

Pashinyan Says His Government to ‘Initiate Discussion’ to Dissolve OSCE Minsk Group

Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — In an interview with Public TV on Friday, March 21, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that dissolving the OSCE Minsk Group was “on the agenda” and that his government



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

would “initiate discussion of this issue in the near future ourselves.”

Pashinyan’s response came in reply to a question of whether, “after fulfilling” the two pushed preconditions, Azerbaijan might push others.

In a statement hours after Azerbaijan

and Armenia separately announced that all terms of the deal were announced, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry named amendments to Armenia’s constitution and the dissolution of the “obsolete and dysfunctional” OSCE Minsk Group as preconditions to signing the deal.

According to Pashinyan, the dissolution of the Minsk Group was among the issues “that can be discussed,” at the same time he noted that “there are issues that cannot be discussed.”

Pashinyan said that “as we are moving towards peace, this format is losing its relevance.”

He further elaborated that “in essence,” the Minsk Group “is about the conflict in the territory of Azerbaijan,” and since the two sides recognized each other’s territorial integrity “we are ready to put on the paper and we agree that there is no conflict situation.”

“But we want additionally to make sure that Azerbaijan’s goal is not to create a conflict situation in the sovereign territory of [...] Armenia after finishing to address the

conflict situation in its territory,” Pashinyan said.

He added that when it was addressed, “or the mechanism for addressing the content would seem reliable and trustworthy, then of course we are ready also to engage in certain solutions.”

Asked if he already agreed to dissolve the Minsk Group before signing the treaty, Pashinyan avoided giving a direct answer, only saying that their “goal is not the deadline, our goal is the content.”

Pashinyan also addressed the second Azerbaijani precondition — the change of the Armenian Constitution, and again claimed that “this is an issue that pertains exclusively to our domestic agenda,” but also noted that “one must admit that this cannot but have a regional and international impact.”

At the same time, Pashinyan said that among his political team, there were “opinions that we should not postpone” holding a referendum for the adoption of the new constitution, which was planned in 2027.

Pashinyan suggested that the referendum might be held together with the regular parliamentary election in 2026.

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After Years of Deterioration, Armenia’s Relations With Russia Appear To Be Warming

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — Following the freefall in bilateral relations over the past few years, Armenia’s relations with Russia appear to be warming up, with the number of high-level contacts increasing in recent weeks.

On Monday, March 24, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan held a telephone conversation with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that they “discussed current issues on the bilateral, regional and global agendas.”

“The progress in agreeing on the text of the peace treaty between Yerevan and



Foreign Ministers Sergey Lavrov, left, and Ararat Mirzoyan, of Russia and Armenia

Baku, which was highly praised in Moscow, was noted. The ministers discussed the schedule and substantive content of the upcoming interstate contacts.”

This marked the second call between Mirzoyan and Lavrov, with the previous one held on March 21, during which Mirzoyan congratulated Lavrov on his birthday.

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Armenian Proposal to Sign Peace Deal ‘Still Not Accepted By Baku’

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Azerbaijan has still not responded positively to Armenia’s proposals to sign a peace treaty essentially finalized by the two sides on March 13, a senior Armenian diplomat said on Monday, March 24.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry urged Baku to start “consultations on the dates and venue for the signing of the treaty” right after Yerevan accepted Azerbaijani proposals regarding the last remaining differences on its text. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan repeated the appeal multiple times on social media last week.

“Unfortunately ... we have always had one step forward and there have always been complications, provocations from the other side,” Deputy Foreign Minis-



The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan meet in Istanbul, October 18, 2024.

ter Paruyr Hovannisyan told journalists. “Sometimes it was seen as two steps back and so on. We stated that we are now ready to discuss all the processes related to the signing, but there has been no response [from Baku] to that statement yet.”

The Azerbaijani leadership has repeatedly made clear since March 13 that the signing of the peace deal is conditional on

a change of Armenia’s constitution and the dissolution of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group on Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenian Foreign Ministry objected to these preconditions on March 19. But two days later, Pashinyan indicated plans to ask the OSCE soon to disband the group that

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Times Square Genocide Commemoration to Take Place on April 27

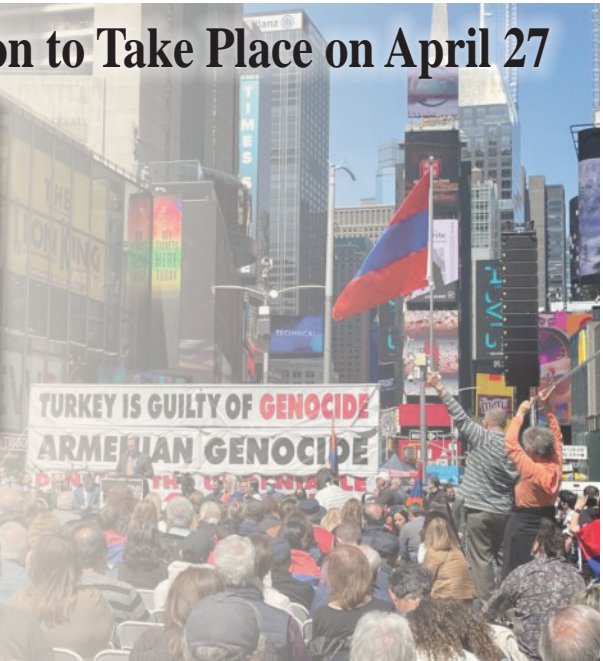
NEW YORK — The 110th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide will take place in Times Square, New York, on Sunday, April 27, 2025, and will feature remarks by elected officials and guest speakers, as well as a powerful performance by Artsakh-born musician Valeri “Lyoka” Ghazaryan, in an event sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, co-sponsored by a number of leading Armenian-American organizations, and led by with masters of ceremonies Diran Jebejian and Chantelle Nasri.

The Commemoration, scheduled from 2 to 4 p.m., will reflect on the 1.5 million Armenians who were massacred by the Young Turk government between 1915 and 1923 under the guise of World War I. Calls for recognition from the Turkish

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Valeri “Lyoka” Ghazaryan will perform in Times Square





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Pashinyan's Approval Rating Drops Nearly 50% in 4 Months

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — According to HayaQve's sociological service, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has lost almost half of his approval rating in the last four months.

It is noted that the votes have entirely shifted to the opposition, which is now highly fragmented.

"The approval rating of Pashinyan is at a low level, and numerous political forces, each with a specific percentage, are emerging against him. Experts suggest that this indicates the need for the opposition to encourage new consolidations."

With the upcoming 2026 national elections, there is a significant internal political struggle in Armenia. HayaQve's regularly conducted polls reveal that the current political landscape is dynamic, with extreme disagreements dominating the field.

No Peace without Justice Says Artsakh Ombudsman

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Gegham Stepanyan, the Human Rights Defender of Artsakh, stated on March 25 that law remains meaningless if there is no commitment to uphold it. He made these comments in a video aired by ArtsakhTV.

He also announced that on March 29 he will participate in a rally at Yerevan's Freedom Square in support of the rights of Armenians from Artsakh, Aysor.am reports.

"Building peace on the basis of 150,000 violated rights is ineffective, unjust, and unachievable," he emphasized.

Watchdog Agency Says Archbishop in Shirak Is Making Political Appeals

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Akanates observer group complained on March 25 that Archbishop Mikayel Ajapahyan, head of the Shirak Diocese, made campaign-style appeals during interviews, which constitutes a violation of legal regulations.

According to Article 23, Clause 5 of Armenia's Electoral Code, religious organizations are prohibited from engaging in election campaigning, whether as organized efforts or individual initiatives.

The law defines election campaigning as any activity aimed at persuading voters to support or oppose a candidate, party, or alliance.

"On March 23 and 24, Archbishop Mikayel Ajapahyan of the Armenian Apostolic Church's Shirak Diocese made campaign-like statements in interviews with ABC News and News.am, which violates the stated legal provisions. We urge all parties to adhere to the Electoral Code," the observer mission declared.

Local elections in Gyumri are scheduled for March 30.

Iran's Foreign Minister Stresses Armenia's Territorial Integrity During Visit to Yerevan

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia/ Armenpress) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received the delegation led by Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, who is on an official visit to Armenia, on March 25.

Welcoming Araghchi's visit to Armenia, Pashinyan thanked him for contributing to the consistent development of Armenia-Iran relations in the previous period.

Araghchi thanked the Armenian leader for the reception and conveyed the warm

The sides exchanged views on the need of signing the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as other issues of mutual interest.

Pashinyan emphasized that the government of Armenia is committed to the consistent implementation of the peace agenda. At the same time, the visiting foreign minister expressed his country's support for the signing of the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, adding that it will contribute to ensuring stability in the region.

tween the two countries," Araghchi emphasized, highly appreciating the deepening ties between the Armenian and Iranian peoples. He also expressed hope that bilateral cooperation in various fields would continue to deepen.

"Iran endorses Armenia's Crossroads of Peace program and believes it will create great opportunities for developing relations between the two countries," the Iranian Foreign Minister added.

Later during the visit, Araghchi announced that the issue of building a new bridge over the Araks River was discussed during his meeting with Mirzoyan.

After the visit, a presentation of the Armenian translation of Araghchi's book, *The Power of Negotiation*, took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Said Mirzoyan at the event, "The presentation of this book within these walls is not accidental. It serves as further evidence of Armenia-Iran mutual understanding, the significance of the power of negotiation, and, of course, our unwavering friendship. Our two countries, living in a truly complex region and having endured various historical hardships, attach particular importance to diplomacy, considering it the most essential tool for ensuring security and stability."

According to Mirzoyan, Araghchi's book once again proves that diplomacy is an effective formula for resolving international and regional issues.

"Dr. Araghchi notes in his book: 'Diplomacy is not a game where you have to win; it is a process where you have to understand the other person.' I believe this is a key, fundamental principle, without which it is impossible to expect or achieve diplomatic solutions," Mirzoyan stated.

Mirzoyan praised the book, emphasizing that "it not only describes the technical aspects of the negotiation process but also analyzes the psychological, political, national, and cultural dimensions of diplomacy."

Mirzoyan wrote the book's preface.

Araghchi and Iran's Ambassador to Armenia Mehdi Sobhani also delivered speeches at the book's presentation.



Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, center, with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan to the right, and Ambassador Mehdi Sobhani

greetings of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. He noted that Armenian-Iranian ties are anchored in historical economic and cultural relations. According to him, the relations between the two countries are of strategic importance and the ongoing developments further emphasize the importance of bilateral cooperation.

Araghchi stressed Iran's continued support for the territorial integrity of Armenia and emphasized the importance of the inviolability of existing borders in the region.

The two touched upon the implementation of new projects between Armenia and Iran in the economic sphere, including infrastructure and energy. The importance of organizing high-level bilateral visits was emphasized.

Araghchi reaffirmed that Tehran supports the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of the countries in the South Caucasus, reiterating Tehran's position against any change in the internationally recognized borders of the region.

"This is the clear stance of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I believe that all regional problems should be resolved within the region, through dialogue and diplomacy, excluding the use of force," Araghchi said at a joint press conference with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan.

The Iranian Foreign Minister also praised the economic relations with Armenia, noting that they "are developing dynamically."

"We have agreed to fully capitalize on the existing potential in the relations be-

Armenia's Amb. to Spain Discusses Peace Process with Local Community

By Karine Armen

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

MADRID — The Armenian Ambassador of Madrid, Sos Avetisyan, on March 6 talked about the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan at the Universidad Complutense Madrid (UCM), at a program organized by Prof. Francisco Zurian of the Armenian Studies of the university.

Avetisyan provided a history of the conflict, focusing more on the second war of 2020, the blockade of Artsakh and later its annexation. Avetisyan is fluent in Spanish and made his slide presentation in that language.

Zurian, who teaches audiovisual communication, has visited Armenia several times. He said, "I am appalled that Russia gave Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan, and today, they support them instead of Armenia."

One audience member asked if an Armenian soldier had shot Azeris near the border. Ambassador Avetisyan replied, "Those are false propaganda by Azerbaijan. Armenia wants peace." He added, "Armenia never attacked Azerbaijan."

Avetisyan has several degrees from Yerevan State University in Human Rights

and Democratization, Spanish Language and Literature. He also studied Russian and East European Studies at St. Anthony's College at Oxford University in the United Kingdom.

Zurian thanked the ambassador and the audience for attending the educational event. The attendees asked thought-provoking questions which showed their interest in the region.



From Left: Ambassador Sos Avetisyan and Professor Francisco Zurian (Karine Armen photo)



ARMENIA

From Seed to Soil: Rebuilding Armenia's Green Future

This year, Armenia Tree Project (ATP) will plant an astounding one million trees across Armenia. With this initiative, ATP will surpass a major milestone — 9 million trees planted since its inception. To put that into perspective, this is enough to cover an area larger than 1,000 football fields. These plantings are not just about trees; they are about resilience, sustainability, and restoring Armenia's natural heritage.

The spring planting season kicks off in the villages of Bovadzor and Urasar in Lori, then expands to Tsaghkaber, Mets Sarian, Lernakert, and Pemzashen in Shirak, before concluding in Leranist in Kotayk. These regions have been carefully selected for their need for reforestation and their potential to thrive as part of Armenia's green future.

At the heart of this movement are the people who make it possible. Last year, 500 seasonal workers joined ATP's efforts, many of whom return each year. This spring, 200 tree planters will take on the responsibility of planting half a million trees. Among them are cousins Marine and Armine Gogoryan from Lori, who have dedicated years to tree planting.

"Planting trees is like planting hope,"

says Marine. "We've seen forests rise where there was once nothing. It makes us believe in the future."

