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Georgia, Armenia And Azerbaijan Hold Trilateral Talks in Tbilisi

TBILISI (commonsense.eu) — A trilateral meeting between Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia was held in Tbilisi on April 17, with the participation of Georgian deputy foreign minister Lasha Darsalia and his counterparts, Azerbaijan's Elnur Mammadov and Armenia's Vahan Kostanyan, along with their delegations. The Foreign Minister of Georgia Maka Botchorishvili also took part in the talks.

In her opening remarks, Botchorishvili emphasized the strategic role of the South Caucasus, the potential of the region, and various formats of cooperation. "It is nothing but Georgia's genuine desire to advance regional cooperation and to identify common interests that unite us and bring us to this table today," Botchorishvili said. "The South Caucasus is a region of strategic importance, with immense potential, which we can jointly benefit. Sharing our visions of the region and exploring possibilities for trilateral cooperation is both very timely and very much needed," she added.

The main objective of the meeting is to share views and identify common interests among the three countries in areas that will contribute to enhancing mutually beneficial, practical trilateral cooperation in support of regional prosperity, stability, and sustainable development.

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House in Armenian Village 'Damaged By Azeri Gunfire'

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Azerbaijani forces again shot at a border village in Armenia's Syunik province overnight, damaging one of its residential houses, the Armenian Defense Ministry said on Monday, April 21.

In a statement, the ministry said the cross-border gunfire struck a solar panel on the roof of the house in the village of Khoznavar. It released photographs purportedly showing the damage as well as a bullet found at the scene.

"Nobody was hurt," added the statement.

The ministry declined to explicitly condemn the reported ceasefire violation, urging the Azerbaijani side instead to investigate the incident and come up with "public clarifications." It reacted in the same way after a cultural center in the nearby village of Khnatsakh came under similar fire on April 14.

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Armenians Remember Pope Francis



Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II in Echmiadzin, 2016



Armenia issued a stamp in honor of Pope Francis' visit in 2016



Dr. Noubar Afeyan and Dr. Ruben Vardanyan meet with the Pope outside St. Peter's Basilica



Pope Francis arriving in Armenia in 2016, greeted by the traditional bread and salt

VATICAN CITY (Combined Sources) — The first Argentine-born Pope, Francis I, died on April 21 from a cerebral stroke. He had been ailing for some time before his sudden death. He was 88.

For Armenians, he was special because he visited Armenia, named Armenian 10th-century mystic St. Gregory of Narek a "Doctor of the Church" in 2015 and attended the unveiling of his statue at the Vatican and repeatedly denounced the Armenian Genocide, as well as the Holocaust and other genocides and wars around the world. As well, he visited Armenia, where he was received in the warmest manner by the whole country.

Earlier in April, Pope Francis cleared the way for the canonization of Catholic Archbishop Ignatius Choukhrallah Maloyan, who was murdered during the Armenian genocide, Vatican News reported.

Because of his championing of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, he incurred the wrath of Turkey. "In the past century, our human family has lived through three massive and unprecedented tragedies. The first, which is widely considered the first genocide of the 20th century, struck your own Armenian people, the first Christian nation," he said.

Pope Francis made a historic visit to Armenia in June 2016, during which he met with religious leaders, including Catholicos Karekin II, and addressed the Armenian Genocide, acknowledging it as the first genocide of the 20th century. He also participated in religious services, including a Divine Liturgy at Echmiadzin, and released doves at the Armenia-Turkey border.

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Nashville Hosts Armenian American Forum

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

NASHVILLE —

Nashville was the site of the Armenian American Forum 2025, a weekend conference with representatives from several dozen different Armenian-American organizations from March 7 to 9. This gathering was unusual in a number of different ways.

First, these different and sometimes rival organizations rarely get together publicly to discuss their work in this number. Second, Nashville has a tiny local Armenian community, so it would not normally be considered as a convenient site for a major Armenian event. Third, the primary organizer of the weekend is not a large Armenian organization but rather two local Armenians, Sevan Chorluyan and Naira Ayyavzian, who also are planning something they call the Hyeland Project. This entails the

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Nancy Terzian Fox, center, one of the cofounders of the Armenian Church mission parish in Nashville, gives a gift on behalf of the Nashville Armenian community to Naira Ayyavzian and Sevan Chorluyan (photo Aram Arkun)

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'Fragments of Memory' Presents Art of Varujan Boghosian

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NEWS from ARMENIA

Court Overturns Sargsyan Acquittal

YEREVAN (News.am) — The Anti-Corruption Court of Appeals of Armenia has upheld the Prosecutor's Office's appeal, overturned the court of first instance's judicial act on acquitting former President Serzh Sargsyan and others, and sent the case for a new trial, the Prosecutor General's Office announced.

According to the indictment, being organized by Sargsyan, pushed by Barsegh Beglaryan, the owner of Flash fuel company, and assisted by former Deputy Minister of Agriculture Samvel Galstyan and Gevorg Harutyunyan, former Minister of Agriculture, the late Sergio Karapetyan had squandered—from January 25 to February 7, 2013—489,160,310 drams of subsidy allocated from the government's reserve fund for diesel fuel that was used during the implementation of state assistance programs.

Opposition Introduces Bill to Criminalize Genocide Denial

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The opposition Hayastan faction in the Armenian National Assembly on April 22 introduced a bill proposing criminal liability for the Armenian Genocide denial ahead of the 110th anniversary of the atrocity, its secretary Artsvik Minasyan announced.

Speaking at a special parliament session, Minasyan emphasized its significance for preserving national memory and dignity.

"This is a choice between the dignity of the Armenian people and the forces that threaten it," he said, calling on all political forces to support the measure during upcoming debates.

Names of Lemkin, du Fournet to Be Added to Genocide Memorial

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute announced this week they will pay tribute to Raphael Lemkin, the Polish lawyer known for coining the term "genocide," and French Admiral Louis Dartige du Fournet, whose actions saved thousands of Armenians during the genocide.

The names of the figures will be added to the Commemoration Wall at Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan.

The names of the predominantly Armenian towns and villages of the Ottoman Empire are engraved on the 100-meter long Commemoration Wall. Since 1996, the other side of the wall honors the foreign figures who raised their voice against the genocide; the names include Norwegian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Fridtjof Nansen, Pope Benedict XV, US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide Henry Morgenthau, Danish missionary Karen Jeppe and others.

Louis Dartige du Fournet's action saved the lives of nearly 4,000 Armenians during the self-defense battle of Musa Dagh (Musa Ler).



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II celebrates the Feast of the Holy Resurrection on Sunday.

Feast of the Holy Resurrection Celebrated At Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin

ECHMIADZIN — On April 20, on the occasion of the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, celebrated a Holy and Immortal Liturgy at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, the spiritual center of all Armenians.

Amid the heralding peals of the bells of the Mother Cathedral, the Patriarchal procession adorned with crosses led the Catholicos of All Armenians under a canopy from the Patriarchate to the Mother Cathedral.

This year, the Patriarchal Shield was carried by the Chief Cardiologist of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Arme-

nia, Head of the Cardiology Center of the Erebuni MC Hamlet Hayrapetyan, Chief Pediatric Surgeon of Yerevan, Associate Professor of the Department of Pediatric Surgery of the Yerevan State Medical University, Doctor of Science Nikolay Dalakyan, Director of the Astghik MC Asatur Asatryan, and the Chief Anesthesiologist of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia, Head of the Anesthesiology Services of the Nairi and Erebuni MCs, Head of the Anesthesiology and Intensive Therapy Department of the Yerevan Limb Reconstruction and Lengthening Center Anatoly Gnuni.

Serving as adjuncts to the Catholicos were Bishop Mushegh Babayan, director

of the Administrative Department of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, and Bishop Vardan Navasardyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Australia and New Zealand.

The Patriarchal Divine Liturgy was attended by members of the Supreme Spiritual Council, benefactors of the Mother See, heads and representatives of diplomatic missions and international organizations accredited in Armenia, political and public figures, and numerous Armenian pilgrims.

During the ceremony, the Catholicos sent his patriarchal message to all Armenians from Holy Echmiadzin, conveying the angelic glad tidings: "Christ is risen from the dead."

Another House on Armenian Border 'Damaged By Azeri Gunfire'

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The Azerbaijani military did not immediately react to the statement.

Residents of Khnatsakh and 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.

Two Khnatsakh residents who spoke with RFE/RL's Armenian Service by phone on Monday said gunshots fired by Azerbaijani troops intensified overnight.

"It felt like a war is breaking out," said one of them.

"The kids are scared. So are the adults... It's been like this for a month," said the other villager.

The cross-border gunfire, which the Defense Ministry in Yerevan has consistently downplayed, began days after Azerbaijan began 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 an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty.

Baku has made it clear that it will not sign the treaty without securing more Armenian concessions. Azerbaijani President

Ilham Aliyev warned last week that Armenia will risk a "new military confrontation" with Azerbaijan unless it makes those 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.

Pashinyan ruled out last week the possibility of a fresh Azerbaijani military at-

tack on Armenia, contradicting statements made by his foreign minister. The premier declined to answer on Monday a reporter's question about the latest shooting incident.

European Union monitors deployed along Armenia's border with Azerbaijan have still not publicly commented on the reported truce violations. The monitoring mission only said on April 9 that it has "increased the number of night patrols along the Armenian side of [the border] to enhance nighttime security and safety and relieve possible tensions."



A view of houses in Khoznavar village in Syunik region, January 26, 2019.



ARMENIA

Armenian Weightlifters Shine In European Championships

YEREVAN (Armenpress/Panarmenia.net) — Armenian weightlifter, Olympic silver medalist, and reigning world and European champion Varazdat Lalayan has once again claimed the top spot at the European Weightlifting Championships on April 21.

At the championship held in Moldova, Lalayan competed in the men's super-heavyweight category. He snatched



Varazdat Lalayan



Liana Gyurjyan

200 kg and then 210 kg, securing first place in that discipline. In the clean and jerk, he lifted 240 kg, again taking first in the discipline.

With a combined total of 450 kg, Lalayan is now a two-time European champion.

On the women's side, Liana Gyurjyan won silver at European Weightlifting Championships

Competing in the women's 87 kg weight category, she lifted a total of 246 kg (106 kg in the snatch and 140 kg in the clean and jerk), securing second place overall on April 21.

Gyurjyan also earned the clean and jerk silver.

Armenia's Tatev Hakobyan, also competing in the same weight class, won the silver medal in the snatch event.

Catholicos Karekin Condemns Armenian Genocide Denial in Easter Mass

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — In an apparent stern rebuke to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Catholicos Karekin II condemned “reprehensible attempts to deny or question” the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey in his Easter message to the nation on Sunday.

The supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church expressed serious concern over “continuous unacceptable actions and campaigns within our reality” as he led an Easter Mass at the church's main cathedral in Echmiadzin which was again boycotted by Armenia's political leadership.

“In our collective memory, the Armenian Genocide ... remains an open wound,” he said. “The unhealed pain of this horrific crime is further intensified by reprehensible attempts to deny or question it, as well as by the occurrence of new genocidal acts around the world. One such manifestation of this crime was the recent atrocity committed against our people: the forceful occupation of Artsakh and the violent displacement of the Armenians of Artsakh from their ancestral land.”

Karekin did not elaborate on those attempts. He said only that Armenians should reject “words and works that degrade our past, diminish our historical memory, and threaten our future.”

Pashinyan provoked a storm of criticism at home when he essentially questioned the genocide during a visit to Switzerland on January 24. Pashinyan said Armenians should “understand what happened” in 1915 and what prompted the subsequent campaign for international recognition of the slaughter of some 1.5 million Armenians as genocide. He seemed to imply that foreign powers, notably the Soviet Union, were behind that campaign.

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

Speaking with visiting Turkish journalists last month, Pashinyan made it clear that his government will not strive to get more countries and international bodies to recognize the genocide. He questioned the wisdom of genocide resolutions already adopted by many foreign parliaments, saying that they undermine stability in the region.

Pashinyan's relationship with the ancient church, to which the vast majority of Armenians belong, has increasingly deteriorated in recent years and especially since the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Karekin and other senior clergymen joined the Armenian opposition in calling for Pashinyan's resignation following Armenia's defeat in the six-week war.

They also condemned Pashinyan for recognizing Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh months before Baku recaptured the region in September 2023. The premier has accused the church of meddling in politics.

Another Pashinyan Ally Blasts Karabakh Armenians for Fleeing after Azeri Assault

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Another political ally of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has lambasted Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population for fleeing the region following Azerbaijan's large-scale military assault in September 2023.

Khachatur Sukiasyan, a wealthy businessman and parliamentarian, accused the Karabakh Armenians of not fighting against Azerbaijani troops when he commented on April 18 on their recent protests against the Armenian government's decision to largely end housing allowances paid to many Karabakh refugees.

“That's what should happen,” he told 24news.am, referring to the socioeconomic plight of the more than 100,000 refugees.

When told about the fact that at least 223 residents of Karabakh were killed during the 24-hour hostilities in September 2023, Sukiasyan alleged, “You're lying. They didn't suffer casualties in Karabakh in 2023. Only ten people [died.]”

The tycoon representing Pashinyan's Civil Contract party admitted grossly understating the death toll and apologized for that in a short statement released later in the day. But he raged at journalists when they pressed him on the subject on Friday.

“Listen, I've apologized,” Sukiasyan yelled in a parliament lobby. “Get out of here.”

Azerbaijan launched the offensive in Karabakh on September 19, 2023, nearly three years after a ceasefire deal brokered by Russia halted a six-week Armenian-Azerbaijani war. Its troops greatly outnumbered and outgunned Karabakh's small army that received no military support from Armenia. Also, Russian peacekeepers deployed in Karabakh did not try to prevent or stop the offensive.

Karabakh's leaders agreed to disband the Defense Army in return for Baku stopping the assault and allowing the region's more than 100,000 remaining residents to flee to Armenia. They maintain that this was the only way of guaranteeing the physical

safety of the Karabakh Armenians.

According to Armenia's Investigative Committee, 198 Karabakh soldiers and 25 civilians were killed in the brief but fierce fighting. Karabakh's exiled leadership reported higher numbers — 265 soldiers and 21 civilians — in a statement that strongly condemned Sukiasyan. The statement released by his Information Center in Yerevan accused him of subjecting the victims and their families to “psychological terror.”

