

Joint Genocide Commemoration Featuring Sassounian Pays Tribute to 40th Anniversary of UN Recognition

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Publisher and syndicated columnist Harut Sassounian, delivering the keynote address at a community-wide commemoration of the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on Sunday, April 6, at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC), focused on the little-known anniversary of the United Nations' recognition of that bleak chapter.

In August 1985, the UN Commission on Human Rights, at a Geneva sitting, approved a report that included a paragraph marking the Armenian Genocide. Sassounian told the story to the assembled, unfurling the twists and turns, including his key role, like a mystery. That report is known as the "Whitaker Report."



Harut Sassounian (Kenneth Martin photo)

In essence, Sassounian urged the Armenian community not to lose hope for either reparations from Turkey nor consider the fate of Karabakh (Artsakh) as fait accompli. Instead, he said members of the community have to pass on the fight for what is right from one generation to another. For example, he cited the change in the status of Turkey, which shrank from an empire to a relatively small country.

Sassounian, a major actor in the adoption of the report, offered a blow-by-blow account of his role making deals with various parties in his capacity as an NGO representative.

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Karabakh Activists Protest Against 'Hate Speech' in Armenia

By Gayane Saribekian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Activists representing refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh rallied in Yerevan on Monday, April 14, to demand that law-enforcement authorities tackle hate speech against them which they said is incited by the Armenian government.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and members of his political team have faced such accusations ever since the 2023 exodus of Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population resulting from an Azerbaijani military offensive. Their loyalists have attacked Karabakh Armenians for participating in anti-government demonstrations. Some of them have said that such refugees must be denied government aid.

The activists, who officially do not represent Karabakh's exiled leadership, say that the smear campaign intensified dramatically after they rallied thousands of refugees in Yerevan late last month to demand that the government stop discriminating against them, champion their right



Karabakh refugees demonstrate in Yerevan's Liberty Square, March 29, 2025

to safely return to their homeland on the international stage and keep up housing allowances paid to many of them.

Picketing the headquarters of Armenia's Office of the Prosecutor-General, they read out a list of members and supporters of the

ruling Civil Contract party who have made what they see as hateful comments about Karabakh Armenians during and after the rally. They demanded criminal proceedings against such individuals.

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Armenian Church, Civic Organizations Condemn Rome Conference on 'Christianity in Azerbaijan'

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Various segments of the Armenian Church condemned the actions of the Roman Catholic Church for a conference organized by Azerbaijan in Rome on April 10, discussing the history of Christianity in Azerbaijan. In the conference, the Azerbaijani government's consistent lies attributing Albanian origins to clearly Armenian churches were advanced.

The conference was organized by the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism, the Institute of History and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijan Embassy to the Holy See, and the Albanian-Udi Christian Community of Azerbaijan.

The Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin in a statement noted, "On April 10, at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome,

an event entitled 'Christianity in Azerbaijan: History and Modernity' was held at the initiative of the Embassy of Azerbaijan to the Holy See and several Azerbaijani organizations, with the participation of representatives from various countries.

"During the event, staged by the Azerbaijani propaganda machine, attempts were made to deny the Armenian origin of the historical and cultural heritage of Armenia and Artsakh, and to distort historical facts with the malicious intention of appropriating this heritage in the future.

This event comes amidst the international community's failure to properly assess the genocidal actions carried out by Azerbaijan, the violation of the fundamental rights of all Armenians forcibly displaced from Artsakh, the illegal and degrading treatment of Armenian prisoners of war held in Baku, the appropriation of Artsakh's spiritual and cultural heritage, and the complete erasure of Armenian traces," reads the statement issued by the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

In its statement, the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin noted that it will take the necessary steps within the framework of inter-church communication.

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Boston's Museum of Fine Arts Names Pierre Terjanian Next Director

By Derrick Bryson Taylor

BOSTON (*New York Times*) — The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston named Pierre Terjanian its next director and chief executive after a seven-month international search, museum officials said on April 10.

Terjanian, the chief of curatorial affairs and conservation at the museum, will succeed Matthew Teitelbaum, who became the director in 2015. Terjanian will begin his new position in July.

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FAR and Harvard Expand Ultrasound Training for Armenian Doctors

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40th Musical Armenian Concert at Carnegie Hall

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BERLIN

Berlin Exhibition Opens eyes Through Myths

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenian Official Meets With EU Commissioner

BRUSSELS (Armenpress) — Secretary of the Security Council Armen Grigoryan, during a visit to Brussels, met with European Commissioner for Defense and Space Andrius Kubilius, on April 15.

Grigoryan and Kubilius discussed prospects of bilateral cooperation in defense and military-industry, Grigoryan's office said in a readout. Secretary Grigoryan presented the Armenian government's ongoing work and priorities in the direction of developing defense and military industry.

Kubilius presented the EU priorities in defense and military industry and the action plan stemming from the relevant strategic concepts.

Grigoryan was pleased to note the assistance given to Armenia through the European Peace Facility, highlighting it in terms of increasing the country's resilience.

US Embassy Urges Armenian Citizens in US Illegally to Leave

YEREVAN (News.am) — The US embassy in Armenia issued a statement posted on Facebook on April 13 urging to encourage those who are in the US illegally to leave the country.

"If you know someone who is in the United States illegally, the best thing you can do for them is encourage them to leave now before they are caught. For everyone, the message is simple: Make the right choice, follow the law, and do not risk your safety, your family, or your future," the statement noted.

Ruling Party Rules Out Shushi, Hadrut Reclamation Pledge in 2026 Manifesto

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Ruben Rubinyan announced this week that the ruling Civil Contract party will not include a commitment to regain Shushi and Hadrut in its platform for the 2026 parliamentary elections.

Speaking at a press briefing in the parliament on April 15, Rubinyan acknowledged the party's repeated failure to secure a majority in Gyumri, both in 2021 and in recent elections, adding it will be "taken into consideration" ahead of the 2026 parliamentary elections. He emphasized that the party will strive to gain wider popular support in 2026.

Describing the past year as "one of the most peaceful" with some exceptions, Rubinyan pointed to tangible progress in peace negotiations with Azerbaijan. He noted that the party's 2026 campaign will center around several key themes, including the "Real Armenia" concept.

In response to criticism regarding unmet promises and the loss of Artsakh, Rubinyan recalled similar accusations made ahead of the 2021 elections, yet the Civil Contract party still secured public support. "2026 will show what the public truly wants," he said.

Former President Sargsyan Raps Government, Opposition Rivals

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Former President Serzh Sargsyan has continued a war of words with political allies of his predecessor and fellow opposition leader Robert Kocharyan while pledging to keep fighting for regime change in Armenia.

Opposition groups led by Sargsyan and Kocharyan have traded bitter recriminations over the last few months. In particular, they have accused each other of helping Nikol Pashinyan come to power in 2018.

Sargsyan for the first time publicly joined in the acrimony late on Monday, April 14, as he delivered a speech on the 35th anniversary of the creation of his Republican Party of Armenia (HHK). Without mentioning Kocharyan by name, he said

that the latter's loyalists participated in the massive street protests that forced him to resign and are therefore complicit in what Pashinyan brought upon Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the following years. He said they now want to "clean their not-too-distant past" by blaming him for the 2018 "velvet revolution."

"It's clear to me why they behave like that or so anxiously hide their efforts to help the power usurpers in 2018 or maybe try to steal opposition votes ahead of the upcoming elections," charged Sargsyan.

Members of Kocharyan's political team did not respond to the accusations as of Tuesday afternoon.

Both ex-presidents are natives of Nagorno-Karabakh who led the region during the 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan. They

worked in tandem after moving to Yerevan and taking up high-level government positions there in the late 1990s. Kocharyan handed over power to Sargsyan after completing his second term in office in 2008.

In his speech delivered at the HHK headquarters in Yerevan, Sargsyan also lambasted the current Armenian government, branding it as a "world champion of lying" and saying that Pashinyan usurped power as part of a plot hatched by unnamed outside forces.



Serzh Sargsyan

"They promised peace but we got war," said the 70-year-old ex-president. "They promised prosperity but we got emigration. They promised to defend Artsakh but surrendered Artsakh."

"Dear compatriots, stay at ease until the authorities decide, for the sake of 'peace,' that your homes are also the object of a border dispute [with Azerbaijan,]" he added tartly in a thinly veiled rebuke to Armenians.

Sargsyan also said: "Our goal is clear and unchanged: at the moment the primary objective is to get rid of the capitulatory authorities."

A senior member of Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, deputy parliament speaker Ruben Rubinyan, scoffed at Sargsyan's remarks on Tuesday. He argued that the Armenian parliament elected Pashinyan prime minister in May 2018 with the decisive backing of lawmakers affiliated with the HHK.

"If there was a usurpation of power, then it means that Serzh Sargsyan participated in the usurpation of power," Rubinyan told reporters. "If that was done by outside forces, then it means that Serzh Sargsyan and the Republican Party participated in a coup d'état carried out from abroad."

Peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan Deserve Peace – PM Pashinyan

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan deserve peace and peaceful coexistence, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at the National Assembly during the discussion of the report on implementation of the Government Action Plan on April 15.

"There will be no war, there will be peace," the Prime Minister emphasized.

"Despite all the difficulties and complications, the Government and I personally will not deviate from the Peace Agenda. It is obvious that some forces both in Armenia and outside Armenia are carrying out daily propaganda for war and calling for specific actions aimed at bringing it to life. Among these actions, Azerbaijan's war rhetoric stands out, along with the rhetoric, actions that are expressed in false accusations of ceasefire violations against Armenia and frequent, if not daily, ceasefire violations by the Azerbaijani armed forces. These violations are mainly sporadic, although two specific cases of targeting the village of Khnatsakh in the Syunik region have been recorded over the past month," the Prime Minister noted.

"However, untargeted shots have been heard in several settlements of our republic during this period. The mentioned shots are either a consequence of indiscipline in the Azerbaijani Armed Forces, or are aimed

at exerting psychological pressure on the population of the mentioned settlements. The Republic of Armenia calls on the Republic of Azerbaijan to investigate the above-mentioned incidents and take measures to stop them," PM Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan reiterated that he has given the Armenian army clear instructions not to violate the ceasefire regime, and the Republic of Armenia is ready to investigate information about the violation of the ceasefire regime by our army. At the same time, he once again called on Azerbaijan to create a joint mechanism for the investigation of border incidents.

"There is no justification for war. Armenia and Azerbaijan have recognized each other's territorial integrity, sovereignty, the inviolability of internationally recognized borders, and the inadmissibility of the use of force and the threat of force," PM Pashinyan stated.

"Based on these realities, I call on all forces and individuals operating in Armenia and Azerbaijan to be extremely responsible, not to make statements that directly or indirectly contradict the aforementioned logic, not to question this logic. It has no prospects," the Prime Minister stated.

"The peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan deserve peace and peaceful coexistence. There will be no war, there will be peace," he concluded.

Karabakh Activists Protest Against 'Hate Speech' in Armenia

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The list includes Arsen Torosyan, a former health minister who currently heads a standing committee of the Armenian parliament. In a Facebook post, Torosyan alleged that the March 29 rally is part of a "fight against the existence of the Republic of Armenia." For his part, a deputy chief of Pashinyan's staff described the disgruntled refugees as a "protest material" for the Armenian opposition.

"People at the helm of the regime sitting in the government building themselves spread hate speech," one of the protesters declared outside the prosecutors' building.

"There is a great deal of fear that this propagated hatred could go much further

and ... could one day lead us to fratricide," said another speaker.

The campaign deplored by the protesters has also been strongly condemned by Armenian opposition leaders and prominent public figures critical of Pashinyan.

The key demand of the March 29 rally was the restoration of monthly housing allowances that were paid to tens of thousands of Karabakh Armenians until this month. The government controversially decided late last year to largely scrap the scheme. Senior government officials have said that the decision will not be reconsidered despite the protests.

The protest organizers have responded by pledging more demonstrations. They

have yet to schedule their next major rally in Yerevan.

The Karabakh activists have also voiced political demands. In particular, they want Yerevan to take "all possible legal, political and diplomatic steps to ensure the collective return of the people of Artsakh to their homeland."

Pashinyan's government does not raise this issue in its peace talks with Azerbaijan or on multilateral international platforms. Pashinyan has repeatedly indicated that the Karabakh issue is closed for his administration. He has lambasted Karabakh's Yerevan-based leaders for continuing to present themselves as a government in exile and threatened to crack down on them.



ARMENIA

Armenian Border Village Reportedly Hit Again by Azeri Gunshots

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Azerbaijani forces again shot at a border village in Armenia's Syunik province and damaged a building there late on Sunday, April 13, the Armenian Defense Ministry said on April 14 amid continuing cross-border gunfire reported by local residents.

"Nobody was injured," the ministry said in a statement issued along with photographs of multiple bullet holes on the cultural center of the village of Khnatsakh. It called on the Azerbaijani side to investigate the incident and come up with "public clarifications."

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry dismissed the report as "disinformation." It said its troops "take adequate measures only in response to provocations by the Armenian armed forces."

The incident was reported two weeks after a residential house in Khnatsakh belonging to the head of the village administration was struck by gunfire.

Residents of Khnatsakh and the nearby village of Khoznavar have reported nightly gunfire from Azerbaijani army positions for almost a month. According to them, it usually starts after 10 pm and continues through the night, keeping villagers on edge.

"Everyone is scared," Kamel Ohanyan, a woman from Khnatsakh, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

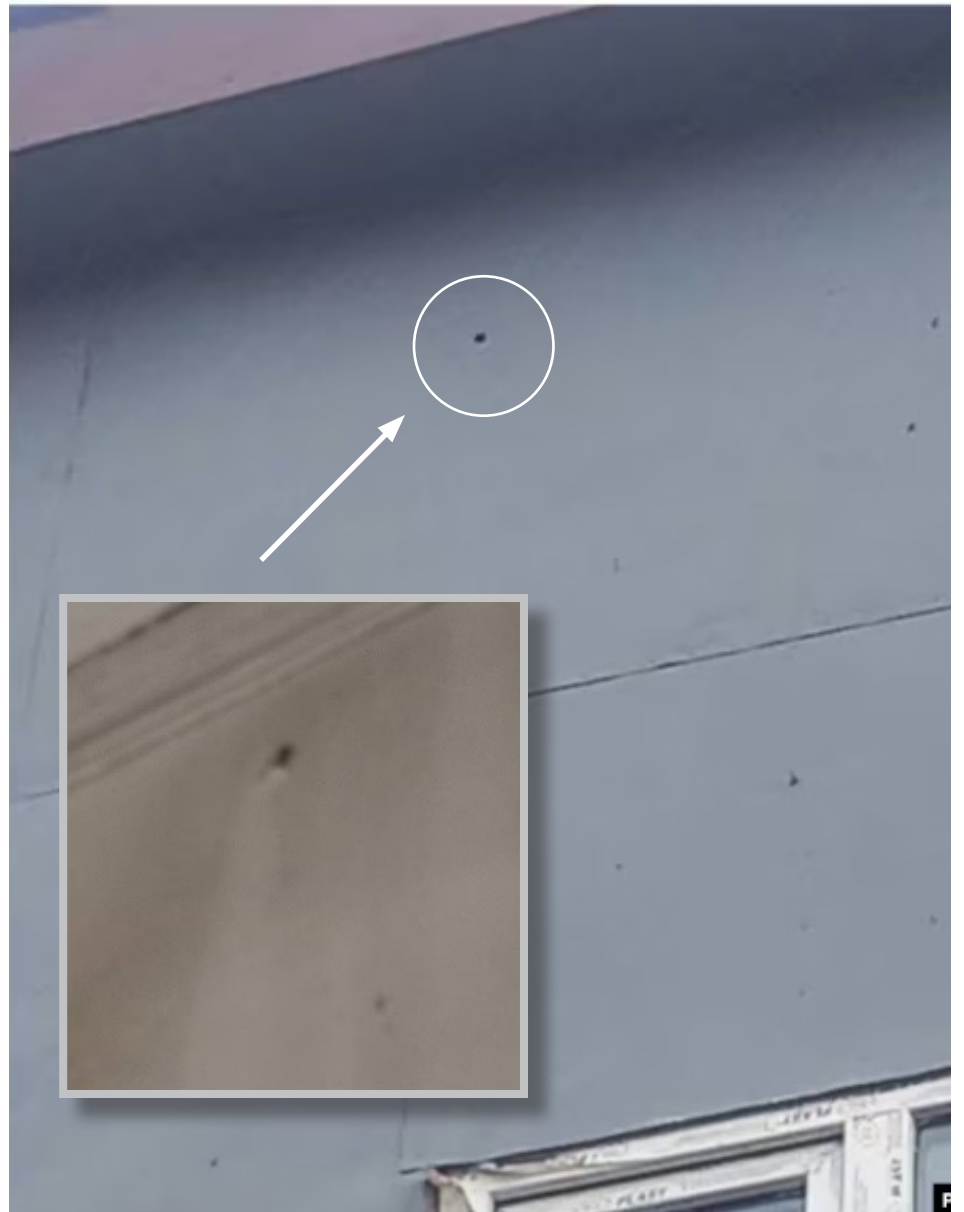
Another local resident, who did not want to be identified, claimed that more local houses have been damaged by gunshots than is acknowledged by the Defense Ministry in Yerevan.

