

Despite Signing of Strategic Partnership Pact, US Halts Projects In Armenia

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN — Within a day, Armenia has announced that two planned activities with the US did not take place or were halted. The news came as the US has begun sweeping cuts to its foreign aid programs.

On Thursday, February 27, the Deputy Chair of the Armenian State Revenue Committee (SRC), Rafael Gevorgyan told Armenpress that the planned visit of the US Customs and Border Protection team to Armenia “did not take place.”

Armenpress noted that the SRC did not provide any additional details about the visit, “conditioned by [the fact] that the team has not yet arrived in Armenia.”

The visit was announced by former US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the day the Strategic Partnership with Armenia was signed in January. Blinken elaborated that the visit would take place “in the coming weeks,” for the group to work with their Armenian counterparts “on border security capacity building, strengthening security cooperation.”

The announcement came as Russian border guards were withdrawn in 2024 from several locations in Armenia amid Yerevan’s deteriorating relations with the Kremlin.

Following Blinken’s announcement, Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyan stated that the training provided could eventually lead to the withdrawal of Russian border guards from Armenia’s shared border with Turkey and Iran.

He noted that “ideally every country must be able to control its borders. And this assistance concerns the increase of our capacity through exchange of relevant experience.”

As the news came of the unfulfilled visit, on Friday, the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry announced that from February 24-28, “a study visit of representatives of the Armenian Security Council, Customs Service and Border Guard” took place in Lithuania, during which the Armenian side got acquainted with the “functioning of Lithuania’s integrated border management system and the model of ensuring the effectiveness of state border protection.”

On Tuesday, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kęstutis Budrys had a telephone conversation with Armen Grigoryan, the Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, in which they discussed security challenges facing the Baltic Sea and South Caucasus regions.

“Budrys called on Armenia to continue its democratic reforms and confirmed that see USAID, page 3

Demonstrations in Yerevan Call for Release of Armenians Held in Azerbaijan

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN — Several demonstrations have taken place in Yerevan since 28 February, calling on the government and international organizations to pressure Azerbaijan to release Armenian prisoners — including former Nagorno-Karabakh officials — being tried in Azerbaijan.

On Monday, March 3, a demonstration was held near the offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Yerevan, amidst reports that Azerbaijan sought to push the ICRC, UNDP, and UNHCR out of the country.

Previously, on February 28, a demonstration was held near the Foreign Ministry and UN office in Yerevan.

According to Armenpress, the protesters demanded that the Armenian authorities ‘convene a meeting with accredited diplomats in Armenia to present the crimes taking place against our compatriots in Baku and demand substantial steps’.

They also noted that the Armenian authorities ‘must raise this issue on international platforms’.

At least 16 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, including ex-officials, are currently on trial in Azerbaijan for a total of 2,548 crimes, including genocide, slavery, en-



Demonstration held near the ICRC office in Yerevan. Photo via social media.

forced disappearance of persons, torture, financing of terrorism, and the creation of a criminal association. Azerbaijan has officially acknowledged that it is holding 23 Armenian prisoners.

Among those detained are three former Nagorno-Karabakh presidents — Arkady Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan and Arayik Harutyunyan — and former State Minis-

ter Ruben Vardanyan, a Russian-Armenian billionaire who is currently on hunger strike in protest against his imprisonment.

Banners held by protesters near the UN’s offices showed portraits of the Armenian prisoners, with one of them reading: ‘UN silence benefits Azerbaijan: act now before it’s too late’.

see PROTESTS, page 2

TCA Signs Joint Appeal to End Azerbaijan’s Political Persecution of Armenian Humanitarian Ruben Vardanyan

To the International Community:

As major Armenian diasporan organizations worldwide and NGOs working in the Republic of Armenia, we the undersigned, are writing to urge you to take immediate action to end Azerbaijan’s political persecution of Ruben Vardanyan, a globally-respected Armenian philanthropist and native of Armenia.

Now 18 months into captivity, under wretched conditions and charged with committing crimes against the Azerbaijani state by standing on the side of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabagh during the 2020 war and its aftermath, Mr. Vardanyan recently went on a hunger strike. His intention is to underscore the urgent need for international intervention to prevent further violations of his basic human right to a fair trial that conforms with international laws of justice.

During a brief phone call with his family from a Baku prison on February 19, 2025, Mr. Vardanyan cited Azerbaijan’s blatant violations of due process and international standards. He highlighted serious procedural violations that have tainted the proceedings and reaffirmed that his persecution is part of a broader effort to criminalize Armenians who have supported or shown solidarity with the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabagh (also referred to as Artsakh in the Armenian language.)

see VARDANYAN, page 3



Attorneys Work Remotely to Help Armenian Prisoners on Trial in Baku Defenses

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The fate of the Armenian leadership of Karabakh (Artsakh), who were arrested in September 2023, after Azerbaijani forces staged a brutal attack on the enclave, taking it over entirely, remains bleak as their trials in Baku are underway.

Recently, two attorneys who are working on the cases of the eight, spoke about the dire outlook.

Human rights attorneys Siranush Sahakyan, who is based in Armenia, and French-Armenian Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, have advised the defense of the 23 Armenian prisoners in Baku and spoke recently about the uphill road they are facing.

The group includes Arayik Harutyunyan, who served as de facto president of the NKR from May 2020 until September 1, two previous NKR presidents — Bako Sahakyan (2007-2020) and Arkady see BAKU PRISONERS, page 8

ARMENIA

TUMO Kapan Main Building Officially Opens



Page 3

LIMA

Khachaturyan Becomes First Armenian President To Visit Peru



Page 5

ATHENS

The Family Tsakirian: Luthiers to The Stars



Page 13



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

\$20-Million Oil Refinery Being Built in Armenia

YEREVAN (ARKA) — Construction of an oil products refinery is underway in Armenia's Ararat region with total investment in the project amounting to about \$20 million, the Ministry of Economy reported on March 4.

The plant will create more than 100 jobs. The investment program envisages phased construction of oil products and bitumen storage facilities, bitumen production shop, hydrocarbon raw materials processing unit.

The bitumen production will allow to meet regional demand for this product.

Gevorg Papoyan, Minister of Economy, together with Eduard Sukiasyan, founder and Chairman of the Board of Sil Capital Company, familiarized with the preparatory work on the territory of the plant.

French Envoy Visits Vayots Dzor

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — French Ambassador to Armenia Olivier Decottignies visited "strategically important" Vayots Dzor Province on February 28.

In a post on [the](#) platform formerly known as Twitter on Friday, February 28, the French envoy emphasized that parts of the province remain under Azerbaijani occupation.

"Today, I am visiting Vayots Dzor Province. Vayots Dzor is located in the base section of Armenian territory partly occupied by Azerbaijan. It is a strategically important area, home to the headquarters of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMA)," the diplomat wrote.

Decottignies has already met with Vayots Dzor Governor Kolya Mikayelyan in Yeghegnadzor.

Legalization of Illegal Construction Nets \$23M To Yerevan Coffers

YEREVAN (ARKA) — On March 3, Narek Barseghyan, the head of the Architecture and Urban Development Department of Yerevan's City Hall, during a working meeting, reported that the legalization of unauthorized buildings in Yerevan between 2019 and 2024 have brought approximately 9.1 billion drams (\$23 million) to the city budget.

According to the data he provided, during the specified period, Yerevan City Hall made 945 decisions to legalize unauthorized buildings on municipal land plots and 3,313 decisions on private land plots.

Barseghyan noted that in 2024, there was a decrease in the number of such decisions, due to the approval of the new general plan for Yerevan.

Yerevan Mayor Tigran Avinyan responded, emphasizing that this concerns residential buildings. "We almost effortlessly sign all applications for houses that do not yet have a title deed or were built without permission on privately owned land," Avinyan said, noting that such plots exist in Avan, the Pobeda quarter, and several other areas.

Demonstrations in Yerevan Call for Release Of Armenians Held in Azerbaijan

PROTESTS, from page 1

On March 1, Mane Tandilyan, the president of Country to Live, a party affiliated with Vardanyan, began a hunger strike in Armenia's Republic Square, "as a plea" to the former state minister to stop his hunger strike, despite her "fully supporting the demands underlying Ruben Vardanyan's hunger strike."

The following day two more people joined her in her hunger strike. Tandilyan felt ill on March 3, with EMTs telling her to terminate her strike. As of publication, Tandilyan is apparently still on hunger strike.

Tandilyan served as Armenia's Labor and Social Affairs Minister from May to November 2018. Then, in the aftermath of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, she served as Labor, Social Affairs and Migration Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh from December 2020 to September 2021.

Vardanyan began his second hunger strike on February 18 in protest against his trial and arrest by Azerbaijan, following which his lawyer, Jared Genser, made a statement regarding his deteriorating health since going on strike. Genser said that the Azerbaijani military court refused their five motions to postpone the trial and "insisted [Vardanyan] attend, despite his being on the verge of passing out".

Yerevan Joins the Fray

Armenian officials have only recently begun publicly condemning the trial of former Nagorno-Karabakh officials and other representatives of the region which was launched in January.

On Friday, February 28, Armenia's Foreign Ministry stated that it "continues to draw the attention of the international community" to the issue of the release of Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan. They also stated that the Azerbaijani authorities "are using this judicial spectacle as a tool for political pressure on" Armenia.

In response, Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry "resolutely" condemned and rejected Armenia's statement. It said that the Arme-

nians on trial "either have been charged or convicted with war crimes, ethnic cleansing, military aggression, torture, and other serious offences" and that Azerbaijan was obligated to "investigate and prosecute these offences under the Geneva Conventions and generally under international and domestic law."

Last week, during an official visit to Ge-

have yet to yield results."

Pashinyan claimed that initially they "refrained from making certain statements" in regard to the trial "to avoid provoking torture and the use of prohibited methods."

"Why are we making a statement now? Because we see that we can no longer provoke anything further — it has already happened," Pashinyan said.



The tent where Mane Tandilyan, the president of Country to Live, a party affiliated with former Nagorno-Karabakh State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, and two others are holding their hunger strike in Armenia's Republic Square, 'as a plea' to Vardanyan to stop his hunger strike. Photo via social media.

neva, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan criticized Azerbaijan's detention and trials against Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians — including former officials — marking the first time Armenia broached the matter at an international level.

On Saturday, March 1, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that his government made "possible diplomatic efforts" towards the release of the Armenian prisoners and that they continue to "bring up this issue in discussions with Azerbaijan." He also noted that "efforts are being made that are not immediately visible and

In late January, Pashinyan expressed concern that the trial was "not only seriously worrying, but will be, and is being used to provoke new escalations in the region."

On February 27, Andranik Kocharyan, an MP and chair of the parliamentary Defense and Security Committee, stated that the former political and military leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh "did not have the right" to be captured by Azerbaijan, adding that their detention by Azerbaijan was a threat to Armenia.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on March 3.)

Vardanyan Refuses to Answer Questions at March 4 Court Hearing

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — The sham trial of Armenian businessman and philanthropist Ruben Vardanyan continued in Azerbaijan on Tuesday, March 4.

According to Azerbaijani media reports, he refused to answer any questions from prosecutors at the court hearing.

Vardanyan, a former Artsakh state minister, launched a hunger strike in protest against his show trial in Baku on February 19.

"I have decided to protest by declaring a hunger strike against the judicial farce being carried out against me," Vardanyan said in a statement via his lawyers.

"What is happening in the courtroom cannot be called a trial — this is a political show, in which my right to a fair hearing is being deliberately disregarded," he added.

Vardanyan showed signs of torture during a court appearance last week, sparking protests outside the Armenian Foreign Ministry, as well as the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) offices in Yerevan, demanding the release of all Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan.

In a related story, Armenia's representative for international legal matters, Yeghishhe Kirakosyan, addressed the Armenian Parliament regarding Armenian captives held in Azerbaijan. He emphasized that the photos published in the media have

been sent to the European Court, requesting that the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) oblige Azerbaijan to provide additional details about these individuals.

"We previously submitted an interstate complaint that includes the issue of prisoners. Additionally, we have a second, separate complaint, the written phase of which was completed last December. We have also implemented interim measures against Azerbaijan, through which we periodically receive updates on the detainees' health conditions and detention circumstances," Kirakosyan stated, adding that the most recent information was shared in early February, according to Radar.am.

According to Kirakosyan, videos and photos related to the prisoners are under analysis.

"These materials are being submitted to the European Court, demanding that it require additional information not only about Ruben Vardanyan and the former leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh but also about all detainees.

We have specific concerns regarding the rights of those held there. We are working meticulously in this direction and will continue our efforts," he said.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry issued a statement emphasizing that it continues to draw the attention of international part-

ners to the issue of Armenian prisoners of war, hostages, and other detainees in Azerbaijan. The statement also condemned the staged trials against some detainees, which involve gross procedural violations and visible signs of torture.

Armenian National Assembly Speaker Alen Simonyan said on March 4 that every effort must be made to prevent escalation of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, stressing that Armenia has no territorial claims and remains committed to peace.

Responding to former Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian's call to suspend talks with Baku until Armenian prisoners are freed, Simonyan dismissed it as "provocative." He noted that negotiations have already reduced the number of prisoners from 152 to 23, highlighting discreet diplomacy as the most effective approach.

Simonyan reaffirmed the government's commitment to securing the release of all Armenian prisoners, including Artsakh's former military and political leaders.

"They are our compatriots and efforts are underway for their repatriation," he told reporters.

"Everything must be done to secure Ruben Vardanyan's release. Even if he was sent from somewhere, it doesn't change anything, he is our compatriot," the speaker added.



ARMENIA

TUMO Kapan Main Building Officially Opens

KAPAN, Armenia (Public Radio of Armenia) — On March 2, the TUMO Kapan main building was officially opened, serving as a central hub for the organization's educational network in Syunik Province. Housed in the Kapan railway station — a historic building now reborn as an innovation hub — this new center, together with the TUMO Boxes in Meghri and Kajaran, will serve around 2,500 teenagers. In addition, teenagers from Goris, where a TUMO Box will soon begin operating, will also attend workshops and learning labs at TUMO Kapan, with transportation provided.

The TUMO Kapan project was made possible thanks to our cooperation with the Kapan Municipality, the EU's Resilient Syunik Team Europe initiative, and our donors Judith Saryan and Victor Zaroujian. The TUMO Boxes in Meghri and Goris are sponsored by the Kashian family and ContourGlobal.

At the official ribbon-cutting ceremony, EU Ambassador to Armenia Vassilis Maragos, Kapan Mayor Gevorg Parsyan, and TUMO CEO Marie Lou Papazian formally opened the doors of the new center. The event was attended by representatives of state agencies, TUMO's international and local partners, students and parents from the community, and the general public.

Kapan Mayor Gevorg Parsyan welcomed all of Kapan's guests and congratulated them on the official opening of the TUMO Kapan building: "We are very pleased that a TUMO Center is being established right here, because the railway once served not only as an important transportation hub for us but also contributed to the economic and cultural development of our entire region. In the twenty-first century, developing a knowledge-based economy and technology is extremely important, and I hope our teenagers will use this opportunity to shape Kapan's future."