Sukiasyan echoed claims made by Armenian parliament speaker Alen Simonian in February. He also alleged on Friday that most Karabakh men “didn't fight” in the 2020 war either.

At least 3,800 Armenian soldiers were killed during the six-week war. Karabakh Armenians account for a large part of that number.

“One gets the impression that [Sukiasyan thinks] all 150,000 Karabakh residents, including women children and the elderly, should have fought,” Hranush Kharatyan, a prominent Armenian sociologist, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. She said such statements made by Pashinyan allies are aimed at absolving the prime minister and his political team of blame for the fall of Karabakh.

Sukiasyan raised eyebrows last May when he said that opposition figures and other individuals trying to topple Pashinyan risk losing their freedom, assets and even lives. Pashinyan's party disavowed the threat.

Sukiasyan, 63, has held parliament seats under Armenia's current and former governments. Since Pashinyan came to power in 2018, the tycoon and his extended family have significantly expanded their business interests, not least because of lucrative government contracts controversially won by their firms.

Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan Hold Trilateral Talks

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The meeting served as an open exchange of views and presentation of visions on potential areas for collaboration. At the end, the participants acknowledged the positive and constructive atmosphere of the meeting, which is regarded as an initial phase designed to build trust and pave the way for the eventual advancement of the dialogue to a higher level.

The trilateral meeting represents an additional effort by the three neighboring countries to establish constructive and mutually beneficial engagement and does not contradict or replace any existing formats of cooperation.

The meeting was preceded by consultations between the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Maka Botchorishvili, and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, and the Republic of Armenia, Ararat Mirzoyan. It was during these consultations that the initiative for a trilateral meeting between the foreign ministries of the three countries was launched.



ARMENIA

INTERNATIONAL

Russia Says Armenia Risks Losing EAEU Advantages

MOSCOW (Panorama.am) — Moscow is concerned about Yerevan's tilt towards the European Union (EU), because Armenia stands to lose the benefits of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) if the West draws it into its geopolitical games, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko told reporters on April 22.

"Naturally, Armenia's aspiration to join the EU is a concern for us, because such an aspiration is incompatible with this country's membership in the EAEU and we talk about this in our regular contacts with our Armenian colleagues," the diplomat said.

"Armenia is developing dynamically thanks to its participation in the EAEU, and economic growth is observed in all the regions that are key for Yerevan. And this is a huge asset that Armenia could lose if the West draws it into its geopolitical game in an attempt to separate Armenia from Russia and other natural allies."

Ambassador to Mongolia Presents Credentials

ULAANBAATAR (Armenpress) — Ambassador of Armenia to Mongolia Vahe Gevorgyan (residence in Beijing) presented his credentials to the President of Mongolia, Ukhnaagiin Khurelsükh, on April 20, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said in a statement.

Gevorgyan expressed his commitment to making efforts to strengthen Armenian-Mongolian relations.

Following the ceremony, Gevorgyan met with Mongolian Foreign Minister Battsetseg Batmunkh, during which the parties discussed the historical ties between Armenia and Mongolia and, in that context, emphasized the importance of enhancing cultural cooperation.

Simonyan Says He and Azeri Counterpart Met in Moscow

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Speaker of Parliament of Armenia Alen Simonyan said on Tuesday, April 22, that the negotiations with Azerbaijan were not in a deadlock and the discussions continued.

"Now we have a situation when we have an agreed-upon document," Simonyan told reporters when asked whether the Armenian-Azeri talks were in a deadlock. "I also had a brief private meeting with the President of the Azerbaijani Parliament in Saint Petersburg. I think there can be no talk about any deadlock. It is beneficial also for the Azeri side for the process that we have been dealing with to conclude maximally swiftly," he added.

Simonyan said the negotiations will not enter a deadlock and the likelihood of a new war will not increase. "We have to do everything for our agenda of peace to become reality," Simonyan said.

Armenians Remember Pope Francis

POPE, from page 1

Pope Francis's strong condemnation of the Armenian Genocide during his visit, calling it the first genocide of the 20th century, was a significant moment in the history of the Vatican's recognition of the event.

Pope Francis's visit emphasized his commitment to peace and reconciliation, particularly in the context of the conflicts and tensions in the region.

In addition to his 2016 visit, Pope Francis has also expressed his concerns and prayers for peace and dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, particularly regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In his last address, he appealed to the international community to favor mediation between Azerbaijan and Armenia as tens of thousands of Armenians flee the contested enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, and he prays for victims of a massive explosion in the city of Stepanakert.

In 2023, during the ethnic cleansing of Karabakh (Artsakh), Pope Francis said he has been following the dramatic situation of displaced Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh in recent days and reiterated his call for a political mediation between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of



Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II release doves on the Armenia-Turkey border in 2016.

ers and sisters, on behalf of the clergy and people of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America."

Pope Francis in speeches stressed the importance of cooperation between the Armenian Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church, an Orthodox body.

The Pope touched on this subject twice, and ended one speech with a prayer from Saint Nerses the Gracious, a 12th-century Armenian bishop recognized as saint in both the Catholic and Armenian Orthodox Churches.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan has offered condolences over the

death of His Holiness Pope Francis.

"I join people around the world in mourning the passing of Pope Francis. He united the hearts of many Armenians with the recognition of Armenian heritage, dedication to humanitarian cause and left an indelible memory of his visit to Armenia

Vardanyan meeting Pope Francis outside St. Peter Basilica, with a quote from Francis: "How much contempt is stirred up at times towards the vulnerable, the marginalized and migrants...I appeal to all those in positions of political responsibility in our world not to yield to the logic of fear which only leads to isolation from others." He himself added, "These wise words from Pope Francis' Easter sermon exemplify his moral leadership, and how much we will miss his vital voice and clarity of purpose. It was an honor to meet him with my friend Ruben Vardanyan. May he rest in peace, and may we all live by his example."

Pope Francis was born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in 1936 in Buenos Aires.

In international diplomacy, Francis criticized the rise of right-wing populism, called for the decriminalization of homosexuality, helped to restore full diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, negotiated a deal with the People's Republic of China to define how much influence the Communist Party had in appointing Chinese bishops, and supported the cause of refugees. He called protection of migrants a "duty of civilization" and criticized anti-immigration politics, including those of U.S. President Donald Trump. In 2022, he apologized for the Church's role in the "cultural genocide" of the Canadian Indigenous peoples. Francis convened the Synod on Synodality which was described as



Pope Francis at the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Armenia in 2016

America (Eastern) offered his thoughts about the Pope's passing.

In his message released shortly after news broke of the Roman Catholic pontiff's passing, Bishop Mesrop expressed his high regard for the late Pope, and recalled their personal meeting in 2020, when he experienced the spirit of affection and sympathy Pope Francis felt for the Armenian Church and people.

"This morning, with the celebration of Christ's resurrection still fresh in our hearts, the world received the sorrowful news of the passing of His Holiness Francis, of blessed memory, the late Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Francis was a remarkable figure in so many ways—and a friend, certainly, to the Armenian Church and people. He was very gracious to the Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II, during their meetings in Rome and in Armenia. Pope Francis' personal example of humanity, tenderness, and love for people from every background and walk of life, were a beautiful witness to the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus," Parsamyan said.

"I have always felt that His Holiness had a special connection to the faithful of the Armenian Church. Naturally, as a man of compassion, he had a tender sympathy for our people and the trials we have endured, throughout history and down to the present day. Indeed, I personally felt that sympathy when I was privileged to meet him in 2020," he added.

He concluded, "Today, I extended my deepest sympathies to our Catholic broth-



At the unveiling of the Gregory of Narek statue in Rome in 2018

in 2016," Mirzoyan said in a post on the platform formerly known as Twitter. "May the Pope's legacy guide us toward a more peaceful world as voiced in his last Easter message."

Dr. Noubar Afeyan posted on social media a photo of him and his friend, Ruben

the culmination of his papacy and the most important event in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council.

(Stories from Vatican News, Armenpress and Mediamax were used to compile this report.)



Community News

Times Square Gathering to Commemorate Genocide to Take Place on April 27

NEW YORK — A community-wide march to Times Square will be held on Sunday, April 27, under the auspices of Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), and Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy, to commemorate the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

The march will begin at 12:30 p.m. following Divine Liturgy at St. Vartan Cathedral (630 Second Avenue) and will conclude at West 46th St. and 7th Avenue, where the annual event, sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, will take place from 2 to 4 p.m.

“As we walk together unified as Armenians throughout New York City, we will reflect on the suffering of our ancestors who perished or narrowly escaped death during the deportation marches in 1915,” said community leader Isabel Hagobian. “As descendants of survivors, it is our duty to preserve the memory of our ancestors, and to carry on their spirit and legacy through our activism and advocacy.”

The program will feature remarks by photographer and photojournalist Scout Tufankjian and a musical performance by Artsakh native Valeri “Lyoka” Ghazaryan. Elected officials will be present to stand in solidarity with Armenian Americans and share their ongoing efforts to support pro-Armenian issues in Congress.

“We are so fortunate to have an annual event commemorating the Armenian Genocide in one of the most recognizable places in the world,” said Diran Jebejian, who will serve as co-master of ceremonies. “All Armenians from the region should be in attendance to show our strength and continue to bring attention to matters that are so important for the survival of our people, both in the diaspora and in our homeland.”

Chantelle Nasri, co-master of ceremonies, emphasized that the Armenian Genocide is “not just about the past” but a moment to “reflect, educate, and stand in solidarity for the sake of humanity.”

“We honor our martyrs by committing to a life led by justice and dignity,” she said. “Each year, this day reminds us of our responsibility to protect human rights and work towards a future free from such atrocities for our homeland, and all communities.”

The annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square is sponsored by the Knights of Vartan and Daughters of Vartan, a national fraternal organization, and co-sponsored by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), Armenian Democratic

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Miaseen Founder, Maria Sarkisian, with Narek Ghazaryan

Bay Area Community Rallies to Launch Miaseen Hub Kapan: A Bold Step Toward Armenia's Future

ORINDA, Calif. — In a moving show of unity and purpose, the Bay Area Armenian community gathered at the Orinda Country Club for the Miaseen Organization's inaugural Benefit Gala and Silent Auction on March 29. The event marked a significant milestone in support of Miaseen Hub Kapan, a transformative initiative dedicated to empowering youth in Armenia's Syunik province.

The evening brought together a group of supporters united by a shared vision: to invest in Armenia's future by investing in its youth.

The Miaseen Hub Kapan is a reimagining of opportunity in a region that deserves it most. Designed to be a vibrant center for learning, creativity, and connection, the Hub will offer modern resources, skill-building programs, and opportunities for community-led innovation. It will host bootcamp-style training, vocational education, and visiting professionals from the diaspora. On-site accommodations will support workshop leaders and generate sustainable income for the Hub through Airbnb-style rentals.

Above all, it will serve as a platform to build bridges, connecting the youth of Kapan to opportunities across Armenia and beyond.

Thanks to donations from sponsors, guests, and the silent auction, the event raised the initial funding required to begin construction. The property for the Hub has already been acquired, and renovation and architectural plans are being led by Shant Charoian, a Harvard-trained architect based in Yerevan. Every dollar raised from the gala will directly support the construction and activation of the Hub.

The evening was hosted by Bay Area radio personality St. John (Paul Sisoian) of 99.7 NOW and featured a soulful performance by Lena Dakessian-Halteh of Arax Dance. The program included a powerful lineup of speakers, each offering personal perspectives on the urgency and promise of Miaseen's mission.

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Miaseen's future hub in Kapan



Koreez Game App Will Enhance Students' Knowledge of Armenian Cultural Heritage

CANOGA PARK, Calif. — Officials of the Koreez Game App and the Canoga Park-based AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School formalized a partnership and the inaugural U.S. launch of the Koreez Game App on April 9.

“We are delighted to announce our partnership with the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School and grateful to David Ghoogasian and Lena Sarkissian for their dedication to preserving the Armenian heritage for Armenian-American students. Having lived and studied in America, I understand the pressures on the second-generation Armenians to preserve their Armenian heritage with limited easy access to authentic content,” said Suren Aloyan, Founder/CEO of Koreez EdTech. “Koreez is an accessible cultural heritage knowledge platform available in Armenian, English, and soon in Western Armenian. Following the launch of our cooperation with the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School, we hope to expand the Koreez initiative to all AGBU network schools and ultimately to all the interested Armenian schools and communities worldwide.”

“I was familiar and quite impressed with the Dasaran platform in Armenia when Kevork Zoryan of AGBU introduced me to Suren Aloyan, and I came to learn more about Suren's vision and pragmatism as well as about Koreez and the Koreez Educational Oscars. We are proud and honored to launch this collaboration, and appreciate Suren's dedication, willingness, and enthusiasm to adapt Koreez based on feedback from our students and teachers who piloted the program to ensure it meets the needs of American-Armenian subscribers,” said David Ghoogasian, head of the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School. “Our collaboration will make Koreez even more accessible as content is translated into Standard Western Armenian and Standard Eastern Armenian with classical orthography to reach a wider audience. We hope to share and expand the reach to other Armenian schools and students in our area and worldwide, making learning entertaining while engaging a global community.”

The AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School is a preschool through 12th grade school committed to instilling Armenian heritage and fostering academic excellence in a safe and nurturing environment. Its college preparatory program inspires students who value their Armenian culture and identity to become critical thinkers and be equipped to face the ever-changing world.

Koreez EdTech, founded in 2023 by entrepreneur Suren Aloyan, provides an accessible, multimedia cultural heritage knowledge platform available in Armenian, English, and soon in Western Armenian. Connecting the global Armenian schools and communities, over 200,000 students across 40 countries are currently spending up to 30 minutes daily on Koreez Mobile App, enhancing their Armenian cultural heritage and language knowledge.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Human Rights and Humanitarian Forum to Be Held in Los Angeles on May 7

WASHINGTON — The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and the Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA Law announced this week the lineup of speakers and program for the 2025 Human Rights and Humanitarian Forum, which they will co-host at the UCLA Luskin Conference Center in Los Angeles on May 7.

At a moment when intensifying global challenges and massive upheavals in humanitarian funding demand fresh thinking, the 2025 Human Rights & Humanitarian Forum seeks to spark new, integrated approaches to advance human dignity, justice, and sustainable peace. It will provide a global platform for thought leaders, prac-

tioners, grassroots humanitarians and academics to develop strategies that harness the power of grassroots movements and young activists. The day prior, on May 6, Aurora will convene a Humanitarian Summit, bringing together local humanitarians from around the world and the greater Los Angeles area to discuss the challenges they currently face and strategies to overcome them.