The ministry has consistently downplayed the truce violations, saying that they are largely "irregular" and "off-target." Deputy Defense Minister Arman Sargsian stuck to this line when he spoke with journalists on Monday.

"The shootings that sometimes occur are unaimed, undirected shots, and I can say they are few in number," said Sargsian.

The cross-border gunfire, which has also been heard by residents of several other Armenian border villages in the last two weeks, began days after Baku started accusing Armenian troops of violating the ceasefire regime on a virtually daily basis. The accusations denied by the Armenian military followed official announcements on March 13 that the two conflicting sides have bridged their differences on the text of a bilateral peace treaty. Baku has made it clear that it will not sign the treaty without securing more Armenian concessions.

Armenian opposition figures have accused Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government of underreporting the situation along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. They say the government is reluctant to admit that unilateral concessions already made by Pashinyan will not end the conflict with Azerbaijan anytime soon.



Photographs released by the Defense Ministry show bullet holes on a building in Khnatsakh village, April 14, 2025

Azerbaijan Almost Completely Destroyed Artsakh's Sargsashen Village

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Azerbaijan has almost completely destroyed the village of Sargsashen in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) as part of its state-sponsored policy to erase all Armenian traces there, warned Hovik Avanesov, Cultural Ombudsman of the Armenian Highlands.

In a post on Facebook on Monday, April 14, Avanesov reported that the deliberate destruction of depopulated Armenian towns and villages is intensifying, carried out with heavy construction and military equipment.

"The latest victim of this strategy is the village of Sargsashen in the Martuni region," he wrote. "While the village had already suffered significant damage between 2021 and 2024 following its occupation by the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance during the 2020 war, satellite images from 2025 now reveal the complete and systematic erasure of the entire village. Its homes, streets, and historical layers have been almost completely reduced to rubble."

Avanesov emphasized that Sargsashen is not an isolated case, but part of a wider policy of cultural eradication being carried out across Artsakh. He warned that dozens of other Armenian towns and villages have been similarly targeted, either partially or entirely destroyed, in an attempt to eliminate the cultural, historical and civilization-



A satellite photo of Sargsashen

al heritage of the Armenian people.

The other affected sites include the heroic village of Karin Tak in the Shushi region, as well as Mokhrenes, Mariamadzor, Tsamdzor and Taghut-Taghot in the Hadrut region, as well as the community of Arakel,

including its Dzoragyugh settlement.

"There is no longer any room for doubt," stressed Avanesov. "What is unfolding in Artsakh is one of the large-scale acts of cultural genocide not only in the 21st century, but in human history. This is not about the

collateral damage of war, it is a deliberate, coordinated and systematic campaign of cultural and civilizational annihilation."

He called on the international community to condemn Azerbaijan's actions as gross violations of international law.



INTERNATIONAL

Parliament Speaker Meets with Slovenian Foreign Minister

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On April 15, Armenian National Assembly Speaker Alen Simonyan met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia Tanja Fajon.

Emphasizing the role of parliamentary diplomacy in the dynamic development of the high-level political dialogue between Armenia and Slovenia, the interlocutors attached importance to its further deepening from the viewpoint of giving a new pace to bilateral relations.

During the meeting, the parties touched upon the already completed draft of the Peace Agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as other issues of mutual interest.

Simonyan discussed the issue of Armenians held in Azerbaijan.

Lyon, Yerevan Sign Cooperation Agreement

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A cooperation agreement was signed between the city of Yerevan, the French city of Lyon and the Metropolis of Lyon on April 15.

The three-year cooperation agreement was signed in Lyon by Mayor Tigran Avinyan, Lyon Mayor Grégory Doucet and Metropolis of Lyon President of the Metropolitan Council Bruno Bernard.

Avinyan said that the agreement would provide the opportunity for effective partnership in all areas chosen by the parties, such as landscaping, urbanization, vocational education, culture, sport, Franco-phonie and tourism.

Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Visits Armenian Patriarchate

JERUSALEM (Public Radio of Armenia) — On Thursday, April 10, 2025, the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Adir Schwartz, accompanied by Yair Tani, visited the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and met with the Chancellor, the Rev. Fr. Aghan Gogchyan.

During the visit, the unpleasant phenomenon of spitting by Jewish extremists toward Christian institutions or clergy was discussed. This is not a new issue in the Old City, but in recent years it has intensified, particularly on the main street located in the heart of the peaceful and quiet Armenian Quarter.

Schwartz himself witnessed such an incident while waiting to meet Gogchyan at the Patriarchate, near the entrance of the Monastery. “As a young man passed in front of the monastery gate, he demonstratively spat twice. I saw this offense with my own eyes, directed at one of the clergy entering. This is shameful. I cannot believe such an act was done in the name of Judaism, because that is not Judaism, nor does it have any connection to Israel,” said the Deputy Mayor during his remarks.

Yerevan Discusses Normalization with Ankara and Baku in the Scope of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

On April 12, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov met on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, after which they discussed the signing of the peace treaty and the preconditions pushed by Azerbaijan in a panel discussion. The forum also saw meetings focused on Armenia’s normalization process with Turkey.

This year marked Armenia’s third participation in the forum hosted by the Turkish Foreign Ministry. The fourth edition of the forum was held April 11–13, under the theme of Reclaiming Diplomacy in a Fragmented World.

It was the first meeting between Mirzoyan and Bayramov since March 13, when the two countries announced they had agreed on the text of the peace treaty.



Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan (second from left), Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov (second from right), and Georgian Foreign Minister Maka Bochorishvili (far right) at a panel discussion at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum (Official photo)

According to the Armenian readout, Mirzoyan and Bayramov “discussed the current state of affairs in the normalization process” following the finalization of the text of the peace treaty. They also “expressed readiness to continue the dialogue.”

During a panel discussion with the participation of the foreign ministers of the three South Caucasus countries, Armenia and Azerbaijan further elaborated on the issue.

Bayramov reiterated Azerbaijan’s two preconditions for the conclusion of the peace deal — “first and foremost, it involves the dissolution of the outdated and ineffective Minsk Group, as well as amendments to Armenia’s constitution and the elimination of territorial claims over Azerbaijani territory.”

In the decades that followed the First Nagorno-Karabakh War in the 1990s, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, co-chaired by France, Russia, and the US, was the main venue for talks between the two sides.

Azerbaijani pro-government media outlet APA quoted Bayramov as saying during the discussion that signing a peace treaty without constitutional changes would be illogical, as no international agreement can contradict a country’s fundamental law.

In turn, Mirzoyan expressed confidence that both sides have “all” the “positive” preconditions to sign the treaty, adding that no single agreement answers and covers all possible questions and issues.

He said that the peace treaty would be “a basis, this is a start of relations,” adding that one of the provisions of the treaty envisages the establishment of “a bilateral commission to discuss all the other issues, including the issues that may arise regarding the interpretation of this or that provision of the agreement.”

Mirzoyan also addressed the mentioned preconditions, by saying that Armenia and

peace process, the Antalya Diplomacy Forum also saw talks covering the Armenia–Turkey normalization process.

Turkey unilaterally closed its border with Armenia in 1993. In late 2021, another round of the normalization process between Armenia and Turkey was kicked off with the two countries appointing special representatives to hold talks.

During the forum, Mirzoyan also met his Turkish counterpart, Hakan Fidan. The Armenian side reported that the ministers discussed “current items in the Armenia–[Turkey] bilateral agenda. Views were exchanged also on regional and international developments.”

Additionally, on 11 April, the Armenian and Turkish Special Representatives for normalization of bilateral relations, Ruben Rubinyan and Serdar Kılıç, respectively, met within the framework of the forum.

Rubinyan wrote on X that he had “a good discussion” on the normalization process, with Kılıç reaffirming in a separate post that the meeting was “indeed had a very good and productive.”

In an interview with CivilNet, Kılıç commented on the Azerbaijani demand regarding Armenia’s constitution, saying that the Armenian authorities “have already declared that they also want to amend their constitution, but this is a domestic issue in Armenia, and the Armenian people and Armenian institutions are going to decide how and when they are going to conduct that amendment process.”

It is unclear if this was Kılıç’s own commentary or a remark quoting the position of the Armenian side.

Also on April 11, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met his Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. Erdoğan’s office reported that he emphasized that Turkey “wishes to see Azerbaijan as the architect of peace in the South Caucasus and added that [Turkey] is carefully continuing the normalization process with Armenia.”

In his own interview with CivilNet, Mirzoyan said that both Armenia and Turkey saw an opportunity “not only to establish minimal relations but also to implement very significant interstate trade, transit opportunities, and joint energy projects.”

He added that in terms of the pace of implementation of agreements reached, however, the Turkish side “assumes certain limitations,” conditioned by the Armenia–Azerbaijan relations, while the Armenian side had a different approach.

“We believe that progress in the Armenia–Turkey direction will have a positive impact on the Armenia–Azerbaijan settlement,” Mirzoyan said, adding Turkey’s “willingness to have a useful, favorable impact.”

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on April 14.)

Hungary Blocks More EU Military Aid to Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Hungary has blocked the European Union from allocating an additional 10 million euros (\$11 million) in “non-lethal” military aid to Armenia through its European Peace Facility (EPF).

The EU foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, proposed the allocation to the bloc’s decision-making Council earlier this year. To be approved, it must receive unanimous support from all of the EU’s 27 member states.

All of them except Hungary have backed Kallas’s proposal, a diplomatic source in Brussels said, adding that Budapest contin-

ued to veto the decision during a meeting of the EU foreign ministers held in Luxembourg on Monday, April 14.

“No progress has been made yet after today’s negotiations,” the source told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

Armenia received first-ever EU military aid, also worth 10 million euros, last July. The money was due to be spent over the next two-and-a-half years on creating a field hospital and auxiliary facilities for a battalion-size Armenian army unit.

Hungary for months blocked that allo-

cation, demanding that similar aid also be provided to Azerbaijan, with which the central European country maintains close ties. It reportedly dropped the veto in return for an EU pledge to finance demining activities in Azerbaijan from another source.

Unlike other EU member states, Hungary has openly supported Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Hungarian Foreign Ministry reaffirmed that support three days after the outbreak of the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Karabakh.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Church, Civic Organizations Condemn Rome Conference on ‘Christianity in Azerbaijan’

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Earlier, the team of the Monitoring the Cultural Heritage of Artsakh program had raised the alarm about the conference, noting that no Armenian studies organization had been informed about the conference until the last minute.

“Dozens of specialists from various countries (Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Russia, Poland, Italy, Georgia, Germany, France, Canada, the US and Lithuania) were assembled and recruited to exclude Armenian history and Armenian culture. Monuments that are unmistakably Armenian and bear hundreds of Armenian inscriptions — such as Amaras, Gandzasar, Dadivank, and others — are being presented as Albanian. It is also incomprehensible to us that some well-known researchers in the field chose to participate, despite noticing that no Armenian scholars were present and not a single word was said about Armenians,” read the statement released by the Artsakh Cultural Heritage Monitoring project team.

The Divan of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem also condemned the Vatican for the international conference.

“We assert that this baseless conference’s glaring exclusion of Armenian scholars renders it a state-sponsored act of revisionism and pseudo-historiography that falls so humiliatingly below the standards of the Vatican that there is no plausible explanation except financial incentive. We assert that the Vatican has acted irresponsibly, allowing its academic platform to be cleverly leveraged to propagate a well-known and fabricated narrative—one that seeks to erase the historic presence of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the South Caucasus from the intellectual memory of world academia. By hosting such an event without the inclusion of Armenian scholars, the Vatican has allowed itself to become complicit with the weaponization of history against an indigenous Christian people whose contributions to global Christianity, by their own scholarly admission, are indisputable,” the Patriarchate’s statement noted.

It continued, “The central thesis advanced at such conferences—that Armenian Christian monuments in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) are the legacy of a



Speakers at the “Christianity in Azerbaijan” conference at the Pontifical Gregorian University

so-called “Caucasian Albanian” civilization is not only academically indefensible but also a sinister act of historical negationism. It constitutes a direct assault on the indigenous epistemology and dignity owed to an extant people whose sacred traditions have persisted on the discussed land for millennia.”

In Lebanon, Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia sent a letter to Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches.

In his message, Catholicos Aram I expressed deep sorrow and protest regarding the conference. He criticized the conference for being organized unilaterally, noting that the topics discussed and the speakers involved, particularly those related to the Armenian Church, were unfair, especially given the absence of Armenian speakers, the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia reported.

He also highlighted the active and organized presence of the Armenian Church in Artsakh to this day. In his letter, His Ho-

liness brought attention to the forced displacement of the indigenous Armenians from Artsakh, which was orchestrated by the Azerbaijani authorities as part of their genocidal policy. At the same time, His Holiness acknowledged the Vatican authorities’ positive stance regarding the Armenians of Artsakh.

Although the event was marketed as being held in the Vatican, which critics argued was intended to give it a sheen of credibility, it was actually held at the Pontifical Gregorian University, a private Jesuit university in Rome founded by the Holy See.

A representative of the university later told the Armenian media outlet CivilNet that it had no affiliation with the conference beyond renting space for it to be held.

The bulk of the conference appears to have been dedicated to a fringe historical theory, typically credited to 20th-century Azerbaijani historian Ziya Bunyadov, that attempted to distort the ancient history

of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh by instead claiming that ancient monuments were created by Caucasian Albanians — referring to a Christian kingdom that existed in the South Caucasus in the first millennium CE.

The theory has not been widely accepted outside of Azerbaijan, and has been criticized as an attempt to [rewrite history](#) in order to deny the ancient presence of Armenians in the region.

The bulk of the speakers at the conference were Azerbaijani, although one was a missionary from the Albanian Orthodox Church, which CivilNet wrote was likely a mistake stemming from confusion over naming.

Eduard Habsburg, Hungary’s ambassador to the Vatican, also attended the event, drawing criticism from Armenians on social media.

(Reports from PanArmenian.net, OC-Media.org, News.am and Armenpress were used to compile this story.)

Aliyev Invites Interim Syrian President al-Sharaa to Visit Azerbaijan

By Aytan Farhadova

On Friday, April 11, a meeting was held between Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and the interim president of Syria, Ahmad al-Sharaa, during the Fourth Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Turkey. Following this, Aliyev shared his hopes regarding developing relations for both sides, and invited al-Sharaa to visit Azerbaijan.

That same day, pro-government media outlet APA wrote that Aliyev noted Azerbaijan’s readiness to participate in the restoration process in Syria, while in turn, al-Sharaa emphasized the importance of Azerbaijan’s support for Syria in the future in the areas of energy, infrastructure, and security.

An agreement among Aliyev and al-Sharaa was also reached regarding mutual visits of high-level official del-

egations and representatives of business circles.

Separately, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan noted during the forum that Turkey “highly appreciates” Azerbaijan’s support.

“We welcome the initiatives taken in this direction. There is not only brotherhood between Azerbaijan and Turkey, but also professional cooperation between state institutions,” Fidan said in a press briefing.

Before the Antalya forum, Aliyev spoke about Azerbaijan–Syria relations during his speech at the international forum “Facing a New World Order” held at ADA University.

As reported by APA, Aliyev stressed that the reason for the deterioration of relations between the two countries was that the previous administration of Syria, “unfortunately, took a pro-Armenian,

anti-Azerbaijani position,” and that there were many contacts between Armenian and Syrian officials.

“Now, perhaps, the Armenian government thinks that no one remembers this, but no, we remember this. Now we see that they, Armenia, are trying to provide humanitarian aid to Syria. This once again shows Armenia’s hypocrisy. We hope that the Syrian government will no longer give place to such hypocritical people,” Aliyev said.