Their passion, alongside the tireless efforts of ATP's forestry teams, has transformed barren lands into thriving forests. Looking back at past plantings—the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest, the Sose and Allen Forest, and the Koghnes Forest—it's clear how far this initiative has come. Once desolate landscapes are now home to lush, growing canopies, proof that long-term commitment yields extraordinary results.

Yet, the urgency of reforestation in Armenia has never been greater. Climate change, deforestation, and the displacement of communities have intensified the need for green spaces. Forests act as natural shields against soil erosion, pro-



Seasonal employees in Armenia taking part in the spring planting

vide oxygen, and help regulate the climate. Every tree planted is a step toward a healthier, more sustainable Armenia.

ATP's mission is gaining recognition beyond Armenia. Environmental organizations worldwide have praised its refor-

estation model, and global conservation leaders are taking note. With continued support, the impact of these efforts will extend far beyond national borders.

To help ATP plant the seeds of change, visit www.ArmeniaTree.org.

Armenia's Defense Ministry Downplays Reports of Azeri Gunfire

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia's Defense Ministry downplayed on Tuesday, March 25, the significance of cross-border gunfire from Azerbaijan reported by residents of some Armenian border villages.

Throughout last week, the Azerbaijani military accused Armenian forces of violating the ceasefire at various sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. The accusations strongly denied by Yerevan followed official announcements that the two sides have essentially finalized a bilateral peace treaty after years of negotiation. Armenian commentators suggested that Baku may thus be preparing the ground for military

action against Armenia or trying to clinch more Armenian concessions.

Although Baku apparently stopped alleging Armenian ceasefire violations over the weekend, residents of two villages in the southeastern Syunik province, Khoznar and Khnatsakh, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that there has been intense automatic gunfire from nearby Azerbaijani army positions in recent days.

"They opened fire at 10 o'clock last night, then at 2 and also at 4 in the morning," said Roman Grigoryan, a Khoznar farmer. "They also shot at us when we were working in the field yesterday. We stopped work for one or two hours."

"There has been continuous shooting for the last five nights," said Manushak Sog-

homonyan, a Khnatsakh resident. "They start at 10:20 p.m. [and keep shooting] until 5:30 a.m. Red [tracer] bullets are flying over the village. The people are scared."

"They shoot into the air, towards the mountains," the woman added by phone.

Davit Ghulunts, the head of a local community comprising Khnatsakh, Khoznar and several other villages, refused to comment on the claims.

Responding to these and other reports, the Armenian Defense Ministry acknowledged that "gunshots are sometimes recorded along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border." But it insisted that they "do not target the territory of the Republic of Armenia."

"In such cases, the Armenian Defense Ministry does not issue statements about

the violation of the ceasefire regime," it added in a statement.

Speaking to journalists on March 21, Defense Minister Suren Papikyan did not explicitly deny reports that Armenian army units deployed outside another border village came under intense cross-border fire overnight. Papikyan insisted that there are no clear indications yet of an imminent Azerbaijani invasion of Armenia. Critics said the Armenian government is reluctant to admit that the unilateral concessions made by it will not end the conflict with Azerbaijan anytime soon.

Baku makes the signing of the peace treaty conditional on Yerevan meeting more Azerbaijani conditions, notably a change of Armenia's constitution.

After Years of Deterioration, Armenia's Relations with Russia Appear to Be Warming

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Mirzoyan wrote on the platform formerly known as Twitter that during the call, they "touched upon upcoming engagements in our bilateral political dialogue."

On the same day, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov commented on media reports that Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had "instructed all his departments to 'restore ties' with their Russian colleagues."

The news was published by *Hraparak*, an Armenian tabloid media outlet, which did not specify the source of its information.

Peskov noted that Russia is "more than satisfied with such a mutual attitude of the Armenian side to the prospects of our bilateral relations and [is] ready to develop them in every possible way."

Peskov also said that the relations between Russia and Armenia "have not been interrupted" and that they "cannot be interrupted."

"Armenia is a friendly country for us. It is a sovereign state, but we have a lot

in common — bilaterally, historically, and culturally. And in terms of joint participation in such an important integration association as the Eurasian Economic Union," Peskov said.

Before this, on March 20, political consultations were held between the Armenian and Russian foreign ministries in Moscow, headed by Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan and his Russian counterpart Mikhail Galuzin.

The two sides discussed a "broad range of issues" focused on bilateral relations, including the development of trade and economic cooperation between Armenia and Russia.

The freefall of the bilateral ties largely began following the lack of support from Russia and the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) during the Azerbaijani attacks on Armenia in 2021 and 2022. Another major reason was the "inaction" of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh, when Azerbaijan placed the region in a nine-

month blockade and forced it to surrender in a culminating lightning offensive in September 2023.

One of the signs that relations were improving came in January, when Mirzoyan and Lavrov held talks in Moscow in "a sincere and constructive atmosphere."

Following the agreement on the text of the peace treaty with Azerbaijan on March 13, Russian President Vladimir Putin was the first world leader that Pashinyan had a phone call with, "informing" him of the development.

During the same call, according to the Kremlin, Pashinyan confirmed that "he accepted the invitation" of Putin "to take part in the May 9 celebrations in Moscow marking the 80th anniversary" of the USSR's victory in World War II.

Sona Ghazaryan, an MP from the ruling Civil Contract party, in an interview with CivilNet, stated that there is a "change in logic and content" in bilateral relations with Russia.

"For a long time, Armenian-Russian relations have become more honest, open,

but at the same time based on the principle of mutual respect for sovereignty and independence. We are able to discuss complex topics, we are able to agree on complex topics, but at the same time I think that relations will benefit from this sincerity," she said.

Ghazaryan also stated that Armenia "should be guided by having minimal enemies and developing interconnectedness with various states," and that Armenia should not fall "from one extreme to the other."

After the ruling Georgian Dream party claimed victory in the October 2024 elections — which were found by both local and international observers to have had serious violations — and continued its drift away from the West, Armenia was left as the sole state in the region actively pursuing integration with the EU.

With this geopolitical shift, political analysts foresaw a potential shift in Armenia's pro-Western policy to pursuing more balanced relations with other countries, including with Russia.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Envoy Highlights Cooperation Between France, Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Olivier Decottignies, the ambassador of France to Armenia, who is on a visit to Syunik, mentioned on his X (formerly Twitter) account on March 25 that decentralized cooperation between France and Armenia covers the entire territory of Armenia.

He pointed out that the town of Meghri, located on the banks of the Araks River on the border with Iran, became a sister city to Bron, France several months ago.

“The decentralized cooperation between France and Armenia extends throughout the country. Thank you, Mayor Mr. Khachatour Andreasian, for the warm welcome,” the ambassador wrote.

Azerbaijan Fails to Block Artsakh Film Screening in Prague

PRAGUE (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan’s efforts to stop the screening of a documentary about Nagorno-Karabakh at a human rights film festival in Prague was rejected by organizers.

The Azerbaijani Embassy in Prague on March 22 formally requested that the One World Human Rights Festival remove “Black Garden,” a documentary by French-Armenian director Alexis Pazoumian, from its program. The film focuses on the region of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), according to a report by Aurora News, citing “Eye for an Eye.”

The Azerbaijani request was sent via letter and aimed at preventing the public screening of the film. However, festival organizers refused to comply.

“Black Garden” explores the history of three generations in the village of Talish in Karabakh. The film documents the aftermath of war, the villagers’ return and daily life, as well as the impact of the 2020 war.

Through personal stories, the film reveals the unending cycle of conflict, the tragic fate of individuals, and the pain of loss.

Ozbilis Accuses FFA of Destroying Armenian Football

YEREVA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Former Armenian national team player and current director of Urartu Football Academy, Araz Ozbilis, has sharply criticized the leadership of the Football Federation of Armenia (FFA) following Armenia’s heavy defeat to Georgia.

“I’ve stayed silent for a long time. But I will no longer remain silent because you are destroying our football,” Ozbilis said in a video statement he released this week.

He said a year ago he had applied for the position of FFA director but was rejected on the grounds of lacking managerial experience.

He emphasized that it is time for the leadership to face reality and initiate changes.

Balian and Merdjanian Receive King Charles III Coronation Medal

MONTREAL — Ara Balian, the chairman of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) Eugene Papazian chapter of Montreal and a Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) member, and TCA member Berj Merdjanian, along with 28 other distinguished individuals, were honored with the King Charles III Coronation Medal on February 25.

This medal serves as a commemorative honor established to mark the coronation of King Charles III on May 6, 2023 and is the first medal in Canadian history to commemorate a royal coronation. It recognizes 30,000 outstanding individuals of all ages and from all walks of life who have made a difference in their communities. The medal highlights themes that both King Charles III and Canadians hold dear, including service, the environment and sustainability, and Canadian diversity. While the Chancellery of Honours, as part of the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, administers the King Charles III Coronation Medal program, Members of Parliament hold a key role in the distribution of the King Charles III Coronation Medal by nominating deserving individuals within their communities.

To be eligible, nominated individuals



Ara Balian, left, and Berj Merdjanian, right, each with their medals

must have been alive on May 6, 2023, and have made noteworthy contributions or outstanding achievements in the community or abroad that honors Canada. The selection process is guided by a commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that Canada’s rich diversity is reflected in the recipients.

community institutions, starting from the Tekeyan Center on Jarry Street. There the young Ara of 18 was forged and devotedly served Armenian organizations for more than 55 years.

Berj Merdjanian serves as a liaison between the Armenian community and Québec’s (Provincial or Federal) political parties. His contacts, communication skills and financial input made him an influential member of the political elite.

On March 23, the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Montreal honored Balian and Merdjanian on the occasion of receiving their medals at the Tekeyan Center in Montreal.



Ara Balian and Berj Merdjanian with family members and MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos



Ara Balian, left, and Berj Merdjanian, right, each with their medals and MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos

After carefully reviewing hundreds of nominations, Saint-Laurent Member of Parliament Emmanuella Lambropoulos and her team selected 30 outstanding candidates in the Saint-Laurent community. The honored persons strengthen and vitalize communities, thus helping shape Canada’s future.

Ara Balian is the son of Onnig and Vartouhie Balian, both dedicated ADL and Tekeyan members. Ara followed in the footsteps of his parents and has been actively involved in the foundation of Montreal’s

Armenian Proposal To Sign Peace Deal ‘Still Not Accepted By Baku’

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was for decades co-headed by the United States, Russia and France.

“Dissolving the OSCE Minsk Group is a negotiable issue that’s on the agenda, and we ourselves will initiate discussing this issue in the near future,” Pashinyan told Armenian Public Television.

Pashinyan until recently linked the group’s dissolution, which had to be initiated by both conflicting sides, to the signing of the peace treaty. He said such a move should also require Baku to stop referring to much of Armenia’s territory as “Western Azerbaijan.”

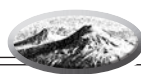
Armenian opposition figures say Pashinyan’s latest comments herald yet another concession to the Azerbaijani side. They say it will further complicate the Karabakh Armenians’ ability to assert their right to return to their homeland on the international stage.

The draft peace treaty was finalized as a result of two other Armenian concessions. Yerevan agreed to withdraw international lawsuits filed against Azerbaijan and remove European Union monitors from the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

Throughout last week, the Azerbaijani ministry accused Armenian forces of violating the ceasefire at various sections of the border. Armenian commentators suggested that the accusations denied by Yerevan are aimed at preparing the ground for military action against Armenia or bullying Pashinyan into making further concessions.



Ara Balian and Berj Merdjanian, center, with Tekeyan leaders at the Montreal Tekeyan Center



INTERNATIONAL

You Can Find More than Just Paella in Valencia

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

VALENCIA, Spain — Armenian restaurants not only can serve great food but often may act as culinary representatives of Armenian culture in various corners of the world. Asador Bufalo, a lively Armenian restaurant in Valencia, is one such outpost. A small family-run restaurant, the owners and staff are recent immigrants from Armenia.

You might think that Asador is a Spanish version of the Armenian name Asadour, but in fact in Spanish it means barbecue, grill or spit, while Bufalo means much the same in Spanish as it does in English — buffalo. Marianna Nersesyan, part of the family that runs the restaurant, said that they do not have buffalo meat on the menu and the name was just chosen because they liked the way it sounded.

The menu includes all kinds of grilled meats and vegetables, served with *lavash*, Armenian salad, *pastirma*, Armenian wines and fruit compote drinks, and desserts like home-made *paklava*. The walls are decorated with reproductions of Armenian paintings by such masters as Martiros Saryan, and the tables have tablecloths with Armenian designs.



While Armenians have lived in Spain from the 16th century, if not earlier, the current Armenian community in Valencia, and in Spain in general, is a new one that is



The exterior of the restaurant (photo Aram Arkun)

largely composed of Armenians from the Republic of Armenia and some other post-Soviet states who came starting in the 1990s. There are only estimates of the numbers of Armenians in Spain. According to the Armenian government (diaspora.gov.am) there are some 40-50,000 Armenians in Spain altogether, while the Armenian Church (<https://www.armenian-church.eu/en/regioncategories/spain-en/>) estimates this number to be no more than 15,000. Nersesyan was not sure of the number but leaned towards the higher range.

Nersesyan said that Armenians in Spain do not face any prejudice or problems, and praised Spaniards as very warm and people-loving.

The family that started Asador Bufalo came to Valencia in 2012, said Nersesyan, because they heard that people are very kind and the climate and ocean are great. First Marianna's husband came, then the others, all in the span of three months.

Since the family had operated a restaurant in Armenia, they decided to continue the tradition in their new country. They started their own restaurant in 2021, but because of the pandemic restrictions, they had a tough time. Nonetheless, through the restaurant they got to meet many of the local Armenian community. While many Russian-speakers and other peoples from the former Soviet Union as well as the locals, come to the restaurant, Armenians compose the majority of customers, Nersesyan said.

Older Armenian restaurants offer some Armenian items, but not the full grill variety of Asador Bufalo.