“This year, amid tectonic shifts in foreign aid, humanitarians on the ground are collectively asking: what’s next?” said Armine Afeyan, CEO of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. “We will seek to develop solutions that drive lasting impact and focus on

supporting the work of frontline humanitarians and human rights activists already dedicating their lives to helping others.”

Confirmed featured speakers include: Noubar Afeyan, Aurora co-founder and Board Chair, Flagship Pioneering founder and CEO, and co-founder and chairman of the Board at Moderna; Marguerite Barankitse, founder of Maison Shalom and 2016 Aurora Prize Laureate; Nidhi Bouri, former deputy assistant administrator for Global Health at USAID; Anna Spain Bradley, UCLA School of Law Professor and faculty director of the Promise Institute for Human Rights; Chelsea Clinton, vice chair, Clinton Foundation and Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; Mirza Dinnayi, Yazidi activist saving victims of the Iraq war, co-founder of Air Bridge Iraq and 2019 Aurora Prize Laureate; Comfort Ero, president and CEO, International Crisis Group; Dr. Eric Esrailian, Aurora co-founder for the next chapter and Board Member and Chief of the UCLA Vatche & Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases, as well as a philanthropist, film producer and entrepreneur; Leymah Gbowee, founder and president, Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa, 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate and Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; Julienne Lusenge, Co-Founder and President of Women’s Solidarity for Inclusive Peace and Development (SOFEPADI), Co-Founder of the Fund for Congolese Women (FFC) and 2021 Aurora Prize Laureate; Dele Olojede, founder, Africa in the World Festival, Pulitzer Prize Winner, and Aurora Prize Selection Committee member; John Prendergast, co-founder, the Sentry and Aurora Prize Selection Committee member; Gayle Smith, Board Member, Skoll Foundation, former CEO, ONE Campaign and former USAID administrator; Catherine Sweetser, the Promise interim executive director and director of the Human Rights Litigation Clinic.

“This Forum provides a crucial platform

to explore the future of human rights and humanitarian work and strengthen collaboration across sectors to help create a more just future for all,” said Sweetser. “We invite the broader community to join us in advancing human rights education, research, and impact by amplifying the voices of affected communities.”

Under the overarching theme “At the Crossroads: Driving Integrated Action for a Resilient Future,” the 2025 Forum will act as a catalyst for uniting diverse perspectives and forging strategic alliances. Going beyond identifying challenges, the Forum will explore pathways that align humanitarian rapid response with long-term human rights protections, development strategies and environmental stewardship. Registration is now open to secure a spot and be part of this pivotal conversation.

The forum is one of a series of landmark events to recognize the impact of Aurora’s work over the past 10 years. Last year’s forum drew hundreds of attendees concerned about humanitarian issues and featured insightful talks, tackling topics such as human rights, forced displacement, global health crises, the right to education, climate change, artificial intelligence, philanthropy, and gender equality.

Aurora’s 10th anniversary events in 2025 include: the Human Rights and Humanitarian Forum, the selection of the 2025 Aurora Humanitarians in New York in September, and the Aurora Prize Ceremony at Ellis Island on November 6. These events will be co-chaired by Dr. Noubar Afeyan, Aurora co-founder and chair of the Board and Founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering; Dr. Eric Esrailian, co-founder for the next chapter and Aurora Board Member and The Promise Institute Founding Donor; Alice Greenwald, Aurora Board Member and Founder and Principal of Memory Matters LLC; and Dame Louise Richardson, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member and President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Baibourtian Lectures for Tekeyan On Armenia’s Difficult Struggles

ALTADENA, Calif. — Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Los Angeles Chapter organized an interesting lecture about the situation of the Republic of Armenia. It took place on Thursday, April 10, at the Association’s Beshgeturian Center in Altadena.

In her opening remarks, long-time member of the TCA Los Angeles Chapter Lilit Keheyian welcomed everyone and then invited composer and singer Jerair Barsamian to perform two songs. The first one was dedicated to the fallen soldiers of the 44-day war in Artsakh and the second one was a well-known warrior’s song by Samuel Yeranyan. She then invited Dr. Simon Simonian, to introduce the lecturer, Dr. Armen Baibourtian.

Dr. Simonian, a former member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Central Board of Directors of North America and Canada and a former chairman of the Armenian General Benevolent Union’s Southern California District – and currently the chairman of Zvartnots Cultural Association of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of North America, gave a brief biographical sketch of Dr. Baibourtian’s diplomatic experience.

Ambassador Dr. Baibourtian was formerly the consul general of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles (10/2018-3/2022), the ambassador of the Republic of Armenia

to India (4/2000-12/2004) and currently is a professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts, Amhurst. He has worked at the Foreign Ministry of Armenia in Yerevan twice, as deputy foreign minister. He was also the Republic of Armenia’s permanent deputy representative at the United Nations in New York.



Dr. Armen Baibourtian

Baibourtian presented Armenia’s challenges amid regional issues in complex neighborhood conditions that has pounded our nation since the 19th century. He also enumerated possible scenarios for solutions, based on Armenia’s experiences of the past and the present. He then concluded his interesting presentation with Ankara’s 7-point preconditions for the normalization of ties with Armenia.

Closing remarks were made by Hovsep Melkonian, the chairman of Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Los Angeles Chapter. He then invited Rev. Njhteh Keshishian, who was representing Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of North America.

At the conclusion of the event, Baibourtian was presented, on behalf of the TCA’s Los Angeles Chapter, the statue of a dove, symbolizing peace. The audience was then invited to a light reception.

(Translated by Kevork Keushkerian from the Armenian report of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.)



Hovsep Melkonian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Bay Area Community Rallies to Launch Miaseen Hub Kapan

MIASEEN, from page 5

Miaseen's founder and executive director, Maria Sarkisian, opened the evening with a heartfelt welcome, sharing the origins of the initiative and her vision for its long-term impact.

Cheryl Edison, global business growth advisor, emphasized the importance of building for the future now. Drawing from her recent 28-event speaking tour in Armenia, she called for spaces of innovation that empower entrepreneurship and inspire possibility.

Sheila Paylan, international human rights

with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In a deeply resonant speech, Paylan emphasized that the path to a strong Armenia is through meaningful, community-led action.

He went on to stress that the work of strengthening Armenia is not just the duty of those living there, it belongs to all Armenians, everywhere:

"Whether you are a teacher, an engineer, an entrepreneur — your skills can make a difference. Miaseen is creating a model for how we can all contribute. Not through politics or endorsements, but through ac-



Keynote speaker Garo Paylan

lawyer and war crimes investigator, shared her personal journey of relocating to Armenia, highlighting the critical need for active engagement from diasporan Armenians. "While conducting a study in Syunik, I saw firsthand the lack of opportunities for youth aged 18 to 35. The Miaseen Hub directly fills that gap—offering tools, skills, and connections that empower young people to build their future right at home."

Michael Goorjian, Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and director of *Amerikatsi*, spoke to the power of experience in shaping young lives. "The Miaseen Hub will give someone a chance, an experience, that could change the course of their life," he said. "And that's exactly what you're supporting."

The keynote address was delivered by Garo Paylan, former member of the Turkish Parliament and current visiting scholar

tion — through building spaces that empower our youth, foster innovation, and spark connection between Armenia and its global diaspora."

The Gala's success is a testament to the power of collective action. Miaseen extends its deepest gratitude to the Gala Organizing Committee — Aline Aghababian, Ani Ekmekjian, Tamar Kilijian, Sheila Paylan, and Zara Galstyan, for their dedication and tireless work in bringing this vision to life.

As Miaseen breaks ground on the Hub Kapan, this moment marks the beginning of a new chapter, one that uplifts youth, inspires innovation, and connects Armenians around the world in pursuit of a shared future.

To learn more or contribute to the project, visit Miaseen.org.

Times Square Gathering to Commemorate Genocide to Take Place on April 27

TIMES SQUARE, from page 5

Liberal Party, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Armenian National Council of America, Armenian Bar Association and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA); participating organizations include the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenian Presbyterian Church, Armenian Evangelical Union, Armenian Catholic Eparchy, Armenian Network of Greater New York, Armenian International Women's Association, Homenetmen Scouts of New York and New Jersey, Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) and national Armenian youth organizations.

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan will hold their annual writing contest in conjunction with the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. High school students (grades 9-12) are invited to participate in a writing contest to enhance awareness of

the Armenian Genocide. This year's theme is the role of memory and memorialization relating to the Armenian Genocide.

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

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

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.

FRESNO STATE



Armenian Studies Program

THE ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM, FRESNO STATE
AND TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION METRO LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

PRESENT

"DEATH MARCHES PAST THE FRONT DOOR:

CLARA AND FRITZ SIGRIST-HILTY: SWISS EYEWITNESSES
TO THE ARMENIAN DANTE-INFERNO IN TURKEY (1915-1918)"

BY DR. DORA SAKAYAN

UNDER THE AUSPICES

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

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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 Sigris and his wife, nurse Clara Hilty. Sigris was based in Ottoman Turkey in 1915 and he and his wife chronicled the unfolding of the Armenian Genocide.

Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdachian 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

3325 N. Glenoaks Blvd., Burbank, CA

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ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR

COMMUNITY NEWS

Nashville Hosts Armenian American Forum

NASHVILLE, from page 1

creation of an Armenian settlement in a rural part of Tennessee, which would be organized in accordance with a type of technolibertarian ideology, and though ostensibly the conference had much broader goals it also served to familiarize Armenian-American community leaders with this project.

Chorluyan declared to the participants on the first night of the event: “I think you are all a little bit crazy obviously. You don’t know what this event is about. I hardly know what this event is about. So what that tells me is that you are all very brave people. You guys are a vanguard of Armenian-Americans that are interested to explore what is in our network.”

Chorluyan explained a bit further the next morning that the goal of the weekend was not to work for unity or create joint policy. Instead, he said, it was to find out what was going on in the Armenian community, share what the different organizations and individuals were doing, and learn from one another.

As the activities presented by many of the participant organizations are often covered in this newspaper and it is not possible to cover all presentations, this article will only attempt to briefly summarize the talks concerning technology and finance, including the two keynote presentations by Dr. Garo Armen and Emma Arakelyan, as well as two efforts to analyze Armenian organizational issues. (See related story on the Hyeland Project on Page 10).

Keynote Speeches

Chorluyan in his introduction noted that Garo Armen is great at collaborating with people with whom he doesn’t necessarily agree with 100 percent. Chorluyan said, “To me, he typifies this thing that we are trying to encourage and grow, of building bridges and breaking down silos and finding a middle ground, and getting things done.”

Armen, the founder in 1994 of biotechnology company Agenus, which focuses on immunotherapy, in 2003 of Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), and in 2010 of Ararat Farms in Maine, which is devoted to organic and regenerative farming, spoke via Zoom. He began by observing that unity is an unachievable goal for Armenians, while encouraging inclusiveness and diversity of thought are more important objectives, as that would allow more rapid adaptation to differing circumstances. He suggested encouraging healthy living and serving as role models in this respect.

He spoke a great deal about incorporating technology to allow more efficient and rigorous processes, and in particular about utilizing artificial intelligence as a tool to stay ahead of others to pave the way to leadership and the right achievable objectives not just for ourselves but for all. Armen said that he has “become addicted to artificial intelligence.” He finds it improves the way we gather and process facts and think, allowing the iterative perfecting of ideas, and those who do not use it properly will soon become obsolete.

The second keynote speech was by Emma Arakelyan, a global management consulting executive and entrepreneur who is a former partner at Ernst & Young and managing director at Accenture. Her talk focused on entrepreneurship and technology. Arakelyan founded startup growth and ecosystem acceleration hub Orion Worldwide Innovations in 2017 and in 2020 co-founded BAJ Accelerator to empower Armenian entrepreneurs with IP management, funding, and growth resources. She is also a venture partner and limited partner of Covenant Venture Capital.

Arakelyan understood the Nashville conference as a call to engagement and a movement, declaring: “It is a movement to start, where we share our successes throughout the whole morning, identify challenges, which we did with our online discussions, and build the bridges necessary to share a strong future across this country, which we then take to the diaspora globally and then to Armenia.” She added, “I am here because from the very first call I had with Sevan I clearly saw that our missions were deeply aligned. It was more than just a conversation — it was a long one, by the way. We could not stop talking. It was a recognition that we share a common vision of driving impactful change. We are here to help him make that change.” In fact she said about the weekend gathering, “It is not just an event. It is another moment in strengthening Armenian-American ties, bringing us together to identify new ways of engagement, innovation, investment, new ways of economic growth for Armenia.”

“Working with so many countries, global exposure has shaped my understanding of what makes nations and ecosystems to prosper,” Arakelyan said. “The key to success whether for an individual company or an entire nation is the ability to build on strength.” The strength of Armenia and the Armenians, she continued, was their values, evidenced over thousands of years, as builders, innovators and creators.

BAJ Accelerator, cofounded by her and Dr. Armen Kherlopian, has graduated 135 founders of 20 countries from its program, but 55 percent of the graduates are startups with Armenian founders or from Armenia. BAJ is a collaboration among three organizations: Baltic American Chamber of Commerce, Orion Worldwide Innovations and the Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute at Cornell Tech, which in turn was established jointly by Cornell University and the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. BAJ’s name composed of initials corresponding to the

Investment in Armenia and Innovation

In his presentation, Kherlopian, CEO and partner in Covenant Venture Capital as well as founding partner in the BAJ Accelerator, similarly encouraged participants to become angel investors. He stressed that the combination of capital, technology and influence could have an outsized impact for a country such as Armenia and its global diaspora. Armenia’s economy (its gross domestic product) is only around 25 billion dollars per year. That of Armenia’s eastern neighbor is three times greater. Yet, Kherlopian pointed out, a startup unicorn is a company valued at \$1 billion and can be built by only 50 people, so a strategy finding customers for such companies can lead to increased security, job opportunity as well as prosperity.

Investing can be done by individuals, a syndicate or investment fund like the Investors Club of Armenia (ICA), crowdfunding like Eqwefy, accelerators like BAJ, or ven-



Many of the participants in the Nashville forum (courtesy Hyeland Project)

Baltic states, Armenia and Jacobs (Israel), places Armenia on the same level as several well-known technologically advanced countries, Arakelyan explained.