Aliyev hinted that in July 2012, Armenian authorities allowed Armenian refugees from Syria to settle in Nagorno-Karabakh, which Baku was against.

Azerbaijan and Syria first established diplomatic bilateral relations in 1992, but it was not until May 2008 that Azerbaijan opened an embassy in Damascus. Now exiled former Syrian President

Bashar al-Assad visited Baku for the first time in July 2009. The following year, al-Assad signed a significant gas agreement, according to which Azerbaijan was to supply Syria with 1.5 billion m3 of gas every year.

The last Azerbaijani ambassador to Syria, Mahir Aliyev, and embassy staff left Syria in 2012, taking into account the current situation and security factors. At the time, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry stated that it “hope[s] that the situation in the country will stabilize soon and the embassy in Syria will be able to resume its work as usual”.

The Azerbaijan embassy in Syria resumed operations only in March 2025 after a 13-year closure.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on April 14.)



Community News

Azerbaijani Migrant Office Director in Maine Forced out After Numerous Anti-Armenian Posts

By Steve Robinson

PORTLAND, Maine (Maine Wire) — Following a Maine Wire investigation into the man Gov. Janet Mills (D) tapped to run her controversial migrant resettlement office, the Director of the “Office of New Americans” (ONA), Tarlan Ahmadov, has had his profile scrubbed from the governor’s website.

In February, when Gov. Mills issued a lengthy press release praising Ahmadov and commending him for his work in diversity, equity, and inclusion with migrant populations, his photograph and bio appeared prominently on the web page for the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF), a collection of political insiders led by GOPIF Director Hannah Pingree.

Now, however, Ahmadov is suddenly missing from the GOPIF website, and only policy advisor Ekhlas Ahmed’s profile appears.

Gov. Mills has refused to respond to the Maine Wire’s repeated inquiries about Ahmadov’s racist posts, as well as the administration’s apparently anemic vetting process for selecting the Azeri nationalist to run an office aimed at promoting diversity, equity and inclusion.

But the deletion of Ahmadov’s profile from the “Team” page of Pingree’s GOPIF can only mean one thing: Ahmadov has resigned — or been forced to resign.

The only question is whether the Mills Administration will manufacture some reason as to why Ahmadov was ousted, as opposed to admitting the truth.

Ahmadov’s removal from the website comes even before the ONA was to have its first meeting on April 14.

The ONA’s first meeting has now been suddenly rescheduled to June 4 — another indication that a major change — like Ahmadov’s ouster — has come about.

Ahmadov’s Soviet-style excision from the governor’s staff website — and his likely exit from the cushy ONA gig — unquestionably resulted from the Maine Wire’s exclusive reporting, not only on his anti-Armenian diatribes but also on his alleged work as an unregistered foreign agent for the government of Azerbaijan.

That work on behalf of the Azeri government included arranging a mysterious luxury trip for several Democratic state lawmakers, a Cumberland County probate judge, and Abdullahi Ali, a Somali-American refugee who recently failed in his bid to become the new militant leader of Jubaland, Somalia.

Ahmadov’s downfall came after months of reporting that exposed a disturbing record, including:

- Social media posts labeling Armenians as “occupants” of the western United States due to the large population of Armenian-Americans in California and the Pacific North West

see MAINE, page 7



Children in Gyumri helped by SOAR

SOAR Launches Glendale/La Cañada Chapter to Support Vulnerable Armenian Children

GLENDALE — The Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) has launched its Glendale/La Cañada Chapter to support orphaned Armenian children and adults with disabilities. The chapter joins a global network of more than 140 locations, working to deliver focused aid to some of Armenia’s most at-risk communities.

The chapter’s first initiative, Our House “Mer Toon,” is raising funds for the Children’s Home of Gyumri, which serves 121 children with mental and physical disabilities.

The immediate goal is to raise \$10,000 to build an additional bedroom that would allow for gender-separated sleeping quarters — a major improvement for the privacy and well-being of the residents.

An additional \$10,000 is needed to construct a heated corridor to connect the children’s sleeping areas to the restroom facilities. Currently, children must walk outdoors to access bathrooms — posing health risks, particularly for those with limited mobility.

“A properly designed bathroom space would reduce risk and increase comfort for the children,” said Lidia Martirosyan, director of the Children’s Home. “The current setup is neither safe nor practical for the older children.”

The project focuses on tangible infrastructure improvements—real changes that will directly impact the daily lives of the children.

If interested in donating, do so at <https://soar-us.reachapp.co/donations/new?referral=DonationOption:5295>

Founded in 2005, the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief provides humanitarian aid to orphaned Armenian children and adults with disabilities around the world. For more information, visit www.soar-us.org or contact glendalelacanada@soar-us.org.

Genocide and Holocaust Studies Crisis Network Formed

On April 8, a new group, the Genocide and Holocaust Studies Crisis Network was formed. This is an alliance of scholars who have come together because they felt the field and its institutions are in crisis. The rise of the far-right in the United States and globally and the weaponization of Holocaust memory and accusations of antisemitism to justify genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing throughout Palestine require an urgent examination of the field’s frameworks, priorities, and investments.

The group works in a variety of disciplines in the field generally known as Holocaust and Genocide Studies and has expertise in histories, theories, and contemporary cases of racism, antisemitism, fascism, and political violence, and in the study of genocides and mass atrocities in different parts of the world. Members of the group have affiliations in related fields such as Human Rights, International Law, Jewish Studies, Memory Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Settler Colonial Studies, Migration Studies, and Peace and Conflict Studies.

The study of histories of genocide and mass atrocity gives us insight into the rise of authoritarianism and ethnonationalism; the processes of dehumanization, ethnic cleansing, and genocide that accompany it; and the urgent need for civil society resistance.

To find out more about the group, to read its inaugural collective statements, and to join the network, visit <https://www.ghscn.org/home>.

Former Artsakh Minister Beglaryan To Be Speaker at Conn. Genocide Commemoration

HARTFORD, Conn. — The Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee will observe the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on Saturday April 26, at 10:30 a.m. at the historic Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Ave.

The keynote speaker will be Artak Beglaryan, former Minister and Former Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). He will speak on “Genocide of Armenians in Artsakh.”

Currently, he serves as the president of the Artsakh Union, an advocacy non-governmental organization. His work focuses on raising global awareness about the genocide and advocating for international justice and protection for his compatriots sheltered in Armenia.

Beglaryan held several high-ranking positions in the Republic of Artsakh. While serving as the Human Rights Ombudsman from 2018 to 2020, he documented and reported war crimes committed by Azerbaijani forces during the 2020 aggression. After acting as the Chief of Presidential Staff for several months, he then served as State Minister from 2021 to 2022, the second-highest position in the government, coordinating the activities of primarily humanitarian ministries.

As a human rights defender, Beglaryan’s reports, interviews, opinions and comments have been published by Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, The New York Times, BBC, CNN, The Washington Post, Newsweek and many other leading organizations and media outlets.

He holds a Master’s degree in Politics, Security and Integration from University College London and a Bachelor’s degree in Political Sciences from Yerevan State University. Additionally, he has studied Public Policy and Administration at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He is currently a member of the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

Beglaryan’s personal experiences have deeply influenced his career. His father was killed in the war with Azerbaijan when Artak was just 4, and he lost his eyesight due to a landmine explosion at the age of 6. These tragedies instilled in him a resilient spirit and a deep sense of responsibility to serve his people, advocate for peace and uphold human rights.

Melanie Kevorkian Brown, chairperson of the Connecticut Committee stated that the committee is pleased to have someone with Beglaryan’s expertise to give thorough and first hand insight into the human rights violations and atrocities which have taken place and continue in Artsakh.

The mission of the Armenian Genocide Commemoration

see CONNECTICUT, page 11



COMMUNITY NEWS

Azerbaijani Migrant Office Director in Maine Forced Out after Anti-Armenian Posts

MAINE, from page 6

- Posts praising military crackdowns in Nagorno-Karabakh and caricaturing famed Armenian Kim Kardashian as a horned devil

- A junket he orchestrated for Maine lawmakers to Azerbaijan — funded by the same regime alleged to have engaged in ethnic cleansing in the Nagorno-Karabakh region

- Financial entanglements and a lavish lifestyle, including photos from an Italian lakeside resort while controversy swirled back home.

- An attempt to suppress Armenian academic voices in Maine, according to multiple community leaders.

The Mills Administration, Ahmadov, and several Democratic elected officials have also ignored the Maine Wire's repeated inquiries about a junket Ahmadov organized last year at the behest of the Azerbaijani government.

According to campaign finance disclosures, Ahmadov brought Rep. Deqa Dhalac (D-South Portland), Rep. Mana Abdi (D-Lewiston), and Sen. Jill Duson (D-Cumberland) on a trip to Turkey and Azerbaijan.

When the Maine Wire reported exclusively on Ahmadov's history of posting racist, anti-Armenian commentary and cartoons on social media, Ahmadov initially changed the location settings for his @TarlanAhmadov X account to "Maineville, Ohio" before deleting the account altogether.

The initial report prompted an outcry from Armenian-Mainers who questioned whether an individual with a brazen disdain for a particular ethnic minority could credibly lead an office designed to assist ethnic minorities in Maine.

Armenian Cultural Association of Maine President Gerard Kiladjian wrote to Gov. Mills calling for Ahmadov to be removed as ONA Director.



Tarlan Ahmadov

"As an Armenian resident of Maine and the leader of the Armenian Cultural Association of Maine, I find it deeply troubling that someone with a documented history of anti-Armenian rhetoric and advocacy against an immigrant community is serving in a position meant to foster inclusion and diversity," Kiladjian wrote.

"Mr. Ahmadov's public statements and actions reveal a clear pattern of bias and hostility toward Armenians," he said. "His social media posts have included inflammatory statements labeling Armenia as an 'occupier and aggressor' and mocking the Armenian diaspora."

Kiladjian said that Ahmadov's rhetoric is "not only inappropriate but directly contradicts the ONA's mission to support and uplift all immigrant communities in Maine."

Armenian critics of Ahmadov pointed not only to his overtly racist social media posts but also to a resolution he attempted to get passed with the Portland City Council in 2021. The resolution sought to recognize February 26 as "Khojaly Remembrance Day," referencing a 1992 event in which hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians were killed by Armenian and Soviet forces. The language of the proclamation de-

scribed the killings as a "genocide."

The move immediately drew sharp backlash from Maine's Armenian-American community, which argued that the proclamation was riddled with historical inaccuracies and amounted to propaganda on behalf of the Azerbaijani and Turkish governments.

Upon learning more about the resolution and its historical context, the then-Mayor of Portland, Kate Snyder, scuttled Ahmadov's subtle Azeri influence campaign.

Despite his open and overt track record of denigrating Armenians, Ahmadov somehow managed to secure not only a high-paying government job in the Mills Administration but also endorsements from well-known figures in Maine politics.

When Mills first announced Ahmadov's appointment to run the migrant resettlement office, the choice was heralded by a who's who of Mills' favorite political insiders, including Labor Commissioner Laura Fortman, Maine State Chamber of Commerce CEO Patrick Woodcock, Catholic Charities of Maine CEO Steve Letourneau, Prosperity Maine Executive Director Claude Rwaganje, Executive Director at the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP) Sue Roche, Maine Community College System President David Daigler, Ben Waxman, CEO and Co-Founder of American Roots in Westbrook, Betsy Biemann, CEO of Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Mufalo Chitam, Executive Director of Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition, Marpheen Chann, Executive Director of Khmer Maine, Zoe Sahloul, Executive Director, New England Arab American Organization, Kerem Durdag, CEO of GWI, and Melissa Skahan, Vice President, Mission Integration and Support Services of Northern Light Mercy Hospital.

Ahadov's sudden joblessness is an embarrassing development for those who vouched on his behalf, especially considering that he scarcely tried to hide his vehement disdain for a particular ethnic minority.

Perhaps the most mysterious part of the whole Ahmadov appointment, though, is why the migrant resettlement specialist would take Rep. Dhalac, his longtime friend Rep. Abdi, Sen. Duson, and Gateway Community Services Executive Director Abdullahi Ali on a junket to Turkey and Azerbaijan, including an area of the country that was inhabited mostly by Armenians until 2020, when the Azeri military forcefully displaced the Armenian population in what was arguably a modern ethnic cleansing.

Instagram photos documenting the luxury junket, including those posted by the Democratic elected officials and Ali, show that the cadre of "New Mainers" visited the Nagorno-Karabakh region, taking glamour shots in front of Armenian churches that

are now abandoned due to the forced displacement of the Armenian Christians who once worshipped at them.

Adding even more intrigue to the saga is Abdullahi Ali's presence on the foreign junket.

At the time of the trip, Ali was simultaneously running a Portland-based migrant services agency that bills MaineCare roughly \$5 million per year, running for president of Jubaland, the semi-autonomous southern state of Somalia, and, according to claims he made in an interview with Kenyan media, helping to fund armed paramilitary groups in the region.

Although Mills' migrant resettlement office appears to have shed one controversial figure, the ONA's remaining employee, policy advisor Ekhlas Ahmed, has also made past comments that call into question whether the office will aim to promote the interests of Maine taxpayers or the interests of foreign governments.

In comments reported exclusively by the Maine Wire, Ahmed once denied that there was any reason for non-citizens who find safe haven in Maine to bother with assimilation, and stated that she would "fight for Sudan" while living and working in Maine.

The direction the ONA has taken almost immediately will come as little surprise to those familiar with the comments of Rep. Dhalac, a Somali-American refugee who introduced the legislation in the 131st Legislature upon which the office is based.

Dhalac, in addition to serving as the Assistant Executive Director at Gateway Community Services, has repeatedly said publicly that non-citizens who have arrived in Maine seeking asylum should receive preference over native-born citizens, including military veterans.

Like with most developments that are embarrassing for the Mills Administration, the governor's office will likely avoid mentioning what actually happened with Ahmadov and why his tenure at ONA was so brief.

Likewise, the development will probably go unnoticed by the various websites in Maine that purport to publish news. Multiple sources within the migrant community have told the Maine Wire that their attempts to garner interest in Ahmadov's anti-Armenian record from news outlets like the Portland Press Herald have fallen on deaf ears.

As of Tuesday evening, the Maine Wire was the only outlet to have covered the controversy surrounding Ahmadov's hiring. Although the George Soros-funded Press Herald and the taxpayer-funded MainePublic.org both covered his initial appointment, neither outlet has written about him since.

(This story originally appeared on Maine Wire on April 2.)



Tekeyan Cultural Association
Boston Chapter
presents

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

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Mark Arkun Wins USA Powerlifting Prize

STONEHAM, Mass. — Mark Antranig Arkun won first place at the USA Powerlifting Titan Barbell Open in the Men's Raw Junior (20-23 years old) 75 kg. weight class on April 13. He lifted a total of 517.5 kg. (1,140.9 pounds), including squat lifting 380.30 lbs., benching 303.14 lbs., and deadlifting 473.99 lbs.



Mark Antranig Arkun (photo Aram Arkun)

COMMUNITY NEWS

Joint Genocide Commemoration Featuring Sassounian Pays Tribute to 40th Anniversary of UN Recognition

COMMEMORATION, from page 1

Sassounian, the founder and publisher of the *California Courier*, started by noting the contribution of Polish-born attorney Raphael Lemkin, who came up with the word genocide in the 1940s as a result of studying what had happened to the Armenians.

On December 9, 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the convention of the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide, which went into effect in 1951.

"The Genocide Convention defined genocide as the intentional destruction of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group," he said. "On May 28, 1948, the UN Economic and Social Commission on Human Rights ... adopted a report by the War Crimes Commission. Eight pages of the report were devoted to the Armenian Massacres. The report quoted the statements issued by France, Great Britain and Russia on May 28, 1915, calling the Armenian Massacres 'crimes against

Nations Osman Olcay, at the Commission on Human Rights in 1974, 'strongly objected to the use of the term 'Armenian Genocide' and requested it be deleted from the final report.'"

Sassounian explained that Olcay got support from 11 other countries, including the US, Pakistan, Italy, France, Austria, Iran, Iraq, India, Romania, Ecuador and Nigeria "supported Turkey's denialist position."

When the State Department declassified some of its archives in 2006, Sassounian said it was revealed that "Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had sent a cable to the US mission at the UN in 1974 agreeing to cooperate with Turkey on the deletion of reference to the Armenian Genocide in the UN report. Kissinger's message to Turkey as that the US would support the deletion if other countries agreed to it. The Turkish delegation warmly thanked the US for its support."

