BEIRUT (*L’Orient-Le Jour*) — Armenians across the Middle East and the rest of the diaspora were shocked by reports that on February 1, the Very Rev. Anania Koujanian, Deputy Archbishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon, was murdered in an apparent robbery, according to preliminary reports.



Koujanian, 40, was found dead, reportedly murdered, in his home in the Bsalim area of Metn.

He was responsible for the affairs of the Armenian Orthodox (Apostolic) community in Zahle and Anjar, in the Bekaa region.

According to security sources cited by *L’Orient-Le Jour*, the crime likely occurred the night before, and his sister raised the alarm. His body was discovered by a housekeeping staff member, and Internal Security Forces (ISF) detected signs of violence. An investigation is underway to determine the exact cause and time of death.

see MURDER, page 5



## Jerusalemite Armenian Duo Tour US to Raise Awareness and Funds for Defense of Armenian Property

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WINCHESTER, Mass. —

The Pan-Armenian Council of New England, in coordination with the Armenian Assembly of America, hosted Jerusalemite activists Hagop Djernazian and Setrag Balian Jr. on January 25 for a presentation in the home of Drs. Shant and Reem Parseghian in Winchester at which representatives of many different local Armenian organizations were present.

The following day the two spoke at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown and at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge, sponsored by the Pan Armenian Council and the Armenian Assembly of America. These talks were part of an East Coast and Midwest tour from January 22 to 30, intended to raise awareness about problems the Armenians of Jerusalem are facing, primarily concerning control over a piece of land called the Cows’ Garden, and to raise funds for legal expenses concerning this property.

The young visitors cofounded the Save the ArQ (Armenian Quarter) movement in May 2023 and were speaking as its representatives. Save the ArQ has a seven-member

see JERUSALEM, page 8

### EUROPE

Preservation Group Names Arakelots Monastery as Endangered

Page 4



### WASHINGTON DC

Pashinyan Attends Religious Freedom Summit In Washington

Page 2



### UNITED STATES

Naghsh Ensemble To Tour US

Page 13





ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### US Congress Discusses Issue of Armenian POWs in Baku

WASHINGTON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The US Congress hosted several discussions as part of the International Religious Freedom Summit, where speakers raised concerns about the rights of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, Armenian prisoners of war in Azerbaijan, and threats to Armenian cultural heritage in the region. They urged the US administration to take action on these issues.

Rep. Chris Smith criticized past US policies on Karabakh, condemned Turkey for denying the Armenian Genocide, and accused Azerbaijan of ethnic cleansing, reports Voice of America.

“I have met with [Azerbaijani President Ilham] Aliyev twice, face-to-face in his office, and debated him over his policies toward the Armenian people and his human rights approach, particularly in Nagorno-Karabakh. I believe we must deepen our friendship and cooperation with the people of Armenia and make that absolutely clear,” said Smith.

Speakers called on the US administration to take steps regarding the rights of Karabakh Armenians, the situation of Armenian POWs and detainees in Azerbaijan, and the preservation of Armenian cultural heritage.

According to Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America, the summit presents an opportunity to shift US policy toward greater accountability. He expressed hope that the administration would impose sanctions on Azerbaijan, enforce Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act and push for the release of Armenian detainees in Azerbaijan as well as the dignified return of Armenians.

The summit is began on February 4.

### No Suspects in Fuel Depot Explosion Case

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The criminal investigation into the September 25, 2023, explosion at a fuel depot in Stepanakert currently has no suspects, according to Investigative Committee spokesperson Kima Avdalyan. The investigation is ongoing.

Media reports suggest that criminal proceedings might be initiated against the last commander of the Artsakh Defense Army, Kamo Vardanyan, since a special unit of the Defense Army was responsible for securing the fuel depot within the military base.

However, the Investigative Committee has reiterated that there are no suspects in the case at this time.

Additionally, media outlets have reported that Vardanyan was recently appointed as an advisor to Defense Minister Suren Papikyan on a voluntary basis. The Ministry of Defense has not confirmed this information.

The Ministry did not elaborate on whether Vardanyan's status has changed in recent months or if he has obtained RA citizenship, reaffirming their previous statement.

# Pashinyan Attends Religious Freedom Summit in Washington

WASHINGTON (Armenpress) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan this week attended a reception organized by Save Armenia on the occasion of his visit to the United States.

Co-Chair of the International Religious Freedom Summit, Save Armenia Board Member Sam Brownback welcomed Pashinyan's visit and emphasized the commitment of the organization to support Armenia in advancing its agenda. He said that Save Armenia's goal is to unite Christian leaders and other stakeholders in supporting Armenia.

Save Armenia Co-founder Robert Nicholson, diplomats, public figures and politicians also participated in the event.

In his remarks, Pashinyan thanked the organizers of the event and said it is an honor to be present at the reception with organizations and friends who have supported Armenia and the Armenian people for decades.

“Of course, I have to say that now Armenia is at a crossroads, at a highly important period of time for our country. It is very important to define, to determine the best method of supporting Armenia on this important and difficult path. Our region is generally extremely difficult, full of deep historic confrontations that are reflected today. But I think today we must focus on the



Nikol Pashinyan in Washington

kind of agenda that would open prospects for the future, which is the most important thing. If you ask me what's the most effective method of supporting Armenia from the U.S. perspective I'd say it would be the inclusion of the agenda of achieving peace in South Caucasus in the list of priorities of the U.S. political elite because we promote freedoms, including religious freedom, but you know I think the best tool to protect

freedoms of the people is sustainable peace because a conflict environment is the most convenient environment to violate all possible human rights. This is why we are now focused on the peace agenda, because we believe that in our region the existence of sustainable peace is the only way to guarantee a proper environment for democracy, protection of human rights, and development of Armenia,” Pashinyan said.

## Armenian Mining Giant Hit By First-Ever Strike

By Ruzanna Stepanian and Tigran Hovsepian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Production operations at Armenia's largest mining enterprise remained disrupted for a fourth consecutive day on Monday due to a walk-out by hundreds of its employees demanding a 50 percent pay increase and better working conditions.

Several dozen of those workers reportedly continued to camp out inside the premises of the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine (ZCMC) located in the southeastern town of Kajaran.

“Work has stopped in several production facilities of the combine,” a ZCMC spokesman told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Sunday, February 2.

Management rejected the workers' demands, described the strike as illegal and threatened its participants with “legal proceedings” shortly after it began on Friday. In a series of statements, it said that the protesters represent only a fraction of the ZCMC workforce numbering some 4,600 people. It also argued that they earn be-

tween 329,000 and 594,000 drams (\$825-\$1,490) per month, or well above Armenia's current average wage of 291,000 drams.

A leader of the striking workers, Shavarsh Margaryan, countered that these fig-



A view of ore-processing facilities of the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine in Kajaran, August 12, 2019.

ures represent their pre-tax gross wages.

“People earn 30 percent less than those sums,” he said, accusing the management of misleading the public.

On Sunday, the strike leaders organized what they called a secret ballot designed to

disprove the management's claims that the work stoppage is not supported by the majority of the ZCMC workers. According to them, more than 2,400 workers took part in the ballot that ended on Monday evening.

Eduard Pahlevanyan, the head of a labor union representing people working in Armenia's mining and jewelry industries, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that he and several representatives of the striking workers will meet with senior ZCMC executives after ballots cast in the declared plebiscite are counted later in the day.

The ZCMC spokesperson insisted on Sunday that “the management is not going to negotiate with the wrongdoers.”

The Armenian government, which holds an almost 22 percent stake in the ZCMC, did not publicly comment on what was the first-ever strike in the mining giant's history. The rest of the company is owned by entities linked to Russian billionaire Roman Trotsenko.

Figures released by the State Revenue Committee last week show that the ZCMC remains Armenia's leading corporate taxpayer.

## Pashinyan Reveals Details of Proposal to Unblock Regional Railway Connections

PROPOSAL, from page 1

Pashinyan additionally noted that what the sides would call the “solution” to the issue of transport connections is another matter, and that Armenia did not oppose unhindered connections, “but unhindered does not mean bypassing Armenia's jurisdiction.”

Earlier this week, on Tuesday, Aliyev stated that “Armenia must fulfil its obligations and ensure unhindered passage from Azerbaijan to Azerbaijan.”

According to the Anadolu Agency, Aliyev accused Armenia of a nonconstructive approach over four years and of stalling

progress on the “Zangezur Corridor” by offering excuses and attempting to mislead the international community.

Aliyev for the first time publicly commented on the Armenian government's Crossroads for Peace project, a regional transport proposal that would connect Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and Georgia via transit routes through Armenia.

“This so-called project is not worth two cents without Azerbaijan, and we have repeatedly conveyed this to the Armenian side through various channels,” Aliyev said, adding that if Armenia truly wanted to implement it “first of all, you should ap-

proach Azerbaijan.”

“Because without us, it is just a piece of paper,” Aliyev said.

He also noted that the “Zangezur Corridor” was an Azerbaijani project which, after their victory in the Second Karabakh War, “was brought to the international agenda and entered international terminology.”

“Today, the Zangezur Corridor is a widely accepted term and expression. Of course, we are taking practical steps for the opening of this Corridor.”

(This article originally appeared on the website OC-Media on January 31.)



## INTERNATIONAL

# Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology Begins Second Research Project in Armenia

By B. Szymanska

WARSAW — The Polish-Armenian Archaeological Expedition has completed its first season of research at the site of Argishtikhinili. This city, dating to the first half of the 1st millennium BCE, is notable for the cuneiform inscriptions of Urartian kings, monumental defensive architecture, and grand residences of the Urartian elite.

The settlement was founded on the summit of Davti Blur hill, today in Nor Armavir Village of Armavir Province in Armenia, around 774 BCE, by Argishti I, the king of Urartu. Between the 9th and 7th centuries BCE, Urartu was one of the most significant powers in Eastern Anatolia and the South Caucasus. The kingdom's center was located near Lake Van. Through military campaigns in the late 9th and 8th centuries BCE, its borders expanded to encompass territories between Lake Urmia in the east, Lake Sevan in the north, and the Taurus and Zagros Mountains in the south.

Urartu, particularly in the 8th century BCE, was a formidable rival of the Assyrian Empire, engaging in protracted conflicts for dominance over Syria and southern Anatolia. Urartu is famed for its strongly fortified, hard-to-reach stone fortresses and bronze craftsmanship, examples of which can be found in many European museums.

In the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, Argishtikhinili was one of Urartu's major administrative and urban centers. The city featured two citadels surrounded by residential districts and irrigation channels supplying water from the Araxes River. The most impressive and best-preserved parts of the city lie in the central and eastern sections of the Davti Blur hill, where



Part of the team working on the cemetery (Photo A. Chlebowski)

the expedition's work is concentrated.

The expedition is co-directed by Dr. Mateusz Iskra, head of the Department of Near Eastern Studies at PCMA UW, and Hasmik Simonyan from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia and the Service for the Protection of Historical Environ-

ment and Cultural Museum-Reservations of Armenia.

Excavations in the 1960s and 1970s uncovered an administrative-religious complex with artifacts revealing Urartian history, religion and culture, but the residential areas are still largely unexplored. "The site is somewhat forgotten today, which unfortunately contributes to its gradual destruction," admitted Dr. Mateusz Iskra. For years, the area has suffered neglect and has been used as an illegal dumping ground and by treasure hunters. "This may be the last chance to thoroughly study and save this site," the archaeologist adds.

The expedition has three main research objectives:

- To investigate the daily lives of the city's elites living in houses situated near the palace complex.

- To reconstruct the history of the city and the processes leading to the decline of Urartu, a period that remains poorly understood.

- To analyze the impact of climate change on life in the city between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE.

The first season included geological and geophysical surveys, which allowed for remote identification of subsurface structures. The findings were verified through

test excavations in selected locations. The team discovered remains of two large residences preliminarily dated to the 6th century BCE. Surprisingly, they also identified a cemetery near the residential area.

"Excavations in the cemetery have the potential to illuminate the sacral landscape of Argishtikhinili, shedding light on whether the site exclusively features Urartian-period burial practices or if it reflects a syncretic blend of burial traditions spanning multiple temporal phases," explained Hasmik Simonyan. This analysis will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the region's funerary customs across different chronological periods.

In the residential area, the primary objective is rigorous examination of the excavated structures and their careful conservation. This approach will provide critical insights into the architectural and socio-cultural practices of the inhabitants.

Additionally, as part of a collaborative research effort with the Sardarapat Ethnographic Museum in Armenia, all materials uncovered by the Armenian-Polish Archaeological Expedition will be systematically cataloged and displayed in both permanent and temporary exhibitions, ensuring their long-term preservation and public accessibility.



Sieving the explored archaeological layer near the excavation in the residential part (Photo M. Iskra)

## Russia Warns Of Armenia's 'Total Impoverishment'

WARNING, from page 1

"Armenian products would face higher duties," she said. "All this would lead to a sharp drop in the GDP growth rate... If we are talking about the scale of manufacturing, about the population of Armenia, this could simply lead to total impoverishment."

Overchuk first issued such warnings on January 9 hours after Pashinyan's government endorsed a bill calling for the "start of a process of Armenia's accession to the European Union." Armenian officials responded by saying that Yerevan has no plans yet

to leave the EEU.

"We feel pretty good in the EEU," Pashinyan told a news conference on January 31. "The figures you cited speak for themselves. But at the same time, we cannot help but notice the desire of a part of the Armenian people to shape options for the future of Armenia."

The Armenian parliament controlled by Pashinyan's Civil Contract party is expected to debate and adopt the bill in February. The premier said his passage will "not in itself mean Armenia's membership in the EU." He again did not give details of his

further steps. No EU member state has so far voiced support for Armenia's accession to the 27-nation bloc.

"Russia, of course, has some concerns about the process, but our conversations have never been and will never be in the language of threats," said Pashinyan, who discussed the issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin in a January 17 phone call. He added that the "dialogue" between the two sides is continuing.

According to Armenian government data, Russia accounted for more than 41 percent

of Armenia's foreign trade in January-November 2024, compared with the EU's 7.5 percent share. Armenia also buys the bulk of its natural gas from Russia at a price that is set well below international market-based levels.

Pashinyan and his entourage first floated the idea of an EU membership bid a year ago amid rising tensions with Moscow. Armenian opposition leaders have described the resulting government-backed bill as reckless and warned of its severe consequences for the domestic economy.



## ARMENIA

# European Preservation Group Names Arakelots Monastery in Tavush as Endangered

This week the 7 Most Endangered Programme, a civil society campaign to save Europe's endangered heritage, announced its list of endangered sites. Among those was Arakelots Monastery and Settlement in Tavush.

Hidden within the forests of the Tavush region in northern Armenia, the Arakelots Monastery and Settlement is a gem of medieval heritage. This ensemble of religious and secular monuments located two kilometres west of the Acharkut village, along the Kirants River, provides invaluable insights into the cultural and economic life of the 13th century. Its remote setting, coupled with its proximity to the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, underscores its historical and geopolitical significance.

The monastery, fortified with imposing ramparts and watchtowers, features the main church, a unique domed hall adorned with delicate architectural details, and an adjoining narthex with a traditional Armenian "hazarashen" roof structure. Notable among its treasures is a fresco of Saint Sargis, a rare depiction of the Armenian saint, reflecting the monastery's dedication to Armenian Apostolic traditions. The remnants of the settlement include a pair of churches, a caravanserai, an oil mill, and the Sranots

Bridge, which collectively narrate the story of a vibrant medieval trade hub on the Armenian Silk Road.

Arakelots flourished under the Georgian Zakarian and Mongol rule, benefiting from its exemption from taxation as a monastic estate. This symbiotic relationship between the religious and secular domains fostered prosperity and left a remarkable legacy of Armenian-Georgian cultural influences. Despite its historical prominence, the site has been abandoned since the 17th century, remaining largely unexplored.