Orion meanwhile collaborates with many nonprofit organizations, syndicates, businesses and universities. Arakelyan highlighted its relationship with the Armenian Bar Association in bringing major projects to Armenia and working with several ministers in the government to improve intellectual property protection and corporate law. As a result, in July 2021, changes were made in this realm, including the protection of minority shareholder rights. Now Orion and its partners are trying to work with Armenia’s judges and the courts.

Orion works with the Central Bank of Armenia and BDO Armenia, a member of the audit, tax and consulting network BDO International Limited, to bring corporate venture or investment culture to Armenia. Since 2022, they have instituted a program called Alternative Investment in Armenia, Arakelyan said, to provide seminars and information for businesses on investment and related legislative information in Armenia (with participation fees). In 2025, the program will be called Power Consulting Days. Reconomy, a Swiss and Swedish economic development program, also supports such efforts.

Arakelyan is starting another effort, she said, to build Armenian wealth and advocacy, by creating what she calls the Digital Julfa Network, www.digitaljulfa.com, which was announced in 2022. She based the idea on the old Armenian trading network based in Iran from the 1600s to the 1800s, in which trust allowed Armenian merchants dispersed throughout the world, from Asia to Europe and even the Americas, to globally trade. Now she was working to create a platform for Armenian businesses to connect and operate globally, based on the Meta 3-D domain. Its inaugural virtual event took place in Dubai on April 22.

Finally, Arakelyan encouraged those present to support startup growth as technology would give Armenia and Armenians fast and sustainable growth. She suggested learning about the ecosystem in Armenia, meaning the companies there, as well as other Armenian-American companies like Service Titan, in whose initial public offering (IPO) few Armenians invested and therefore lost an opportunity to make a great deal of money.

ture capital. He estimated that there are not more than 100 Armenians in the world today joining in this strategy, yet at least 300 were needed. Furthermore, Kherlopian asked where the Armenian nonprofit endowments or a sovereign (state-owned) investment fund are in this picture.

Telecom industry expert Berge Ayvazian, a senior analyst and consultant at Wireless 20/20, amplified some of these themes. Ayvazian, the co-founder of ArmTech — an international organization linking Armenian professionals in high tech throughout the world, a board advisor for Eqwefy, and a member of the Angel Investor Club of Armenia, declared: “For almost 30 years now I am trying to bring the tech industry in Armenia to a level of success that could both propel the economy, create employment and create a way for the whole worldwide Armenian community to galvanize together around technology.”

Ayvazian said that as a global Armenian network state, the numbers of Armenians are increased compared to the population of the small country of Armenia and the latter become more powerful thanks to their compatriots abroad. He pointed to how in his own career, he was able to leverage his experience to help Armenia rebuild its high-tech sector after independence, when President Robert Kocharyan called for help at a forum in New York. They founded the Armenian High-Tech Council in 2000 and went to Armenia to work with the government and industry there, Ayvazian said.

They built ArmTech, which now has 5,000 members globally. Ayvazian related that they brought Orange to Armenia to create competition in the telecom industry there, though eventually it was sold to UComm. Now, AI-driven startup companies are being created in Armenia which work within industry-specific sectors. Recently, Nvidia Corporation opened up a research center in Armenia to work on accelerated computing and AI and there are many more developments in Armenia that Ayvazian quickly noted.

Ayvazian said, “If you want to develop the best generative AI you want to come to Armenia.” With the convergence of AI and 5G infrastructure and Starlink in Armenia, Ayvazian spelled out in one of his slides that new applications in what is called the Internet of Things (the connectivity or networking of physical objects) are forthcoming.

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

How to take the benefits of the high-tech industry in Armenia and democratize it? Ayvazian said that Armenia is just starting to have retirement funds. There are angel investors. However, to make investing in this field more accessible to ordinary Armenians, he said he and his colleagues founded Eqwefy.

Data scientist Charlie Apigian, who leads Data & AI Strategy at the accounting and business consulting firm LBMC and serves as a professor at Belmont University in Nashville, spoke about his career, identity and community commitment before pointing to AI as an accelerator of change. He exclaimed, “Who is going to thrive in a world of AI? It is going to be creative people, innovator, builders. It is going to be those kinds of individuals. Who are those individuals? Armenians. Those are the people that I think are going to thrive, and I am very excited [about] what we are doing in Armenia, but also what we can do here. This type of group and gathering I think ... is a great way to get that started.”

Mark Chenian, UBS investment banker and economic consultant to the Republic of Armenia, spoke about his goal to create an Armenian opera as well as his Komitas digital brain initiative. The latter is an unusual project whose origins dated back decades to a conversation with musicologist Ohannes Salibian about the puzzle of the ancient Armenian *khaz* system of musical notation. It fell into disuse and its meaning was lost by the 19th century. Ethnomusicologist Komitas Vardapet (Soghomon Soghomonian) attempted to solve the meaning of its symbols and Salibian said Komitas claimed some success in some of his letters but no one knows the specifics.

Three years ago Chenian discovered that 23,000 documents penned by Komitas have been assembled in Armenia. He offered to digitize all of them and then bring in specialists in machine learning (a specialized field within AI) and machine translation together with musicologists to see what Komitas was thinking or had discovered. The digitization should be finished by the end of this year, Chenian estimated.

If this project is successful, then the approach will be patented to the benefit of the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran) in Yerevan. Chenian said then the whole world will be invited to come and recreate Beethoven’s brain (and presumably that of many other artists and intellectuals).

A hands-on technology-related initiative, Little Bird Armenian Development, Inc., a 501c3 nonprofit based in New York City, was presented by Stephen Haroian, who professionally is involved in software sales. He related that Little Bird was founded by him and his wife Astrid (Astghik) in November 2022. Haroian visited a small village in Syunik Province, near the border with Azerbaijan that had been attacked only some six weeks prior. He went to the frontline villages and found out that there was an acute need for thermal cameras to see at night and through the heavy fog, as well as Starlink internet for reliable backup communication if the conventional cell and radio towers are disabled.

The couple, with a lot of help from their friends, since then delivered over \$160,000 worth of this type of non-lethal supplies to the frontlines. Haroian said that though the Armenian government is slow and not efficient, it is starting to catch up in this type of equipment, so Little Bird’s goal is only to be a band aid to fill these gaps until it becomes unnecessary.

The moral of his story, he said, was that everyone, no matter their background, has a value to add for Armenia. He himself was able to use his business development and management skills to make life safer on its border areas.

Two Approaches to Understanding and Improving Community Engagement

Khajag Geukjian, a New York-based managing consultant and head of Enterprise Market Risk Management at the financial services and software company Murex, spoke of his active Armenian involvement growing up in Beirut, and later traveling across the world to work on different projects. Armenian identity inspires trust, he learned.

He suggested looking at the Armenian nation state or network state with its communities as a multinational company headquartered in Armenia with branches throughout the world. Vertical integration, meaning Armenian companies doing business with one another, will help its growth. Horizontal diversification on the other hand, meaning investing in many different fields like financial services, military production, and even the environment, will lower risk and be more sustainable and self-sufficient for the long term. Geographical diversification, again like multinational companies, will allow for

a strong diaspora and a strong Armenia reinforcing one another. Communities must grow and not just aim at preserving what they already are.

Finally, he said, just as a company may get more creative ideas with a horizontal structure than just a pure top-down approach, Armenians must be included as active contributors of the community, so that Armenia, as headquarters, can engage the diaspora in more strategic decision making, while individuals also must actively contribute to Armenian society.

Like many of the other conference participants, Geukjian declared that today’s Armenians have the responsibility to hand over a better Armenian community to the generations to come.

Intellectual property and business attorney Karén Tonoyan of Ridgewood, NJ, founder of the Tono Law Group, member of the Board of Armenian Engineers and Scientists Association and co-chair of the Intellectual Property /Information Technology Committee of the Armenian Bar Association, took a more contrarian approach in his talk by talking about failures in his Armenian initiatives as learning opportunities. He said, “I am going to be talking about the failures specifically in order to change the paradigm about how we engage... If we don’t talk about what’s broken we can’t really talk about how to fix it.”

Tonoyan declared that 80 to 90 percent of diasporan Armenians are not involved actively in any ongoing Armenian activity or organization. Yet, Armenians love having organizations or groups for everything. Tonoyan said, “The only problem [is] that half of these groups don’t talk to each other, and the other half don’t know what the first half is doing.”

He enumerated many challenges to working together, including political divisions, Armenia vs. diaspora, old vs. new diaspora, different geographical/cultural origins, different ideas about how to properly act, and language barriers. Causes could be epigenetic trauma response, centuries living without a state, Soviet oppression and merely struggling to survive from generation to generation, Tonoyan speculated, as opposed to strategic overarching goals for individuals, their families and their nation.

He then provided some examples from his personal experience. Born in the Ukraine, he moved to Brooklyn and then New Jersey, where he went to Armenian school, joined the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA), Antranig Dance Ensemble for 15 years, and eventually joined the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF). He became a leader of the Rutgers University Armenian Student Association while in college, and hosted an event for Armenian students to learn what internships were available. The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Armenian National Committee of America, and the Armenian Assembly came to make presentations, but he wondered why he needed to do so much research to find out about them.

He then worked for the AGBU for several years (2008-10) as university outreach coordinator, and he had his first failure there while attempting to bring Armenian youth and organizations together. Later, a second attempt during the Syrian war in 2014 to bring youth organizations like ACYOA, AYF and Homenetmen together through the Pan Armenian Youth Alliance was a little better but also not very successful due to the community divisions he previously listed.

The 2020 Artsakh war led to Tonoyan’s third failure of bringing Armenian organizations together, through a new platform or space for collaboration called United Armenian Inter-Org (United AIO). This was an attempt to avoid duplication or incongruity of efforts through a conference held in 2021 with 2,000 people attending presentations about projects that could take place in Armenia. Tonoyan admitted that this effort could not continue its role because it was not set up as an anchor project.

He pointed out that with no centralized platform, shared database for communication, nor a systematic approach to collaboration, duplication of efforts leads to the issue of inefficient use of resources and even at times the unintentional countering of efforts. He gave the example of the latter: when during the 2020 war supplies to Armenia were going on trucks to the Los Angeles International Airport to be flown out and an Armenian protest was organized to block the highway they were on. Fortunately, the protest was stopped just in the nick of time.

His suggested remedy was to build structured collaboration platforms instead of creating another organization to carry out one project or achieve one goal. Individuals can advise people in fields they are knowledgeable about. Instead of working for Armenia being a sacrifice, mutually beneficial relationships can be created. Connections can be made with startups that generate income. Arme-

nians can learn from what other diasporan communities and cultures do.

“Most importantly,” he said, “proactively constantly evolve and try to future proof yourself by evaluating and challenging the approaches that you use. Don’t be afraid to admit that you are doing things wrong. It is not a bad thing. People make mistakes. It is not a means to demean you, or your capability as a leader or an organizer. It actually means you care about getting better.”

Tonoyan proposed shifting the paradigm from volunteering and sacrificing for the cause to a more positive approach, as people don’t necessarily have to lose out by helping Armenia or fellow Armenians. Instead they can benefit. Like many of the speakers already mentioned, Tonoyan encouraged people to start working with startup companies and invest in Armenia as one way to do this.

He suggested that Armenians must move from crisis response to proactive leadership, and seek collaboration and innovation to anticipate forthcoming changes. He said, “The cycle of technological development is accelerating. If you are not actively participating in the future it will pass you by and you will become obsolete. And we can’t just be reacting to these things and we can’t just be keeping up with the times. We have to be at the forefront. We have to anticipate the changes that are going to be happening and come to meet those challenges before they hit you.”

The Broad Range of Participants

Many of the talks presented the workings of Armenian organizations and institutions, including the Armenian Assembly of America (by Mariam Khaloyan), the Armenian National Committee of America (Gev Iskajyan), the Armenian Tree Project (Jeanmarie Papelian), the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* (Aram Arkun), the *Ar-*



Garo Armen (video screenshot from speech)

menian Weekly (Lilly Torosyan), Armenian International Women’s Association or AIWA (Silva Katchiguan), the Daughters of Vartan (Gloria Korkoian), National Association for Armenian Studies and Research or NAASR (Sara Cohan), the Armenian Professional Society in Los Angeles (Ani Petrosyan), the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation in connection with Repat Armenia, Birthright Armenia, Armenian Volunteer Corps, HIKEArmenia, and The Armenia Project (Linda Yepoyan), International Armenian Literary Alliance or IALA (Gariné Boyadjian Issasi), Heritage of Armenian Culture (HARC) radio program in Detroit and Remarkable Armenians blog (Charlene Apigian), and the Armenian female innovation platform Fem-Inno of Yerevan/Los Angeles (Seda Papoyan).

Additional speakers included Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Relations graduate student Alena Mikhaelyan and Dr. Nora Lessersohn, Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian Visiting Professor of Armenian Studies at Columbia University, who spoke about Ottoman Armenian journalist Christopher Oscanyan (1818-1895), an early immigrant to the US. Sommelier Irina Sargisova of New York City introduced a winetasting sponsored by Storica Wines. Julie Kupelian Keltonic, owner of Sweet Armenia Bakery in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, spoke about the mission of her bakery to support the Young Life Armenia Christian ministry.

Videos of the talks are available at <https://tennessee.hyllandproject.com/armenian-american-forum-2025/>



COMMUNITY NEWS

Hyeland Project Attempts to Create Armenian Settlement in Rural Tennessee

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

NASHVILLE — Nashville was the site in early March of the Armenian American Forum 2025, a weekend conference with representatives from many different Armenian-American organizations informing each other about their work and potential ways of collaboration. There was a strong contingent of speakers on tech and finance issues (see accompanying article in this issue). The main organizers of this conference, Sevan Chorluyan and Naira Ayvazyan, also used the occasion to publicize their unusual independent project to create an Armenian settlement in rural Tennessee, which they call the Hyeland Project and which bears technolibertarian ideological influence.

According to the project's website (<https://tennessee.hyelandproject.com>), 13 people have pledged so far to move to the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee out of a goal of 360. A few are already living there. Once the goal is reached, they will all move.

The website states that people living a “mechanized life” in cities and suburbs have lost touch with nature. Under the heading “Predatory America,” it explains: “From healthcare to housing costs, sometimes it feels like everyone is out to get you. The best protection is to be part of a community that looks out for itself.” The US, it says, is “a country with ever increasing forms of control and restrictions.” Moreover, the website writes: “Our boys and girls are under spiritual and psychological attack from institutions that oppose our values,” though the nature of these attacks are not further spelled out.