Sassounian detailed the chain of events which led to the inclusion of the Arme-

was never heard from again. The genocide report was left hanging without Paragraph 30," he said.

In 1982 Sassounian contacted Benjamin Whitaker and asked him to accept to be the new rapporteur "since as an executive director of the Minority Rights group," he was very knowledgeable about the Armenian Genocide.

He also contacted two other members of the board who agreed to support Whitaker.

"I did not contact the rest of the subcommission members so that Turkey would not get wind of my behind-the-scenes orchestration," Sassounian said.

He then alerted in fall 1983 subcommission Chair Madame Halima Warzazi of Morocco about the possibility of appointing Whitaker.

"On the opening day of the subcommission's 1983 session, when usually no agenda item is discussed, suddenly Madame Warzazi, who was a close friend of Whitaker, lifted her gavel and said he would be the new rapporteur if there were no objections. Before anyone could react, Madame Warzazi banged her gavel and said since there were no objections, Whitaker was appointed the new rapporteur."

He added, "The Turkish delegate was in total shock but it was too late to do anything about it."

In his final report, in paragraph 24, Whitaker included the reference to the Armenian Genocide, with many footnotes.

The paragraph is as follows: "The Nazi aberration has unfortunately not been the only case of genocide in the twentieth century. Among other examples which can be cited as qualifying are the Ottoman massacre of Hereros in 1904, the Ottoman massacre of Armenians in 1915-1916, the Ukrainian pogrom of Jews in 1919, the Tutsi massacre of Hutu in Burundi in 1965 and 1972, the Paraguayan massacre of Ache Indians prior to 1974, the Khmer Rouge massacre in Kampuchea between 1975 and 1978, and the contemporary [1985] Iranian killings of Baha'is.

"At least one million or well over half of the Armenian population are reliably estimated to have been killed or death marched by independent authorities and eyewitnesses."

He also quoted the German ambassador from 1915, saying that they were trying to eliminate the Armenian population.

Sassounian said that he took to the floor of the UN subcommission when the report was released, to speak in its favor.

"I met with most of the 26 members of the subcommission to convince them to support the report," he said. "The strangest idea I came up with was when I approached the Syrian representative who was going to vote against the report in solidarity with the neighboring Islamic Turkey. I told him to leave the hall when the voting started and not to come back until it was completed.... I was able to neutralize at least one vote."

Speaking in support of the measure were representatives from Zambia, India, Greece, France, the UK and Argentina.

Whitaker's report was put to a vote on August 29, 1985, with 14 votes in favor, one opposed and four abstentions.

"The result was astonishing because Turkey had the support of the then 12 NATO members and 40 members of the Islamic Conference. At the end they refrained from supporting Turkey," he said.

"The Turkish government, having fought for a dozen years to deleted the

reference to the Armenian genocide, failing to do so, said the report wasn't that important after all," Sassounian said.

President Kocharyan attended as head of state and designated him as an official member of the Armenian delegation.

In 1988, he said he went to Geneva to speak about the massacres in Sumgait and Baku, "since as an NGO I had the right to speak."

"I approached the Soviet delegation at the UN and informed them about my planned speech. I told them that I would not make any hard remarks about the Soviet Union but focus my remarks on the Azeri murders. The Soviet representatives were extremely upset and asked me not to bring up the subject at all. I had to tell them I wasn't asking their permission but simply giving them a heads-up as a courtesy. The next day, when my turn came to speak at the UN Subcommission, the minute I pronounced the word Sumgait, the entire Soviet delegation got up and walked out of the UN building."

In addition to founding the California Courier, Sassounian is the president of the Armenia Artsakh Fund, a non-profit organization that has donated to Armenia and Artsakh one billion dollars of humanitarian aid, mostly medicines, since 1989 (including its predecessor, the United Armenian Fund).

Before the talk, Hamazkayin Boston's ArtNova Choir, led by artistic director Arthur Veranian offered several songs, including the hymn *Soorp Soorp* by Komitas.

In his introductory remarks, Ara Balikan chair of the Armenian General Benevolent Union New England District, paid tribute to the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, saying it "scattered us all across the globe" but that the Armenians had not been silenced. Our resilience is testament to our ability to use our intellect and faith to rebuild and thrive," he said.

He referred the ethnic cleansing in Artsakh. "Let us use this occasion not just to talk, but to act. Let us use this occasion to remember that our Artsakh leaders, who remain unlawfully held as hostages, need our voice and actions to get back home as soon as they can."

Balikian thanked Dr. Ara Nazarian and all the other organizations for hosting this unified program.

Aram Arkun, executive director of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, offered the closing remarks. He noted that as Sassounian's talk made clear, though the road to justice for the Armenians is hard, they have to do something and not lose hope. Like Sassounian, every individual has the possibility of making a difference.

"There is always light somewhere on the horizon," he said. "It is an uphill battle, but every little bit of the uphill battle contributes to not having the cause forgotten." This is true both for Artsakh and the events of 110 years ago.

He praised the Boston Armenian community as being strong and united, as shown by this joint commemoration.

Serving as master of ceremonies was Ani Khatchadourian representing the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

The benediction was offered by the Very Rev. Hrant Tahanian of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church.

The event was sponsored by the ARF and several of its affiliated organizations, in addition to the AGBU and the Tekeyan Cultural Association.



AGBU New England Chair Ara Balikian (Kenneth Martin photo)



Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada Executive Director Aram Arkun (Kenneth Martin photo)

humanity and civilization,' warning that all Ottoman leaders would be held personally responsible for the crimes," he said. They also referred to the Treaty of Sevres, "adding the Turkish government shall hand over to the Allied Powers the persons responsible for the Armenian massacres."

In fact, he said, "The trials held in Istanbul held in 1919 of the Ottoman perpetrators of the Armenian massacres were considered a precedent of the Nuremberg Trials."

This 1948 report, he said, "is unknown because the Turkish government pressured the UN to make it a restricted document."

In 1969, the UN Economic and Social Council, approved a decision by the Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination of Minorities, with 26 human rights experts, to make the crime of genocide punishable by law.

In 1971, Rwandan Nicodème Ruhashyankiko was appointed the special rapporteur of the Subcommission. He filed several reports. However, in his first one, there was no reference to the Armenian Genocide. The second, in 1973, "existence of relatively full documentation dealing with the massacres of Armenians which have been describes as the first face of genocide in the 20th century," Sassounian said.

Even this small reference was too much for Turkey, Sassounian added.

"Even though paragraph 30 didn't even mention turkey as the perpetrator of genocide, the Turkish ambassador, by his objection, admitted it was referring to the Turkish genocide," he said.

Then Turkish Ambassador to the United

nian Genocide in the report.

In 1974, an Armenian delegation, including Sassounian, visited several missions, including Tunisia, Austria, Ecuador, Iran, Pakistan, the US, Italy, Iraq and the Netherlands, asking them to support Paragraph 30.

The following year, at the sitting when the report was to be presented, Ruhashyankiko failed to show up after he had deleted Paragraph 30.

Shavarsh Torigian, representing the NGO World Council of Churches, and also a member of the Armenian National Committee, objected to the deletion, and got support from Argentina, France, Soviet Union, Greece and Syria, but to no avail.

By 1979, Sassounian was living in Geneva and decided to represent the Armenian Cause through various organizations, including the International League of Human Rights, the International Federation of Human Rights and the Indigenous World Association, since there were no Armenian NGOs.

"To make my lobbying task easier, I had asked the ARF Bureaus to urge the ANC Chapters in various countries to meet with their foreign ministries to direct their representatives in the UN to support the Genocide report," he said.

That year, at a speech in the UN, he objected to Ruhashyankiko deleting the reference to the Armenian Genocide. "After lengthy debates, the commission on human rights suggested that the special rapporteur taking into consideration the statements of several countries to include paragraph 30. However, Ruhashyankiko



COMMUNITY NEWS

OBITUARY

Susan Lind-Sinanian

Textile Specialist at Armenian Museum, Dedicated to Armenian Dance

WATERTOWN — Susan Lind-Sinanian passed away peacefully on April 5, 2025 at Mt. Auburn Hospital.

Susan Marie Sinanian was born in Boston on November 3, 1948 to the late Harry Sinanian and Margaret (Samour) Sinanian, and was the sister of Janet Rae-Sinanian, Marilyn Sinanian Stuart, and Paul Sinanian.

Susan was a graduate of Boston Girl's Latin School, Northeastern University and Boston College, with a BS in elementary education and an master's in education of the visually impaired. She worked as a house mother at the Perkin's School for the Blind while a student at Northeastern and upon graduation, joined the staff at Perkins, teaching Daily Living Skills at the Keller-Sullivan Building for 42 years, guiding generations of blind students.

Teaching was one of her greatest loves. The other was embracing and sharing her Armenian heritage.

Susan was a noted expert in traditional Armenian folk arts and lectured and taught workshops on Armenian village dances, folk embroideries and costumes, and cooking at camps throughout the United States and in Europe and Asia. She learned these arts through interviews with survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Susan also served as the Textile Curator/Conservator of the Armenian Museum of America, where in 1986 she created the textile center to oversee the largest Armenian textile collection in the diaspora. She created numerous exhibitions on costumes, laces, embroideries,



and carpets, both at the Armenian Museum and off-site.

She assisted Ron Marchese and Marlene Breu at the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, advising the conservation and preparation of historic vestments for a new museum there, and advised in the creation of a museum in Shushi, Artsakh.

She presented Armenian culture at a Smithsonian Festival in Washington, and in 2015 she curated an Armenian textile exhibit at the United Nations in New York, which is currently on view at the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown. Susan was an active lecturer, performer, and teacher until health issues curtailed her activities, but in recent years she still managed to participate in the documentation of Armenian dance for the Houshamadyan website and demonstrated embroideries on the website of the Armenian Museum.

Susan was married to Gary Lind-Sinanian, the Collections Curator of the Armenian Museum, for 48 years. They met in a Lebanese Dance group and together taught Lebanese, Assyrian and Armenian dances in international folk circles.

Susan is survived by her husband Gary, her son and daughter-in-law Raffi and Heidi Kaivalya, her siblings Janet, Marilyn and Paul, and numerous nephews and nieces.

Funeral arrangements were private. Memorial donations may be made in Susan's memory to Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472 or Perkins School for the Blind, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472.

THE ARMENIAN
MIRROR-SPECTATOR

Armenian Mirror-Spectator Seeks Summer Intern

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer (mid-July through August).

The intern will receive a \$150 weekly stipend provided through the Armenian Students' Association of America's Internship Program.

The intern should be in college or graduate school and does not necessarily have to be studying journalism. Most likely, the internship will be done long distance, via electronic communications, therefore location is not an issue (but native speaker knowledge of English remains important). Main tasks will be writing and working on the *Mirror* website, but they could also take part in marketing campaigns and work to increase digital advertising.

The *Mirror* also is looking for interns during the regular year.

If interested, please email a resume and cover letter to either tcadirector@aol.com and alin.gregorian@gmail.com.

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"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

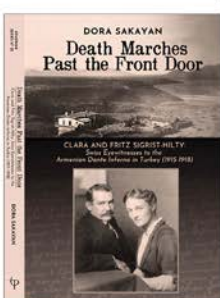
OF HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP HOVNAN DERDERIAN,
PRIMATE, WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

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

Western Diocese of the Armenian Church

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COMMUNITY NEWS

FAR and Harvard University Expand Critical Ultrasound Training for Armenian Doctors

YEREVAN — For the second time, Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), in partnership with Harvard University, organized a workshop titled “Ultrasound in Critical Situations.” This intensive training brought together healthcare professionals from Armenia’s regions and the capital, Yerevan, to enhance their skills in point-of-care ultrasound, a vital tool for rapid diagnosis in emergency medicine.

The course, held on March 9-10, was designed for emergency medicine specialists, cardiologists, and intensive care specialists. Participants underwent six months of preparatory distance learning before the two-day, on-site intensive training. A total of 30 medical professionals, including doctors from university hospitals and regional medical centers, took part in this hands-on experience.

“This course emphasized the importance of ultrasound examination for early diagnosis. Our goal is to ensure that local professionals continue this work independently, as they now possess the necessary knowledge and skills,” said FAR’s Healthcare Program Director Hambardzum Simonyan. He added that the first course, held in 2022 with 20 participants, proved invaluable and highlighted the need for continued training.

“Our main focus is on using ultrasound in emergency situations. We aim to train cardiologists and intensive care doctors, and it’s rewarding to see our past participants now teaching others. This initiative began three years ago through our cooperation with FAR, which later led to broader collaborations and the launch of this second course,” said Dr. Akiva Leibowitz of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Harvard Medical School.



The workshop in Yerevan combined theory and practice, featuring discussions on real clinical cases, interactive Q&A sessions, and, most importantly, hands-on ultrasound training

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APRIL 27, 2025
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Boston's Museum of Fine Arts Names Pierre Terjanian Next Director

TERJANIAN, from page 1

In an interview on Thursday, April 10, Terjanian, 56, said that he felt like everything he had been doing in his career was leading to this moment. "The predominant feeling is the excitement," he said. "This is a great institution, and it has a big part to play in Boston, in New England and beyond."

Asked what he thought about the overall climate around museums under the Trump administration — which has closed some institutions like the National Environmental Museum and is trying to force changes at others like the Smithsonian and the National Gallery of Art — Terjanian said it was "volatile."

"It's an environment that forces us to

continue to consider how we operate," he said. "We obviously want to be in compliance with all the legislation, and we're monitoring closely all the changes."

He added that "uncertainty" is not helpful to institutions, and that the museum was currently "not planning any significant changes."

The museum would remain nimble, he said, and he noted that over the last two years, it had received some funding from the city of Boston but has received less than 1

percent of its budget from the government.

The museum was not planning to avoid certain programming because of the Trump administration's prohibitions against diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, he added.



"We want to be compliant, but at this time we're proceeding with our programs, all of them," he said.

Terjanian, a native of Strasbourg, France, started at the museum in 2024 as a leadership team member in charge of all conservation of the museum's collection of more than 500,000 objects.

He helped develop the museum's current exhibition "Van Gogh: The Roulin Family Portraits," a collection of 23 works that explore the artist's relationship with a neighboring family when he stayed in the South of France in the 1880s.

Before joining the museum, Terjanian worked as a curator in charge of the department of arms and armor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; he was also a curator and acting head of the department of European sculpture and decorative arts before 1700 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Emi M. Winterer, the president of the board of trustees at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, said in a statement that Terjanian's name came up repeatedly during the search process.

"He quickly earned the trust and respect of his colleagues," Winterer said.

Former Artsakh Minister Beglaryan To Be Speaker at Conn. Genocide Commemoration

CONNECTICUT, from page 6

Committee of Connecticut, in addition to honoring the memory of the one and a half million victims and as well as survivors of the Armenian Genocide begun by the Ottoman government in 1915, is to support programs and events, itself or with other organizations, to inform the public



Artak Beglaryan

and remember the Genocide. It is in the process of establishing a suitable permanent Genocide Memorial. The committee also assists in the legislative mandate to provide Genocide related curricula in the public schools. Additionally, the committee seeks to present information about developments in the Diaspora and in Armenia.

Attorney Harry N. Mazadoorian of Kensington, a longtime member of the committee, stressed the critical nature of this year's commemoration in light of the tenuous situation in Artsakh and the plight of the refugees from Artsakh and the hostages being detained there.

Members of the Connecticut Committee include Rev. Fr. Archpriest Untzag Nalbandian of the Armenian Church of the Holy Ascension; Rev. Fr. Voski Galstyan of St. George Armenian Church; Rev. Fr. Haroutiun Sabounjian of the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection; Melanie Kevorkian Brown (Chair), Rita Soovajian (Secretary), Diana Dagavarian Colpitts (Treasurer); Richard Arzoomanian, Steven Avakian, Dr. Svetlana Babajanyan, Yn. Patricia Buttero, The Honorable Evelyn Mukjian Daly, Professor Mari Firkatian, John C. Geragosian, State Auditor, Kit Kaolian, Emma Lopez, Lusine Lopez, Mellie Mardiyan, Professor Armen Marsoobian, Attorney Harry Mazadoorian, Attorney Gregory Nor-sigian and David Paparian.

The program will conclude with the Martyrs' Service which was created in 2015 on the occasion of the centennial of the Genocide and the canonization of the Martyrs. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service.

A reception will follow the commemoration.

Beglaryan will also be speaking at the Yale Geocide Studies Program in New Haven at noon on April 25.