Maragos noted, "TUMO Kapan exemplifies the European Union's commitment to innovation and supporting regional development in Armenia. This center will not only

equip young people with the skills to thrive locally but will also contribute to the sustainable economic development and resilience of the Syunik region. Our partnership with TUMO is a key part of the EU's broader mission to invest in human capital, strengthen local economies, and prepare the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs who will shape the future of Armenia," he emphasized in his opening remarks.

"Our goal of providing all teenagers in Syunik with life-changing learning experiences on a large-scale began back in 2021 with just one TUMO Box. Now, we have grown into a full educational network. This major undertaking was made possible by a strong partnership. TUMO purchased a formerly privatized building, while the Kapan Municipality and the EU joined forces through the 'Resilient Syunik Team Europe' initiative, and our loyal friends Judith and Victor lent their invaluable support. Notably, we are announcing the long-awaited news about the TUMO Box in Goris, which is being launched in collaboration with ContourGlobal. To complete TUMO's educational network in Syunik, we only need to establish the Sisian Center and its surrounding TUMO Boxes. We hope to overcome that challenge, too, by finding reliable partners," said TUMO CEO Marie Lou Papazian.

The TUMO Kapan educational space will not be limited to a single building. Construction is ongoing, and newly built facilities outlined in the project will soon open to students. In the meantime, educational activities will continue in temporary TUMO



The new TUMO Kapan building

Boxes located adjacent to the building.

TUMO Kapan will offer a unique experience not only for teenagers but also for the entire community. The TUMO Labs program, implemented in cooperation with the EU, will be based here as well. Offering practical projects in technology, science and engineering for individuals 18 and older, TUMO Labs in Kapan will initially launch the guided self-learning (GSL) program, giving students the opportunity to study machine learning, Python, or JavaScript from scratch, free of charge, by registering online at tumolabs.am. Moreover, the building will be equipped with spaces tailored for events, coworking, and learning.

The official opening coincided with the

popular Barekendan event on TUMO's festive calendar. True to TUMO style, the celebration included a calligraphy performance and a screen printing workshop featuring TUMO alumni and TUMO Studios experts, a traditional song-dance-masquerade, and performances by the Vorotna folk dance ensemble and the Katil folk band. The event also showcased TUMO's work in digitizing cultural heritage, with participants taking a virtual tour of historical sites in Syunik scanned by TUMO.

The evening concluded with an audiovisual experience by Misak Samokatyan and Shaghen Khandkaryan, dedicated to the history and revival of Kapan's railway station building.

TCA Signs Joint Appeal to End Azerbaijan's Persecution of Humanitarian Ruben Vardanyan

VARDANYAN, from page 1

Mr. Vardanyan outlined his ill-treatment in detention, how he has been coerced to sign falsified case materials, and denied the right to prepare a defense, just to name a few of Azerbaijan's tactics to undermine his human rights and render his conviction a foregone conclusion.

Regrettably, Mr. Vardanyan's previous appeal to international organizations and the media regarding the gross human rights violations against Armenian detainees went unanswered, leading to even graver consequences. His current hunger strike is not only a protest but a dire warning — continued silence and inaction will only worsen the plight of Armenian prisoners of war and detained civilians illegally held by Azerbaijan.

We strongly urge you to take a resolute stance against the Aliyev regime to defend justice, human dignity, and the rule of law, before it's too late. We ask you to demand:

- Justice for all Armenian political prisoners and prisoners of war illegally held in Baku
- An immediate and thorough investigation into the mistreatment of Ruben Vardanyan and the ongoing violations of his human rights to a fair trial
- Transparency and accountability in judicial proceedings by ensuring access for independent international observers and legal representatives
- Urgent action to compel Azerbaijan to uphold its international obligations and end the politically-motivated persecution of Armenian citizens

We look forward to your decisive action in addressing this urgent matter and would greatly appreciate your reporting your efforts and findings to us in a timely manner. Respectfully yours,

Armenian General Benevolent Union
Afeyan Foundation
"ARBANE" Pan-Armenian Projects Foundation
Armenian Relief Society
Aurora Humanitarian Initiative
Aznavour Foundation
Fund for Armenian Relief
H. Hovnanian Family Foundation
Orran
Teach For Armenia
Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada
The Armenian Legal Defense Front
Tufenkian Foundation
We Are Our Mountains

Despite Signing of Strategic Partnership Pact, US Halts Projects in Armenia

USAID, from page 1

Lithuania was ready to continue sharing its experience in economic and energy diversification, developing a national crisis management system and increasing the country's resilience to external threats," the statement issued by the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry read.

Cyber Laboratory 'on Halt'

The Strategic Partnership document was signed by Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and Blinken, and stresses a mutual desire to strengthen relations across the diplomatic, economic, energy, high-tech, educational, scientific, cultural, legal, defense, and security fields.

At the time of the signing, Mirzoyan also expressed Armenia's eagerness to continue working with the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump in order "to fulfil the ambitious goals outlined in our Strategic Partnership Charter."

Nonetheless, beyond the unfulfilled visit, Armenia has said other collaborative projects with the US have been halted.

Earlier on Thursday, the Armenian Interior Ministry told Armenpress that work on a cyber lab was "temporarily halted because of the latest developments in the US pertaining to foreign programs."

It also noted that "a preliminary agree-

ment" had been reached with the US side regarding the creation of a cyber laboratory in Armenia, "within the framework of combating cybercrime."

On 20 January, Trump applied a 90-day pause in the US foreign development assistance "for assessment of programmatic efficiencies and consistency with United States foreign policy." While it was initially announced as being temporary, it is unclear when, or if, foreign aid programs would resume.

During his visit to the US in early February, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with members of the Senate and Congress, discussing prospects for developing the partnership between their two countries and the ongoing peace talks with Azerbaijan.

According to Pashinyan's administration, Republican Senator Roger Wicker and the congresspeople who met with Pashinyan "emphasized the importance of deepening cooperation in the areas envisaged by the Strategic Partnership Document" and "noted the need for an active dialogue with the new US administration aimed continuously advancing the bilateral agenda."

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on February 27.)



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

EU Considers Providing Another 10 Million Euros in Aid to Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The European Union is considering providing Armenia with another 10 million euros in non-lethal assistance under the European Peace Facility (EPF), Radio Liberty quotes its sources in Brussels as saying.

According to the source, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaia Kallas, has submitted a proposal to the EU Council, which is expected to discuss it in the coming weeks. The exact date of the discussion is not yet clear.

The proposal will enter into force if approved by all 27 EU member states. Last year, for example, Hungary blocked the provision of this assistance, demanding that Azerbaijan be included in the program. After weeks of closed-door negotiations, European diplomats managed to overcome Budapest's resistance at the time.

The position of Budapest and other member states on the issue is not clear for now.

In July 2022 the Council adopted an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility (EPF) in support of the Armed Forces of Armenia worth €10 million.

Russia Appoints New Consul in Gyumri

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Russia has appointed a new consul general in Gyumri, Armenia.

“By order of the Russian foreign minister, Igor Borisovich Titov has been appointed Russian Consul General in Gyumri,” the ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

He is set to replace Ruslan Kandaurov who passed away in November 2024 at the age of 63.

IAEA Board of Governors Elects Armenian Ambassador As Vice-Chair

VIENNA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Ambassador to the International Organizations in Vienna, Andranik Hovhannisyan, was elected vice-chair of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during its latest session, which began on March 3, Factor.am reports.

Hovhannisyan reaffirmed Armenia's commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, adherence to international conventions, and ongoing efforts to ensure the safe operation of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant (ANPP). He also outlined joint initiatives with the IAEA and partner states and presented Armenia's stance on the IAEA's nuclear safety program for 2026-2029 and other matters under the agency's mandate.

The IAEA Board of Governors is one of the agency's key policymaking and governing bodies, working alongside the organization's annual General Conference of member states.

UNDP, UNHCR, and ICRC ‘Told to Leave’ Azerbaijan

According to pro-government media outlet Caliber, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been told “they must leave” Azerbaijan.

Previously, the Baku offices of these organizations were “notified about the need to review the format of cooperation,” Caliber reported on Sunday, March 2, citing the information available to their editorial team.

According to Caliber, the main reason for the decision was that Azerbaijan is now able to “address emerging challenges independently,” including those specifically related to Nagorno-Karabakh, noting that in 2025, more than \$2.4 billion have already been allocated for the reconstruction of the region.

In addition, Caliber cited an example from the EU as proof Azerbaijan was not “reinventing the wheel” by refusing international support, noting that several refugee support centers established in Poland by the UNHCR in 2022 to assist Ukrainian refugees in transit zones were closed the following year after refugee needs changed and there was a shift towards more sustainability in aid, including increased collaboration with local organizations and municipalities.

Beyond citing Azerbaijan's growth, Caliber also criticized the UNDP for alleged “corruption, systemic management failures, and a lack of transparency,” citing an audit conducted by the UNDP's Office of Internal Audit and Investigations.

In particular, the article claimed that in 2023, the UNDP allocated \$754,570 to 23 local civil society organizations which were not properly registered with the state, calling it a “flagrant disregard for legal and ethical standards.”

Both the UNDP and UNHCR have been working in Azerbaijan since 1992.

Continued Attacks on the ICRC

In addition to criticizing the two UN agencies, Caliber, focusing on the ICRC specifically, highlighted that Azerbaijan had “serious suspicions of hostile, particularly espionage activities by the ICRC against the

Azerbaijani Army” during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

“We have repeatedly witnessed that the ICRC operates under double standards, with anti-Turkish chauvinism, indulgence towards Armenian provocations, and complete indifference to the problems of Azerbaijanis, among other issues,” Caliber wrote.

In contrast, an investigation by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) published August 2024 revealed the ways in which Azerbaijan reportedly impeded the humanitarian work of the ICRC and how the Azerbaijani Red Crescent Society supported Azerbaijani government narratives.

The OCCRP investigation — which lasted more than a year and was based on data about ICRC convoys “provided by inside sources,” as well as interviews and on-the-ground reporting — claimed that the Azerbaijan Red Crescent was “deeply enmeshed with the authoritarian regime of President Ilham Aliyev.”

In particular, the investigation reported that during the blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the Azerbaijan Red Crescent organized a protest near the Aghdam road to the region, demanding access for itself.

The ICRC played a crucial role in evacuating the region's population in need of advanced medical treatment during the blockade, which began in December 2022. The region's population, which numbered over 100,000, saw shortages not only of food and fuel, but also medical supplies, which challenged the work of the medics.

Despite the International Court of Justice's decision obliging Azerbaijan to ensure “unimpeded movement” along the enclave's only road to Armenia in both directions, the OCCRP claims that Azerbaijan “severely limited” even the ICRC's ability to operate there.

The ICRC was one of two international organizations officially represented in Nagorno-Karabakh before the 2020 war — the second, Halo Trust, closed in 2023.

Currently, the ICRC is the only organi-

zation who has met with Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan, focusing on recording the conditions of their detentions and their health.

Azerbaijan has officially acknowledged 23 Armenian prisoners, including former Nagorno-Karabakh officials, most notably former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan.

Azerbaijan's Civil Society Continues to Shrink

Repression against civil society organizations in Azerbaijan first began in 2014, after the government changed legislation to only allow international organizations to provide grants if it had a branch or representative office registered in Azerbaijan and entered into an agreement with the Justice Ministry. In addition, such organizations had to apply for permission to host any events, from training sessions to conferences.

Following this, in December 2014, the former chair of the Presidential Administration, Ramiz Mehdiyev, wrote an article claiming that local and international civil society organizations in Azerbaijan were acting as a fifth column.

According to prominent human rights lawyer Intigam Aliyev, “first, authoritarian governments constantly need an image of an enemy to distract attention from the ineffective social and economic policies they pursue, corruption, monopolies, the arbitrariness of officials, courts and the police. This image can be the Council of Europe, the EU, USAID, UN agencies, or France and Iran.”

Speaking to OC Media, Aliyev noted all of these organizations have worked in Azerbaijan for many years, and have been partnered with state agencies more than other civil society groups.

“A significant part of the grants they allocate are aimed at financing joint projects with the state. The effectiveness of most of them and their benefit to the country has always been a subject of debate. In terms of transparency, it is no different from projects financed from the state budget,” Aliyev said.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on March 3.)

Vaccine Hesitancy Fuels Resurgence of Childhood Diseases in Central Asia, Caucasus

Preventable childhood diseases, especially measles, are making a comeback across Central Asia and the Caucasus. Vaccine hesitancy among parents is a major factor in the resurgence.

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) have surged across the region during the post-Covid era, according to a report published March 3 by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Among Central Asian and Caucasus states, Kazakhstan registered the highest number of measles cases during the reporting period with 28,147. Azerbaijan (16,690) and Kyrgyzstan (13,961) recorded the second and third highest totals, UNICEF reported.

MMR vaccination rates across Europe and Central Asia have declined in recent years and in 2024 ranged from 73 percent to 86 percent. The report noted that children in Georgia's separatist territory of Abkhazia were especially vulnerable to contracting measles, polio and diphtheria due to “severely weakened health systems.” Fewer than three out of 10 children in the territory had received the full cycle of the DPT3 diphtheria vaccine, it added.

The report cited vaccine hesitancy as playing a key role in declining vaccination rates. The outbreak of the Covid pandemic not only disrupted regular vaccination programs but also prompted an avalanche of mis- and disinformation about vaccines

that prompted parents to keep their kids unvaccinated. As a result, 2020-2021 saw the “largest continued backslide in vaccinations” seen since the 1980s, according to UNICEF and World Health Organization data. And even as vaccination rates started to stabilize, wariness about childhood vaccines remained strong, according to a UNICEF study published in 2023.

“The decline in confidence in childhood vaccines is deeply concerning. Immunization is one of humanity's most remarkable success stories. Too many lives are at stake to let it fall prey to a wave of fear and misinformation fueled by the pandemic,” the study quoted Philippe Cori, UNICEF's Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, as saying.

The 2023 study identified Kyrgyzstan as having the highest number of completely unvaccinated children among all countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Georgia, meanwhile, had the highest number of under-vaccinated kids, or those who had not received all doses of vaccines, such as DPT3.

State agencies in the region launched programs in 2024 to combat vaccine mis- and disinformation. In Kyrgyzstan, the Health Ministry's Center for Disease Prevention mounted an information campaign to dispel misconceptions that vaccines can induce autism. Public service announce-

ments, citing British and American studies, also asserted that “there is no biological link between vaccination and morbidity.”

UNICEF reinforced the Kyrgyz governmental initiative by training health workers on MMR management and prevention best practices. The combined efforts produced quick results: the “second phase” of a 2024 vaccination campaign yielded an 88 percent overall immunization rate, according to the UNICEF report.

Elsewhere, UNICEF worked in 2024 with national governments, including in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, to strengthen national immunization plans and develop outreach efforts to identify and vaccinate “zero-dose” children. The UN agency also implemented “awareness-raising” initiatives in Armenia and Kazakhstan. The report goes on to mention that UNICEF experienced a 49 percent shortfall in its \$39.6 funding appeal for 2024.

