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Armenian Genocide Recognition 'No Priority' For PM Pashinyan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has made it clear that Armenia no longer strives to get foreign countries and international bodies to recognize the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey.

“Our official position is that international recognition of the Armenian genocide is not among our foreign policy priorities today,” he told Turkish journalists in an interview published by his office late on Thursday, March 13.

What is more, Pashinyan questioned the wisdom of genocide resolutions adopted by the parliaments of dozens of nations and resented by Turkey, saying that they undermine stability in the region.

“When even very distant countries make such decisions and when enthusiasm or joy [in Armenia] from that decision fades, the next question arises: what do those decisions give us in our relations with our immediate neigh-



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan talks to Turkish journalists in Yerevan.

borhood?” he said: “When we have tensions in our immediate neighborhood, to what extent do those tensions contribute to stability, peace in our country, in our region, etc.?”

Pashinyan provoked a storm of criticism at home when he essentially questioned the genocide during a visit to Switzerland on January 24. Pashinyan said Armenians should “understand what happened” in 1915 and what prompted the subsequent campaigning for international recognition of the slaughter of some 1.5 million Armenians as genocide. see RECOGNITION, page 2



Armenia, Azerbaijan Agree on Peace Treaty

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to the terms of a peace treaty on March 13.

After Armenia accepted the two remaining elements of a peace deal from Azerbaijan, the latter laid out several formal requirements that Armenia must complete before the deal can be signed.

“As the next step, Azerbaijan expects that Armenia will amend its Constitution and ... eliminate claims against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan,” said Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov.

Bayramov added that in order to seal the deal, Armenia must also dissolve the Minsk Group, a 1992 format created under the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and co-headed by the U.S., Russia and France to resolve a conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh.

Meeting these demands could take some time, given that amending the constitution requires that a referendum be held.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has pledged to try to enact a new Armenian constitution through a referendum but this is unlikely to happen before June 2026.

The current Armenian Constitution’s preamble refers to a 1990 declaration of



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, left, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in 2024

independence, made while Armenia was still a part of the Soviet Union, which calls for the reunification of Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, which was then a part of Soviet Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan has argued that, as long as the claim to Karabakh remains enshrined in Armenian law, there will be a danger of governments after Pashinyan going

back on that declaration and relitigating its claims to Karabakh.

Pashinyan played down the issue, saying that “the constitution of the Republic of Armenia does not have territorial claims against Azerbaijan or any other country.”

Pashinyan hailed the agreement as an “important event,” saying Yerevan was “ready to begin discussions on the place and time for signing the peace agreement.”

“We believe this text is a compromise, as a peace agreement should be,” he told reporters.

see TREATY, page 4

Karabakh Armenians Warn Yerevan Against Dropping Lawsuits Against Baku

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Exiled activists from Nagorno-Karabakh have threatened to sue the Armenian government if it does withdraw its lawsuits filed against Azerbaijan since the 2020 Karabakh war.

The government announced plans to do so after accepting last week Azer-

baijan’s proposals regarding the two remaining articles of a draft peace treaty that were not yet agreed upon by the two sides. In particular, Yerevan agreed to the mutual withdrawal of international lawsuits filed by the two South Caucasus countries against each other. It had previously voiced reservations about such a move demanded by the Azerbaijani side. see LAWSUITS, page 2

European Parliament Urges Baku to Release Prisoners

YEREVAN (Jam-News) — On March 12, the European Parliament urgently discussed the resolution titled “The illegal detention of Armenian prisoners, including political leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the fabricated trials against them in Azerbaijan.” The resolution passed with 523 votes in favor, 3 against, and 84 abstentions.

The European Parliament’s resolution calls on Azerbaijan to immediately release Armenian prisoners. However, the document is non-binding and carries a recommendation rather than an obligation.

Miriam Lexmann, who is also a co-author of the resolution, emphasized that the EU aims for a strategic partnership with Azerbaijan. However, she added that “the Baku regime continues to threaten its neighbors and hinder efforts to achieve peace in the region.” She declared that the EU must defend its values, especially in the current geopolitical situation: see PRISONERS, page 5

Violinist Nuné Melikian Revives Legacy of Arno Babajanian

By Aram Arkun

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BELMONT, Mass. — Violinist Nuné Melikian captivated the audience at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) on March 6 with a lively introduction to the life and music of composer Arno Babajanian (1921-1983). The event was cosponsored by the Mashtots Chair of Arme-

nian Studies at Harvard University, the Friends of Armenian Culture and Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter.

Dr. Nuné Melikian is the author of *Arno Babajanian: An Armenian Beat in Soviet Time*, which is the first English-language book on this remarkable composer aimed at a broad audience. She is also the North American representative of the Arno Babajanian International see MELIKIAN, page 13

ARMENIA
Renters in Yerevan are Facing Volatile Market
Page 3



NEW YORK
14th Annual Mentoring Forum Offers Career Opportunities
Page 6



NEW YORK
Out of Egypt: Peggy Hinaekian and The Artistic Life
Page 12





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Protest outside Danish Parliament Demands Prisoner Release

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — On March 17, a group of Armenians from Sweden and Denmark held a protest outside the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen, demanding the release of all Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan, the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy reported.

The protest was also attended by Danish MP Sjørður Skaale and Kim Hartzner, a Danish physician and founder of Mission10forty.

The demands of the demonstrators included: the immediate release of Artsakh's military-political leadership and other illegally detained Armenians and prisoners of war, the establishment of an international commission to investigate cases of torture and inhumane treatment against Armenian detainees and the imposition of sanctions on Azerbaijani officials responsible for human rights violations.

Gymnasts to Compete in World Cup In Antalya

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian gymnasts Arthur Davtyan and Vahagn Davtyan will participate in the third stage of the World Cup, scheduled for March 18-24 in Antalya, Turkey, the Gymnastics Federation announced on March 18.

The Armenian team did not take part in the second stage of the World Cup, which was held in Baku.

Davtyan is an Olympic silver medalist and a world and European champion. Vahagn Davtyan placed sixth at the Olympic Games.

Armenia Seeks Ties with European, Eurasian Markets

YEREVAN (ARKA) — Armenia seeks to connect its economy with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) market as well as the EU, Arab, Asian and other markets with as many threads as possible, Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan said on March 17.

“Diversification of the Armenian economy does not imply anything against the EEU. We do not want to replace dependence on one market with dependence on another market, either in terms of imports or exports,” Papoyan noted at the session of the parliamentary committee on regional and Eurasian integration on Monday.

In this regard, he said Armenia is advancing the agenda that exists in reality and envisages “establishing as close economic relations as possible with all potentially possible markets.”

He said he will visit Russia to discuss a broad agenda, which envisages an even greater development of Armenia's trade and economic relations.

“After that, I plan to visit the UAE, then Japan to participate in the World Expo-2025 in Osaka,” he said.

Earlier the Armenian Prime Minister said that Armenia has no plans to break economic ties with the EEU and Russia.

New EU-Funded Program Boosts Health Workforce And Mental Health Services in Armenia

YEREVAN — The World Health Organization (WHO) Europe and the European Union (EU), in partnership with the Ministry of Health of Armenia, have launched a new joint program to bolster Armenia's health workforce and strengthen mental health services in the country, marking a major step in Armenia's health-care reforms.

The initiative is part of a broader 5-country program titled “Support for Health Resilience in the Eastern Partnership,” funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighborhood and launched in Brussels, Belgium, in early 2025.

Through this new initiative, WHO/Europe will support Armenia and 4 other countries in the Eastern Partnership – Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine – as they retain and support their health workforces, strengthen mental health services, tackle stigma, and include culture- and arts-based approaches in health.

“With EU funding, WHO is supporting Armenia in strengthening its health workforce and integrating mental health services into primary care,” said Dr Siddhartha Datta, WHO Representative in Armenia, at the launch event in Yerevan on 26 February. “Today's launch represents an important step towards building resilient health sys-

tems that can withstand future challenges and ensure inclusive health care for all.”

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in health systems worldwide, highlighting the need for stronger and better-supported health workforces. Armenia, like many countries in the WHO European Region, faces pressing challenges including workforce shortages, uneven distribution of health professionals and high levels of burnout.

At the same time, mental health has emerged as a priority area, requiring a shift from institutionalized models to community-based, person-centred care that reduces stigma and expands access to essential services.

“The EU is committed to supporting Armenia's health sector, ensuring that today's investments lead to lasting and meaningful change,” said Mr Vassilis Maragos, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia. “Through our partnership with WHO, we are addressing critical workforce challenges and expanding access to mental health support. A resilient health system is the foundation of a strong society, and together we are working to make quality health care a reality for all in Armenia.”

A well trained and equitably distributed health workforce is essential for ensuring high-quality care. With this in mind, the EU-funded program will focus on:

- improving health workforce retention through better working conditions and mental health support;

- enhancing the quality of medical and nursing education to align with Armenia's health-care needs; and

- supporting evidence-based workforce planning for long-term health system sustainability.

- Enhancing mental health services and reducing stigma

Mental health remains a critical yet underfunded area of health care in Armenia. Institutionalization and stigma have often limited access to necessary services. In response, the program will:

- strengthen national mental health governance and service provision;

- train health workers to adopt a rights-based, person-centered approach to mental health care; and

- promote mental health awareness and well-being through actions to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination and improve community-based services.

The collaboration of WHO and the EU in Armenia is part of a larger commitment to strengthen health systems across the Eastern Partnership region. The Partnership supports Armenia in advancing its health sector reforms to pave the way towards universal health coverage and ensure health system resilience.

Karabakh Armenians Warn Against Dropping Baku Lawsuits

LAWSUITS, from page 1

Artak Beglaryan, Karabakh's former premier and human rights ombudsman now based in Yerevan, condemned over the weekend the apparent Armenian concession to Baku as a further blow to Karabakh's population that fled the region following Azerbaijan's September 2023 offensive. He said it means that “the Armenian authorities will equally share responsibility for violating our rights and eliminating opportunities to protect our rights.”

Beglaryan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that he and other Karabakh Armenians are therefore planning to file individual lawsuits, presumably with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), against Armenia and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in particular. He said they would not do so if the peace treaty finalized by Baku and Yerevan addressed the issues of the release of Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani “war crimes,” the Karabakh Armenians' right to safely return to their homeland and protection of their properties and cultural heritage.

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said on Friday, March 14, that the treaty will also commit the two sides to “not to file in the future claims regarding issues that existed between the parties prior to its signing.” Beglaryan decried this provision as well, saying that it deprives the Karabakh refugees of legal avenues of fighting for their safe repatriation.

“The Armenian authorities are closing the page on Artsakh not only politically but also legally, and it can be said that the possibilities of our return are nullified,” he said.

The Armenian government has brought four cases against Azerbaijan in the ECHR and another one in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It accuses Azerbaijan of committing war crimes, violating the rights of Armenian prisoners, occupying Armenian territory and forcibly displacing Karabakh's

population. Baku has likewise taken Yerevan to these international tribunals, alleging various violations of international law.

Yeghishe Kirakosyan, the top lawyer representing the government in those tribunals, resigned on March 6 in apparent anticipation of the latest developments. Kirakosyan insisted in January that the Armenian lawsuits do not preclude peace between the two countries.

Contrary to government pledges, Armenia has still not filed any cases against Azerbaijan at another tribunal, the International Criminal Court (ICC). Bringing Azerbaijan

to justice for its war crimes and preventing more Azerbaijani attacks on Armenia was the main official rationale for Yerevan's accession to the ICC completed in February 2024 amid strong Western encouragement.

The ICC issued in 2023 an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin over war crimes allegedly committed during Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Pashinyan's critics say the real purpose of his decision to submit to The Hague court's jurisdiction was to please the West and embarrass Moscow, rather than take further legal action against Baku.

Genocide Recognition ‘No Priority’ for Pashinyan

RECOGNITION, from page 1

He seemed to imply that foreign powers, notably the Soviet Union, were behind that campaign.

Armenian historians, opposition figures and retired diplomats expressed outrage at the remarks, saying that Pashinyan cast doubt on the fact of the genocide officially recognized by over three dozen countries, including the United States. Some of them claimed that this is part of his efforts to cozy up to Turkey, which continues to deny a deliberate government effort to exterminate the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. Some Armenian Diaspora groups that have long been at the forefront of the recognition campaign also deplored Pashinyan's remarks.

The premier insisted later in January that he did not deny the genocide and is not helping Ankara do that. He repeated those assurances in his televised comments to the Turkish journalists, who reportedly visited Armenia at the invitation and expense of the Armenian government.

But he also stressed in the same context: “We must draw a line between the history and the present.”

Pashinyan had caused a similar uproar

with his statement on the 109th anniversary of the genocide commemorated in April 2024. The statement put the emphasis on the Armenian phrase “Meds Yeghern” (Great Crime), rather than the word “genocide,” and said Armenians should “overcome the trauma” generated by it.

In his latest interview, Pashinyan also touted his policy of rapprochement with Turkey, similarly criticized by the Armenian opposition. He said that there has been a “very significant change” in Turkish-Armenian relations despite Ankara's failure to implement a 2022 agreement to partially normalize them.

“Diplomatic representatives of Armenia and Turkey are in constant direct contact with each other,” he said.

Ankara continues to make the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border and establishment of diplomatic relations with Yerevan conditional on a resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict acceptable to Baku. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal should call for a land corridor through Armenia to Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan exclave bordering Turkey.



ARMENIA

Renters in Yerevan Are Facing Volatile Market

By Anzhela Sedrakyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Armenia's real estate rental market has undergone significant changes in recent years. The sharp increase in rental prices is driven by various factors, including immigration, economic developments, and the rise in the prices of construction materials.

Konstantin Boyajyan, an independent real estate agent specializing in property sales and rentals, in a recent interview explained some of the reasons behind rental price changes.

"The first factor that raised rental prices was the influx of Syrian Armenians, especially from Aleppo, who arrived in Armenia due to the war in their homeland. Their demand increased rental prices, but this rise was not as significant as the one caused by Russian immigration. The Russian influx had a major impact on rental price increases, especially starting from March 2022, and again in September 2022. Russians arriving in Armenia drove up rental costs, particularly in the new apartment market," he said.

According to Boyajyan, rental prices remained high throughout 2023. However, in mid-2024, especially after November, they began to rise again. For instance, in the capital's Arabkir and Yeraz districts, a two-room apartment, which had reached 400,000 AMD (\$1,019) during the Russian migration, previously cost around 175,000-180,000 AMD (\$446 to \$458). Now, the price has dropped to about 250,000 AMD (\$637), indicating that the market has not yet returned to pre-Russian influx levels but remains high.

"Nevertheless, trends suggest that prices are unlikely to return to previous levels, although some decrease is expected. Prices may stabilize in the coming months, but this trend could persist," he added.

This fluctuation doesn't just affect renters; many people who purchased apart-

ments as a source of income are suffering because of the fluctuation. As rental prices have not risen as expected, they face financial difficulties, particularly if they cannot cover their mortgage payments.

A key issue in the real estate market is why newly-built apartments are now priced similarly to secondary market apartments, whereas previously, new buildings were expected to be more expensive. Russians who have remained in Yerevan's center are now renting cheaper homes.

"Those still living here prefer to share



Konstantin Boyajyan

apartments with several people to reduce rental costs. If one person previously paid 350,000 AMD (\$892), now the same amount is shared among multiple tenants. This makes apartments more affordable, effectively reducing prices. However, it does not completely resolve the issue," Boyajyan added.

High demand for rental apartments continues in the Kentron (downtown) and Arabkir districts. Apartments near Yerevan's metro stations are also attractive,

particularly for students from the regions who move to Yerevan for university, as the metro provides a faster commute, Boyajyan noted.

Another challenge is the prevalence of misleading advertisements and unregulated property listings online.