Today, the Arakelots Monastery and Settlement faces significant threats. Encroaching vegetation, structural decay, and climate-related hazards, including excessive rainfall and mudslides, jeopardize its preservation. Additionally, the area's location in a seismically active zone has left its monuments vulnerable, with visible earthquake damage to key structures. Human-made impacts, such as graffiti and the construction of two large picnic areas and a lack of formal conservation, further exacerbate the situation. Furthermore, the presence of large bat colonies in the monastery creates a need to balance cultural heritage preservation with wildlife protection.



Arakelots Monastery and Settlement

The nomination of the Arakelots Monastery and Settlement to the 7 Most Endangered Programme is led by an Individual Member of Europa Nostra, Dr. Jasmine Dum-Tragut from the Armenian Studies Division at the Centre for the Studies of the Christian East of the University of Salzburg in Austria. The nomination is supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of the Republic of Armenia, the Municipality of Acharkut, Blue Shield Armenia, and the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. Additional expertise comes from the University for Continuing Education in Krems, Austria, ensuring a collaborative effort for the conservation, research, and sustainable development of the site.

Proposed actions include holistic research, cleaning and conservation of the Arakelots Monastery and Settlement, alongside the development of sustainable ecotourism. Local stakeholders, including academic institutions and civil society organizations, are integral to these efforts. Educational initiatives and trail improvements aim to reconnect the local population with this forgotten medieval treasure heritage, fostering pride and appreciation

for the region's cultural identity.

The Advisory Panel of the 7 Most Endangered Programme remarked: "Arakelots is an outstanding medieval ensemble that reflects the cultural hybridity and peaceful coexistence of its era. Its precarious state due to geopolitical tensions and environmental challenges calls for immediate action. The restoration and promotion of the Arakelots Monastery and Settlement can act as a catalyst for reconciliation, regional stability, and sustainable development, offering a pathway for transforming heritage into a resource for peace and progress."

Being on the 7 Most Endangered List often serves as a catalyst for action and as an incentive for mobilisation of the necessary public or private support.

The 7 Most Endangered Programme was launched in January 2013 by Europa Nostra with the European Investment Bank Institute as founding partner and the Council of Europe Development Bank as associated partner. It was inspired by a successful similar project run by the US National Trust for Historic Preservation. The 7 Most Endangered is supported by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, as part of Europa Nostra's network project European Cultural Heritage Agora.



Interior shot of Arakelots Monastery

## FAR Establishes Graduate Research Center at Institute of Botany

NEW YORK/YEREVAN — Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) announces the FAR Graduate Research Center at Armenia's Institute of Botany, home to the country's first-ever master's program in Biodiversity and Conservation. This milestone was made possible through the support of Ara Cherkhian as part of FAR's STEM for Rural Armenia initiative. Since its launch in 2021, this program has aimed to transform STEM education for children in Armenia's remote regions, offering hands-on learning with scientists, summer camps, modernized school labs, and teacher training.

The new Graduate Research Center is set to play a transformative role, empowering young researchers to explore critical topics like Armenia's wildlife, plant life and climate change. Their work will pave the way for impactful discoveries and policies that protect Armenia's biodiversity.

"Until now, the Institute of Botany has been focused solely on research, and we didn't have a proper educational facility," explains Alla Aleksanyan, Head of the Department of Plant Diversity and Eco-



Fund for Armenian Relief's Eduard Karapetyan, FAR's Education and Science Programs Director with Marianna Sargsyan, a mother of two displaced from Artsakh

systems Studies of the National Academy of Sciences in Armenia. "Now, with this new, state-of-the-art center funded and renovated by FAR, we finally have

a space designed for education. This will not only enhance the learning experience but also inspire more students to pursue studies in biodiversity and conservation."

Already, six students have enrolled in the program, including Marianna Sargsyan, a mother of two displaced from Artsakh. With the help of FAR's Mathevosian Scholarship, Marianna is now pursuing her Master's degree. "I never thought I could join this program. The financial burden of rent and daily expenses made tuition impossible to afford. This scholarship has given me the chance to follow my dreams," she said with her eyes sparkling with pride.

Within the STEM project, FAR has already established the Eco Education Center at Yerevan Botanical Garden, a space designed for science and eco-focused events and summer camps for children from both urban and rural areas.

"When working with schoolchildren from Syunik and Tavush, we saw incredible talent and curiosity," shared Eduard Karapetyan, FAR's Education and Science Programs Director. "With initiatives like these, we hope to spark an even greater passion for research and project-based learning among Armenia's next generation of scientists."



## INTERNATIONAL

# Turkey's Last Armenian Village Faces Expropriation Threat

ISTANBUL (Bianet) — Vakıflı, known as Turkey's last remaining Armenian village, is facing the threat of expropriation due to a public housing project.

Located in the Samandağ district of Hatay, the village is included in a large-scale development plan by the Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) as part of post-earthquake housing projects following the devastating quakes in Feb 2023.

The project, which involves the construction of 1,353 housing units, covers parts of Vakıflı, including residential areas, agricultural land, and treasury-owned property.

Residents of Vakıflı are alarmed by the prospect of expropriation, fearing that the project will harm the village's historical, cultural, and social fabric. Many worry that Vakıflı could lose its unique status as Turkey's last Armenian village.

Speaking by phone in late January, a local resident said, "Today, the headmen of Vakıfköy, Hıdırbey, and Mağaracık are meeting with the governor. We, as the people of the village, oppose the expropriation decision. We are a village that has existed for centuries.

"We fear not only for our cultural and historical heritage but also for the demographic makeup of our community. Almost half of our village is at risk of expropriation, and we are deeply concerned about losing our identity as Turkey's last Armenian village."

The village's mukhtar, Berç Kartun, also commented on the situation, stating that the village's fate would become clearer after their meeting with Hatay Governor Mustafa Masatlı. Kartun noted that the villagers were anxious and upset about the potential impact of the project.

Following the forced displacement of most Armenians from the Musa Dagh region in 1915, only a small number remained in Vakıflı and nearby villages such as Hıdırbey, Yoğunoluk, and Kapisuyu. After the annexation of the İskenderun Sanjak, the modern-day Hatay, by Turkey in 1939, the remaining Armenian population largely concentrated in Vakıflı.

According to Agos journalist İşhan Erdiç, the Vakıflı Armenian Church Foundation initiated legal proceedings to reclaim 36 properties identified as belonging to the Armenian community. These properties had been transferred to the state treasury or private individuals over time.

Despite a 2022 ruling by Turkey's Constitutional Court, which found a violation of property rights, the disputed properties have not been returned to the foundation.



Vakıflı (Asia News photo)

## Armenian Priest Killed in Lebanon

MURDER, from page 1

Sources indicate there was no sign of forced entry. The suspected motive is robbery, as his car is missing, but it remains unclear whether other belongings were stolen or if the cleric knew his attackers. Neighbors reportedly noticed comings and goings at his home on Friday, and construction work was ongoing at his residence.

Hagop Terzian, a Beirut MP from the Armenian Tashnag Party (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), confirmed the murder. He stated that Kojanian had not communicated with anyone since Friday, prompting the party to issue a missing persons alert on Saturday morning.

"Sadly, we received confirmation of his death around 11 a.m.," Terzian said, adding that very few details are known. No suspects have been identified, though it is possible he opened the door to his assailants himself.

"He was a kind and gentle man; I knew him personally," Terzian said, struggling to process the news. "The level of insecurity has become intolerable," he added.

Criminal incidents are on the rise in various regions of Lebanon. On January 27,

the lifeless body of a gas station owner in Mazraat Yachouh, Metn, was found tied up and dumped inside a restroom. Four of his Syrian employees were suspected of the murder, which appears to have been motivated by robbery. On Jan. 14, a car dealer was murdered in Dbayeh, also in Metn. His killer was later arrested in Beirut's southern suburbs by the Internal Security Forces (ISF). Another robbery-related crime was also committed in the Ashrafieh district.

Outraged reactions have followed one another since the crime was announced on Saturday morning. President Joseph Aoun and caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati contacted Armenian Patriarch Catholicos Aram I to offer their condolences and denounce the crime. According to a statement published by the official National News Agency (NNA), Mikati "has instructed the security forces to speed up the investigation and identify and arrest the culprits."

On his account on the platform formerly known as Twitter, Hagop Pakradounian, secretary general of the Tachnag party, denounced "the murder of Archimandrite Anania Kojanian," deploring that "this lov-

ing and dynamic cleric was tortured and put to death in the worst possible way." "We insist on the need not to slide into discord because of an individual act, and to keep confidence in our security forces who will know how to prosecute and then penalize the culprits," he continued.

Caretaker Industry Minister Georges Bouchikjian felt that "attacking religious leaders is the height of crime and insecurity because such acts are likely to sow discord among the population."

The Armenian leaders' references to "discord" follow rumors of the possible involvement of Syrian refugees in the crime, which have not yet been confirmed by any official source. Nevertheless, Maroun Khawli, coordinator of the National Campaign for the Repatriation of Displaced Syrians, issued a statement in which he "holds the Lebanese authorities responsible for any crime resulting from lax security."

For its part, the Free Patriotic Movement issued a statement strongly denouncing the assassination of Archimandrite Kojanian. It called on "the security forces to shed light on this case and put a stop to this wave of robbery-related murders throughout the country."

(The NNA news agency contributed to this report.)

## INTERNATIONAL

## UK Calls for Increased Scrutiny of Goods Headed to Russia

LONDON (news.am) — Britain called for increased screening of goods from Armenia and 13 other countries as part of anti-Russian sanctions.

Russia continues to purchase sensitive goods from third-country entities, often without the government's knowledge, the UK government statement said.

Aside from Armenia, the list includes China, India, Israel, Mongolia, Turkey and several Central Asian republics.

"Several countries [...] are taking steps to reduce the flow of Common High Priority List (CHPL) goods to Russia from their jurisdictions. Businesses should continually assess the export control environment in the countries with which they interact.

"Businesses may wish to conduct enhanced screening when exporting at-risk products to certain countries to prevent re-export to Russia, although the risk of each country and individual trade may vary. The UK Government fully supports trade with these countries unless the final destination is Russia or any other authorized destination," the statement added.

## Direct Flights to Prague May Be Launched

YEREVAN (ARKA) — On February 3, Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure David Khudatyan received the Czech Ambassador to Armenia Petr Piruncik. Khudatyan and Piruncik discussed the importance of establishing direct flights between Yerevan and Prague, which would significantly contribute to the development of tourism, according to the press service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration.

Khudatyan highlighted the effectiveness of the cooperation between Armenia and the Czech Republic.

## Armenia Praises EU For Extending Border Monitoring

YEREVAN (CaucasusWatch.de) — Armenia has welcomed the European Union's decision to extend its Mission in Armenia (EUMA) for another two years, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan announced on social media on February 4.

"The Mission has proven to be one of the pillars of stability in the region. We appreciate the support of each and every EU Member State and their participation on the ground," Mirzoyan stated.

The Council of the European Union formally adopted the decision, extending EUMA's mandate until February 19, 2027, with a budget allocation of over €4 million from February 20, 2025, to February 19, 2027.

First deployed in 2023, the EU observer mission monitors and reports on the security situation along Armenia's borders.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Iran Reaffirms Stance on Regional Borders After Aliyev's Threats

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Iran remains strongly opposed to any changes in regional borders, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has told a senior aide to his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev one month after the latter threatened to forcibly open a land corridor through Armenia.

Hikmet Hajiyev, Aliyev's top foreign policy adviser, was received by Pezeshkian on Sunday, February 2, during a visit to Tehran apparently aimed at easing lingering tensions in Azerbaijani-Iranian relations.

"Pezeshkian also underlined the significance of preserving territorial integrity of regional states as one of the main principles of Iran's foreign policy, noting that chang-

es to borders are unacceptable," the Iranian presidential office said in its readout of the meeting released on Monday.

Iranian officials, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have repeatedly issued such warnings in recent years amid Baku's demands for the opening of the extraterritorial corridor that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave through Syunik, the only Armenian region bordering Iran. The Islamic Republic fears that the corridor would strip it of its common border with Armenia.

"The Zangezur corridor must be opened and it will be opened," Aliyev said on January 7, adding that "the factor of force" is dominant in international affairs these

days.

Aliyev repeated his demands on January 28, again accusing Yerevan of not complying with a relevant provision of a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The clause commits Armenia to opening rail and road links between Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan through Syunik, the only Armenian province bordering Iran. It says that Russian border guards will "control" the movement of people, vehicles and goods.

The Armenian government maintains that the truce accord calls for only conventional transport links between Armenia and

Azerbaijan and does not exempt people and cargo transported to and from Nakhichevan from Armenian border checks. Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said on January 30 that Yerevan could only agree to "some simplified procedures" for border crossings and transit.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sparked angry reactions from Iran after accusing Armenia last August of "sabotaging" the agreement. The Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned Russia's ambassador in Tehran to warn Russia against contributing to any "geopolitical changes" in the region. Moscow insisted that it is not seeking any arrangements that would compromise Armenia's territorial integrity.

## Food Prices Kept Inching up in Caucasus and Central Asia in 2024 – World Bank Report

The World Bank's most recent food security update shows that food price inflation rates pushed higher in 2024 in most countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia. But the two countries that had the highest rates at the outset of 2024, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, saw food price inflation moderate over the course of the year.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), roughly 280 million people globally are experiencing acute hunger every day. Comparatively few sufferers are in Central Asian states, although neighboring Afghanistan remains a food insecurity hotspot three-and-a-half years after the Taliban returned to power in Kabul.

"Despite sustained provision of aid [to Afghanistan], the food security situation remains fragile. Large parts of the population still require substantial food assistance because of ongoing drought and conflict, which have destabilized agricultural production, leading to severe food shortages," the bank's update states.

More broadly, a separate World Bank estimate indicates that 2.8 billion individuals around the world cannot afford a healthy diet. Accordingly, food price inflation remains a major source of food insecurity; the report notes that more than 70 percent of lower-income countries during the last quarter of 2024 had food price inflation rates exceeding 5 percent.

Inflationary pressure on foodstuffs in many countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia was relatively moderate in 2024. In the World Bank report's "lower middle income category," Kyrgyzstan saw an uptick in food inflation, with a year-on-year rate for December of 4.1 percent. The rate in Tajikistan, meanwhile, remained flat, under 3 percent for every month of the year. Uzbekistan saw a significant drop in the food price inflation rate, going from 9.3 percent in January 2024 to 2.5 percent in December.

Food price inflation in Turkmenistan was not measured in the bank's report, due to a lack of data. But an earlier report by a World Bank blogger noted that Turkmenistan is the only formerly Soviet state with a double-digit rate for the prevalence of food insecurity.

Among "upper middle income states", Azerbaijan and Georgia experienced a steady rise with Azerbaijan recording a 4.4 percent food price inflation rate in December, and Georgia a 3.6 percent rate for the same month. The rate in Armenia also rose but remained under 2 percent throughout 2024.

The rate in Kazakhstan remained stubbornly high throughout 2024, ending the year at 5.5 percent for December. In January of last year, however, the rate stood at

8.2 percent.

A UN report cited in the World Bank update notes that inflationary pressures are a factor in causing changes in dietary patterns. As a result, many lower and lower middle income nations are seeing an "increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity, while many have not yet been able to eradicate undernutrition," according to the UN report, titled *The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets 2024*. "These countries are burdened with various forms of malnutrition including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency, overweight and obesity all co-existing within the same country, community or household."

The widening availability of ultra-processed foods that are linked to a variety of health problems, including obesity and type 2 diabetes, appears to play a significant role in fueling the changes in dietary patterns. The volume of global food exports, including ultra-processed items, has more than doubled in the past two decades, the UN report notes. "Without a doubt, this significant expansion of food trade affects the availability, accessibility, affordability and diversity of foods in domestic markets," the report adds.

