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Azerbaijan's Pro-Government Media Amplifies Weeks-Old Threat Over Armenia Peace Talks

By Aytan Farhadova

BAKU (OC-Media) — Azerbaijani pro-government media have begun circulating an apparent threat made by a top Azerbaijani official two weeks ago, in which he warned Armenia that they risked losing their 'window' for a peace deal if they did not bow to Azerbaijani demands quickly.

Elchin Amirbayov, a special advisor to President Ilham Aliyev, had made the comments during a trip to Argentina on March 14.

'The only obstacle that remains to achieving a definitive peace is the territorial claims enshrined in the Armenian Constitution. We must now hope that Armenia will take that next step, and once that happens, I hope we will be closer to achieving a definitive peace', Amirbayov said. 'The fact that we already have a text that both parties have agreed upon places an additional responsibility on Armenia to not delay the process because this window could close, and we do not want that to happen', he added.

Amirbayov's comments on the peace deal did not initially gain traction in Azerbaijani media. However, on Wednesday, March 26, Report.az, a major pro-government press agency, reported on the comments without stating when they happened. Report.az had covered Amirbayov's visit to Argentina at the time without mentioning his apparent warning to Armenia. Other pro-government media see THREATS, page 6



Village of Khnatsakh, Armenia

Armenian Border Village Reportedly Hit By Azeri Gunshots

By Norine Ghalechian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Azerbaijani forces opened fire at a border village in Armenia's Syunik province overnight, the Armenian Defense Ministry said on Monday, March 31, as it denied renewed Azerbaijani allegations of Armenian truce violations along the border between the two countries.

The Azerbaijani military made the claims on March 30 and 31. It said Armenian army units targeted its troops at various sections of the long border.

The Defense Ministry in Yerevan dismissed the claims, again challenging Baku to present evidence of the alleged truce violations. It said Azerbaijani troops themselves fired at the village of Khnatsakh and damaged one of its houses shortly after midnight.

The ministry released photographs purportedly showing a bullet hole on a window glass of the house. Local residents confirmed the cross-border gunfire. According to them, the damaged house belongs to the head of the



A bullet hole on a window glass in a house in the village of Khnatsakh, March 31, 2025

village administration, Seyran Mirzoyan. The latter could not immediately be reached for comment.

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Peace Proves Elusive, but Pedestrians Feel Safe on the Streets at Night

Fearing renewed Azerbaijani aggression, Armenian government officials have scrambled in the last few days to shore up international diplomatic support. At the same time, a newly published survey deems Armenia to be the safest country in Eurasia.

A peace treaty to end over 35 years of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is ostensibly ready for signing. But since the mid-March announcement that the treaty text had been finalized, a steady stream of belligerent rhetoric has flowed out of Baku, as Ilham Aliyev's administration apparently presses for additional advantages outside the pact's provisions.

Over the past week, Armenia has engaged all regional powers except Turkey, striving to bolster support for the country's sovereignty. Top on the Armenian diplomatic agenda has been smoothing over relations with Russia. Bilateral ties had been marked by increasing rancor since Azerbaijan's reconquest of Nagorno-Karabakh in the fall of 2023, underscored by Yerevan's efforts during the last year to break

ARMENIA APPEARS TO HAVE SUCCEEDED IN CONVINCING THE KREMLIN THAT RUSSIA WILL RETAIN ITS GEOPOLITICAL STANDING IN THE CAUCASUS.

free of the Kremlin's magnetic field and reset its geopolitical compass to point West.

Armenia appears to have succeeded in convincing the Kremlin that Russia will retain its geopolitical standing in the Caucasus. Pretending as though there had never been any tension in the relationship, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on March 27 noted that Moscow has "always had excellent ties with Armenia. In the historical context, it could not be otherwise. ... Our geography, destiny and history prescribe developing relations."

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The Secret Trio performing in Watertown: from left, Tamer Pınarbaşı, Ara Dinkjian and Ismail Lumanovski (photo Aram Arkun)

Secret Trio Charms Watertown

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Secret Trio, a musical group composed of Macedonian clarinetist Ismail Lumanovski, Armenian oud player Ara Dinkjian, and Turkish kanun player Tamer Pınarbaşı, performed at the Dorothy and Charles Mosesian Center for the Arts in Watertown on Friday, March 21.