She added that Armenians live throughout the city. In the nearby municipality of Mislata there is a *khachkar*



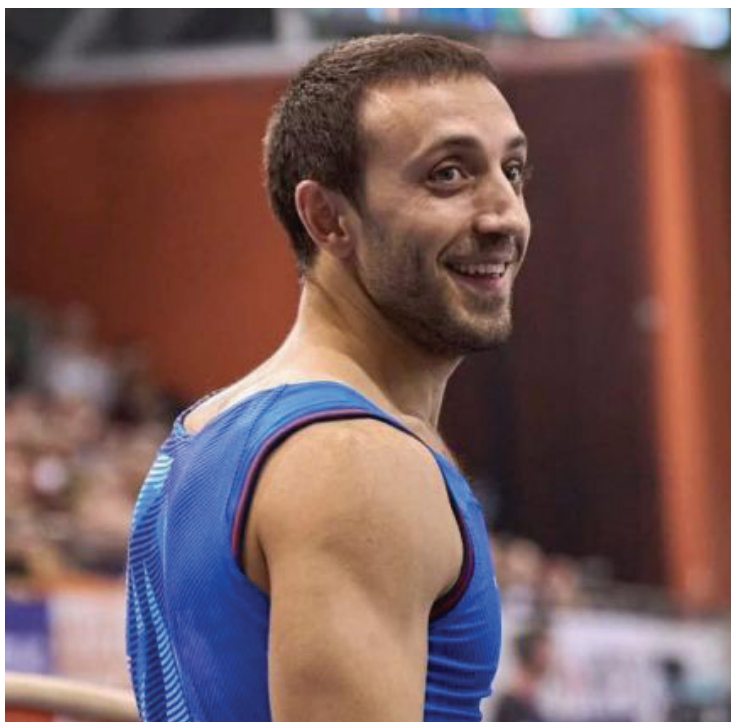
[cross-stone], erected in 2010 in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide (the city itself officially recognized and condemned the Genocide in 2017), and a Sunday school run by the Ararat Armenian Association, but there is no church. The only Armenian church in Spain at present is in Malaga, which was established in 2022.



Three members of the family running Asador Bufalo restaurant: from left, Lianna Avetisyan, Marianna Nersesyan, and Anna Hovhannisyan (photo Aram Arkun)

The connection with Armenia remains immediate for many Valencian Armenians, as Yerevan is just a relatively short flight away (direct via nearby Barcelona). Armenian singers and actors visit Valencia and other places in Spain frequently for concerts or presentations. For example, the restaurant had on display an advertisement for comedian (and former mayor of Yerevan) Hayk Marutyan's show on February 23. Aram MP3 and Iveta Mukuchyan gave a concert on March 2 in Valencia, while the famous singer Armenchik (Armen Gondrachyan) was to give a concert on March 24 there.

The restaurant has a lively presence on social media. Check out <https://www.facebook.com/AsadorBufaloRestaurante/> or <https://www.instagram.com/restaurante.bufalo/?hl=en>.



Gymnast Artur Davtyan Wins Gold at World Cup in Turkey

ANTALYA (News.am) — Armenian gymnast Artur Davtyan, an Olympic silver medalist and world and European champion, won a gold medal at the third stage of the World Cup series in the vault event during the competition held in Antalya, Turkey, on Sunday, March 23. Davtyan scored 14.483 points in the qualification round.

Another Armenian athlete, Vahagn Davtyan, will compete in the rings final after earning 14,000 points in the qualification round.

Community News

Holy Archangels Church to Host Annual Clergy Conference, Diocesan Assembly

HAVERHILL, Mass. — The Holy Archangels Church this May will be host to the Annual Clergy Conference and the 123rd Diocesan Assembly, a momentous occasion that will bring together clergy, delegates and faithful from across the Eastern Diocese. This year's theme, inspired by the Gospel of John 13:34, is "Love One Another."

The Clergy Conference and Diocesan Assembly will serve as a time for reflection, prayer and planning for the future of the Diocese. As St. Paul writes, "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10). In the spirit of these biblical teachings, we gather to renew our commitment to Christ and one another as we celebrate our faith and heritage.

At the same time, the Women's Guild Assembly, organized by the Women's Guild Central Council, will be held and hosted by the Holy Archangels Women's Guild. This important gathering will bring together women from across the Diocese to strengthen their bonds of fellowship, share ideas, and celebrate their vital role in the life of the Armenian Church.

Delegates and attendees will also have the opportunity to visit the church's newly consecrated sanctuary, Family Life and Cultural Center, and see its traditional Armenian *tonir*. They can partake in the unique experience of enjoying freshly baked *lahmajun* and *jingalov hats* prepared directly from the *tonir*, a testament to the rich culinary traditions and warm hospitality.

A highlight of the gathering will be the gala banquet on Friday, May 2nd, during which two remarkable individuals will be honored.

James Kalustian will be honored as "Armenian of the Year." A devoted servant of the Armenian Church and a champion of the Armenian culture and traditions, he has worked tirelessly to promote the Armenian heritage.

Rev. Fr. John Delaney, pastor of Sacred Hearts Parish in Bradford, Mass., will be recognized as this year's "Friend of Armenians," a title reserved for those who have shown unwavering support for our community. His genuine care, friendship, and collaboration with our parish have been a blessing.

Following the banquet, a dance will take place that is open to the public (as is the banquet).

— Rev. Fr. Vart Gyozyan



The newly-consecrated Holy Archangels Church



Age is but a number for Richard Hagopian and Nazik Kocholosian

Dedicated Partiers Flock To Fresno Kef

By Paulette Janian

FRESNO — Kef! It's Armenian for let's party and that is exactly what about 450 people did the evening of January 25, when, after a delicious dinner prepared by the Holy Trinity Church cooks, KEF Time IV, Fresno, launched in the church social hall. This annual event has become so popular, tickets sold out in less than 15 minutes. Proceeds will benefit the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State.

I attended this year and last as a guest of Father George Arakelian and his wife Sandra. They are gifted with a table of tickets from a major out of state sponsor of the event and enjoy a front row table at the edge of the dance floor. Their benefactor, Dean Shahinian, met Sandra when both were students at Yale University. Shahinian is a successful attorney in Washington, D.C., an insider, and member of the Washington Press Club, who has served as legal counsel for various United States Senate committees.

Event promoter Andrew Hagopian founded KEF Time Productions in 2022, but the original Kef Time began in 1974 when Andrew's grandfather, Richard Hagopian, a Selma area farmer and nationally recognized Armenian musician, held the first Kef Time at Fresno's Rainbow Ballroom. Thousands of young Fresnoans attended events at this historical venue. In those days, the kef started at 8:30 p.m. and continued until 2 or 3 a.m. The event featured live music for Western Armenian folk dancing, all night mezzeh (hors d'oeuvres), and bar. Rainbow

see KEF, page 7



Legacy Band members perform

Armenian Assembly Advocacy Summit to Feature Sheila Paylan, Michael Rubin

WASHINGTON — As the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) continues to focus on persecuted Christian and Armenian hostages held in Baku, the organization's Spring 2025 Advocacy Summit panel will shed more light on international human rights pertaining to Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives, by featuring human rights expert Sheila Paylan, Middle East Forum's Director of Policy Analysis Dr. Michael Rubin, and international lawyer and professor Elizabeth Samson on Tuesday, April 1, at the University Club.

"We expect the panelists to share their extensive knowledge on human rights, international law, and significant global developments that impact the Armenian people, as Azerbaijan continues to disregard international norms and persists in its anti-Armenian policies," said Assembly Director of Research and Analysis Robert Avetisyan. "The expertise of distinguished scholars and practitioners is crucial, as we need to contextualize the current situation and explore efforts aimed at the liberation of all Armenian prisoners and hostages unlawfully detained in Baku, preservation of Armenian heritage, and the implementation of the right of Artsakh-Armenians to return to their homeland."

International human rights lawyer Sheila Paylan, who has served as a legal advisor to the United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, has over 15 years of experience advising judges and senior officials of various UN-backed international criminal tribunals. She publishes extensively on international justice and consults for a number of international organizations, NGOs, think tanks, and governments.

Dr. Michael Rubin, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and Director of Policy Analysis at Middle East Forum, is a former Pentagon official who specializes in the Middle East. He is an author of several books relating to diplomacy, and regularly publishes op-ed pieces relating to Armenia, Turkey, Iran, and the broader Middle East.

A professor of political science at the City University of New York, Elizabeth Samson has over 25 years' experience in law, policy, writing and research. As a Writing Fellow at the Middle East Forum, she has written articles about international law, security, and democratization, among other topics. Her latest piece focuses on Ruben Vardanyan's hunger strike, who has been imprisoned in Baku on "trumped-up charges" and his "unlawful detention."

The Assembly's Spring 2025 Advocacy Summit is scheduled for Monday, March 31 through Wednesday, April 2, and will include informative briefings, panel discussions, and meetings with Members of Congress. A Welcome Reception will be held on Tuesday, April 1, from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Following the Summit, the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide will be commemorated on Capitol Hill.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Dedicated Partiers Flock to Fresno Kef

KEF, from page 6

Ballroom accommodated 1,500 attendees and cost of admission was only \$6.50. In the mid-eighties, Kef Time moved to the Hacienda Resort and Convention Center where the last original event was held on February 15, 1986.

How fortunate we are that Richard Hagopian, celebrated master of the oud, an



Reveler Ron Statler

ancient instrument which provides the soul sound of Middle Eastern music, passed his talent to his son Armen and his grandsons Andrew and Phillip. The Hagopian brothers are continuing to celebrate and share their rich cultural heritage with traditional Armenian music and dance, performed by younger musicians as part of their Legacy Band. With electric energy, the packed house of celebrants at this year's Kef Time flooded the dance floor with line dancers. A leader starts a line making a circle and

dancers join their pinky fingers to follow steps to folk dances handed down from generation to generation.

Experienced dancers leap into the center of the circle, the young men showing off their masculine, athletic moves and the old men reliving their days of youth, often out-dancing the young. Ladies, too, enter the circle with their graceful moves, with outstretched arms swaying with the music.

About two hours into the dancing, grandfather Richard Hagopian, in his mid-80s, arose to lead one of the line dances. He was joined by Nazik Meserlian, in her mid-90s, who entered the hall using a cane, but who, with Richard, could not resist at least one line dance, a traditional folk dance from Erzeroum, the province of their ancestors in Armenia. The band plays at least one Greek folk song. And, the night is not complete without *Miserlou* and *Hava Nagila*.

Across the dance floor, I spotted a familiar figure. How could I miss the tall, bearded Scotsman dressed in his traditional Scottish regalia in a sea of whirling dancers? I recalled meeting him during the Christmas season, dressed in Scottish attire, leading a First Armenian Presbyterian Church sing along of Christmas carols at the California Armenian Home. Ron Statler is a Fresno resident, a 2004 graduate of San Joaquin College of Law, and practices law as a member of the Tulare County law firm of Herr, Petersen, and Berglund LLP. Ron is what we Armenians affectionately call an A.B.C., an Armenian by choice, whose spouse is usually of Armenian descent. Ron appreciates Armenian culture while proudly displaying and honoring his Scottish heritage.

Next year, Kef Time V will be held at a larger Clovis venue to accommodate many more people. I thank Richard Hagopian and his talented family for their commitment to preserving traditional Western Armenian music and folk dancing and for keeping our traditions alive for future generations.



Children helped by FASF

FASF Mission: In the Footsteps Of Hope and Light

In February 2021, hi-tech CEO, serial entrepreneur, and investor Adam Kablanian founded Friends of the Armenian Soldier and Family (FASF) with a clear objective: to provide direct support to Armenian soldiers and their families affected by the Artsakh War. Since its inception, FASF has worked to foster a culture of giving within the Armenian-American community, ensuring that those who sacrificed for their homeland receive the assistance they need.

FASF collaborates with established organizations in Armenia that provide on-the-ground support to veterans and their families. The organization's grants focus on financial stability, medical recovery, education, and professional training, helping soldiers transition to civilian life and ensuring their families receive the necessary resources to move forward.

In the fall of 2024, FASF organized a fundraising campaign that successfully raised \$30,000. Contributions from Armenian-Americans played a key role in sustaining these efforts, demonstrating

the community's commitment to supporting those who have served.

The most recent FASF fundraising campaign concluded on January 31, 2025. The funds raised have already been allocated to HAYORDI, a charitable organization dedicated to supporting children who have lost their fathers in the war. Through this partnership, FASF helps ensure that these children remain connected to their cultural heritage, language, and community.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, FASF continues to expand its reach, emphasizing the importance of ongoing support for Armenian veterans and their families. Contributions to FASF are tax-deductible, and every donation directly impacts the lives of those in need.

For more information or to support FASF's mission, visit www.fasf.org

Together, we can help keep the light of hope alive for those who need it most.

FASF is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (EIN #86-2191892), and donations are tax-deductible in accordance with applicable laws.

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 SAKAYAN

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

ԳԻՆԵԶՈՆ-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

Gaslighting the World: How Azerbaijan Denies Armenian Existence

LINCROFT, N.J. — CHHANGE (Center for Holocaust, Human Rights & Genocide Education) and the Society for Armenian Studies is hosting a program titled “Gaslighting the World: How Azerbaijan Denies Armenian Existence,” on Thursday, April 10, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Marc A. Mamigonian, the director of Academic Affairs at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), explores how today's Azerbaijani petro-dictatorship engages in triumphalist anti-Armenian denial that is fueled by its military victories in 2020 and 2023 and aims at a kind of humiliation via eradication of Armenia and Armenians. Mamigonian will explain why Azerbaijan's rhetoric of denial and its impact demand a closer analysis — as well as those in media, academia, think tanks, and NGOs who enable it.