On the other hand, it states that “The Armenian culture is to be cherished, nurtured, and lived within.” Personal responsibility is important as part of a larger community, according to the website, while “Gun rights are human rights” and “Property rights are human rights.”

Rural Tennessee was chosen as the target settlement region because, the website states, it resembles Dilijan and the climate is similar to that of the Ararat valley, yet there is the city of Nashville with an international airport close by. Real estate is more affordable compared to other parts of the US, property taxes are low, and Tennessee has neither income nor vehicle tax. The state is fiscally and economically strong, the website continues, and it has what it calls strong freedom rankings.

The Hyeland Project, which has been licensed as a non-profit organization in Tennessee, also intends, the website states, “to create a replicable model for establishing Armenian communities elsewhere too.”

Why Hyeland?

The duo separately explained their motivations to create Hyeland in short presentations during the March weekend forum. Chorluyan has a master's degree in public health from Boston University (2012) and founded Armenian Crypto School, the largest Armenian-language cryptocurrency educational resource in the world (2019-2022). At present, he is a project manager for Otsuka Pharmaceutical Companies and previously worked seven years as a health care IT consultant.

Chorluyan grew up in New Jersey and related that he was greatly affected by what he learned about the Armenian Genocide.

He said, “there was an overwhelming amount of Genocide programming, which I found both very repulsive and I internalized. So I thought as a child and young adult about how on earth can certain people live on a plot of land for thousands of years and then overnight be pushed out and killed. And what kind of system can allow that? It informed my political views. It informed my career.”

He went into public health to address all the terrible things that could take place in genocide, he said, but he was not active in the Armenian community until he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem sponsored by an Armenian church. For Chorluyan, that gave him a framework to experience what it means to be Armenian outside of genocide, and led him to want more. He said, “That led to this exploration of building out my personal network, making friends,

determining how things play out, and having the ability to exit. And to exist means to leave the network without everything falling apart.”

Last December, Chorluyan published a 35-page on the decentralized decision-making architecture of such a network state which uses cryptographic identifiers for membership (“You Will Own Everything and Be Free: A Federated Fractal Network-State Architecture,” *Journal of Special Jurisdictions*, Vol. 5 No. 1, 2024, pp. 174-208). A network-state, unlike a nation-state, does not have contiguous geographic territory, according to Chorluyan's paper, and may espouse different operational philosophies, for example stressing equity or property rights. In his conference talk, he said that the Armenians already possess the components of a network state, with many of the organizations represented

stepped away from the tech world to work in residential real estate, architecture and design. She has a YouTube channel called Nairaville focusing on building, construction and real estate. She got involved in the Hyeland Project seriously from February 2024.

In her talk, she said that though she lived at one point in New York City, she wanted to find peace and quiet in rural living. She moved to Portland, Ore., Texas, and then Tennessee. After travels to Italy and Armenia, she said that she returned to Tennessee, where she thought the Upper Cumberland area reminded her of Dilijan, Armenia, with its four seasons, while Tennessee had the kind of freedom rights and responsible budgeting she was looking for.

Ayvazyan said she knows similar Armenians who moved from California to random states where they felt alone and isolated, so they moved back to an Armenian community. When she met Chorluyan in Tennessee, she said, “We realized that we are looking for the exact same thing and we realized also that we searched the web and we could not find any Armenian community in any community in rural America in general.”

Ayvazyan declared that the Hyeland Project aimed to close that gap, by allowing Armenians who are seeking rural peace and homesteading to find one another. Chorluyan identified the Free State Project in New Hampshire and the two of them used this as a model. The Free State Project is a political migration libertarian movement founded in 2001 and based on decentralized decision making. It got over 20,000 like-minded libertarians to move to that state in order to promote their approach to society.

She said that as the Hyeland community grows in Tennessee, “there are just endless possibilities of what kind of partnerships can form, as small and important as family, to business partnerships, to building small cities, to the bigger opportunities.”

Ayvazyan said that she always wanted to build a village, which would be a type of retreat with full sustainability (off-grid). She said, “It can bring people, who were born and raised here [presumably meaning the US], to be able to learn about food, understand nutrition, as well as health, stress, and so on.”

In this future Tennessee Armenian settlement, Ayvazyan said, “One thing that I really want to do some day is find a nice hilltop in Tennessee that looks exactly like Dilijan and build a medieval-style Armenian church. My plan is not going to church but what I want to do with the basement of that church. And I really want to start translating our [Armenian] literature, translating our history, translating the history about us from our neighboring neighbors from history because there is so much that is lost, in deep in the archives.”

Anecdotally, it did not seem that many of the participants in the Nashville conference were ready to move to Upper Cumberland or adopt the technolibertarian approach to life, but perhaps that was not the true intended target audience.

Chorluyan at the end of the March weekend in Nashville, announced that he and Ayvazyan would like to have an event in late summer or early fall completely different from this conference. He urged: “Try to experience an Armenian city, a popup Armenian city, at a campground in Tennessee.”



Sevan Chorluyan, left, and Naira Ayvazyan (photo Aram Arkun)

ultimately marrying an Armenian woman, having Armenian kids and wanting to create an Armenian community here in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee.”

Nevertheless, he still retained the concern of how a system could turn on people and kill them. Even prior to his Jerusalem trip, he encountered technolibertarians on the Internet who also were concerned about this issue. Around 2011 or 2012, Chorluyan learned about Bitcoin and thought that if this existed during the Armenian Genocide, at least his ancestors could have crossed the desert with the Bitcoin wallet or seed phrase in their heads and not lost everything financially.

Chorluyan thought Armenians have trust issues just like the technolibertarians, who are hyper-individualistic. He said, “I ask my dad for advice sometimes and he says don't trust anyone, including me.” The technolibertarians are building technology but don't have communities while Armenians have community but coordination issues. Chorluyan said, “My whole thing has been, I want to meld the two. My two tribes are actually merging together, and it excites me greatly.”

He proposed creating a digital network-state, declaring “What if instead of coordinating on network security, we coordinated on physical security, or social security, or medical security, or cultural security, or not even security at all — maybe you would want to coordinate in other ways. We can do so in a way without giving up autonomy, without losing control, with having a tremendous amount of voice in

in Nashville potential service providers for this future entity.

He said, “What I hope to accomplish, me personally, not necessarily in the Hyeland Project — but I hope the Hyeland Project is a magnet for people who want to share my vision — [is] that we will build a greenfield [meaning construction on previously undeveloped land] community, and it will be called a network community here in Tennessee and we will be the vanguard that uses this technology.”

Trying to make his idea more understandable to those present, he said, “The closest thing I can describe is like an HOA [homeowners association], but instead of it being an HOA fee, you are being paid a dividend, based on how much you invested in it — so your percentage ownership of the town, and obviously the revenue it has produced.”

For example, if the town raises money and builds a hotel, it will be leased out and it will then make money for the town. “So you go from the paradigm that you are a resident in your town and you are being taxed to being now an owner in your town,” Chorluyan said.

He said that he was opposed to the World Economic Forum, and instead likes property rights and wants to own his own community.

Naira Ayvazyan, originally from Armar, Armenia, has a bachelor's degree in graphic design from Portland State University (2007) and worked in a variety of different fields, including as a product manager for several companies, but from 2023



COMMUNITY NEWS

Party for the Park! Celebrates Community and Connection

BOSTON — The Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway brought together many supporters and friends on Thursday, April 10, for its annual celebration held at the InterContinental Boston.

“What a spectacular evening—congratulations on yet another successful and meaningful event. The venue struck the perfect balance: elegant yet welcoming, creating such a warm atmosphere for reconnecting with familiar faces and meeting new ones,” shared Vicki Adjami, Principal and Chief Strategist at Communication via Design.

That was exactly the intention behind “Let’s Party for the Park!, a spirited benefit in support of the care and maintenance of Armenian Heritage Park — a cherished public space where people from all walks of life come together



to celebrate what unites and connects us. The Park is a gift to the City of Boston and the Commonwealth from the Armenian community.

The festive evening was chaired by Eric Doroski, managing partner and co-founder of Zanzibar Capital. Hosted by the Robert A. Semonian Charitable Trust and attended by Trustees Leon and Paul Semonian and their families, the event drew strong support from the Armenian community and those who live and work near the Park.

Friends of Armenian Heritage Park planned the benefit, which featured a lively silent auction with items including a Bank of America suite at Fenway Park, a round of golf at The Country Club in Brookline, and an elegant dinner at Davio’s.



Leon Semonian and Nicole Babikian Hajjar



Let’s Party for the Park! Team



From left, Wes Stephanian, Eric Doroski and Anoush O’Connor



From left, Armen Meguerditchian, Maria Mahdasian, Paul Semonian



From left, Nigoghos Atinizian, Paul Boghosian, Arman Manoukian



From left, Jeffrey Bilezikian, Beatrice Bilezikian and Nancy Bilezikian



Bruce Bagdasarian



Armineh Mirzabegian, left, with Charleen Mosesian Onanian



From left, Adi Nalbandian, Eva Medzorian, Dianna Bedrosian



COMMUNITY NEWS

Houri Berberian, Talinn Grigor to Give Annual Vartan Gregorian Lecture at NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host an in-person illustrated lecture by Dr. Houri Berberian and Dr. Talinn Grigor titled “The Armenian Woman, Minoritarian Agency, and the Making of Iranian Modernity, 1860-1979,” on Thursday, May 8, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern), at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave. The program will be the 4th Annual Vartan Gregorian Memorial Lecture at NAASR.

A reception and book signing will follow the program.

With the newly published *The Armenian Woman, Minoritarian Agency, and the Making of Iranian Modernity, 1860-1979* (Stanford Univ. Press, 2025), Berberian and Grigor offer the first history of Armenian women in modern Iran. Foregrounding the work of Armenian women’s organizations, the authors trace minoritarian politics and the shifting relationships among doubly minoritized Armenian female subjects, Iran’s central nodes of power, and the Irano-Armenian patriarchal institutions of church and political parties.

Engaging broader considerations around modernization,

nationalism, and feminism, this book makes a conceptually rich contribution to how we think about the history of women and minoritized peoples. Berberian and Grigor read archival, textual, visual, and oral history sources together and against one another to challenge conventional notions of “the archive” and transform silences and absences into audible and visual presences.

Berberian is professor of history, Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies, and director of the Center for Armenian Studies at the University of California, Irvine. Her research focuses on late nineteenth/early twentieth-century transimperial Armenian history, especially revolutionary movements and women and gender. Her books include *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911* (2001) and the multiple award-winning *Roving Revolutionaries* (2019).

Grigor is professor of art and architectural history at the University of California, Davis. Her research focuses on 18th- to 20th-century architectural and art histories through postcolonial, race, feminist, and critical theories grounded in Iran, Armeno-Iran, Armenia, and Parsi India. Her books



Prof. Talinn Grigor



Prof. Houri Berberian

include the winner of the Saidi-Sirjani Book Award, *The Persian Revival* (2021), *Contemporary Iranian Art* (2014), and *Building Iran* (2009).

Vartan Gregorian (1934-2021) was a brilliant educator, humanitarian, and friend after whom NAASR’s headquarters building is named. Born in Tabriz, Iran, he received his secondary education at Collège Arménien in Beirut, Lebanon, and graduated from and received a PhD in history and humanities from Stanford University. After an academic career spanning two decades, including a period as Tarzian Professor of Armenian and Caucasian History at the University of Pennsylvania, Gregorian served as President of The New York Public Library, President of Brown University, and President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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

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OBITUARY

Armen Vahan Barooshian Dedicated Family Man

NEWTON, Mass. — Armen Vahan Barooshian (88) of Newton, passed away peacefully at home on April 13.

He was the loving husband to his wife of 62 years, Pauline Bilezikian Barooshian. He was the father of Karin (James) Rizza, Nancy (Gordon) Barnett and Suzanne (Pete) Antoine. Grandfather of Daniela and Juliana Rizza; Nelson, Roland and Maya Barnett; Taline and Serena Antoine. He leaves behind his brothers Berg (Janet) and George (Joan) and many nieces, nephews and friends. Now he joins his siblings Vahan, John and Vera who have departed before him.

Armen was born and raised in Chelsea, where he was an outstanding student athlete at Chelsea High School.

He went on to earn a football scholarship to Tufts University (class of '59) majoring in chemistry. He continued at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell (Class of '62) earning his Master’s Degree in chemistry.

Armen was a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserves.

He worked for New England Nuclear in the 1970s as a Director of Analytical Chemistry and later transitioned to DuPont as the director of Computer Services.

He enjoyed his summers in Mattapoisett with his family, sailing and sitting in the sun at “The Wall.” He was an exceptional



husband, father and grandfather. He cherished his grandchildren and was very proud of his Armenian heritage.

Funeral services were held at First Armenian Church in Belmont on April 22 with final burial at Newton Cemetery in Newton. Expressions of sympathy may be made in memory of Armen Barooshian to AMAA Child Sponsorship, 31 W. Century Road, Paramus NJ 07652 or St Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School, 47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown, MA 02472

Arrangements were by the Giragosian Funeral Home.

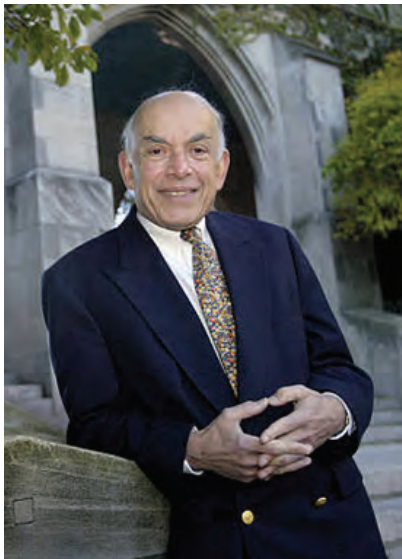


Arts & Culture

Medical Association To Present Program Exploring Intersection Of the Arts and Medicine

WATERTOWN — The Armenian American Medical Association (AAMA) in years past has held programs exploring the role of the humanities in medicine and medical education. AAMA is proud to rename the talks as the Aram V. Chobanian Medicine and Humanities Lecture Series, in honor of Dr. Aram Chobanian, past Boston University president, past dean of the Chobanian and Avedisian School of Medicine, and past AAMA president.