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Arts & Culture

Embodied Expression

Language, Desire, and the Female Form in Poetry of Maroush Yeramian

By Tamar Marie Boyadjian

Maroush Yeramian's new poetry collection, *SURΦΟΥΡ ARDOUR* (Cairo, 2024), unfolds as a lyrical tapestry woven in Western Armenian, where the imagery of love and sensuality weaves gracefully around the profound questions of language, subjectivity, and the female body. Her poetry deftly transcends boundaries, inviting readers into a resonant



Maroush Yeramian

exploration of the universal human experience of love—where language emerges as both a potent force of expression and a space of longing.

Already there
where dreams are more real
than reality (my translation)

These opening lines of the collection already create an enchanting backdrop that will invite us on a forthcoming journey as we experience our female narrator's sensual fantasy. Through each line of verse, the delicate interplay between dream and reality unfolds, revealing a tapestry of womanly longing that seeks to express itself—through language, through the body, through the very essence of being woman. In these realms, physical sensations need words. They yearn to be communicated. Words, in turn, seek bodies; they crave to inhabit flesh and form. Through words, fantasies find their solace. Through sounds a woman among poems becomes seduced. As we delve deeper, we discover that fantasies come to life through a woman's dialogue with and in Western Armenian. As we are enraptured in this body of language, each phrase serves as a bridge, connecting the depths of female desire to the beauty of expression, illuminating a shared journey of longing and discovery.

Imbued with a profound understanding of how society constructs, perceives and often confines the feminine voice, the folds of these poems gradually reclaim their power through their expressions of desire. The conscious and unconscious reveal themselves within and beyond language, as captured in the line: "I see you through your words." Our
see YERAMIAN, page 15



Pictures at the exhibition

Berlin Exhibition Opens Eyes through Myths

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — Art is a language, like poetry, but is visual. It speaks through metaphors and allegories, communicating across verbal language barriers, through images, figurative or abstract. An exhibition has opened in Berlin in which the artistic language of communication is mythology. Entitled, "Mythical Images – On the Relevance of a Refuge," it opened on March 28 and will run until April 20, at InteriorDasein, an atelier and meeting place for artists founded by Archi Galentz. Galentz, a third-generation Armenian artist, has been living and working in the German capital since 1992.

The current exhibition is a sequel to an earlier show, "Through Mythical Zones," presented in the producer gallery SpiritTransfer in Moers near Duisburg, which featured works by Galentz and Edwin Dickman, who died in December 2023 at the age of 94. The new exhibition expands on it, adding works by Tigran Tokmajyan (1923-2004), Peter Hahlbrock (1934-2015), Gisela Breitling (1939-2018), Gisa Hausmann (1942-2015), Aude de Kerros, Thomas J. Richter, Oleg Neishtadt, Philipp Mager, Julia Katan and others. The works displayed were created between 1958 and 2025: sketches, woodprints, etchings, lithographs, watercolors, oil paintings, and AI-generated prints.

The Language of Myth

As mentioned in a review of the exhibition that appeared on April 4 in *Ozer* from Prague, myths take on a "special dynamic in times of societal upheaval," like those we are going through today. The viewer must possess "a certain education and preparation to gain access to these visual worlds, whereas the artists must reinterpret and restructure the stuff of mythology content over and again. Neither of these processes unfolds quickly, and there is no single canon" which defines criteria.

The language of mythology can articulate ideas in our modern world, playing a "creative game of associations and drawing parallels between the characters and dramas of ancient times and those of our modern world," the magazine writes.

see EXHIBIT, page 16



Linolprints by Tigran Tokmajyan (left, top), Minotaurus (middle) and two water colors by Archi Galentz (below) oil and lithograph (right) by Peter Hahlbrock

Calling Young Armenian Writers: IALA's Young Armenian Poets Awards Now Open

LOS ANGELES — The International Armenian Literary Alliance, in partnership with h-pem, has opened the 2025 Young Armenian Poets Awards in honor of Tamar Asadourian, an annual contest that recognizes and provides a platform for exceptional Armenian writers between the ages of 14 and 18.

In his poem, "Motto," which was published in 1939, the German dramatist and poet Bertolt Brecht asks the important question "In dark times / Will there also be singing?" to which he responds, "Yes, there will be singing. / About the dark times." This year's prompt asks students to consider the ways in which we "sing" in response to "dark times," whether they be personal or public in nature. What does our singing look and sound like? What must it preserve and celebrate and why?

IALA encourages submissions from any young writer who identifies as Armenian, regardless of gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, religious belief, national origin, socio-economic class, educational background, personal style/appearance, citizenship and immigration status, or political affiliation.

Submissions will be read by IALA Advisory Board members and judges Gregory Djanikian, Armine Iknadosian, and Raffi Wartanian. This year, a total of \$600 will be granted to the authors of the three top poems selected by the judges (\$200 for each author). Winning poems will be published online on IALA's and h-pem's respective websites in the fall of 2025. Winning authors will be invited to read their work at IALA's annual Emerging Writers Showcase. Finally, the winning authors will receive a copy of Tamar Asadourian's poetry collection, *I remember you my future...*

IALA is looking to honor work that exhibits invention, technical skill, and the emergence of a unique voice or vision. The deadline for submissions is 11:59 PM (Eastern Time) on April 30, 2025. You can learn about submission guidelines, read previous winning poems, and submit work to <https://armenianliterary.org/yapa-2025/>.

"What's really extraordinary about the Young Armenian Poets Awards is how it has not only managed to find and celebrate some of the most talented young voices among us but also how it has provided a launchpad for their growth in the literary world. In many ways, entering the competition is like joining a family," says YAPA Founder and Director Alan Semerdjian.

"YAPA was one of the most important turning points of my life. Submitting to the contest introduced me to a vibrant community of other Armenian writers and instilled a new wave of cultural passion I carry with me in my current projects," said 2023 YAPA Winner Vladimir Mkrтчian.

YAPA is made possible by a donation from members of Tamar's family, Sam and Tamig Ekizian.

see AWARD, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

40th Musical Armenian Concert at Carnegie Hall

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — On March 9, the 40th Musical Armenia Concert with two very young and remarkably talented artists, pianist Vartan Arakelian and pianist/composer Arno Melkonyan, graced the Carnegie Hall stage.

Musical Armenia, a celebratory event established by the Eastern Prelacy in 1982 by Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, was only interrupted during the Covid lockdown. It has drawn large music loving crowds throughout New York and nearby metropolitan areas.

“Music has no borders,” wrote the Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy, Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, in a preface to the program booklet. “Perhaps more than any other form of artistic creation, it immediately and quintessentially becomes part of the universal heritage.”

Following words of welcome by Musical Armenia Committee member Levon Tatevossian to the large crowd, 17-year-old Arakelian strode confidently onto the stage and took his seat at the Steinway grand, pausing thoughtfully for a minute, and started his program.

He opened with Bach’s *Partita No. 2 in C minor*, an intricately-fingered dark piece demanding exceptional dexterity which the young performer demonstrated with great understanding.

Beethoven’s *Sonata No. 4 in E-flat major* featuring spacious melodies followed, and concluded in a dramatic climax, to which Arakelian gave full splendor.

Chopin’s *Nocturne in C Minor* has been hailed by critics as “musical poetry,” Archbishop Anoushavan has written. Starting



Arno Melkonyan

worldwide. And Arakelian gave this work the flavor it deserved. His pianistic mastery resulted in a lengthy standing ovation.

Armenian Musical Inventions

Following the intermission, 21-year-old Arno Melkonyan presented a creative program dedicated to his homeland and began his pianistic and compositional mastery with Babadjanian’s *Prelude*, a folk-inspired piece demonstrating the brilliant style of Rachmaninoff and Khachaturian, truly a tribute to his Armenian people.

Melkonyan’s *Wedding Song* began with

during his first year of college in the United States. Through many meaningful connections, it concluded with a dash of optimism. Two violinists, Alisa Shin and Analuna Chahine, violist Minjun Seo and cellist Queral Giral accompanied the pianist.

The final composition was *In Memory of Artsakh*. Melkonyan dedicated the piece to its courageous people, the 120,000 forced out of their beloved homeland, “to what once was and hopefully will be again.” The first movement, *Vardavar in Stepanakert*, evoked his earliest memories when

sical Armenia Committee members Levon Tatevossian and Annita Nerses presented beautiful bouquets to each of the performers. The loud applause continued for several more minutes, ending an afternoon of soulful and deeply moving musicality.

Following the outstanding concert, Tanielian hosted a reception at the Prelacy headquarters.

A Promising Future

Arakelian started his studies on the piano at the age of 4 and continued with master classes. His achievements include an award at the 2025 National Young Arts Competition. He was also the second-place winner of the 2024-2025 of the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Concerto Competition. The young artist won second place at the 2023 Chopin International Piano Competition in Connecticut, at age 15.

His honors have also included finalist at the 2023 Boston Pops Fidelity Investments Young Artists Competition, first prize at the 2022 New England Teachers Association Mildred Frieberg Competition, and prize winner at the Back Bay Music Contest and at the Paderewski International Competition.

On many occasions Arakelian has performed at Carnegie’s Weill Recital Hall. In Boston, where he is a high school student, he has performed with friends in senior centers. For the Music for Food organization, Vartan established student concerts to raise awareness about food insecurity and fight hunger in local communities. Every year, he performs in the New England Piano Teachers’ Association’s Music for Hope charity recital.

Melkonyan, who is not only a pianist and composer, but also a guitarist, started his musical journey at age 9 at the Yerevan Music School. Internationally adept, he has lived with his family in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, while attending high school.

In 2023, Melkonyan started his B.A. degree in music composition at the Berklee College of Music. At Berklee, he is the treasurer of the College Society of Composers. He has combined influences from the Romantic era, jazz fusion themes, and his deeply ingrained Armenian folk and religious chant traditions.

The Musical Armenia Committee included Julie Kedersha, Sophie Khachatryan, Annita Nerses, Varsenne Sarkissian, and Levon Tatevossian. The art direction and design were by Gregory Dosttur.



Vartan Arakelian

slow and meditatively, with soulful melodies, and chords, it builds to a powerful climax, which elicited lengthy applause from the audience.

Schumann’s *Novelletten*, a set of eight pieces for solo piano, reflecting the composer’s keyboard style, demonstrated the young pianist’s accomplishment and keyboard mastery.

Arakelian concluded his program with Arno Babadjanian’s *Six Pictures for Piano*, showing his prowess not only for the classical genre, but also for his Armenian emotion and ancestry.

Babadjanian (also spelled Babajanian), one of the most prolific and beloved composers of Armenia, has won the hearts of not only Armenians, but also music lovers

quiet thoughtfulness and built to joyous celebration. It was accompanied with talented Iranian-born Alireza Khodayari on the tar who evoked soulful Armenian feelings in his talented understanding of the music.

Melkonyan’s *Patriotic Rhapsody* paid tribute to his mother who “used to sing it in our Armenian church,” he wrote. The piece is “an exploration of my Armenian roots and patriotism.” With Melkonyan masterfully evoking his feelings on piano, he was accompanied on violin by Alisa Shin and on cello by Queral Giral.

String Quartet No. 1, receiving its first live performance, painted a feeling of sheer loneliness, even though one might be surrounded by many. It conveyed the feeling of solitude, which Melkonyan experienced

as a 9-year old he visited Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) with his father.

In part two of this profound piece, *Elegy for the Fallen*, depicted the war and described his grief during the exodus, and as a Diaspora Armenian, his feelings of grief. The final, *Hope of Rebirth*, was a “show of light in the darkness, a sunrise after the long night, symbolizing the spirit of resilience and the profound hope that Artsakh will rise again.”

As the highly emotional music ended, the crowd instantly rose to their feet, some visibly in tears, giving the masterful composer and pianist a very lengthy and loud ovation, lasting several minutes.

As the two artists with the accompanying instrumentalists came onto the stage, Mu-



New book Examines Story Behind US Relationship to the Armenian Genocide

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

Seasoned French political scientist Julien Zarifian has published a thoroughly researched and thought-provoking book that analyzes the Armenian Genocide exclusively from the perspective of the United States. Titled *The United States and the Armenian Genocide: History, Memory, Politics*, it offers a comprehensive look at changing attitudes towards the event starting with the noble but failed attempt by the American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau to save Armenian lives as the Genocide was unfolding.

As Zarifian writes in his introduction: “My main objective in this work is to examine the relationship the US government and, to a lesser extent, US society and media, has had with the issue of the Armenian massacres of 1915-1916, from the perpetration of these crimes to their nonrecognition as genocide in the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century.”



Dr. Julien Zarifian

Of course, underlying this rather neutral sounding statement is one simple question: why did it take the United States government a century to officially recognize that the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 had indeed been planned and executed by a (still to this day) unrepentant (Ottoman) Turkey, this in spite of the fact that American media and government covered the massacres on an almost daily basis as they unfolded? Along the way, Zarifian analyzes media and press coverage, the role of lobbies, as well as geopolitical considerations and American foreign policy decisions.

Zarifian’s book is divided into six parts, and each part is in turn subdivided into three chapters. In Parts I-V, Zarifian presents a chronological history of the US relationship to the Armenian Genocide starting with American involvement in the Ottoman Empire and its policies of non-involvement stretching back to the Hamidian massacres of 1894-1896, and the Adana Massacres of 1909, when large-scale massacres of Armenians also took place in Turkey. He reviews the records of all the most recent administrations including those of Bush, Obama and Trump. His analysis culminates with the Biden administration which became the first in the country’s history to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide when both branches of Congress did so in 2019, followed by Joe Biden and the executive branch in 2021.

Then in Part VI, the author analyzes the same issue thematically and analytically. The great advantage of this organizational methodology is to fully educate those who are not historians or experts on the topic, so that everyone has the full story before attempting to analyze the why behind it all: why the US caved in to Realpolitik even in the face of mass murder and its aftereffects. The surprising part of Zarifian’s analysis is precisely that it shows, as we shall see, that there were in fact many reasons for official US policy having to do with Armenians, Turks and Armenians, but also memories that all sides have tried to suppress about their own cultures. And even a learned historian, although he might passively know much if not all the information presented here, will probably never have seen it analyzed from quite this angle or made all the connections that Zarifian does here.

Part I, “The United States, the Arme-

nians and the Armenian Genocide before the Genocide Convention” traces the early immigration of Armenians to the United States beginning with the arrival of the trader “Martin the Armenian” at Jamestown in 1618-19, followed by their steady rise from poor agricultural workers to landowners, and small businessmen in the late 19th and early 20th century, with a growing network of religious and cultural institutions on both coasts.

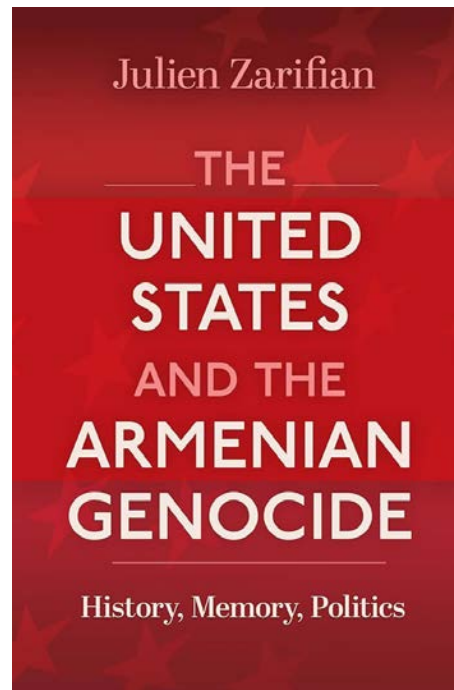
While an Armenophile movement was born in this period, and there was general sympathy for the plight of Armenians who were routinely massacred or otherwise mistreated, the US followed a policy of non-intervention in the Ottoman Empire which coincided with the tenets of the Monroe Doctrine. Concurrently, as the US did not have as much influence in the region as the European powers, Christian missionaries were sent to the Ottoman Empire to proselytize and convert ottoman subjects, as well as establish a network of schools and universities, which created friction with the Muslim leaders of the Empire. Funds were also raised to help Armenians and the US government did protest the mistreatment of the Armenian minority but to little effect.