The program will take place in the Twin Lights I & II in the Student Life Center (SLC 106 & 107) at Brookdale Community College (Lincroft). Admission is free; advanced registration is required.

Since 1979, CHHANGE has been dedicated to its mission to educate about the Holocaust, genocide, and human rights

issues and promote the elimination of racism, antisemitism, and all forms of prejudice. Each year, Chhange connects with more than 50,000 students, educators, and community members through innovative



Marc Mamigonian

programming, professional development workshops, and our Annual Colloquium—now in its 43rd year.

For more information or to register, visit www.chhange.org.



Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents

“Remnants”: Armenian Genocide April 11 Lecture

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



with author **Elyse Semerdjian**

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

7 p.m. Friday at the Baikar Center

755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA

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



COMMUNITY NEWS

Young Wrestler Takes Top Spot

WATERTOWN —Evelyn Mancilikli, competing for the Waltham Wrestling Club and Doughgirls Wrestling Club of Lowell, Mass., took first place in the 12u girls 160lb bracket with a 3-0 record last weekend at the Game On, the 2025 Youth New England's youth wrestling tournament which took place in Fitchburg.

Above she can be seen on the podium, solo as well as with the other top finishers.

She also competed in the 12u open (co-ed) 165-lb. bracket and finished in the top 8 with a 4-2 record this weekend.

Mancilikli, of Watertown, is currently a sixth grader at Our Lady's Academy in Waltham and a former student of St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School.

She has been wrestling for two years and previously finished second in the 2024 and 2025 Massachusetts Youth Wrestling Girl's 15u 185 lb. bracket.



Applications for Inaugural ISA Summer Analyst Program

YEREVAN — The Institute for Security Analysis (ISA) announced recently that applications are now being accepted for the inaugural cohort of its summer analyst Program. This immersive, eight-week program, running from June 9–August 1, is designed for young professionals eager to gain hands-on experience in the fields of national security and international affairs, while making meaningful contributions to Armenia's security.

The full-time program will take place in Yerevan and offers a blend of lectures, research opportunities and professional development. Analysts will have the opportunity to engage in key areas of national security research, from designing wargaming exercises to drafting policy papers, while working alongside subject matter experts.

The analyst cohort includes young professionals from the Diaspora and Armenia.

Program highlights will include building analytical skills through hands-on research, professional development, and lectures; designing wargame exercises that simulate real-world national security scenarios; participating in fact-finding excursions across Armenia, gaining first-hand knowledge of

local and regional security issues and collaborating with national security experts on research projects.

"Our mission at ISA is to prepare the next generation of national security leaders," said Ara Araz, ISA Board member. "This new class of fellows will have excellent leadership growth opportunities, and we anticipate that they will go on to have key roles in shaping future national security policy."

Applicants should be current BA or MA students (21+) or recent graduates (within 3 years of graduation). They should have a demonstrable interest in pursuing a career in national security with relevant professional experience, including internships or other early career work in related fields.

Application deadline is April 7, at 11:59 p.m. EST. There is no fee. Sessions will take place at ISA's Yerevan office.

Accommodations will be arranged based on individual needs.

Interested candidates can apply online via <https://forms.gle/jDzmCEnT-1G866Krt9>.

For any inquiries, please contact sevan@securityandanalysis.net.

**Tekeyan Cultural Association
Boston Chapter**

presents a lecture

Introduction to Education in Armenia Today

by

**Aedu
Armenia**

Volunteering program for Armenian educators
armeducators@gmail.com

Vicky Kherlopian
Boston University Practicum Field Supervisor

Thurs. April 3, 7 p.m. Baikar Center
755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown
(use Norseman Ave. entrance)
Free, reception afterwards
For info, contact syogurtian@comcast.net, 617 281-1647

**Tekeyan Cultural Association
Boston Chapter**

presents

The Global World of Armenian Merchants, 1600-1720

Lecture by Dr. Gayane Ayvazyan
Ph.D. from NAS, Armenia; Joint Ph.D. Candidate at
Harvard University's History Department and Center of
Middle Eastern Studies

Lecture is primarily in the Armenian language

Thurs., May 1, 7 p.m.
Baikar Building
755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Times Square Genocide Commemoration to Take Place on April 27

TIMES SQUARE, from page 1
government will be reiterated throughout the program, particularly from U.S. representatives who have remained steadfast supporters of Armenian-American issues and who persistently advocated for Armenian Genocide affirmation.

“For over one hundred years the Armenian people have commemorated the Armenian Genocide to preserve the memory of our ancestors and to ensure that we will continue to fight for global recognition of the first genocide of the 20th century,” said Committee Co-Chairs Haig Gulian and Christopher Artun. “Our platform in Times Square has consistently served as a beacon of truth and remembrance for over 40 years, as our community gathers in one of the most popular sites in the world to remember our Armenian martyrs.”

Lyoka’s songs online have reached 10 million views worldwide. He expressed the importance of “recognizing that the 1.5 million martyrs were people just like us who had dreams and a strong will to live, but they were stripped of that right to live.”

“Diasporan Armenians must act as ambassadors, raising awareness worldwide about the atrocities committed against Armenians,” he continued. “We continue to face new genocides because we do not remember

enough, we do not learn enough, we do not appreciate enough, and perhaps, we do not embrace the idea of unity as much as we should.”

A survivor of three Artsakh wars (1990, 2016 and 2020), Lyoka was born in Maragha and was forcibly displaced throughout his life—from his birth city to Martakert to Stepanakert to Yerevan—due to aggression from neighboring Azerbaijan. He hails from a cultural family who wrote poetry and participated in folk Armenian dance troupes, finding solace in the poetic words he wrote when he was seeking safety in a shelter or recovering in a hospital. He began his musical career as a rapper in 2011 and focused his lyrics on resilience, patriotism, loss, and hope.

“Through my art I share my life experiences, emotions, and fears,” said Lyoka, who emphasizes that throughout life’s challenges, he “stands unbroken, ready to tell first-hand, the story of genocide, and what our families have endured throughout history.”

He notes that his music is a “responsibility” because his songs and stories “belong to an entire people, and on the symbolic day of remembrance on April 24, Armenians with different stories will gather to share their grief and commemorate the lives tragically lost.”

“Art is the most impactful tool for raising

awareness in today’s world, and art that reflects on life heals and raises awareness,” he concluded. “We should all be informed, educated, and aware so we can be armed with knowledge and strength, especially during these difficult times.”

To participate in the Commemoration as a volunteer, visit

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScXBZIZoNlcAfxjaKCXofF-nu4ZKu721IF0k8vtKPHnGSga23Q/view-form>

Donations to help defray costs of the Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square can be at <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/kovts2025>

The annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square is sponsored by the Knights of Vartan and Daughters of Vartan, a national fraternal organization, and co-sponsored by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Armenian National Council of America, Armenian Bar Association and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA); participating organizations include the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), Eastern Prelacy of

the Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenian Presbyterian Church, Armenian Evangelical Union, Armenian Catholic Eparchy, Armenian Network of Greater New York, Armenian International Women’s Association, Homenetmen Scouts of New York and New Jersey, Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) and national Armenian youth organizations.

In addition, the Knights and Daughters of Vartan will hold their annual writing contest in conjunction with the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. High school students (grades 9-12) are invited to participate in a writing contest to enhance awareness of the Armenian Genocide. This year’s theme is the role of memory and memorialization relating to the Armenian Genocide.

All submissions should be received by Tuesday, April 22, by email (april24nyc@gmail.com). Winners will be announced publicly in Times Square on Sunday, April 27. Prizes include first place: \$300, second place: \$200, and third place: \$100. Responses must be between 750-1,000 words typed in Times New Roman 12-point font and double-spaced. Please include the applicant’s first and last name at the top of each page along with contact information. Please note your essay will be judged on its originality, clarity, historical accuracy and understanding of the essay contest theme.



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THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
NYC ANNUAL COMMEMORATION

TURKEY IS GUILTY OF GENOCIDE
ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

SUNDAY
APRIL 27, 2025
1:30PM
TIMES SQUARE



COMMUNITY NEWS

Tekeyan Boston Celebrates Poon Paregentan

By **Aram Arkun**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Boston Chapter celebrated an early Poon Paregentan on Sunday afternoon, March 2 at the Baikar Building in Watertown with a luncheon and bilingual lively cultural program with interactive portions.

Chapter Co-Chair Rita Balyozian explained in Armenian the meaning of Poon Paregentan, its place in the Armenian calendar on the eve of the fasting period of Great Lent (Medz Bahk), and the ways in which Arme-



Rita Balyozian (photo Jeanine Shememian)

nians traditionally celebrated it, which included games with masks and dramatic presentations. She then invited several young people, Lory Simonian, Ara Naroian and Shant Der Torossian to perform in Armenian a version of Hovhannes Toumanyan’s “Paregentan” short story, for which she served as the general narrator. This story was first published in Tbilisi in 1910 in the children’s monthly *Hasker*. The presentation of this humorous story about a husband and wife who did not like one another and were tricked by a wily stranger elicited laughs and applause from the audience.

Chapter Corresponding Secretary Jeanine Shememian spoke about Poon Paregentan in English before presenting a competition on dressing up a bride in traditional Armenian costume with the use of various arts and crafts supplies, which she planned and supervised with TCA Boston Chapter Assistant Treasurer Suzy Naroian, along with the remaining games and activities of the day. Volunteers from the youth present were divided into two groups, and at the end, the audience voted on the winner through applause.

Balyozian then introduced a young talented guest singer, 17-year-old Alla Petrosyan, who sang two Armenian songs, *Yeraz im yergir haireni* and *Mardigi yerkeh*.



Door prizes were distributed: from left, Jeanine Shememian, Lori Tomarci, Suzy Naroian and Garo Tomarci (photo Aram Arkun)

After this, Shememian asked a group of young audience members to form two teams and play a game to build the highest tower possible out of plastic cups over the course of ten minutes.

The wider audience participated in a trivia contest on Armenian history, literature and culture including ten questions, which Shememian conducted.

Naroian and Shememian supervised the drawing and distribution of door prizes.

Chapter Vice Chair Sargis Gavlakian concluded the formal program with a recitation of a poem he had written many years ago about the Armenian homeland, and some closing remarks.



Teams competed in various games (photo Aram Arkun)



Jeanine Shememian (photo Aram Arkun)

Shememian thanked supporters of the event for their donations, including Arman and Armine Manoukian of the House of Lavash in Belmont for their *lavash*, and Avo Bedrossian of Gourmet Nuts and Food in Canton, who donated *halva* sweets. Chapter Co-Chair Dr. Aida Yavshayan, Recording Secretary Maral Der Torossian, and Balyozian contributed greatly along with the other chapter members to the preparation of the luncheon.



Ara Naroian and Lory Simonian in a scene from Toumanyan’s play (photo Aram Arkun)



Singer Alla Petrosyan (photo Jeanine Shememian)



Arts & Culture

Embracing Diasporic Art: Portraits of Joan Agajanian Quinn

GLENDAL — Embracing Diasporic Art: Portraits of Joan Agajanian Quinn at ReflectSpace presents 35 original portraits of Quinn made by diasporic, immigrant and culturally diverse artists. Selected from Quinn's personal art collection and archive of over three hundred works, the exhibition highlights a distinct part of each artists' unique story and how they capture Quinn's vital and enduring presence.

Often described as the doyenne of the Los Angeles art scene, Quinn's image has been captured by more artists than any other living person. She has been painted, photographed, and sculpted by many of the prolific artists she has befriended throughout her years in Los Angeles and other cities, including Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, David Hockney, Larry Bell, Ed Ruscha, and many more. As West Coast editor of *Interview Magazine*, host of "The Joan Quinn Profiles" and throughout her career in journalism, the arts and philanthropy, Quinn has seamlessly moved between roles as advocate, chronicler, catalyst, and friend, championing artists from diverse cultural backgrounds and



A portrait of Joan Agajanian Quinn by Huguette Caland (Beirut, Lebanon, 1931-2019), Untitled, Oil on canvas, 1991

across disciplines and generations. Through their work, the artists reflect the richness of cultural exchange and collaboration.

The exhibition extends into the PassageWay, where Quinn's own snapshots reveal her instinct for documenting intimate moments with legendary figures like Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. These spontaneous photographs unveil another facet of Quinn's artistic orbit, capturing her ability to be both documentarian and active participant in significant artistic circles.

Through these portraits and photographs, viewers witness decades of artistic dialogue across communities and cultures. Quinn's unwavering commitment to connecting artists, particularly those from immigrant and diasporic backgrounds, continues to echo in contemporary art. Embracing Diasporic Art: Portraits of

see QUINN, page 14



Sahan Arzruni instructing a student in Armenia

Sahan Arzruni

Spreading the Message About the Importance of Musical Education

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Pianist, composer and cultural ambassador Sahan Arzruni has dedicated his life to preserving and promoting Armenian music and culture, bridging generations and continents. Arzruni's life has helped bring Armenian music to the world stage while nurturing the next generation of musicians in Armenia and the diaspora.

On April 13 he will conduct a piano recital with a tribute to Armenian women composers at Robbins Memorial Town Hall in Arlington at 5 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Born in Istanbul in 1943, Arzruni did not visit Armenia until 1975. "Growing up in Turkey, it wasn't easy to visit Armenia, especially during the Soviet era. However, in 1975, I was invited by Cecilia Proudian, a writer-musician who kept ties with diasporan musicians, to visit Armenia when I gave my first concert in Yerevan."

Through his connections with composer Edvard Mirzoyan and other Armenian artists, Arzruni began forging deep ties with Armenia. "I started visiting frequently and playing concerts, gradually expanding my musical network. Over time, I was invited to perform more regularly." By the late 1980s, thanks to his association with Louise Simone, he was traveling to Armenia nearly every other month. To date, he has returned more than 150 times.