"People often see apartments listed at inflated prices without proper quality checks or pricing regulations. As a result, properties that should be more affordable or require renovations are listed at higher prices due to market pressure. Many property owners struggle to correctly assess their home's value, and the lack of market oversight leads to such pricing issues," Boyajyan explained.

The influx of Armenians from Artsakh has further contributed to price increases, highlighting the market's instability and the influence of unpredictable factors.

"All these realities show that the market still lacks stable regulation. People must be cautious when considering rental offers and prices," Boyajyan added.

Artsakh refugees generally prefer larger apartments (three- or four-room units) rather than one- or two-room apartments. On the other hand, landlords are often hesitant to rent to large families. Prices have risen significantly in districts like Davtashen, Ajapnyak and Erebuni.

Boyajyan added that some property owners wait long periods before adjusting their prices, hoping to determine the right market value. Many landlords are reluctant to lower their prices, even when market experts advise them otherwise. This can lead to prolonged negotiations before a rental agreement is reached.

Boyajyan stated, "Ten years ago, it was possible to find an apartment for 50,000 AMD (\$127). Today, finding one for even 100,000 AMD (\$254) is difficult, while 130,000-140,000 AMD (\$331-\$356) has become the norm. This price increase is not just seasonal but a result of long-term changes and growing demand."

Seasonal factors also play a role. Short-term rentals (daily or monthly) require furnished apartments with necessary amenities such as dishes and bedding. Many newcomers look for such move-in-ready properties.

Ultimately, rental or purchase decisions depend on the individual willing to pay the agreed-upon price. The government does not regulate the market, leaving pricing up to landlords and tenants.

Market regulation remains challenging, as various agencies operate with different pricing strategies. Some agents prioritize professionalism, while others focus purely on profit. The real estate industry lacks a centralized governing body. Although an association for real estate agents was established in Armenia a year ago, it does not fully regulate the market.

One tenant, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said she believes that the lack of government oversight in the real estate market is a significant issue.

"Years ago, property owners neither paid income taxes nor declared their rental income. This issue needs political attention. Without proper oversight, market stability cannot be ensured," she said.

Another real estate agent, Lusine Shah-

verdyan, (HER FIRM?) pointed out that the Russia-Ukraine war increased rental prices due to the demand from Ukrainian refugees.

"The immigration of diasporan Armenians and rising demand also contributed to the price surge. However, this does not mean the increase will be long-term. Prices are driven by supply and demand. When demand rises, prices go up. When demand decreases, prices should theoretically drop," she said.

However, she noted that once prices rise, they rarely decline significantly.

"Currently, the market has a certain 'demand inflation,' meaning that advertised prices are sometimes higher than actual demand. Listings on social media and rental websites often do not reflect reality. Ultimately, the landlord decides the price. However, if a property remains vacant for months, landlords are forced to lower their prices," she concluded.

The increase in Armenia's property tax is not seen as a direct cause of rental price fluctuations. While higher taxes can slightly raise apartment prices in certain areas, they do not necessarily lead to higher rental costs. If tenants cannot afford high rent, landlords must adjust prices accordingly.

A tenant from the provinces shared his experience of renting an apartment in Yerevan for his son, who moved to the capital to attend college.

"The apartment is extremely small, essentially a former dormitory room of 24 square meters, with no kitchen and only a small bathroom. It costs 110,000 AMD (\$280) per month. During summer break, my son does not stay there, yet we still have to pay rent. When we asked the landlord for a discount, they refused. The apartment is not even gas-equipped, and we rely on electric heating. Its only advantage is proximity to the metro, allowing my son to reach university on time. We are looking for a more suitable option, but prices remain high, and we fear we won't find anything better," he explained.

Kristina Virabyan is an international real estate expert and analyst with the firm Invest by Kristina, said interest from foreign buyers is driving up prices.

One key reason is the growing demand from foreign buyers. Since 2022, a significant number of foreign nationals, mainly from Russia, have relocated to Armenia. Many of them are purchasing apartments, which increases demand and, consequently, prices. Moreover, Yerevan and other major cities are becoming increasingly attractive to investors who see real estate as a secure asset, she said.

With limited supply, the construction sector struggles to meet the rising demand. Although new residential complexes are being built, their completion takes time. This leads to a shortage of quality housing, particularly in the capital, further pushing prices upward.

She also noted that inflation and rising construction material costs have significantly impacted rental prices.

"The global increase in construction material prices, rising logistics costs, and overall inflation make construction more expensive. Developers incorporate these expenses into the price per square meter, affecting overall housing costs," she said.

When asked whether the market will continue to grow, she said, "Long-term forecasts depend on various factors, including the country's economic policies, future migration trends, and regional stability. However, in the short term, the upward price trend is likely to persist, especially in Yerevan and areas with high tourism appeal."



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INTERNATIONAL

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CNN Turk Journalist Presents Yerevan as Turkish

YEREVAN (news.am) — CNN Turk news editor Idris Arikan, who visited Yerevan a few days ago at the invitation of the Armenian side and met with the prime minister, presented Armenia in a very negative light in his report on March 18, and disseminated blatant disinformation unbecoming of a journalist.

The 26-minute report presented Armenia in a negative way.

Arikan said in his report against the backdrop of the Iranian mosque in downtown Yerevan that the latter was one of the cities of the Turkish empire. And as “evidence,” he presented this mosque as Turkish.

Swiss Parliament Passes Motion on Return of Artsakh Armenians

BERN (Panarmenian.am) — The Council of States — the upper house of the Swiss Federal Assembly — on March 18 adopted Motion No. 24.4259 titled “Peace Forum for Nagorno-Karabakh: Enabling the Return of Armenians,” the EAFJD reported.

This decision enforces the Swiss government to establish an international forum between representatives of Azerbaijan and Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh to facilitate the return of the more than 120,000 Armenian civilians, who were ethnically cleansed from their homeland following Azerbaijan’s military campaigns. The establishment of such a forum will promote the right to return of Artsakh Armenians, under international safety guarantees to ensure their protection.

Ankara Links Normalization with Armenia to Baku’s Demands

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) spokesperson, Ömer Çelik, expressed satisfaction with the agreement reached on the text of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, he emphasized that Yerevan must fulfill Baku’s demands to advance Armenia-Turkey relations.

“For Armenia, it will be important to amend certain laws or constitutional provisions directed against Azerbaijan. It is time to dissolve the OSCE Minsk Group; they have no role left and have not contributed to resolving the issue. Once these steps are taken, the process of normalizing Turkey-Armenia relations will gain momentum,” Çelik stated on March 18.

On March 13, official Baku and Yerevan announced that they had finalized work on the draft peace treaty. While Armenia’s Foreign Ministry has expressed readiness to begin consultations on the treaty’s signing timeline and location, Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry has stressed that a key prerequisite for signing is amending Armenia’s Constitution.

Armenia, Azerbaijan Agree on Peace Treaty

TREATY, from page 1

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has also set other conditions for making peace with Armenia. Those include the opening of a land corridor to Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan exclave through a key Armenian region.

Earlier this year, Aliyev renewed his threats to open the corridor by force. Armenian opposition leaders and other critics of Pashinyan say that the treaty would not preclude such military action.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan insisted that the treaty does not call for any extraterritorial transport links for Nakhichevan. He also admitted that he “will not answer all possible questions.”

“But this agreement provides for mechanisms that we and Azerbaijan can use after the agreement enters into force to resolve issues and finally normalize relations,” he added without elaborating.

The key question now is when the agreement might be signed.

Still, observers hailed the agreement as representing significant progress toward peace.

“This is an unprecedented breakthrough in what was deadlocked diplomacy,” said Richard Giragosian, director of the Regional Studies Center, an independent think tank based in Armenia.

Given how long it will take to meet Azerbaijan’s final demands, they should not be prerequisites for signing the peace treaty but rather a matter for further discussion, Giragosian added. “Both sides [should] sign the peace treaty and continue talks,” he said, though noted that skepticism remained a barrier. There is a degree of wariness in Armenia that this may be too good to be true. There are expectations that Azerbaijan may actually continue to demand more concessions.”

The two countries have yet to negotiate when and where the peace deal will be signed. Armenia proposed issuing a joint statement following the agreement

of terms but Baku declined, Armenia’s Foreign Ministry said.

World Leaders React

France’s President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the announcement, writing on the platform formerly known as Twitter that “there are now no remaining obstacles to the signing of a peace treaty ... which should pave the way for a lasting peace in the South Caucasus.”

But in a hint at enduring tensions, Armenia criticized Azerbaijan for making a statement unilaterally rather than issuing a joint one.

Armenia last year suspended its participation in the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) over the bloc’s failure to come to its aid in the conflict with Azerbaijan.

One key issue was “non-deployment of third-party forces” along the countries’ shared border, he said.

There were also disagreements over plans for both sides to mutually withdraw legal cases from international judicial bodies.

The United States has praised Armenia and Azerbaijan for concluding negotiations on a “historic peace treaty,” marking a significant step toward ending decades of hostilities between the two nations.

“The United States commends Armenia and Azerbaijan for concluding negotiations on a historic peace treaty,” said US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a statement.

“This is an opportunity for both countries to turn the page on a decades-old conflict in line with President [Donald] Trump’s vision for a more peaceful world.

In a Telegram post, the Armenian government said Pashinyan, had informed Russian President Vladimir Putin about the peace agreement during a telephone conversation.

In a statement, the Kremlin confirmed Pashinyan’s conversation with Putin, saying that the Russian president stressed

that “Russia has always supported and continues to support the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the interests of ensuring security, stability, and sustainable socio-economic development in the Transcaucasian region.”

Putin said that “Both Armenia and Azerbaijan can always count on any possible assistance from the Russian side in achieving these goals.”

In his statement, Rubio urged both sides to “commit to peace, sign and ratify the treaty, and usher in a new era of prosperity for the people of the South Caucasus.”

The European Union also urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign the treaty as soon as possible after congratulating them on the peace agreement.

Kaja Kallas, the EU’s foreign policy chief, commended both sides for their persistent work and said that the announcement of the peace agreement “represents a decisive step toward lasting peace and security in the region.”

Opposition Rejects ‘Another Capitulation To Azerbaijan’

Armenia’s leading opposition groups condemned Pashinyan on Friday, March 14, for making more concessions to Azerbaijan to finalize a bilateral peace deal which they say will not resolve the long-running Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

“These authorities have agreed to everything that was demanded by Azerbaijan,” said Artur Khachatryan, a senior lawmaker from the opposition Hayastan alliance. “Now these authorities are blackmailing the people of the Republic of Armenia and all Armenians, saying that if we suddenly did not submit to Azerbaijan’s demands, there would be war.”

The second parliamentary opposition force, the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), decried Pashinyan’s “unilateral anti-state concession” and “double capitulation” to Baku. It demanded that the authorities immediately publicize the text of the draft treaty.

In a written statement, the party headed by former President Serzh Sarkisian at the same time said, “Nikol Pashinyan does not have the mandate and legitimacy to sign such agreements on behalf of the Armenian people.”

“If [Pashinyan] had said in the 2021 elections that he would cede Artsakh and recognize it as part of Azerbaijan, that ethnic cleansing and genocidal action would take place [in Nagorno-Karabakh,] how many people would have voted for him?” argued Hayk Mamijanyan, the HHK’s parliamentary leader.

“I consider this an extremely important milestone in the normalization of relations and the establishment of peace in the region around us, around Armenia,” the minister told lawmakers.

Mirzoyan said Yerevan now expects to start “as soon as possible” consultations with Baku on when and where to sign the negotiated treaty.

The two countries have been locked in legal battles at the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and the European Court of Human Rights over allegations of rights violations committed before, during and after their armed conflicts.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought a series of conflicts in recent years, with an Azerbaijani offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh last September forcing the region’s 100,000 residents to flee.

(Reports from Politico.eu, France 24, RFE/RL and Azatutyun were used to compile this piece.)

Ex-Ombudsman: Azerbaijan Issues Fresh Demands after ‘Peace Talks’

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Following the conclusion of negotiations on the so-called Armenia-Azerbaijan “peace agreement,” Azerbaijani political figures have started making additional demands on almost all Azerbaijani media platforms controlled by the authorities, former Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan claimed on March 18.

Among those, he said, are the Armenian government must ensure the return of the so-called “Western Azerbaijanis” and guarantee their unrestricted entry into and exit from Armenia.

In addition, he said Armenia must agree to the opening of the so-called “Zangezur Corridor” in the form specified by the Azerbaijani president during a joint press conference with the Turkish leader in November 2021 - specifically, to establish a corridor connecting the entire Turkic world.

Other demands, he said, include payment of compensation to Azerbaijan as well as demilitarization, including the return of acquired weapons.

Armenia must stop glorifying the victory in the First Artsakh War and its participants.

All organizations and structures in Armenia that promote national values must be shut down.

“According to Azerbaijani state propaganda, these issues need to be addressed outside the framework of the ‘peace agreement’ and before it is signed,” Tatoyan stated.

“In addition to concealing these critical issues from the Armenian public, the Armenian authorities, desperate to cling to power, are deliberately misleading the people. They are creating the illusion that they are in control of the situation and that the agreement serves Armenia’s interests, despite knowing full well that this is not the case,” he added.



Arman Tatoyan



INTERNATIONAL

European Parliament Urges Baku to Release Prisoners

PRISONERS, from page 1

“Instead of that, we are once again trying to appease the dictator and encourage Aliyev’s actions by expanding trade cooperation. Haven’t we learned the lessons of the past? It is time to end the illusion of strategic partnership, face reality, and act in accordance with our values and principles.”

The trial of former Nagorno-Karabakh leaders continues in Azerbaijan. Baku accuses eight former high-ranking officials of serious crimes: Presidents Arkady Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan, Arayik Harutyunyan, National Assembly Speaker David Ishkhanyan, State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, Defense Army Commander Levon Mnatsakanyan, Deputy Defense Army Commander David Manukyan, and Foreign Minister David Babayan.

They are charged with organizing genocide, terrorism, and the forcible displacement of civilians. They face life imprisonment. However, the accused have not been allowed to fully review the criminal case materials.

As for former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, his case is being investigated separately. Vardanyan has staged two hunger strikes to protest the “judicial farce.” On March 12, on the 23rd day, he announced that he had “decided to suspend the hunger strike.” His previous hunger strike lasted 20 days.

The European Parliament resolution states that since January 17, 2025, legal proceedings have been underway for 16 prisoners, including former military and political leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The document specifically mentions credible reports of violence, psychological torture, and unfair trials against Armenian prisoners.

The European Parliament declared that it condemns their illegal detention by Azerbaijan, the inhumane treatment they have endured, and the unjust trials they face.

The resolution demands the immediate release of Armenian prisoners; calls for an independent investigation into cases of torture and ill-treatment; urges Azerbaijan’s authorities to fulfill their international obligations, including the Geneva Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights; appeals to the EU and international organizations to support humanitarian and medical missions to assess the condition of the detainees and emphasizes the need for diplomatic efforts to secure the release of Armenian political prisoners, their protection, and the prosecution of those responsible for mistreating them. In addition, the measure calls on the Council of Europe to impose targeted sanctions on Azerbaijani officials, including judges, responsible for human rights violations; condemn Azerbaijan’s decision to close UN and International Committee of the Red Cross offices, which severely hinders international humanitarian efforts and monitoring mechanisms and urges the International Criminal Court and its Prosecutor General to investigate cases of forced displacement, persecution, and ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh.

‘Gas Bought from Baku Cannot be More Important than Human Rights’

During the discussion of the resolution, parliamentarians characterized the violation of prisoners’ rights as a shameful phenomenon. Many expressed the view that the EU must take a firm stance, hold Azerbaijan accountable, and impose sanctions.

It was also mentioned that the gas purchased from Baku cannot be more important than human rights and European values. A question was raised about why Russia’s military aggression and the actions of its leader, Putin, are condemned, while the actions of Azerbaijan’s president remain unpunished.