(This article originally appeared on Eurasianet.org on February 3.)

## Baghdad's Armenian Church Undergoing Renovation

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Renovations have begun on St. Gregory the Illuminator Church in Baghdad, the cathedral of the Armenian Diocese of Iraq, under the jurisdiction of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, a post on the diocese's official Facebook page on February 4 noted.

The church was built between 1954 and 1957 on a vast estate belonging to the Armenian Church, which has housed a large Armenian cemetery since 1904, containing both ancient and modern graves.

The site also includes a memorial complex dedicated to the victims of the Armenian Genocide and a large museum, opened in November 1997.

The construction of the cathedral was

made possible through two Armenian philanthropists: Simon M. Garibian and Galust Gulbenkian.

Armenians have been present in Iraq since the 7th-12th centuries, during the Abbasid Caliphate. The community expanded significantly after forced relocations under Persian Shah Abbas I and later saw a major influx following the Armenian Genocide, when approximately 100,000 refugees found shelter in Iraq. The Armenian Diocese of Iraq was established in 1922.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Iraq's Armenian population was around 20,000. However, following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, most Armenians emigrated. Currently, approximately 5,000 Armenians remain in the country.



Tahar Rahim as Charles Aznavour

## 'Monsieur Aznavour' Biopic Receives Four César Nominations

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Charles Aznavour biopic, "Monsieur Aznavour," has received four César Award nominations, it was announced this week. Those are for Best Actor Tahar Rahim; Best Costumes: Isabelle Mathieu; Best Decorations: Stéphane Rozenbaum and Best Visual Effects: Stéphane Dittoo.

The award ceremony will take place on February 28.

The César Award is the national film award of France. First awarded in 1976, the César Award is considered the highest film honor in France, the French film industry's equivalent to the Molière Award for theatre, and the Victoires de la Musique for music.



# Community News

## Dr. Talin Suciyan Named 21st Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies

FRESNO — Dr. Talin Suciyan has been named the 21st Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at California State University, Fresno, for the Spring 2025 semester.

“We are happy to welcome Dr. Suciyan for the spring semester,” said Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program. “Dr. Suciyan will

bring a new and active element to the Program.”

“The Kazan Visiting Professorship offers schol-



ars a unique opportunity to work on topics of their choice, covering the wide range of Armenian Studies,” said Suciyan. “Further, it provides a stimulating and supportive academic environment with a long tradition of Armenian studies, to meet young generations of Armenians, and to be part of one of the oldest communities in the United States.”

Suciyan was born and raised in Istanbul and attended Armenian schools. “Armenian institutions in Istanbul, such as the Armenian Patriarchate, the Armenian Hospital, cultural centers established by the alumni organizations, choirs, theatre groups, Armenian periodicals, all provided a vibrant community life for us all,” said Suciyan. Her later migration to Germany to pursue her academic career changed this life and yet gave her the opportunity to think, write and reflect on the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, Turkey and beyond.

After graduating from the University of Istanbul, she obtained her PhD. in Germany.

Based in Munich, she has been teaching and researching at the Institute for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Munich over 15 years. She is the author of *Outcasting Armenians: Tanzimat of the Provinces* (Syracuse University Press, 2023) and *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, History and Politics* (I. B. Tauris, 2016). Her research focuses on Armenians in the Middle East and Mediterranean. Her areas of interests are colonialism, histories of the autochthonous populations, medicine, peasantry and temporality.

“After 16 years of living, researching and teaching at the University of Munich, I am happy to have a daily life that is both academically and socially embedded in the activities of the community,” stated Suciyan. “I look forward to new projects that will emerge from my Kazan Visiting Professorship.”

As the 21st Kazan Visiting Professor, Suciyan will teach an upper-division course titled “Armenians in the Ottoman Middle East,” and will give three public lectures at Fresno State on the family archives of Armenian Genocide survivors. It will primarily utilize a largely untapped and overlooked source, correspondences kept by dispersed Armenian families.



## Colin Thomas-Jensen Joins Aurora as Director Of Communications

WASHINGTON — The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative recently announced the appointment of Colin Thomas-Jensen as director of communications, advocacy and impact. Thomas-Jensen will lead efforts to support the initiative’s growing network of local humanitarians, including advocating for more effective, sustainable funding for individuals and local organizations that offer assistance and protection in communities with the greatest need.

Thomas-Jensen joins Aurora from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), where he was the national security advisor to its administrator.

“I am thrilled with the opportunity to advance Aurora’s efforts on behalf of brave local humanitarians on the front lines of the world’s most acute crises,” Thomas-Jensen said. “With governments and armed groups increasingly emboldened to restrict humanitarian access for international relief efforts, it has never been more important to strengthen the global network of local responders and advocate for innovative and sustainable initiatives to support their life-saving work.”

Thomas-Jensen began his career as a humanitarian responder with USAID in Sudan during the Darfur Genocide. Through his work with the International Crisis Group and the Enough Project, Thomas-Jensen has developed and led impactful advocacy efforts for more effective international responses to genocide and mass atrocities. From 2010 to 2017, he worked in senior policymaking roles with the Department of State and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

After graduating from Pomona College, he served as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer, teaching high school English in Ethiopia and Mozambique. He holds an MA in African Studies from the University of London’s School for Oriental and African Studies.

“We are delighted to welcome Colin Thomas-Jensen to the Aurora team. Colin’s strong belief in our collective responsibility to address the world’s most pressing challenges echoes the very core of Aurora’s mission,” said Armine Afeyan, CEO of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. “His experience advancing humanitarian and human rights efforts will undoubtedly help us achieve even greater impact in this pivotal phase of our journey.”

Founded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative seeks to address on-the-ground humanitarian challenges around the world. To date, Aurora has already changed the lives of more than 3.4 million people across 60 countries and territories, deploying funding toward 463 projects that support emergency response, food, water, education, medical care, psychosocial support and more for underserved communities.

Aurora will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year with a series of landmark events, including the Human Rights and Humanitarian Forum in Los Angeles in May, the announcement of the 2025 Aurora Humanitarians in New York in September, and the reveal of the 2025 Laureate during the Aurora Prize Ceremony at Ellis Island in November.

## Attorney Mark Geragos Joins Truth and Accountability League Board of Directors

LOS ANGELES — Mark Geragos who was an executive producer on the Truth and Accountability League (TAAL) produced feature documentary “Motherland,” and the first major contributor and the biggest funder of the film, joins the Armenian-focused non-profit watchdog organization’s board. TAAL is a 501©3 non-profit advocacy organization based in Los Angeles and founded in 2020 due to a significant increase in anti-Armenian racism, defamation, hate crimes, and Armenophobia that monitors and addresses discrimination, bias, disinformation, propaganda, and slander of the Armenian people and culture at the media level, including social media, academics, intelligentsia, and public policy.

“[Having] Mark on our board is not just the usual honor and privilege, but a gamechanger for TAAL and a big win for the Armenian community,” said TAAL’s founder, Vic Gerami. He added, “The world knows Mark as a renowned celebrity attorney responsible for getting justice for countless people. Mark’s



Mark Geragos

immense generosity, philanthropic projects, and championing of many causes make him a lionheart and a hero that makes Armenians proud.”

Geragos brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience in advocacy as a past board member of the Armenia Fund International Board of Trustees and frequent host of the annual Thanksgiving Telethon. He has also held other roles with Armenian organizations, including founding member and chairman of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry and a member of the Advisory Committee of Birthright Armenia.

Geragos’s accomplishments have earned him numerous accolades. He is the only attorney besides Johnnie Cochran to be named ‘Lawyer of the Year’ in both the criminal and civil arenas. *California Law Business Magazine* ranked him among the ‘100 Most Influential Attorneys in California’ for three consecutive years, and he is one of the handful of Lawyers named as a SuperLawyer for over 20 years. His 59-million-dollar verdict against Pfizer Corporation see TAAL, page 12



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Jerusalemite Armenian Duo Tour US to Raise Awareness And Funds for Defense of Armenian Property

JERUSALEM, from page 1  
organizing committee which, according to Djernazian, consults and works closely with the various Armenian political parties and clubs.

The 24-year-old Djernazian is also leader of the scouts and executive committee member of the Hoyetchmen Club (Armenian Youth Association) in Jerusalem. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in international relations and Middle East Studies in Hebrew University of Jerusalem, he is now working on a second degree in law. The 28-year-old Balian, a fourth-generation descendant of the Balian ceramics family, has studied economics in France and Armenia, and explored ceramics in Spain.

In addition to participating in Armenian community meetings in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, New York and New Jersey, in Washington D.C., the Jerusalemite duo met with representatives of various Congressional offices and held a midday briefing sponsored by the Armenian National Committee of America, while in New York City, they met with representatives of several countries' United Nations missions, including of France, Canada and Armenia, together with one of their international law team members, Karnig Kerkonian.

Djernazian right after the trip ended reported that the meetings at the UN and Capitol Hill were very productive. He said, "We reached agreements with different stakeholders to raise this issue on various levels, whether at the UN, the House of Representatives, or Senate."



Hagop Djernazian (photo Aram Arkun)

Back in Winchester, after a home blessing by no less than four Armenian priests, from the Armenian Diocese, Armenian Prelacy and the Armenian Catholic Church, and welcoming words from Dr. Shant Parseghian, Anthony Barsamian, co-chair of the Assembly and a legal consultant to the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate, stressed the importance of the struggle over control of the Cows' Garden property in the Armenian Quarter and declared: "If we win this, it will change how we are viewed in the Middle East as Armenians."

## The Lease

According to Balian, there are less than 2000 Armenians living in Jerusalem at present. The Armenians today live primarily in the Armenian Quarter of the Old City located on Mt. Zion in Eastern Jerusalem. Significantly, it is the only quarter which still has open spaces left in the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Cows' Garden. This is the most elevated part of the Armenian Quarter and the Old City.

Adding to the value of this area, Djernazian said, is the fact that the only access via car to reach the Western or Wailing Wall sacred to Jewish people is through the Armenian Patriarchate road.

The Armenian Quarter consists of 90,000 square meters and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the custodian and owner of most of it, including the Cows' Garden. In July 2021, a 98-year lease (a 49-year one time renewable lease) was signed for the use of 11,500 square meters of land, which is primarily the latter area. This area constitutes 5 percent of the properties owned by Armenians within the Armenian Quarter (there are non-Armenian churches which also own property within this quarter).

The lease also includes the Alex and Marie Manoogian Seminary hall, five houses belonging to Armenian families, a garden of the Armenian Patriarchate, and some other open spaces.

The lease was signed between representatives of Xana Gardens, a company registered both in Israel and the United Arab Emirates, and, as representatives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Patriarch Nourhan Manougian,



Setrag Balian speaking at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge

Grand Sacristan Archbishop Sevan Gharibian and Director of the Real Estate Department of the Patriarchate Fr. Baret (Khachig) Yeretzian.

Xana Gardens was supposedly to build a 7-star (sic) luxury hotel on this land, but Djernazian said that the location is next to the ramps of the Old City, which would make construction very difficult. Furthermore, digging even one to two meters deep in the Old City often leads to the discovery of antiquities, which could delay such a project for years.

Djernazian said that the Patriarchate received \$2 million at the beginning (not as escrow) from Xana Gardens and would also receive an income of \$300,000 a year, which Djernazian called a "laughable amount" considering the value of the land involved.

## Deal Sparks Resistance

Balian said that while the deal was signed in 2021 concerning the Cows' Garden property, Djernazian had been opposing it even in 2019 when rumors had spread about such a possibility. However, Balian explained, it took a lot of time to mobilize the Armenian population against it, because they were so dependent on the patriarchate (for employment and, for many of them, rent-free homes). In 2023, the private Israeli company entered the area in April, and Fr. Yeretzian, who was accused of being behind the deal, was relieved of his position and defrocked as a priest.

Rumors spread that the real estate deal not only included the parking lot but more areas, so Balian said that they worked to organize the community, but it was difficult. Djernazian and he went to see Fr. Yeretzian but could not get any answers and then with a group of young people, they tried to talk to other representatives of the Patriarchate, again unsuccessfully. On May 9, 2023, they decided that the entire community needed to be involved and they called for a united protest.

The next day, Balian said that they got a phone call that the former Fr. Yeretzian, now defrocked, was preparing to leave Jerusalem. He and Djernazian opposed this as well as defrocking him until the necessary information was obtained from the latter. People started to gather in front of his house to demand answers about the details of the real estate agreement and stop him from leaving. The numbers grew to around 70 people and therefore Balian and Djernazian decided to call for an impromptu protest at the grand courtyard of the convent.

Balian said the two activists gave speeches. After they finished, they looked at each other and wondered what to do next. However, suddenly two Israeli policemen had

entered the convent, which was a rare occurrence, and wanted to escort the priest out, so the protest then moved in front of his house, and the numbers kept increasing until 300 people, with Armenian tricolor and Artsakh flags, were chanting patriotic songs and refusing to let the priest leave until he provided information. Instead, more Israeli policemen and special forces came and escorted him out through what Balian called a walk of shame.

He said, "This was a very important message to send to anyone, that if you betray your nation, if you betray your people, if you sell out, you have to pay a price. There have to be consequences. You can't just take your stuff, take whatever money, if any...and go enjoy your lifestyle. We have to send a message to everyone that this is unacceptable."

After that, every Friday Save the ArQ organized protests in the grand courtyard of the convent against the deal, calling for its cancellation and more transparency with the community. This lasted six months and then the Patriarchate sent a unilateral cancellation letter, but this meant lawsuits and court cases would follow.



Setrag Balian (photo Aram Arkun)

Balian said: "We were united. It was something that brought tears to our eyes. In the tent ... we had for example brothers who had not talked with each other for decades sit together and converse. We had all the Tashnags, Ramgavars [members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Armenian Democratic Liberal Parties], all those different people sitting together, talking together, everybody helping us, bringing food. It was really such a beautiful sight. We hope that Jerusalem will give that hope to Armenians, especially today."

*continued on next page*





## COMMUNITY NEWS

## In NJ, Djernazian and Balian Rally Support for Armenian Quarter's Legal Battle

FRANKLIN LAKES, N.J. — On January 24, community leaders, members of the clergy and activists gathered at the home of Ara and Aline Araz to support the Save the Armenian Quarter (Save the ArQ) Movement, an initiative dedicated to protecting the historic Armenian presence in Jerusalem. The event, hosted by Berj and Suzanne Akian, Ara and Aline Araz, Thomas and Carol Ashbahian, Dr. Garbis and Laura Baydar, Peter Bedevian, Dr. Garo and Cecelia Garibian, James and Maral Sahagian, and Dean Shahinian, Esq., featured an in-depth discussion with Hagop Djernazian and Setrag Balian, founders of the movement.

The event raised \$36,000 to support ongoing legal efforts and \$10,000 more was raised in Boston and Detroit, but additional funds are urgently needed to continue defending the Armenian community's rights. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to Armenian Legal Defense Front Inc., 800 Maine Avenue SW, Ste. 200, Washington DC 20024 or go to <https://bit.ly/Save-the-ArQ> to donate online.

The Save the ArQ Movement, launched in May 2023, is fighting an unlawful 98-year lease agreement signed by the Armenian Patriarchate with the developer Xana

Gardens. The Armenian community filed a lawsuit on February 18, 2024, in the Jerusalem District Court, arguing that:

**Lack of Authority** – The Patriarchate's internal bylaws prohibit long-term property leases without specific approvals, which were not obtained.

**Waqf (Trust) Status** – The disputed land, known as Cow Garden, is classified as a Waqf (endowment), established under Ottoman Sharia law and recognized by Israeli courts. Such endowments cannot be sold or leased for private development.

Djernazian and Balian explained how this legal position distinguishes the Armenian community's lawsuit from a separate claim filed by the Patriarchate, where the Patriarchate didn't argue important arguments to nullify the deal. The community's lawsuit demands the complete cancellation of the lease, asserting that the Patriarchate had no legal authority to sign it.