Dr. Chobanian and his wife were



The late Dr. Aram Chobanian

patrons of the arts and advocated for integrating the arts and medicine and their role in health and well-being. In his later years, Dr. Chobanian turned to composing music, and completed an opera based on Isabella Stewart Gardner. Educational experience in the arts and humanities is known to promote the core skills of doctoring and patient care, including observation, communication, listening, reflection, empathy, teamwork and well-being.

The inaugural event will be held on Thursday, May 15, at the Dorothy and Charles Mosesian Center for the Arts. The reception will start at 6 p.m., and the program at 7 p.m. Dr. Aniruddh Patel, a professor of psychology at Tufts University, will present a lecture titled “Music, Emotion, and Brain Health.” Patel studies the cognitive, neural and evolutionary foundations of musicality. His 2008 book, *Music, Language, and the Brain* (Oxford Univ. Press), won the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award, and his 2015 lecture series for The Great Courses, titled “Music and the Brain,” has reached a wide audience. Renée Fleming invited him to contribute a chapter on musicality, evolution and animal responses to music to her 2024 book, *Music and the Mind: Harnessing the Arts for Health and Wellness*.

Next, Dr. Justin Casinghino, Dr. Chobanian’s music teacher, will offer remarks on the role of music, specifically in Dr. Chobanian’s life. Following the lecture, the audience will experience a live, immersive

see CHOBANIAN, page 16



Varujan Boghosian, “Self-Portrait as a Lion,” 2006, Framed Collage, 21 x 16.5 in, from the collection of Heidi Boghosian

‘Fragments of Memory’ Presents Art of Varujan Boghosian

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America recently announced a new exhibition of 45 works by Armenian-American artist, Varujan Boghosian. “Fragments of Memory: The Art and Legacy of Varujan Boghosian,” offers an opportunity to experience the elegant, poetic constructions created by an artist who left a profound mark on the world of contemporary art.

Curated by Ryann Casey, the exhibition is sponsored by the Alan and Isabelle Der Kazarian Foundation.

Boghosian (1926–2020) was more than just an artist; he was a mentor, a teacher and a friend to many. His welcoming nature was particularly evident at Provincetown’s Berta Walker Gallery, where his encounters often left visitors with a newfound understanding of art and literature, and with smiles that carried the spirit of his personality. Boghosian was deeply committed to supporting young artists and fostering creativity in the next generation.

“Working only with found materials, Varujan created constructions and collages through the use of old and discarded objects. In the resulting elegant works, we find that the old and ordinary have been endowed with wonder and mystery, wit and pathos,” said Berta Walker. “Boghosian used his carefully culled raw materials to create works of pure and lyric visual poetry. Haiku in found objects.”

“Boghosian’s work is inspired by the past, by an appreciation of the lives and legacy of myth, of people and objects that have gone before, and a love of images and iconography. He is a sculptor, assembler, constructionist, beachcomber, scavenger, collector, historian, and conservator, and gathers the relics of our common experience, transforming them, often with humor, into poetic tributes,” wrote Gillian Drake in *Cape Arts Magazine*.

Boghosian was born in New Britain, Conn. His father emigrated from Armenia in the aftermath of the Genocide and was a cobbler, before going to work in the Stanley tool works. After serving in the Navy during World War II, Boghosian attended the Vesper George School of Art in Boston. In 1953 he received a Fulbright scholarship and went to Italy. When he returned, he became a student of the influential Joseph Albers at Yale School of Art and Architecture.

Boghosian’s work has been presented in museums across the country and is in public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of America Art, the New York Public Library, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He was a phenomenal teacher, holding positions at Yale, Brown and Dartmouth.

see EXHIBIT, page 14

Medical Comedy ‘Nothing Solid’ To Be Released In August

BOSTON — A young Armenian-American filmmaker is almost done making a semi-autobiographical, dark, medical comedy titled “Nothing Solid” about her experience with Cyclic (or Cyclical) Vomiting Syndrome (CVS), a rare brain-gut disorder that causes frequent and often intense bouts of vomiting that can last anywhere from hours to days. This will be the world’s first movie about the condition — “a vom-com,” as Zeroonian calls it.

According to the National Institutes of Health, about 3 in 100,000 children are diagnosed with CVS each year, but it’s becoming increasingly recognized in adults. Triggers can include stress and anxiety, migraine, menstruation, motion sickness, and more. Although she went through short-lived bouts of digestive issues — and isn’t entirely sure



Writer, director and actor Sharisse Zeroonian

if she had a milder form of the disorder — in childhood, Zeroonian, 29, went at least thirteen years without any chronic gastrointestinal problems until she started experiencing weekly and often severe attacks of vomiting at age 25 in April 2021. After two and a half years of medical testing, she was diagnosed with Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome during a trip to the emergency room in August 2023, a month before turning 28.

She has written, directed and acted in the film. “This film is helping me reclaim much of what I lost to the disease,” Zeroonian said. She isn’t making the movie for sympathy, or to lionize herself, but in her words, “help [herself] and others to no longer live in shame” and also “finally give curious people an explanation about what [she’s] been through these past several years.”

“At my lowest weight, I was 16 pounds down from what I used to be, and kept getting questions about it.” Zeroonian recalled. “That was uncomfortable enough, but what made me even more uncomfortable was the fact that I was carrying around this dreadful secret. Once I went public with my diagnosis, my burden was lifted and I found I felt much better being open about it.”

see COMEDY, page 17



ARTS & CULTURE

Abaka Dance Academy Prepares for 30th Anniversary Celebration

By Lara Salahi

WATERTOWN — On Sunday, May 4, the stage at Watertown High School will transform into a living, breathing portrait of Armenian tradition as Abaka Dance Academy celebrates its 30th anniversary with a milestone recital.

For three decades, Abaka has been a cultural cornerstone in the Greater Boston Armenian community — a place where young dancers learn not just steps and rhythm, but the stories, pride, and heritage of a people.

For me, this celebration is deeply personal. My daughter, now 12, first joined Abaka at age 6. I still remember her first day in the studio: her black leotard and braids, her tiny dance shoes, the shuffle of her feet — all as I squeezed a glimpse through a folding room divider meant to limit the distractions of the outside world.

She didn't know then what Abaka would come to mean to her — how much she would grow, not only as a dancer, but as a young part-Armenian American connected to a broader cultural narrative.

Founded in 1995 by choreographer Apo Ashjian, Abaka began as a dream to preserve Armenian heritage through dance. Ashjian wanted to give Armenian-American children a place to celebrate their identity, transforming a former hair salon into a studio where the dream of preserving Armenian culture could take root.

In 2004, Abaka moved its studio to a space next to the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center in Watertown — a reflection of its growing footprint and deepening community roots. The program has guided the choreographed footsteps of more than 750 students over the years through a program that blends discipline with joy, tradition with creativity.

“My goal when I founded Abaka in 1995 was to provide an environment where the youth of our community could come together, and through the art of dance, learn about our culture, history, and music,” Apo Ashjian said. “But it's not just about dancing, it's about creating a safe-place to have fun and build camaraderie with other Armenian children.”

“The energy is contagious actually, they may be too young to understand that now, but one day they will,” he added.

This year, 60 dancers, ranging in age from 4 to 16, will take the stage, including my daughter, now in the middle school group — taller, stronger and more confident than that wiggly 6-year-old who once fumbled through her first “Kochari.”

Over the years, I've watched her fall in love with dances like the “Shalakho,” with its joyful rhythms, and the “Tamzara,” known for its graceful, sweeping lines. She and the other students are taught not just technique, but meaning — learning that every gesture, every formation, is a thread in a much larger tapestry of Armenian history and resilience.

Many of the instructors at Abaka, including Alina Ashjian Palanjian — Apo's daughter — are graduates of the program themselves. Palanjian now choreographs and co-directs the school alongside her mother, continuing the legacy she first joined at age 9.

“Now my daughter is 4 and dancing in the program, just like I did,” she said. “To continue this dream is truly a privilege. These kids are an absolute joy to work with.”

That generational continuity will be central to Sunday's recital.

“We'll be recognizing former students, some of whom now have children dancing with Abaka,” Palanjian said.



From left, Arlet Ashjian, Sarine Ashjian, the author's daughter Dalia DiCrescenzo, Arpie Ashjian and Christine Hovsepian following Abaka's May 2024 recital. (Credit: Lara Salahi)

Even the show's emcee is a former Abaka student who now performs with Sayat Nova Dance Company — the professional troupe many students aspire to join. Abaka instructors Collette Shahverdian, Sarine Ashjian, Talar Palanjian and Araz Ashjian — all a part of Sayat Nova — were once Abaka dancers too.

“It's a celebration of how this tradition lives on,” Palanjian said.

Palanjian says sustaining the program hasn't always been easy. Shifting priorities, busy family schedules and competition from other extracurriculars have made it harder to keep enrollment consistent.

“Parents used to be more dedicated to making sure their children were immersed in Armenian culture,” she said. “Now, it's ballet or chess or other activities. But we want parents to know — that half hour of waiting in the parking lot, that midweek rush — it's worth it.”

Her mother, Arlet, agreed.

“It's hard now,” she said. “But I'm so grateful that my kids have stepped in to carry this forward. It's more than dance — it's our identity. It's how our children grow up feeling Armenian.”

As the dancers prepare for the performance, the mood in the studio is electric: a mix of nervous excitement and quiet pride. My daughter has been practicing for weeks, carefully perfecting the steps, adjusting her costume and absorbing every word of her instructors.

When the curtain rises, she'll take her place among dozens of other young people — each step carrying forward a 30-year tradition into — as the name implies — the future.

Abaka's 30th Anniversary Recital will take place Sunday, May 4 at 3:30 p.m. at Watertown High School. Tickets here: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/abakadanceacademy2025/1629490>



Apo Ashjian at the Grand Opening of the Abaka dance studio location on Bigelow Avenue in Watertown, in September 2004. (Credit: Arlet Ashjian)

'Fragments of Memory' Presents Art of Varujan Boghosian

EXHIBIT, from page 13

“This exhibition was an incredible collaboration. Last year, when the artist's daughter, Heidi Boghosian, contacted the museum about donating his work to our collection, Executive Committee Member Joan Agajanian Quinn led the process of selecting 10 of the works that would represent his various styles and exhibit well together,” explained Executive Director Jason Sohigian.

“Once we decided to exhibit the works,

Curator Ryann Casey worked with Heidi to select another 28 works from her personal collection,” he continued. “From there, the Berta Walker Gallery loaned nine larger works for the exhibition to round out the scope of work. The end result is sure to impress visitors to our Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries!”

Casey is a New Jersey-based curator, artist and educator. She holds a BA in photography from Stockton University and an MFA/MS in photography and art history

from Pratt Institute. She is the exhibitions coordinator at Stockton University Art Gallery and teaches there as an adjunct professor.

Over the past two years, Casey has curated exhibitions at the Armenian Museum including “Ara Oshagan: Disrupted, Borders,” “Gandzaran! Notable Selections from Our Collection” and “Filtered Identity: The Art of Tigran Tsitoghdzian.”

The opening will take place on Saturday,

April 26, at 6:30 p.m., and offer an opportunity to meet the artists' daughter Heidi Boghosian and network with fellow art enthusiasts.

The Armenian Museum of America is committed to preserving and sharing the rich cultural heritage of the Armenian people through art, history, and education. The galleries are open Thursday through Sunday 12 to 6 p.m.

For more information, visit www.armenianmuseum.org/boghosian.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Omelet with eggplants

Houshamadyan: Cuisine and Fried Omelets from Diyarbekir

Sonia Tashjian, an Armenian cookbook enthusiast, author, and one of Armenia's most valuable culinary resources, has worked tirelessly to document and preserve Armenian culture, cooking and cuisine through history in ancient Ottoman Armenian towns and villages. Her stories and articles about Armenian cuisine



Diyarbekir. Joiner Krikor Kasabian (seated on the left) and his family (Source: Dikran Mgount, Ամիսայի արձագանգներ [Echoes from Amida/Diyarbekir], Vol. 1, New York, 1950).

from this period are featured at the Houshamadyan.org website, an ongoing project to recreate the village life and culture of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Houshamadyan is the name of a non-profitmaking association that was founded in Berlin, Germany in 2010. At Houshamadyan, she continues to celebrate the remarkable foods and cuisine of Dikranagerd, and is helping preserve culture and memories.

of the eponymous province of Diyarbekir. The region's climate was temperate. The province's mountains were covered with forests teeming with the rich local flora and fauna, and also serving as an important source of firewood for the locals. The area featured vast fields, orchards, bridges, and watermills. The province was rich in water, with the Tigris River flowing right down the middle of it. A multitude of streams flowed down from the mountains during the spring, feeding the Tigris. To the west of the city was Mount Karadja, and from its base flowed the frigid spring called Hamrvat. The waters of this spring were diverted to the city using a stone-lined canal.

"Many Diyarbekir Armenians were wealthy landowners who lived comfortably. They were lively, always looking for reasons to organize parties and celebrations. It was customary to organize exclusive, separate parties for men and women. The local cuisine, too, developed against this backdrop, and differed from the cuisine of other Armenian areas in both the type of foods eaten and their presentation. One of the characteristics of Diyarbekir Armenian cuisine was the



Diyarbekir. Hovsep Nakash (seated, wearing the fez) and his family (Source: Dikran Mgount, Ամիսայի արձագանգներ [Echoes from Amida/Diyarbekir], Vol. 1, New York, 1950).

generous use of various spices, which can be explained by the fact that the city was located at the crossroads of ancient highways. Not only the local meals and sweets, but also local juices and drinks contained large amounts of spices. The cuisine of Diyarbekir boasted many succulent and visually attractive dishes that required a great amount of labor."

"Almost every home had its own kitchen and *tonterton* (tonir room). Over the centuries, kitchen arrangements had been perfected. The women of Diyarbekir were proud to display their *beghentsgark* (sets of kitchen utensils), with large, medium and small items lined in their proper order, from regular *amnigs* (saucers) to *taprosh lakans* (wide-rimmed tubs). Household tableware consisted of metallic, clay, wooden, glass and earthen plates, trays, pitchers, bottles and baskets. Lavash was the everyday staple bread in the local diet, and was baked at home, in the *tonir*. However, the lavash of Diyarbekir differed from the thin lavash baked elsewhere in that it consisted of smaller and slightly thicker loaves. On holidays, the loaves were flavored with oil and spices. Various bread products and pastries were also prepared by the market bakeries, which also baked *boreg* (börek) stuffed with meat or cheese."