“How can you justify importing gas from Azerbaijan, cooperating with criminals committing monstrous crimes? Are gas supplies from Baku not as unacceptable as receiving gas from Russia? Isn’t it the same?” said French MEP François-Xavier Bellamy.

Portuguese MEP Catarina Vieira stated that Azerbaijan is experiencing a deep crisis in human rights. The country’s authorities are imposing strict restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, punishing those who criticize their policies through law enforcement:

“The Armenians held in Baku are among the groups who have suffered the most from the policies of this government. Fair trials have become an illusion.”

She added that it is unacceptable for relations with Baku to continue as usual: “European values cannot be sacrificed for economic and energy interests. This is not only hypocritical but also addictive, making us vulnerable to blackmail. Haven’t we learned from our past dependence on Russia? It’s time to put human rights above cheap oil and gas.”

‘These Trials Are no Different from Stalinist Ones’

Co-author of the resolution and rapporteur on Armenia, Nathalie Loiseau, stated that the trials taking place in Baku are no different from Stalinist ones. According to the French MEP, the “guilt” of the Arme-

nians being tried in Baku is simply their origin.

Loiseau urged the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, to visit Armenia: “And you will see with your own eyes that there is a country that wants peace and dreams of Europe. And next door is Azerbaijan, which continues to threaten and is one of Russia’s allies. I hope you will be able to stand up to those who call for the same approach to be applied to Yerevan and Baku.”

MEP Marina Mezhur stated that the “crime” of those standing trial is that they defended their land and their rights:

“If we do not take action now, it will mean that we are sending a clear signal to Aliyev — he can continue with impunity what he is doing to Armenia.”

The EU Commissioner for Energy, Dan Jørgensen, also participated in the discussion. He assured that the European Commission is monitoring the trials taking place in the military court in Baku.

“We know that human rights organizations have expressed concern regarding the fairness of these trials and the treatment of the accused,” he said.

According to the EU commissioner, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus is also closely following the trials and conveying to Baku that they are causing concern.

“EU-Azerbaijan relations are based on respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as other principles that both parties have committed to uphold. Therefore, the European Union will continue to urge the Azerbaijani government to respect its international obligations, including the right to a fair trial,” Dan Jørgensen stated.

Furthermore, he said that the EU expects an objective investigation into reports of torture and inhumane treatment of Armenian prisoners in the near future. He emphasized that the EU intends to use all leverage to ensure that Azerbaijan provides decent and safe conditions for their detention.

Top Trump Officials Make Direct Diplomatic Overtures to Azerbaijan

By Nate Ostiller

In the past few days, top officials from US President Donald Trump’s administration have made direct diplomatic overtures to Azerbaijan, including a visit over the weekend from special envoy Steve Witkoff to Baku and a phone call between US National Security Advisor Mike Waltz and his Azerbaijani counterpart Hikmat Hajiyev.

The moves come in the aftermath of an announcement that Armenia and Azerbaijan had agreed to sign a historic peace treaty.

Details about Witkoff’s visit were scant, with the bulk of news regarding his trip stemming from the Russian state-run media outlet RIA Novosti, which only reported that Witkoff had flown from Moscow, where he reportedly met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, to Baku.

It is unclear whether Witkoff met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev or other top officials, and it is unknown what issues, if any, were discussed. Nonetheless, there was speculation that the visit could have been related to a growing ‘strategic alliance’ between the US, Azerbaijan, and Israel.

Waltz was more detailed in his comments about the call with Hajiyev.

“We are pleased Azerbaijan and Armenia have taken a big step forward and agreed to a peace treaty. I told him we should finalize this peace deal now, release the prisoners, and work together to make the region more secure and prosperous,” Waltz wrote on X.

“America’s Golden Age will bring peace and prosperity to the world, and we won’t stop working until that happens,” he concluded.

There were numerous critical responses to his post from Armenians and Armenian lobbying organizations, including the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), which said the agreement to sign a peace treaty was “a one-sided surrender of Armenian security and sovereignty forced on Yerevan at the point of a gun”.

Others responded more favorably, such as Jared Genser, the lawyer representing former Nagorno-Karabakh State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, who is on trial in Azerbaijan.

Genser thanked Waltz and Trump, saying he appreciated their “commitment to peace in the Caucasus [sic] and for not just a peace treaty to be signed but for the release of the Armenian Christian political prisoners in Azerbaijan, including my client Ruben Vardanyan!”

Separately, Armenian Parliamentary Speaker Alen Simonyan said that he “hope(s) that this statement will be followed by clear steps and that it’s not just a statement for the sake of a statement. I don’t know, let them call, come to an agreement on how they will return our captives, our people, everyone without discrimination, regardless of when they were captured.”

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on March 17.)



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Community News

Armenian Heritage Walk to Break Ground at Historic Philadelphia Museum of Art

By Melissa Markaridian Selverian

PHILADELPHIA — After five years of planning, the Philadelphia Armenian community will break ground on the Armenian Heritage Walk, an expansive outdoor parcel to feature exquisite public art and gardens featuring the legendary Young Meher statue beside the world-famous Philadelphia Museum of Art on Saturday, April 26, 2025. All are welcome to attend the afternoon event beginning at 2 p.m., which will celebrate the Armenian-American story and give thanks to America on the 250th anniversary of its founding. Leaders of the city, bishops of the Diocese and Prelacy, clergy of the five area Armenian churches, and representatives of Armenian organizations will be in attendance. Students of the



Illustration of the Philadelphia Armenian Heritage Walk

Armenian Sisters Academy will take the stage with other artists in musical interludes.

A collaboration of the Armenian community with the city of Philadelphia, the Armenian Heritage Walk will showcase a restored Young Meher statue, which has towered at the site in tribute to the indomitable spirit of the Armenian people for 50 years. Surrounding the centerpiece will be a winding trail of art and natural elements of Armenian and American origin. Visitors will be able to reflect on the value of cultural diversity as they explore the story of a people exiled in genocide who found a home in the birthplace of the nation and made lasting contributions to it.

The Philadelphia Armenian community invites everyone to join in this historic celebration. The Armenian Heritage Walk relies on contributions from all Armenians and their friends. To donate, visit www.armenianheritagewalk.org.



Scene from previous mentoring forums

14th Annual Mentoring Forum Offers Career and Networking Opportunities

By Stephan. S. Nigohosian

NEW YORK — The 14th Annual Mentoring Forum, a conference-style business networking event for Armenian Professionals, will take place on Friday, March 28, at 6:30 p.m. at Fordham University in New York City. Admission is free.

The Mentoring Forum, which provides practical career insights and networking opportunities to empower Armenian students and professionals, is co-hosted by a consortium of 15 Armenian organizations from the metro-New York City region. It will begin with a brief panel discussion of effective networking for employment. Attendees may submit questions in advance to panelists at <https://armenianmentors.org/>.

Following the panel discussion, participants will divide into small groups for breakout sessions focused on detailed, field-specific content. Each breakout session will be led by experienced career guidance professionals, who will share their combined experience in career placement and corporate talent recruitment.

The Mentoring Forum will provide valuable information on a multitude of diverse industries and careers, including architecture/interior design, education, engineering/sciences, fashion design/manufacturing, financial services, law/social sciences, medical/healthcare services, political science, and many others.

“Now in its 14th year, the Mentoring Forum continues to fulfill a need in the Armenian-American professional community of connecting students and professionals with the resources and mentorship to grow their careers,” said event Co-Chair Larry Najarian, MD. “We now have mentors who began attending the Mentoring Forum as students just a few years ago, so it has come full circle.”

Scheduled panelists at this year’s event include:

Aram Babikian, Head of Xtrackers Sales, US Wealth @ DWS Group

Nazo Haroutunian, Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition, Samsung

Peter Bonjuklian, Managing Partner, National Staffing Leader

Sam Armen, MA, MS, ELA teacher Brooklyn Tech, adjunct lecturer of psychology at Hunter College

Karen Dilsizian, Regional College Readiness Director, New City Kids

“We are grateful to the panel of industry veteran mentors who graciously volunteer their time to share their insights on networking for employment,” said event Co-Chair Raffi Jamgotchian, president and mentoring co-chair of the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESAs) - Northeast. “Seeing the mentoring forum positively impact Armenian professionals, as well as the increase in the number of participating organizations each year, is tremendously rewarding.”

Snacks and refreshments will be provided. Ticket validation will be provided for discounted parking in a designated lot. Event attendees will also have a chance to win gift cards.

The Mentoring Forum was founded in 2011 by the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) and the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESAs). A full listing of this year’s participating sponsors may be viewed at <https://armenianmentors.org/>.

For more information and free registration, visit <https://armenianmentors.org/>. Questions and/or comments may be emailed to info@armenianmentors.org.



Armenian Assembly Co-Chairs Address Letter to Trump Raising Concerns for Armenia’s Security

WASHINGTON — Recalling the President’s statement last year to “protect persecuted Christians” and to “restore PEACE between Armenia and Azerbaijan,” Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) Co-Chairs Oscar Tatosian and Talin Yacoubian — in a letter to President Donald J. Trump — outlined numerous concerns regarding the announcement that negotiations of “a historic peace treaty” between Armenia and Azerbaijan have been concluded.

“True peace cannot be achieved until all Armenian captives and POWs are released, and we urge you to use every tool at your disposal to secure their immediate freedom,” the Assembly Co-Chairs emphasized.

The Co-Chairs stressed that there must be strong security guarantees as well as “severe consequences should Azerbaijan violate this agreement.” In their letter they highlighted Azerbaijan’s repeated failure “to abide by its international commitments, including the 2020 Agreement reached in Washington,” during President Trump’s first term.

The letter also expressed serious concerns regarding Azerbaijan’s continued military presence “in strategic areas within Armenia,” and explained that despite Armenia’s willingness to achieve a lasting peace deal, Azerbaijan “continues to conduct unlawful show trials against Armenian captives.”

Additionally, the Co-Chairs underlined that the ethnic cleansing of 120,000 Armenians from Artsakh remains an “unresolved humanitarian crisis,” and in their letter stressed that their rights and status must be addressed, and their “fundamental right to return must be guaranteed.”

ANCA Western Region And Northern California Chapter Advocate for Legislation in Sacramento

SACRAMENTO, Calif — Representatives from the Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region joined the ANCA Northern California chapter on March 10 and 11 for a two-day advocacy round in Sacramento. ANCA-NorCal is a regional chapter of ANCA-WR that represents local chapters ANCA San Francisco, ANCA Silicon Valley, and ANCA Sacramento.

The delegation, which included ANCA-WR Chair Oshin Harootunian, Government Affairs Director Ruben Karapetian, Government Affairs Coordinator Sonia Meroian, and ANCA-NorCal Coordinator Henry Agajanov, met with 22 legislative offices in the State Capitol to discuss key legislative items and issues

see ANCA, page 11



COMMUNITY NEWS

AUA Luncheon in Los Angeles Celebrates Elizabeth Agbabian

LOS ANGELES — On March 1, the Los Angeles community gathered at the California Club to celebrate Elizabeth Agbabian, the first lady of the American University of Armenia (AUA). The event, titled A Legacy of Grace: Honoring Elizabeth Agbabian, honored her decorated life of service and philanthropy in Armenia and beyond.

The program was filled with inspiring tales from Elizabeth’s grandchildren: Sabrina, Erika, Lori and Arman. They each took their turn on stage speaking to their grandmother’s character and recalling their fondest memories with her throughout their childhood. Dr. Karen Israyelyan, the consul general of Armenia in Los Angeles, provided remarks about the Agbabian family’s philanthropy in AUA and Armenia.

AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian then highlighted Elizabeth’s pivotal role in the early years of AUA alongside her late husband, Dr. Mihran Agbabian, and the many ways their sons and daughters-in-law continue to carry forward the legacy of philanthropy they established for the in-



Elizabeth Agbabian accepting the Legacy of Grace Award with her sons (left to right) Bryan, Michael, Paul



Elizabeth Agbabian

stitution. He proceeded with the Legacy of Grace Award presentation, in which Elizabeth, supported by her sons Paul, Bryan and Michael, took the stage to accept the honor. “I’m happy to be here. Thank you for coming. I know that my husband is watching us to see what wonderful supporters we have here: the presidents, the trustees, and all of you, dear friends,” she said, before elaborating further on AUA’s history. “I want

you to know that perseverance and hard work lead to success,” she added.

Several musicians took part in the program, including pianist Vardan Ovsepiyan; violinist Sevana Abramyan accompanied by pianist Tomomi Kojima; as well as Arman Agbabian, playing a couple of his grandmother’s favorite compositions.

Vice President of Development Gaiane Khachatryan shared that the event had raised \$172,000, which would be directed towards establishing the Elizabeth Agbabian Endowed Scholarship Fund, helping to provide access to an AUA education for students in Armenia, in perpetuity. She also mentioned the cherished relationship be-

tween Elizabeth and AUA alumni, reading an excerpt from a note by Anahit Ordyan (MBA ’93), who currently serves as assistant vice president at AUA.

Surprise components of the program included AUA alumna Nare Sedrakyan (BAB ’17; MSCIS ’19), a recipient of the AIWA – LA Elizabeth Agbabian Scholarship during her time at AUA. “As a scholarship recipient, I am immensely grateful to Mrs. Agbabian for making this dream a reality. AUA was not just a university for me; it shaped me as a professional and as a person. It provided me with the foundation to build a successful career and opened the doors to a bright future,” she said.

In addition, Lorraine Alexander, former vice president of Development at AUA, made a surprise appearance and spoke to the impact Elizabeth had through major AUA event committees she partook in.

Dr. Lawrence H. Pitts, chairman of the AUA Board of Trustees, provided closing remarks, mentioning, “The Agbabian family is a wonderful family that has been part of AUA since the outset.” He also highlighted the importance of the younger generations and their impact on the future of society. “AUA is here to help educate young people. Our investment in them and their future is what AUA is all about,” he said.

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OBITUARY

Haig Gechjian, 100

Part of MIT Community

WINCHESTER, Mass. — Haig Gechjian of Winchester passed peacefully on Tuesday, March 4, at his home in Winchester, at the age of 100.

He was the son of the late George and Nartoohey (Bagdigian) Gechjian, and brother to the late Arshag and Armen Gechjian, of Belmont, MA.

She was the husband of the late Patricia (Moushegian) Gechjian; father of David Garo Gechjian of Boston, Mark Aram Gechjian of Arlington, and Pamela Lee Gechjian of Boston. He is also survived by many other loving family members and friends.

Haig was born March 29, 1924 in Everett to the late George and Nartoohey (Bagdigian) Gechjian. He was raised in Arlington, and was a graduate of Arlington High School, class of 1941.

Following high school, Haig moved to Belmont with his family. He then enlisted in the U.S. Army, where he served in Southeast Asia during World War II, as a technician in the 68th Signal Battalion.

Upon returning home from service Haig attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with the assistance of the G.I. Bill. He graduated MIT in 1948, with a degree in general engineering. He began his professional career at Jarvis Engineering Co., in Boston, followed by employment at Lincoln Laboratory, in Lexington.

From 1959 to 1972 he was employed by The Mitre Corporation in Bedford, where he served as the associate director of general services. His major role was the planning and construction inspection of a new 100,000 sq. ft. office building in McLean, Va., to serve as the corporation's headquarters.

It was at Mitre Corp. that he met his wife, Patricia, with whom he would later have three children, David, Mark, and Pamela. He married Patricia in 1966, and settled in Winchester, where he raised his family, and resided until his passing.

In 1972 Haig began his employment with MIT, where he served as Manager of Engineering Services in the Physical Plant



Department for 20 years, until his retirement in 1992.

During this time, he was instrumental in providing mechanical and electrical engineering support throughout the planning, design, and construction phases of all new buildings on campus. Major projects that he was directly responsible for include

the Arts & Media Technology Building, a Medical Services Building, a Special Events Center, and a Student Housing Facility.