During the Genocide itself, America officially decried the news of the massacres taking place, which were covered daily in major American media outlets, but they could do little to intervene in a foreign Empire’s internal affairs. Behind the scenes, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau did everything in his power to bring to light what was happening on several occasions to convince the Young Turk leaders to spare the Armenians but failed in his attempts. A fascinating Chapter 3 “From Hope to ‘Memory Erosion’: The United States and the Armenian Matter in the Interwar Period,” shows that after the founding of Near East Relief which raised the equivalent of \$1billion today to save a generation of surviving Armenian orphans, and after much sympathy for the fate of the Armenians on the part of the American public, the Genocide was soon forgotten. The Wilsonian Mandate for Armenia failed, the Treaty of Sevres was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne which favored Turkish control of Western Armenia, and the Soviet Union and Kemalist Turkey carved out what was left of Armenia. Turkey grew in importance for the United States and burgeoning fundraising and political activism on the part of Armenian Americans was overshadowed by the might of Turkish diplomacy and politicking. The Armenians split in two rival political groups and the memory of 1915 was soon eclipsed by the new horrors of the Holocaust and the genocide of European Jewry during WWII.

Part II, “The United States and the Post-WWII Armenian Awakenings” traces three different stages of Armenian “awakenings” when Armenian-Americans began to organize themselves more effectively and founded its first lobbying group, in the 1940s, then in 1965 on the occasion of the 50th commemoration of the Genocide and then in the 70’s which saw a rise of Turkish denialism concurrent to the activities of Armenian terrorist groups such as ASALA.

Zarifian does not shy away from calling out Armenian terrorism and notes that the US took a strong stance against Armenian terrorists and help to snuff out their domestic cells.

Part III examines lobbying and organizing on the part of the Armenian community to have the Genocide recognized officially by the US government. These attempts failed due to US policy favorable to Turkey and representatives who didn’t see its importance — under Ronald Reagan’s presiden-



cy, all attempts to recognize the event were quashed. Zarifian then examines the case of Senator Bob Dole whose life was saved by an Armenian surgeon during WWII and Senate Joint Resolution 212 (1989-1990) which he unsuccessfully tried to have ratified.

In Part IV Zarifian examines the US Post-Cold War Context and George W. Bush’s First Mandate. Turkey now was more important perhaps than before and President Bush pinned his hopes on illusory Turkish-Armenian reconciliation efforts in Congress. With George W. Bush’s Second Mandate, progress was being made, albeit slowly. Bill Clinton disappointed many in not recognizing the Genocide.

Part V moves the reader through the Obama, Trump and finally the Biden administration when efforts finally gave way to success. As Zarifian points out, part of the reason for recognition was simply the unrelenting efforts of Armenians and their allies to keep coming back with new resolutions: even Donald Trump’s bullying and non-recognition couldn’t stop both houses Congress from eventually recognizing it—then finally Biden made his official statement to the relief of Armenians everywhere.

In Part VI, Zarifian then meticulously and with remarkable objectivity analyzes the American reaction to the Armenian genocide itself: he is praiseworthy of the founding of the Near East Relief. Simply, American interests never coincided enough with those of the Armenians: before WWI, the US was not a player in the region even. Afterwards, they gave in to geopolitics as Turkey became an important NATO ally against the Soviets. As Zarifian points out, the US attitude to the Armenian Genocide can be divided into roughly three periods:

1) recognition of the event as it happened but non-intervention; then the period until WWII; then WWII to the 1980’s: pacification and refusal to upset Turkey, and then the 1980s onwards when it began to reckon with the historical record more honestly. Zarifian shows that a coalition of forces overwhelmingly hindered recognition: the strength of the Turkish lobby and its importance as a NATO ally; but also the role of the Jewish Lobby and AIPAC since Turkey was Israel’s only Muslim ally in the region; and finally the United States’ own failure to reckon with history of slavery and genocide against the Native Americans created a perhaps subliminal desire not to discuss Genocides too often: the Holocaust was enough, it seems. In the end, it seems that plain hard work and lobbying as well as the doggedness of politicians like Senator Menendez who kept bringing the resolution to vote until opposition to it wore down and it passed. But here is the sad reality of Arme-

nian Genocide recognition: apart from the catharsis that it provided Armenian Americans, and helping to set the historical record straight once and for all, little was arguably gained. Turkey refused to accept the facts and even participated in further ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Artsakh by training Azeri officers and providing Bayraktar missiles.

Zarifian also notes that recognition of the Genocide has changed little in the Armenian world, apart from assuaging people who see it as a moral victory. As for Armenia itself, wedged between Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Third Republic has gained little from the US’s most recent acknowledgment: apart from a \$3 million insurance settlement paid out to heirs, reparations will not occur nor will peace between Armenians and Turks magically appear. At least the US finally did the right thing, Zarifian seems to conclude, even if it came some 50 years too late. And one also wonders what Armenians could have been built in the US institutionally with all the effort and financial resources that they poured into this battle for over a half century. Be that as it may, Zarifian’s book makes a solid addition to works by scholars such as Raymond Kevorkian, Richard Hovannisian, and others who have analyzed the Armenian Genocide from different angles and perspectives.

At 300 pages, of which a good third are endnotes and bibliography, Zarifian’s book should be the authority on this topic for quite some time to come. In the end this is a book for historians and students of history both. It might someday be interesting to write a companion volume that analyzes in a similarly thorough fashion the reaction of say Western Europe (France, Russia, the United Kingdom) same issue. As such, Zarifian lists places, events and motivations, and although he does provide cogent analysis of the diverse elements involved in American decisions towards Armenians the Genocide, there is little room here for theories of nationalism, colonialism, Lit Crit, gender studies and such which have recently made the field of Armenian Genocide studies so exciting, such as Elyse Semerdjian’s recent volume on the tattooing of Armenian female bodies sold into slavery. Were it not for Zarifian’s elegant and pared down prose, and his obvious intelligence, it might otherwise read a bit dry. In the end, though, this is a perfect companion for the studies that detail the events and horrors of the Armenian Genocide itself, as well as all the new scholarship and fiction coming out on the issue. If we take all of these different studies together as a whole, it seems that one hundred years after the events that traumatized an entire nation and its descendants, we finally have scholarship that is intelligent, rich, and complete; scholarship that also helps to anchor the truth and complexity Armenian Genocide in the annals of human history once and for all.

In his introduction, Zarifian makes the interesting observation that this particular issue represents one of the most remarkable instances of continuity in US policy, at both the domestic and international levels. Given this fact, it is even more important that this egregious status quo was finally changed. It also says something positive about the willpower and organization of Armenian-Americans who are a tiny minority group which had limited financial means and education until the middle or end of the twentieth century. As pyrrhic a victory as it may have been, the 2021 Armenian Genocide recognition represents a good example of how immigrant groups to the US have at times been able to change the law or government policy to their advantage by using the country’s democratic channels.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Fig Cake and Fresh Fig Preserves

Monica Kass Rogers is a mom, writer, photographer, and home cook, who also explores abstract photography as a member of Perspective Fine Art Photography Gallery in Evanston, IL. She started her food blog, Lost Recipes Found, first as a column for the Chicago Tribune, one of the many publications she has written for over the past 20 years. “At one point I was writing stories and columns for six different sections of the Chicago Tribune, addressing sustainability, women’s issues, gardening, business, architecture and food, plus writing for Crain’s Chicago Business, and many lifestyle magazines,” she says. “My research into the provenance of recipes for a Chicago Tribune column was so compelling that it became my blog, lostrecipesfound.com. In turn, the process of researching, preparing, propping, food-styling and photographing the recipes for each story launched my professional photography business.”

“For you, the food memory trigger might be sight, or taste, or sound, or some sensual mixture of all of it,” says Rogers. “The point is, we all have recipes we’ve loved and lost over the course of our lives. How serendipitous to rediscover and enjoy them again. At my Lost Recipes Found food blog, readers discover those recipes, some history when I can find it, visuals, and hopefully, some connection to the food memories that matter the most to you. Some of these recipes are my own. Some are adapted from old and vintage cookbooks. Others are chef creations based on vintage recipes that people love. Before publishing to the site, I test, prepare, and photograph each dish using natural light. I have dozens of recipes, photos and stories that I’ve collected over the years, and will be posting them as often as I can,” she adds.



Monica Kass Rogers

“My mother,” Rogers says, “grew up eating the fresh fruit from a large, spreading fig tree that grew next to her childhood home in southern Texas. She spoke wistfully of that tree, the scent and the flavor of its fruit, the cool of its shade and passed her fondness for figs right down to me.”

“Rogers adds that reading cookbook author Belinda Hulin’s ode to the fig tree that grew 30 feet high and more than 30 feet wide in her own mother’s Louisiana backyard, struck a chord. Hulin’s story, featured in her 2010-released *Roux Memories*, is a beautiful tale of growth, loss and rebirth.”

Hulin writes, “My mother planted the tree more than thirty years ago...without fertilizing or pruning, dependent on rain for watering, it grew. And grew. And grew.” And as she grew, the fig tree gave back. “Sometimes,” Hulin adds, “like after my father died, or when my first marriage crumbled, I’d wander into the backyard just to visit the fig tree, eat from its branches, and stare into its mystical depths.”

Rogers says, “I adore fresh figs -- the shape and flavor of the fruit, and all of the delicious things you can make with it. Here are two favorites. The preserves make the perfect filling for homemade fig bars or goes well over yogurt or pudding. And this fig cake is so moist as to be almost pudding like. I’ve also reworked the recipe as a layer cake, with caramel frosting.”

For fig preserves:

Ingredients:

6 cups fresh, whole figs
2 tablespoons baking soda
3 cups water
3 cups sugar

1 sliced fresh lemon, seeds removed (NOTE: If you don’t like the flavor of marmalade, remove and discard the skin of the lemon. Otherwise, leave it on.)

For the cake:

Ingredients:

3/4 cup softened butter
1 cup sugar
3 eggs
1/2 cup milk
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking soda dissolved in 1 teaspoon vinegar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups fig preserves (recipe above)

Serves 8

Preparation:

Make preserves: Snip stem ends from figs and discard. Rinse trimmed figs in colander. Mix baking soda into 1/2 gallon cold water in a large pot. Place figs in the pot and swirl around to rinse well.

Drain figs in colander and rinse with fresh water. Combine figs, sugar, water and lemon slices (or, just the lemon flesh if you don’t like the flavor of marmalade) in tall soup pot. Cook, stirring often, over medium-low heat. Cook until fig mixture reaches desired thickness—about 2 1/2 to 3 hours. NOTE: Rogers uses a hand-held immersion blender to blend most of the figs for a less-chunky preserve.

Sanitize six, clean, pint canning jars by boiling in water along with canning seals and lids. Ladle hot fig preserves into the jars, leaving about 1/2 inch of headspace at the top. Place seals on the jars and process in a boiling water bath 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from bath, let stand until cooled, and store. NOTE: This recipe can be halved and refrigerated or frozen, if you don’t want to can the preserves. For this option, let preserves cool, then spoon into storage tubs. The preserves will keep for one month to 6 weeks in the refrigerator; 6 months in the freezer.

Make the cake: Cream butter and sugar together. Add eggs, one at a time, beating after each addition. Add milk. With mixer on low, slowly add flour followed by dissolved baking soda. Beat in vanilla. Add fig preserves and beat until just blended. If using a stand mixer, be sure to scrape sides and bottom of bowl to ensure even mixing. Pour batter into a greased 12 x 9-inch baking dish.

Bake at 350°F for 50 minutes to one hour. Cake will flatten and pull away from sides of baking dish as it cools. Serve warm or at room temperature with fresh whipped cream.

For this recipe, go to: <http://lostrecipesfound.com/fig-preserves-fig-cake/>

For Belinda’s cookbook, go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Roux-Memories-Cajun-Creole-Story-Recipes/dp/0762759054>

Language, Desire, and the Female Form in Poetry of Maroush Yeramian

YERAMIAN, from page 12
expectations—and the unexpected intimacy we discover with the female body—challenge us to reconsider the limitations and liberating quality of language. Here, insights into female desire find harmony alongside interpretations of poetic verse. With each subsequent poem, the female body emerges as a landscape of exploration, as a catalyst for expression, and as a vessel that allows for vibrant imaginings to transcend language while remaining essential to their very expression.

Your words shape my body
According to their desires,
They breathe life into me
Awakening my spirit. (my translation)

In a lyrical waltz of metaphor and memory, these poems guide us through a realm of innate vibrancy, where language transforms into the woman’s lover. As a body to be desired, we sense her passion and urgency for them. Yet we also experience how language serves her feelings as delicate mediator. Words of longing are not merely whispers of the flesh; they are the songs that weave a yearning for connection. They are the sounds that make up the woman’s need for sensual interaction, echoing her courage to claim her own narrative.

In ՏԱՐՓՄԱՆԻ ԱՐԴՈՒՐ, a woman and language emerges as intertwined companions. An intensely reciprocal relationship defines these verses, where female desire and language intertwine, each unable to

manifest without the other. The woman is liberated to articulate her truth, to explore, and live out her fantasies. Yet, there exists a dynamic tension—a push and pull. This interplay of dualities mirrors her hesitations, perhaps echoing societal pressures that have traditionally attempted to shame women for their desires. These apprehensions manifest themselves through images of light and shadow woven together, sometimes illuminating paths forward other times casting veils of obscurity. The language of these poems dances fluidly among words, forging connections and creating frissons of emotion, urging us to dwell in the discomfort while allowing vulnerability to blossom alongside the resilience of expression. It nurtures both

fragility and strength, revealing language as a constant embrace, a source of comfort that showcases an infinite capacity for love.

In a landscape historically marked by shame and silence, the poems resonate deeply within the collective consciousness of women across time and culture. It stands as a testament to the unwavering spirit of language — as it speaks, shatters, and ultimately transforms the boundaries that seek to confine the outward expression of women’s desires. Yeramian’s words resurrect a forgotten legacy of Western Armenian women authors who have charted the complex landscapes of female bodies and desires, affirming their scared place in language and literary history.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

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

MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 24 — Screening of award-winning documentary "My Sweet Lan," a film by Sareen Hairabedian, at the Somerville Theatre, Somerville. 7.15 p.m. Through the eyes of an 11-year-old, Vrej, the film explores the hopes, fears and intergenerational resilience of the people of Artsakh. One night only. Sponsored by the Armenian Women's Welfare Association.

APRIL 26 — Armenian Museum of America Member Preview 5 to 6 p.m. and Opening Reception 6:30-8:30pm: Open to the Public. Fragments of Memory: The Art and Legacy of Varujan Boghosian. Armenian-American artist Varujan Boghosian (1926-2020) used found objects to explore themes of mystery, transformation, and death. His work is in collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of America Art, and Philadelphia Museum of Art. Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Please RSVP by April 23 at armenianmuseum.org/rsvp.

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

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

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

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

MAY 2 — 123rd DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY DANCE hosted by Holy Archangels Armenian Church. Music by Jason Naroian & His Band featuring the voice of Michael Gostanian. Friday, from 9 pm to 12 am. at the Hilton Boston Woburn, 2 Forbes Rd. Woburn. \$50.00; reserve your dance tickets at Tiny.cc/AssemblyDance. Walk-ins welcome.

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

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

NEW JERSEY

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

PENNSYLVANIA

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

RHODE ISLAND

JUNE 28 — Save the date. The Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island 70th Anniversary Concert. Saturday, at 7 pm, Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence. Details to follow.

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.

Berlin Exhibition Opens Eyes through Myths

EXHIBIT, from page 12

Archi Galentz has been fascinated with myths since the beginning of his studies as an artist. According to his teacher, Klaus Fussmann, he found it easier to immerse himself in mythology because, as an Armenian, he belongs to an ancient cultural world, the world of myths that anthropologist and ethnologist Claude Levi-Strauss referred to as the "savage mind." Galentz found in Edwin Dickman a likeminded artist, perhaps because the latter, an American, was of Irish origin, partaking of a culture rich in mythology. Galentz writes that his own work with myths is not a matter of archival research, but rather a "performative act" that lives through its interpretation. One can transpose myths, like allegories, into the modern world, even with the use of modern technical means. Galentz has experimented here even with artificial

intelligence, producing AI-generated pictures.

"What moves us today, Galentz asks, "to wander through mythological worlds, to find joy in them, to want to dwell on the rigor and internal logic of their ancient transmission, to fearlessly seek out dialogue with these narrative structures?" He asks whether or not it is worth the effort to deal with myths in a world "where fake news and faithful reporting are indistinguishable, lobbyism, advertising strategy, and propaganda are considered honorable activities." The answer given by the exhibition is an unequivocal "yes, it is worth it." Precisely because we live in such times, mythical formulations point to a path guiding us out of the challenges of existence, they help us bridge periods of uncertainty, and communicate meaningful messages for art enthusiasts and inquiring minds.