The UNICEF report identifies inadequate “health personnel capacities and health system level issues” as ancillary factors in the rising number of measles cases. “Despite UNICEF's efforts, shortages of essential medicines and trained health personnel persist, exacerbating public health risks,” the report states.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.euraisanet.org on March 4.)



INTERNATIONAL

Khachaturyan Becomes First Armenian President to Visit Peru

LIMA (Armenpress) — As part of his trip to South America, Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan visited Peru on March 4, where he met with President Dina Boluarte in Lima. Khachaturyan became the first Armenian president to visit the South American country.

President Boluarte emphasized that Khachaturyan's visit marks the first Armenian presidential visit to Peru, which is a testament to the two countries seeking to strengthen friendship and partnership and will boost the enhancement of the relationship between the two states that represent ancient civilizations, the presidency said in a press release.

President Khachaturyan thanked for the warm reception and attached importance to mutual high-level visits for establishing cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

During the meeting the presidents attached importance to effective partnership in various international platforms, including the Ancient Civilizations Forum, and opportunities to enhance partnership.

The presidents discussed issues pertaining to cultural heritage.

Intensifying the visa liberalization steps between the two countries was also dis-

cussed. The sides concurred that the visa waiver would contribute to mutual visits and boost tourism.

Boluarte congratulated Khachaturyan on the selection of Armenia as the host of COP17. In this context Khachaturyan said he would be happy to see the highest representation of Peru at the event.

The presidents also emphasized the invaluable role of establishing peace and concurred that sustainable development and prosperity is possible only in a peaceful and predictable environment, which requires continuous efforts by the international community.

The sides discussed the need for intensifying partnership in various areas including politics, economy, culture, tourism. They highlighted the need for continuing political consultations launched last year.

The presidents agreed to promote ties and support joint initiatives aimed at enhancing cooperation.

Reiterating readiness to develop mutually beneficial cooperation, the presidents said that the Armenia-Peru relations have great potential for development, and utilizing it would benefit the two nations.



President Vahagn Khachaturyan with President Dina Boluarte in Lima, Peru

Turkey's Kurds Wary of Path to Peace after PKK Declares Ceasefire

By Mucahit Ceylan and Adnan Ahmad

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (AP) — A momentous ceasefire declaration on Saturday stirred a mix of emotions in southeast Turkey and northern Iraq, where people bore the brunt of the 40-year conflict between Kurdish militants and the Turkish state.

The militants' ceasefire announcement could mark a significant boost to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government, two days after their imprisoned leader called for the group to disarm.

On the streets of Diyarbakir, the largest city in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeast, some of those who had lost relatives fighting on the side of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, were wary of placing their faith in the Turkish government. Turkey has yet to make a detailed response to the PKK's ceasefire announcement.

"We do not trust them, they said the same things before, nothing has changed. Twelve years ago they said peace, peace, peace. Then there was a ceasefire and then we saw what happened," said Turkan Duman, 56, referring to a previous peace process that broke down in 2015.

She said her son is currently serving a 12-year prison sentence for PKK membership. He was jailed after crossing the Syrian border to fight with Kurdish forces against the Islamic State group at Kobani in late 2014.

Duman also lost two brothers who were killed fighting Turkish security forces in the mid-2010s near Lice, a town to the north of Diyarbakir where the PKK was founded in 1978.

Kiyemet Soresoglu, who like Duman is part of the Peace Mothers' Association, also expressed doubt over the government's intentions. "Of course we want peace to be established. We are afraid because they make plans or (could) play a

trick," she said.

Soresoglu, 55, also has a son serving a prison term for being a member of the PKK, which is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey and its Western allies.

He was wounded in fighting in Diyarbakir's downtown Sur district when the earlier ceasefire broke down 10 years ago. "There is not a single inch of land left in Kurdistan where the blood of martyrs has not been shed," she said.

"If they tell us to lay down our weapons without expecting anything in return, we, the guerrillas and mothers of martyrs, will not accept this. We would be the ones that would take the weapons of our children and continue the struggle."

Sitting alongside her friend, Duman added: "But we want peace. Peace so that no more blood is shed, it is a sin."

Since the PKK launched its armed campaign against the Turkish state in 1984, tens of thousands have died. Exact casualties are difficult to calculate but the International Crisis Group says 7,152 have been killed since fighting resumed in July 2015, including 646 civilians, 1,494 members of the security forces and 4,786 PKK militants.

Saturday's ceasefire announcement preceded two days earlier by imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's call for the group to disarm and disband.

Vahap Coskun, a law lecturer at Diyarbakir's Dicle University, said this indicated how closely the PKK leadership based in northern Iraq was in step with Ocalan despite his 25 years behind bars.

"A very high threshold has been crossed in terms of disarmament," he said, adding that he expected the PKK to move swiftly to hold a congress to dissolve itself.

"Unlike the last solution process, this solution process is being handled with utmost sensitivity regarding the use of time,"

Coskun added.

Across the mountainous Iraqi border, which for years saw PKK insurgents slip into Turkey to stage attacks, Kurds in Sulaymaniyah welcomed the ceasefire with hopeful expectation.

Najmaddin Bahaadin described it as a "historical moment" different from previous peace deals.

"It is not like the previous experiments where the PKK stopped the war several times and demanded peace but (Turkish President Recep Tayyip) Erdogan and Turkish policy were not convinced," he said. "It seems they both reached to this

conviction now."

Sulaymaniyah, in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, is the city closest to the PKK's headquarters in the Qandil mountains and many locals support the group.

Awat Rashid questioned whether Ocalan had been pressured by his captors to make the peace bid.

"If Mr. Ocalan was in the Qandil mountains, on top of his leadership council, would he make this peace decision? This is the question that should be asked," he said. "To what extent you think this is reliable and it can be trusted?"

US Shows Interest in Bolstering Ties with Central Asian States

When it comes to Eurasia, the Trump administration has acted quickly to reverse the foreign policy of its predecessor, underscored by moves to foster a rapid thaw in relations with Russia. But there is one Biden-era legacy that the Trump State Department seems intent on preserving, an initiative to increase US influence in Central Asia known as the C5+1 format.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio emphasized the US interest in building up the C5+1 framework during a February 21 talk with Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov of Uzbekistan. According to a State Department spokesperson, Rubio "discussed continued cooperation, including through the C5+1 diplomatic platform, in support of a more peaceful and prosperous Central Asia."

The main driver of US interest in Central Asia is the region's abundant natural resources, not only oil and natural gas, but also minerals and rare earths used in high-tech devices and for clean energy and defense purposes. A geographic consideration may also factor into the US policy calculus: Central Asian states sit on China's western border, and an avowed aim of Trump's second term is containing Chinese global economic influence.

Saidov indicated that Uzbekistan was eager to engage with the United States, describing his conversation with Rubio as

"candid and productive." In a statement posted on Telegram, he added that Uzbekistan would work to expand bilateral ties "in all spheres without an exception," focusing on "building strong bridges between business communities, increasing trade volume in both directions [and] ensuring prosperous development."

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are considered the lynchpin states within the C5+1 context. Then-secretary of state John Kerry initiated the C5+1 format in 2015. But the Biden administration significantly elevated the framework's status by convening the first-ever presidential-level summit of C5+1 leaders in 2023. The following year, the Biden administration launched a related initiative, dubbed the B5+1 process, to specifically promote trade and investment.

The Rubio-Saidov discussion indicated that the United States will remain committed to backing Uzbek efforts to gain entry to the World Trade Organization. Prior to Trump's return to the White House, the two countries inked an agreement in December to expand mutual market access. US officials at that time hailed the Uzbek government's "significant progress" in opening the country's economy.

(This article originally appeared on www.eurasianet.org on February 26.)

Donation

Anoush Balian of West Newton, MA, donated \$100 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator.

Community News

La Porta to Lecture In Watertown on Christian-Muslim Relations in Medieval Armenia

WATERTOWN — Dr. Sergio La Porta will present a lecture titled “When Things Fall Apart: Disentangling Christian-Muslim Relations in Medieval Armenia” at the Baikar Center for the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter on Tuesday, March 25, at 7 p.m. The talk is organized with the support of Dean Shahinian and cosponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research.

The Turkish invasions of the late eleventh century created disruptions to political and social life in Armenia. The disappearance of the kingdoms of the Bagratuni and Artsruni created a political vacuum, and the departure of Armenians for other lands and the emergence of Turkish and Kurdish populations shifted the demographics of the region. Besides the conflicts waged between the major geopolitical actors of the time, rulers and communities had to manage relationships between competing interests on more local levels as well.

Over the course of the twelfth century, relationships between many Christian and Muslim communities in Armenia began to break down. This talk will present Armenian narratives of the period that point to the entanglement of Armenian Christian and Muslim communities, the deterioration of relations between them, and the pressures that exacerbated the decline. In addition, it will analyze a set of 12th-century martyrologies and argue that they provide unique insights into strategies promoted to negotiate the rapidly changing socio-political context.

Dr. Sergio La Porta is currently the Acting Dean of the Kremen School of Education and Human Development at California State University, Fresno. Prior to assuming this role, he was the Associate Dean of the



College of Arts and Humanities and the Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies. His most recent book publication, co-authored with Dr. Alison Vacca, is entitled *An Armenian Futūḥ Narrative: Lewond's Eighth-Century History of the Caliphate* (Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, 2024). In addition, Dr. La Porta has published on the Armenian commentaries on the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, and numerous articles on medieval Armenian intellectual history and cultural interactions with the Islamicate, Byzantine, and Latinate worlds.

Admission is complimentary, and the lecture will be followed by a reception. The Baikar Center is located at 755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown (please use the Norseman Avenue side entrance). For more information, contact Sossy Yogurtian at syogurtian@comcast.net or call 617 281-1647.



Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan has urged President Trump and his administration to act on behalf of the Artsakh detainees.

Bishop Mesrop Urges President to Help Free Artsakh Detainees

NEW YORK — Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, sent a letter to U.S. President Donald Trump on February 27 asking for his administration's support and aid in freeing the Armenian detainees and prisoners of the Artsakh war currently held in illegal captivity by Azerbaijan.

Read the text of his letter below.

Dear Mr. President:

Greetings to you in the Name of Jesus Christ, as our world prepares for Easter and the celebration of our Lord's resurrection.

Mr. President, I am writing to you as a bishop of the Armenian Church of America, as the head of its Eastern Diocese headquartered in New York City, and as the spiritual leader of faithful Armenian Americans across this blessed country.

We wish to voice our deep concern over a grave injustice currently taking place on the international scene. We seek your counsel in enlisting the aid of the Trump administration in ameliorating the situation.

You are well aware of the ongoing plight of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabagh, also known as Artsakh. A full-scale military attack by Azerbaijan in the fall of 2020 had catastrophic consequences for the region and for the Republic of Armenia, including the loss of some 5,000 Armenian lives. Subsequent Azerbaijani attacks continued, in violation of peace agreements, for three years afterwards—culminating in the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabagh of its Armenian population in 2023. As a result, today, 120,000 refugees are uneasily settled in the Republic of Armenia.

As Artsakh's Armenians were fleeing from home for their lives, Azerbaijani forces arrested more than a dozen officials of the independent Armenian government of Nagorno-Karabagh and sent them to prison in Baku to await trial. For



two years they have languished in conditions that human rights organizations have condemned as cruel and inhuman. The trials themselves are not open to public scrutiny, and the Armenian defendants have been denied the basic rights of due process, including a clear articulation of the charges brought against them.

We are deeply distressed by this situation, Mr. President. And we know that it has also been a matter of grave concern for your administration. Armenian Americans were greatly encouraged by your bold statement last year, in which you condemned Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Artsakh's Armenian Christians, and called for the restoration of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The

See APPEAL, page 9

Nzhdeh Yeranyan Speak on Cultural Loss in the Artsakh War at NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host a hybrid (in-person and online) illustrated lecture by Dr. Nzhdeh Yeranyan of the History Museum of Armenia titled “Shattered Heritage: Museums and Cultural Loss in the Artsakh War,” on Thursday, March 20, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern) / 4:30 (Pacific), at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

The program is being held under the auspices of the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues and is co-sponsored by the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University, the Armenian Museum of America, and the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS). It is open to all free of charge, and a reception will follow the program.

This will be an in-person event and also presented online live via Zoom (Registration: <https://bit.ly/41ipi0R>) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/c/ArmenianStudies).

The impact of the 2020 Artsakh War and the 2023 forced expulsion on the region's cultural heritage, especially its museums, was devastating. Over 40 state and private museums and their collections were left behind in areas now controlled by Azerbaijan (including the Stepanakert Museum, the entrance to which is shown above).

This presentation will highlight the deliberate targeting of cultural and educational institutions during the conflict, emphasizing that such actions constitute war crimes under international law. It will also explore the critical role these museums played in community life and reflect on the heightened vulnerability of museums, as their collections—unlike immovable heritage—cannot be remotely monitored. Finally, the presentation will address the ongoing challenges facing these museums and the broader implications of cultural loss.



Yeranyan is a cultural anthropologist specializing in the preservation and management of cultural heritage, particularly in crisis,

conflict, and post-conflict situations. His research focuses on the colonial and postcolonial archaeology of Armenia, the Bronze-Iron Age landscape, and the preservation of the cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the protection of museums and collections. He is the deputy scientific director of the History Museum of Armenia, lecturer in the Department of Cultural Studies at Yerevan State University, and is currently a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Cornell University.

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



COMMUNITY NEWS

Scholarships Available for College Students to Attend Armenian Assembly Advocacy Summit

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) announced the availability of scholarships to college students across the U.S. interested in participating in its Spring 2025 Advocacy Summit. Headlined by actor and director Joe Manganiello, the Summit will take place from March 31 through April 2.

In view of the success of the Advocacy Summit Scholarship Program launched in 2024, where 20 Armenian American college students secured the opportunity to participate in the Assembly's Spring 2024 Summit, the program is being repeated in 2025. The scholarship covers costs for travel and accommodations.

"I was so impressed with the Summit and its all-encompassing scope while we networked and advocated for Armenian issues with like-minded individuals," said Meline Martirosyan, a 2024 recipient of the Advocacy Summit Scholarship Program who is a nursing student living in Santa Clarita, Calif. "I have always been an activist online and consistently respond to action alerts as this is a personal commitment for me, but it was a new experience of meeting with elected officials in person."

This year's Summit will again give participants the chance to connect with advocates from across the country to make a direct impact on pro-Armenian policies on Capitol Hill. Events include a Young Professionals Networking Reception on Monday, March 31, an Advocacy Training and Welcome Reception on Tuesday, April 1, and Capitol Hill Meetings and a community-wide Armenian Genocide Commemoration on Wednesday, April 2.

The deadline to apply is Friday, March 7. For questions, email Assembly Grassroots Associate Bettina Saraydaroglu at bettinasar@aaainc.org.