In addition to his vital role as employee at MIT, Haig also forged many lifelong friends, and deeply entrenched himself in the MIT community throughout the duration of his life.

Outside of work, Haig found a deep-rooted sense of connection and brotherhood as a Freemason. Initiated in 1950, he was installed as Worshipful Master of the Hesperia Lodge in 1959, and after 50 years of faithful service was anointed the title of Senior Past Master. His 100th birthday marked his 74th year of membership with the organization.

In addition to the Masons, Haig also found fellowship as an active member of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown, along with his two brothers, Arshag and Armen. He was a frequent participant of the monthly Men's Club and Hye Café get-togethers. Haig always enjoyed gathering with friends and family, particularly when good food was involved.

Haig was an avid sports enthusiast throughout his life. For much of the 1970s and 1980s, Haig was a key member of a limited group of personnel responsible for filming and editing game footage for the Harvard Crimson Football Team, as well as the New England Patriots. The coaches would utilize the film to analyze and enhance game performance and strategy. Haig was passionate about this hobby, and enjoyed traveling with the teams on most weekends during game season. In his later years Haig could always be found enjoying televised sports, and rarely missed a

game involving our local teams.

Haig also had a steadfast love for the ocean. As a young boy he spent weekends with his family on the shores of Manomet, Plymouth. His brother, Armen, later purchased a home in the seaside town of Humarock Beach, Marshfield, where the family summered for many years.

Once married, Haig built his own beachfront vacation home for his wife and children in Humarock. His summers were punctuated with family cookouts, fishing with his sons, and simply enjoying soaking up the sun.

When not relaxing Haig was always fixing something, and using his engineering skills and smarts to assist neighbors and friends with any mechanical issue they may have encountered. He never shied away from lending a helping hand, and became revered for always knowing how to solve any problem. A man of high intellect, Haig was also very soft spoken and approachable. Even-tempered and kind, he was always concerned most with the well-being of those around him, even in times of his own recent health challenges. Silent but strong, Haig was a fighter. He never gave up pushing forward in life, whether in advance of his career, providing for his family, or in the face of set-backs. He enriched the lives of many through his kind acts and words, wisdom, and sharp wit. He will forever be missed by all who knew him.

Funeral service was at Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown, on March 11.

Interment was at Wildwood Cemetery, Winchester. Veteran WW II, US Army.

Contributions in Haig's memory may be made to the Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts, 186 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02111 or to Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown, MA 02472.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Honors Portantino For His Dedicated Advocacy

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America honored California State Sen. Anthony Portantino for his commitment to strengthening relations with Armenia and Artsakh, genuine friendship with the Armenian people, and passionate leadership on pro-Armenian advocacy, on Sunday, March 9, at Chevy Chase Country Club, in Glendale, in an event filled with accolades for Portantino, his Senate staff members and cross-community and organization-wide unity and camaraderie.

“It’s been an honor to represent the [Armenian] community...a vibrant community that respects family, church, culture, and togetherness,” said Senator Portantino, who served in the California Senate from 2016-2024, and in the California Assembly from 2006-2012. “This community maintains its connections and it’s been an extraordinary experience to be welcomed.”

Senator Portantino reflected on his travels to Artsakh and Armenia, and appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues with his constituents in Los Angeles that affect the homeland.

“This is a community where everyone puts a drop and makes it better for each other,” he said. “It means a lot to me to be recognized by the Armenian Assembly of America that does tremendous work.”

State Sen. Sasha Renée Pérez (D-CA), who succeeded Portantino in representing the 25th Senate District, presented the California State Senate Resolution honoring Senator Portantino and commended him as a “genuine advocate,” while emphasizing that he conveys what “good leadership looks like, and that is showing up and being present.”

As a young person interested in politics, she recalled witnessing his powerful work in advocacy as she watched him advocate for the Armenian community to ensure Armenian history is accurately reflected in educational curricula and that the Armenian Genocide is formally recognized on a regular basis. “I recognize I have huge shoes to fill, and I look forward to working with all of you.”

Assembly Co-Chair Talin Yacoubian expressed that the organization is focused on “strategic planning to react to our present realities,” which includes the ethnic cleansing of 120,000 Armenians from Artsakh and prisoners of war still unjustly held captive by Azerbaijan, among a “host of problems that we have to address.”

“It’s my firm belief that we can only work towards solving these problems if we work together,” said Yacoubian, who noted the recent example of the fires in Los Angeles that brought the community together to help one another. “We need to have this be an example for how we want to move forward.”

Speaking on behalf of the Artsakh Preservation Committee, Alyosha Petrosyan thanked Portantino for his support of Artsakh, particularly when he visited in 2020, and appreciated him serving as a “tireless advocate for the people of Artsakh, and for standing up for what is right.”

“It takes only one visit to fall in love with Artsakh with its beautiful nature, forests, mountains, unique culture, hospitality and people,” said Petrosyan. “And as long as there are people like Senator Portantino, who not only believe in human rights and justice, but also actively take a stand for it, the people of Artsakh will continue to fight for their rights and won’t lose hope to re-



From left, Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, Assembly Southern California Regional Council Member Margaret Mgrublian, Assembly Intern Alum Tamar Tujian, Assembly Co-Chair Talin Yacoubian, Senator Anthony Portantino, Assembly Board Member Lisa Kalustian, Assembly Board Member Valina Agbabian, and Assembly Western Region Director David Ojakian

turn to their ancestral home.”

Assembly Southern California Regional Council Member Margaret Mgrublian reflected on her first encounter with Senator Portantino and his wife Ellen, when they opened up their own home to host the first fundraiser for the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Pasadena.

“I don’t know any other elected official who has opened their home so kindly and generously,” she said. “Senator Portantino is one of the few politicians who brings everyone together and we thank you for everything you have done for our Armenian community.”

Assembly intern alum Tamar Tujian noted that Senator Portantino has a “rare and remarkable gift,” and that he “truly belongs to every community he serves.”

“People trust him because he listens, because he cares and because he takes action,” said Tujian. “When a constituent shares a concern or a challenge, it doesn’t just end in a conversation, it often becomes legislation.”

Tujian remarked that the Armenian Cause has “always been central to his public service and ability to direct critical funding to our community has been invaluable,” including the championing of the Armenian American Museum in Glendale, as well as being the only American official to visit Artsakh after the war.

“He met with NGOs, engaged with leaders, sat down with the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, always asking tough question, and always beginning and ending each meeting with the same words, ‘how can I help?’”

“His love for our homeland, history, and our future, is personal, profound, and tireless,” she concluded.

Portantino, who represented California’s 25th State Senate District, and served in the legislature since 2006, has been a recognized leader in the Armenian diaspora for his advocacy of Genocide affirmation and longstanding ties to the Armenian community. His pro-Armenian accomplishments included strengthening California-Armenia relations, championing Armenian Genocide recognition, holding Azerbaijan accountable for its unjust actions against the Armenian people, traveling to Armenia and Artsakh, spearheading financial support for Armenian cultural institutions and programming, and executing legislative actions.

The program included additional re-

markings by Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, who reiterated the community’s appreciation to Senator Portantino and encouraged the audience to attend the Assembly’s upcoming Spring 2025 Advocacy Summit.

For college students interested in attending the Summit, a special Advocacy Summit Scholarship is available. Past recipients in attendance at the event included Maria Galstyan, Karine Grigoryan, Areg Hovhannisyian, Liana Issaian, Celine Khachiki, and Artur Melikian.

A commendation plaque for AGBU Western Region Chair Kev Zoryan was presented by the Armenian Assembly of America thanking the AGBU Western Region for its “extraordinary efforts in the wake of the tragic January 2025 Los

marks by Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, who reiterated the community’s appreciation to Senator Portantino and encouraged the audience to attend the Assembly’s upcoming Spring 2025 Advocacy Summit.

Elected officials in attendance for the event included: Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, CA Senate District 25, Assemblymember Jessica Caloza, CA Assembly District 52, Glendale Mayor Elen Asatryan, Glendale City Council Member Ara Najarian, Glendale City Council Member Ardy Kassakhian (Assembly Intern Alum), and representatives from the Glendale Teachers Association.

Staffers present included Declan Floyd, District Director for Assemblymember John Harabedian, Assembly District 41, former staff member for Senator Portantino; Astghik Hakobyan, Legislative Aid for Assemblymember Jessica Caloza, Assembly District 52, and former legislative aide for Senator Portantino; Arda Tchakian, District Representative for Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Senate District 25 and former district representative for Senator Portantino.

FRESNO STATE
Armenian Studies Program
THE ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM, FRESNO STATE
AND TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION METRO LOS ANGELES CHAPTER
PRESENT

**“DEATH MARCHES PAST THE FRONT DOOR:
CLARA AND FRITZ SIGRIST-HILTY: SWISS EYEWITNESSES
TO THE ARMENIAN DANTE-INFERNO IN TURKEY (1915-1918)”**
BY DR. DORA SAKAJAN

**UNDER THE AUSPICES
OF HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP HOVNAN DERDERIAN,
PRIMATE, WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH**

ԳԻՆԵՐՈՍ-BOOK LAUNCH
WITH PROF. BARLOW DER MUGRDECHIAN
ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM, FRESNO STATE

WITH HONORED GUEST HONORABLE FRANCO ZIMMERLI
HONORARY CONSUL OF SWITZERLAND IN LOS ANGELES



Death Marches Past the Front Door is the story of Swiss civil engineer Fritz Sigrist and his wife, nurse Clara Hilty. Sigrist was based in Ottoman Turkey in 1915 and he and his wife chronicled the unfolding of the Armenian Genocide.

Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian is the Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program and Director of the Center for Armenian Studies at Fresno State.



Sunday, April 27, 2025 • 5:00PM
Tekeyan Center • 1901 N. Allen Ave., Altadena, CA
Յայտագիրը Անգլերենով և Հայերենով



COMMUNITY NEWS

ANCA Western Region and Northern California Chapter Advocate For Legislation in Sacramento

ANCA, from page 6

pertinent to the Armenian-American community in California. The meetings primarily focused on advocating for two key legislative initiatives supported by ANCA-WR, bills AB-91 and SB-472, and the Armenian-American community's relief efforts in the aftermath of the devastating Los Angeles fires.

A major legislative focus, Assembly Bill 91 was introduced on January 6 by Assemblymember John Harabedian, who also serves as Chair of the Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation. This bicameral, bipartisan coalition—now the largest it has ever been—consists of 50 lawmakers dedicated to promoting Armenian-American interests in the California State Legislature. AB-91 would mandate state and local agencies in California that collect demographic data to expand their classifications to include major Middle Eastern, North African, and other transnational regional groups in all official public forms and documentation. Such agencies would also be required to report the data they've collected to the US Census Bureau prior to each centennial survey. As part of the bill's effort, Armenians would be counted separately alongside 30 other distinct groups indigenous to the region and its surrounding area.

Armenian-Americans are currently grouped under the "white" category in demographic data, which has led to significant underrepresentation for the community both in California and across the United States due to the label's broad parameters and the lack of distinct ethnic and national sub-categories attributed to it in

Primate Parsamyan Visits Naples Mission Parish

NEW YORK — From February 28 to March 3, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan was in Naples, Fla., visiting the Diocese's Southwest Florida mission parish. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy on the afternoon of Sunday, March 2, at a local Episcopal Church, with some 130 people participating. An equally large crowd attended the banquet that followed church services, where guests had a chance to meet and talk with the Primate, and hear his encouraging words for the future.

"Visiting this unique mission parish is like experiencing a cross-section of our Diocese, with faithful from many different parishes joining the year-round residents to create a truly vibrant and enthusiastic community," Bishop Mesrop said.

Bishop Mesrop's visit to Naples was also an opportunity for him to make pastoral visitations to elderly faithful, offer his blessings, and spend time with local families.



Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan in Naples

most public forms. This 'data invisibility' can limit Armenian-Americans' access to vital resources, including state and federal funding, scholarships, and grants for community-based initiatives such as cultural programs and events.

AB-91 aims to mitigate these disparities by ensuring a more precise, inclusive, and representative classification of Armenian-Americans and other historically undercounted communities within California's diverse population. The size and strength of our local community add weight to the urgency and importance of this effort, as California is home to the largest Armenian community in the United States and also represents the second-largest Armenian diaspora in the world. The bill is scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Judiciary Committee on March 25 at 8

a.m. PST. We encourage members of the Armenian-American community to watch the live hearing.

Although the Armenian Genocide is included in California's Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Materials, its instruction varies widely across classrooms statewide. Senate Bill 472, introduced by Senator Henry Stern with co-sponsorship from Senators Benjamin Allen and Scott Wiener, aims to address this inconsistency by establishing the "Holocaust and Genocide Education Grant Program."

Pending a final budget determination by the state legislature, this program would allocate a dedicated funding stream from the State Treasury to local educational agencies in California with the stated aim of enhancing curricula and training educators to effectively teach about the Holocaust and

other genocides in public schools, which would include the Armenian Genocide. Advocating for the expansion of Armenian Genocide education has been a longstanding priority for the ANCA-WR and the wider Armenian-American community, and we remain committed to ensuring SB-472 secures the necessary support in both chambers. No hearing has been scheduled for this bill as of March 14th, 2025.

"We have many allies in the California State Legislature, and we are grateful for their strong support of our communities across the state. The California Armenian Legislative Caucus is the largest it's ever been at 50 members strong. We must maintain our momentum as a community to ensure our priorities and concerns are heard," stated Oshin Harootonian, Chair of ANCA-WR Board of Directors.

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Senior Advisor for Strategic Planning and Initiatives
Professor of Armenian Studies, California State University, Fresno

Date: March 27, 2025
Time: 5 p.m.
Location: Heritage Hall*

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SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Arts & Culture

Arpa International Film Fest Celebrates Anniversary

HOLLYWOOD — The Arpa International Film Festival celebrated yet another year of storytelling from independent filmmakers across the globe. In its 27th year, the festival continues to shine and make a positive impact on the power of independent cinema.

Arpa IFF is a branch of the non-profit Arpa Foundation for Film, Music, and Art (AFFMA), celebrates diverse international talent in the heart of Hollywood. The festival creates a dynamic forum for international cinema, with a special focus on filmmakers who explore issues such as multiculturalism, war, exile, diaspora, dual identity, and environmentalism. Through film screenings, panel discussions, networking events, and closing night awards ceremonies, the festival bridges cultural divides and fosters dialogue among different



Mary Apick with her mom

ethnicities, cultures, and lifestyles. Whether presented through feature films, documentaries, shorts, animation, or music videos, these works showcase the vibrant world of independent cinema.

Throughout the years, many industry icons have graced the Arpa International Film Festival's galas as honorees, presenters, emcees, special award recipients, jury members and film enthusiasts. The festival has generated the participation of giants in the cinematic arena such as Howard Kazanjian, Hank Moonjean, Mark Martin, Cheech Marin, Vivica A. Fox, Frances Fisher, Atom Egoyan, Serj Tankian, Tippi Hedren, Edward James Olmos, and many others. This year, the festival showcased more than 100 films from 25 countries on the digital streaming platform Eventive and at in-person screenings, of note Director Eric Nazarian's "Die Like a Man," which follows Freddy, a 17-year-old facing a moral choice in gang violence, exploring masculinity and gun culture through an authentic Los Angeles lens.

Nazarian also created a film literacy and filmmaking social impact program by training and employing system-impacted youth and Angelenos as a deterrent to gun and gang violence. The film was recently acquired by Gravititas Ventures and is set for a 2025 global release.

see ARPA, page 14



Out of Egypt: Peggy Hinaekian and The Artistic Life

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — Writer, photographer and color field painter Peggy Hinaekian is 89 years old and shows no signs of slowing down. In fact the more time goes by, the more successful projects she seems to undertake.