Arzruni's work to strengthen cultural bonds between Armenia and the rest of the world went well beyond his performances. With the help of the former head of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Louise Simone, they organized the Armenian State Choir's US tour, which was a major step in the promotion of the Armenian national abroad powering Armenian cultural diplomacy.

In 1989, his path crossed with the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), where he was offered a leadership role. After much consideration, he declined the offer. "I would have had to leave my music behind to do so, which wasn't an option for me. Nevertheless, this marked the beginning of my close connection with FAR, which continues to this day." His work with FAR allowed him to serve as a cultural ambassador, promoting Armenian music and arts abroad.

Philanthropy and the Vanadzor Old Age Home

In the late 1990s, Arzruni's family members, Kevork and Sirvart Karamanuk — his uncle and aunt — expressed a deep interest in supporting elderly Armenians.

"I suggested FAR help with the project, and together, we found a Soviet-era sanatorium in Vanadzor, Armenia's third-largest city. Though the facility needed significant renovation, its location — on a hilltop overlooking a peaceful river — made it ideal for an elderly care facility."

Thanks to years of dedication and significant investment, the Vanadzor Old Age Home was established, now providing a nurturing environment for 55 elderly residents. "In 2003, I took my aunt, Sirvart Karamanuk, to see the facility. Her husband, Kevork, had passed away in 2002, and I wanted her to experience it. We revisited the place in 2005."

see ARZRUNI, page 13

Books

Nancy Kricorian To Discuss New Novel *The Burning Heart of the World* At NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host a hybrid (in-person and online) book event with author Nancy Kricorian in conversation with Nanore Barsoumian discussing Kricorian's new novel *The Burning Heart of the World*, on Tuesday, April 15, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern) / 4:30 (Pacific), at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont.

The program is being held as part of the ongoing series Literary Lights 2025, showcasing new literary works by Armenian authors, organized by the International Armenian Literary Alliance, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center.

The event is open to all free of charge, and a reception and book signing will follow the program. The *Burning Heart of the World* (Red Hen Press) will be available for purchase from the NAASR bookstore. This will be an in-person event and also presented online live via Zoom (Registration: <https://bit.ly/4hrGuah>) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/c/ArmenianStudies).

The Burning Heart of the World tells the story of a Beirut Armenian family



before, during, and after the Lebanese Civil War. Returning to the fabulous tone of *Zabelle*, her popular first novel, Kricorian conjures up the lost worlds and intergenerational traumas that haunt a family in permanent exile. Leavened with humor and imbued with the timelessness of a folktale, *The Burning Heart of the World* is a sweeping saga that takes readers on an epic journey from the mountains of Cilicia to contemporary New York City.

Nancy Kricorian, who was born and raised in the Armenian community of Watertown, is the author of four novels about post-genocide Armenian diaspora experience, including *Zabelle*, which was translated into seven

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ARTS & CULTURE

Sahan Arzruni: Spreading the Message About the Importance of Musical Education

ARZRUNI, from page 12

Recently, the facility welcomed 11 displaced people from Artsakh. Arzruni hopes to establish a small farm on the property, cultivating fresh vegetables and raising chickens to further support the home's residents.

Investing in Musical Education for Armenian Youth

Passionate about the next generation of Armenian musicians, Arzruni has dedicated himself to fostering young talent, particularly in Armenia's rural provinces. "I've organized tours to various towns in Armenia, where I meet students, listen to their performances, and offer suggestions. I also perform for the music lovers in the city and make sure that the best two or three get a chance to play with me in concert."

His most recent trip in May 2024 proved particularly rewarding. "It was not only good for the kids, but also a valuable experience for me to see the various regions of Armenia and learn more about the local culture."

Over decades of involvement in Armenia's cultural sphere, Arzruni has witnessed both progress and setbacks. "We are a people with an ancient civilization that has survived for 3,000 years. Our language is unique, and our script is one of a kind. Our music is intrinsically tied to our language. As such, Armenian music is

not just a style of composition—it's an extension of the way we speak, a reflection of our unique culture and identity."

Referencing the legendary Armenian composer and musicologist Komitas, Arzruni emphasizes the deep connection between Armenian music and language. "Komitas, who collected and notated 2,500 folk songs, once argued that if the melody of a song didn't match the rhythm of the text, it was inauthentic. He believed that Armenian music should always correspond to the natural rhythms of the Armenian language. This is something I deeply believe in as well."

Challenges and the Call for Cultural Preservation

Unlike some neighboring countries with natural resources, Arzruni believes Armenia's greatest asset is its cultural heritage. "Sadly, in today's world, materialism has taken over, and people are becoming less interested in preserving traditions and customs. I often find that the Armenian genocide is overlooked while other genocides, like the Holocaust, get more attention."

To counteract this, Arzruni stresses the importance of greater international awareness. "We need to do a better job marketing our history and culture."

Now 81, Arzruni reflects on the influences that shaped

his career. "My aunt, a composer, was the first to notice my musical talent, and she encouraged me to pursue music seriously." After studying at Getronagan Armenian Lyceum and the Istanbul Municipal Conservatory, he went on to train at Juilliard in New York, where he studied under renowned mentors. "I even performed for 18 years as a sidekick alongside the famous pianist Victor Borge."

Throughout his career, Arzruni has worked to highlight Armenia's unique contributions to global music. "The first female composer in the world was Armenian, which is something I've highlighted during my tours."

Beyond his own performances, he remains committed to preserving Armenian music. "As I get older, I want to record more Armenian music. A concert may be fleeting, but a recording allows the music to live on."

He also remains dedicated to mentoring young musicians. "Although I have not held a position at a university, I feel a deep responsibility to share what I know."

Arzruni plans to continue his mission, traveling through FAR and engaging with Armenian communities worldwide as long as his health permits. "As long as my health allows me, I will continue this important endeavor."

Nancy Kricorian to Discuss New Novel *The Burning Heart of the World* at NAASR

KRICORIAN, from page 12

languages, was adapted as a play and had been continuously in print since 1998; *Dreams of Bread and Fire* (2003); and *All the Light There Was* (2013). Her essays and poems have appeared in *The Los Angeles Review of Books Quarterly*, *Guerinica*, *Parnassus*, *Minnesota Review*, *The Mississippi Review* and other journals. She has taught at Barnard, Columbia,

Yale, and New York University, as well as Teacher & Writers Collaborative in the New York City Public Schools and for the Palestine Writing Workshop in Birzeit. She has been the recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, a Gold Medal from the Writers Union of Armenia, and the Anahid Literary Ward. She lives in New York City and has been a member of the NAASR Board of Direc-

tors since 2016.

Nanore Barsoumian is a Boston-based writer and researcher. She served as editor of the *Armenian Weekly* (2014-2016) and assistant editor (2010-2014), reporting from Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Javakhk and Turkey. Her articles focus on books, politics and human rights, while her scholarly research explores genocide memorialization and denial. She is currently working on her debut novel, which explores themes of belonging and self-invention. Her review of *The Burning Heart of the World* was published in the February 25, issue of the *Armenian Weekly*.

For more information about this program, contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



Nancy Kricorian

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ARTS & CULTURE

Torange Yeghiazarian

Threading an Artistic Journey

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/OAKLAND — For many years, I have been in touch with American theater director, actress, producer, playwright, and translator Torange Yeghiazarian. Born in 1964 in Tehran, she received a medical education, specializing in clinical microbiology, and worked in the healthcare sector for 15 years. Later, she earned a Master's degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University. Before moving to the Bay Area, she lived in Boston, where she was an activist in the Nor Seroond (New Generation) Armenian youth organization, serving as its president for one term.

In 1996, she founded Golden Thread Productions, a theater company, and served as its Executive Artistic Director until 2021. At Golden Thread, she launched ReOrient Festival of Short Plays, featuring diverse voices of the Middle East in one evening, and Golden Thread Fairytale Players, creating and touring original plays inspired by Middle Eastern folktales and children's stories including "Leyla's Quest for Flight," "Nasrudin's Magnificent Journey to Samarqand," "Princess Tamar Rescues Nazar the Brave" and "21 Days That Change the Year."

Yeghiazarian has written several plays, including "The Tutor," "The Fifth String," "Isfahan Blues," "444 Days," "Call Me Mehdi," "Thanksgiving at Khodabakhshian's," "Waves," "Behind Glass Windows" and "Operation No Penetration: Lysistrata 97."

She has directed numerous plays, including "English, The Language of Wild Berries," "Our Enemies: Live-ly Scenes of Love & Combat," "Oh My Sweet Land," "Tamam," "Voice Room," "I Sell Souls," "Twelve Women in a Cell," "The Myth of Creation" and many others.

As an actress, Torange has performed in "The Eighth Voyage of Sinbad," "The Last Supper," "A Woman Alone" and in the films "The Last Illusion" and "Brilliant Mind."

She has translated a number of contemporary plays from Iran, and her translation and stage adaptation of Nizami's "Layla & Majnun" has been published on Gleditions.com. Most recently, she translated and directed a full-length stage adaptation of it with an ensemble of actors and musicians.

Additionally, Torange has written extensively about contemporary theater in Iran, with her work published in various reviews and encyclopedias. As a director and author, she has received numerous awards and was honored by the Cairo International Theatre Festival and the Symposium on Equity in the Entertainment Industry at Stanford University.

For more information, please visit: torangeyeghiazarian.com or goldenthread.org

Dear Torange, Golden Thread Productions is unique in the American theater scene for its focus on Middle Eastern subjects. Is your main audience primarily Middle Eastern? Do you ever worry that this focus might lead to a kind of cultural ghettoization?

This was in fact the warning my graduate advisor at San Francisco State gave me: don't box yourself in! But the stories I wanted to tell had to do with the Middle East, so the box, if true, felt appropriate. Our establishing Golden Thread was inspired by and built on the efforts of the Asian American and Latinx theater movements. I wanted our community to have a louder voice. At the same time, I wanted to break the assumptions about what Middle Eastern theater is, what our stories are, and who is represented. Being Armenian-Iranian, it was important to me to represent the full diversity of the Middle East.

Our audience at Golden Thread is a mix of Middle Eastern, and non-Middle Easterners. Middle Easterners appreciate the opportunity to celebrate their culture and to see their stories told on American stages in English where a wider audience can experience them. In addition, our stories resonate with many from other immigrant communities, as well as those looking to learn more about the Middle East. I am proud to say that at Golden Thread, we have successfully presented a wide range of aesthetics from realism to abstract multi-media pieces to ensemble-generated physical theater with live music.

Your theatrical career is quite impressive, so I assume you have never regretted choosing the arts — despite the fact that doctors tend to earn more!

Correct. I have no regrets about choosing theater instead of medicine. But I love science and often incorporate my knowledge of medicine in my plays.

Really? And how?

For example, in my play "444 Days," a character suffers from a very specific disease the details of which are central to the plot line.

I am sure you inherited your artistic talent from your mother, Vida Ghahremani, a renowned film and stage actress in both Iran and the U.S. Despite many cultural similarities, intermarriages between Armenians and Persians have always been rare. What is it like to carry this dual heritage?

My Armenian grandmother was born in Tabriz, Iran, and my grandfather in Davalu, nowadays Ararat, in Armenia. They met in Tabriz. I grew up primarily with my Armenian father's family in an artistic environment. My father, David Yeghiazarian, ran the night club Couchini

in Tehran and was a talented music producer, writer and painter. My aunt, Mary Yeghiazarian, was educated in Yerevan's music conservatory and worked extensively at Iran's Ministry of Art and Culture as a choir conductor, in addition to being a fantastic singer. My sister, Termeh Yeghiazarian, was a musician and visual artist. There were always musicians, writers, and filmmakers hanging



out in our house, both Iranian and international artists.

My dual heritage deeply shaped my identity and world outlook. Being both inside and outside cultures is natural to me. Having experienced that in Iran should have made the move to the US easier but of course, it was not easy at all. But finding community in Nor Seroond helped me adjust. It was there that I learned to read and write Armenian to be able to act in an Armenian play. It was "Digineh ge Nnjeh" (Madame is Taking a Nap), a comedy where I played the part of the house-keeper!

I reconnected with my mother more after moving to California to study theater. Through our work together in theater, I was able to know my mother better and appreciate her breathtaking acting skills, as well as writing and painting. She had such an amazing presence on stage. Even when she was standing still, all eyes were on her. I learned a lot from my parents. They were both rule-breaking pioneers guided by passion. I should be so lucky to stand on their shoulders.

Armenian themes have also been part of your work. You were the first to stage Leslie Ayvazian's once-famous play "Nine Armenians" in San Francisco.

Yes, it was such a joy to discover Leslie's play. I so identified with the family dynamics and the personalities she depicted. It was our biggest production to date at Golden Thread in 2002, and we would not have been able to do justice to the play without the Armenian community's support. This play was my introduction to the Bay Area's vibrant Armenian community and its many talented artists. It led to my helping produce The Armenian Film Festival in San Francisco and developing and producing the world premiere of Night Over Erzinga by Adriana Sevan at Golden Thread. Bay Area's Armenian community made this all possible.

You have also written plays with Armenian themes. Your play "Abaga" [The Future] (2001) tells the story of a love affair between an Armenian man and a Turkish woman in Constantinople in 1915 and beyond. Do you think such love stories have become a cliché in literary works about historical conflicts?

An intimate love story is often my entry into a global political conflict. In "ABAGA," I wanted to depict the continued cycle of violence and inhumanity from the Armenian Genocide to the Nakba, the mass displacement of Palestinians in 1948, without actually showing any of it. Constantinople and Jerusalem were major urban hubs

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Embracing Diasporic Art: Portraits of Joan Agajanian Quinn

QUINN, from page 12

Joan Agajanian Quinn is curated by Ara and Anahid Oshagan.