The concert was organized by Dr. Aida Yavshayan, Arto Kurkjian and Mardiros Merdinian for the Society of Istanbul Armenians of Boston (SOIAB) as a fundraiser for the Armenian schools of Istanbul.

According to one of the organizers, there were around 235 guests in the audience.

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NEWS from ARMENIA

Justice Minister Meets US Ambassador Ahead Of Washington Visit

YEREVAN (news.am) — Armenian Justice Minister Srubhi Galyan met with US Ambassador Kristina Kvien, the Ministry of Justice of Armenia announced, on April 1.

Galyan discussed the agenda of her working visit to Washington D.C. on April 7-11 to attend the “Partnership in the Fight against Corruption” international conference.

The two reflected also on creating a legal framework regulating relations between Armenia and the US related to the extradition of criminals and the transfer of convicts, as well as the planned meeting with the leadership of the US Drug Enforcement Administration and the National Bureau of Law Enforcement Cooperation.

Rare 18th-Century Printed Amulet Donated To Matenadaran

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A printed scroll-shaped amulet from 1717 has been added to Matenadaran’s rare manuscript collection.

The Matenadaran’s unique collection of ribbon-shaped amulets has been enriched by a remarkable new addition printed in 1717.

The item was donated to the Matenadaran by Ioanna Rapti, a professor of Armenian and Eastern Christian Art at the École Pratique des Hautes Études of the Sorbonne University, and head of the Caucasus Section at the Byzantine Studies Center of the Collège de France.

This distinctive object consists of a cylindrical structure formed from connected sheets of paper, decorated with preserved miniatures and traditional amuletic prayers.

The scroll contains glued-together papers bearing miniatures and characteristic amulet prayers. The unfurled amulet measures up to 480 centimeters.

Cybertheft Cases Jump 25 Percent in Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A significant increase in cybertheft cases has been recorded in Armenia, according to the 2024 annual report by the Office of the Prosecutor General.

Specifically, while 630 such crimes were reported in 2023, the number has risen to 788 this year — an increase of 158 cases, or 25.1 Percent. Furthermore, detection rates have also improved, growing from 1.7 Percent last year to 2.5 Percent, Armenpress reports.

More than half of the cases — 428, or 54.3 Percent — were recorded in Yerevan, marking a 12.3-percent rise (47 additional cases) compared to the previous year.

The report highlights several reasons, including the rapid development of digital technologies and software, the swift digitalization of financial services, the introduction of innovative solutions, and vulnerabilities in information and banking security systems.

Pashinyan Ally Denounced For Calling Karabakh ‘Bad Place’

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The ruling Civil Contract party’s candidate in the upcoming mayoral election in Gyumri faced an uproar from Armenian opposition figures and exiled Nagorno-Karabakh activists on Friday, March 28, after saying that Karabakh was a “bad place” before being recaptured by Azerbaijan.

Sarik Minasyan made the comment late on Thursday during a heated debate with his opposition challengers hosted by Armenian Public Television. One of those challengers, Ruben Mkhitarian, attacked Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, saying that he “surrendered” Karabakh to Azerbaijan just a few years after declaring that “Artsakh is Armenia.”

Minasyan responded by saying that during former Presidents Robert Kocharyan’s and Serzh Sargsyan’s rule, “Karabakh

grist to the enemy’s mill,” he told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

Beglaryan argued that bribery among military officials affected army units deployed not only in Karabakh but also various parts of Armenia.

“The reason for the problem was not Artsakh but security risks,” he said. “[The illegal practice] manifested itself not only in Artsakh. It exists even now.”

“The candidate representing Civil Contract took the path of political suicide,” said Tigran Abrahamian, an Armenian opposition parliamentarian. “He also assumed responsibility for all the sins of these authorities, from the surrender of the homeland to the [mishandling of] Armenia’s security.”

Hakob Badalyan, an independent political analyst, added his voice to the condemnations in a social media post.