The Egyptian-born polymath is an inspirational whirlwind of activity. Raised in Cairo where a prosperous Armenian community once lived, Hinaekian's paternal step-grandfather, Karekin Durgherian, owned the largest private library in Egypt. As a result, she grew up surrounded by books in a multilingual household where she learned English, French, Arabic and Armenian at a young age.

"My father was a Renaissance man and a fatalist," explained Hinaekian. "During WWII in Cairo, when the sirens would blast, we would all go down to the doorkeeper's living quarters in a semi-basement. My father, however, stayed behind and would declare that he preferred dying in his bed if a bomb fell on the building."

After leaving Cairo, Hinaekian spent years honing her craft as an artist at leading institutions such as the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the Leonardo da Vinci Academy of Art in Rome. She also studied Art History at McGill University and etching at the Institute of Contemporary Prints in Geneva, Switzerland. Then ensued a career as a fashion designer in Boston and Manhattan before she decided to pursue art as a profession.

Inspired by Matisse, Modigliani and Picasso, she began creating paintings based on "the couples theme" as she terms it, and solitary women posed in different positions and painted in vivid colors. Since then, she has been creating vibrant abstract landscapes in blue and earth tones, as well as collages on paper in rich reds, blues and blacks.

While becoming an accomplished painter, Hinaekian also published her first book, an erotic romance novel titled *Of Julia and Men* in 2018, which explores the latent sexual tension between the opposite sexes.

Then in 2020, she came out with an autobiographical memoir titled *The Girl from Cairo*, which traces the author's early life in the Egyptian capital through WWII, followed by her cosmopolitan existence in Montreal, Boston and New York City in the 1950s and early 1960s. This fast-paced work takes the reader through two Middle Eastern wars and the mind of a young woman who escapes

see HINAEKIAN, page 13

Books

On the Occasion Of the Armenian Edition of the Book *Anastas Mikoyan: From Ilyich to Ilyich*

By Ruben Mirzakhanyan

The infamous plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia in 1937 is a factually documented historical event. Among the distinguished participants who arrived in Yerevan for this session were Anastas Mikoyan, a senior member of the Soviet leadership; Georgy Malenkov, head of the Union-wide Central Committee's department (who later assumed the role of the head of the Soviet Government following Stalin's death); as well as Mikhail Litvinov and Lazar Artman, both figures associated with the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). Additionally, Lavrentiy Beria travelled from Tbilisi to attend.

The session lasted for four days, following an officially declared break. Ultimately, this event precipitated widespread political repression across the country. While these occurrences have been extensively analysed in scholarly literature, a less known yet intriguing detail has recently emerged: Mikoyan actively participated in the first day of the plenary session but was conspicuously absent for the remainder, reappearing only at the end of the session. It has now come to light that during his absence, he secretly crossed the Armenian-Turkish border to meet with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The contents of their discussion remain classified to this day. However, it is plausible that the plenary session served as a mere pretext to obscure significant foreign policy arrangements. The fact that an Armenian statesman was entrusted with these discussions is noteworthy.

More than two decades later, following the conclusion of the Second World War, Mikoyan — who had been the first high-ranking Soviet official to visit the United States in the early 1930s — played a crucial role in diplomatic negotiations between the two emerging superpowers. During his meeting with then US Vice President (later President) Richard Nixon, Mikoyan addressed the condition of Armenians in Turkey, expressing his concerns in that respect. Official records of these discussions are extant. It is evident that in both instances, substantial attention was devoted to the plight of Armenians in the region. The undeniable outcome of these efforts was the safeguarding of the physical security of the Armenian people.

In light of the foregoing discussion, it becomes evident that diplomatic negotiations yield results when conducted by political figures of exceptional stature — individuals who wield genuine power, possess intellectual acumen and act with responsibility.

see BOOKS, page 14



ARTS & CULTURE

Out of Egypt: Peggy Hinaekian and the Artistic Life

HINAEKIAN, from page 12

age-old cultural stereotypes to gain the freedom to live as an emancipated woman. At the beginning of the book, Hinaekian describes her desire to recapture her lost youth, though she realizes that this is a vain attempt: "But alas, nothing can be recaptured."

Hinaekian's writing style is spare and to the point, and her narrator shoots from the hip, as when she writes: "I knew that life was full of surprises, and I could not predict the future. I was just damn curious to find out what was in store for me on the other side of the Atlantic."

Hinaekian's writing has been featured in the *New York Times* and in 2020 she received a literary award from the Writer's Workshop in Asheville, NC.

Of all of Hinaekian's different activities artistic and literary, I am perhaps most taken by her rich color field paintings. In the large 44" by 24" acrylic-on-canvas "Spring Green" (2023) the artist pairs an almost rust green with a deep Chinese red that play off each other in a rich yin and yang of abstraction. The top green part of the diptych and the bottom red flow into each other like waves and intersect with elemental force.

Other works display both whimsy and craft, such as her 2024 "Bluebirds Flying Through." Set against a bright orange and yellow canvas reminiscent of a setting sun, two bluebirds sit on a thread that resembles the tail of a kite before flying off through a painted rectangular tear in the canvas. On the edge of the red tear, dots of blue hint at more bluebirds on a journey somewhere else, reminiscent perhaps of the Judy Garland song *Over the Rainbow*.

A typical canvas can take Hinaekian up to two weeks to complete. The painter succinctly explained her process for making these colorful works: "Rothko most influenced my color field paintings. I paint differently than he does, though. I first put a layer of gesso mixed with some paint thickener, then I lay down a color that I would



"Jumping Fish under Blue Cloud" by Peggy Hinaekian

like to appear in the final product. I then lay on other colors on top of that to create a multi-surfaced final painting."

Other canvases hue more closely to a classic color field, such as one large, also rectangular-sized, canvas with orange rectangles painted over a red background or another almost entirely blue canvas with at least four or five shades of blue from light aquamarine to deep almost blue black, which recalls ocean waves against sand and the sky falling from above.

As Hinaekian writes: "I'm fascinated by the warm earth tones of desert landscapes and the cool blue hues of the oceans. My colors evoke the Egyptian landscape — the Sinai desert's quality of orange light and the turquoise blue of the Mediterranean

Sea. These left an indelible impression on me and have influenced the entire corpus of my work."

As she has explained elsewhere, Hinaekian starts off with a general idea but then lets chance play its role in her creative process, as opposed to some artists who work with exact specifications ahead of time and know what a final

possibility of ambiguity and surprise, as I try to immerse the viewer in a perceptual experience of space, color and light." The experience that the artist tries to create for viewers is deeply sensual as she almost physically guides them into the paintings, so they may "wander off into a different reality."

Currently Hinaekian is exhibiting at the San Diego Water Color Society in Pacific Beach, Calif., through March and at the North Coastal Art Gallery in Carlsbad, Calif., through the end of 2025. Art lovers may also take in her work at venues as diverse as the Contemporary Fine Arts Gallery in La Jolla, Calif., the M. A. Doran Art Gallery in Tulsa, Ok, and at San Diego's MOPA/SDMA Museum. The artist splits her time between California and Switzerland,

where her work can also be found at the Carouge Art Museum, the Contemporary Print Museum of Geneva and the Canton of Geneva Art Collection. Hinaekian enjoys sharing her thoughts on life, and art and holds a monthly salon at her La Jolla studio, which has become a tradition amongst locals.

Out of Egypt a young Armenian woman once emerged to conquer the world — and after much hard work and determination, she

has seemingly done just that. Her motto has always been: "Don't dream your life, live your dreams."



"Blue Birds Flying" by Peggy Hinaekian

canvas will look like before they set out to paint it: "I rarely work with a preconceived vision for the final product. I allow for the

Violinist Nuné Melikian Revives Legacy of Arno Babajanian

MELIKIAN, from page 1

Foundation. (There are two transliterated spellings of Babajanian/Babadjanian, both commonly used in English.)

Melikian is a prize-winner of numerous competitions and audience awards, has performed at prestigious venues such as the Stern Auditorium and Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall and Merkin Hall at Lincoln Center. She graduated from the Gnnessin Music College, studied at the Moscow State Conservatory, and holds a master's degree from the University of Montreal and a Ph.D. from McGill University.

After a brief introduction by NAASR Director of Academic Affairs Marc Mamigonian, Melikian, accompanied by pianist Riko Higuma, a faculty member at Manhattan School of Music, performed several pieces of classical music by composers whom Babajanian liked, such as Johannes Brahms, as well as the Armenian ethnomusicologist Gomidas Vartabed, who influenced Babajanian's work. Higuma then played Babajanian's *Impromptu*, before Melikian rejoined her to perform a special arrangement by Artem Andreyan for the violin and piano of Babajanian's *Elegy*. Melikian explained that this piece, which is very dear to her heart, is based on Sayat Nova's folk tune and written in memory of Aram Khachaturian. The two musicians concluded the musical portion of the evening with a rousing version of *Sabre*

Dance, by Khachaturian, who served as a mentor to Babajanian.

After the audience listened to Babajanian's music, Melikian presented to them a brief overview of the composer's life and works, accompanied by PowerPoint slides. Born in Armenia, Babajanian received his early musical education in Yerevan, including at the conservatory, before going to Moscow during his formative years. He was a virtuoso pianist even at the age of 11.

He received the Stalin Prize of the second degree later, which was an important jumpstart to his career, Melikian explained. While helpful, she also noted that the state system encouraged ethnic composers to work within certain guidelines, which restricted their musical approaches from being too avantgarde or religious.

Babajanian dedicated his violin sonata (1958) to Russian composer and pianist Dmitri Shostakovich, and though this work was very heavily criticized by the Composers' Union, Shostakovich called Babajanian to tell him that he really liked it. Babajanian had a long relationship throughout his life also with Aram Khachaturian and was friends with Armenian-American writer William Saroyan and British composer Benjamin Britten.

From the 1960s, Babajanian became known in the Soviet Union primarily as a pop music composer, where he faced less harsh criticism. His songs were translated



Marc Mamigonian show off Nuné Melikian's new book (photo Aram Arkun)

into more than 10' different languages, Melikian said. She observed that this shift almost feels forced. This was both because of his lymphoblastoma which did not allow him to continue piano playing due to pain, and also because of lack of Soviet encouragement for his classical compositions.

As a consequence of this shift, Melikian said, he did not receive as much recognition as his peers during his lifetime and even afterwards in the classical field. His childhood friend Edvard Mirzoyan, who was president of the Armenian Composers' Union, fought hard to get Babajanian

buried in the Armenian pantheon. However, he was rejected on the grounds that Babajanian did not write symphonies and so could not be considered a classical Armenian composer. Another factor in this rejection, Melikian said, was that he did not write works praising socialism and the image of the worker, and so was not considered state-aligned.

Even now, his songs continue to be sung or played in Russia and Armenia but Melikian wanted to change the lacuna of materials on his classical works in the West, and her doctoral dissertation research embodied in this new book is a step towards this. She has also given many lectures about him, performed his music, and in 2019 prepared a short documentary film about him in English. The book contains a full list of Babajanian's works and exclusive photos from the Babajanian family archives, along with anecdotes from his colleagues and family.

Melikian plans for an audiobook and both French and Armenian-language translations of her book to be released next year, which will be the 105th anniversary of Babajanian. Concerts are being planned for next year, too.

After answering some audience questions, including by two people who had interacted with Babajanian, Melikian signed copies of her book.

Copies of the book are also available through the website nunemelik.com.

ARTS & CULTURE

Arpa International Film Fest Celebrates Anniversary

ARPA, from page 12

Just like Women in Filmmaking, the festival has honored, women have also played important roles in organizing the annual festival. Sylvia Minassian, AFFMA's founder, tirelessly promotes independent filmmakers. Sonia Keshishian serves as the festival's jury liaison, and Maral Kazazian is the festival director, these women recognize and celebrate cultural diversity across the globe ensuring that women's voices are represented. The Arpa International Film Festival values and celebrates independent global filmmakers. As storytellers, they inspire and shine a spotlight on creative freedom.

The 27th Annual Arpa International Festival was celebrated at the Harmony Gold Theater October 25-27, offering the film loving community a unique opportunity to discover new films and talent. The incredible roster of the festival's honorees and recipients of Arpa's prestigious awards included Danny Trejo, George Pennacchio, Michael A. Goorjian, Roxanne Medina Cantor, Gabriele Fabbro.

Another highlight of the festival was the inspiring and creative discussion of WOMEN IN FILMMAKING Panel, with filmmaker/actress Mary Apick, the legendary actress Diana Baker, and gifted producer Valerie McCaffrey discussing their experiences and unveiling their upcoming projects.

The awards ceremony was hosted by filmmaker and beauty/fashion world personality Diana Madison. The award recipients Michael Goorjian received career achievement award, Roxanne Medina Cantor visionary award, Danny Trejo Icon award, Gabriel Fabbro Rising Star Award,

which highlighted the festival's global appeal in continuing its support to leading and upcoming artists.

The 2024 Arpa International Film Festival Awards Winners:

- Best Feature Narrative
 "Here's Yianni!" — Directed by Christina Eliopoulos (United States)
- Best Director
 "Here's Yianni!" — Directed by Christina Eliopoulos (United States)
- Best Screenplay
 "Wages of Sin" — Directed by Victor Rios (United States)
- Best Feature-Length Documentary (Tie)
 "Jewel of the Desert" — Directed by Mary Apick (United States)
- "Sunflowers in the Rain" — Directed by Aaron MacCarley (United States)
- Best Music Video
 "Anguish as a Second Language" — Directed by Denise Gentilini (United States)
- Best Short Documentary
 "Driving the Green Book" — Directed by Mike De Caro (United States)
- Best Animated Film
 "The Song of Flying Leaves" — Directed by Armine Anda (Armenia)
- Best Short Films (Tie)
 "One Note" — Directed by Jamie Ting (United States)
- "The Last Take" — Directed by Brian Foyster (United States)
- "Jewel of the Desert," a documentary by Mary Apick, won Best Feature-Length Documentary. The film follows a brass band of retirees who, despite lacking professional experience, passionately pursue music. During the Q&A, Apick introduced



Valerie McCaffrey, Maral Kazazian, Ani Hovannisian, Sylvia Minassian, Mary Apick, Toma Enache and Sonia Keshishian

her mother, Apick Youssefian, and shared, "This film was an opportunity to capture these musicians; they all have hearts of gold. When they play their instruments, they come alive."

"Missak and Melinee Manouchian," a documentary by Katia Guiragossian from France, received the Armin T. Wegner Humanitarian Award. Another notable entry, "Vigen," Berlin and the Cold War, produced by Aviva Barkhourdarian and Norik Keshishian, explores the life of the filmmaker's father, an Armenian migrant in Germany during the Cold War. The film was nominated for Best Documentary and received a Mayor's Commendation from

the City of Glendale.

Arpa IFF is already at work for its 28th year, planning, organizing and collaborating, to make sure the indie film community continues to have an authentic viewing experience. Film submissions will soon open on FilmFreeway.

Arpa's mission is to unite diverse people and cultures through the arts, believing in film's power to inspire, entertain, and create change. As a nonprofit organization, all financial support helps continue championing global independent filmmakers in Hollywood.

For more information about the organization, visit arpafilmfestival.com.