Artists in Exhibition: Ruben Amirian, Vako Armeno, Huguette Caland, Pablo Carreño, Silvina Der-Meguerditchian, Aiham Dib, Gregory Wiley Edwards, Elsa Flores Almaraz, Sophia Gasparian, Yolanda González, Nikolas Soren Goodich, Guedgian, Chaz Guest, Marc Guiragosian, Chris Hartunian, Aron Kalman, Zarko Kalmic, Anna Kostanian, Sheku Kowai, Gilbert "Magu" Luján, Joao Machado, Karine Matsakian, Ramon Ramirez, Stuart Rapeport, Jose "Prime" Reza, Samvel Saghatelian, Aram Saroyan, Wayne Shimabukuro, Reinhard Teichmann, Joey Terrill, Connor Tingley, Ruby Vartan, Don Weinstein, Felix Yegazarian,

Firooz Zahedi, Zareh, and Hraztan Zeitlian.

The exhibit will run through May 23, at ReflectSpace / Glendale Central Library, 222 East Harvard St., Glendale.

ReflectSpace is curated by Ara and Anahid Oshagan and is an inclusive exhibition gallery designed to explore and reflect on social justice issues, human rights violations and genocides through the arts. Immersive in conception, ReflectSpace is a hybrid space that is both experiential and informative, employing art, technology, and interactive media to reflect on the past and present of Glendale's communal fabric and interrogate current-day global human rights issues. ReflectSpace is housed in Glendale Central Library and online at ReflectSpace.org.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Helen Adourian's Curry Lentil (Vosp, Mercimek) from Mediterranean Meals for Mom

Food Blogger Helen Adourian: "I was born in Chicago, and live and work in California. My parents were both born in Turkey; my father is from Kayseri, and my mother is from Istanbul. Kayseri is renowned for its culinary specialties such as manti, pastirma (basturma) and sucuk. Manti is the most popular dish in Kayseri for the local people and tourists. My in-laws are from Dikranagerd, and I also post special family recipes that I've learned from my husband's relatives," says Helen Adourian, the successful blogger and entrepreneur at *Mediterranean Meals for Moms*.

"I love to cook and bake especially traditional meals and baked goods from my Armenian culture. My paternal grandparents were a big part of my childhood, and I remember them when I cook and bake because I have the fondest memories of them in our family kitchen," she adds.

"Early on, as I prepared authentic Armenian dishes for my family, my friends and other family members began asking me for these recipes. I posted the recipes and photos on Facebook and many people were intrigued enough to ask me

if I would be interested in going to their homes and showing them how to prepare my recipes. I went to their homes and at that point, I decided to start blogging because I realized these were cherished family recipes to write down, maintain, and document for future generations. Sadly, my paternal grandfather was a talented baker, but he never passed on his recipes to other family members, and now they are lost forever," says Helen.

"Lentils are a major part of many Mediterranean kitchens and menus. This dish is one that I was raised on, but I have changed the recipe slightly to suit my tastes because I use a lot of curry in my home cooking. If you don't care for the taste of curry, feel free to omit it from this recipe. We always have plenty of leftover rice from our family dinners, so on busy nights I make this dish to serve with rice and other fresh vegetables. It takes about an hour to prepare, not to mention that it is meatless and affordable. Best of all, this is a dish that many Armenians make for Lent but it can really be enjoyed any time of year."



Helen Adourian and her family.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup split red lentils
- 5 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups onions, chopped
- 1 tablespoon red pepper paste (optional)
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste (more to taste)
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1 1/2 tablespoons curry powder (optional)
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon allspice (optional)

PREPARATION:

Wash and drain the lentils. Place the lentils in a cooking pot, add 5 cups of water, and bring to a simmer. Cook for about 30 to 35 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add the chopped onions to the lentils and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Add the red pepper paste, tomato paste, and tomato sauce along with the salt, pepper, curry, cumin, allspice, and olive oil, and stir.

Let simmer for 15 to 25 minutes, or until you have a thick, creamy, stew-like consistency. Serve this dish warm with rice or bulgur pilaf.

For this recipe, go to: <https://helenadourian.wordpress.com/2014/03/04/curry-lentil-vosp-mercimek/>

For Helen's website, see: <https://helenadourian.wordpress.com/>

For more about Helen, go to: <https://helenadourian.wordpress.com/page/6/>

Torange Yeghiazarian: Threading an Artistic Journey

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at the time with thriving diverse populations. Then it all changed... I wanted to trace the change and its impact on people's lives through the personal story of one family. Golden Thread produced a 20-minute version of "ABAGA" at the Re-Orient Festival. But the play is actually longer and could even be a film.

In my play "Princess Tamar Rescues Nazar the Brave" I combined the tales of Kaj Nazar and Akhtamar as told by Toumanian, to create a story within a story. Joyce van Dyke's "The Girl's War," which I directed, also has an Armenian theme.

Have you been in Armenia and do you have future Armenia-related projects?

Yes, I have visited Armenia twice and would love to visit again. My next Armenia-related project is about Komitas. I am dreaming about a play that depicts a moment in his life and music. He lived such an expansive life with many accomplishments. It may be difficult to do it justice but I'm hoping to have a clearer idea after reading his biography by Rita Soulahian Kuyumjian, *Archeology of Madness, Komitas, Portrait of an Armenian Icon*.



George Psarras, Dina Mousawy and Vida Ghahremani in "Abaga" (ReOrient, 2009)



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 26 — The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut will hold its annual program on the 110th anniversary of the Genocide, Saturday at 10:30 a.m. at the Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate. Keynote speaker will be Artak Beglaryan, former State Minister and former Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and President of the "Union for Protection of the Interests and Rights of the Artsakh People." He will speak on "Genocide of Armenians in Artsakh." A reception will follow the commemoration. For questions call Melanie at 860-651-0629

MASSACHUSETTS

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: @HCACCMA

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 3 — Jewelry Making Class hosted by the Apri Otyag Daughters of Vartan. Artist Karine Abgaryan to instruct. Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Belmont. Thursday, 6.30 p.m. \$45 per guest. Take home your jewelry piece. Refreshments will be served. To RSVP, email arpie.otyag.dov@gmail.com or call/text 617-947-1795.

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 Kheyima 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 Sahar Arzruni in tribute to Armenian woman composers. Works by: M. Kouyoumdjian, K. Gazarovian, 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 open to the public on Friday, May 2 at the Hilton Boston Woburn 2 Forbes Rd. 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 Ayvazyan, 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 2 - 123rd DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY DANCE hosted by Holy Archangels Armenian Church. Music by Jason Naroian & His Band featuring the voice of Michael Gostanian. Friday, from 9 pm to 12 am. at the Hilton Boston Woburn, 2 Forbes Rd. Woburn. \$50.00; reserve your dance tickets at Tiny.cc/AssemblyDance. Walk-ins welcome.

MAY 3 — CELEBRATE PUBLIC ART! Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Saturday at 12:45 p.m. Remarks: Rita Fucillo, co-Publisher, Art New England followed by participating World Labyrinth Day: Walk As One at 1PM joining all ages in cities and towns worldwide. Refreshments. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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 Amrenian 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.

PENNSYLVANIA

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

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COMMENTARY

Will Trump Enable Turkey to Forge an Islamic-Leftist Bloc?

By Dr. Loqman Radpey

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Turkey has been leading regional developments since Assad's decline in Syria. With intensified military operations in the north, a reinforced presence in Damascus, and a strategic blow to its long-time rival — the PKK — through Abdullah Öcalan's message and his call for disarmament, Ankara is reshaping the region to fit its neo-Ottomanist ambitions. But beneath this drive lies a deeper objective: the formation of a new ideological bloc that merges Islamism and leftist anti-liberalism to counter the evolving Middle Eastern order.

Turkey's neo-Ottomanist project, driven by Sunni political currents, has been unmistakable. Its military incursions in Syria and Iraq have not been about securing its borders but rather about dismantling a critical regional divide — what can be termed a “ready platform” for a new regional order. This expansionism, in tandem with Iran's regional influence, has targeted the Kurds, who have long struggled for political autonomy or independence in the four states of Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Turkey and Iran claim to restore a so-called natural and imperial order through respectively the Sunni Brotherhood and the Shiite Axis of Resistance. Their model of Islamic integration and militarism seeks to stifle Kurdish aspirations and prevent the rise of a liberal-national political order in the Middle East.

The Kurds, uniquely positioned as a non-Islamist national movement, pose a challenge to Turkey and Iran's ideological monopoly. Consequently, both Ankara and Tehran have pursued strategies to entrap the Kurds within an Islamic-leftist framework that opposes liberalization. Their objective is to prevent the Kurds from aligning with emerging Western-backed alliances, such as the Israeli-Saudi bloc and the geopolitical shifts under the Abraham Accords.

A deeper examination of Turkey's opposition to the Abraham Accords and its proposed alternative to the IMEC Corridor reveals the complexity of this strategy. Turkey's growing tensions with Israel, coupled with the historic affinity between Israel and Kurdish self-determination, have driven Ankara to employ similar tactics as seen in Syria under the Trump administration. This involves complicating issues on the ground to limit Washington's unilateral decision-making, much like the Turkish incursion and subsequent occupation of the Kurdish city of Afrin in 2018. Yet, Israel's support for Kurdish independence is not a recent phenomenon — it is a long-standing policy that predates the latest geopolitical realignments.

Historically, Turkey and Iran have employed polarization as a mechanism for sustaining their regional influence. Turkey's model has centered on Sunni Islamism and, more recently, the rebranding of Jolani's faction in Syria. Iran, on the other hand, has

propagated Shiite resistance narratives and exported the Islamic Revolution. While these strategies may appear reactionary, they are fundamentally rooted in geopolitical imperatives and a rejection of the liberal international order.

By consolidating Islamic influence, Turkey and Iran seek to merge domestic control with regional expansion (“strategic depth”). However, because the Kurds do not frame their political identity through political Islam, these actors have resorted to leftist ideological integration as an alternative approach. The goal is not to empower Kurdish autonomy but to create a wedge between the Kurds and the West, thereby eroding Western trust in Kurdish political aspirations. The historic lack of consistent Western support for the Kurds has left them vulnerable to regional pressures and ideological infiltration.

The Kurdish struggle has never been part of the broader Islamic movement. Instead, Kurdish identity is rooted in national and democratic aspirations, making their case an anomaly in a region dominated by Islamist power structures. This is why Turkey and Iran aim to co-opt Kurdish movements through leftist ideological narratives. Turkey's recent attempts to detach the Kurds from strategic opportunities in the new Middle East — through Öcalan's message for the so-called “reconciliation project” — serve as an anti-Western maneuver to obstruct Kurdish alignment with US and Israeli interests.

Turkey and Iran have effectively weaponized Islamism, wokism, and anti-Western rhetoric to undermine liberal democratic influences in the region. The alignment between Qatar, Turkey, and Iran serves as a nexus for anti-Semitic jihadist movements that disguise themselves as resistance against Western colonialism. Erdogan's AKP and Iran's Supreme Leader both position themselves as defenders of the oppressed while blaming the West for Islamophobia — a narrative that resonates across both Islamist and leftist ideological circles.

The question of securing an independent Kurdistan and breaking free from the Turkey-Iran binary is a matter of critical strategic importance for the United States and Israel. Without direct Western support, the Kurds risk being absorbed into the Islamic-leftist framework that Ankara and Tehran are constructing. This would not only stifle Kurdish self-determination but also pave the way for Turkey to operationalize a new ideological paradigm — one that merges Islamism and leftist anti-liberalism on the ground. If Washington fails to act decisively, Erdogan may succeed in reshaping the region's ideological and geopolitical landscape in unprecedented ways.

(Dr. Loqman Radpey, an expert on Kurdistan and the Middle East, is a fellow at the Middle East Forum with over a decade of experience analyzing the international legal and political dimensions of the right to self-determination for peoples and nations, including the case of Kurdistan.

I'm a Dem Running for Congress: Here's What Biden Got Wrong on Armenia

By Greg Vartan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Today, our community is at a crossroads. President Biden let us down. President Trump is not the answer. Let me explain, offer my views, and share what I believe we need to move forward.

Like many Armenians, I supported President Biden and was pleased when he became the first US President since Reagan to recognize the Armenian Genocide. But while he acknowledged the past, he failed to take decisive action against Azerbaijan's genocide of Artsakh's indigenous Armenians. His administration provided crucial aid to Ukraine while ignoring Armenia's pleas for help. Biden and his team, including former U.N. Ambassador Samantha Power and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, prioritized “stability” in the South Caucasus over justice, waiving Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act in 2024, which enabled Azerbaijan's military buildup. Power, despite her work on genocide prevention, stayed largely indifferent as Azerbaijan carried out ethnic cleansing in Artsakh. The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) even gave the Biden administration a failing grade for aiding Azerbaijan's 2023 genocide of Artsakh Armenians and failing to hold the Aliyev regime accountable, leading to displaced Armenians and refugees.

In the 2024 election, many Arme-

nian-Americans who had proudly supported Democrats for decades shifted their hopes to Trump. However, we must be extremely wary of putting our faith in a president who openly praises strongmen like Recep Tayyip Erdoğan — calling him a “very smart guy” as recently as December — while pushing an “America First” isolationist agenda that weakens global safeguards against aggression and territorial expansion. By undermining these structures, Trump risks plunging Armenia into a more dangerous and unpredictable geopolitical environment, with fewer checks on authoritarian regimes and less support from Western institutions.

Despite their flaws, these Western institutions have helped Armenia. Since 2018, its economy has grown by 44 percent, and EU monitors have helped deter Azerbaijani attacks, though their mission is now ending. This is why I disagree with Trump's worldview in the strongest possible terms, because he prioritizes power over principle. I believe we need moral leadership and strong representation in Washington now more than ever. I'm running for Congress to give our community the voice in the federal government that it deserves.