“The candidate of the ruling party tried to attribute the behavior of a certain social

Alen Simonian echoed the claim earlier this year. Karabakh activists and other critics accused them of spreading hate speech against the Karabakh Armenians.

At least 198 soldiers and 25 civilian residents of Karabakh were killed during the 24-hour hostilities in September 2023. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry acknowledged roughly 200 combat deaths among its military personnel involved in the operation.

US Ambassador Visits Syunik, Reaffirms US Support for Peace

SYUNIK, Armenia — US Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien has concluded her visit to the Syunik region on March 26, where she emphasized the United States’ continued support for peace, greater shared economic prosperity, and preservation of cultural heritage.

During her March 25-26 visit, Ambassador Kvien discussed economic and regional issues with Syunik Governor Robert Ghukasyan, Tegh Community Head Davit Ghulunts, and other members of local community.

On her way to Syunik, she stopped at the newly-opened GTB Steel Plant in Ararat region, a major US investment that will benefit both the US and Armenia. In Syunik, she toured the ContourGlobal Hydro Cascade, another top US investment in Armenia. ContourGlobal has updated the 55-year-old complex with US technology to provide reliable energy to the region while supporting US and local jobs.

Kvien also visited the historic Saint Hripsime Church, where she underscored the importance of preserving Armenia’s cultural and religious heritage everywhere.

In Goris, she met European Union Mission in Armenia (EUMA) representatives to gain a clearer understanding of the current security situation. Throughout her visit, Kvien engaged with local community leaders and residents, reaffirming the United States’ support for Armenia’s territorial integrity and peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“Talking with people of Syunik, I have heard their hope for peace, stability, and prosperity. I look forward to further strengthening the relationship between our countries,” said Ambassador Kvien. She welcomed the recent progress toward the peace agreement, emphasizing that this is the pivotal moment to move beyond decades of conflict and work to ensure lasting security and economic prosperity in the South



Sarik Minasyan, the acting mayor of Gyumri, speaks to journalists, Febr. 20, 2025.

was such a bad place that people in Gyumri would pay money to avoid serving there.”

“Those people whose sons were taken to Karabakh during their compulsory military service considered themselves unfortunate,” he said.

The claim sparked a shouting match between the two candidates, forcing the moderators to interrupt the live debate.

Artak Beglaryan, Karabakh’s Yerevan-based former premier and human rights ombudsman, condemned Minasyan’s remark, saying that it is consistent with the Pashinyan government’s efforts to “devalue Artsakh” and incite hatred towards the Karabakh Armenians.

“Everyone should keep in mind that hate speech within our people means inciting hostility towards each other and bringing

stratum to an entire social, popular organism, which is essentially immoral and undignified manipulation against the public hundreds of thousands of whose sons have served in Artsakh over the past three decades,” he wrote.

Minasyan already raised eyebrows late last month when he claimed that Azerbaijan regained control of Karabakh not because of Pashinyan’s policies but because “we didn’t fight.” The remark outraged relatives of some of at least 3,800 Armenian soldiers killed during the 2020 war with Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan likewise claimed last June that Karabakh forces did not fight against the September 2023 Azerbaijani offensive that forced the region’s entire population to flee to Armenia. Parliament speaker

Peace Proves Elusive, but Pedestrians Feel Safe on the Streets at Night

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At the same briefing, Zakharova emphasized that Yerevan’s recent efforts to seek EU membership are “not mutually acceptable” with the country’s existing participation in the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union.

Elsewhere on March 27, the Arminfo news agency reported that the US envoy to Armenia, Kristina Kvien, visited Syunik Province, which is the area where Azerbaijan wants to establish a land corridor with extraterritorial rights connecting the Azerbaijani mainland to the Nakhchivan exclave. Armenia’s reluctance to grant extraterritoriality to Baku is seen as one of several sticking points holding up the signing of the peace treaty.

The Arminfo report said Kvien reaffirmed “US support for Armenia’s territori-

al integrity and for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.” On March 25, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a brief discussion with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, during which the two agreed that “escalation of any form in the South Caucasus is unacceptable,” according to a State Department statement.