Lithograph and oil by Edwin Dickman (USA and Berlin) and 2 paper works by Julia Katan (Odessa and Berlin)

Young Armenian Poets Awards Now Open

AWARDS, from page 12

Tamar Asadourian (1980-2020)

was an accomplished pianist, author and artist. At 16, she performed at Carnegie Hall, and was acclaimed as "an absorbing artist of uncommon sensitivity and intelligence." While studying at the Manhattan School of Music, Asadourian was forced to give up the piano due to illness. She suffered from severe depression, and dedicated herself to writing, drawing and the arts. After her untimely death, a collection of her poetry, prose and artwork was published in a volume entitled *I remember you my future...* (Naregatsi Art Institute, Yerevan, Armenia, 2022).



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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Trump's Tariffs and Armenia's Negotiation Priorities

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Last week saw a significant development with implications for Armenia's exports: the escalating global trade war triggered by the Trump administration resulting in imposition of reciprocal tariffs on more than 60 countries. In his book, *The Art of the Deal*, Donald Trump emphasizes the importance of setting ambitious goals. The hope is that counterparts, unsettled by Trump's unpredictability and hardline stances — as well as the potential use of force — will be forced to adapt to his terms, approaching negotiations from a weaker and more anxious standpoint. That is exactly the strategy Trump is currently pursuing with the imposition of tariffs on a number of countries. Trump's widespread tariffs, justified as a response to perceived unfair trade practices, prompted over 50 countries to seek negotiations.

Despite drawing significant domestic and international criticism, these tariffs compelled many nations to re-evaluate their trade policies with the US. As far as Armenia is concerned, starting April 5, the US imposed 10% tariffs on all imports, which includes Armenian goods. This action, stemming from Trump's reciprocal tariff policy targeting countries that restrict US market access, will likely increase prices and reduce demand for Armenian exports like aluminum, stones, precious metals, agricultural products, and alcohol, potentially harming those sectors' competitiveness.

In 2024, the total value of goods traded between Armenia and the United States was estimated at \$282.4 million. US exports to Armenia amounted to \$160.8 million, marking a 14.8% decrease (or \$27.9 million) compared to 2023. US imports from Armenia totaled \$121.6 million, down 8.4% (or \$11.1 million) from the previous year. The US trade surplus with Armenia stood at \$39.2 million, which is a 29.9% drop (or \$16.7 million) compared to 2023.

The changes in US-Armenia trade figures between 2023 and 2024 were unrelated to the current tariff situation and instead reflected typical fluctuations in trade between the two countries, but these figures do give an indication of the scale of bilateral trade. The US in 2024 was not even among the top five trading partners of Armenia but was in seventh place.

Trump's tariffs introduce a new item agenda in Armenian-American relations, replacing the previous one largely focused on US aid, which is now less relevant. For years, all kinds of assistance programs dominated the Armenian-American agenda. This included the support that Washington provided to the police, the justice sector, the judicial system, some economic programs, etc. Now that President Trump has significantly reduced the provision of foreign assistance, the Armenian-American bilateral agenda has become even more insubstantial. If American assistance programs are no longer on the agenda, USAID is no longer operational, then the areas of cooperation will also significantly

decrease. So the imposition of tariffs by Trump might actually provide a window of opportunity for a new track of cooperation between Armenia and the US.

Instead of disappointment, this situation offers a chance to revitalize Armenia-US negotiations. There are a few key points to consider. Though Armenia is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the tariffs imposed by the Trump administration are not targeted at the Union itself, but rather at individual member countries of the Union. This fact gives the member states the right to carry separate negotiations with other states on this topic.

For example, a 27% tariff is going to be imposed on Kazakhstan, whereas Kyrgyzstan faces the same 10% tariffs as Armenia. No additional tariffs are going to be imposed against Russia and Belarus. However, the tariff that all EAEU member countries, including Armenia, are imposing against the USA is based on regulations of the EAEU, and the common external tariff applied to imports entering the Union. US official sources state that it is Armenia's accession to the EAEU that resulted in an increase of customs tariffs. Armenia, as a member of the organization, had to harmonize its customs tariffs with the EAEU and hence the average applied tariff imposed by Armenia against the US imports since its accession to EAEU has reached over 10%.

This point might come in handy once Armenian national authorities decide to engage in negotiations with the US in an attempt to at least decrease the imposed tariffs. They can argue that it is not the Armenian government's unilateral decision to impose the tariffs but rather its obligation to comply with the EAEU regulations. At the same time, Armenia may be a bridge between EAEU and the US for possible negotiations.

While US exports to Armenia are limited, Armenian exports to the US are crucial. It is extremely important for Armenia to have a presence in that market, even as a minor player, because there are sectors of strategic importance for Armenia, regardless of the current export volumes, such as the aluminum industry and the export of precious metals.

Armenia could offer targeted concessions on American products to secure favorable terms on goods essential for its economic development. This could convert trade challenges into deeper economic cooperation and stronger ties. High Armenian duties (over 30%) on US car imports are likely to displease Americans. Trump, in particular, prioritizes reciprocity — not symmetry — viewing such barriers as unfair to the US, regardless of the same rates that Armenia is applying to other nations. Trump is prioritizing his own country and his own place in the global market and this perspective must be considered in future trade negotiations.

(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.)

Armenia-Russia Relations: Paving the Way for a Dialogue

By David Petrosyan

At the beginning of April 2025, a very "non-round" date was celebrated — the 33rd anniversary of the establishment of Armenian-Russian diplomatic relations. Unexpectedly for many, both in Yerevan and Moscow, the foreign ministries of the two countries exchanged such a volume of pleasantries that would have been enough for several years of joint work. Here are memories of centuries-old friendship, words about partnership and alliance, words that the countries are focused on long-term mutually beneficial cooperation in the political, socio-economic, humanitarian and other spheres and are aimed at continuing and expanding a meaningful dialogue that fully meets the interests of Armenia and Russia.

What actually happened, because not so long ago, nothing good was said about allied Armenia from the screens of Russian federal channels? From the Armenian side, there were very similar messages. Let me remind you that the "splitting" between the countries began in the fall of 2022, when the Azerbaijani Armed Forces attacked the borders of Armenia (this coincided with the offensive of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the Kharkiv and Kherson regions) and the military-political bloc of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization), which

includes Yerevan, refused to give a political assessment of the seizure of Armenian territory. Then there was more: a 9-month blockade of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces and, ultimately, its ethnic cleansing in the presence of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in the fall of 2023. Finally, the "freezing" of Armenia's membership in the CSTO, including the refusal to pay membership fees, occurred.

Subsequently, the expansion of Armenia's interaction in the military-political and military-technical spheres with India and France, as well as the appearance of unarmed observers of the European Union on the border with Azerbaijan, was followed, on January 14, by Armenia signing a charter on strategic partnership with the United States while, at the same time, maintaining good-neighborly relations with Iran.

The day after the signing of the Armenian-American Charter, the Russian *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* published an alarming editorial entitled "Russia is losing the South Caucasus." It seems to us that this was essentially a signal that bilateral relations are, if not at an impasse, then at least in a serious crisis.

On January 21, the head of the Armenian Foreign Ministry visited Moscow, where Ararat Mirzoyan had a *tete-a-tete* meeting

with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, which lasted 3 hours (!). There was also a meeting of the Armenian and Russian delegations in an expanded format. Let us recall that the last meeting in an expanded format of the delegations of the Foreign Ministries of the two countries took place in July 2023 and the last *tete-a-tete* meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries took place in December 2023.

In our opinion, in general, Moscow and Yerevan remain with their previous positions on a number of key issues, but it should be noted that the tone and vocabulary of the dialogue have changed. It seemed that Lavrov was the epitome of courtesy. This was confirmed during the 33rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

What is the reason for this?

In fact, all the sharp statements by the parties against each other were made in the last year and a half. Perhaps that is why the tone of the dialogue, at least in its open part, is changing and has become somewhat different. It is possible that this is the result of changed/changing realities not only in the South Caucasus region, but also in the world. It seems that the stage of denying these realities has passed, and now the stage of accepting them is coming — perhaps a painful stage. Thus, recently, the speaker
see RELATIONS, page 20



COMMENTARY

Will a Peace Treaty Be Signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan?

By Arsen Nazarian

In recent weeks, a strange event has occurred in the South Caucasus: the whole world is congratulating the agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan on signing a peace treaty, while Azerbaijan makes preparations for a new attack on Armenia and Armenian border villages are being targeted by gunfire from across the border.

What is the matter? Why, despite the agreement on the text of the peace treaty, is the situation not only not calm, but is moving towards a military confrontation? The text of the treaty actually contains all the excessive demands of the Baku regime from the Pashinyan government. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's approval rating has reached its lowest point in his term due to the incredible concessions he has made to the Baku regime. But Baku is not interested in peace and continues to put forward one ridiculous precondition after another, creates tension along the borders and wages a massive propaganda war by spreading false news that Armenia is preparing to attack Azerbaijani territory (!), a method it has used before launching military offensives. These accusations are being made while European observers regularly declare that they have not observed any military movements within Armenia's borders.

Various countries of the world, from European states to Arab and Latin American countries, Iran, Turkey, United States, Japan, the Pope, the Arab League, and even Russia, welcomed the conclusion of the peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia (<https://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php/news1/more/120034/>). However, the Baku regime not only shows no interest in concluding a peace treaty and ending the decades-long hostility, but is actually preparing for a new confrontation.

Among Baku's "preconditions" for concluding a peace treaty with Armenia is amending the Constitution of Armenia, claiming that the text of the law contains territorial claims to the Republic of Azerbaijan. The claim, of course, does not correspond to reality.

The fact is that with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, the Armenian National Assembly adopted a resolution on the independence of Armenia, which referred to a joint statement by the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Armenia and the National Council of Artsakh entitled On the Unity of the Socialist Republic of Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Region (Artsakh) in 1989. Pashinyan has admitted that the text of the law needs to be amended, but according to him, this will take at least two years, since parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2026 and it will not be possible to hold a referendum on such an important issue until then. In addition, it is unclear what the outcome of a referendum held under pressure from a foreign state would be, while the issue of peace and stability is now an urgent issue.

The following arguments dismiss Azerbaijan's claim and make them devoid of any foundation. First, the text of the peace treaty states that no clause or article in the constitution can prevent the signing of the peace treaty, because the parties to the peace agreement have explicitly accepted each other's territorial integrity.

The agreed text of the peace treaty also emphasizes that this treaty takes precedence over the constitutions of the two countries.

Finally, the current constitution of Azerbaijan itself refers to the 1921 constitution of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, which refers to parts of present-day Arme-

nia as the territory of Azerbaijan.

If the constitution of one of the parties is to be changed due to an alleged territorial claim, why should the other party be exempt from this obligation?

Other conditions or excuses of Baku for not signing the peace treaty are:

- Withdrawal of criminal cases against Baku from international courts for ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of Artsakh, closing the Lachin crossing and exposing the residents of the region to famine and destruction for 9 months, encroachment on the territorial territory of Armenia (parts of which are still occupied), etc.;

- Termination of the EU monitoring mission on the borders of Azerbaijan and Armenia (which faces strong public opposition);

- Demand for the dissolution of the Minsk Group, a body created by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to resolve the Karabakh conflict and which has nothing to do with the current peace agreement between the two countries;

- Limitation on Armenia's armaments — Baku is demanding a limitation on Armenia's weapons, while it itself is making multi-billion-dollar arms purchases, several times more than Armenia's spending on arms;

- And finally, the demand from the Armenian government to "suppress revanchist tendencies in Armenia," a demand that cannot be described other than the emanation of an unbalanced mind.

In addition to spreading false news about the state of Armenia's armaments, Baku also spreads false news on delivery of weapons from Iran to Armenia. However, the weapons that reach Armenia from Iran are weapons purchased by Armenia from India, concerning which Iran does not create obstacles to their passage to Armenia.

Given the foregoing and the risky concessions that Pashinyan has made to Baku, his approval rating among Armenians in Armenia and the diaspora has descended to a minimum. The government does not even dare to make the text of the peace treaty public.

What Is Azerbaijan Really After?

There are several reasons for Azerbaijani Prime Minister Ilham Aliyev's abnormal behavior, all of which fit into the logic of the sinister Russian-Turkish plan for the so-called "Zangezur corridor."

First: Baku is trying to repay its political debt to Russia, i.e. the price of seizing Karabakh with Russia's permission and tacit silence, by opening the so-called "Zangezur corridor" (Meghri crossing) and placing it at Russia's disposal. This, according to Baku and Moscow, should be done by exerting maximum pressure on the Pashinyan government and forcing it to cede the Syunik region or, ultimately, by military occupation of the region.

However, there is another important reason: the fear of losing its superior military-economic position over a neighbor towards which it spares no effort to sow hatred, humiliate and weaken it to the point of wiping it off the map.

However, the global situation has changed significantly compared to the time of the 44-day war. Armenia has gained important military-political partners, Iran has noticeably focused more attention to the preservation of the Syunik region and constantly emphasizes the inviolability of international borders. On the other hand, Europe and the United States are also monitoring the situation and directly or indirectly warn Baku not to make

any mistakes. Aliyev, however, still lives under the illusion that he can pressure Armenia forever and without hindrance and can demand and extract new concessions from the Pashinyan government. Baku has in fact lost the game, but still does not give up fruitless attempts to preserve what it has — military-economic superiority over Armenia.

Aliyev knows that a peace treaty with Armenia would stabilize the situation in latter's favor, will allow it quickly rebuild its economy and army, and achieve some degree of military balance between the two countries, a vision that has become Aliyev's nightmare, because then the entire geopolitical picture of the region would change.

Finally, the Baku regime, as an authoritarian state, is afraid of having an Armenia in its neighborhood which is moving towards democracy, towards respect for human rights and a competitive economy. Baku will almost certainly do anything to disrupt Armenia's progress towards democracy and a rule-of-law system and the best way to do this is to maintain a state of war with Armenia.

Temporary Reopening of the Armenia-Turkey Border Crossing

As we know, negotiations have been underway for years between representatives of Armenia and Turkey to reopen the Armenia-Turkey border, which has been closed since 1991, that is, since the First Karabakh War, but the progress is slow and cumbersome. According to the agreement of the parties, the crossing is used only for the passage of humanitarian aid, as was the case in the days after the devastating earthquake in Turkey in February 2023, when the Armenian relief team used this crossing to enter Turkey. Recently, the crossing was opened for ten days after the Armenian government decided to send aid to Syria. Each time, after such an event, the crossing is closed again.

Political experts believe that the crossing will eventually open as the global situation changes, but at present (mainly) due to the opposition of Azerbaijan, the Turkish government refuses to open it. Regarding the recent opening, Azerbaijani governmental and non-governmental authorities have made a big fuss and even criticized the elder brother with stinging attacks for not informing Baku about the (even temporary) opening of the border with Armenia. The Turkish Foreign Ministry in turn responded by stating that the accusation was unfounded and that the matter had been notified to the Azerbaijani authorities before, thus dismissing the accusation.

Azerbaijan is afraid of any political-diplomatic rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia, because it is worried that its importance to Turkey will decrease and, conversely, Armenia will become more important. Azerbaijan is making every effort to ensure that Armenia is always under blockade and isolated.

It is worth noting that the United States and the European Union welcomed the opening of the border between Armenia and Turkey. The European Union finds it important that relations between Armenia and Turkey, both of which are at different stages of accession to EU, be mended as soon as possible.

The Islamic Republic's Current Position in the South Caucasus

In recent times, the political-diplomatic apparatus of the Islamic Republic has become more active in the South Caucasus. Last January, Ali Akbar Ahmadian, a se-

nior security official of the Islamic Republic, visited Baku and Yerevan and, among other issues, emphasized Iran's position on the inviolability of internationally recognized borders.

Just recently, Abbas Araghchi, the Iranian Foreign Minister, travelled to Yerevan, probably out of concern about the Aliyev regime's moves and the possibility of a new conflict. While meeting with Mr. Pashinyan and other senior Armenian officials, he conveyed the same message to his audience (Baku and Yerevan) and supported the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace agreement.

During the official visit of the Islamic Republic's foreign minister to Yerevan, the Armenian translation of the book *The Power of Negotiation*, by Abbas Araghchi, was unveiled. At the presentation ceremony, held at the Armenian Foreign Ministry in the presence of Ararat Mirzoyan, the Armenian foreign minister, Mehdi Sobhani, the ambassador of the Islamic Republic to Armenia and Araghchi, the ambassador introduced and explained the content of the book, stating that the purpose of translating this book was to provide first-hand experiences of negotiation techniques for diplomats and students of international relations.