Students attending the Armenian Assembly of America Advocacy Summit last year

END THE DENIAL

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

NYC ANNUAL COMMEMORATION

SUNDAY

APRIL 27, 2025

1:30PM

TIMES SQUARE



COMMUNITY NEWS

Attorneys Work Remotely to Help Prisoners On Trial in Baku Defenses

BAKU PRISONERS, from page 1
Ghukasyan (1997—2007) — and the last chair of parliament, David Ishkhanyan, David Babayan, former de facto foreign minister, former NKR Defense Minister Levon Mnatsakanyan and David Manukyan, a former commander in the Artsakh Defense Army was arrested on September 27 and now faces charges of terrorism, creating illegal armed groups, and illegally crossing the border.

Also in that group is Ruben Vardanyan, a Russian-Armenian billionaire philanthropist, who after living in Armenia for a few years, moved to Artsakh in 2022, becoming the minister of state there for a brief spell. His case has been separated from the others for unknown reasons, and he is also facing more charges.

He and the seven other men serving in leadership positions there were detained by Azerbaijani forces as they were trying to leave with all the other Armenians of the enclave.

A sham trial started in Baku in January. As one can imagine, there is no direct contact between the team of attorneys outside Azerbaijan and the clients there. In addition, the Azerbaijani authorities have barred the attorneys from traveling there.

The list of charges Vardanyan and the other seven leaders are facing is long. Among other charges, Vardanyan and the other seven are charged with creating an illegal armed group and financing them, managing them or illegal circulation of weapons and war crimes, crimes against humanity and forced deportation. They are also charged with illegal border crossing. Vardanyan in addition is charged with financing of terrorism. The seven face a charge for torture, but Vardanyan does not.

The eight former leaders are part of a bigger group. Currently, 23 Armenians are detained in Azerbaijan. Seven of them have already been convicted and are serving sentences ranging from 15 to 20 years, while the remaining 16 are facing trial. Among these cases, two are particularly significant: Ruben Vardanyan's trial and the case of a group of 15 detainees.

Helping Clients in Baku

"The attorneys of the International and Comparative Law Center Armenia (ICLAW) are handling cases involving Armenian POWs in partnership with the Armenian Legal Center for Human Rights and Justice, which is based in Washington," Sahakyan noted. "This team of attorneys has been granted power of attorney by the victims and their families, allowing them to represent them in court."

Sahakyan is at the top of her field; in addition to heading ICLAW in Yerevan, she has served as ad hoc judge at the European Court of Human Rights and is a lecturer at the American University of Armenia. She is also the founding president of the Protection of Rights without Borders NGO. She has served as an expert for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, UNICEF Armenia, UNDP, the Civil Society Institute NGO and the International Centre for Transitional Justice, among other initiatives.

Her involvement with the cases concerning Armenian victims of armed conflict is not new; it dates back to 2016.

"Since the 2016 Four-Day War, we have been representing approximately 400 victims of human rights violations, including

various groups such as victims of torture, prisoners of war (POWs), and families of those subjected to arbitrary executions. Many of these families continue to suffer from severe emotional distress due to the loss of their loved ones.

"Additionally, we handle cases involving missing persons, forcibly disappeared captives, individuals under arbitrary detention, and victims of sham trials currently being conducted in Azerbaijan. Beyond these, we also advocate for displaced individuals, working to protect their rights to return, property, identity, and freedom from discrimination, among other fundamental rights" she said.

Making an Example of Vardanyan

Vardanyan's case has been separated from the other leaders by the Azerbaijani prosecutors.

Sahakyan explained, "There are several reasons for this. First, Ruben Vardanyan's prominence and his ability to attract international attention by exposing human rights violations in Baku play a significant role. He has consistently spoken out against these abuses, both during his time in Artsakh — where he advocated for the rights, security, and self-determination of its people — and now in Baku, where he continues to do so despite the risks of retaliation. He remains one of the few voices actively highlighting issues such as torture and other violations, making his case particularly notable."

"Another factor, I believe, is that he became a symbol of hope for the future in the eyes of the people of Artsakh, inspiring them to fight for their rights. Because of this, he is facing even harsher retaliation, as he is seen as an influential and inspiring leader for the people," she said.

Kalfayan is another luminary in human rights. (He is also a regular contributor to the Mirror-Spectator.) He holds a PhD in international law and has been active at Paris Panthéon-Assas University and the Paris Human Rights Center. He serves as a legal expert at the Council of Europe int Human Rights and Legal Affairs and has also served as secretary general of the FIDH (International Federation of Human Rights Leagues).

Kalfayan added, "In fact, he [Vardanyan] has been the symbol of the resistance to Azerbaijani pressure and aggression. When he decided to settle in Karabakh, that was a very strong signal, not only for the Karabakh people, but the entire Armenian nation. The second point is that such a dictator as Aliyev, they are always afraid of wealthy and influential people. Vardanyan is one of the persons who initiated the Aurora Prize and many other projects that have been quite well known and well regarded. He is really a symbol of power in the sense that he is known internationally and he has some wealth. So he is the key target to humiliate the talent and pride of Armenians and their resilience at the occasion of this trial."

He added, "Most of the charges against him are illogical because Vardanyan was not involved in the wars before, not even the 2020 war. They accused him of being part of the self-determination movement [the Karabakh war for independence] in 1989. He was still a student at that time. On the contrary, during the 2020 war, he made some declarations which aimed at reconciliation between the two peoples and stopping the war. However, Vardanyan does not want him to be treated differently and separately

from the other prisoners."

Suits in International Venues

The government of Armenia currently has filed four interstate cases against the government of Azerbaijan in the European Court of Human Rights. The last covers the blockade of the Lachin corridor, linking Artsakh and Armenia, adding starvation, deaths, and other resulting hardships, as well as forced deportation, arrest and detention of leaders.

The two attorneys explained that in order to apply to the ECHR for recourse, one must wait for the trial is over and a verdict has been rendered. The ECHR is not an appeals court but will hear only cases of violations of the European Convention on Human Rights. Those are arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment, right to a fair trial, right to legal defense of one's choice, etc.

"Ruben Vardanyan has a private legal team that has filed a complaint with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture" Sahakyan said. Among this team is international human rights lawyer Jared Genser as well as an Azerbaijani lawyer. In contrast, the group of 15 detainees is represented only by Azerbaijani state-appointed lawyers.

"Azerbaijani legislation requires lawyers to hold a license issued by Azerbaijani authorities in order to practice law. As a result, international lawyers or those from foreign jurisdictions are prohibited from defending accused individuals in criminal cases" Sahakyan added.

She explained that it is very hard for the attorneys outside Baku to communicate with Vardanyan. Neither the two nor Genser have been allowed to visit nor to speak directly with local Azerbaijani counsel. "I don't have any contact with the state appointed lawyers," she added.

"In Vardanyan's case, his private Azerbaijani lawyer provides some information to the international legal team. The family receives updates during monthly phone calls arranged by the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as through monthly letters or video messages," she explained.

"We have no opportunity to communicate directly with our clients — prisoners held in Baku. Azerbaijani authorities impose obstacles that prevent effective legal representation," Sahakyan said.

Both added that they were concerned that Armenia would drop its cases against Azerbaijan in international courts (ICJ and ECHR).

"My personal opinion is this withdrawal will happen shortly," Sahakyan said.

Added Kalfayan, "The whole world knows the trials cannot be fair against Ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan and those prisoners are political hostages of a peace treaty negotiation between two countries. The release of these prisoners cannot be obtained without intergovernmental institutions implication and international courts' decisions. If Armenia withdraws from the interstate applications at the ICJ and ECHR, the fate of these prisoners will be very frightening."

Ongoing Torture

The appearance of the Armenian POWs and of the political leaders as well as the judicial history of Azerbaijan indicate the difficult straits the prisoners are in.

"We can confirm the use of torture and ill-treatment. We are aware of various meth-

ods, including beatings, mock executions, humiliation, sleep deprivation, and physical hardship, among others. In our view, Azerbaijan follows an administrative practice of systematically torturing and mistreating Armenians, with many of these actions being punitive in nature and directly linked to ethnic discrimination. These abuses constitute ethnically motivated crimes against Armenians," Sahakyan said.

Last week, unusually, Azerbaijani news outlets quoted Arayik Harutyunyan and David Babayan saying they were being treated well.

"It is totally unusual for a prisoner to say that. You can understand what the meaning of this is," Kalfayan said. In contrast, Vardanyan "has publicly and internationally made known that he was ill-treated. When you look at their physical appearance and take into consideration that the life in the prisons of post-Soviet republics is no honeymoon."

Sahakyan noted, "We have received testimonies from repatriated prisoners confirming that they were forced to sign forged documents written in Azerbaijani, without understanding their content. This demonstrates a clear pattern of coercing prisoners into providing false information and signing documents with content they neither dictated nor comprehended."

Kalfayan then addressed the involvement of the Armenian government with the trials.

"We don't know whether in the negotiations between the two states the case of the prisoners is on the table or not. At least there is no official information about this. Neither the Azerbaijani government nor the Armenian government are talking about it," Kalfayan said. "Some Armenian officials sometimes have made very strange statements about Artsakh people and the leadership of Artsakh."

He referred to the statement by Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan who in response to a question about the possibility of returning to his homeland by an Armenian from Artsakh who had fled, replied that the person could have stayed and fought instead of running away.

He added, "This behavior is not acceptable when you know people are there in prison and are ill-treated, under the threat of life imprisonment, you cannot say such things. This is very worrying that such things are said in Armenia. I also remind you that a few months ago the Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan made an enigmatic declaration about Vardanyan."

Kalfayan said when the premier was asked why he does not take care of the Vardanyan case, he replied, "Who is he? Is he a citizen of Armenia? Why did he abandon his Russian citizenship?"

In addition, both suggested that those prisoners should be treated as political prisoners, rather than relegated to the role of terrorist or criminal.

"Those prisoners, especially eight leaders, are there because of the dispute between the two states, because of the dispute over Nagorno Karabakh. They are political prisoners in all aspects. Since all of them are Armenian nationals, their case should be handled by the Armenian government. This is objectively we have not seen specific actions taken in favor of these prisoners while international legal instruments and diplomatic forums exist," Kalfayan said. "We are trying to orient them to those instruments."

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Marks 37th Anniversary of Sumgait Pogroms Coordinated by Azerbaijani Government

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) marked the 37th anniversary of the Sumgait pogrom, which was a brutally planned and executed massacre against the Armenian population of Sumgait, a coastal city near the Caspian Sea in Azerbaijan, on February 27.

The violence against the peaceful Armenian people was unleashed on February 27, 1988 and continued until March 1, 1988, as the perpetrators — armed with the addresses of Armenian residents — killed, assaulted, critically injured, vandalized and looted during the course of three days. The pogrom was widely reported in mainstream media, however the pattern of state-sponsored violence by Azerbaijan escalated and additional pogroms were committed in Baku, Kirovabad and Maragha in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The anti-Armenian riots were the violent response of Azerbaijanis opposing the Artsakh Armenian people's legitimate

pursuit of self-determination, which was supported by human rights advocates around the globe. The ethnic cleansing against the Armenian people reached its brutal conclusion during Azerbaijan's unjustified attack on Artsakh in September 2020 during the 44-day war, followed by forcibly driving the Armenians of Artsakh from their ancestral lands in September 2023 in the aftermath of a grueling blockade.

As the Armenian Assembly of America commemorates the 37th anniversary of the Sumgait pogrom and the lives lost during all of the pogroms from 1988 to 1990, it condemns Azerbaijan's continued hostility as well as its continued illegal detainment of Armenian prisoners of war, civilians, and government officials. The Assembly urges the international community to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its decades of crimes against humanity, and urges Armenian Americans to contact their U.S. Member of Congress to make a statement on the anti-Armenian pogroms.



Survivors in Sumgait huddle.

Bishop Mesrop Urges President Trump to Help Free Artsakh Detainees

APPEAL, from page 7

same statement emphasized the right of indigenous Armenians to return to their homeland of Artsakh.

As our countrymen in Armenia endure the crushing realities described above, our plight has become a matter of concern shared by Christian peoples across the globe—many of whom live under state, ethnic, and religious persecution. The same cause has been embraced by leading Human Rights organizations.

We are hopeful, President Trump, that a clear signal from the United States would put an end to the ongoing cruelty against the Armenian detainees in the hands of

Azerbaijan, avert further bloodshed, and permit a just and humane outcome to prevail in the region.

A high-level, unambiguous message from the United States at this time, to President Aliyev of Azerbaijan, condemning the ongoing situation, and advocating for the release of the detainees—as well as Armenian prisoners of war still held in inhuman conditions, in contravention of the terms of agreed treaties—would be a significant and meaningful advancement in establishing genuine peace in the region.

Mr. President, my Armenian brothers and sisters have been exemplars and pioneers of Christian civilization since the Apostol-

ic Age. In recent years we have seen our lands attacked, our defenders and civilians cut down, our age-old monuments to God erased from the landscape of Artsakh. The plight of the detainees is but a small part of this unfolding tragedy—but it is a part that can be acted upon, and ameliorated, by bold, morally-grounded effort on the part of your administration.

We hope and pray that you will hear our appeal, Mr. President. May our risen Lord guide your indispensable work to strengthen our country and its citizens, and to promote peace in the world.

Prayerfully,

His Grace Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan
Primate, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

from previous page

End of Trial

The coverage of the trials — especially that of Vardanyan — seems to indicate that truly there is no expectation of a just trial. After the interview with Kalfayan and Sahakyan, Vardanyan's family announced that he has embarked on a hunger strike. This week, his lawyer indicated a deterioration of Ruben Vardanyan's health.

Sahakyan said, "We are closely monitoring the scheduling of the hearings and have observed that the trial process is being expedited. A verdict is expected within a few months," she said. "The proceedings may only last a few more months. The verdict is highly predictable — conviction with a severe sentence, most likely life imprisonment or a long-term sentence exceeding 20 years," she said. "Several dozen Artsakh natives have already been convicted in Azerbaijan, including prisoners of war who should have been granted immunity from criminal liability for actions inherent to their combatant status."

She added, "These combatants were convicted for charges such as illegal possession of weapons and unlawful border crossing, which clearly demonstrates the politicization of these trials," Sahakyan said. "There has not been a single case where the Azerbaijani judiciary has administered proper justice or acquitted an Armenian defendant. Every Armenian who has appeared before Azerbaijan's justice system has been con-

victed. We are certain that all verdicts are predetermined, and conviction is the inevitable outcome."

And just how were the Armenians currently detained found?

"What we know publicly is Azerbaijan had a list of 300 people that were wanted" in Artsakh, Kalfayan said. "The dark side of this is in fact we don't have explanations why they arrested these eight leaders. We can make some assumptions," he explained. For example, they were all leaders, even Vardanyan, though he had a very short tenure there, "They are probably symbols," he said. "David Babayan, the former minister of foreign affairs surrendered by himself. It was quite strange, but less officially, we know that at the time of leaving, the Azerbaijani forces had pressured the families. The leaders had to surrender, otherwise, Azerbaijani forces may have caught the whole family."

He added, "I find the situation quite terrible. For me, the peace treaty negotiations and the release of Armenian prisoners should have been disconnected." The release of the Armenian prisoners must be a preliminary step by Azerbaijan, a guarantee of good intentions on the part of the authorities of that State for reconciliation and sustainable peace, he suggested.