In a positive legal development, the Jerusalem District Court rejected multiple requests by Xana Gardens to dismiss the case. Other requests have also been denied. These rulings mark a significant step in strengthening the community's



Hagop Djernazian and Setrag Balian in New Jersey

case.

Looking ahead, a pre-trial hearing is scheduled for September 17, where critical evidence and testimonies will be presented. To prepare for this pivotal hearing, extensive legal work, research, and

witness preparation must be conducted to ensure the strongest possible defense of the Armenian community's and the Patriarchate's rights.

Online donations can be made at <https://bit.ly/Save-the-ArQ>.

from previous page

He said that Jerusalem was a second Artsakh, with at least 1700 years of continuous Armenian presence that could not be lost, and wished that the light of unity and hope in Jerusalem would spread throughout the Armenian nation.

### The Legal Battle

Djernazian said that in April 2023, the real estate company took over one part of the Cows' Garden area by force. They then tried to take over some more land including Armenian homes. When the Patriarchate sent a cancellation letter in October 2023, Xana sent armed settlers and others to try to physically take over the Cows' Garden and attack the Armenian community members there, but the Armenians, including women and children, withstood many such attempts by standing in front of bulldozers. Djernazian said that unlike the attackers, the Armenians as non-Jews could not carry weapons in Israel.

He said that there were 20 people at first defending the property but their numbers rose to 400. They set up tents and despite a few months of attacks, they maintained their presence for over a year.

Although laymen from the community asked for information from the Patriarchate about the agreement and what had taken place, Djernazian said it declined to share any information.

Then the legal proceedings began. The Patriarchate initiated a lawsuit on December 26, 2023 against the real estate company. The community group was not informed about this despite its months of demonstrations, so when the company organized a new attack on December 28, the people in the tents were not prepared.

The Patriarchate's lawsuit was based on three arguments, Djernazian said. The first was misrepresentation of identity — the two investors, Israeli-Australian Jewish businessman Danny Rothman (aka Rubinstein), the head of Xana Gardens, and George Warwar, an Arab Israeli, used various different names or aliases with the Patriarchate. Rothman claimed to be the owner of hotels all around the world and to have the ability to build them, but in fact neither has experience in building hotels, but have had various problems with the law.

They have alleged ties with Jewish settler organizations which aim to take over non-Jewish-owned land in Israel.

The second argument, Djernazian continued, concerns the size of the property. The contract states it is 11,500 square meters on the first page, yet the Patriarchate agreed to only 7,500 sq. meters.

The third is bribery: the Patriarchate accused Fr. Baret Yeretzian of taking bribes from the real estate company.

Djernazian said that the Save the ArQ movement decided to initiate its own lawsuit in February 2024 "because we see it as a difficult struggle for which one lawsuit is not enough, and the community as a third party should present its arguments as well." He said, "We cannot ask

the court to declare that the deal is nullified without suing both parties to the contract. As a third party, as a community, we are suing both parties because the patriarchate is a party to the deal and Xana Gardens is a party to the deal, so obviously we should sue both of them."

Djernazian upon his return to Jerusalem added that the fact that 365 members of the local Armenian community out of a population less than 2,000 are signatories or parties to this lawsuit means that the majority of families are supporting this lawsuit and the Save the ArQ movement.

This lawsuit has two main arguments.

First, Djernazian said during his Winchester presentation, it argues that the Patriarchate did not have the necessary authority to sign the deal. The approval of the Holy Synod and the General Assembly was necessary according to the bylaws of the Patriarchate yet had not been obtained prior to the signing. Also, Article 23 of the bylaws states that the patriarch and the Patriarchate are custodians of Armenian national properties. A letter signed in 2021 by 17 members of the Brotherhood of St. James demanding the cancellation of the deal based on the violation of the bylaws bolsters this argument.

The second argument is that the properties in question were registered as trusts or "waqf" originally when purchased by Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Antreas Merdintsi in 1574 under Ottoman rule. This type of custodial endowment according to Ottoman law was first registered in the name of his family members, and then when no one was left, to the Armenian Christian community of Jerusalem. He remarked that Israel recognizes Ottoman law and British law, and since other properties of Jews and Muslims are still recognized as *waqf*, this argument is a valid one. (Djernazian after the event further explained that the *waqf* agreement, written in Ottoman, used the word *taifeh* or *taifet* to indicate the Jerusalem Armenian community.)

Balian added that as in Israel there is no constitution and everything is based on jurisprudence, meaning precedents are important, he was pretty confident that the *waqf* argument would be respected. Otherwise, he said that it would have repercussions in many other cases.

Djernazian said that his group wanted to cooperate with the patriarchate. It held many meetings with various people from the patriarchate, including the real estate director. He himself had personal meetings with the patriarch, though he was not on speaking terms with the latter, to try to cooperate after the demonstrations, when the company was on the property and Israeli settlers were arriving. He added that their lawyers tried also, yet when Karnig Kerkonian and his legal team arrived in Jerusalem in June 2023, they were rejected by the patriarchate many times and failed to even see the contract, which eventually was obtained through a third party. He added that even now, neither the community group nor the patriarchate have the map indicating the

extent of the property in question, which is Appendix A in the contract.

He said, "We wrote also in our lawsuit that the purpose of this lawsuit is not suing the patriarchate. On paper the patriarchate is being sued but the community is here to help the patriarchate to nullify the deal...We cannot cooperate with the patriarchate as long as there are legal proceedings."

### Initial Legal Progress

Djernazian said that there were some small positive developments over the last year. Though the real estate company tried to have the Save the ArQ's case dismissed, the court rejected the motion twice. The company's request for an extension of time to prepare its defense was also rejected by the court.

The company initiated a countersuit against the Save the ArQ community group, suing for \$40 million per year of delay. Djernazian said that this is an unfounded claim as the company has not even approached the Jerusalem municipality yet to obtain a permit.

Djernazian explained that there are two teams of lawyers working on their case. There are two local lawyers, one Israeli Jewish and the other Israeli Arab, working for pay, and one Israeli-American Jewish lawyer working pro bono. An international legal team primarily based in the US includes Karnig Kerkonian, Garo Ghazarian, Ani Nazaryan, Elizabeth al-Dajani and Arman Tatoyan.

Over the past years, five community meetings were held with the 365 Jerusalemite Armenian signatories of the lawsuit to keep them informed of developments. The next hearing in court is scheduled for September 17 and meanwhile the list of documents and testimonies for submission is being prepared.

Djernazian said: "It is important to say that we are here not to protect the community rights only, but the rights of the church because Jerusalem for us is a spiritual homeland. Jerusalem is the homeland, it is the *hayrenik* for all of us, for Armenians all over the world. Just as you visited Jerusalem, you have to encourage your children to visit Jerusalem, and your grandchildren to visit Jerusalem. It is not enough to visit Armenia only. We have Jerusalem as a spiritual homeland with a presence of 1,700 years and we need people like you, the diaspora, with us in this struggle to protect the Patriarchate and the community."

He concluded, "We can win this struggle. We had good decisions. We did succeed in some things, small things, but in order to win the big thing you have to win first the small battles. This is where we stand now."

The Jerusalemite duo expect to have \$200,000 expenses over the next two years. Save the ArQ has a tax-exempt fund in the US through which donations are being accepted (<https://givebutter.com/Arq2025>). As of February 3, it has \$9,170 in donations. In addition, checks may be sent to Armenian Legal Defense Front Inc., 800 Maine Avenue SW, Ste. 200, Washington DC 20024.



## COMMUNITY NEWS



The children at St. Vartan Cathedral on January 25

## Lessons of Kindness at St. Vartan Cathedral Children's Day

By John Cermak-O'Brien

NEW YORK — The morning of January 25 started off with a chill as the freezing winds cascaded between the skyscrapers of New York. Yet even the harsh winter winds couldn't dampen the youthful warmth and energy that was present in Eastern Diocese's mother cathedral, as the second annual "Children's Day at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral" was held in earnest.

Beginning with a short service led by Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, the inside of the cathedral was packed with the more than 210 children from Diocesan parishes and Armenian schools across the tri-state area, and from neighboring areas as far away as Philadelphia. Attendance this year represented a significant increase over the already large number of participants at the previous iteration.

The young faithful, ranging from the 3rd-to-8th-graders, arrived ready to make new friendships, and lend their eager hands to a special community service project.

"These Armenian youth gathered to be the hands of Christ in action. Together, they spread God's love through acts of kindness to those in need," said Parsamyan. "This is what community is all about: coming together to make a difference, and sharing faith, hope, and love with the world."

Assisting Parsamyan during the service and throughout the day were Cathedral Vicar Fr. Davit Karamyan, Fr. Mesrob Hovsepyan (of St. Gregory the Enlightener Church, White Plains, NY), and Fr. Armash Bagdasarian (of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church, Wynnewood, PA).

Following the service, a luncheon was held in the Diocesan Center's Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium, where multiple tables were lined with ingredients for making sandwiches, snacks, and drinks — all intended to be packed into bags for the city's vulnerable residents.

While enjoying lunch and working on the service project, the children listened to a motivational talk by the day's Master of Ceremonies, Chris Sarafian, director of outreach at New Jersey's Hovnanian School.

"What we do today is something that we should be doing all over," he said. "When you leave here today, remember that it's not only about what we're doing today; it's about how we change our lives, and how we can do things in the future that will help other people."

Aram Sethian, an investment analyst at One68 Global Capital, served as the guest speaker at this year's Children's Day. In his talk, he mentioned that while charitable acts can sometimes be done from a distance, an important aspect of charity is personal involvement — and that's an objective children should focus on.

"That's the lesson behind today's event," Sethian explained. "We learn that we're in an advantaged place, that we're lucky to be here, that we have things that a lot of people would enjoy. In doing these acts of kindness, these acts of charity, you learn how to conduct yourself and how to carry yourself in the future."

"The sandwich you're making today will have a bigger impact on you, as you learn the lesson of kindness," he said. "By making kindness a habit, you learn how to engage your Christian spirit, and become the Armenian Christians that we want you to grow into."

The children prepared more than 200 bags of food for distribution at the Sant'Egidio shelter, which has a long-time partnership with the Diocese.

After the bags were filled and group photographs were taken with the children, clergy, and committee members, community service certificates were awarded to the participants to conclude the ceremonies.

All items and food, including everything served at the luncheon, were donated by community members and businesses.

### Giving Back, Helping Others

Adults who attended the event were so inspired by the energy of the children that they jumped in help with the outreach activity and food service. In addition, a number of teenager chaperones were on hand to help the youngest students pack the bags and make sandwiches.

The Children's Day event was co-chaired by Maria Stepanian and Talia Jebejian Bouldoukian, who dedicated their efforts to the memory of a beloved family member: Joyce Sulahian, who passed away a year ago.

"Joyce was a champion of the youth," explained Maria, "organizing numerous activities for young people during her many years of assisting the late Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, former Primate of the Eastern Diocese. As a longtime Manhattan resident, Joyce would have been thrilled to see so many young Armenians gathering in her beloved cathedral to help the city's most vulnerable residents."

"During our own formative years as children, we attended countless events at the Diocese," Talia recalled, "and wanted to bring back the same sense of wonder and joy that comes from being in the cathedral and connecting with peers on such a meaningful endeavor. We are proud to honor Joyce's memory in this way today."

Other members of the Children's Day organizing committee included Armenuhi Bagdasarian, Maral Beylerian, Melanie Bourghol, Souzi Kasaryan, Nazig Kirokian, Noushig Ohanian, Lori Saganda, and Yn. Alla Terzyan. These were virtually the same committee members who had worked on last year's event—and who wholeheartedly volunteered their time once again after receiving such positive feedback from parents in 2024. Again this year, parents of participating children were overjoyed to see how happy and fulfilled their children were when they came home.

## Faith Leaders Unite to Call out Hinduphobia, Demand Fair Media Coverage

HONOLULU — In a rare demonstration of unity, religious leaders representing diverse faiths and substantial communities from Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Sikh traditions issued an interfaith coalition letter on January 28 urging the media to reject anti-Hindu prejudice and embrace balanced, respectful reporting.

The coalition's letter condemns the "recent biased portrayal of Hindus in the media," citing concerns about the promotion of anti-Hindu bigotry, which misrepresents spiritual organizations and individuals.

"Media has recently published content that not only promotes Hinduphobia but also biases against individuals and organizations from multiple faith backgrounds,"

the letter says.

The letter addresses how the Science of Identity Foundation, a spiritual organization rooted in the Hindu Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, has been unfairly portrayed in narratives that promote "fear and animosity towards Hindu practices."

Signatories of the letter include Sukhi Chahal of The Khalsa Today, a prominent Sikh organization; Hakim Ouansafi of the Muslim Association; Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, representing Eastern Orthodox Christians; Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, a leading voice in the Catholic community; Dr. Jeffery D. Long of Elizabethtown College, a respect-

ed Hindu scholar; and Dr. Richard Benkin of Interfaith Strength, representing the Jewish faith. These leaders emphasize that "the vitality of our democracy depends on embracing our diversity, not exploiting it for discord."

"The increasing number of voices standing against anti-Hindu prejudice is deeply encouraging," said Jeannie Bishop, president of the Science of Identity Foundation.

"This interfaith coalition's strong stance highlights the power of unity across diverse religious and cultural traditions. If attacks like this can occur against one spiritual path, it can happen against any. Religious bias and religious bigotry have no place in our society striving for inclusivity and mutual respect."

This significant statement comes on the heels of an open letter that has now been signed by more than 70 Hindu organizations that also denounced Hinduphobia in the media, reflecting a growing chorus of voices from diverse faith traditions committed to combating religious bigotry.

The coalition also calls for heightened journalistic responsibility.

"For journalism to serve its purpose, it must maintain the highest standards of accuracy, fairness, and integrity, thereby fostering trust and unity among varied communities," the letter says.

By promoting fact-based and respectful reporting, the signatories aim to combat divisive narratives and reinforce principles of equality and inclusion.



Tekeyan Cultural Association  
Boston Chapter  
presents

“Remnants”: Armenian Genocide  
April 11 Lecture

How the Ottoman Armenian communal body was dismembered, disfigured, and later re-membered by the survivor community, tracing the histories of women and children rescued during and after the war



with author **Elyse Semerdjian**

holder of the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University, Worcester,

7 p.m. Friday at the Baikar Center

755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA

(use Norseman Ave. entrance). Free admission. Book signing. Email for info: [syogurtian@comcast.net](mailto:syogurtian@comcast.net)



## COMMUNITY NEWS/OBITUARY

## Nazaryan, Alexandrian to Head Ward Howell Dubai Office

Ward Howell, a global leadership advisory and executive search firm, has installed an Armenian duo at the helm of its just launched Middle East business.

Earlier this month, Ward Howell announced the launch of its new office in Abu Dhabi, marking its entry in the Middle East, and lifting its footprint worldwide to 30+ offices in 23 countries.

Now, Ward Howell has unveiled the appointment of two Managing Partners who have been tasked with setting up and building out the Abu Dhabi office: Sevag Alexandrian and Gregory Nazaryan. Both have

dustrial, media, and advisory services.

Nazaryan meanwhile spent most of his professional career in executive search. Prior to becoming a partner at True Search mid-2020, he was a partner at Stanton Chase and a leader at Pedersen & Partners. He has extensive experience in C-Suite and board-level executive searches across diverse sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, energy, real estate, and government.

Additionally, he also held several senior roles in consulting, and in industry working across functions such as sales & marketing, operations and supply chain.

“Our presence in Abu Dhabi aligns with our vision to be at the center of the Middle East’s thriving business ecosystem, with our new office strategically located in ADGM, we aim to further strengthen our relationships and expand our impact across the

Middle East and Africa” said Alexandrian.