On the Occasion of the Armenian Edition of the Book *Anastas Mikoyan: From Ilyich to Ilyich*

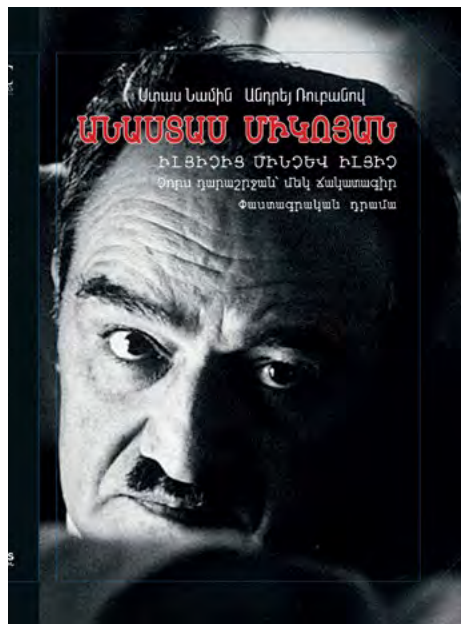
BOOKS, from page 12

Stas Namin and Andrey Rubanov's documentary work *Anastas Mikoyan: From Ilyich to Ilyich*, has been published in multiple editions in Moscow, later translated into Armenian, and published in Yerevan. The translation was undertaken by one of Armenia's leading historians, Dr. Khachatur Stepanyan. The involvement of a scholar of such high calibre in producing the Armenian edition, which incorporates various primary sources, lends the work considerable academic credibility. The Armenian translation includes bibliographic annotations and a rigorous scholarly apparatus, reflecting the expertise of a distinguished historian.

Namin, is not only a cultural figure of international renown but also Anastas Mikoyan's grandson. Consequently, Namin's work represents not only an invaluable scholarly contribution but also a deeply personal endeavour.

The book provides a comprehensive examination of Mikoyan's life, covering: his childhood and early years (1906–1917); his role in the Baku Commune (March 1917–September 1919); his professional activities in Nizhny Novgorod and Rostov (1919–1928); his contributions to the organization of the Soviet Union's food industry (1930–1941); his efforts during and after the Great Patriotic War (1941–1953); his pivotal role in the de-Stalinization process as the Soviet Union's crisis manager in diplomacy (1953–1964) and his tenure as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium and his final years (1963–1978).

As a committed Marxist, Mikoyan was an active participant in the Bolshevik movement in both Caucasus and Russia. He was imprisoned five times for his political undertakings. His contributions to



the Baku Commune were particularly celebrated. Notably, he named his children after the executed Baku Commissars. It is said that Stalin occasionally referred to him as the "twenty-seventh commissar," an epithet intended to highlight Mikoyan's survival amid the purge of the Baku Commissars, thereby keeping his inner circle in a constant state of apprehension. However, first-hand accounts, including those of Mikoyan himself and Suren Shahumyan (son of Stepan Shahumyan), provide a more nuanced perspective on these events.

Mikoyan's exceptional administrative aptitude was most evident in his food supply management, internal and external trade arrangements, and the coordinated material and technical provisioning of the Soviet Union. During the Great Patriotic War, his role was decisive in organizing food supplies for the Red Army and overseeing the relocation of industrial

enterprises to the eastern regions of the USSR – an unprecedented logistical operation in world history. It was customary for high-ranking Soviet officials to receive awards on solemn occasions. Mikoyan was conferred the title of the top-ranked Hero of Socialist Labour in 1943 in recognition of his outstanding merits.

Mikoyan astutely recognised that, from the mid-1930s onward, the undertaken technological advancements were predominantly occurring in the United States rather than in Europe or elsewhere. This awareness led to his numerous visits to the U.S., where he laid the groundwork for the Soviet canned food industry and the mass production of processed food. His initiatives facilitated the large-scale introduction of sausages, frankfurters, ice cream, condensed milk, and even Soviet champagne – each manufactured on an unprecedented scale. Notably, while Soviet industry adopted American technological advancements, it carefully adapted them to the specific conditions of the USSR, ensuring that food production avoided artificial additives. Mikoyan is also credited with the famous assertion: "Advertisement is trade's engine."

From the 1950s to the early 1960s, Mikoyan emerged as a dominant figure in Soviet diplomacy. In 1957, *Time* magazine featured his portrait on its cover – an honour traditionally reserved for heads of state. Harvard University surveyed specialists, asking them to identify the foremost crisis manager of the 20th century. The majority were named Mikoyan, despite the list including primarily world leaders.

Mikoyan was the principal negotiator during the Berlin Crisis when the world teetered on the brink of a third world war.

He also played a decisive role in resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis when nuclear war seemed imminent. Furthermore, he was the chief Soviet negotiator in diplomatic engagements with China, India, and Vietnam. Upon his passing, numerous prominent global leaders sent messages of condolence despite the fact that he had long since retired and no longer enjoyed the favour of the Soviet establishment.

Anastas Mikoyan was a statesman of global significance. International developments were there to ground his actions and policies, and he approached Armenian affairs within this broader geopolitical framework, which ensured the efficacy of his decisions. A question might be asked: So, what did Mikoyan do for Armenia and the Armenian people? The answer is unequivocal: he twice prevented a nuclear war, and Armenia is part of the world he helped to preserve.

For those with a narrower perspective, one need only consult the memoirs of Soviet Armenian leaders from the 1950s and 1960s. Whenever they visited Moscow, their first meeting was invariably with Mikoyan, after which numerous issues concerning the Armenian SSR were resolved.

Academician Rafael Ghazaryan, a member of the Karabakh Committee – who could never be accused of sympathy towards the Soviet regime and ideology – once wrote: "If only Armenia had a president like Mikoyan."

And there seems to be no other way to put it better.

(Ruben Mirzakhanyan is a Doctor of Historical Sciences and professor in Yerevan, as well as president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Armenia.)



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Grazing Nomads' Armenian Cabbage Dolma

Dolma is one of the most popular dishes in Armenian culture. Armenians often know more than 50 dolma recipes. And it is no surprise that Armenia also has a dolma (tolma) festival, where you will get to know almost all types of Armenian dolma. Dolma is prepared from minced lamb or beef mixed with rice, fresh herbs and spices, wrapped in grape or cabbage leaves. Many Armenians use seasonings such as coriander, dill, mint, pepper and cinnamon. The taste of the dolma varies in each region, including Artamet, Alashkert, and Etchmiadzin. This traditional cabbage dolma recipe and article were posted on October 10, 2015 by Grazing Nomads, a travel and food blog that features recipes from around the world, and stories and photos of the towns, cities, and local people and travel guides they meet along the way.

"We found the food in Armenia was a real treat, especially after the limited variety we found in Georgia," says John Wood at Grazing Nomads. "Armenia's land is very fertile and the locals take pride in using fresh and local produce. One dish we tasted in various traditional restaurants was the dolma, stuffed parcels of meat or/and rice wrapped in cabbage or grape leaves. Similar to those found in Greek and Turkish cuisine. However, the very best dolma we had was not in a restaurant."

"After a long day of hitchhiking we were welcomed into a lovely family home in a town south of Yerevan, and presented with the mother's delicious dolmas. Full of flavor and incredibly moist, we could not leave without begging for the recipe. Below is the recipe given to us by Marine and her daughter Anna. The secret to the tastiness of Marine's dolmas is that they are boiled in tomato juice. Although they look 'fiddly,' once you have made the first dolma you will find they are incredibly quick and easy. And look



Grazing Nomads met Marine and her family who prepared this traditional dolma recipe for them

great on the table."

"Everywhere we went on our trip to Armenia we found friendly locals and were warmly welcomed," says Wood. "Nearly every driver bought us food or drink, invited us home, some even invited us for picnics. The language barrier was not a problem, as people were just happy to help us and show us a part of their amazing country. We made lots of friends, some of which we hope to meet again and stay in touch with. We were genuinely overwhelmed and surprised by the kindness of people in Armenia. Not once were we asked for money. Although the sheer beauty and intense culture of Armenia was striking, it's the people we met and what they showed or taught us that struck us and made this trip one of the most memorable so far."

"The Dolma (Tolma) Festival in Armenia, also known as Uduli, is a festival that is held annually near the city of Armavir, Armenia. It began in 2011 and focuses on appreciation of Armenian cuisine, especially dolma, a traditional Armenian dish made of ground beef, lamb and spices wrapped in grape leaves, cabbage leaves and vegetables. During the festival, chefs from Armenia and other countries aim to cook different kinds of stuffed vegetable dishes known as dolma. During the competition, festival guests can watch Armenian dances, listen to songs, and taste the dolma. At the end of the festival, a jury chooses the best chef. The winner gets a special prize — a golden statue."

The Delishably website writes: "Madhulika Dash is a senior writer for the Indian Express with over 13 years of writing experience. In 2016 she interviewed Sabyasachi Gorai, the chef-owner of India's first Armenian café, Lavaash by Saby. In that interview, Chef Gorai stated that dolmas were made in Sardarapat 3,000 years ago. Due to military conflicts, Armenia became part of a larger empire. Armenian peoples and their culture expanded to Greece, then Turkey, and Iran. When Alexander the Great marched into Thebes in 335 B.C., he was astonished that in an area suffering from an acute food shortage, there were such sumptuous platters of food. The dolmas he saw, though made of simple ingredients, were impressive."

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 head green cabbage
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1/2 cup rice
- 2 tablespoons tomato puree or tomato sauce
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 1 stick butter
- 2 cans chopped tomatoes
- Herbs such as fresh bunch of parsley, basil, coriander or dill; a combination of herbs works well
- Salt, black pepper
- Spices (paprika, coriander, turmeric), optional

PREPARATION:

In a large bowl, mix the uncooked meat, rice, chopped herbs, onions, butter, spices (salt and pepper, you can add other spices of your choice), and tomato puree. Mix until well combined.

Cut the head of the cabbage at the bottom, carefully removing the leaves one by one without breaking them. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boiling point and let the cabbage leaves boil for approximately 7 minutes. Remove the cabbage leaves from the water and place on a tray. Leave cabbage leaves until cool enough to handle.

Take one cabbage leaf, place a tablespoon of stuffing on the border closest to you, roll the edge of cabbage over it, and fold the two sides of the cabbage leaves inward and roll. (It sounds complicated but it's just like rolling up a carpet, and it takes practice.)

Repeat for all the cabbage leaves and stuffing. Place each stuffed cabbage roll in a pot with the folded end underneath so that it does not unfold. Lightly sprinkle with salt. Place a heat-resistant plate on top of the dolmas (in the pot) so that they do not open up when cooking.

Pour equal amounts of chopped tomatoes and water on top of the dolmas until they are completely covered. You are unlikely to use both cans of tomatoes completely. Cook on a medium heat for approximately 40 minutes or until a fork easily pierces through the dolmas. Serve dolmas either hot or cold, as a snack or part of a main meal.

Gorky and the Language of Drawing on Exhibit at the Mosesian Center

WATERTOWN — The year 2025 marks the 100th anniversary of the time when Armenian American artist Arshile Gorky lived in Watertown. Gorky endured personal tragedies from fleeing his village during the Armenian genocide and later losing his mother at a young age. After arriving in America in 1920 he was able to pursue his passion for art and create work that reflected his traumatic past. Gorky's biomorphic abstractions hold an important place in 20th century art.

As Watertown celebrates the art and life of the artist, Mosesian Center for the Arts is excited to be a part of the events honoring Gorky's work.

The Mosesian Center invited artists to submit artwork that recognized the impor-

ance of drawing as a vital artistic practice. Artists in the exhibition used drawing as a vehicle of self-expression, drawing as a way of recording thoughts and experiences, and as a form of visual thinking.

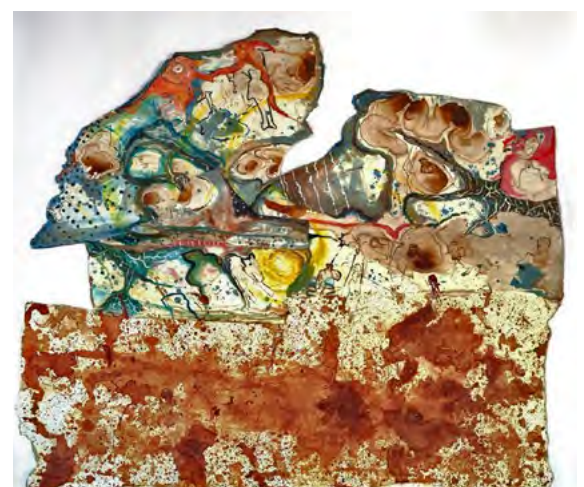
"Gorky and the Language of Drawing: Observation, Transformation and Metaphor" is on display at the Mosesian Center for the Arts through April 25.

In addition, there will be a free screening of the film "Without Gorky" on March 28, at 7:30 p.m. The mission of The Mosesian Center for the Arts is to enrich the lives of diverse audiences and participants by providing exceptional experiences in theater, visual, and literary art.

For more information, visit www.mosesianarts.org.



"Opening Books" Bill Flynn
30 x 24 inches pastel on paper 2022



Gerri Rachins, "First Flying Machines to Take Off, V1," Flashe gouache acrylic ink



CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 22 — Lowell ARF 130th Anniversary. Dinner-Program. Featured speaker, Prof. Christina Maranci, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies, Harvard University, who will discuss Destruction of Artsakh's Priceless Cultural Heritage by Azerbaijan. Kazanjian Ballroom, Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford, Rd., Chelmsford. 6 p.m. Reservations required. Call or email Armen Jeknavorian, 978-265-9479; armenjeknavorian@gmail.com. or Ara Jeknavorian, 617-803-2612, ara.a.jeknavorian@gmail.com. Adults - \$35. Students - \$15. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to assist the thousands of Artsakh refugees forced from their homeland and now living in Armenia.

MARCH 22 -APRIL 25 — "Gorky and the Language of Drawing: Observation, Transformation and Metaphor" exhibit at the Mosesian Center for the Arts. Free screening of the film "Without Gorky" on March 28, at 7:30 p.m. Mosesian Center for the Arts, the Arsenal on the Charles, 321 Arsenal St., Watertown. Visit www.mosesianarts.org for details.

MARCH 25 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents a lecture by Prof. Sergio La Porta of California State University, Fresno, Titled "When Things Fall Apart: Disentangling Christian-Muslim Relations in Medieval Armenia," on Tuesday, 7 p.m., at the Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown (Use Norseman Avenue entrance.) With the support of Dean Shahinian and the co-sponsorship of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research and the Armenian Cultural Foundation. Free admission and reception. For info, contact syogurtian@comcast.net or call (617) 281-1647.

MARCH 30 — Special Lenten Luncheon – Hosted by the Ladies Guild of Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall (200 Lexington St., Belmont, MA), 12:00 PM. Featuring: Keynote Speaker: Dr. Cara Aghajanian, Dame of the Order of Malta & Honorary Presenter of the Servant of God Cardinal Agagianian A culturally rich program in the spirit of Lent Tickets: \$35 Reserve your spot: Contact Ingrid at 617-312-0805 Email: holycrossbostonma@gmail.com Venmo: @HCACCA

APRIL 3 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents a lecture by Vicky Kherlopian, titled "Introduction to Education in Armenian Today." 7 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. (Use Norseman Avenue entrance.) Free; reception afterwards. For info, contact syogurtian@comcast.net or call (617) 281-1647.

APRIL 6 — The ARF Sardarabad Gomideh, the ANCA of Eastern Massachusetts, the "Leola Sassouni" and "Shushi" chapters of the ARS, the "Nejdeh" AYF Chapter, Hamazkayin and Homenetmen chapters of Boston, the ACEC, the AGBU of New England, St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, the Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Shahbazian Foundation cohost a commemorative event entitled "Forgotten, Unforgettable: Marking the 40th Anniversary of the U.N.'s Recognition of the Armenian Genocide." Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown) at 3 p.m. The event will be in English and free and open to the public. Harut Sassounian, the publisher of the California Courier newspaper will be the keynote speaker. It will also include a presentation of the flags by the Homenetmen Scouts and a cultural performance by the ArtNova Hamazkayin Choir of Boston under the directorship of Artur Veranian.

APRIL 7 — St. James Armenian Church Men's Club will host Harut Sassounian, a publisher, syndicated columnist, human rights activist, author and founder of the Armenia Artsakh Fund, which has delivered a billion dollars of humanitarian aid to Armenia over the past 35 years. Talk titled "Genocide Recognition or Quest For Justice?" Losh Kebab and Kheyma Dinner. Social Hour (mezza) 6:15 p.m. Dinner 7 p.m. \$25 per person. St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center. Keljik Hall, 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown.