For now, the Armenians political prisoners are facing a perilous journey, living in a hostile society that would like nothing more than to serve them a mockery of justice.

KEV ORKIAN

Enough is Enough

Tournée mondiale du 25e anniversaire
Un nouveau spectacle hilarant

Le 29 mars 2025
à 19h30

Pour l'achat de billets
* Aller au eventbrite.ca
et rechercher Kev Orkian
* Appeler 514-747-6680

Centre Arménie
1025 Bd Élisabeth, Laval, QC H7W 3J7

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian-American Veterans of Greater Boston Offer University Student Scholarships

WATERTOWN — The Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston (AAVGB), formerly known as the Paul S. Marsubian Amvets Post 41, Watertown, in partnership with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), is pleased to announce scholarship opportunities for the 2025-2026 academic year. Scholarships of up to \$5,000 for undergraduate students and an additional \$5,000 for graduate students are available. Eligible applicants include children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of AAVGB members, including deceased members who were in good standing.

The application deadline is April 30, 2025, and the award notification date is on or before May 31, 2025.

To request a scholarship application, contact C. George Elanjian, Chairman of the AAVGB/AGBU Scholarship Committee (16 Independence Dr., Woburn, MA 01801; cell: 781-888-2227; Fax: 781-935-6036; Email: cgelanjian@yahoo.com).

Supporting Future Generations through Education and Charity

In 2024, the AAVGB/AGBU awarded \$35,000 in scholarships to seven undergraduate and graduate students. Since the establishment of the AAVGB/AGBU New York Endowment Fund in August 2017, a total of \$397,500 has been awarded to students pursuing higher education.

“These scholarships reflect our dedication to supporting the educational pursuits of our members’ families, ensuring that the legacy of service and community continues,” said Elanjian.

Since its inception, the AAVGB has had 408 total members listed, including past and present. Currently, the organization has 18 active members. To ensure the continua-

tion of scholarship awards in the future, the AAVGB has an agreement with AGBU NY to replenish the scholarship fund annually through interest earned from the endowment. AGBU New England will continue to advertise and administer scholarships for eligible applicants, keeping AAVGB members informed of opportunities. A database with the names of past members of Amvets Post 41, will be established to verify family members who apply for scholarships. College scholarships is just one of the organizations philanthropic purposes.

The AAVGB’s mission extends beyond

education. Since its founding, the organization has provided financial support to a wide range of Armenian and veteran-related causes. To date, these charitable contributions will total over \$400,000, in addition to the \$397,500 in scholarship awards to date.

Major contributions have supported organizations such as: Armenian Heritage Park, St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School (SSAES), National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), Society of Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR), Armenian National Committee of

America (ANCA), Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), Orphans of Armenian Veterans Killed, Armenian Relief Fund (ARF), Tufankjian Fund, Project Save, Karabagh Fund, Armenian Tree Project (ATP), Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Watertown High School Armenian Students Fund, and Cancer Research for Armenian Children.

These contributions reflect AAVGB’s enduring commitment to supporting the Armenian community and honoring its members’ legacy.





Institute for the Study
of Eastern Christianity
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

GRACE AND PAUL SHAHINIAN ARMENIAN CHRISTIAN ART AND CULTURE LECTURE SERIES

WHEN THINGS FALL APART: Disentangling Christian-Muslim Relations in Medieval Armenia

SERGIO LA PORTA, Ph.D.
Interim Dean, Kremen School of Education and Human Development
Senior Advisor for Strategic Planning and Initiatives
Professor of Armenian Studies, California State University, Fresno



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

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

The Catholic University of America
Father O'Connell Hall
620 Michigan Ave., N.E.
Washington, DC 20064

* Heritage Hall is located on the main floor of Father O'Connell Hall.

CO-SPONSORED BY



National Association for
Armenian Studies and Research



SCAN FOR MORE
INFORMATION

This lecture is free and open to the public. For information, use the QR code.
To request accommodations for individuals with disabilities, please call 202-319-5683.



Tekeyan Cultural Association | Philadelphia Chapter
Villanova Armenian Students Organization
Present

My Sweet Land

A film by SAREEN HAIRABEDIAN

Special Screening with the Director
Saturday | April 12th | 7pm
Connelly Center @ Villanova University

Tickets:
\$20 Regular Package
\$50 VIP Package (Includes Meet & Greet with the Director & Welcome Reception @5:30pm)



For more info:
tekeyanphilly@gmail.com
484-402-0128

Parking available: M-2 SAC Parking
Garage @ Villanova University

HAI CREATIVE PRESENTS "MY SWEET LAND" IN ASSOCIATION WITH SISTER PRODUCTIONS AND SOLISU FILMS. A CO-PRODUCTION OF ITVS WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING IN ASSOCIATION WITH ARTE FRANCE. ALL WORLD OF HAI PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS. SCREENPLAY BY TIGRAN HAMASYAN. DIRECTED BY SAREEN HAIRABEDIAN. CASTING BY RAPHAELE MARTIN-HOISER. SAREEN HAIRABEDIAN. COSTUME DESIGNER ROSENA RICCIHELLO. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BETH LEVISON, CARRIE LOZANO, HALLEE ADELMAN, KINTU THOMAS, SUSHMIT GHOSH. PRODUCED BY JULIE PARATIAN, DAVID RANE. EDITOR AZZA HOURANI. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SAREEN HAIRABEDIAN.



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



OBITUARY

Edward Ashod Tiryakian

Duke Sociologist

DURHAM, N.C. — Longtime Duke sociology faculty member Edward Ashod Tiryakian passed away peacefully on February 1 at his home in Durham. He was 95 years old.

Born on August 6, 1929, the only son of Yervent Tiryakian and Keghiné Agathon, both diaspora Armenians, he was born in Bronxville, NY, and spent his early years in Nice, France. He matriculated with the Princeton University class of 1952, graduating summa cum laude majoring in sociology. He earned his Ph.D. in sociology from Harvard University in 1956 under the direction of Talcott Parsons and Pitirim O. Sorokin, the world's two most renowned sociologists of their era. He met the woman who was to be his wife for 72 years, Josefina Cintron, while both were students at Harvard, marrying in 1953.

He and Josefina were Fulbright Scholars researching in the Philippines in 1957 and upon his return he began teaching at Princeton before accepting a faculty position at Harvard. He joined the Department of Sociology at Duke in 1965 and immediately became a beloved professor among students, colleagues and administrators, reaching emeritus status in 2004. He continued teaching through 2020 as part of Duke's Graduate Studies Program.

Tiryakian's 60-year academic career made unparalleled contributions in multiple areas publishing works on the life and work of his academic hero, the ground-breaking 19th century French sociologist Emile Durkheim; existentialism; apartheid; religion; modernity; African societies, and nationalism. He served as chair of Duke's Sociology and Anthropology department, and as director of Duke's Center for International Studies, where he worked tirelessly

with his wife to strengthen Duke's international presence.

He went on to serve as president of the International Society of French-Speaking Sociologists and of the American Sociological Association History of Sociology section. He received honorary doctorates from the Sorbonne, as well as Université Paris Descartes. He continuously attended and often chaired sociological conferences around the world and felt strongly that academic cooperation was a bridge to solve ethnic and national differences.

One of his most cherished Duke moments was his role in helping to resolve the student takeover of the Allen Building in February 1969. It was a labor of love helping the students about whom he cared deeply having their concerns heard by the university in support of its mission to educate and to arrive at a peaceful resolution in very unsettling times. Decades later, Tiryakian taught a popular class on the turbulent year 1968 which brought to bear the vast social changes happening globally in that period.

Dr. Tiryakian donated his professional papers to Penn State University, which has become a repository for the original documents of sociologists who have made a difference. In 2021, Dr. Tiryakian donated his professional library to the Sociology Department of Yerevan State University in Armenia, which created a dedicated wing in its library to honor him. He was recognized in the US Congressional Record for his accomplishments both on behalf of Armenia and academia.

Colleagues and students described him as a deeply thoughtful and caring person and the paradigm of a sociologist. He loved meeting people, exploring different cultures, and writing about the diverse societies that were part of his world. He was cherished by his family, colleagues, his beloved university and academics around the world, as well as thousands of students whose lives he touched in deeply meaningful ways. Everyone who met him described him as a

kind person. In a world where professionals frequently change career paths, Tiryakian considered himself blessed to have found at a young age in teaching something he loved from the start.

Duke University recognized his many accomplishments to the university through its media communication department and ordered flags at half-mast in his honor.

He is survived by his wife of 72 years, Josefina Cintron Tiryakian and his 2 sons, Edmund Agathon Tiryakian and his wife Jacqueline, and Edwyn Ashod Tiryakian and his wife Karen.

Dr. Tiryakian believed that his finest accomplishment was his unwavering faith in God, the greater good of humanity and the

world we live in.

A memorial service took place at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Durham on Saturday, February 15, followed immediately by a memorial reception at Aria Events.

It was Professor Tiryakian's request that in lieu of flowers, any memorial gifts be made to either the Armenian General Benevolent Union, <http://www.agbu.org/mem-ory-edward-tiryakian>; co-founded in 1906 by his grandfather Yervant Agathon, or to the Edward and Josefina Tiryakian Faculty Support Fund, which provides unrestricted support to Duke faculty in the Department of Sociology: <https://duke.box.com/v/tiryakianfaculty-support>.



Joan Bamberger Goodheart

Studied Armenian Community in Watertown

WATERTOWN — Joan Bamberger Goodheart, of Watertown passed away on February 4, 2025, at the age of 90.

An anthropologist, she studied the Armenian community of Watertown and conducted extensive research on the Kayapó people of Central Brazil. She wrote and lectured widely on Armenian and women's studies and served on the board of the Armenian International Women's Association.

Goodheart taught at Wellesley College from 1977 until her retirement in 2000 and also held teaching positions at Brandeis, Yale, and Tufts. She earned a B.A. from Smith College and a Ph.D. in anthropology from Harvard University. She pursued an academic career despite a senior anthropologist's warning that there was no place for women in the field. (She later noted that the name on the door next to his at the American Museum of Natural History belonged to Margaret Mead.)

Her widely cited 1974 article, "The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society," argued that there was no evidence that matriarchies ever existed and that myths of female rule collapsing into disorder have been used to justify women's subordination.



Born on February 27, 1934, in Manhattan, she was the daughter of Leopold R. Bamberger and Helen L. Thatcher. She was predeceased by her husband, Eugene Goodheart, a literary critic and scholar. She is survived by her stepson, Eric Goodheart; her stepdaughter, Jessica Goodheart; her nephew, Ty Alevizos; and her step-grandchildren, Alex Goodheart and Max Medearis.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her honor to Project Save, an Armenian photo archive, at 600 Pleasant St., Watertown, MA 02472.

Movie Night

TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION METRO LOS ANGELES CHAPTER
AND THE ARMENIAN SCHOOLS OF EGYPT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (KNB)
INVITE YOU TO THE SCREENING OF "WE ARE EGYPTIAN ARMENIANS"

SUNDAY
MARCH 30, 2025
5:00 PM

Մենք եգիպտացի... Հայեր ենք

إحنا المصريين... الأرمن
We Are Egyptian ... Armenians

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER
HIS EXCELLENCY ARMEN MELKONIAN
FORMER AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO EGYPT

FREE ADMISSION - RECEPTION TO FOLLOW
TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION BESHGETURIAN CENTER
1981 N. ALLEN AVENUE, ALTADENA, CA 91001

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS

Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543
(781) 891-9876 www.NEMonuments.com

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME

576 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472, Tel: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

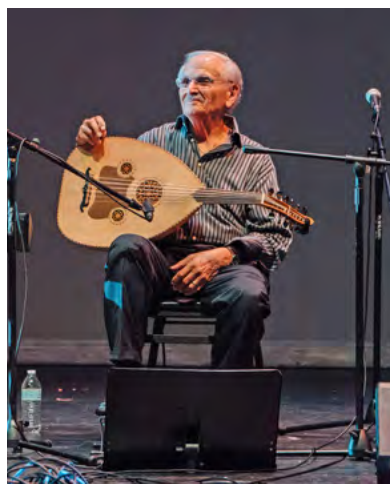


Arts & Culture

Oud Master John Berberian To Perform with Armadi Tsayn in NYC

NEW YORK — St. Illuminator's Armenian Cathedral, on Saturday, April 26, will host a concert with Oud Master John Berberian and Armadi Tsayn performing Armenian folk music from the Highlands and the Diaspora. At a time when the preservation of Armenian culture is more important than ever, the program will celebrate the generational transfer of Armenian folk music from our ancestral lands.

Berberian is an oud virtuoso born in the United States to Armenian immigrant parents. His father was an accomplished oud player, as well as instrument maker. He first recorded traditional oud music while he was a student at Columbia University in the early 1960s. He subsequently recorded for a variety of labels including MGM, RCA, Roulette, Verve



John Berberian (Knar Bedian photo)

and Mainstream Records. Notable albums in his discography include *Expressions East* (1964), *Oud Artistry* (1965), *Music of the Middle East* (1966) and *Middle Eastern Rock* (1969), which fuse traditional Middle Eastern folk with psychedelic rock and jazz.

Armadi Tsayn, which means "Sounds/Voice of the Roots" in Armenian, will be accompanying Berberian with an ensemble of young musicians. The group pays homage to the rich musical heritage of Western Armenia and the captivating melodies of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This contemporary folk ensemble, founded by Alek Surenian and Sam Sjostedt who both studied under Berberian, is making a name for itself thanks to its blend of traditional melodies and modern influences. Armadi Tsayn has played in major cities including Boston, Worcester, New York City, Los Angeles, Washington DC, Toronto and Yerevan.

St. Illuminator's Armenian Cathedral is located at 221 East 27th St. The concert will start at 8 p.m.

Advance tickets are \$60 and \$70 at the door.

Link for tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/echoes-of-armenia-live-in-nyc-tickets-1227134053989?aff=od->



Tanya Tsakirian working on a lute.

The Family Tsakirian: Luthiers to the Stars

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ATHENS — The Tsakirian family has been making instruments — stringed musical instruments, to be specific — for four generations in Athens, Greece. People who exercise this rare profession are called luthiers, which comes from the French word lute or flute. The profession itself is referred to as lutherie, and the two words are often confused as they look almost alike. The Tsakirians are considered among the best musical instrument makers and repairers in the world, and instruments that they work on include bouzouki, tzoura, baglama, classical guitar, mandolin, lute and oud. Tanya Vehanoush Tsakirian is the latest and fourth generation of master luthiers. Her father Karolos before her, Onnik before Karolos and finally Agop, have all made traditional Middle Eastern instruments for a living.