If elected, I would be the only Armenian-American member of Congress, an honor and responsibility I do not take lightly. That is why I am committed to restoring America's role as a world leader, and will collaborate with my colleagues across party lines to represent Armenian interests,

strengthen ties between the US and Armenia, and support Armenia's Western pivot. I will work to uphold a rules-based international order that defends Armenia and other nations facing aggression. This means securing further financial and military assistance for Armenia, pushing for targeted sanctions on Azerbaijani officials responsible for war crimes and ethnic cleansing, and standing up for the rights of Artsakh refugees to return to their homes.

In Washington, I will push for stronger US engagement with international institutions, advocate for a stronger NATO to deter authoritarian threats, and champion America's commitment to human rights and democracy. Ultimately, the US should serve a role as a credible guarantor for peace along Armenia's border. Additionally, there is a unique opportunity to draw Armenia — the South Caucasus's only democratic nation — closer to America's western values and interests. If elected, I hope to pave ways for American companies to invest in Armenia's thriving tech scene.

I do not see this as a partisan issue — it's about standing up for our community and promoting the security of Armenia and the Armenian people. I will never hesitate to stand up to my own party or the administration. Our community simply cannot afford another setback.

Greg Vartan is running as a Democrat in New Jersey's 7th Congressional District.

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COMMENTARY

US-Russia Talks: Implications for Armenia-Azerbaijan Negotiations

By **Benyamin Poghosyan**
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The promise to end the war in Ukraine quickly was one of Donald J. Trump’s main campaign pledges. Upon returning to the White House in January 2025, the president began taking steps toward this goal. The world witnessed a whirlwind of negotiations: face-to-face meetings between Mr. Trump’s envoy, Steven Witkoff, and Russian President Putin; multiple phone calls between Mr. Trump and Presidents Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky; direct US–Russia and US–Ukraine talks in Saudi Arabia; and a tense meeting in the Oval Office with Mr. Zelensky.

As a result, Russia and Ukraine agreed to suspend attacks on each other’s energy infrastructure for one month. Negotiations are now underway for a broader ceasefire. It is too early to assess the likelihood of a complete and lasting ceasefire — let alone the prospects for a comprehensive peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

On several key issues, the sides maintain diametrically opposing positions. Russia demands recognition of territories it declared part of the Russian Federation in 2022, as well as Crimea, restrictions on the Ukrainian armed forces, and the formal adoption of Ukraine’s neutrality. Ukraine, in turn, insists it will never recognize Russian control over any of its territory, will not accept limits on its military, and will not remove NATO membership from its foreign policy agenda.

Nevertheless, the mere fact of direct US–Russia talks — and Mr. Trump’s statements about normalizing relations with Russia and the need for Ukraine to accept some territorial losses — has significantly impacted global geopolitics. Regional developments in many parts of the world have been affected, and the South Caucasus is no exception. In recent years the region has become a microcosm of the emerging post-unipolar world order, shaped by the competing and overlapping interests of Russia, Turkey, Iran, the United States, the European Union, Israel, France, Britain, India, China, and Pakistan.

Current Stage of Armenia–Azerbaijan Negotiations

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, the onset of the Russia–Ukraine War, and Azerbaijan’s 2023 military takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh — accompanied by forced displacement of the Armenian population — have significantly altered the regional balance of power. Confronted with an increasingly assertive Azerbaijan and the failure of both Russia and the Collective Security Treaty Organization to support it during Azerbaijani incursions, Armenia launched a “peace agenda” aimed at normalizing relations with both Azerbaijan and Turkey. Simultaneously, it began diversifying its foreign policy with a Western focus, deepening ties with the European Union, France, and the United States while strengthening relations with India and the Persian Gulf states.

The Armenian government appeared to be positioning itself for a regional order marked by diminished Russian influence and greater engagement with the West — an outlook seemingly shaped by assessments in 2022 and 2023 predicting Russia’s eventual defeat in Ukraine.

As part of this peace agenda and to prevent further escalation by Azerbaijan, Armenia agreed in 2024 to Azerbaijani terms on border delimitation in the northern sector of the bilateral border. In early March 2025, it further accepted the Azerbaijani phrasing for the two remaining disputed articles of the peace agreement, thereby finalizing the text. Armenia then proposed to Azerbaijan that consultations begin on the timing and venue for signing the contract.

However, Azerbaijan insisted that the text would be signed only after Armenia fulfilled two preconditions: amending its Constitution and relevant laws and formally dis-

solving the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Minsk Group. In addition, Azerbaijan has presented a broader list of demands — including establishing the so-called “Zangezur corridor” — any of which could be declared preconditions at any moment, effectively delaying or obstructing the peace process.

In recent days, Azerbaijan has actively disseminated false claims of ceasefire violations by the Armenian military, contributing to a tense atmosphere and potentially laying the groundwork for renewed escalation.

The Impact of US–Russia Talks

The launch of direct US–Russia talks has already influenced prevailing assessments regarding the potential outcome of the war in Ukraine. Few observers now argue that the conflict will conclude with a strategic defeat for Russia. At the same time, an increasing number contend that Ukraine must accept the loss of territory and abandon hopes of joining NATO in the foreseeable future. This paradigm shift has bolstered Russia’s image on the world stage, fostering a perception of a resilient power capable of withstanding the pressure of the collective West.

Should Russia and Ukraine reach a durable ceasefire, this perception will likely grow stronger, enabling Russia to gradually redirect resources toward protecting its interests in other areas of the post-Soviet space, including the South Caucasus. Such a development would reinforce Russia’s position as the most present actor in the region, limiting the ability of Turkey and other states to shape regional geopolitics. Concurrently, any potential decline in US involvement in the South Caucasus would allow Russia to reassert its role in the Armenia–Azerbaijan peace process — a role it has largely abandoned since late 2022, as Armenia and Azerbaijan probably would not be able to resist an emboldened Russia’s demands.

The Kremlin has already signaled its renewed interest in the region, expressing its intention to dispatch its special envoy, Igor Khovayev, to Armenia and Azerbaijan and offering to host negotiations between the two countries.

These developments may constrain Azerbaijan’s capacity to forcefully establish the so-called “Zangezur corridor” by occupying all or part of Armenia’s Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions. Such a move would significantly elevate Turkey’s regional role, countering Russia’s core strategic interests. Meanwhile, Russia wants to revive the trilateral Armenia–Azerbaijan–Russia working group on restoring regional communications, which has been dormant since the summer of 2023, to implement Article 9 of the November 2020 trilateral statement.

In the short term, the prospect of a Russia–Ukraine ceasefire could prompt Azerbaijan to escalate hostilities to secure the coveted corridor before Russia fully reestablishes its influence in the region. In the medium and long term, however, a ceasefire and the normalization of US–Russian relations might reestablish Russia’s dominance in the South Caucasus, limiting Turkey’s and Azerbaijan’s ability to expand their influence further.

The Armenian government should carefully consider these possible scenarios. It must begin taking steps to establish a new *modus operandi* with Russia. At the same time, Yerevan should initiate consultations with all actors interested in the region’s stability — including the European Union, Russia, Iran, the United States, India, and China — to raise the alarm over Azerbaijan’s aggressive intentions and explore coordinated efforts to prevent renewed Azerbaijani escalation in the weeks and months ahead.

(Benyamin Poghosyan is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, and Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Policy Research Institute (APRI) of Armenia.

Artsakh: A Childhood Memory, A Shattered Treasure

By **Symona Baatian**

To drive up the narrow roads of the mountains of Artsakh is to find a bit of peace — even if that peace happens to include 20 of your closest family and friends crammed into one bus chatting, picking on you, reminding you that this is your day. At the impressionable age of 12, I arrived in the “mother country” to forge a deeper relationship with my heritage that would guide me in discovering who I am and who I am to become. Our destination? A 13th-century Gandzasar Monastery in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), which serves as an Armenian Apostolic Church, where I would be christened.

As the ceremony began, the beauty of the church and the landscape opened up a new world for me. The beautifully carved crosses, *khachkars*, were perfectly embedded into the church’s facade. The aroma of the candles was a subtle sweetness mixed with a smoky undertone, which I imagined had absorbed centuries of whispered hopes. Each fragment of light shining through the arches felt like fairies stroking my skin. I had always wondered about the treasures held on this ancient Armenian land, not knowing how deeply they would soon matter to me. Here, I started to evolve into Symona, embracing a more profound sense of identity that tied me to my Armenian roots and propelled me toward my future.

Memories of childhood flooded my mind as I stood in this sacred place: running out of school with paper-cut and colored crosses, Sundays at church lighting candles, and my first educational experience at St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School in Watertown, Mass. But the real learning happened at home, with my family and friends, where we were nourished as much by shared experiences as by the delicious *jingalov hats*, a flatbread filled with greens, that I would spend all day preparing with my grandmother.

As I stood in the church, I saw joy on my parents’ faces. Their forced journey from the Soviet region and their shared desire to return was fulfilled through this homecoming. Their eyes shone with a dream reached, and our cheeks were wet with tears when the priest clasped my hands, pressed them against his heart, and then to mine. “Menk bolors kou entanik’d enk” he said. “We are all your family.”

From that moment on, I felt the true meaning of family in a way I’d never known before. Whether it was community members taking us horseback riding through the sunny valley, where we picked flowers, or friends welcoming us into their homes for traditional barbecues and letting us play with their fresh, traditional lavash bread dough, moments like these continued throughout my stay in Artsakh and filled me with belonging.

Soon after my christening, the peace I found there was

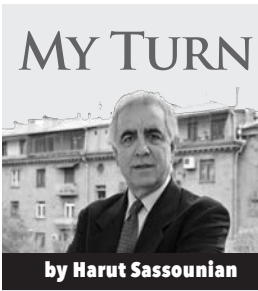
shattered. The Artsakh region and the Gandzasar Monastery became part of Azerbaijan — the result of the 2023 Nagorno-Karabakh War, echoing my mother’s experience 35 years earlier during the first Nagorno-Karabakh war for independence when she was forced to flee as a refugee from Baku, Azerbaijan, where Armenian residents became victims of violent attacks and persecution. This place that held me in its comforting embrace is now inaccessible to me, a loss so unexpected and devastating that it forced me to confront the pain of war and the sorrows my ancestors and parents endured.

Yet, I will never forget how the whole community came together in that remote mountain village. Amidst my sadness, the memory of the trip fills me with an appreciation for family and the beauty of diversity. The people in and around the church in Armenia taught me that humanity is indomitable and benevolent and that peace, community, and family love can transcend even the deepest strife. This experience gave me hope, expanded my definition of family, and empowered me to build and support communities wherever I go. I carry with me the vibrant tapestry of cultures and experiences that weave us together, reminding me that, even in conflict, we are bound by shared humanity and the enduring power of love.

(Symona Baatian is a senior at the Cambridge School of Weston.)



COMMENTARY



MY TURN

Prime Minister Pashinyan’s Objectionable Statements To Turkish Journalists

I learned this week that the government of Armenia had spent 7.5 million drams (approx. \$19,000) for the travel, lodging and meals of 10 Turkish journalists invited to Yerevan to interview Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Fortunately, it is not a large sum, but covering their expenses violates journalistic ethics.

I also learned that prior to the interview, the prime minister’s aides took away the Turkish journalists’ cell phones and cameras, so they would not be able to record the interview. The recording was done exclusively by the prime minister’s office. This is a very unusual and unacceptable way of treating journalists.

Interestingly, Turkish journalist Farhat Boratav noted that “the booths [at the Yerevan airport] where the Armenian police were sitting were brought from Turkey via Georgia.”

A Turkish reporter inquired about Pashinyan’s frequent comments on the Armenian Genocide. He asked: “I would like you to reflect on the reasons you pay attention to this theme. What are you trying to achieve with it, both among your citizens and diaspora circles?”

Pashinyan responded: “My understanding is that the lessons of history must serve the state interests and future interests of the state, the interests of the Republic of Armenia. And, by the way, according to my understanding, this conversation is ripe both in Armenia and the diaspora...not only inside Armenia or Armenian circles, but also in the regional sense, because that’s also an issue. What are we utilizing history for? Should historical confrontations become eternal or historical confrontations become a message for us to build a peaceful, collaborative stable future, in the regional sense? I am in favor of the second understanding.”

Another Turkish journalist asked: “You use ‘internal Armenization of genocide.’ I would like to understand, what influence does the genocide issue have now in Armenia-Turkey relations? According to you, is that already a former, past stage, has it been left as a previous issue in terms of Armenia-Turkey relations? And Armenia in the past was conducting a policy, as we know, so that the genocide was accepted by the various countries’ parliaments, etc. Can we say that this policy will no longer be used? Similarly, in the preamble of your Constitution, there are parts where there are the expressions Western Armenia and genocide. If the Constitution is changed in your country, will they not be found in the new Constitution?”

Pashinyan responded by saying that “the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is not among our foreign policy priorities today.” However, he added, without using the term genocide, “in Armenia and among Armenians, it is an incontestable truth. In other words, directly in our reality, it is not possible to negate or deny it because for all of us it is an undeniable truth, but that is not the issue.” He then minimized the significance of genocide recognition by saying that when far away countries decide to acknowledge it, after the euphoria dies down, the next minute the question becomes, “but what does that decision give us in our relations with our immediate environment? When we have tensions in our immediate environment, how do those tensions benefit our country, our regional stability, peace, etc., and so on.”

During his entire 90-minute interview, Pashinyan used the term genocide only once, whereas a Turkish journalist used the term genocide four times in his question. The rest of the time Pashinyan referred to the genocide as “decision” (6 times), “it” (3 times), “history” (39 times), and “great tragedy” (once).