Mixing eggs with fresh herbs, spices, and vegetables was popular among the Armenians from Diyarbekir like these traditional omelets below.

Omelet with Eggplants

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 small eggplants
- 1 medium onion
- 1 large clove of garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons oil, to taste
- 4 large eggs, beaten
- Parsley, chopped
- Red and black ground pepper, salt to taste

PREPARATION:

Finely chop the eggplants and onions, season, and fry (sauté) in oil for a few minutes, tossing. Add the beaten eggs and crushed garlic, and stir. Cover pan with a lid, and continue cooking over a low flame until eggs are set. Top omelet with chopped parsley to serve.



Omelet with Scallions

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large bunch scallions
- 2 tablespoons oil, to taste
- 4 large eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons flour
- Red and black ground pepper, salt to taste
- Baharat or allspice

PREPARATION:

Chop scallions, then sauté in oil for a few minutes. Season, and add the eggs mixed with flour. Stir, cover with a lid, and continue cooking over a low flame until eggs are set. Sprinkle with baharat and serve.

Dabag with Dates

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup dates
- 5 eggs
- 2 soupspoons of oil
- Salt

PREPARATION: De-seed the dates and lightly sear the dates in oil, then the scrambled eggs, and cook together.

Sonia Tashjian was born in Ainjar, Lebanon. She lives in Yerevan, and has written four cookbooks. She works at Houshamadyan association's website, Toronto-Hye Magazine of Canada, and Zham Magazine of Russia, writing a variety of articles and stories about Armenian cuisine, history, and culture. Haygagan Avantagan Khohanots, Armenian Traditional Cuisine is written completely in Armenian, and is published by Maranik LTD, a food (specially beans and herbs) production company in Armenia. For pricing and ordering information, contact MARANIK LTD directly at: info@maranik.am.



ARTS & CULTURE

AAMA to Present Program Exploring Intersection of the Arts and Medicine

CHOBANIAN, from page 13

performance featuring visual artist Kevork Mourad, whose real-time digital artwork will evolve in response to a live string quartet led by violinist Haig Hovsepian.

During the evening, the AAMA will present an award to Dr. Raffi Tachdjian, associate clinical professor of medicine and



Dr. Aniruddh Patel

pediatrics at the UCLA School of Medicine and founder and president of the Children's Music Fund, as a healthcare professional who exemplifies Dr. Chobanian's dedication to the arts and medicine.

This year's program is about more than appreciation for the arts; it is about understanding the arts and humanities' essential role in human health and well-being.

Thanks to sponsors for the evening, the Avedisian 575 Foundation, Fund for Armenia Relief and Charles Mosesian Charitable Foundation, admission is free and open to



Kevork Mourad

the public.

Advanced reservations suggested by May 10 at <http://bit.ly/AAMAMay>.

Although the event is free, donations to the AAMA are welcome and can be made

online at <http://www.aamaboston.org> or by mailed check to the AAMA (PO Box 812641, Wellesley, MA 02482).

Please specify whether you wish your donation to go to the general AAMA fund

or the Medicine and Humanities initiative. As a 501(c)(3) organization, contributions to the AAMA are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Inquiries at info@aamaboston.org

New Short Film 'Tethered' Sheds Light on Escaping Toxic Family Ties

BOSTON — "Tethered," a raw and powerful short film that delves into the lasting impact of toxic family dynamics, is set to hold private screenings in Boston and New York City. Written by Diran Shahrik, directed by Chris Moore and associate produced/directed by Sam Millstein — all Boston University alumni — the film follows 17-year-old Derick Kovac as he struggles with the emotionally and physically

relationships is a painful reality for those affected. This film gives voice to those who have felt isolated by such experiences, showing them that they are not alone.

"Tethered" takes a deeper dive into the layers of abuse as Derick navigates the psychological manipulation, guilt and fear that have been deeply ingrained in him for years.

"With this film, I hope to spark conversations around the unseen emotional worlds

The film will be shown in New York City the following weekend, on Friday, May 2, at 7 and 8 p.m. at the Producers Club, 358 W. 44th Street.

Each screening will be followed by a Q&A with members of the cast, writer, director, and associate producer.

Reserve seats at: Tethered Screenings.



Diran Shahrik watching a scene from the short film "Tethered," which he wrote

abusive relationship with his father.

"Tethered" offers an unflinching look at the psychological complexities of growing up with a parent suffering from borderline personality disorder (BPD) — an experience often misunderstood and rarely portrayed with nuance on screen. The struggle to overcome self-doubt, emotional numbness, and difficulty forming healthy

so many teenagers are tethered to," said writer Diran Shahrik. "Realities that keep them stuck and make it hard to imagine a way out. I hope this film can help change that — on screen, and beyond."

Shahrik intends to submit the short into several film festivals beginning this spring with the goal of developing it into a feature film.



Tekeyan Cultural Association
Boston Chapter
presents

The Global World of Armenian Merchants, 1600-1720

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

Lecture is primarily in the Armenian language

Thurs., May 1, 7 p.m.
Baikar Building

755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown
(use Norseman Ave. door)

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





ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

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

MASSACHUSETTS

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.hypointearmenianchurch.org/>

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

MAY 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 15 — The Armenian American Medical Association presents the inaugural Aram V. Chobanian Medicine and Humanities Program. "Music, Emotion and Brain Health," presented by guest speaker Aniruddh D. Patel, professor of psychology, Tufts University, with remarks by Justin Casinghino, assistant professor of music, Fitchburg State University, and visual artist Kevork Mourad, in collaboration with Haig Hovsepian and Evan Johanson on violin, Cara Pogossian on viola and Dilshod Narzillaevev on cello. Dorothy and Charles Mosesian Center for the Arts, 321 Arsenal St., Watertown. Reception 6 p.m., program 7 p.m. Admission free. Advanced reservations suggested by May 10 to bit.ly/AAMAmay or inquiries to info@amaaboston.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 Armenian Church Abajian Hall, 12-61 Saddle River Road, Fair Lawn. Tickets \$70 for adults, \$45 for students. Cash bar. For reservations, Aline Araz at (917) 716-3827 or aline@edrcorp.net or Marie Zokian (201) 745-8850. Reservations accepted with payment and names of guests. Make checks payable to St. Leon Armenian Church. Mail to Aline Araz, 876 Pueblo Drive, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417.

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.

Medical Comedy 'Nothing Solid' to Be Released in August

COMEDY, from page 13

Zeroonian in the film play the role of Nikki. In addition to the film's various medical and family scenes, there are quite a few funny moments that happen in Nikki's workplace, which is her Armenian church newsletter, that feature characters such as her best friend Tamar (Julie DeStefano), bullies Arsen and Esther (Logan Raposo and Angela Hurley), and a compassionate but no-nonsense *Der Hayr* (Rick DuMont).

"I don't work at a church newsletter, but a lot of what Nikki deals with at work really does come from some of the unfortunate interactions I've had with my peers in the Armenian community. All names have been changed to protect the guilty," Zeroonian joked.

The bread and butter of the movie, though, is Nikki's relationship with her psychiatrist, Dr. Miller (Russ Gannon). The most common triggers for cyclical vomiting are stress and anxiety — as is the case for Nikki with all of the changes and conflicts happening in her life — and Dr. Miller not only helps Nikki see the connection between her emotions and her physical symptoms, but challenges her to take the necessary steps to improve her situation.

There are pieces of Armenian culture woven throughout the movie, and even a few pieces of Armenian dialogue. But most importantly, Zeroonian says, there will be a couple of scenes that sensitively and compassionately address the rather hot-button issue of "cultural" practices and love languages, particularly when it comes to parenting.



Louise Mara, left, and Sharisse Zeroonian, in a scene from "Nothing Solid"

"A lot of us grew up idealizing the typical Western family system, which works for some but not others," said Zeroonian. "A large part of this script came from my own conflict between figuring out how to be an adult by Western standards while trying to be a part of my family by Eastern standards. Of course, there are some behaviors that happen in families which are unacceptable no matter what your background is — and the film will show

plenty of those as well — but all the members of Nikki's family end up understanding more about each other in the end."

Starting in August, "Nothing Solid" will be released nationwide in select theaters, submitted to international festivals, and made available on streaming. A portion of ticket sales from screenings will be donated to the Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome Association (CVSA).

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**

SINCE 1932



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Turkish Stability Is in the US's Best Interest

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Recent political developments in Turkey, particularly the arrest of the opposition leader, have not generated the expected level of international political attention. While the arrest was discussed and some official statements were issued, the Western political establishment's response has been mostly muted. This is particularly noteworthy given that US Vice President JD Vance had previously accused Europe of canceling elections and straying from its declared values. Obviously, the Trump administration prioritizes stability in Turkey over democracy, human rights, or fair elections, as evidenced by its response to the arrest of the Turkish opposition leader.

From the American perspective, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is seen as the sole guarantor of this stability, explaining President Donald Trump's deference, Secretary of State Marco Rubio's evasiveness, and other similar official positions. Geopolitics dictates that strategic interests, not other nations' internal affairs, ultimately guide state actions.

Despite the fact that President Joe Biden emphasized human rights in foreign policy, the US maintained a key strategic alliance with Saudi Arabia, where human rights are demonstrably lacking. This highlights how strategic interests often supersede ideological commitments in foreign policy.

Turkey is effectively "selling" its influence over Syria, over the South Caucasus, over Azerbaijan, and over the wider Middle East. It asserts that its involvement ensures relative stability in Syria, preventing refugee flows to Europe. At the same time, countries welcome Turkey's use of its influence in Syria to contain Iran.

In the case of the South Caucasus, Ankara further shows that Erdoğan's Turkey is the sole guarantor of preventing renewed conflict if the West hopes to avoid such a scenario. Erdoğan aims for Turkey to secure a prominent role in the reshaping global order, leveraging its strategic advantages. This ambition reflects Turkey's rapid political evolution, despite its economic challenges, distinguishing it from the Turkey of a decade ago. Despite these challenges, Erdoğan continues to win elections and de facto has led the Turkish state for decades.

Recent political developments in Turkey, particularly the arrest of the opposition leader,

Turkey's relevance diminishes with global power stabilization, yet it asserts its indispensability by demonstrating that global challenges are difficult to address effectively without its influence. In other words, Turkey demonstrates its indispensability by shaping and exploiting conflicts, subsequently leveraging these conflicts to expand its influence in regions like Syria, Iraq, the South Caucasus (particularly Azerbaijan), Libya, Mali, and beyond, often through active military involvement. Turkey initiates military conflicts and subsequently asserts vital interests to justify its full participation in negotiations and resolutions.

Cyprus exemplifies this pattern: Turkey's military intervention divided the island, establishing a lasting presence over its territory and surrounding waters. This aggressive approach, also evident in its stance toward Greece, demonstrates Turkey's continued reliance on conflict to project geopolitical influence, often successfully. This tactic isn't unique to Turkey or Erdoğan. Major powers,

from the Roman Empire to the Soviet Union and the United States, have historically used it to advance national interests. War and military intervention have often proven to be the most direct path to influence, especially for states lacking the capacity for effective soft power.

Critics often accuse Trump of admiring authoritarian leaders, while his supporters contend he simply respects strong leaders. Trump's praise of Erdoğan, whom he recently lauded as "very smart" and suggested as a mediator between Israel and Turkey, has drawn further criticism. Even some Republicans, among

others, condemned the praise of "autocratic leader Erdoğan," citing acts like the recent imprisonment and marginalization of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, Erdoğan's main political rival. In politics, realpolitik, state interests, and foreign policy objectives, rather than declared values, primarily drive decisions. Domestic political developments in other countries matter only insofar as they offer leverage or pressure opportunities.

(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.)



Memory and Denial: Commemorating the Armenian Genocide in a Time of Crisis

By Vartan Oskanian

Armenia's former foreign minister

This April 24 marks the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide — a moment of solemn remembrance for Armenians around the world. For generations, we have honored the 1.5 million lives lost to a deliberate, state-orchestrated campaign of extermination. But this year, a cloud hangs over our collective mourning — not from outside forces, but from within. The clarity that has long defined our commemoration is now threatened by a profound and disorienting moral collapse in Armenian leadership.

Nikol Pashinyan stands accused of something previously unimaginable: publicly casting doubt on the veracity and scale of the Armenian Genocide. His recent remarks — couched in evasive, ambiguous language — stop short of outright denial, yet dangerously echo the revisionist rhetoric long propagated by Ankara. By suggesting Armenians must ask "why" the genocide happened, as if the victims bore responsibility, Pashinyan has adopted one of the most insidious tools of historical distortion.

Genocide denial is not a matter of intellectual curiosity or diplomatic finesse — it is an act of violence. As Elie Wiesel once said, "the denial of genocide is the final

stage of genocide." It aims to erase not only lives, but memory, identity, and truth. This is why our commemoration matters more than ever. We now face a dual threat: denial from without, and dilution from within.

The Armenian Genocide is among the most thoroughly documented atrocities of the 20th century. Survivor testimonies, Ottoman government orders, missionary records, foreign diplomatic cables, and irrefutable demographic data all bear witness to a systematic campaign to annihilate a people. It was not wartime chaos — it was cold, calculated policy. To question this is not bold or nuanced. It is a moral failure.

And Pashinyan's failures are not limited to memory. His tenure has been marked by national catastrophe: the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh, the displacement of 120,000 Armenians, the deaths of thousands of young soldiers, and the humiliation of defeat. Armenia's territorial integrity has been shattered under his leadership, while prisoners remain in Azerbaijani captivity and new concessions loom. Pashinyan also stands as the primary obstacle to the right of return for the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh — despite clear signals of willingness from the global community to address this fundamental issue.

Pashinyan's recent comments on the Genocide are, at a minimum, condemnable and unacceptable. For an Armenian leader

to distort or downplay the greatest tragedy in our history is a betrayal of the highest order. It should send a chill through every Armenian who has carried the weight of memory for generations.

Turkey has spent decades denying the Genocide — recasting it as mutual wartime suffering, dismissing documentation as propaganda, and lobbying the world to forget. Now, that rhetoric has found an unsettling resonance in Yerevan. Pashinyan's words don't just undermine Armenia's moral standing abroad — they threaten to fracture the collective memory that has held our people together through exile, injustice, and survival.