Tanya's quest began at the age of 14 when she started visiting her father's workshop on Saturdays. She continued her studies throughout high school. By the time she entered university, even though she stayed in touch with her father's workshop, Tanya shifted focus and majored in philosophy and history of science at the University of Athens. As a senior, she had to decide if she wanted to continue along an academic path or instead learn a trade. Not surprisingly, she chose to apprentice with her father, Karolos Tsakirian, and deepen her practical knowledge of making and repairing musical instruments. She fell in love with the craft and never looked back. As luck — or talent — would have it — the first bouzouki that she made was purchased by Kostas Doumouliakas, one of the most famous rebetiko musicians of his generation. Rebetiko is one of the most popular musical forms in the Eastern Mediterranean world, a form that is often described as "Greek blues music" and though it is both jazzy and soulful, rebetiko possesses a distinctive sound all its own. Today some of her work can be found on every continent, including at the Paris Philharmonic or Philharmonie de Paris. Talent runs in the family as Tsakirian's mother is the world-renowned visual Artist Eozen Agopian.

see TSAKIRIAN, page 16



Onnik Tsakirian, holding guitar, in 1964, with friends

Author David Karamian to Speak About New Travel Guide to Armenia

FRESNO — David Karamian will give a presentation on his new book, *Armenia - The Lone Stone: A Traveler's Guide to Tradition and Modernity* on Friday, March 7, at 7 p.m., in the Grosse Industrial Technology Building, Room 101 (2255 E. Barstow Ave.-corner of Barstow Ave. and Campus Drive.), on the Fresno State campus.

Armenia - The Lone Stone, A Traveler's Guide is a compact, immersive travel companion that offers a unique lens into the rich tapestry of Armenia's history, culture, and heritage. Designed for modern travelers, this guide unveils a harmonious blend of iconic landmarks and hidden gems, bringing to life the essence of Armenia's ancient cities, breathtaking landscapes, and architectural marvels. The book highlights significant cultural elements, from traditional music and world-renowned composers to the legacy of Armenian chess, film, and art.

Beyond its vibrant depiction of major cities, such as Yerevan and Gyumri, the guide delves into Armenia's culinary treasures, showcasing its celebrated cuisine, including traditional pastries, beverages, and local markets. Readers will find meticulously curated road trip routes and suggestions for exploring Armenia's historic monasteries, Brutalist architecture, and cultural institutions, making the book a practical and inspirational resource.

Emphasizing local traditions and modern experiences, the book is not merely a travel guide but an invitation to connect with Armenia's soul through its art, music, cuisine, and timeless stories. Perfect for art enthusiasts, history buffs, and curious explorers, the book serves as both a gateway to Armenia's treasures and a testament to the enduring spirit of its culture.

Karamian is an accomplished professional turned creative visionary. With degrees in design engineering and business management, Karamian spent his career with Fortune 20 companies, traveling to more than 25 countries across five continents. His work focused on solving complex problems and driving innovation, but his heart has always been rooted in the arts.

Four years ago, he embarked on a transformative journey, leaving behind his corporate career to devote himself fully to his lifelong passions for art, architecture, and Armenian heritage. Through his *Armenia - The Lone Stone* book series, he promotes Armenian culture, history, and the arts, sharing its timeless beauty with the world. As the founder of NorArt-Gallery Publishing, he empowers other creatives, helping them transform their visions into enduring works of art.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

The presentation will also be live-streamed on YouTube at: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesyoutube>.



ARTS & CULTURE

Andrius Arutiunian

With Real and Fictitious Armenian Narratives

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN-THE HAGUE, the Netherlands — Andrius Arutiunian (born 1991, Vilnius, Lithuania), a multifaceted conceptual artist and composer of Armenian and Lithuanian heritage, works with hybrid forms of listening, vernacular knowledge, and contemporary cosmologies. From 2010 to 2016, he studied music composition at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. His selected exhibitions include Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Centre Pompidou (Paris), M HKA (Antwerp), Stroom (The Hague), Sapiha Palace (Vilnius), Survival Kit 13 (Riga), FACT (Liverpool), Rewire (The Hague), CTM Festival (Berlin), and the Contemporary Art Center (Vilnius), as well as biennials in Venice, Shanghai, Gwangju, Lyon, and the 15th Baltic Triennial. In 2023, he was a DAAD Artist-in-Residence Fellow. Since 2016, he has been a sound researcher at the Sedje Hémon Foundation in The Hague. From 2016 to 2021, he served as a guest tutor at the Master Artistic Research department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in The Hague. In 2024, Arutiunian was shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize.

Dear Andrius, in 2022, you represented Armenia at the 59th Venice Art Biennale with your solo show entitled *Gharīb*. Since then, I have been following your activities online, and last year I attended your performance in Yerevan. Your musical language is tightly connected to modern technologies, yet would it be ac-



Andrius Arutiunian, *You Do Not Remember Yourself*. Venice Biennale 2022. Photo by Gabriele Miseikyte.

curate to say that it seems rooted in ancient sonorities from various cultures?

My musical language roams; in other words, it seeks spaces where the distortion of time, hypnotic structures, and cosmological thinking converge. It is not tied to a singular model of sound-making, even if it is often rooted in what might be called the pan-Caucasian world of sonic traditions. Instead, it is concerned with our ways of knowledge exchange, violent logics of old empires, and those yet to come. So, this musical language migrates, as many do, with the technologies of different decades shaping its manifestation anew, each bringing their own limitations and sonic discoveries.

The first association I have with the word *Gharīb* is the famous Oriental tale about the wandering *ashugh*, *Ashik Kerib*. The atmosphere in your installation on the Venice Pavilion felt distinctly Oriental—quite intriguing and even unusual, if not surreal: a golden, tongue-shaped installation, sounds and music, Armenian carpets, a vinyl player, and, most unexpectedly, a special fruit vodka called *Gharīb Oghi*. Although there was a booklet with explanatory text, is it meaningful to seek connections between these objects?

Gharīb Pavilion was ethereal, its existence in people's imaginaries as significant as its brief physical manifestation. Purposefully eluding definition and a defining purpose, the *Pavilion* sought to exist as a good dream—of an alternate political-historical composition, where the future simultaneously sends its best wishes to the past, and ancestral knowledge is passed through the deliriums of modernity into the equally contradictory present. This is a decidedly anti-Orientalist approach—it demands a view of the Caucasus and Middle Eastern cosmologies as vibrant, rich, distinct, in their own right.

Together with *Gharīb Pavilion's* curator, Anne Davidian, we often reflected on the idea of the vernacular, of the disappeared, of voices that have been silenced yet remained resilient. *Gharīb* was bound by this shared desire to unearth worlds that never were—a reverse somnio-archeology of sorts, departing far but always returning to its home place.

Esotericism seems to play a prominent role in your art. For the pavilion, you composed a piece called *Do Not Fear, Then!* for four voices. In an interview, you mentioned using the secret Rushtuni argot, which disappeared in the 19th century. This phenomenon is unfamiliar to most Armenians — how did you come across this idea?

Esotericism intrigues me as a space where the “alternate” can flourish, playfully questioning what lies beyond the realms of provable knowledge. Its dedication to establishing truths, along with the many documented instances of its failures, embodies that tension between a genuine search for enlightenment and a complex form of charlatanism.

The Rushtuni argot, invented by Armenian felt-beaters in the province of Moks, survived to us only through secondary, written, and coded sources. Speculating on how this cryptic jargon, emerging from the murky ancient underworld, might have sounded based on its archeo-acoustic properties became the only way to revive Rushtuni's strange tongues, even if for a brief moment.

You mentioned charlatanism and I immediately remembered another source of your inspiration: George Gurdjieff. Although this iconic and controversial figure described himself as merely a dance teacher, for nearly nine decades, the world has recognized him as a mystic philosopher. For musicians, he is also a composer, though no one is entirely certain how much of his music he personally wrote. What draws you to this contradictory figure? My understanding of him became clearer after reading the memoirs of poet Avetik Isahakyan's son (where he quoted Gurdjieff's confessions to his father), which, ironically, left me even more doubtful about Gurdjieff's



Andrius Arutiunian's photo by Claudio Fleitas, 2022.

legacy in literature, music, and dance.

Part of Gurdjieff's allure lies in how he embodies entirely different things to different people — a guru to some, a charlatan to others. But in the end, he was also a representation of a specific world, perhaps lost by now: a syncretic traveler shaped in an era when borders were porous, nations were still forming, and identities were fluid. One of my favorite stories about Gurdjieff is his escape from the Russian Revolution with a small group of followers. In his thick accent, Gurdjieff would later recount how, upon encountering “white” soldiers, he'd tilt his mustache upward, while with “red” soldiers, the master guru would greet them with his mustache pointing down.

Being of Armenian and Lithuanian or-

igin, you live in a third country, the Netherlands. Are you somehow a *Gharīb*?

While I am certainly not interested in bloodlines, the symbols and language we use to perceive the world are deeply influenced by the places we find each other at. So, my relationship to Armenia is formed by both real and fictitious narratives, which I find equally legitimate. Though I lived in Armenia only until the age of three, those early years must have left an indelible mark. I'm told my first word in Armenian was *looy*s (light), spoken as I pointed to a swinging lamp, set in motion by a minor earthquake. Rotational movements and light — these elements are burnt in my mind as distinctly Armenian and continue to fascinate me to this day...



Tekeyan Cultural Association
Boston Chapter
presents a lecture

by

Prof. Sergio La Porta, Ph.D.
California State University, Fresno

**When Things Fall Apart:
Disentangling Christian-Muslim
Relations in Medieval Armenia**

Tues. March 25, 7 p.m.

Baikar Building

755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown

(use Norseman Ave. entrance)

**Free admission, reception. For more info, contact
syogurtian@comcast.net, 617 281-1647**

**With the support of Dean Shahinian
and the cosponsorship of the National Association for Armenian
Studies and Research and the Armenian Cultural Foundation**





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Jenan Zammar: Za'atar Pull-Apart Muffins

“Cheesy and packed with great za’atar flavor, these pull-apart muffins are easy to make, says Jenan Zammar, the award-winning content creator and blogger who is based in Canada. “If you’re looking for a quick after school snack, these muffins are for you. They come together in about 5 minutes since the recipe uses premade refrigerated biscuit dough and trust me, the kids will love them. They’re fun to eat and great to feed a crowd. These muffins are similar to monkey bread only they’re savory, not sweet, and instead of being baked in a Bundt pan, I cook them in a muffin tin to create individual snacks and portions. It’s refrigerated biscuit dough that is cut up into quarters and then coated with za’atar, oil, and mozzarella cheese,” she adds.

“Za’atar is an herb or family of herbs. It is also the name of a spice mixture that includes the herb along with toasted sesame seeds, dried sumac, often salt, as well as other spices. Even though it varies greatly depending on where you are from in the Middle East (specific recipes are sometimes closely-guarded secrets), za’atar is generally a combination of dried oregano, thyme, and/or marjoram (woody and floral), with sumac (tangy and acidic) and toasted sesame seeds (nutty and rich).”

“Bright, earthy, herby, and toasty, it makes plain stuff (boiled eggs, garlicky yogurt, canned chickpeas<<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/lemony-salmon-and-spiced-chickpeas>>) taste exciting and exciting stuff (roast chicken<<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/zaatar-chicken-with-garlicky-yogurt>>, green sauce<<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/broiled-red-snapper-with-zaatar-salsa-verde>>, homemade hummus<<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/classic-chickpea-hummus>>) taste special. Za’atar encompasses such a wide range of flavors that it can be the bright note that both brightens and anchors sliced tomatoes, the unifying force in a salad of refreshing smashed cucumbers and salty, fatty feta<<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/smashed-cucumber-salad-with-zaatar-and-feta>>, and the replacement for lemon and herbs on a roast chicken<<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/no-fail-roast-chicken-with-lemon-and-garlic>>. Consider adding it when you’re looking for a spice mix that’s savory and tangy, all in one. In the Middle East, za’atar is often eaten with oil-dipped bread or labneh<<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/labneh-with-zaatar-oil>>, or spread onto flatbread dough before it’s baked into man’oushe<<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/manoushe-with-zaatar-oil-tomatoes-and-cucumber>>,” writes Bon Appetit.*

What you will need for this recipe:

- * Refrigerated biscuit dough - the kind in a can
- * Za’atar
- * Olive oil
- * Shredded mozzarella cheese
- * Cooking spray
- * Muffin tin

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cans refrigerated biscuits
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded, more to taste
- 1/2 cup za’atar
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Cooking spray

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 400°F. Cut biscuits into quarters and transfer to a bowl.

In a separate bowl, mix za’atar and olive oil until combined, then pour over the biscuits. Add cheese and mix to coat all the biscuit pieces.

Spray muffin tin with cooking spray then distribute the biscuit pieces into each muffin cup.

Bake for 15-18 minutes.

Serves 12

Jenan Zammar, winner of the 2022 Ottawa Foodie Influencer Award (Photo courtesy <https://jenanzammar.com/>)

“I’m a Lebanese mother of 3 and love to share all of my recipes,” says Jenan. “Years ago I had no idea what I was doing in the kitchen but with lots of trial and errors, I can now whip up a meal with little effort. I’m all about simplifying meals but still enjoying the delicious flavors food has to offer. From my kitchen to yours with love.”

Connect at:

https://www.facebook.com/people/jenan_zammar/100063710430318/

https://www.pinterest.com/Jenan_Zammar/

<https://www.youtube.com/c/JenanZammar/videos>

Jenan is happy to work with your brand, too. She’s collaborated with many brands and have created great long standing relationships. She can showcase your products in many ways such as recipe videos, recipe creations, Instagram story ads, and more. For more information, contact her at jenan.zammar@hotmail.com<<mailto:jenan.zammar@hotmail.com>> for sponsored rates



The muffins before they hit the oven (Photo courtesy Jenan Zammar)



Jenan Zammar cuts the muffins (Photo courtesy Jenan Zammar)

The Family Tsakirian: Luthiers to the Stars

TSAKIRIAN, from page 13

A One Hundred-Year Old Tradition

The legendary Tsakirian family tradition begun when Agop Tsakirian emigrated from Smyrna in 1922 after the Armenian Genocide and opened the first shop some two years later in Piraeus, now the main port of Athens, at 7 Fokionos street. The neighborhood was a haven for refugees at the time and many Armenian families settled there. Agop learned the art of lutherie from his brother-in-law Aram Papazian, another master luthier from Smyrna. Agop benefitted from the fact that Papazian was well-educated and on good terms with many of the musicians who had escaped Asia Minor. Some of Agop Tsakirian's clients included Markos Vamvakaris, Yovan Chaous and Udi Hrant Kenkulian. Agop also made Giorgos Batis's favorite baglama: the story goes that Batis loved his Baglama so much that when he died, he asked to be buried with it!

Agop died in 1973, and his son, Onnik Tsakirian, was already continuing the tradition at his own workshop in downtown Athens, which he opened in 1960. He would go on to make instruments for great bouzouki players like Manolis Chiotis, Giannis Tatassopoulos, and Giannis Angelou. As a matter of fact, Manolis Chiotis was buried with the famous Acropolis bouzouki that Onnik had made for him. Among other honors, in 1966 Onnik received the Gold Medal for master craftsmanship at the Thessaloniki International Expo. In 1970, Onnik immigrated to the United States where he worked for the renowned Fender Guitar Company in Los Angeles, before eventually moving to Astoria, Queens



Some of the instruments at the Tsakirian workshop

daughter Tanya Tsakirian. When asked to name the most difficult part of making a bouzouki or an oud, Tanya answers: "Before the assembly of the instrument, we work separately on each part. Bowl, soundboard, neck, fingerboard and headstock. The assembly starts by joining the bowl with the neck. Then follows the soundboard and lastly the headstock and fingerboard. The hardest part would be 'voicing the instrument,' which is the process of bringing out the sound and playability of each instrument to its full capacity. This journey starts from the early stages of building and it ends with the placement of the strings."