Nazaryan added: “The UAE is a strategic gateway to the region, and our strong network and proven expertise allow us to connect clients with world-class leadership talent. Ward Howell’s reputation for execution excellence is rooted in our ability to deliver tailored solutions that meet the unique challenges of our clients.”

Ward Howell was founded in 1951 by a former McKinsey & Company leader. Today, the company is active in three lines of business: board-level human capital and governance advisory, executive search, and leadership development.



Sevag Alexandrian and Gregory Nazaryan

Armenian roots, and both also have been recruited in from counterpart True Search, where they were partners.

Having kicked off his career in management consulting at EY, Alexandrian spent most of his 30+ year career in human resources, holding roles of growing seniority at Technip, Sky News Arabia and Seha (Abu Dhabi Health Services Company), where he latterly served as Group Director for HR Strategy and Performance. He moved into executive search mid-2019.

At True Search, Alexandrian completed C-Suite and board-level searches across industries such as healthcare, oil & gas, in-

## OBITUARY

### Richard Khederian

Attorney, Active in Armenian Community

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. — Richard Khederian, born January 8, 1958, in Detroit, passed away on January 28, 2025, after a long illness.

Son of the late Margaret and Thomas (Khoren) Khederian, he was embraced by his in-laws, the late Henry and Victoria Kachadourian, as family.

Married to Corinne Kachadourian on May 25, 1991, at St. Stepanos Armenian Church in Elberon, NJ, they built a loving home in Bloomfield Hills and shared 33 years of marriage. He was the father of Henry Khoren and Victoria Sapega and brother to Deborah (Neshan) Ohanian. He will also be missed by many relatives, family friends and his special caregivers who treated him like family.

A graduate of Cass Tech High School, Richard earned his BA from the University of Michigan and his JD from Emory University.

Admitted to multiple state bars, he began his career interning for the UAW in Washington, D.C., before joining his father’s law firm in Detroit. After his father’s passing, he moved the practice to Bloomfield Hills, focusing on real estate, contracts, and estate planning. In later years, he served as Counsel at Powers Chapman in Troy before retiring due to illness.

Richard was a proud Armenian and an active member of St. Sarkis and St. John Armenian Churches. He was known for his



humor, generosity, and devotion to family, friends and clients. A lifelong Michigan Wolverine, he cherished time spent in Ann Arbor, attending games, and sharing traditions with his children.

A loving husband and father, Richard found joy in family adventures, games, travel, and hosting special occasions. His kindness and warmth left a lasting impact on all who knew him.

His funeral was on Monday, February 3, at St. John Armenian Church. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. John Armenian Church in Richard’s memory.

## Armenia Fund USA Provides \$250,000 For Tuition Assistance to Students Affected by California Wildfires

GLENDALE — Armenia Fund USA will provide \$250,000 toward student tuition to families financially affected by the recent wildfires. This funding aims to provide tuition assistance to families who have lost their homes and are experiencing financial hardship, enabling their children to continue attending Armenian schools.

To ensure the funding reaches those most in need, Armenia Fund has been working directly with Armenian schools to coordinate support for the impacted families. “This is a crisis that has deeply affected our communities” said Maria Mehranian, president of Armenia Fund. “Our goal in providing funds for tuition costs is to reduce financial burdens and support students in maintaining their education without interruption.” Every effort is made to provide the tuition relief and the distribution of funds efficiently and effectively.

Armenia Fund remains committed to supporting the community through this crisis and will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the affected children receive the help they need.

Armenia Fund is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the global Armenian community through humanitarian aid, educational opportunities, and emergency relief. With a focus on empowerment, Armenia Fund works to create lasting change and provide critical support in times of need.

## Geragos Joins Truth and Accountability League

TAAL, from page 7

was ranked among the ‘Top Ten Verdicts in 2008 in California’ and ‘Top Fifty Verdicts in the United States’ by the National Law Journal. Early last year, he won a 32-million-dollar wrongful death verdict in Federal Court.

“I’m excited to join the Truth and Accountability League’s board of directors. They do tremendous work for the community. I’ve known Vic for some time and seen his commitment in the last five years to combat disinformation, slander, propaganda, and the defamation of the Armenian people. We’ve had political advocacy, philanthropy, and other types of organizations, but never one that directly deals with the information and cyber war we face now,” said Geragos.

He added, “I call on everyone to throw their support behind TAAL in the battle to call out misinformation whether it is public policy, academics or in the media. I look forward to TAAL’s upcoming projects and campaigns.”

Geragos was at the helm of the landmark victory and a rare justice for Armenian Genocide victims, survivors, and the pan-Armenian community as the lead attorney in groundbreaking Federal Class Action Lawsuits against New York Life Insurance and AXA Corporation, achieving a \$37.5 million settlement for insurance policies issued during the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Empire. Geragos is also currently suing the government of Turkey for reparations related to this genocide.

Telephone (617) 924-7400

## Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET  
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN  
PAUL BEDROSIAN  
LARRY BEDROSIAN

## DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in  
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543

(781) 891-9876 [www.NEMonuments.com](http://www.NEMonuments.com)

James “Jack” Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

*Giragosian*  
FUNERAL HOME

576 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472, Tel: 617-924-0606  
[www.giragosianfuneralhome.com](http://www.giragosianfuneralhome.com)

ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR



# Arts & Culture

## Naghsh Ensemble To Tour US on 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Celebrating ten years of international touring, as well as the release of their new album “Songs of Wisdom,” Armenia’s internationally acclaimed Naghash Ensemble will embark on a North American tour in March, performing in eight cities across the U.S. and Canada.

Based in Yerevan and led by Armenian-American composer John Hodian, the ensemble combines the earthy spirituality of Armenian folk song, new classical music, and contemporary post-minimalism with the energy of rock and jazz. Featuring three exceptional female vocalists and some of Armenia’s finest instrumentalists on duduk, oud, dhol, and piano, their performances bring new life to the sacred texts of medieval Armenian mystic poets Mkrtych Naghash and Kostandin Erznkatsi. Drawing from this rich literary tradition, the new music from their upcoming album will be at the heart of their North American tour.

The stops will be:

March 14, Brigham Young University • Provo, Utah

March 15, Berklee Performing Arts Center, Boston

March 16, Longwood Gardens, Philadelphia

March 19, The Local, Saugerties, NY

March 21, Strathmore Theater, North Bethesda, MD

March 25, SF Jazz, San Francisco, CA

March 27, Green Music Center, Sonoma, CA

March 29, Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, Canada

The Naghash Ensemble’s music is both ancient and modern, an amalgam of sacred tradition and contemporary innovation that draws deep from Armenia’s storied past while pushing forward into new uncharted terrain. Written by Hodian, the ensemble’s latest album expands on a project that began nearly two decades ago with a serendipitous encounter at Garni temple. Hodian heard soprano Hasmik Baghdasaryan’s ethereal voice reverberating through the ancient ruins, which he recalls as “the most beautiful sound I’ve ever heard.” His determination to use her voice in a new way would lead to the creation of a musical language that deftly marries Armenian folk traditions, classical music, and the minimalism of contemporary Western composition. The result is music that feels timeless — suffused with the soul-stirring spirituality of Armenian liturgical music but framed by a sense of modernity.

At the heart of the Naghash Ensemble’s appeal is the unique combination of instrumentation and vocal prowess. The ensemble’s three extraordinary female vocalists — Hasmik Baghdasaryan, Tatevik Movsesyan, and Shahane Zalyan — alongside some of Armenia’s finest instrumentalists on duduk, oud, dhol and piano, create a mesmerizing atmosphere that feels at once rooted in the past and strikingly fresh.

see NAGHASH, page 15



Valda Salmiņa (right) with Armenian translators of Latvian literature Naira Khachatryan and Gohar Aslanyan.

## Valda Salmiņa

*‘I Lived with Narekatsi’s Texts for 15 Years’*

By **Artsvi Bakhchinyan**  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

YEREVAN-RIGA — Latvian translator Valda Salmiņa (born in 1962) earned a bachelor’s degree in philology with a specialization in German Philology from the University of Latvia and studied Armenian Philology at Yerevan State University. She also studied at Hagen University in Germany, obtaining a master’s degree. Currently, she works as a German language teacher at the Riga School of Design and Art. She translates Armenian literature in Latvian. In 2018, she was nominated for the 2017 Latvian Literature Annual Award in the category of Best Foreign Literature Translation into Latvian for her translation of Grigor Narekatsi’s *The Book of Lamentations* from Classical Armenian. For her contribution to promoting Armenian cultural heritage in the Baltic States through the translation of *The Book of Lamentations*, Salmiņa was awarded the Grigor Narekatsi Memorial Medal by Armenia.

Needless to say, Valda answered my written questions in Armenian...

**Dear Valda, in the Baltic republics, Armenology appears to be the most developed in Latvia. How would you characterize Latvian Armenology in the past and today?**

We cannot really speak of systematic Armenology research in Latvia. Over the past 20 years, we have carried out several successful initiatives in collaboration with the Latvian Language Institute and the University of Latvia. I have developed proposals for the correct pronunciation of Armenian proper names in Latvian. After completing my doctoral studies, I participated in several conferences both in Latvia and abroad, presenting topics such as the translation of Grigor Narekatsi and onomastics, including Armenian ergonyms in Latvia’s urban environment. In recent years, in cooperation with the Embassy of Armenia, particularly the former Ambassador to the Baltic States Tigran Mkrtychyan, international Narekatsi Readings have been organized at the University of Latvia in Riga.

In November of 2023, a conference dedicated to Nerses Shnorhali, organized at the initiative of Bishop Vardan Navasardyan, brought together luminaries such as Levon Boghos Zekiy, Claude Mutafian, and Abraham Terian. Reports were delivered by art scholar and Vice President of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, Ojārs Spārtis, church history professor Andris Priede, and religion scholar Prof. Elizabete Taivane, who has Armenian roots. She has been traveling around Armenia for several years, collecting materials on the manifestations of the people’s religiosity. Prof. Taivane has managed to unite scholars working on a collection of articles titled *Armenia through the Eyes of Latvians*, which will be published by the University of Latvia Press.

**Today, we have two Armenian translators who translate Latvian writers from the original. How is Armenian literature presented in Latvia?**

I am very pleased that Naira Khachatryan and Gohar Aslanyan have formed a creative team of translators, collaborating on various translation projects with see LATVIAN, page 16

## Musical Armenia’s 40<sup>th</sup> Concert to Feature Arno Melkonyan, Vartan Arakelian

NEW YORK — The Armenian Prelacy will host the 2025 Musical Armenia Concert on Sunday, March 9, at 2:00 PM at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. This marks the 40th concert in this series, which was launched in 1982.

The featured artists this year are the innovative composer/pianist Arno Melkonyan and the promising pianist Vartan Arakelian, who will perform music by Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, Babadjanyan, and Arno Melkonyan.

Established by Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian with the Prelacy Ladies Guild, Musical Armenia is dedicated to promoting young Armenian artists and to the performance of music by Armenian composers. Over the past forty-plus years many of the program’s performers have established solid professional and music-instruction careers. The Prelacy is very appreciative of the contribution that Musical Armenia’s devoted supporters have made in their artistic advancement.

Melkonyan will be accompanied by musicians Analuna Chahine (violin), Alisa Shin (violin), Minjun Seo (viola), Devin Connolly (cello) and Alireza Khodayari (tar).

A native of Yerevan, Melkonyan has lived in the Middle East and South-east Asia. He began composing music while attending an international high school and subsequently studied with the composer David Balasanyan. Melkonyan’s creative approach blends music from the Late Romantic period with influences from pop, jazz and Armenian folk and chant traditions. He is currently a student in composition and games scoring at Boston’s Berklee College of Music.

Arakelian began piano studies at the age of 4 under the direction of Lilit Karapetian-Shougarian. Arakelian’s accomplishments include an



award at the 2025 YoungArts National Arts competition, second prize at the 2023 Chopin International Piano

Competition and finalist selection at the 2023 Boston Pops and Fidelity Investments Young Artists Competition. He is currently a high school junior at Buckingham Browne & Nichols School in Cambridge, Mass.

Tickets are priced at \$35 and \$25. Student and senior discounts are available through the Carnegie Hall Box Office. For tickets, visit [www.carnegiehall.org](http://www.carnegiehall.org).



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine  
Vartanian Datian



## The Stuffed Grape Leaf: Pomegranate and Pine Nut Lahmajoun

“Slightly sweet and tangy with aromatic spices, these small meat pies will make a great appetizer for your next holiday party or a tasty afternoon snack. Adapted from a recipe by Chef Kamal Al-Faqih, these ‘mini pizzas’ are a fun twist on the regular lahmajoun recipe you may be more familiar with,” says Janelle Leatherwood, founder of the Stuffed Grape Leaf blog ([www.thestuffedgrapeleaf.com](http://www.thestuffedgrapeleaf.com)). “This winter, I was lucky enough to belong to a produce co-op where I was able to purchase pomegranates in bulk at a great price. I have been looking for ways to incorporate pomegranates into my meals. And I always love anything dressed up with pine nuts, even if they are one of the most expensive ingredients you can buy. I keep them in my freezer to preserve them as long as possible.”

“All of my best memories growing up centered around holidays and food. A coffee table filled to the brim with appetizers was center stage at these gatherings. Armenian string cheese, hummus and pita bread, basturma and sarma were Armenian favorites as well as many American-influenced appetizers such as shrimp and cocktail sauce, 7-layer dip and See’s candy chocolates. It became quite the challenge to save any room in my stomach for the actual dinner meal, but I wouldn’t have had it any other way,” she adds.



Roll dough to 1/8 inch thick and cut 3-inch circles with a glass or cookie cutter.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 batch of Heavenly Armenian Pita Bread Dough\*
- 1 lb. ground meat (beef, lamb or turkey)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (add more if using lean meat)
- 2 medium onions, finely diced (strain out water)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 1/2 teaspoons allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup labneh cheese (or strained Greek yogurt)
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon sumac (optional)
- 1 cup pomegranate seeds
- 1/2 cup pine nuts, toasted in butter

### PREPARATION:

Use the bread dough of your choice. (“I recommend using a half a batch of Heavenly Armenian Pita Bread. You could also use a crescent roll dough for a more buttery taste. I was craving a healthy snack when I made these, so I used Homemade Whole Wheat Pita Bread and paired it up with extra-lean ground turkey. This is a great option for a healthy snack, but if I was preparing this as an appetizer for guests, I might want to stick with the white Armenian Pita Bread and pair it with an 85/15 ground meat/fat content for a richer flavor,” says Janelle.)

Finely dice the onions or process them in a food processor. Mince the garlic as well or include them in the food processor. Drain excess water from the diced onions in a fine mesh sieve. Combine raw ground meat, onions, lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, labneh, tahini and spices in a bowl. Stir thoroughly. Add pomegranate seeds, and stir until combined.

Roll dough to 1/8 inch thick and cut 3-inch circles with a glass or cookie cutter.

Brush a little olive oil over the dough. Then top each piece of dough with a teaspoon of meat mixture and spread thinly over the whole top. Place about one dozen lahmajoun on a greased cookie sheet.

Bake at 450°F for 6-7 minutes on a lower rack and 6-7 minutes on an upper rack. Check to make sure meat is browned, but be careful not to overcook dough. Sprinkle baked lahmajoun with pine nuts toasted in melted butter. Serve warm with fresh parsley, fresh mint, a dollop of labneh or Greek yogurt, and fresh lemon wedges, if desired.

\*See Heavenly Armenian Pita Bread: <https://thestuffedgrapeleaf.com/armenian-pita-bread/>

See Homemade Whole Wheat Pita Bread: <https://thestuffedgrapeleaf.com/home-made-whole-wheat-pita-bread/>

### About Janelle Leatherwood

“This blog was born from a deep connection I feel toward my Armenian roots. My mother’s parents are both Armenian, and my father was ‘adopted’ into the family. Connecting with friends and relatives worldwide and sharing cherished family recipes is a dream come true. I’m grateful to all who have shared their insights or contributed recipes.