Pashinyan was wrong when he said that “the period when that great tragedy occurred was a period when there was no Republic of Armenia.” The Prime Minister of Armenia does not seem to know that the Armenian Genocide lasted from 1915 to 1923, during which time, from 1918-1920, there was an independent Republic of Armenia.

It was also very disappointing to hear Pashinyan ask what the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by far away countries gave us. He should know that had it not been for the diaspora’s decades-long pursuit of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide internationally, no one in the world would have remembered by now that there has been such a genocide — something the Turkish government would have been very pleased with. Going beyond recognition, someday when there is a nationalistic government in Armenia and the right international circumstances materialize, Armenians will pursue the restitution of their losses from the Genocide, including the return of confiscated Armenian properties and occupied territories.

Pashinyan continued by saying that Armenia needs to have peace with its immediate neighbors, not so much with Australia, New Zealand or Brazil. He does not seem to understand that true peace must be based on historical truth and justice, not revisionism and lies. He went on to say that Turkey should not be a threat to Armenia, just as Armenia should not be a threat to Turkey! The prime minister must be living in a make-believe world. I am sure President Erdogan is not spending sleepless nights worrying that Armenia might attack Turkey any minute. He has much more critical issues to worry about.

Pashinyan goes on to deride the concept of historic Western Armenia, by saying that the cities in the Western part of the current Republic of Armenia are Western Armenia. And then, to cover up his concessions of Armenian territories, he makes the ridiculous statement that in this day and age, there are no such things as geographic borders due to social media and the internet which cross all borders.

As expected, the Turkish journalists reported the interview with the prime minister from a Turkish perspective, emphasizing that Pashinyan’s “conciliatory approach” about the Genocide issue and his rejection of territorial demands from Turkey are no longer obstacles in Armenia-Turkey relations. However, one particularly scandalous Turkish journalist, CNN Turk’s news director Idris Arkan, standing in front of the Blue Mosque in Yerevan, claimed falsely on Turkish TV that the Persian-built mosque, a historic landmark in Armenia’s capital, was Turkish. He even dared to describe Yerevan as a historic Turkish city. This is how CNN Turk’s news director rewarded Pashinyan for the all-expenses-paid trip to Armenia.

What Gets Sacrificed in the Name of Government Efficiency

By Raffi Krikorian

IMAGINE walking into a government office seeking help after losing your job. In one version of this story, you’re greeted by a system designed to process you as quickly as possible — scanning your identification card, assigning you a number and optimizing you through the pipeline. In another version, you’re met with understanding — someone who recognizes that behind your request is a human being who is facing one of life’s most challenging moments.

After decades in Silicon Valley, I’ve watched us revolutionize industries. We’ve made it possible to order anything at the tap of a button, to video-chat with someone halfway around the world and to access humanity’s knowledge in seconds. But in our relentless pursuit of efficiency, we’ve sometimes forgotten about the human beings on the other side of the screen.

We watched as social media algorithms pushed content that hurt teenage mental health — because engagement metrics looked good. We saw ride-sharing platforms optimize for growth while drivers struggled to make rent. We built social media systems that hijacked attention spans and fractured communities — all in the name of efficiency.

These weren’t mistakes. They were choices — conscious trades in which we sacrificed empathy for metrics.

Now, as Silicon Valley veterans take the helm of government modernization through the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), we face a decisive moment. Not just for technology but also for humanity.

Look at China. Through WeChat, its government services are a marvel of efficiency. Every citizen interaction is streamlined, optimized and measured. But at what cost? China is a surveillance state in which privacy crumbles and human dignity is measured in social credit scores. Is that what we want for someone seeking unemployment assistance, to be reduced to a series of data points and risk scores?

Here’s what keeps me up at night. When you’ve lost your job and need help, you’re not looking for another app to navigate. When a single mother applies for food assistance, she’s not interested in being another monthly active-user statistic. When an elderly man tries to understand Medicare after losing his wife of 50 years, he needs more than an efficient chatbot.

These are human beings at their most vulnerable. They’re coming to their government — to us — for help. And they deserve more than cold efficiency.

But here’s what gives me hope: We can write a different story.

Imagine instead a system that recognizes the courage it takes to ask for help. One that connects you with people who care — not because it drives engagement metrics but because human connection matters. Picture services that understand when someone needs a compassionate voice, not another automated response. Envision a government that works for everyone — including those without stable internet, those with disabilities and those who speak different languages.

This isn’t just idealistic thinking — it’s essential innovation. When people trust government services, when they feel heard and respected, they become partners in progress, not problems to be optimized away.

You have more power to shape this future than you might think.

Start local. Join your city council meetings and engage with your state representatives. Work with local nonprofits that understand your community’s needs, as the most meaningful change often starts in our own backyards where we can see firsthand how policies affect our neighbors. You can also raise your voice. When you hear conversations about government efficiency, ask about human impact. Question metrics that don’t account for dignity and understanding. Challenge the assumption that faster always means better.

The challenge before us isn’t just to modernize government — it’s to humanize it. To prove that efficiency and empathy aren’t opposing forces but essential partners. That America can lead the world not just in technological innovation but also in compassionate governance.

This is our moment to build something unprecedented: government services that measure success not in clicks and completions, but in lives improved and dignity preserved. A system that remembers that behind every unemployment claim, behind every assistance application, behind every Medicare question, there’s a human being seeking help.

The future of government services isn’t just about better technology — it’s about better humanity. And that starts with all of us demanding both.

(Raffi Krikorian is chief technology officer at Emerson Collective and host of the “Technically Optimistic” podcast. Originally published in the *Chicago Tribune* on March 13, 2025.)

COMMENTARY

Azerbaijan Is Already Friendly with Israel. Why the Push to ‘Normalize’?

By Eldar Mamedov

With President Donald Trump sending mixed messages on Iran — on the one hand, reinstating his “maximum pressure” campaign and threatening military action; on the other, signaling an eagerness to negotiate — anti-diplomacy voices are working overtime to find new ways to lock the US and Iran into perpetual enmity.

The last weeks have seen a mounting campaign, in both the US and Israel, to integrate Azerbaijan, Iran’s northern neighbor, into the Abraham Accords — the 2020 set of “normalization deals” between Israel and a number of Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco. The leading Israeli think tank Begin-Sadat Center argued that Baku would be a perfect addition to the club. A number of influential rabbis, led by the founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, Marvin Hier, and the main rabbi of the UAE, Eli Abadi (who happens to be a close associate to Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner, who was himself instrumental in forging the original Abraham Accords), also sent a letter to Trump promoting Baku’s inclusion. The *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* amplified these messages on their op-ed pages.

At first blush, such activism may appear puzzling. Azerbaijan, for all practical purposes, is already a close ally of Israel — to a much greater extent than any of the Arab signatories of the Abraham Accords.

When, in the early 1990s, Israel defined Iran as its main threat, it sought ties with Azerbaijan as a counter. Baku has benefited greatly from that relationship: Israel played a key role in Azerbaijan’s defeat of Armenia in wars over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region in 2020 and 2023. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Israel accounted for up to 70 percent of Azerbaijan’s imports of advanced weaponry. Azerbaijan, in turn, is Israel’s main supplier of oil, accounting for up to 40 percent of overall oil imports. Baku never suspended oil shipments during Israel’s war in Gaza after October 7, 2023. In a sign of further developing ties, Azerbaijan’s state oil company SOCAR recently acquired a 10 percent stake in Israel’s offshore “Tamar” gas field.

Thus, the added value of Azerbaijan joining the Abraham Accords is not obvious on its merits alone. The real agenda here appears to be to add the United States to the existing bilateral alliance. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office, in fact, announced that Israel seeks to

“establish a strong foundation for trilateral collaboration” with the US and Azerbaijan. Seth Cropsey and Joseph Epstein spelled out the aim of such an alliance in their March 14 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed: to significantly increase pressure on Iran’s northern border.

Yet there is an obstacle to the full realization of that scheme: Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, enacted by Congress in the context of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war in the early 1990s at the urgings of the influential American-Armenian lobby, forbids US aid and arms sales to Azerbaijan. Since the beginning of the Global War on Terror, successive presidents have waived that provision as Azerbaijan was found to be a useful partner. In that context, Baku pitched itself as a key ally against Tehran, including through illicit lobbying of Congress members.

Azerbaijan’s Israeli and American backers claim that the announcement of an impending “peace deal” between Armenia and Azerbaijan provides a good reason for Section 907 to be repealed altogether. Yet the deal is not yet signed, with Baku constantly moving the goalposts. More ominously, Baku has intensified messaging that Armenia is preparing a revanchist war to roll back its losses. Such claims, however, would seem to defy common sense as the balance of forces in the region strongly suggests that Yerevan is in no position to militarily challenge a Turkish and Israeli-backed Azerbaijan. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has insisted that he is ready to immediately sign the peace agreement with Baku.

Baku’s stalling tactics may be explained by the desire to maximize its current leverage to extract yet more territorial concessions from Yerevan and then blame Armenia for the failure of the peace talks. In particular, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev has long claimed the southern Armenian province of Syunik (known as Zangezur in Baku) as ancestral Azeri land and vowed to “return” it. It also happens to be the small slice of Armenian territory that borders Iran and cuts mainland Azerbaijan off from its exclave Nakhchivan. Azerbaijan has long demanded the establishment of the so-called “Zangezur corridor” that would connect it directly with Turkey. That demand is not addressed in the current draft peace agreement; nor, however, has it been dropped from Baku’s agenda, which makes Armenia particularly vulnerable to renewed military pressure from Azerbaijan.

For itself, Iran has made it abundantly clear that any change to the borders in the South Caucasus is unacceptable.

Tehran fears that the loss of the border with Armenia will isolate it from the region and enable its rival Turkey and arch-enemy Israel to consolidate their foothold in its backyard. To prevent that, Tehran has conducted massive military exercises along its border with Azerbaijan and warned that it would intervene militarily, if necessary. So far, that has been enough to deter Baku’s irredentist plans. Those warnings have had their desired effect: since then, both Baku and Tehran have taken steps to deescalate tensions.

The push to add Azerbaijan to the Abraham Accords, which Trump considers his signature first-term foreign policy achievement, appears aimed at elevating Baku’s relationship to Washington, and thus potentially emboldening Azerbaijan to take a more assertive stance vis-à-vis Iran. Positioning Azerbaijan at the vanguard of the anti-Iran coalition also aims at galvanizing Iran’s own large Azeri community (up to 20 percent of the total population). Hard-line US neoconservatives and organizations, such as the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the Hudson Institute, and their Israeli counterparts have long argued for encouraging Iran’s ethnic and religious minority communities, including Azeris, to rise up against the regime.

There is no doubt that Israel and Azerbaijan would welcome “trilateral collaboration” with the US that Netanyahu’s office favors. But it is difficult to see how it would serve long-term US interests, particularly its interest in avoiding new military commitments in the Greater Middle East that could entangle Washington in alliances that could drag it into new wars there, either directly or by proxy.

Moreover, there certainly isn’t any compelling reason for the US to reward Azerbaijan — a far-flung, corrupt and despotic dynastic regime guilty of ethnically cleansing 120,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh and abusing the human rights of its own people. Azerbaijan’s strategic significance to the US is negligible. It mostly hinges on a massively inflated “Iran threat.” A far better way forward would be for Washington to settle its differences with Tehran in a peaceful way, as indeed Trump purports to want to do. Among other benefits, it would remove any excuses for unnecessary entanglements with yet more unsavory clients.

(This commentary originally appeared on <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/> on March 24.)



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Pashinyan Says His Government to ‘Initiate Discussion’ to Dissolve OSCE Minsk Group

MINSK, from page 1

“Therefore, turning to the question of whether Azerbaijan can put forward new demands, returning to the peace agenda, yes, Azerbaijan can bring new issues and questions to the agenda, but it does not mean that all these issues are questions of discussion for us.”

‘Disguise the Real News’

Pashinyan was also asked about Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s recent remark, “that the level of trust to Armenia is close to zero.”

In light of the lack of trust, Aliyev said “we need documents; we need papers,” from Armenia in order to demonstrate that the efforts towards the peace treaty are genuine.

Pashinyan also admitted the lack of trust, noting that “if there were no trust issues, then there would be two options — either the peace treaty would have long ago been signed or there would be no need for a peace treaty.”

He further noted that a provision in the agreed peace treaty is “on confidence building measures.”

Pashinyan was asked to comment on the recent series of Azerbaijani accusations that Armenia has been violating the ceasefire, which follow the announcement that both sides declared they had reached an agreement on the text of the peace treaty.

According to Pashinyan’s interpretation of these events, the “dissemination of news with the escalation logic, I think one of its goals is to disguise the real news under the

flow of such news, and the real news is that the text of the peace treaty has been agreed upon and is waiting for being signed and therefore it must be signed.”

Pashinyan also said that “escalation in our region has no justification.”

Concessions with no Guarantees

Pashinyan did not agree with his critics’ comments that his government was engaged in making a list of concessions to Azerbaijan. Instead he claimed that currently, Armenia is “a much more independent and sovereign state.”

“During all those periods of what people call periods of non-concessions, including during my term as Prime Minister, during that whole period we had conceded the most important thing we have, our sovereignty, our independence, and our statehood.”

Despite his government’s previous stance, that the peace process needed a guarantor, during the interview on Friday Pashinyan suggested the opposite.

“There is one guarantee of Armenia’s security and it is [...] Armenia itself” and that “there is no more effective tool to guarantee security than peace.”

“There simply is no such tool,” Pashinyan said.

He suggested that it was a lesson learnt from history, referencing that, “in September 2022 when Azerbaijan attacked Armenia, Armenia had a guarantor.”

“Then what happened?,” Pashinyan said, referring to the Collective Security Treaty Organization’s lack of support.