Agop Tsakirian in black suit, 1953

in 1973 where he was later joined by his son Karolos. Like his father, Onnik made instruments for some of the most famous musicians in the world including Stelios Kazantzidis and Stamatis Kokotas. He died at the tender age of 52 and the family business was passed down to his son Karolos Tsakirian, who had also been his apprentice since the age of 14. Karolos ran his shop out of Astoria before returning to Athens and expanding the family business that his father had founded in 1960.

Karolos continued the family tradition with great passion and love for his craft. Some renowned musicians that he made instruments for are Giannis Stamatou, Lakis Karnezis, Manolis Karantinis, Panagiotis Stergiou, Babis Goles and Vaggelis Korakakis.

Tanya Tsakirian: Maybe the Best?

Instrument making in Greece is a traditionally male-dominated profession, so it is no small feat that Karolos has handed over the reins of the family business to his

Do clients order instruments with particular specifications or materials?: "For custom orders, clients can choose from a specific selection of woods, that can be used on the bowl and soundboard. Furthermore, they decide on the ornamentation of the soundboard and perhaps the bowl. It could be made of wood, plastic and/or abalone and mother of pearl." Tanya is proud to be carrying on this family tradition, as well as aspects of her Armenian culture." The Tsakirian family are part of a 35,000-strong Greek Armenian community, two peoples who have had intimate contacts since their shared centuries of persecution during the Ottoman Empire. Tanya remains close to her Armenian roots: "Having grown up in an Armenian family, I was exposed to different aspects of Armenian culture. From listening to my grandmothers singing Armenian songs and cooking Armenian food, to going to events of the local Armenian community center." As for Karolos, he admits to originally doubting whether Tanya would fully measure up to the famous



Tanya Tsakirian



Karolos Tsakirian

family members who preceded her. After seeing the hard work and passion she has put in — and the instruments that she has produced — his doubts have disappeared, and he today proudly declares: "Now I

think she will be even better at it than I ever was."

Video About the Tsakirian Family:
<https://www.tsakirianbouzouki.com/en-gb/history.html>



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 8 — Sip & Stretch – Celebrate World Women’s Day with Armenian Catholic Youth Group-Boston! Saturday, 10:00 AM, Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall (200 Lexington St., Belmont, MA), Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church. A refreshing Sip & Stretch session for women Light Breakfast & Great Company. Donation: \$35 per person. Venmo: @HCAC-CMA Reserve your spot today! Call Karina at 617-999-0658.

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

MARCH 17 — Khachkar Café (For Men Only). Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall (200 Lexington St., Belmont, MA), Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church. Monday, 6.30 p.m. \$25 per person Includes a plate of Chicken and Lule Kebab Combo, salad, and hummus Ghyema (Additional plate): \$15 Venmo: @HCACCMA (Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church in MA) For pre-orders: Call 617-489-2280 or email holycrossbostonma@gmail.com

MARCH 21 — Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston presents The Secret Trio, consisting of Ara Dinkjian on oud, Tamer Pinarbasi on kanun and Ismail Lumanovski on clarinet, in concert at the Mosesian Center for the Arts, 321 Arsenal St., Watertown. 7.30 p.m. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.mosesianarts.org. Proceeds will benefit Armenian Schools in Istanbul.

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

MARCH 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 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. Gazarossian, A. Terzian. S. Karamanuk, D. Goolkasian-Rahbee, L. Hazarabedian, G. Chitchyan, and G. Chebotaryan. Organized by Armenian Cultural Foundation, Mirak Chamber Music Series. Co-sponsored by AGBU Boston Affiliate, AIWA New England Affiliate, Amaras Art Alliance, Sunday, 5 p.m., Robbins Memorial Town Hall (730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington). Free and Open to the public.

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

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

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

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

APRIL 29-MAY 3 — 123rd Diocesan Annual Assembly & Clergy Conference April 29-May 3, 2025 hosted by Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael & St. Gabriel (Haverhill MA). Gala Banquet & Dance open to the public on Friday, May 2 at the Hilton Boston Woburn 2 Forbes Rd., Woburn, MA 01801. For more information, please visit <https://www.hypointearmenianchurch.org/>

NEW JERSEY

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/>

RHODE ISLAND

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

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

Applications for IALA’s 2025 Mentorship Program Open

LOS ANGELES — The International Armenian Literary Alliance’s fifth annual mentorship program will run from July 1 through August 31, with mentorships for writers of the novel, short story, memoir, creative nonfiction, and poetry, as well as literary translation from both Armenian into English and English into Armenian. Mentors will read and provide feedback on their mentee’s writing and speak virtually with their mentee throughout the program to discuss the writing life, the mentee’s work and how to navigate the publishing industry. At the end of the program, IALA will host an Emerging Writers Showcase to give mentees the opportunity to read their work.

“Any organization striving for longevity must actively cultivate and uplift emerging voices. IALA — a literary hub for Armenian writers who harness the English language as a powerful tool for expression — is uniquely equipped to do just that,” says IALA’s Mentorship Program Director Shahé Manekarian. “For the past four years, IALA’s Mentorship Program has connected emerging writers across the globe, providing a platform and expert guidance from distinguished literary voices. As the Director of the Mentorship Program, I take great pride in witnessing 48 writers grow and evolve through this initiative, each embarking on a promising literary journey. I eagerly antici-

pate welcoming a new cohort of writers who will add their voices to this ever-expanding community, building on the legacy of those who came before them.”

Last year, six new published authors joined IALA’s signature program and six returned as mentors. Over the years, mentors have included Nancy Agabian, Nyri Bakkalian, Tina Demirdjian, Ariel Djanikian, Arminé Iknadossian, Nancy Kricorian, Dawn Anahid MacKeen, Markar Melkonian, Gina Srmabekian, Meline Toumani, Patricia Ward, Aida Zilelian, among others.

This year, IALA has expanded its translation mentorship to those translating English texts into Armenian — previously offered only to Armenian

to English translators like 2024 IALA mentee Norayr Manvelyan.

“The IALA Mentorship Program gave me a unique opportunity to delve into the intricacies of English and Armenian languages in the scope of my translation work, meet my wonderful mentor Jennifer Manoukian and create a network of like-minded bright translators and writers. Translation is all about constant learning and it’s always rewarding to have a skilled guide illuminating your translation journey,” sad Manvelyan.

Applications for IALA’s 2025 Mentorship Program are now open through March 30, 2025. To learn more, visit the www.armenianliterary.org.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

What Is Turkey Doing?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

After the teleconference between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump and the historic meeting of Russian and US delegations in Saudi Arabia, Turkey initiated another round of negotiations, inviting Russians and Americans to its own soil. Turkey has long been seen as a nation with strong ties to the US, Russia and Ukraine and as a potential mediator in the Ukraine conflict. However, Washington and Moscow opted for Saudi Arabia, leaving Turkey feeling excluded from the process that is shaping a new world order. Turkey aspires to be a superpower not just regionally but globally. Simultaneously, Turkey aims to be a key partner for both Russia and the US. Amidst their rivalry, Turkey's importance grows for both superpowers. However, with no tensions between them, Ankara's influence on global and regional issues remains limited, as Russia and the US engage directly and reach agreements on certain matters. To attain its desired status, Ankara seeks greater involvement in international affairs and more leverage in important negotiations.

Its foreign policy prioritizes military involvement and an active presence in various conflicts and countries. Turkey exerts significant influence over the Syrian and Azerbaijani governments. Its participation in the Syrian and Nagorno-Karabakh wars strengthened its presence in the South Caucasus and Middle East, making it a crucial partner for both Russia and the US in their regional interests. Since the onset of the Ukraine war, Turkey has maintained friendly relations with both Kiev and Moscow, gradually supporting anti-Russian sanctions while assisting Moscow in circumventing some of them.

Despite these circumstances, one thing is clear: Turkey and Russia have been rival states for centuries, including in the South Caucasus, and their competition will remain constant. As a result, it is clear that after the Ukraine war, Russia will allocate more resources to regions where it historically held influence. A key area for Moscow in the South Caucasus is impacted by Turkey's increased political pressure on Armenia and its historic ally, Azerbaijan.

As US-Russia relations improve and the Ukraine conflict concludes, Turkey and Azerbaijan's importance to Russia is likely to diminish, leading to significant political changes in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan's role for Russia will wane, as Moscow has depended on it for exporting its own natural resources to European nations through Azerbaijani pipelines. Europeans are aware

of it but have no choice but to pay a higher price for gas that is originally Russian but comes via Azerbaijani pipelines.

After the war, once anti-Russian sanctions are lifted, some European countries will buy Russian resources directly from Moscow, making them cheaper for their populations. The same will be true for Turkey, which took advantage of US-Russia tensions to emphasize its strategic importance for both sides. However, the stabilization of US-Russia relations reduces Ankara's significance for both powers. The choice of Saudi Arabia, rather than Turkey, as the mediator in high-level negotiations clearly indicated this shift, despite Ankara's overt desire to play a role in the process and its frustration over losing influence. Moreover, if Trump meets Putin in Saudi Arabia as originally planned, Turkey's role as a potential mediator between the two superpowers will diminish.

To avoid this, Turkey must enhance its pressure on Russia using all available means to demonstrate that Russia cannot address regional issues of significant importance to Ankara without its consideration. The growing tensions between Russia and Azerbaijan are quite noticeable, with Ankara's influence playing a key role behind the scenes. Turkey is also trying to solidify its global standing by leveraging its influence over Baku as a bargaining chip in negotiations. The same applies to the pro-Turkish government in Syria, which Turkey seeks to use to secure a seat at the global negotiating table and reinforce its status as a major power. Zelensky's visit to Turkey, marked by Erdogan's provision of an umbrella for both presidents and his willingness to send peacekeeping troops to Ukraine, sends a clear message: Russia must engage with Turkey or risk facing significant challenges throughout the region, including the South Caucasus.

As for the South Caucasus, Turkey will continue to compete with Russia on a global scale in this region as well. With its geopolitical influence over Azerbaijan, its strong economic presence in Georgia, and its pressure tactics on Armenia, Turkey has prepared new strategic tools to expand its influence in the region. Notably, the Armenian government is often accused of pursuing a pro-Turkish policy, which is seen as a direct consequence of Turkish pressure. Meanwhile, Georgia has made a more pragmatic choice, considering global trends and regional political realities. However, the economic influence of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem on Georgia also complicates its ability to make independent and pragmatic decisions. One thing is clear: the normalization of US-Russia relations, even if Europe continues to provide aid and funding to Ukraine, will reshape the global landscape — something no world leader can afford to ignore.

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

Has Trump Greenlit Aggression Against Armenia?

By Michael Rubin

During their campaign, President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance both cultivated the Armenian community and promised to right the wrongs inflicted on Armenians during the Biden administration.

Writing on Truth Social on October 23, 2024, Trump pledged, "I will protect persecuted Christians, I will work to stop the violence and ethnic cleansing, and we will restore PEACE between Armenia and Azerbaijan."

Later that day, Vance echoed this commitment. "The United States should fight against the persecution of Christians all over the world." Entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and Secretary of State Marco Rubio also sided with Armenia against external aggression.

The betrayal looming for Armenians may surpass that of the previous administration, which swore that the US would not tolerate ethnic cleansing only to culminate with US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Mark Libby symbolically celebrating it by participating in an Azerbaijan-sponsored propaganda tour of towns cleansed of their Armenians.

The problem is Russia. Beyond the Baltic States, no country other than Ukraine has pivoted further to the West than Armenia. In the 1990s, as Armenia first sought to detach itself from Russian diplomatic

domination, a Russian-backed terrorist attack decapitated the government, killing the reform-minded Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan, National Assembly Speaker Karen Demirchyan, two deputy speakers, a minister, and three members of Parliament.

In 2018, Armenians again pivoted away from Russia as protests against Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan's third term culminated in a popular revolution. One reason Russia betrayed Armenia in the face of Azerbaijani aggression against both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia proper was the Kremlin's cynical belief that Armenians would reject the post-2018 order and pivot back to Moscow. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan lost internal support, but Armenians continued to reject the status quo ante. Subsequent assassination and coup plots likewise backfired. Whenever Russia clumsily sought to interfere, the backlash drove a wedge further into Russia-Armenia ties.

Pashinyan, meanwhile, antagonized Russian President Vladimir Putin further, embarrassing him at summits and tilting even further toward Washington.

With Putin poised to seize the initiative and perhaps even win the Ukraine war, Russian power is resurgent. The problem for Armenia is that Putin, as a former KGB agent, has a mindset antagonistic to democracy and holds a grudge. Should Russia consolidate diplomatic, if not territorial,

control over Ukraine, the outcome to which the Trump and Vance policies would lead, then pro-Western, democratic Armenia will be in the crosshairs.

Perhaps the spark will be a false flag — the assassination of a Russian diplomat or businessman in Yerevan, for example — or perhaps Putin will dispense with any excuse to make the lesson stark. Either way, Armenians should expect the noose to tighten. Russia will cut off fuel deliveries, freezing Armenians and grinding industry to a halt. Armenian exports into Russia-dominated Georgia will end next. Then, as far as Putin is concerned, it will just be a waiting game until Armenians flee their country or accept Russian domination.

Perhaps France will help Armenians for a time, but Putin calculates this will be too little too late. If the US is not willing to help the far more strategically significant Ukraine, under what logic would it risk Russian antagonism to help Armenia?

What happens to Ukraine will not end in Ukraine. Trump, Vance, Gabbard, and others said all the right things during the campaign, but the time is now for them to explain whether they were treating Armenian Americans for fools or if they have some unknown or undefined strategy to prevent Armenia from becoming Putin's idea of Ukraine 2.0.

(This article first appeared in the *Washington Examiner* on February 26, 2025.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Falsely Claims Former Leaders Recognized Artsakh as Part of Azerbaijan

Ambassador of France to Armenia Olivier Decottignies, who had been taking strong pro-Armenian positions, surprised everyone last week by falsely telling Armenia's Public Radio that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was not the first Armenian leader to recognize that Artsakh belonged to Azerbaijan.

Decottignies added: "Armenia has accepted, recognized that Nagorno Karabagh is part of Azerbaijan ever since the adoption of the Alma Ata Declaration [in 1991] because Nagorno Karabagh was a region of Soviet Azerbaijan. Therefore, those who claim that Nagorno Karabagh was recognized as part of Azerbaijan in 2022 in Prague are lying, because Nagorno Karabagh has been recognized by Armenia as part of Azerbaijan since the Alma Ata Declaration."

This is an undiplomatic and false statement from the representative of a country friendly with Armenia. Why would the French Ambassador make such a wrong claim? There may be three reasons:

1) To absolve French President Emmanuel Macron of blame for mediating along with then President of the European Council Charles Michel talks in Prague on October 6, 2022, with Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, where Pashinyan recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, accepting that Artsakh is part of Azerbaijan based on the Alma Ata Declaration of 1991.