While preparing traditional recipes often takes a great deal of time, I attempted to preserve the methods used by family so generations to come would know how to replicate these ‘labors of love.’ When possible, I suggest a few shortcuts (e.g. dough alternatives for lahmajoun) that you simply must try rather than not trying a recipe at all. To further balance things out, I also offer an array of simple (but scrumptious) recipes.

As a registered dietitian who takes a balanced approach to eating, I’m sharing a mix of recipes ranging from nutrient-packed to delightfully decadent (paklava anyone?) I also find that Armenian, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern foods such as those featured on this blog are some of the healthiest and tastiest foods around. So, thank you for joining me here. I’m excited to share this journey with you.” - Janelle Leatherwood, MS, RD.

See Chef Kamal Al-Faqih’s Pomegranate Beef and Cheese Pies (Sfiha Lahm) recipe at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyFT\\_FUu1SQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyFT_FUu1SQ)

For Chef Kamal Al-Faqih’s falafel YouTube video, go to: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfDYKgiJ\\_JU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfDYKgiJ_JU)

See: “Food Brings People Together Across All Borders” at: [https://medium.com/@janelle\\_24904/food-brings-people-together-across-all-borders-6bbebb335eea](https://medium.com/@janelle_24904/food-brings-people-together-across-all-borders-6bbebb335eea)

For this recipe, go to: <https://thestuffedgrapeleaf.com/pomegranate-and-pine-nut-lahmajoun/>

For Armenian recipes, see: <https://thestuffedgrapeleaf.com/category/armenian-recipes/>





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Books

## New Book on American University of Armenia To Be Presented at Western Diocese

BURBANK — On February 27, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, in collaboration with the American University of Armenia (AUA), will host a special reception and book signing for Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian's new book, *From Earthquake Tragedy to Beacon of Light: The Story of the American University of Armenia*.

AUA co-founder and President Emeritus Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian served at AUA in various capacities, including Founding Dean of Engineering (1991-2007), Interim Provost (2011-2012), and President (2014-2019, 2022-2023).

His book, published by the AUA, tells the story of the university from its conceptualization after the Spitak earthquake in 1988 to its founding in 1991 under extremely challenging conditions, and its remarkable growth and advancement over the past three decades.

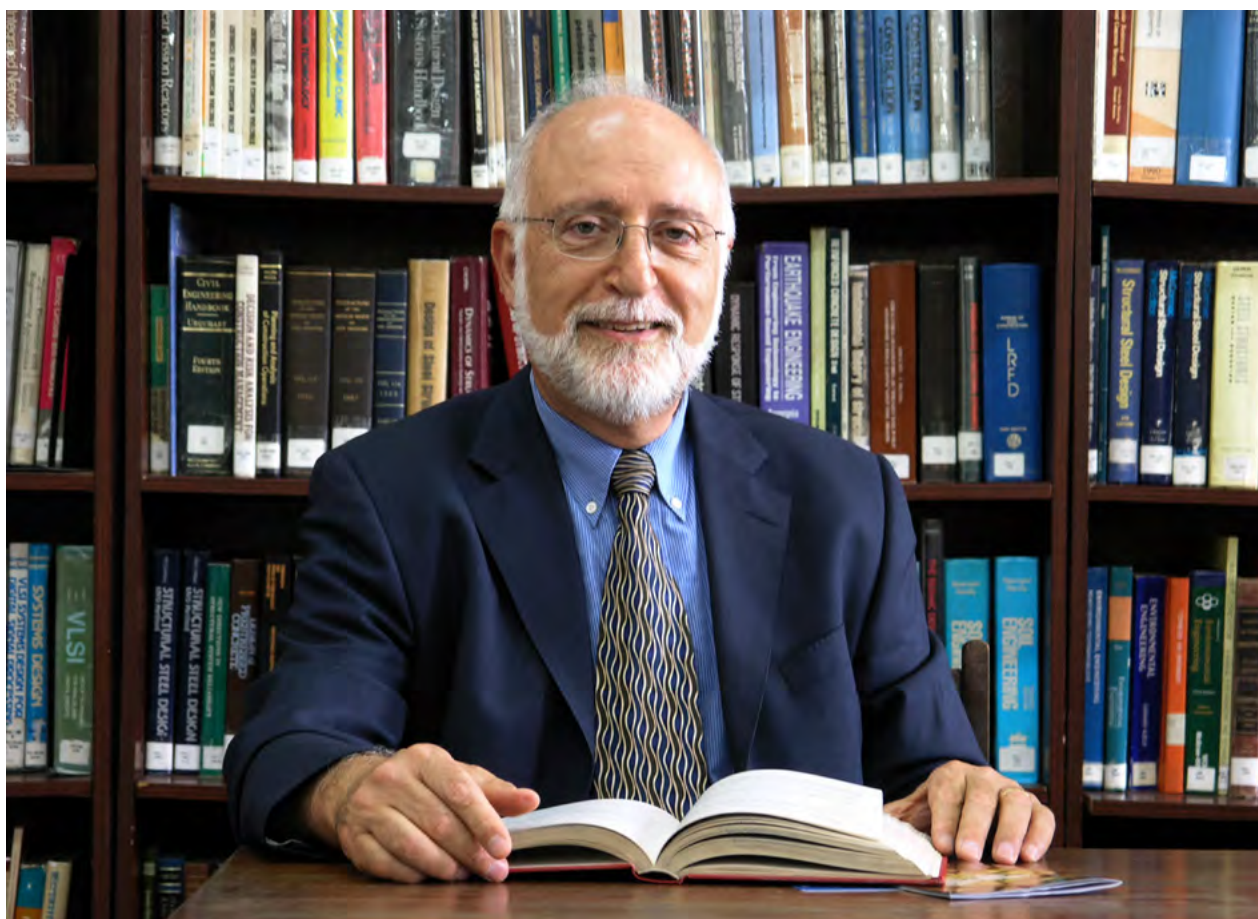
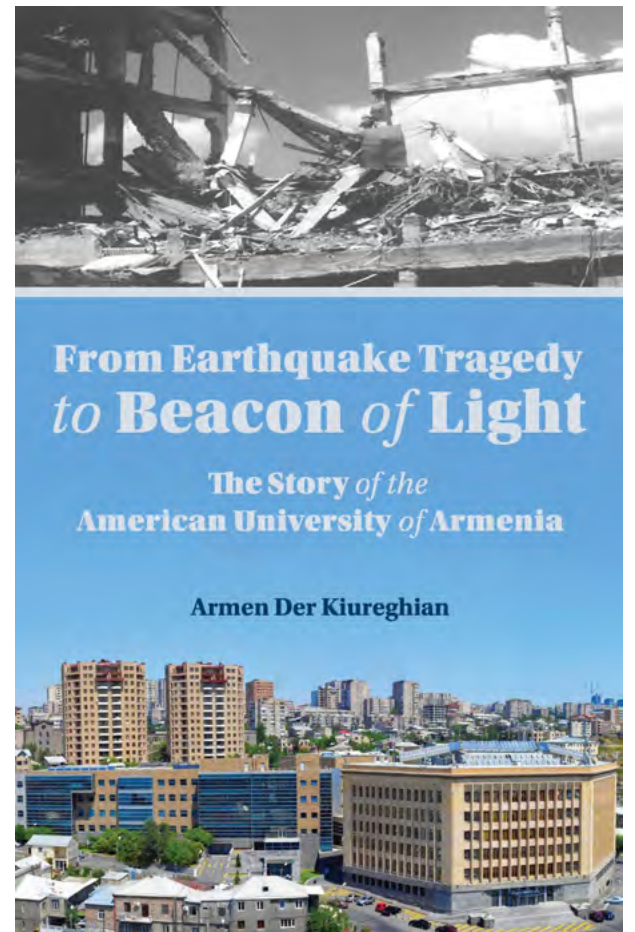
It also tells the story of how AUA became affiliated

with the University of California, and how it came to be accredited by one of the highly recognized American accrediting agencies. In addition to Der Kiureghian's memories, the writing relies on archival documents, including reports by other AUA presidents, minutes of various meetings, correspondence within and outside the University, newspaper articles, program review reports, strategic planning reports, and reviews by outside organizations.

The presentation will take place in the Hampar Hall of the Western Diocese, located at 3325 N Glenoaks Blvd., at 5:30 p.m., followed by a wine and appetizer reception.

Program highlights will include a discussion of the book by Dr. Der Kiureghian and AUA trustee Suzy Antounian, as well as a brief musical performance. AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian will offer remarks, followed by a benediction from Archbishop Derderian. Members of the AUA Board of Trustees will also be present.

Copies of the book will be available for purchase at



Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian

the event, and a book signing will take place at the close of the program. All proceeds from the book sales will benefit AUA.

Registration is required to attend as capacity is limited. Please RSVP by February 21, by contacting the AUA Office of Development at [development@aua.am](mailto:development@aua.am).

Der Kiureghian is Taisei Professor of Civil Engineering Emeritus of the University of California, Berkeley. He was born in New Julfa, Isfahan, Iran, and attended local Armenian schools. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in civil engineering from Tehran University and his PhD in structural engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

His teaching and research are in the areas of risk and reliability of constructed facilities, stochastic structural dynamics, earthquake engineering, and engineering decision making. He has authored more than 400 publications, including over 130 in archival journals. Among other awards, he is a recipient of the American Society of Civil Engineer's Walter L. Huber Civil Engineering Research Prize, Alfred M. Freudenthal Medal, Thomas A. Middlebrooks Award, and George Winter Medal. For his efforts in advancing education in Armenia, he was awarded the Movses Khorenatsi Medal by the Government of Armenia and the Saint Sahak-Saint Mesrob Medal by His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians.

Der Kiureghian is a Distinguished Alumnus of both Tehran University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, an elected foreign member of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, and an elected member of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering.

## Naghash Ensemble to Tour US on 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

NAGHASH, from page 13

In Hodian's compositions, ancient Armenian sacred texts, such as the evocative poems of exiled medieval priest Mkrtych Naghash, are woven into a fabric of sound that draws on a diverse set of influences. As Armenia's most celebrated composer, Tigran Mansurian, aptly put it, the music of the Naghash Ensemble is "the sound of ancient Armenia reinvented for the 21st century."

"Songs of Wisdom" draws inspiration from another Armenian medieval poet, Kostandin Erznkatsi, whose writings, filled with admonitions and sorrow, pushed Hodian to explore new musical terrain. These new compositions are more rhythmic, intense, and emotionally charged but retain the haunting melancholy that defines so much of Armenian sacred and folk music. This shift in style comes not only from the text but from a decade of creative evolution, during which the ensemble has honed its distinctive voice on stages across Europe and the world.

The Naghash Ensemble members are Hasmik Baghdasaryan (soprano), Tatevik Movsesyan (soprano), Shahane Zalyan (alto), Harutyun Chkolyan (duduk), Aramays Nikoghosyan (oud), Tigran Hovhannisyan (dhol), John Hodian (piano/composer).

To find out more, visit [www.naghashensemble.com](http://www.naghashensemble.com).



# Valda Salmiņa

## 'I Lived with Narekatsi's Texts for 15 Years'

LATVIAN, from page 13

great success. Our Latvian Literature Platform, which supports and advocates for translators of Latvian literature, organizes annual workshops in Jurmala and deserves much praise.

Relatively little has been translated from Armenian into Latvian. During the Soviet era, Armenian texts were usually translated from Russian. For instance, Hrant Matevosyan's short story collection *Trees*, published under the title *Mother Goes to Marry Her Son*, is available in a wonderful translation by Anna Ozola-Sakse (1899–1996). This edition was published in 1985 and includes the now-famous story *The Buffalo*, which was staged in Yerevan by Narine Grigoryan. Today, the practice of translating from an intermediary language is no longer preferred, and we strive to translate works directly from the original. The first direct translations from Armenian were done by the experienced translator Silvija Ķuze (1921–1984), who learned Armenian



by herself and even began compiling an Armenian-Latvian dictionary. Her translation of Hovhannes Tumanyan's *Gikor* was published during the Soviet years.

Armenian poetry has also been translated by Māris Čaklais. The selection of poems by Paruyr Sevak, translated based on a line-by-line translation by Alexander Topchyan, is particularly valuable.

When I returned from Armenia in 1989, I began publishing my translations, which appeared in various periodicals. If I recall correctly, together with you, Artsvi, we created a list of Armenian literature works translated into Latvian, available online. This list now needs updating. Few works have been published as standalone books. Among them are my translations of *The Book of Lamentation* by Grigor Narekatsi, *Fairy Tales* by Hovhannes Tumanyan, and the short story collection *The Cat of Jesus* by modern writer Grig.

Finding a publisher for translations is challenging, as the competition for funding is high. Currently, we have submitted applications for the translation of at least two works, and we hope that at least one will receive funding.

**You have translated the greatest and most difficult Armenian poet of all time,**

**Grigor Narekatsi, into Latvian. I assume that it was extremely difficult, but also inspiring.**

I have lived with Narekatsi's texts for about 15 years. At the request of my colleagues, I published separate chapters. The process was challenging both in terms of language and content, but the outcome was rewarding. People were thrilled to read and listen to these texts, and they shared their delight with me. Thanks to Narekatsi's translation, I was able to establish connections with prominent Narekatsi researchers and translators such as Levon Boghos Zekiyan, Jean-Pierre Mahé, and others, who provided me with valuable additional literature. I even participated in two AEIA (International Association of Armenian Studies) conferences with the support of its members.

**Let's talk about a topic that may not be pleasant, but is worth addressing. You studied in Armenia during the Soviet era,**

**when society was closed here. The late Marytė Kontrimaitė, a Lithuanian translator of Armenian literature, recalled that it was difficult for a young Baltic girl to live in Yerevan at that time. I assume your experience must have been hard too.**

I don't want to go into more detail on this subject here. I can imagine what you're thinking. There were certainly difficult situations that put my safety in question. But I was very young and did not fully comprehend the risks. There were times when I cried to my parents, saying I would not return to Armenia. But my parents were firm: I had to finish my university studies.

**However, what positive memories do you have, and what did Armenia give you, besides the profession of an Armenologist?**

Living in Yerevan was interesting, but financially challenging because I was far from home. I loved the mountains, the nature, the vibrant colors, and especially the view of Mount Ararat. It was also difficult for me since I had just started learning the language. I was unable to establish lasting friendships with my classmates because I only joined them in my second year, by which point everyone had already formed close bonds. However, I had wonderful teachers, who took great care of me with genuine warmth and selflessness. Linguists Lusik Maksudyan and her daughter Mariam Kirakosyan worked separately with me in the spring of 1983, when I first came to Armenia. Lusik Maksudyan also helped me when I had to defend my diploma thesis. My teacher Arshaluys Papazyan was a classmate of one of our poets in Petersburg, and through him, we got acquainted. I had just learned the Armenian alphabet in Riga. We studied together at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences, where he was working at that time. We would read Koryun's *The Life of Mashtots* in contemporary Armenian and analyze the verb forms. I had to prepare thoroughly for each lesson, about six hours, so that I could read the text properly. Later, I always con-

sulted Arshaluys whenever I was preparing any report; her knowledge always amazed me and was trustworthy.

I also want to emphasize that I appreciated the Eastern calmness in the approach to life. I liked that people were not in a rush. I would watch how the elderly, holding their prayer beads, would walk in the parks. We, northerners, are always in a hurry, under stress.

Now, it seems that Yerevan has become a commercial city, at least the center...

**What are your plans for this year?**

I hope to secure funding for the translation of a work by a contemporary Armenian author. However, the selection of works for translation is usually done by the publishers, not by me.