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 Marian 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 13 — Piano Recital by Prominent Armenian Pianist Sahan Arzruni in tribute to Armenian woman composers. Works by: M. Kouyoumdjian, K. Gazarossian, A. Terzian, S. Karamanuk, D. Goolkasian-Rahbee, L. Hazarabedian, G. Chitchyan, and G. Chebotaryan. Organized by Armenian Cultural Foundation, Mirak Chamber Music Series. Co-sponsored by AGBU Boston Affiliate, AIWA New England Affiliate, Amaras Art Alliance, Sunday, 5 p.m., Robbins Memorial Town Hall (730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington). Free and Open to the public.

APRIL 15 — National Association of Armenian Studies and Research hosts author Nancy Kricorian in conversation with Nanore Barsoumian, IALA Literary Lights spring series event, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. To be filmed and posted online. 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont.

APRIL 17 — Author Nancy Kricorian will appear at Porter Square Books, Cambridge, on Thursday at 7 p.m. Author talk and Q&A about her new book, Burning Heart of the World, followed by book signing. In Conversation with Lisa Gulesserian. Contact: Katie Haemmerle. 1815 Mass Ave., Cambridge.

APRIL 27 — Book Launch: A Conversation and Reception with Narine Abgaryan, author of To Go on Living. Organized by Armenian Cultural Foundation, co-sponsored by Plough Quarterly, NAASR, AIWA New England Affiliate, Amara Art Alliance, Sunday, 5 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation (441 Mystic Street, Arlington).

APRIL 27 — Remembrance of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide. Divine Liturgy, Reception, and Cultural Program with the participation of the Armenian Churches of the Merrimack Valley. Armenian Church. Guest Speaker, Aram Arkun, Performance by the Sayat Nova Dance Ensemble, and musical selections by parish youth. Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Divine Liturgy will begin at 10:00 a.m. Special Sunday School Program for the Youth.

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). Gala Banquet & Dance open to the public on Friday, May 2 at the Hilton Boston Woburn 2 Forbes Rd., Woburn, MA 01801. For more information, please visit <https://www.hypointearmenianchurch.org/>

MAY 1 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents "The Global World of Armenian Merchants, 1600-1720," a lecture by Dr. Gayane Ayyvazyan, a PhD candidate at Harvard University's History Department and Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Lecture primarily in Armenian. Thursday, 7 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown (use Norseman Avenue door). Free admission, reception to follow. For more information, contact syogurtian@comcast.net or call (617) 281-1647.

MAY 16-17 — Annual Fair at Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown dine-in or take-out. Beef, chicken, losh kabob or vegetarian meals Friday 4-8 p.m.-Saturday 12-7 p.m. Sale of Armenian desserts and delicacies. The Church will donate 10% of the fair proceeds to the California Wildfire Relief Fund through the Armenian Missionary Association of America.

NEW JERSEY

MARCH 30 — An Evening with Amalya Yeghoyan, executive director of the Gyumri Information Technology Center. Learn what this award-winning, innovative center has done to make Armenia the tech hub of the region. Sunday. Reception and presentation begin at 5. St. Leon Armenian Church, Abajian Hall, 12-51 Saddle River Road, Fair Lawn.

APRIL 10 — AMAA NY/NJ Orphan & Child Care Committee invites you to a Rendezvous @ the Barnes Foundation – a guided tour of the Barnes Foundation Collection. Tickets: \$250, Lunch at 11 a.m., Guided Tour at 12:30 p.m. Roundtrip transportation provided from the Armenian Presbyterian Church (APC) in Paramus, NJ to the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA and back. For more info and RSVP visit: <https://amaa.org/rendezvousatthebarnes/>

MAY 10 — St. Leon Armenian Church and Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group present Anton Chekhov's "The Marriage Proposal," a comedy directed by Harout Chatmajian for an evening of dinner theater. Play will be performed in Armenian with English subtitles. Saturday, cocktails at 7 p.m. and dinner at 7.30 p.m., St. Leon Armenian Church Abajian Hall, 12-61 Saddle River Road, Fair Lawn. Tickets \$70 for adults, \$45 for students. Cash bar. For reservations, Aline Araz at (917) 716-3827 or aline@edrcorp.net or Marie Zokian (201) 745-8850. Reservations accepted with payment and names of guests. Make checks payable to St. Leon Armenian Church. Mail to Aline Araz, 876 Pueblo Drive, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417.

RHODE ISLAND

MARCH 22 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church presents "A tribute to the music of Charles Aznavour." Presented by Berge Turabian, with guest singer Alvard Mayilyan. Guest of Honor Louise Janigian. Belcour of Newport (657 Bellevue Avenue, Newport). Saturday, doors open at 5:30 p.m. Concert at 6 p.m. Refreshments immediately following. Suggested Donation \$30. 3COMMON.COM/AZNAVOUR. Tickets also available at the church. Call 401-272-7712.

PENNSYLVANIA

APRIL 26 — Armenian Heritage Walk Groundbreaking, Saturday, 2 p.m. Beside the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2600 Benjamin Franklin Pkwy, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia.

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" or 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

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'Peace Treaty' Alone Is No Guarantee of Real Peace

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, C.M.

The Armenian authorities have announced this week with great expectations that the text of a peace treaty with Azerbaijan has been finalized.

Indeed, after the infamous forty-four-day war in 2020 that ended in defeat, over the past four years the Armenian authorities have been pursuing relentlessly what appears to be their main political strategic goal, the signing of a so-called peace treaty with Azerbaijan, which would guarantee a period of peace and tranquility for Armenia.

During these four years, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his main associates from the Civil Contract Party, without losing hope, used every opportunity to try and achieve the finalization of this treaty. During this entire period, on the contrary, a self-confident Azerbaijan, intoxicated by the success of the war, has continuously expressed ever increasingly arrogant and extraordinary demands and conditions directed at Armenia.

The peak of this unbridled arrogance is the naming of all of Armenia, to this very day, as "Western Azerbaijan" by the highest state officials of Azerbaijan.

It is under these circumstances that, during the past few days, the news suddenly spread in Armenia and then in the international press that Armenia and Azerbaijan had agreed on all points of the text for a "peace treaty." It is noteworthy, however, that while the Armenian authorities are trying to present this event as an important achievement, and similarly, while European,

American and neighboring countries are responding to this news with optimism, on the other hand, there is no information about the date or place of signing the treaty, and, significantly, Azerbaijan does not even address this issue in any way. Moreover, every day Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev still demands new concessions from Armenia.

In the face of all this, it is completely understandable that the raised voices of the majority of the Armenian people living in the homeland express concern and distrust. Moreover, they are awaiting with pessimism the details of the full content of this trumpeted agreement.

The diaspora, in its turn, shares the pessimism of the people of the homeland in general, in view of the current government's repeatedly demonstrated practice of making defeatist concessions.

It is under these conditions that in response to the questions addressed to us in this regard, we too, as conscientious Armenians, based on the incomplete data available to the public at present about the "peace treaty," express with this article our concern and, for the time being, pessimism.

This concern and pessimism are based on one major fundamental lapse: today, more than four years after the war, there is still a clear lack of military preparedness at a high level of sophistication for Armenia's defense. Short of any other guarantee, the latter would be the most reliable and important guarantee of the true durability of any such treaty and, consequently, of its real value.

Indeed, history has repeatedly shown that the surest guarantee of any peace for any country at all times and in all places is its complete readiness to militarily defend itself, and resist any attack on its borders with its own forces.

In its absence, unfortunately, a paper document and its signatures alone are only worth as much as the value of the paper and the ink used.

(This article is a translation of the Armenian-language original.)

Can the ICRC in Azerbaijan Overcome the Hamas Model?

By Elizabeth Samson

On February 18, 2025, former Artsakh State Minister Ruben Vardanyan began a hunger strike to protest his continued imprisonment in Baku. Azerbaijan holds Vardanyan, a philanthropist, billionaire, and the number two official in the Nagorno-Karabakh government, on trumped-up charges of terrorism and war crimes. His hunger strike seeks to protest his unlawful detention. His life is in danger.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)'s deference to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev is just the latest dereliction of its duties that now threatens to make the organization irrelevant.

On March 3, protestors outside the Yerevan office of the International Committee of the Red Cross demanded that the ICRC president visit Vardanyan to assess his condition and ensure proper monitoring of his health. However, the Azerbaijani regime told the ICRC on March 5 that Baku intends instead to end the ICRC's mission to Azerbaijan that has operated in the country since 1992. The ICRC is the only organization with access to the detained Armenians. If the ICRC leaves, it would allow the Azerbaijani government, one of the world's most authoritarian regimes, to dictate how the ICRC upholds its mandate to protect and aid victims of armed conflict. The ICRC's deference to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev is just the latest dereliction of its duties that now threatens to make the organization irrelevant.

The ICRC derives its authority from international humanitarian law, specifically Article 126 of Geneva Convention III and Article 143 of Geneva Convention IV, which outline the right and responsibility of the ICRC to visit POWs, protected civilians, and detainees without restriction. Azerbaijan is a signatory of the four Geneva Conventions, having ratified them in 1993, and as such is aware of the ICRC's

right to function within its territory.

Yet, the ICRC's willing abrogation of its responsibilities towards those it is obligated to help presents a worrying trend for the organization. The ICRC's abandonment of the Armenian hostages in Baku parallels the neglect and desertion of the 251 Israeli hostages kidnapped by Hamas on October 7, 2023, some of whom are still held captive in Gaza.

In violation of its mission, and while claiming lack of access during the more than 520 days of the conflict, the ICRC has not visited or provided medical assistance to a single Israeli hostage, many of whom Hamas murdered in captivity. The ICRC's casual acceptance of terms set by Hamas, a recognized terrorist organization, defies both logic and principle, though it is not surprising because it never publicly condemned Hamas.

The ICRC has visited the 23 Armenian prisoners in Baku — at least the ones that the Azerbaijani government has acknowledged — many times since September 2023 and as recently as February 2025. The ICRC, however, has made no effort to visit the dozens of other hostages that Yerevan has identified but Azerbaijan denies holding. However, with its previous history of prison visitation, it is surprising, then, that the ICRC appears willing to so easily acquiesce to Baku's shutdown order.

The ICRC's willing abrogation of its responsibilities towards those it is obligated to help presents a worrying trend for the organization.

The ICRC was not always so weak. In 2015, the ICRC demanded access — "immediate and unimpeded passage of urgent humanitarian aid" — to a camp of Palestinian refugees the Islamic State held in Syria. Although it had not been able to access the camp since 2014, the ICRC never gave up its demands. During the 2017 conflict in South Sudan, the ICRC demanded access to the wounded to provide medical

assistance and evacuate severe cases, with the ICRC's head of delegation Francois Stamm reminding the parties involved about their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Throughout the years-long Russian offensive in Ukraine, the ICRC has demanded access to Ukrainian POWs and gotten it, even if not consistently and frequently, and in July 2024, the ICRC demanded that the Sudanese government in Khartoum allow it access to those impacted by the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces — millions of people who lack food, water, and health care.

The ICRC knows how to demand the right to do its work, but the precedent of neglect of Israeli hostages and acquiescence to Hamas has become the new rule, rather than the exception. The ICRC should reject Azerbaijan's threat to close down its delegation and demand access to all Armenian prisoners as it has done before. The alternative is to invite and confirm the derision of dictators who increasingly see the ICRC as irrelevant on the international stage.

(This commentary was first published online March 12 in the Middle East Forum. Elizabeth Samson is an international lawyer, an adjunct professor of political science at Queens College-CUNY, an Associate Research Fellow at the Henry Jackson Society, and a former Visiting Fellow at the Hudson Institute. She holds a J.D. from Fordham Law School and an LL.M. in International & European Law from the University of Amsterdam. Ms. Samson has authored several peer-reviewed legal publications on topics of comparative international law and humanitarian law. Her writings have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Guardian*, *Washington Times*, and the *New York Post*.)

COMMENTARY

Peace Agreement Raises More Questions Than It Answers

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The statement from Baku announcing that Armenia and Azerbaijan had agreed on the text of a peace agreement had the effect of a bombshell in the Armenian media and political landscape. While such an outcome was somewhat predictable, the Armenian public's outrage stemmed from the fact that the announcement came not from Armenia's authorities but from Azerbaijan's leadership. Once again, the people of Armenia learned about a major development not from its own government but from a foreign state's representatives. At the same time, the issue lay in the realization that Armenia had, in essence, accepted all of Azerbaijan's demands and preconditions. If Armenia was ultimately going to comply with all of Azerbaijan's demands — many of which had been openly articulated over the past few years — then what exactly had it been negotiating for over the past four years? It appears that Armenia failed to strengthen its positions on the most crucial points of negotiation and was unable to firmly defend its national interests. As a result, what has taken place can be described as a second capitulation or diplomatic capitulation — this time, not on the battlefield but in the realm of diplomacy.

Another issue is not so much what the parties are prepared to sign but rather when they will sign this document and what security guarantees Yerevan has in general. Essentially, there are no guarantees, and this is also accepted by Armenian officials. If Yerevan is expecting security assurances from the US, that would be naïve, as Washington is unwilling to provide such guarantees even to its strategic allies. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that Armenia — a country of no vital significance to Washington — would receive such assurances. The EU is also incapable of providing these guarantees, as it itself is facing a serious security crisis due to US President Donald Trump's policies towards NATO and EU. In Europe, discussions are ongoing about the possibility of establishing an independent NATO and the need for a self-sufficient defense system. Meanwhile, Washington is minimizing its involvement in NATO and is entirely unwilling to take on additional financial or other obligations toward allies.

Notably, in the immediate aftermath of the announcement regarding the agree-

ment, Armenia's prime minister called the Russian president, informing him about the reached agreements and discussing a number of regional issues. Moreover, reports suggest that Pashinyan may travel to Moscow on May 9 to participate in the 80th anniversary celebration of the Great Patriotic War (World War II) victory. Aliyev's participation in the event cannot be ruled out, which raises the possibility of a trilateral meeting taking place. Given that Trump's administration, unlike Biden's, has shown little interest in Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations, there is a strong likelihood that Moscow will seize the mediation initiative, further increasing its influence in the South Caucasus and over the conflicting parties.

Now, the question arises: Will the Armenian authorities seek security guarantees from Moscow? This is difficult to imagine, given the negative past experiences. However, Armenia now stands completely alone against the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem and has effectively lost Washington's support as well. While the Biden administration had certain leverage and pressure mechanisms against Baku, the Trump administration appears largely uninterested in mediating Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations. So far, there has been no trace of US mediation in the talks, and considering the complexity of the issue, it seems that Washington has little desire to get involved. This raises another question: What will happen to the Armenian-American strategic partnership document? As I mentioned before, it is likely that the Trump administration does not see this document as particularly significant, and at this moment, Washington appears to have neither the interest nor the time to engage with Armenia's issues.

Regarding the Armenia-Azerbaijan agreement, Azerbaijan's new preconditions

warrant consideration. The primary one, amending Armenia's constitution, is a potentially lengthy process subject to Armenian law. A critical question is: what are the consequences if a constitutional referendum fails? Furthermore, Azerbaijan might impose new preconditions. Aliyev recently demanded Armenia extradite former presidents Kocharyan and Sargsyan, claiming all military and political leaders who fought against Azerbaijan should be extradited. Furthermore, Azerbaijan will likely maintain its demand for the "Zangezur Corridor," which, despite Armenia's preferred "road" designation, necessitates clearly defined security components. However, Armenia and Azerbaijan remain at odds regarding the specific form and content of these security mechanisms.

One thing is clear from this entire situation: with the conclusion of these negotiations, nothing is truly ending — rather, everything is just beginning. All the international guarantees that Armenia once relied on, such as cases in international court against Azerbaijan, the presence of European observers in Armenia, US support, and other factors, will no longer be relevant for one reason or another. These factors will force Armenia, already vulnerable, to make a difficult choices and decisions in the nearest future.