After leaving Armenia, Araghchi released a video of his trip to Armenia and his meetings, which, according to him, were full of good and positive experiences.

Let us not forget that in the heat of the 44-day Karabakh war, Araghchi traveled to Baku and Yerevan as a peace mediator on behalf of the Islamic Republic, a mission that did not produce a result. It is worth mentioning that in Baku, when he met Aliyev, he congratulated him on "the retaking of the occupied territories" thus violating principles of mediation (<https://parsieuronews.com/2020/10/29/baku-says-iran-envoy-congratulated-azerbaijan-army-victories-and-paid-tribute-to-martyrs>).

Increasing Tension between the Islamic Republic and the United States

In recent days, there has been a lot of rhetoric in American and Israeli circles about war and an attack on the Islamic Republic. With the intensification of mutual threats between Iran and the United States, the possibility of a war in the region has increased. In a possible scenario, the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan is considered a suitable platform for carrying out military operations against Iran. Recently, the Israeli newspaper *Jerusalem Post* (<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-845076>) published news about the formation of an alliance between Israel, Azerbaijan, and the United States. The Israeli Prime Minister's Office also confirmed the news (<https://parsieuronews.com/2025/03/08/upgrading-israel-azerbaijan-strategic-alliance-and-lifting-us-sanctions-against-baku>).

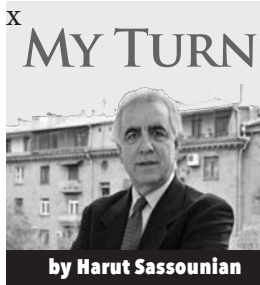
From the perspective of some political commentators, the announcement of a plan to strengthen the "Israel-Azerbaijan-US alliance" by the Israeli Prime Minister's Office pursues several goals: 1. Using the territory of Azerbaijan to attack Iran. The possibility of such a scenario from the perspective of Israel and Baku increases the importance and value of Azerbaijan for the United States. 2. Receiving weapons from the United States to heighten military capability in the region and possibly use them against Armenia.

The question arises whether Baku will participate in the offensive operation itself

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COMMENTARY



by Harut Sassounian

Heated Debate in Armenia: Which Leader Is More Anti-Genocide?

As if we didn't already have enough disputes among Armenians, a new argument surfaced last week between Arman Babajanyan, head of a minor pro-Western political party that supports Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and former Foreign Minister of Armenia Vartan Oskanian.

On April 8, Babajanyan wrote on his Facebook page that President Robert Kocharyan and Oskanian told US diplomats in July 2007: "they are ready to obstruct the acceptance of the Armenian Genocide Resolution by the US Congress, if Turkey simply opened the border or reactivated the Kars-Gyumri railroad."

Babajanyan somewhat misquoted Oskanian's words as having told US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza during a meeting in Yerevan in 2007: "If Turkey opens its border and normalizes relations, I am flying to Washington the next day to convince the Armenian lobbies not to support the Armenian Genocide Recognition Resolution."

Here is what Bryza actually wrote after meeting with Armenia's top officials: "Bryza learned that Armenia would intercede in Washington to slow a Congressional Armenian 'Genocide' Resolution (AGR) only if the Turkish side opens the border, or at least allows the reopening of the cross-border railroad.... FM Oskanian offered the most concrete articulation to date about what Armenia would consider a significant enough gesture of Turkish good faith for Armenia to make a serious effort to soften momentum toward an AGR. Oskanian reiterated Armenia's continued skepticism about Turkey's motives, and concern that overtures to Armenia are aimed only at diverting European pressure and derailing a possible AGR. Oskanian said, however, that if Turkey were to open its border and normalize relations with Armenia, he would be 'on a plane the next day' to Washington to confer with Armenia's friends on Capitol Hill and pro-Armenian lobby groups to hold off passage of an AGR. In a new twist, Oskanian said that if Turkey were willing just to restore railroad traffic on the existing Kars-Gyumri rail line, that might be enough for the GOAM [Government of Armenia] to engage the Armenian-American community on AGR. He could not, of course, guarantee an outcome, but vowed to make a good faith, high-level effort to persuade Washington interlocutors that an AGR would be counter to Armenia's national interests if the Turks offered real movement on the border issue."

Bryza wrote this report following his July 2007 meeting in Yerevan with Kocharyan and Oskanian. Bryza's internal US report was revealed to the public by WikiLeaks several years later.

Babajanyan went on to quote Kocharyan from Bryza's report as saying: "I don't need the [Armenian genocide recognition] Resolution. I need an open border and the possibility of a balanced trade with Turkey."

Oskanian angrily responded to Babajanyan on Facebook on April 10, ac-

curring him of "circulating fake news supposedly based on WikiLeaks." Oskanian stated that Babajanyan "is lying. His interpretations and conclusions cannot emanate from the content of the WikiLeaks' original [document] and the nature of discussions. The document is attached."

After I researched the WikiLeaks documents dating back to 2007 and compared them to Babajanyan's and Oskanian's posts, I discovered the reason for their contradictory statements.

Babajanyan failed to clarify in his Facebook post that he was quoting from two different reports of Bryza's meetings in Yerevan, which took place on separate dates. The first was on March 28, 2007, and the second on July 30, 2007. Babajanyan posted undated excerpts from the two documents.

Therefore, when Oskanian wrote that Babajanyan "is lying" because there is no such statement in the WikiLeaks document, Oskanian must not have realized that Babajanyan was referring to Bryza's second report.

In fact, in his second report of his meeting with President Kocharyan, Oskanian and Presidential Assistant Vigen Sargsyan on March 28, 2007, Bryza wrote: "Kocharyan and Oskanian revealed their profound skepticism about Turkey's good faith, and their weariness with a process that looks to them designed in Ankara merely to deflect the pressure of world opinion, while never granting Armenia the slightest concrete result." They said: "Although Armenia would reciprocate [Turkey's] positive gestures, the GOAM is tired of the endless cycle of gestures and discussions leading nowhere in its Turkish relationship. What is most important to Armenia, Kocharyan said flatly, is the border. Diaspora groups had been pressing him to support passage of the Congressional resolution, but he had refused: 'I don't need it,' he said. 'What I need is the border open and an opportunity to offset the giant trade imbalance with Turkey.'"

Normally, a misunderstanding about the reference to a document would not be a major issue. However, given that Pashinyan's circle uses every opportunity to blame the former leaders, including Oskanian, there was a sharp reaction from the latter. Babajanyan had harshly criticized Kocharyan and Oskanian stating that "they were not only ready to silence the diaspora's struggle for genocide recognition, sacrifice the entire people's memory, but also openly underline that the recognition of the Genocide is not a priority on their agenda." Babajanyan added that the former leaders call the current authorities "Turks, traitors, and land-givers."

Here is the core of the problem. Babajanyan, in his obsession with discrediting the former leaders, is ignoring the fact that his ally Pashinyan has been the one repeatedly disgracing almost all Armenian national symbols. Pashinyan has raised unnecessary questions about the facts of the Armenian Genocide, even stating: "our official position is that the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide today is not on the priority list of our foreign policy."

I would like to remind Babajanyan of the popular proverb: "Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones." Before pointing fingers, make sure you own hands are clean.

This does not mean that I am defending the previous leaders. I have had numerous face-to-face arguments with both Presidents Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan regarding their positions on many issues, including Armenia-Turkey relations. However, I have bigger disagreements with Prime Minister Pashinyan.

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or will it only provide its territory to Israel for an attack?

The Israeli lobby in the United States is working hard for Azerbaijan and is trying to repeal Section 907 of the USA Freedom Act (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Section_9075), which prohibits the delivery of weapons to Azerbaijan because it could use these weapons against Armenia, and which, if lifted, would also allow the use of these weapons against Iran.

In any case, the best way to prevent a disaster or catastrophe that may arise due to the mismanagement of those in power is to try to prevent it before it happens. Armenia is perhaps the most interested party in preventing the war. This is where an opportunity arises for Armenian leaders that, if used optimally, could create a strong security guarantee for it. It is essential for Armenia that Iran is stable, but free of unnecessary tensions with the West.

Armenia's Strategic Position between the Islamic Republic and the United States

A number of prominent Armenian commentators and political experts, such as Stepan Grigoryan, head of the Analytical Center for the Study of Globalization and Regional Cooperation (<http://www.acgrc.am/>), encourage the Armenian government that, given Armenia's good relations with the Islamic Republic and the United States, it offer both countries the opportunity to meet for direct negotiations on Ar-

menian soil. Although the Islamic Republic and the United States are negotiating indirectly (ostensibly in Oman), in Armenia they practically face each other. Armenia is a place where their strategic interests intersect. Armenian leaders should free themselves from the passivity and timidity caused by a defeat and confidently take bold diplomatic steps. No one can blame Armenia for doing such a move. On the contrary, such a move would certainly be approved by the European Union, France, Germany, Greece and many other countries, and most likely by the United States itself, because the United States is willing to enter into direct negotiations with Iran.

It is, of course, not clear how the Islamic Republic will react, but such a move, if the Armenian government takes the initiative and steps forward, would be an opportunity that the leaders of the Islamic Republic should not miss. The current deadlock and the highly tense atmosphere that exists between the Islamic Republic on the one hand and the United States and Israel on the other and which could lead to an explosion any moment, can only be resolved through dialogue and negotiation.

Currently, there are almost regular meetings and contacts between the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the French Ambassador in Yerevan, and it seems that the European Union, through the French Ambassador, has been able to convince the Islamic Republic that the EU's assistance to Armenia is solely to strengthen the country's military-econom-

ic strength against possible aggression by Baku, which is something that is in Iran's interest as well. The government of the Islamic Republic has also received assurances as stated by its ambassador in Armenia that the presence of the West, including the United States, in Armenia will not be against Iran's interests.

EU Membership Process

On March 26, the Armenian Parliament approved the draft of the EU accession process after the second reading. Out of 106 deputies, 67 voted in favor and 7 voted against, while the rest abstained or did not participate in the vote. The aforementioned draft was prepared at the initiative of Armenian civil-political non-governmental organizations by a successful collection of signatures and submitted to the parliament.

A joint statement issued by two European Parliament officials, Nils Ušakovs (Ushakov), Chair of the Council for Relations with the South Caucasus, and Miriam Lexmann, the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Armenia, states, among other things (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/joint-statement-on-the-adoption-by-the-n/product-details/20250326DPU39920>):

"Today's adoption at second and final reading by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia of the law, proposed by a citizens' initiative, by which it declares the initiation of the process of accession of Armenia to the EU, marks an-

other significant step in the already very strong EU-Armenia relations. We take note of this decision and welcome it as another clear expression of Armenia's steadfast commitment to our shared values and the country's democratic path.

"Pursuant to Article 49 of the Treaty of European Union, any European state may apply to become a member of the EU provided that it adheres to the Copenhagen criteria and the principles of democracy, respects fundamental freedoms and human and minority rights and upholds the rule of law. We note the Armenian government's intention to discuss a possible roadmap with the EU and consult the population in a referendum in the future. We recall that EU accession is a complex, long-term and merit-based process and stand ready to continue supporting Armenia in its reform efforts, as well as in ensuring its resilience, based in particular on the existing EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement and the upcoming ambitious Partnership Agenda."

The representatives also stated in the joint statement: "We encourage the Commission, the High Representative/Vice-President and the Council to actively support Armenia's desire for increased cooperation with the EU in all dimensions and its European aspirations."

(This article has previously been published in Persian at <https://kayhan.london/1404/01/13/373681/>)



COMMENTARY

Armenia-Russia Relations: Paving The Way for a Dialogue

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of the Armenian parliament Alen Simonyan stated that Yerevan cannot and should not maintain constantly tense relations with Moscow. There is a clear trend of Armenia moving towards the EU/France, the USA and India, but Yerevan has not taken or has not yet taken any political and legal steps to destroy relations with Moscow. The same Lavrov is well aware that statements, declarative documents and even laws have not yet led to Armenia's final withdrawal from the CSTO, Yerevan remains an active member of the EAEU, and few are willing to look into the foreseeable political future, including Moscow. In addition, it is obvious that both sides do not intend to curtail mutually beneficial economic cooperation. The volume of economic cooperation between the countries has increased several times, and small Armenia has entered the top 10 trading partners of Russia. Moreover, these trade channels are not static, they change (for example, trade in precious metals and stones).

We also note the following:

i) One of the main differences between Yerevan and Moscow remains the issue of land transport communication linking the western regions of Azerbaijan with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Moscow continues to insist that, according to para-

graph 9 of the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020, the security of this communication (the "Meghri route" is a term used by the Russian Foreign Ministry) should be ensured by Russian border guards. Azerbaijan and Turkey insist on the extraterritoriality of this communication, calling it the "Zangezur corridor." Armenia believes that most of the points of the trilateral statement were not implemented through no fault of its own and, in this context, it sees no need to implement this point. In return, Armenia proposes the Crossroads of Peace project, in which the security of this communication will be ensured by Armenia itself, carrying out all customs and border procedures. Armenia does not trust Moscow here, because after the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of Karabakh, it fears collusion between Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Thus, the issue of control over the communication/communications passing through the Armenian *marz* (province) of Syunik in the East-West-East direction remains open.

ii) despite the discrepancy in the issue of land transport communication linking the western regions of Azerbaijan with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, Yerevan agreed to allow the Consulate General of the Russian Federation to open in the *marz* of Syunik (center Kapan), although negotiations on this issue have not yet been completed. Almost certainly, the Russian diplomats who will work in this consulate will be "people with shoulder straps" [implying in the military or special services]. Even Russian experts speak about this quite openly. We do not rule out that if the Russian Consulate General begins working in Kapan, diplomatic missions of other countries may be opened in Syunik. In particular, we are

talking about France, which is preparing to open a consular office in Goris. The Consulate General of Iran has been working in Kapan for over a year,

iii) Yerevan is not inclined to believe that Moscow, within the framework of the trilateral documents signed in 2020-2022, can effectively and impartially perform mediation functions, although it constantly offers them. After the events of autumn 2022 and the exodus of Armenians from Karabakh in autumn 2023, Yerevan believes that Moscow is on the side of Azerbaijan, despite numerous statements by Russian leaders about its equidistance ("Russia is not on anyone's side," said Lavrov) from Yerevan and Baku. Russia would like to be neutral, but the events of 2022-2023 call this desire into question in Yerevan.

iv) The story of the AZAL plane crash showed many high-ranking Russian officials in the Kremlin and on the Smolensk embankment that constant appeasement of Baku will not do anything good for Russia. Azerbaijan, de facto, continues to be an ally of Turkey, not Russia, although, purely formally, it is also an ally of Moscow. In this context, Moscow may have decided to seek clarification of relations with Armenia, which is actually happening,

v) A number of Russian critical publications increasingly often feature these that Moscow's policy regarding transport communications through the Syunik region poses serious problems and threats to the security of Russia itself, especially in light of Ankara's pan-Turkic plans for Central Asia and Azerbaijan. In this context, systemic pressure on Armenia is counterproductive and leads to it being forced to look toward the West. It is possible that these concerns

have begun to reach the leadership of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

So the above-mentioned rhetoric on the 33rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries should be considered positive. It can be stated that, judging by this rhetoric, Russia wants to maintain relations with Armenia, and Armenia with Russia.

It also follows that the high level of trade turnover between the countries plays an important role in the dialogue (the volume of trade turnover by the end of 2024 is \$ 12.4 billion). Moreover, the trade turnover is balanced. In the conditions of sanctions pressure, Russia does not want to lose this trade channel. Despite the propaganda hype on both sides (in Yerevan and Moscow), apparently, Russia is not yet inclined to exaggerate the importance of the declarative Charter on strategic partnership between Armenia and the United States. Moscow would very much like to regain its role as a mediator in the issue of settling relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but now this is a very difficult and overwhelming task for it, which is aggravated by a series of its previous mistakes in political planning.

The crisis in Armenian-Russian relations remains, but the latest meetings and contacts at various levels, both in Moscow and Yerevan, suggest that the peak of the crisis may have passed, as both sides are committed to dialogue, which will most likely continue during the visits of Lavrov and Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko to Yerevan.

(The author is a Yerevan-based political commentator. Thus article is a lightly edited version of what first was published in InternationalAffairsReview.com on April 9.)

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