This betrayal is not a lapse in judgment — it is a rupture. A leader entrusted with defending Armenian sovereignty cannot simultaneously undermine the foundation of our moral and historical identity. Pashinyan's rhetoric emboldens denialists and corrodes the very fabric of national unity.

On April 24, as Armenians gather to remember, mourn, and honor, we must also resolve to restore dignity and national leadership to Armenia. Pashinyan has lost all authority — moral, political, and legal — to govern. The path to justice and revival begins with his departure.

(This commentary originally appeared on www.panorama.am in Armenia.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

U.S. Judge Dismisses \$500 Million Lawsuit By Azeri Lawyer Against ANCA & 29 Others

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) announced last week that on April 14, a US District Court dismissed a \$500-million lawsuit filed by Aynur Baghirzade, an Azeri lawyer based in Laguna Beach, CA, against the ANCA and 29 others.

Baghirzade's 198-page lawsuit "leveled unfounded accusations," the ANCA stated. "The court struck the plaintiff's [Baghirzade's] Third Amended Complaint, dismissing this action, denying remaining motions as moot, and declaring the case closed." She later tweeted that she intends to appeal the ruling.

The ANCA noted that for months, Baghirzade had engaged in a "lengthy series of incendiary social media posts," describing Armenia as "a carcinoma" that "shall be deleted from South Caucasus." In multiple posts on X (formerly Twitter), she referred to herself as a "US Immigration and Business attorney.... If the truth scares you I will terrify you...." She also wrote: "You fight a terrorist organization and find out that it has its own judges, police, state officials and even congressmen as members." She added: "Imagine your power that people go and bribe judges to harm you...." She even ridiculed the Armenian Genocide, claiming Armenians shed "crocodile tears about the events back in 1915."

In addition to her inflammatory rhetoric, Baghirzade posted numerous tweets raising concerns about her professionalism and mental state. For example, she criticized a policeman who issued her a ticket for traffic violation: "Just got a letter from police 'fining' me for illegal stop -- another candidate to be a defendant." She also wrote, "if police watches your steps and then relays this information to the terrorists -- this is called a state backed terrorism." In a direct attack on Federal Judge Robert Huie who dismissed her case, Baghirzade accused him of being "corrupt," threatening to sue him!

Interestingly, when Baghirzade filed her case on June 21, 2024, she failed to pay the required \$350 civil filing fee, claiming "in forma pauperis" — meaning she was too poor to pay the fee. The judge rejected her request. She submitted a new request on July 2, 2024, which was also denied. The Court noted that her annual income of \$50,952 exceeded the federal poverty threshold by 325%. The judge imposed a \$55 administrative fee on top of the initial \$350.

Baghirzade sued the following 30 individuals and entities: "Alphabet Inc.; Aram Hamparian; Armen Sahakyan; Armenian National Committee of America; Armenian National Committee of America, Western Region; Attorney Search Network; Coco Su; Estrella Sanchez; Google, Inc.; Jake Baloian; Jeremy Stoppelman; Legal Match; Martindale-Nolo; Los Angeles County Bar Association; Orange County Bar Association; Seth Chavez; Teresa Vuki; Trudy Levindofskis; Yelp, Inc.; YouTube; Sundar Pichai; Zartoon Media; Zaven Kouroghlian; Van Megerdichian; Ani Tchaglasian; Legalshield; Parker-Stanbury, LLP; Greystar California, Inc.; Kia America, Inc.; and ARF Eastern

USA, Inc.

On February 27, 2025, the Federal Court "dismissed Baghirzade's Second Amended Complaint [which was 78-pages-long] pursuant to Defendants' motion to dismiss." The court determined that her claims failed to meet the legal standard for federal claims and granted plaintiff "leave to amend Claims One through Five to address the deficiencies described in this order." The Court said that her lawsuit "is a failure to adequately plead a single cognizable federal claim against any one of the defendants she has sued." The judge further stated: "Plaintiff's filings to date have consistently failed to comply with the applicable rules, but the Court has accepted them nonetheless — even without a request from Plaintiff to excuse the non-compliance. Failure to follow applicable rules or orders in the future may result in filings being stricken."

On April 10, 2025, Baghirzade filed her Third Amended Complaint which was 198 pages long. In her latest filing, she had added as a new defendant, the "ARF Eastern USA, Inc., mentioning it 100 times," even though she was told by the judge that she could not add any new defendants. She alleged that the ARF had been "plotting for centuries to annex two regions of Azerbaijan" — a baseless claim, given that neither the ARF nor Azerbaijan had existed for 'centuries.' The court stated that Baghirzade had not complied with its instructions. "None of her claims has survived dismissal."

The court further accused Baghirzade of suing "over 30 defendants, has amended her complaint more than once, and has failed to state a single claim against a single defendant that is not subject to dismissal. Plaintiff accuses Defendants of extensive criminal conduct, and her pleadings frequently adopt a tone of animus, hostility, suspicion, or sarcasm in referring to Defendants." Her complaint "repeats and seeks to vindicate her past statements that another ethnic group's home country is a 'carcinoma' and that 'we have to delete [that ethnic group's] project as soon as possible.'" Her complaint also "fancifully alleged that all Defendants — most of whom appear completely unrelated to each other, and some of which are public companies — conspired together for the single-minded purpose of harming her."

The judge further stated that Baghirzade's third complaint, "over two-and-a-half times as long, appears to contain similar fanciful allegations while expanding the alleged conspiracy ever wider." Like her second complaint, the third complaint "continues to ascribe events in her life — such as discovering flies in her apartment on one occasion, finding a cockroach in her hotel room, or having her car towed after parking in someone else's spot in her building -- to the malevolent conspiracy of Defendants without any factual basis for this ascription plausibly alleged." Her third complaint "now sweeps even more broadly, accusing the Defendants of (among other things) international terrorism as well as engaging the US Congress to persecute her. Plaintiff also adds numerous 'non-party co-conspirators,' including seven California state court judges or justices; the implication is that persons who have displeased Plaintiff are thereby part of a criminal conspiracy against her. In other words, Defendants are seemingly required to respond to expanding pleadings that diverge even further from plausibility. This factor weighs in favor of dismissal."

Federal Judge Robert Huie had no choice but to dismiss Baghirzade's lawsuit, stating: "Anything short of dismissal in these circumstances would deserve the interests of justice."

'It Was the First Genocide of the 20th Century'

By Rev. Fr. Ghazar (Lazarus) Bedrossian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

I remember it as if it were yesterday. On April 9, 2015, three days before the Holy Mass commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, we were in Rome, in the quiet solemnity of the patriarchal office of His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX, Catholicos Patriarch of the Armenian Catholic Church. We were three priests, humbled and awed, standing in a moment that was clearly part of history's mysterious unfolding.

It was in those sacred halls that the official draft of the Holy Father Pope Francis' speech arrived. It had been sent to the Patriarch so that we could prepare its Armenian translation. As we read through the lines, my eyes paused, wide with recognition — *he had used the word: Genocide*. I turned to His Beatitude and said, "The Holy Father is using the term Genocide." He looked back at me with surprise in his eyes, perhaps not yet fully grasping the magnitude of what had been written. We were all, in that moment, standing at the edge of something profound.

Then came Sunday, April 12 — the Sunday of Divine Mercy.

I had the privilege of assisting our Patriarch during the Holy Mass at St. Peter's Basilica. As we took our places and were seated, the basilica was filled with reverent silence. Before the liturgy began, Pope Francis stood and addressed the world. And then, in his clear and unwavering voice, he said the unforgettable words: "It was the first Genocide of the 20th century."

In that instant, we turned to one another. Our faces lit up — not in celebration, but in the quiet joy and relief that comes only when Divine Justice pierces through decades of silence. A century of denial, distortion, and political hesitation was met head-on by the voice of the Vicar of Christ. We smiled, not for ourselves, but for the souls of our martyrs. We smiled because the truth had finally been spoken by the Head of the Universal Church, the Roman Pontiff, standing boldly in the footsteps of his Nazarene Master:



Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian with Pope Francis on April 9, 2015, during the meeting of the Armenian Catholic Synod bishops with Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX Tarmouni, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Armenians of Cilicia

"The truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

Here is the greatness of Pope Francis.

The Apostle of Truth.

The Father of the Marginalized.

The Titan of Justice and Peace.

With his unmatched kindness and spiritual courage, he reminded the world — and the Armenian people — of the sacred obligation to speak the truth, no matter how difficult, no matter how long delayed. In the eyes of many, he became the hero we had waited for: not with weapons or speeches of war, but with a prayer, with a word, with the unmistakable weight of conscience.

He didn't speak as a politician. He spoke as a father.

He didn't calculate diplomacy. He offered clarity.

He didn't fear consequence. He chose compassion.

In doing so, Pope Francis forever linked the Holy See to the Armenian people's truth and pain. And for this, we will remember him. We will remember the Mass, the moment, the silence broken by the one voice that echoed across nations:

the voice that said what needed to be said.

Yes, it was the first genocide of the 20th century.

And yes, the world heard it — because the Holy Father had the courage to speak it.

For us, this was not simply a commemoration. It was a vindication of history, a balm for inherited wounds, and a profound witness to the power of faith aligned with truth.

To Pope Francis, I say with the love of a son and the faith of a priest: You will forever be remembered as the shepherd who defended truth with mercy, and who stood with the Armenian people not only in memory but in mission.

The source of the pope's speech on April 12, 2015 is https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150412_omelia-fedeli-ri-to-armeno.html

(Rev. Fr. Ghazar [Lazarus] Bedrossian is pastor of the Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Belmont, MA.)



Nobel laureate: I Owe America My Success. Today, Its Scientific Future Is in Danger

By Dr. Ardem Patapoutian

As a boy growing up in war-torn Lebanon, I never could have imagined that moving to America would lead me to a life in science. I grew up amid civil war in Lebanon, where my family had sought refuge after escaping persecution during the Armenian genocide by Ottoman Turks. Our days in Lebanon were filled with uncertainty, violence and the constant awareness that life could drastically change in an instant.

When I arrived in the United States as a young immigrant, I stepped into a country that offered not only safety but limitless potential, powered by education, scientific inquiry and the open exchange of ideas. This country gave me the opportunity to train as a biomedical scientist and to collaborate with dedicated researchers from around the world who, like me, had found a home in the United States. In fact, I would not be here without the federal Pell grant that offered financial aid to me as a college student.

Today, I watch with deep sadness as the United States' remarkable scientific enterprise, which took generations of hard work and national investment to build, faces a concerted dismantling by the current administration. American science is the envy of the world, but this global leadership is now threatened by draconian cuts to federal support of biomedical research through the defunding of grants and drastic reductions in funding for essential research costs and infrastructure. This will have catastrophic consequences for the US biomedical research and medical sector, choking off the next generation of medical advances and undermining our global competitiveness at a time when other coun-

tries are working hard to overtake us.

As for so many scientists, National Institutes of Health funding has been critical to my research. Federal grants supported the experiments in my lab that uncovered the body's sensors for temperature and touch. These discoveries help us understand, at the molecular level, how we feel a warm hug from a loved one or the prick of a thorn on a rose bush. What began as a curiosity-driven question – “How do you feel?” – has implications far beyond the initial scope, potentially leading to new types of treatments for pain, cardiovascular disease and more. The progress of this research has now been delayed while my lab waits on a crucial research grant that was supposed to start in February on finding new cures for pain.

In fact, nearly every medical advance we rely on today would not exist without curiosity-driven research funded by the NIH and other agencies that supported research at universities and nonprofit institutes across the country. Whether it's lifesaving cancer therapies like Keytruda and cisplatin or the now-routine use of MRI scanning for diagnosis, the fruits of federally funded research have profoundly reshaped modern medicine and improved countless lives. Beyond medicine, basic research underpinned innovations such as the rechargeable lithium-ion batteries powering electric vehicles and the critical understanding of ozone depletion that preserved our atmosphere.

History shows that science reliably generates immense economic benefit. The impact of NIH investment is astounding. Every dollar of NIH funding generates approximately \$2.56 in local economic growth, according to a [report](#) by United for Medical Research.

NIH-funded research supports over 450,000 jobs across the country, injecting nearly \$95 billion annually into the economy.

In every corner of our society, these achievements, made possible through sustained public investment in scientific exploration, have led to a healthier, more prosperous future for everyone. Cutting these investments does not save money; it impoverishes our future, sacrificing decades of progress.

Moreover, the ongoing efforts to diminish scientific investment are having a massive negative effect on our ability to attract and train young scientists. Graduate school admissions are being drastically cut due to uncertainty and shrinking budgets, effectively halting the recruitment and training of the next generation of innovators, as our most promising trainees look for opportunities overseas. This threatens our future competitiveness and ability to lead globally in scientific discovery and innovation.

The global biotech market, which the United States currently dominates, is expected to grow to nearly \$3.9 trillion by the end of the decade. Competition in this economic sector is becoming ever fiercer. China and other countries covet America's biomedical research success and have spent decades trying to catch up. These misguided policies will hand China exactly what it wants. In fact, I've already been approached with an offer to relocate my lab to China, complete with a promise of 20 years of stable research funding. While I have no plans to leave the United States, the fact that such offers are becoming increasingly attractive should be a wake-up call.

So, I ask you: How do you feel? How do you feel as we fall behind in global scientific

progress? As economic uncertainty grows? As the health of your families and communities is put at risk? As patients are cut off from clinical trials? I know I feel outrage, and I hope others recognize what's at stake and feel the urgency to support science.

I love America, the country that adopted me and offered immense opportunities. As a US citizen, I believe it's my duty to advocate for investment in science, which has long been one of the keys to our national success: improving health, creating jobs and generating tremendous economic returns. The scientific community is not opposed to examining how taxpayer funds are used; on the contrary, we welcome efforts to improve efficiency and better serve the American public. But what's happening now has nothing to do with efficiency. These actions against science are indiscriminate and risk doing real, long-lasting harm.

The consequences of such policies must be clearly communicated to the public and to our elected officials across the political spectrum. We especially urge Republican leaders, who hold the legislative majority, to join us in ensuring that science remains a nonpartisan priority. All Americans know someone affected by cancer and heart disease, and disinformation has no place in science or medicine. Now is the time for all of us to speak up – because protecting American science means protecting our future shared prosperity.

(Dr. Ardem Patapoutian is a professor of neuroscience at the Scripps Research Institute. In 2021, he received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discoveries of receptors for temperature and touch. This commentary originally appeared on [cnn.com](#) on April 9.)

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