2) To justify and support Pashinyan's teetering rule against his domestic opponents after handing over Artsakh to Azerbaijan.

3) To improve the damaged Azerbaijan-France relations.

The statement issued after the quadrilateral 2022 Prague meeting confirmed that Armenia and Azerbaijan, according to the Alma Ata 1991 Declaration, "recognize each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty," meaning that Artsakh belongs to Azerbaijan. Subsequently, Pashinyan explicitly and falsely claimed multiple times that based on the Alma Ata Declaration Artsakh is part of Azerbaijan.

By making such a statement, Pashinyan's intent was to shift the blame onto Armenia's former leaders for giving away Artsakh to Azerbaijan in 1991, long before he came to power in 2018.

There are several errors in the statements of the French Ambassador and Pashinyan:

- The Alma Ata Declaration of December 21, 1991, did not include any reference to Artsakh. It stated that the 11 former Soviet Republics, including Armenia and Azerbaijan, "recognize and respect each other's territorial integrity and the inviolability of the existing borders."

- President Levon Ter Petrosian, on his way back from Alma Ata in 1991 told Soviet Television that when the Declaration is ratified by the Supreme Council of Armenia, a reservation would be added regarding the status of Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy "so that we can obtain solid guarantees for

the existence of Nagorno-Karabakh as an autonomous entity."

- On February 18, 1992, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia ratified the December 8, 1991 Minsk Agreement on the Creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was the precursor to the Alma Ata Declaration. Given the fact that Artsakh had held a referendum on December 10, 1991, declaring the establishment of the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh, the Supreme Council of Armenia added the following reservation which applied to Artsakh: All former autonomous entities of the USSR, which had previously held a referendum declaring their independence, can join the CIS.

- The Supreme Council of Armenia reaffirmed its position on Artsakh in a decision on July 8, 1992, stating that it considers unacceptable any document that mentions the Republic of Nagorno Karabagh as part of Azerbaijan.

- On April 15, 1994, the president of Armenia refused to sign the "Declaration on the Preservation of Sovereignty, Territorial integrity, and Inviolability of Borders of the Participant States of the Commonwealth of Independent States," out of concern that Azerbaijan would use that document against Artsakh.

- The Preamble of the 1995 Constitution of Armenia contains a reference to the Declaration of Independence, which in turn refers to the 1989 joint decision of the Soviet Armenia's Supreme Council and the Artsakh National Council on the "Reunification of the Armenian SSR Supreme Council and the Mountainous Region of Karabagh."

- Finally, during the 1996 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Lisbon Summit, the Armenian government vetoed a resolution which would have given the highest degree of self-government to Nagorno Karabagh within Azerbaijan.

After all the above references to the separate status of Artsakh from Azerbaijan, how can Pashinyan claim that the former leaders of Armenia had given Artsakh to Azerbaijan? If that were the case:

- Why did Azerbaijan not occupy Artsakh from 1991 to 2020?

- Why did Azerbaijan launch a major war in 2020 to conquer Artsakh, losing thousands of soldiers?

- Why did Armenian soldiers battle Azerbaijani troops after 1991?

- Why did the Armenian government for decades, including during Pashinyan's rule, station soldiers of the Armenian Army in Artsakh?

- Why did the Armenian government contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to Artsakh's budget, if Artsakh was part of Azerbaijan?

- Why did the EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell state in the European Parliament in 2023 that "Armenia has recognized Nagorno Karabagh as an integral part of Azerbaijan, and Nikol Pashinyan is the first Armenian leader to make such a statement?"

- Why did Pashinyan stand in front of the people of Artsakh in Stepanakert on August 5, 2019 and declare: "Artsakh is Armenia, period," if Artsakh had been given to Azerbaijan?

- Why did the Minsk Group of mediators, co-headed by France, Russia and the United States, tried for decades to find a solution to the status of Artsakh, if it was recognized by Armenia to be part of Azerbaijan since 1991?

The answer to all of these questions is that Armenia's former leaders did not hand over Artsakh to Azerbaijan. Pashinyan was the first Armenian leader to recognize Artsakh as part of Azerbaijan.

LETTERS

Diaspora Can Be Armenia's Super Power

To the Editor:

I have been reading your online news for some time. All the articles related to Armenia evolve around what this or that foreign head of state said about Armenia or finding a meaning to what these foreign politicians talk between them regarding Armenia, hoping a salvation will come from them. (maybe we have a collective mentality that other countries must help us because we are the first Christian country...) There is a saying — whatever happens to you, you're the first responsible.

If Armenia is in this difficult situation we are the first responsible party, therefore we ourselves need to come out of this situation. I haven't heard or read of any roadmap we Armenians, homeland and diaspora can follow to reach the destination.

Let me humbly as a layman propose one. The diaspora's financial situation is as strong as our adversaries' oil. Looking around me I can confidently say that the diaspora can raise easily \$1 billion a year. It's serious weapons purchasing power... with a strong army and strong diaspora any leader can seat on negotiating table with an "iron ladle."

There is much to say about the indifference of the diaspora and the incompetence of Armenia to "cooperate" with it therefore a comprehensive roadmap is needed.

Sarkis Gurunian
Hvik@verizon.net

Legal Aspects of Artsakh's Independence: The Forgotten Soviet Judicial Framework

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

YEREVAN — The right to self-determination, enunciated about 100 years ago by US President Woodrow Wilson in his famous 14 Points document, has traditionally been one of the most important principles for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict. In a document dated July 10, 2009 that is available on [Barack Obama's presidential website](#), the presidents of the United States, Russia's Dmitry Medvedev, and France's Nicolas Sarkozy agreed that the self-determination of the people of NK was one of the basic principles of the resolution. The same principle of international law back in the 1960s and 1970s facilitated the independence movement in many African countries. However, beyond the principle of self-determination, there is another regulation, somewhat overlooked in the West, that paved the way for Nagorno-Karabakh's independence back in 1991. "This was well known in the 1990s but forgotten now," observed Larisa Alaverdyan, the director of the Against the Violation of Law NGO and a former deputy of the Armenian Parliament, when I met her in Yerevan during my last trip to the homeland.

"The constitution of the Soviet Union included a provision that the Soviet republics could withdraw from the USSR. However, no mechanism for that withdrawal was defined by any rules. On April

3, 1990, that law was finally adopted," related Alaverdyan, drawing attention to the legislation that laid the legal basis for NK's withdrawal from still-existing Soviet Azerbaijan a year after its adoption. This regulation articulated that the self-governing autonomous regions were granted the right to determine their own political status, in case the Soviet republic to which the Soviet Constitution attached them, chose to leave the Soviet Union. The third article of the law in particular noted: "The people of autonomous republics and autonomous formations retain the right to decide independently the question of remaining within the USSR or the seceding Union republic, and also to raise the question of their state-legal status."

The following year, in March of 1991, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev initiated a referendum on whether the republics wanted to remain part of the Soviet Union. Those republics already preparing themselves for independence (Armenia, the three Baltic Republics, Georgia, and Moldova) were allowed to not participate in this referendum but take actions towards formalizing their independence according to the April 3, 1990 law. As a result, Armenia declared that a national referendum for independence would occur on September 21, 1991 — both the referendum and the dates fully complied with the aforementioned Soviet law from the previous year.

see FRAMEWORK, page 20



Legal Aspects of Artsakh's Independence: The Forgotten Soviet Judicial Framework

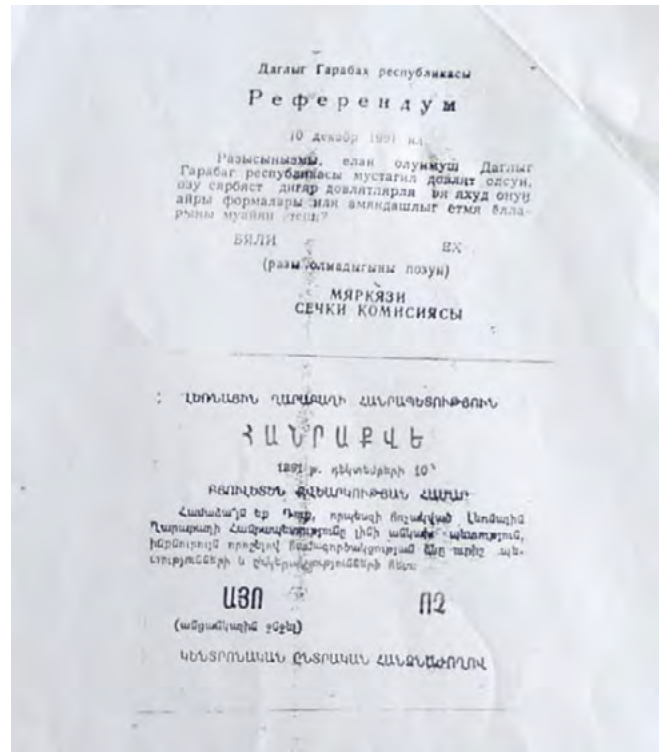
FRAMEWORK, from page 19

Azerbaijan, however, was among the republics that in March of 1991 chose to conduct the referendum initiated by Gorbachev. As a result, about 90% of the participants supported the Soviet model, although no referendum was conducted in Nagorno-Karabakh, where the local administration refused to hold it. The gears shifted soon. On August 19,

failed in a matter of three days. As Soviet Azerbaijan was one of the few republics that supported the coup, the return of Gorbachev to power nearly 72 hours later put it in a sensitive position. This is when Soviet Azerbaijan rapidly changed its mind and chose to leave the Soviet Union.

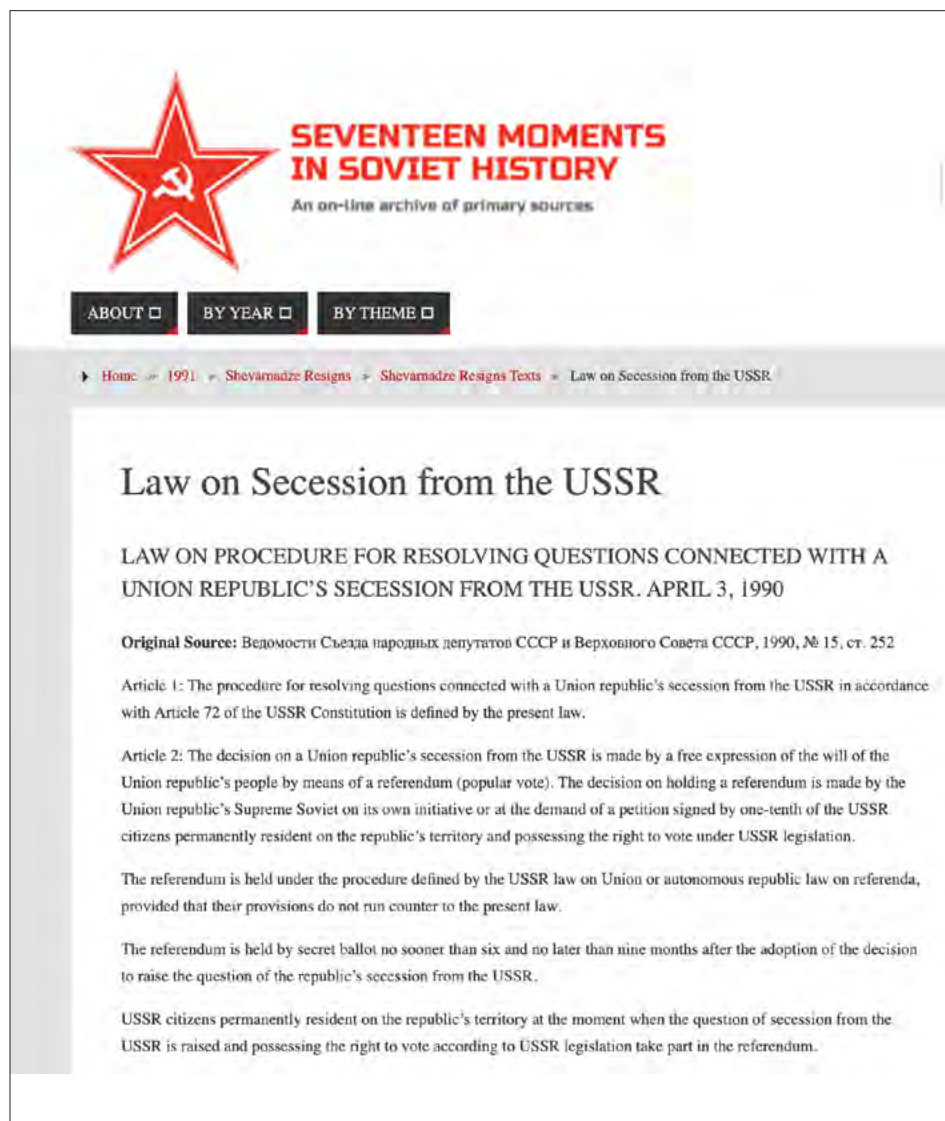
“After the coup failed, the parliament of Azerbaijan, despite the popular vote that had been cast about six months earlier in the republic, declared independence. On August 30, it adopted the Independence Declaration. The new Azerbaijan proclaimed itself the legal successor of the 1918-1920 Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (ADR). Three days later, once again following the April 3, 1990 law provision, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (district) declared independence from Azerbaijan, as the latter was leaving the Union. A Declaration of Independence adopted by the local Parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh was adopted. “The existing Soviet law was completely respected and complied with,” added Alaverdyan.

On December 10, 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh also held a popular referendum on independence, in which 98.9% of the population voted for freedom and the formation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. As the official flag of the Soviet



December 10, 1991 Artsakh referendum voting slip

1991, a group of eight high-level Soviet officials and authorities decided to form what they called a State Committee on State Emergency, which assumed power in the country. The Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was put under home arrest in his Crimean mansion. A coup took place which



The law on secession from the USSR (Courtesy of Montana University System)

Union was lowered in the Red Square on December 25, the Artsakh authorities managed to complete the independence process right before the disintegration. In contrast, Azerbaijan held its referendum on December 29, although by this time, the USSR as a political entity ceased to exist. Soviet Armenia conducted its own referendum on September 21, 1991, and, by the end of the year was recognized as a sovereign nation by more than a dozen nations, including the United States.

As Alaverdyan noted at the end of our conversation, Armenia was perhaps the only nation whose independence meticulously followed all the requirements of the existing Soviet rules. The same was true of Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory that was attached to Soviet Azerbaijan against the will of its population. However, it held a popular referendum based on the existing legal regulations to escape that tie. The video of the conversation may be found at mirrorspectator.com.

BRINGING THE ARMENIAN FOLKTALE HAZARAN BLBUL TO LIFE THROUGH THE BIRD OF A THOUSAND VOICES

TIGRAN HAMASYAN

MAR 29 | SOMERVILLE THEATRE
55 Davis Square, Somerville

GLOBAL ARTS LIVE
GLOBALARTSLIVE.ORG | 617.876.4275 |

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**

ԳԻՆԵՁՈՒ-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