I would also like to find an institution in Latvia that would be willing to publish the famous poet Rainis's article *The Most*

*Unfortunate Nation* about Armenians, with corrected Armenian names and data. The article contains many inaccuracies, as they were taken from the Russian manuscript. This article, which addresses the fate, history, and literature of the Armenians, was written in the Slobodsk exile, where Rainis met the Armenian intellectual Ashot Khumaryan, and together they conceived the idea of writing notes about Armenia. This article can be found in Armenian in the collection of Rainis' works published in Yerevan in 1959.

I received funding from the Ministry of Culture of Armenia to translate Hovik Afyan's book, *The Red*. I am happy to be able to practice Armenian.

Additionally, I would love to work on a project with Armenian partners, perhaps within the framework of the *Creative Europe* program...

# CALENDAR

## OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

### MASSACHUSETTS

**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 Atinikian 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 1 — Poon Paregentan ("Great Carnival") Dinner-Dance. Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. A terrific family evening of great food, music and dancing. Featuring the fabulous Ani Ensemble — Oud Virtuoso John Berberian; Dave Anisbigian, guitar and vocals; Art Chingris, Dumbeg; and Ara Jeknavorian, clarinet. Also featuring the latest dance tunes from Armenia and America Pop music by DJ Garen. Adults: \$35. Students: \$15. Children under 6: free. Paid reservation must be made by February 26 either on the church website, stsvartanantz.com, or by contacting Corie Horan, coriehoran@gmail.com.**

**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**

**APRIL 11 — Lecture by historian and author Dr. Elyse Semerdjian sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter. Semerdjian is the holder of the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marianne Mugar Chair of the Armenian Genocide Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide, Clark University. Her new book is called Remnants. 7 p.m., Friday, the Baikar Center, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. (Use Norseman Ave. entrance.) Free admission. Book signing. For info, email syogurtian@comcast.net.**

**APRIL 12 — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church presents a nostalgic concert by Marten Yorgantz and Meghedi Vocal Ensemble, artistic director Marina Margarian. If your child would like to perform on stage, they can audition to join Meghedi Children's Chorus every Saturday, 3.15 to 4.15 p.m. 200 Lexington St., Belmont. For registration and information, call 781-929-3415 or 781-439-3702.**

**APRIL 29-May 3 — 123rd Diocesan Annual Assembly & Clergy Conference April 29-May 3, 2025 hosted by Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael & St. Gabriel (Haverhill MA) Details to follow. Gala Banquet on Friday, May 2, open to the public, at the Hilton Boston Woburn 2 Forbes Rd., Woburn. For more information, visit https://www.hyepointearmenianchurch.org/**

**APRIL 29-May 3 — 123rd Diocesan Annual Assembly & Clergy Conference April 29-May 3, 2025 hosted by Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael & St. Gabriel (Haverhill MA) Details to follow. Gala Banquet on Friday, May 2, open to the public, at the Hilton Boston Woburn 2 Forbes Rd., Woburn. For more information, visit https://www.hyepointearmenianchurch.org/**

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



## COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN  
**MIRROR  
SPECTATOR**

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE  
UNITED STATES

## EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

## MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

## ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgriditchian) McKertich

## CONTRIBUTORS

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

## REGIONAL

## CORRESPONDENTS

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

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepiyan, Ken Martin

## VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

# What Issues Exist in Chinese-Armenian Relations?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Since establishing diplomatic ties, Armenia-China relations have evolved rapidly. Notably, China was among the few countries in the mid-1990s to provide Armenia with Typhoon missiles. Additionally, military cooperation has strengthened, enabling Armenian personnel to receive education in China. Armenia has effectively recognized China's expanding influence in international relations. Chinese and Armenian officials consistently stated that their bilateral relations were free of issues and that their positions on various international matters were either identical or closely aligned. This means that Armenia successfully established this exceptional partnership with a global superpower. However, due to certain actions taken by the current Armenian government, this partnership was somewhat undermined, driven by several factors.

Since the change of power in Armenia, Yerevan has shown no interest in the "Belt and Road" mega-project, despite high-level commitments, and has not engaged with it, indicating its opposition to China's initiative. This ambitious project is exceptionally important for China, and Beijing is collaborating closely with all potential partners.

Armenia still holds formal membership in the inactive Religious Freedom Alliance, which should not be confused with the International Religious Freedom Summit. Founded by former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as an anti-China initiative, the alliance has been dormant for over four years. But despite that, Armenia remains a member of this informal alliance.

Another important issue for China is Armenia's stance on Taiwan. Armenia officially recognizes China's territorial integrity, and while there are no statements against this claim, some actions warrant further scrutiny. Armenia recently hosted Taiwan's Minister of Economy, despite its commitment to avoiding direct

contact with Taiwanese officials. The Taiwan issue is highly sensitive for China, which strictly enforces the "One China" principle for all countries.

China has not publicly commented on these actions but has conveyed its dissatisfaction through other means. For nearly seven months, it has lacked an ambassador to Armenia, an unprecedented situation in Armenian-Chinese relations. This clearly sends a message — there are no coincidences in such matters. Beijing has numerous skilled diplomats ready to be sent to Yerevan at any time. Beijing is signaling to Yerevan that it will not accept disrespect from a major power.

At the same time, it indicates that if Armenia opts for this type of relationship, Beijing is willing to engage with Yerevan on that basis. Recently, Armenia's former ambassador to China,

Sergey Manasaryan, noted that the current stagnation in Armenian-Chinese relations stems from Armenia's low level of relations with Russia. He suggested that China's attitude toward Yerevan should be understood in the context of Armenia's ties with Russia.

In any case, we are witnessing how Yerevan is attempting to cool its relations with both Beijing and Moscow in order to move closer to the West and the United States. How-

ever, it would be wise for Armenia's leaders to understand that when the great powers compete with one another, the primary role of smaller states should not be to play on their contradictions but rather to ensure that they are not caught underfoot in this geopolitical struggle.

(Suren Sargsyan is an expert on US foreign policy, researcher and author. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University, American University of Armenia and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Suren Sargsyan is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan.)



## Swiss-Armenian Group Reacts to Statements By Prime Minister of Armenia in Zurich

The Council of Swiss Armenian and Armenophile Associations (CAAS) expresses its deep concern about the statements made by the prime minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, during his recent meeting with leaders of the Swiss Armenian diaspora in Zurich. These statements, which we consider controversial, undermine the memory of the Armenian Genocide and raise legitimate questions about the Armenian government's commitment to a full understanding of this crime against humanity and its international recognition.

For more than half a century, recognition of the Armenian Genocide has been a priority for the descendants of the victims and for organizations working for historical justice. As the Armenian diaspora in Switzerland, we believe that minimizing or relativizing the importance of this recognition is incompatible with the expectations of the worldwide Armenian community.

We recall that the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is based on indisputable historical facts confirmed by hundreds of researchers, academic institutions and several states, including Switzerland, which officially recognized the Arme-

nian Genocide in 2003 through its National Council, but most importantly by the Republic of Armenia itself. This struggle for recognition transcends political divisions and embodies a universal quest for justice.

CAAS urges the Armenian government and its representatives to live up to their responsibilities. Recognition of the Armenian Genocide must never be compromised by political or diplomatic considerations and must not allow opponents of the Armenian nation to use such statements for negative purposes. We call on the prime minister to clarify his remarks and unequivocally reaffirm his commitment to international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Should the Armenian government persist in abandoning the struggle for international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, it would be the duty of CAAS, the diaspora in general, and all allies of this cause to continue this historic struggle without respite. The memory of the victims, the honor of their descendants, and the fundamental principles of justice and truth demand that this struggle never be abandoned, regardless of the political circumstances or obstacles encountered.

We also call upon the Armenian diaspora and friends of the Armenian people to remain united and vigilant in the face of any attempt at revisionism or abandonment of the fundamental values that animate our common cause. The memory of the victims, the dignity of their descendants, and the lessons of history cannot be sacrificed in the name of short-term interests.

Like the Armenian government, we seek a just and lasting peace in the region. In particular, the CAAS was established to express our solidarity with the Republic of Armenia, especially with regard to its national security and territorial integrity. Therefore, it is imperative that the diaspora and Armenia remain united and consistent in their commitment to international law, justice and historical truth at this difficult time. CAAS reiterates its unwavering commitment to the recognition and prevention of genocide and will continue to work with its partners in Switzerland and internationally to combat the commission of new crimes, preserve memory and promote justice.

Council of Armenian and Armenophile Associations of Switzerland (CAAS), Geneva, January 29, 2025



## COMMENTARY

# George Orwell on Today's Armenia

By Vahan Zanojan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

*"Erase a people's past, and you control their future."*  
— George Orwell

The collective understanding of its history has always been central to the survival of the Armenian nation. The past matters. History forges and strengthens identity. It not only sheds light on present realities but also forms the foundation on which a future compatible with its sense of national identity can be built. Tampering with "the past," the way a nation collectively understands, remembers, and identifies with it, is not just an inconsequential exercise in academic historical revisionism. It derails that nation's aspirations and corrupts its vision of the future.

"Erase a people's past, and you control their future," rings true today as we pay attention to what is going on in Armenia, even though that sentence, while widely attributed to George Orwell, is in fact an interpretation and rewording of a different statement made by him. The original Orwell phrase is: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past." 1984, Book 1, Chapter 3, page 34.

If the political power that controls the present wants, or needs, or is forced to change the aspirations of a nation regarding its future, it must first revise how that nation perceives and understands its past. This can work in either direction — either over-glorify the past and raise the bar of national aspirations to unrealistic levels, or question the very foundations of national historical rights and lower that bar to equally unrealistic and untenable levels. Armenia's neighbors have displayed an insatiable appetite for the former, whether in the form of Turkey's compulsion to return to the glory of the Ottoman Empire, or Azerbaijan's aggressive and expansionist "Western Azerbaijan" rhetoric. There have also been some "maximalist" Armenians in this category who dream to reclaim Tigran the Great's empire.

Today's official Yerevan squarely falls in the second category. It questions and denies the nation's own understanding of its history, in order to render palatable a much more degraded vision of the future than the nation would have accepted had it maintained its true sense of identity.

There is a long chain of examples of how the government in Yerevan has tried to reshape the past in order to draw a new map for the future. Those who live in Armenia or follow the interviews and pronouncements of government officials in the Armenian language are probably aware of each loop in that chain (and those who don't will probably not fully understand the context in which the points of this article are made and may even question what the whole fuss is about).

The latest in these series of blows to the collective national understanding came on January 24, during the prime minister's meeting with members of the Swiss-Armenian community in Zurich, when he questioned (<https://fb.watch/xvgLJaOxHX/>, minutes 19:20-20:20) the historic circumstances of the Genocide, stating bluntly that "we have to return to our truths, [ask] whether that which we consider truth is in fact the truth. [As] The most important part of our identity, we need to return to the history of the Armenian Genocide and we should understand what happened, why it happened, and how did we form our understanding of what happened, through whom did we form our understanding, and how did it happen that in 1939 there was no Armenian Genocide agenda, and how then in 1950 the Armenian Genocide agenda appeared."

Forget for a moment that the term "genocide" was coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, and that it could not have been on any agenda in 1939, even though the significance of that date escapes me. Forget also that the Armenian Genocide is one of the best documented historic events considering the means available at the time. Both foreign (including Turkish) and Armenian historians and legal experts, diplomatic eyewitnesses and missionaries, Turkish archives and trials, as well as countless pages of survivor accounts leave no doubt about "what happened and why it happened." The prime minister could easily have found the answers to all his questions in the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute right there in Yerevan.

The more significant point here is the fact that questioning the Genocide by the head of state of the Republic of Armenia, when 32 countries ([www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition\\_countries.html](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition_countries.html)) officially recognize it,

cannot be explained in any way other than to push a future agenda on the Republic of Armenia which would be anathema to one of the most central Armenian national causes.

The prime minister has since retracted/explained his comments on the Genocide, but that does not change the arguments, analyses and conclusions of this article. The Zurich pronouncement was just one loop in a long chain of public statements which challenge the nation's collective understanding of its history and sense of identity. These are publicly available, and some of them are referred to below.

The most common justification given (and often accepted by many) for this policy is national security — do not provoke the enemy, do not take the bait when the enemy tries to provoke you, do not proclaim any territorial claims from any of your neighbors, declare that you will not attempt to recover the over 200 sq. kms. of sovereign Armenian territory occupied by Azerbaijan by military force, do not demand the release of your prisoners in Baku nor put the issue of their release on any negotiating agenda, do not talk about the right of Artsakh's population to return to their homes, deny the existence of a historic Western Armenia, even discard Mount Ararat from the national emblem lest it be misconstrued as a territorial demand from Turkey.

Given the current balance of military power in the region, some of these policies, such as not provoking a premature unequal war, are wise. Armenia is surrounded by aggressive and hostile neighbors, who are now more than ever used to conducting military aggression with impunity. Avoiding war is also politically prudent because it is popular within a war-fatigued, demoralized and depoliticized public.

But much more is being conceded under the banner of national security than is necessary to avoid provoking another war. These concessions have disastrous immediate and long-term implications for both the population of Armenia and the Armenian nation at large. Questioning the Genocide cannot possibly be a national security tool. Granted, the Republic of Armenia does not have the power today to exact a recognition of the Genocide from Turkey, nor was the meeting with the Swiss Armenian community the place to make such a demand. But, listening to the entire video of the event, it is clear that there was no reason to even bring up the subject in the first place. It was brought up because *it afforded an opportunity to question the validity of the Genocide.*

Abandoning Armenian citizens held in Baku jails also cannot be part of a national security strategy; quite the contrary, it further emboldens the enemy and confirms that its illegal actions will continue to go unpunished. Declaring that Armenia has no territorial claims from its neighbors is one thing, equating the historical reality of a "Western Armenia" with Aliyev's fallacy of "Western Azerbaijan" an entirely different thing. A millennia-old national symbol is not a territorial claim. Removing the word "national" from various national cultural institutions, such as the National Library and the National Opera, has nothing to do with avoiding war.

The national security argument simply does not hold water. We are in an Orwellian world of downgrading our past, national identity and history, with the aim of lowering national aspirations to a level where a sanitized and degraded future would seem normal and become acceptable.

One of the most profound and dangerous implications (in fact, aims) of this policy is to drive a wedge between the nation and the state. Official Yerevan makes no qualms about the separation of the two. The public pronouncements, both in Zurich and in other interviews (e.g. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIE-AcwQWfc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIE-AcwQWfc)), are very clear: The Armenian Motherland is *only* the [current] state; The Armenian people/population (ժողովուրդ) are the citizens of Armenia. The Armenian nation is all ethnic Armenians who are not citizens of the Republic of Armenia, and the state has nothing to do with them. National history and aspirations are not the history and aspirations of the Republic of Armenia. Armenian history is irrelevant to the history of Armenia. In short, the Republic of Armenia is just a state, not a *nation-state*.

Aside from not advancing national security, these policies cannot in any way be considered to be part of an Armenian political agenda, whether at the national level or the state level. The Lemkin Institute issued a detailed statement ([www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/](http://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/)

statement-on-the-continued-denialist-rhetoric-of-armenian-prime-minister-nikol-pashinyan) on January 30 calling the prime minister's pronouncement a further echo of "Turkish denialist narratives." Aside from denial of the Genocide, sterilizing the Armenian state from its national and historical content has been on the Turkish regional political agenda since the First Republic and continues today.

As I have argued elsewhere ([mirrorspectator.com/2024/02/01/defining-nation-and-state/](http://mirrorspectator.com/2024/02/01/defining-nation-and-state/)), the Armenian people do not need just a state; they need a *nation-state*. Most of the current citizens of Armenia and members of the diaspora have much better options than the Republic of Armenia if all it had to offer was a non-national state where they could live in peace and earn a living. If the Armenian state decides to rid itself of its national content, it will no longer have anything to offer to the Armenian population either in Armenia or in the rest of the world. In this sense, abandoning the nation is the first step toward the demise of the state itself, even if somehow it managed to secure its physical borders.