(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.)



LETTERS

Doom & Gloom Spectator Is the Name...

To the Editor:

It is deeply disappointing to see the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* drift into the realm of fact-less, sensationalist doom-mongering rather than upholding responsible journalism and informed analysis. The editorial board should seriously reconsider whether it wishes to continue representing Armenian interests or if it would be more fitting to drop "Armenian" from its name and replace it with *Doom & Gloom Spectator*.

The relentless stream of anti-Armenian, pessimistic narratives pushed by so-called "experts" like Suren Sargsyan and Michael Rubin is not only misleading but also dangerously counterproductive. These individuals contribute nothing but despair, condemnation, and baseless ranting, failing to offer factual assessments, realistic solutions, or even a strategic perspective on the challenges Armenia faces.

It is troubling to witness the *Mirror-Spectator* sink to such unprofessional levels, giving a platform to factually weak and sensationalist rhetoric that serves no purpose other than to undermine Armenian resilience and morale. Responsible journalism should inform, analyze, and propose solutions — not engage in defeatist, agenda-driven fearmongering that benefits Armenia's adversaries.

I urge the editorial board to reassess the standards of its publications and ensure that it does not become a megaphone for baseless hysteria, but rather a forum for meaningful, fact-based discussions that contribute to the national interest. Armenia needs smart, strategic engagement — not unhinged doom narratives that serve no one but those who wish to see Armenia fail.

Berge Jololian
Watertown, MA

A Hard Pass on 'Anora'

To the Editor:

As an Armenian viewer, I found the movie "Anora" difficult to watch due to its portrayal of two Armenian characters in a negative light. The decision to cast Armenians as "thugs" felt like an unfair stereotype, misrepresenting our community and reinforcing harmful narratives. For those of us familiar with Armenian culture, such depictions can feel like a misrepresentation that doesn't align with the values and experiences of the community.

In many films, ethnic groups are often unfairly cast as villains, and it is especially painful when your own community is depicted this way. The film missed an opportunity for more nuanced storytelling. It would have been more balanced to cast a different ethnic group, such as Russian Jewish emigrants, as the antagonists given that the action was taking place at Brighton Beach. This approach would have avoided perpetuating negative stereotypes of Armenians and offered a more diverse representation.

Cultural sensitivity is essential in filmmaking. By accurately reflecting the complexity of different communities, filmmakers can avoid misrepresentations that alienate viewers. "Anora" could have been more impactful if it had embraced this responsibility, leading to a richer, more fair portrayal of characters.

Armen Dedekian



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Shouldn't Have Invited Turkish Journalists To Yerevan for An Interview

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan made yet another mistake last week by inviting 10 journalists from Turkey to Yerevan and speaking to them for one and a half hours.

Before we go into the substance of Pashinyan's remarks, I would like to point out some of the basic problems with his statements and those of his spokesperson.

First of all, the spokesperson revealed that the Turkish journalists had been invited to Yerevan at the Armenian government's expense. This violates journalistic ethics. Professional journalists are not offered and do not accept payment for their travel and accommodation to maintain their independence from the subject of the interview.

Secondly, the spokesperson for Pashinyan said that Armenia had invited Turkish journalists from all sides of the political spectrum, including pro-government, opposition, and independent media. Anyone who follows the Turkish media knows that there are hardly any opposition journalists left in Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has either taken over all the opposition media or shut them down and jailed the dissenting journalists. The invited journalists to Armenia were from: T24, Sozcu TV, Anadolu Agency, Hürriyet Daily News, Turkish Radio and Television, Medyascope, NTV, Agos Armenian newspaper, Ihlas News Agency, and CNN Turk. Only two out of the 10 invited Turkish news outlets, Sozcu TV and Agos, can be considered independent news outlets.

Thirdly, Pashinyan proudly told the Turkish journalists that his meeting with them was an unprecedented event. As usual, his statements are not based on facts.

The meeting with Turkish journalists in Yerevan was NOT unprecedented. There were several past meetings between Armenian officials and Turkish journalists. I remember one particular interview that took place in 2001 when prominent Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand of 'CNN Turk' came to Yerevan and interviewed President Robert Kocharyan. That interview created a lot of controversy because Birand distorted what Kocharyan had told him by mistranslating his words from Armenian into Turkish. I wrote an article in 2001 pointing out Birand's distortions and criticized President Kocharyan for agreeing to give an interview on sensitive political topics which he and his advisors should have known was going to be distorted by the Turkish journal-

ist. Besides Birand, many other Turkish journalists have come to Armenia to interview Armenian officials in the past. In addition, a large number of Armenian and Turkish journalists visited each other's countries as part of the "Armenia-Turkey Team Reporting Project" in 2007-08.

Turkish journalists are notorious for distorting the words of the people they interview. For that reason, over the past 40 years, I have refused all Turkish requests for an interview.

Fourthly, Pashinyan falsely claimed that during previous Armenian governments, there were no direct contacts between Armenian and Turkish officials. He cited his invitation to attend President Erdogan's inauguration in Ankara and meeting him in New York. He also mentioned the visits of Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan to Ankara. He said that previously, Armenian and Turkish officials only learned of each other's views through third parties. Pashinyan mentioned as "a concrete example of cooperation," Armenia's recent extradition to Turkey of two Turks accused of committing a crime.

Pashinyan's claims that before him there were no official contacts between Armenia and Turkey are completely false. He wants to leave the impression that nothing happened in Armenia before he assumed power in 2018. There have been dozens of contacts between the officials of the two countries long before Pashinyan became Prime Minister. Here are some of them:

- 1) Foreign Minister Raffi Hovannisian went to Istanbul in 1992 to participate in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Conference.
- 2) Presidential Advisor Gerard Libaridian went to Ankara in 1992.
- 3) President Levon Ter Petrosian met with Alpaslan Turkesh, the founder of the ultra-nationalist Grey Wolves group and member of the Turkish Parliament, in Paris in 1993.
- 4) President Ter Petrosian, accompanied by Foreign Minister Vahan Papazyan and Presidential Advisor Gerard Libaridian, went to Ankara in 1993 to attend the funeral of Turkish President Turgut Ozal. On that occasion, Ter Petrosian met with Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel. During that visit, Ter Petrosian also met with Azerbaijan's President Abulfaz Elchibey.
- 5) Turkish President Abdullah Gul came to Yerevan to watch with President Serzh Sargsyan the football match between Armenia and Turkey in 2008.
- 6) President Serzh Sargsyan travelled to Bursa, Turkey, to watch the return football game between Armenia and Turkey with Turkish President Abdullah Gul in 2009.
- 7) Foreign Minister of Armenia Eduard Nalbandyan and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu met in Zurich in 2009 to sign the Armenia-Turkey Protocols.
- 8) Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu came to Yerevan in 2013.
- 9) Foreign Minister Nalbandyan went to Ankara in 2014 to attend the inauguration of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Therefore, Pashinyan is not correct that in the past Armenian and Turkish officials had no direct contacts and communicated only through third parties.

What Armenia Peace Processors Should Learn from Cyprus and Yemen

By Michael Rubin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The Armenian Foreign Ministry announced on March 14 that it had accepted Azerbaijan's last two outstanding demands and was ready to sign a peace agreement with its neighbor. Secretary of State Marco Rubio lauded the agreement. "Now is the time to commit to peace, sign and ratify the treaty, and usher in a new era of prosperity for the people of the South Caucasus," he declared. French President Emmanuel Macron also praised the agreement. "I welcome the announcement of the conclusion of negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There are now no remaining obstacles to the signing of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which should pave the way for a lasting peace in the South Caucasus," he tweeted on X.

Such praise is premature, if not naive.

The text of the agreement remains confidential — never a good sign — but reported final concessions by Armenia included expelling international observers who have successfully monitored the border, much to the consternation of Azerbaijan that continues to occupy Armenian territory near Jermuk. Second, Armenia reportedly agreed to change its constitution to omit references to its own declaration of independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian *oblast* that Azerbaijan ethnically cleansed in September 2023, putting an end to its 1,700-year Christian community.

Such an Azerbaijani demand, and Armenian acquiescence, is even more bizarre since it does not address the oblique revanchism inherent in Azerbaijan's embrace of its own 1918 declaration of independence, a document that claimed a huge swath of Armenian land in the South Caucasus. Here, consider Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's words from late last year:

"The Azerbaijani Constitution cites the 1991 State Independence Act. This act cites the 1918, May 28 Azerbaijani Declaration of Independence. Furthermore, the

act says that the present-day Azerbaijan is the successor of the 1918-1920 Azerbaijan. The 1918-1920 Azerbaijan declaration says that the Southern and Eastern Transcaucasia are Azerbaijani territories. Under the 1919 Entente map Azerbaijan presented claims for the entirety of the present-day provinces of Syunik and Vayots Dzor, and partially for the provinces of Tavush, Gegharkunik, Ararat, Lori and Shirak. Unlike the Constitution of Armenia, the Azerbaijani constitution does contain territorial claims against Armenia."

Initially, Armenia argued that both sides could retain the integrities of their constitution with provisions that an article in the peace treaty would state that neither side could cite their domestic legislation for not fulfilling the treaty.

Pashinyan also noted that Azerbaijani papers say that Azerbaijani territory is 108,000 square kilometers [41,700 square miles]. However, the same papers say that resolving their border disputes with Armenia and Georgia will make Azerbaijan 141,000 square kilometers [54,440 miles]. By caving to President Ilham Aliyev's demands and accepting an inequitable approach, Pashinyan now effectively affirms Aliyev's territorial ambitions.

The celebrations are premature for another reason. Azerbaijan has never honored a single agreement it has made. It remains not only rhetorically but also militarily on a war footing. Caliber.az, an outlet controlled by Azerbaijan's defense ministry, not only argued this week that Armenia plans a "blitzkrieg" against Azerbaijan that Azerbaijan should preempt, but that European Union observers are part of the plot. Not only is this nonsense, but the foreign observers have been the most effective check on Azerbaijan's pattern of breaching, cease-fires and other agreements. Without observers and with Azerbaijan controlling its media and rejecting visas for independent reporters and the travel of foreign diplomats, Armenia will be powerless to expose Azerbaijani violations.

While peace is a noble goal, Armenia should consider the case of Cyprus. In 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus twice. During its first invasion in July 1974, the Turkish

Army seized a beachhead of perhaps three percent of the country. Turkey's stated goal was to protect Cyprus' Turkish Muslim minority against the revanchism of the Greek junta. Within days, however, that junta fell; the *casus belli* dissolved. It was only then — and against the backdrop of Geneva peace talks — that the Turkish Army invaded again, seizing more than one-third of the nation. Last year, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan lamented publicly that Turkey ceased its drive and did not conquer the entirety of the country so that Cyprus in its entirety could become a part of Turkey.

The United Nations and international community have tried over subsequent decades to negotiate a peace between Cyprus and the Vichy regime that Turkey set up in the occupied zone. One such effort culminated in the Annan Plan, negotiated by then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The basis of the plan was the formation of a "United Republic of Cyprus" comprised of two federal states, one Turkish and the other Greek. The Swiss federal model influenced many of the proposed government structures and mechanisms for power sharing.

In 2004, the UN put the Annan Plan to a referendum: Two-thirds of Turkish Cypriots voted in favor, but three quarters of Greek Cypriots voted against. Turks have argued ever since that Greek disapproval of the Annan Plan conveys a lack of interest in peace.

Such an interpretation is nonsense. The reason for the Annan Plan's rejection was clear-eyed appraisal of its flaws. In a Mega TV exit poll questioning those who said they voted "No," 75 percent referred to concerns over "security" as their reason for their vote; only 13 percent said they wanted to live separately from Turkish Cypriots. What killed the deal was not Greek rejectionism, but rather the weakness of international negotiators. Faced with Turkish objections, Annan consistently watered down the agreement's enforcement provisions. The negotiators omitted any mechanism that would compel a party not living up to its obligations to do so. For example, if

see PEACE, page 20



Armenian, Chinese Scientists to Collaborate on Electronic Design Automation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) of Armenia recently hosted a delegation from China's Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics (NUAA), the National Technology Innovation Center for EDA and Southeast University (NCTIEDA&SEU) and EDA Ecosystem Development Accelerator (EDA²).

During the visit a framework cooperation agreement was signed between the parties.

On the Armenian side the agreement was signed by Director of the Institute for Informatics and Automation Problems of NAS Hrachya Astsatryan and Armenian-Russian University Rector Edvard Sandoyan. On the Chinese side, the agreement was signed by NUAA Professor Bin Jiang, NCTIEDA&SEU Dr. Zhaoyang Zhang and EDA² head Yunsheng Zheng.

As part of the cooperation the sides will conduct exchange of personnel in the area of electronic design automation, joint research, training of experts and other mutually beneficial projects, the NAS said in a press release.

NAS President Ashot Saghyan, commenting on the agreement, said that it is a valuable opportunity to promote closer cooperation between scientists and to prevent global challenges. He attached importance to the development of cooperation with China, highlighting the numerous agreements signed with various Chinese scientific organizations.



Representatives of the National Academy of Science of Armenia and the delegation from China's Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics

What Armenia Peace Processors Should Learn from Cyprus and Yemen

PEACE, from page 19

Turkey failed to withdraw troops, there was no way to make them, nor did the plan address the Turkish settlers on the island who today vastly outnumber the native Turkish Cypriot population. Quite the contrary, Cypriots saw loopholes through which Turks could pour settlers into Cyprus to change the island's demography, much as Azerbaijan's Soviet-era leaders and then Ilham Aliyev have done regarding Nagorno-Karabakh.

Nor was the Annan Plan the only example of diplomatic smoke-and-mirrors obfuscating major flaws that render peace mute. In 2018, the United Nations brought Yemen's warring sides to Stockholm to negotiate an agreement to prevent a military

attack on the Red Sea Port of Hudaydah, the main entry point for humanitarian assistance. While diplomats celebrated the subsequent Stockholm Agreement as an avenue to peace, the episode only accelerated war. Against the backdrop of Houthi negotiators violating their own commitments and desperate to win a deal, the UN proposed an inspection regime to ensure ships docking in Hudaydah did not carry weaponry. Buried in the details? Such inspections were voluntary. A third party would take over port operations from the Houthis with customs revenue from inspected ships paying their salaries. In practice, the Houthis changed uniforms and today control the port on the international community's dime. Khaled Alyemany, the

foreign minister of Yemen's International Recognized Government temporarily based in Aden resigned in disgust.

Back to Armenia: Seeking peace is honorable, but poorly negotiated peace can be more dangerous than the status quo. True peace requires sincerity, especially as some regimes look at diplomacy as an asymmetric warfare strategy to tie their opponent's hands while they pursue their own *fait accompli*. Poorly negotiated peace absent mechanisms to ensure compliance can fuel crises and increase the confidence of those who believe they can act unilaterally. Ideology adds fuel to the fire as ideologues can justify any transgression in a belief system that sees the other side as subhuman or unworthy. This was the case with Rwanda's anti-Tutsi genocide, for example.

It is always a bad sign when those negotiating peace have so little faith in the deal and the judgment of their own people that they try to keep the peace agreement's

provisions secret. It is also dangerous to accept the plaudits of outside diplomats who want the photo opportunity and the mantle of peacemaker without having to live with the consequences.

If Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan truly believes the deal to which he apparently agreed is worth the paper on which it is written, he should do what the United Nations did in Cyprus and agree to hold a binding referendum. Armenians are intelligent; they want peace but can also assess whether the proposed deal with Azerbaijan can bring it. Pashinyan should not go the route of the United Nations in Yemen, as this will only lead to war, a possibility that a bad agreement could accelerate if not greenlight.

(Michael Rubin is director of policy analysis at the Middle East Forum and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.)

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