By the same token, the Republic of Armenia cannot be defended without the resources of the entire nation that gave birth to it. This should be obvious to anyone who takes a careful look at the map and the Armenian nation's history. National interests and state interests are not mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary; one cannot be served without serving the other.

Even though today's government outright rejects that obvious premise, it has become abundantly clear that *it is unproductive to keep arguing the point*. At the cost of being somewhat repetitive, I will paraphrase some of the arguments I made in another article ([mirrorspectator.com/2024/02/27/it-is-time-to-end-the-30-year-holiday-of-the-armenian-diaspora/](http://mirrorspectator.com/2024/02/27/it-is-time-to-end-the-30-year-holiday-of-the-armenian-diaspora/)) on the Armenian diaspora. The "nation," in its broadest sense, encompassing elements and resources of the Armenian nation both in Armenia and around the globe, must reorganize itself to pursue both national and state interests in a parallel universe to that of the government in Yerevan. This would *not be* a competitive effort, even though it would require *going around* some of the policies and pronouncements of official Yerevan. It would be a complementary effort, because the nation can no longer rely on the state to defend its own state interests, let alone those of the broader nation, and because the Armenian nation is a legitimate stakeholder in the Armenian state, whether today's government admits it or not.

Reorganizing the nation without the direct participation and collaboration of the state is a very tall order indeed, especially when many continue to harbor unfounded hopes that relying on the state will eventually achieve the same result. It requires uncharacteristic cooperation and a dispassionate national vision. The traditional diaspora structures are not equipped to handle this task. A new initiative must emerge which includes and incorporates the traditional structures but goes beyond them with a pragmatic vision and an equally pragmatic action plan, whereby the resources of the global Armenian nation are harnessed to a clear, unified goal.

The goals of such an initiative would be 1) to enhance the economic development and security infrastructure of Armenia; 2) to establish global political leverage on par with the challenges of the Armenian state; 3) to ensure that Armenia develops and prospers as a nation-state, in the most comprehensive sense of the word. Pursuing these objectives entails several interrelated activities, which the state alone either cannot or is unwilling to accomplish, but the nation can. These include (revisiting the concluding thoughts from my article at [mirrorspectator.com/2024/02/27/it-is-time-to-end-the-30-year-holiday-of-the-armenian-diaspora/](http://mirrorspectator.com/2024/02/27/it-is-time-to-end-the-30-year-holiday-of-the-armenian-diaspora/)):

— Restore and reinforce a sense of national identity and common history, by reviving and invigorating the Armenian educational institutions throughout the world, where ideally a "common" national Armenian education is imparted, in addition to a competitive modern education.

— Have a seat at the table of global economic interests by creating an effective and globally connected Armenian business network.

— Have a say in shaping the policy-making mindset around the world by cultivating entrenched professional and diplomatic relations with key international NGOs and think tanks.

*continued on next page*



## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Pashinyan Rejects Committing the Crime of Armenian Genocide Denial

Ever since Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's disgraceful attempt to raise unnecessary questions about the facts of the Armenian Genocide to a group of Swiss-Armenians in Zurich last month, he and his blind followers have been making excuses for his deplorable remarks.

Pashinyan casually told the Swiss-Armenian group: "We need to also return to the history of the Armenian Genocide. We need to understand what happened and why?" It is shocking that 110 years after the Armenian Genocide, the Prime Minister of Armenia pretends not to know "what happened and why." I don't think it is because of his lack of knowledge. He knows exactly what he is saying and why.

He continued with more fabricated questions: "How is it that in 1939 there was no agenda for the Armenian Genocide? And how is it that in 1950 the Armenian Genocide agenda appeared? And how did we perceive it, through whom did we perceive it?" Pashinyan must be told that long before 1950 and 1939, all the way back in 1921, the Catholicos of All Armenians Kevork V Surenlyants designated April 24 as the Day of Remembrance for the victims of 'Meds Yeghern.'

Pashinyan has made similar questionable statements in the past. To confuse the public, he regularly denies his earlier statements and claims that he was misunderstood. One thing is sure, Azeris and Turks were elated that the Prime Minister of Armenia agrees with them on "questioning the genocide."

Justifiably, Pashinyan was condemned by prominent Armenians and organizations all over the world. He was harshly criticized by Catholicos Karekin II and Aram I, various historians and experts on the Armenian Genocide, the Lemkin Institute, and Armenian organizations in Switzerland, Belgium and Armenia.

Given the fact that Pashinyan has denigrated all sacred symbols of the Armenian nation, from Mt. Ararat to Armenia's coat of arms, and has repeatedly claimed that commemorations of the Armenian Genocide were prompted by external forces, meaning the Soviet Union, he has come very close to denying the facts of the Armenian Genocide which is a crime in Armenia punishable by 2-5 years of imprisonment.

Pashinyan's statement, as to why the Armenian Genocide was not on the agenda in 1939 and that it appeared on the agenda only in 1950, has a very simple explanation. There is no need for conspiracy theories. After the demise of Stalin's dictatorial regime, which punished manifestations of nationalism with imprisonment, exile and even execution, the repressive environment began to soften gradually which allowed the construction of the Sardarabad

and Armenian Genocide Memorials in Soviet Armenia.

In the meantime, both prior to 1939 and after 1950, Armenians in the Diaspora commemorated the Armenian Genocide, asking for its recognition and the return of occupied Western Armenia from Turkey. Memoranda and petitions were presented to the United Nations and major powers in the late 1940's. Tens of thousands of Armenians marched in various Middle Eastern, European and American cities demanding their historical rights.

On August 20, 2009, Pashinyan wrote in his Prison Diary: the mechanics of genocide and reposted on his Facebook page last week: "Traditional Armenian thinking equates the concept of 'genocide' with the hostile actions of the outside world, 'the Turk,' meaning, the enemy. The new Armenian thinking tries to perceive the phenomenon through self-realization, tries to perceive the internal causes of the phenomenon, which are hidden behind the genocided people's thinking, meaning, our own thinking." Strangely, Pashinyan shifts the blame for the genocide from the perpetrators to the victims.

There are two key documents that I would like to bring to Pashinyan's attention:

1) The law adopted by the Supreme Council of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic on Nov. 22, 1988: We "condemn the 1915 Genocide of the Armenians in Ottoman Turkey as a grave crime against humanity, and declare April 24 as a day of remembrance for the Armenian victims."

2) Article 136 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia: "Public denial, justification, propaganda or belittling the danger of Genocide or Crimes against Humanity:

a) Public denial, justification, propaganda or belittling the danger of Genocide or Crimes against Humanity, where those have been committed on the basis of racial background, skin color, national or ethnic origin or religious background, for the purpose of provoking hatred, discrimination or violence against a person or a group of persons —shall be punished by a fine in the amount of twenty-fold to forty-fold, or public works for a term of one hundred fifty hours to two hundred fifty hours, or by restriction of liberty for a maximum term of three years, or by short-term imprisonment for a term of one to two months, or by imprisonment for a maximum term of four years.

b) The act provided for in part (a) of this Article, which has been committed:

i) through publicly exhibited artworks, mass media or using information or communication technologies;

ii) by use of official or service authority or influence conditioned thereby — shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of two to five years.

Regrettably, Pashinyan's statements parallel the denialist strategy of the Turkish government. Turks raise similar questions to cast doubt on the veracity of the Armenian Genocide.

Because Armenia's judicial system is currently under Pashinyan's control, no judge will dare to find him guilty. But when he is no longer in power, an independent judge will punish him for violating the law on genocide denial.

## George Orwell on Today's Armenia

from previous page

— Keep up with and have a presence in the technological and AI developments around the world.

— Project the soft power of Armenian history and culture worldwide, by launching a professional and consistent information campaign.

—In order to facilitate the above, establish an elaborate global information gathering and analyzing system, covering both Armenian communities and non-Armenian entities that impact Armenia.

Ideally, it should be the state that assumes responsibility of coordinating an effort of this magnitude, acting as the magnet to draw all the resources of the nation and harnessing them to a common vision. But all four governments of the Third Republic have proved to be incapable of that task, with the current one refuting even the premise of such a mission, let alone accepting the responsibility for it.

Daunting as the task outlined above may seem in light of present realities, the Armenian nation has *all* the necessary resources, capabilities and global reach to accomplish it. It remains to muster the political will, the vision and the organizational acumen to initiate the effort.

(Vahan Zanoian is a global energy and security specialist. Over a span of 35 years, he has advised 15 different governments on economic development policy, energy sector strategy, national security, and global competitiveness. He has also served as a consultant to numerous international and national oil companies, banks, and other public and private organizations.)

## Letter to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

The following is a letter dated February 3 to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan from Peter Balakian, the author of *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*, which was a *New York Times* Best Seller and winner of the Raphael Lemkin Prize. Balakian is the recipient of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. He teaches at Colgate University.

Dear Prime Minister Pashinyan:

Having read your remarks as they are quoted in the Armenian American and diasporan press, I would like to offer an answer to the question you asked: "How is it that in 1939 there was no Armenian genocide [recognition] agenda and how is it that in 1950 the Armenian genocide agenda emerged?"

The Armenian Genocide as a historic event evolved into a more public presence after World War II because of the evolution of a global culture of human rights. Raphael Lemkin developed the concept of genocide as a crime in international law and coined the term "genocide," around 1943. He used the Nazi genocide of the Jews of Europe and the Turkish genocide of the Armenians of Ottoman Turkey as foundational events for his thinking. It was the great legal scholar Lemkin who coined the term Armenian Genocide at that time.

After the war, the Nuremberg Trials did a great deal to impress in public consciousness the concept of genocide as an international crime. In the post war decades, the emergence of a human rights culture evolved rapidly. The decolonization movements across the globe were crucial, and in the United States a human rights culture was accelerated because of the African American Civil Rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the second wave of feminism, and a new awareness about Nazi concentration camps and the Holocaust. In this new environment the Armenian Genocide became a more prominent history, and Armenians worldwide responded to that with their own necessary movements for acknowledgement and justice. 1965 was a

crucial year for this.

In the face of the continued full-scale Turkish government propaganda that sought to erase this history, blame the victims, and coerce global opinion, Armenian communities were challenged, and the trauma of the event was exacerbated. Genocide scholars have studied Turkish denialism as an extreme and virulent case and have noted the following: "the denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide because it seeks to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators and because it sends the message that genocide can be carried out without consequence and demands no accountability."

As the first case of genocide carried out in a modern modality, the Armenian Genocide is taught as an important history in the curricula in the US and in other nations around the world. Scholars continue to study the impact of Turkish denialism and the necessary Armenian quest for some forms of justice and they regard this as a significant ethical issue with many ramifications for many cultures and ethnic groups who have been subjected to such violence.

Mr. Pashinyan, it would be useful for you to acquaint yourself with some of the major scholarship on the Armenian Genocide including scholarship that deals with the social and psychological impact of denialism on both Armenians and Turks today. It might be more helpful if you asked Armenians, in the Republic and in the diaspora, what kinds of creative and constructive responses they might formulate in response to the continued violence of the Turkish government's propaganda campaign of denial. I understand that you are trying to find ways to deal with Turkey in this very fraught moment. And, I can imagine how difficult this is. But, situating the Armenian Genocide in a broader human rights context and challenging Armenians to think creatively about this predicament might be a good place to start. As you know well, the voices of the people matter.

Sincerely,  
Peter Balakian



# 2024 DONORS OF TCA SPONSOR A TEACHER PROGRAM



SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2001, THE TCA SPONSOR A TEACHER PROGRAM  
HAD RAISED \$864,000 AND REACHED OUT TO 7,558 TEACHERS AND  
SCHOOL STAFF IN ARMENIA AND KARABAGH

Sarkis M. Nazarian	Little Rock	AR	250
Vasken Demirjian	Laguna Beach	CA	500
Maral Voskian	Northridge	CA	150
Zarouhi Der Mugardechian	Burbank	CA	100
Arsavir & Silva Andonian	Huntington Beach	CA	500
Marie-Louise Yangoyan	San Jose	CA	100
Kaspar H. Gazarian	Monrovia	CA	240
Mathew & Lisa Natcharian	Avon	CT	250
Silva A. Karachorlu	Naples	FL	250
Mariam Tatosian	Evanston	IL	240
H. O. Doumanian	Chicago	IL	700
Sonya & Ara Hacet	Prospect	KY	1000
Sonia Iskandarian	Watertown	MA	500
Armen Adourian	Burlington	MA	150
Lucille Ajemian	Dover	MA	240
Geri Lyn Ajemian	Watertown	MA	240
C. & M. Garabedian	Shrewsbury	MA	480
Roxanne Etmekjian, Nerses Joubanian	West Newton	MA	100
Michael & Kathleen Casey	Andover	MA	10
Sona M Kazanjian	Tewksbury	MA	200
Sonia Iskandarian	Watertown	MA	1000
Zareh & Hasmig Maserejian	Newton	MA	50
Seth & Tina Bilazarian	Concord	MA	150
Kegham K. Sherikian	Watertown	MA	240
Margrit and Nishan Atinizian	Winchester	MA	1000
Elizabeth Ganjian	Watertown	MA	100
Vahe & Anni Bedian	Ashburnham	MA	480
Hrip & Harry Parsekian	Watertown	MA	480
Donald Morene	Boston	MA	1000
Aram Sirakian	Andover	MA	240
Barbara Soghigian	Middleton	MA	30
Jean Shapazian	Waltham	MA	100
Carolyn Atinizian	Winchester	MA	240
Nancy R. Kolligian	Watertown	MA	480
Adourian/Ohanyan	Concord	MA	240
John Dagdigian	Westford	MA	500
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Daghdigian	Harvard	MA	250
Dr. Myron & Ruth Allukian	Boston	MA	50
Dorothy Martiesian	West Newton	MA	240
Robert Odabashian	Bel Air	MD	500
Osep & Nadia Sarafian	Northville	MI	500
Suzanne Hagopian	West Bloomfield	MI	150
Sarah Dergazarian	Midland	MI	100
Kathryn Ossian	Bloomfield Hills	MI	240
Howard & Cathy Atesian	Bloomfield Hts.	MI	1000
Tekeyan Cultural Association	Detroit	MI	2,000
Detroit Armenian Women's Club	Farmington Hills	MI	600
Arman Derian	Hooksett	NH	240
Hagop Vartivarian	Mahwah	NJ	240
Gregory K. Aynedjian	Leonia	NJ	100
Takouhi Tarpinian	Old Tappan	NJ	250
Anne Anahid Shirinian-Orlando	Freehold	NJ	240
Andrew Chaglasian	Greenlawn	NY	240
Jack Seferian, Pat Jeff	Staten Island	NY	100
Alice Emirzayan/Costes	Troy	NY	480
Mihran Mooradian	Troy	NY	240
Fidelity Charitable	Cincinnati	OH	500
Mike Norehad	West Lake	OH	1000
Linda Babikian	Drexel Hill	PA	200
Alma Alabilikian	Philadelphia	PA	200
Dr. & Mrs. Mayis Seapan	Glen Mills	PA	240
Siroop & Maro Bedrosian	Houston	TX	500
Sarkis Satian	McLean	VA	700
Tomas Azarian	Plainfield	VT	200
Tomas Azarian	Calais	VT	200
Arshagouhi Ohanian	Brookfield	WI	50
Darren Paul Atesian	Beverly Hills,	MI	1500



## DONORS FROM CANADA

Paul Ahmaranian	\$750.00
Suzanne Benlian	650.00
Sarkis Ekizian	500.00
Filik Isik	500.00
Anthony Tatossian	400.00
Vahram Salibian	400.00
Isabelle Basmajian	400.00
Avedis Djihanian	250.00
Arek Manoukian	200.00
Chirac Manukian	170.00
Philip Isik (Lasale Canada)	1443.27