Earlier Pashinyan met March 25 in Yerevan with the Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, who later told journalists that Iran “backs the territorial integrity of countries” and that “regional issues should be resolved within the region, through dialogue and diplomacy, and without resorting to force.”

The perceived threat hovering over Armenia’s international relations contrasts sharply with the domestic conditions. A survey on public perceptions about crime

and safety in 147 countries around the world ranked Armenia as the globe’s 8th safest country. The rankings were published by Numbeo, which bills itself as the “world’s largest database of user contributed data about cities and countries worldwide.”

Other Eurasian states ranking in the Top 30 safest countries were Georgia and Uzbekistan. Azerbaijan was 33rd; Kazakhstan 71st; and Kyrgyzstan 109th. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were not included in the survey.

Almost 78 percent of individuals surveyed reported feeling safe walking alone on the streets of the Armenian capital Yerevan at night, while only 37 percent in Bishkek felt the same.

(This article originally appeared on www.eurasianet.org on March 28.)



ARMENIA

From Armenia to the World: Berd Ensemble's Legacy

By Hena Aposhian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In 1963, in an era when national cultural activities were neither encouraged nor widely common in Armenia, Boris Gevorgyan, a man with a vision, founded a traditional Armenian dance collective. What began as a small group soon flourished, and the Berd Ensemble was founded, which grew into the biggest Armenian dance studio.

Founding Berd Ensemble was a daring leap for Gevorgyan, yet he saw great potential in dance. To him, it was a powerful expression of a nation's identity. The name Berd ["fortress"] was chosen after the Armenian national dance which is rooted in "Gmbetakhagh," a ritual dance-game from the historical Armenian region of Vaspourakan.

It did not take long for the collective to expand, welcoming not just children but adults as well. With this development, new doors opened for Berd, allowing them to participate at dance competitions and festivals across other Soviet countries, and then different parts of Europe.

Its first international appearance was in 1967, four years after the collective's establishment, at an international festival in Riga, Latvia, where it was awarded with



the title of Laureate. During the 1970s and 1980s, Berd's participation in international festivals and events became more frequent in countries such as Greece, Hungary, Algeria, Austria and more, where it received widespread recognition and international awards.

Berd Ensemble established itself as more than just a place to learn traditional and folk dance; it became a passionate force dedicated to preserving Armenia's rich cultural heritage.

In the 1990s, Gevorgyan passed the role of choreographer to his life-long student and son, Karen Gevorgyan, confident that he would preserve and expand his efforts. Karen Gevorgyan's choreography, noted for its national character, enriched traditional Armenian dances by adding new layers to it. Meanwhile, his elder son, Stepan, became the director of the ensemble, playing a key role in gaining global recognition for Berd.

While tradition has long been carefully preserved, Karen Gevorgyan sought to take it a step further by allowing dances to evolve by taking a more innovative ethnographic approach, breathing new life into Armenian dance. His passion led him to read and translate historical dance texts, travel extensively to seek traditional dances from villages, meticulously researching and refining each movement. In other words, his work extended beyond the ensemble — he ventured into different regions, decoding, documenting the migration stories and cultural heritage of different parts of Armenia. With his artistic vision, he transformed these collected traditions into a professional, dynamic expression of Armenian dance and presented



them on stage through Berd. He has created over 50 new dances, all which are considered as classical examples of Armenian national dance.

The dances trace their roots all the way through the history of the Armenian people — traditional Armenian dance reaches back thousands of years, with each movement passed down through tradition. Each dance is a story that serves as a testament to faith, resilience, and the radiant spirit of the people.

Through dance, Berd allows Armenians to journey deep into the heart and land of their ancestors, going back to Taron and Mush, Tigranakert and Vaspourakan, Musaler, Kharberd and Hamshen.

One of the ensemble's bigger milestones was marked in the year 2000, during its participation in the International Competition of Traditional and Folklore Dances in Dijon, France, where it competed against 25 other countries and brought home the Golden Medal.

The Armenians in the diaspora appear



to deeply value Berd's efforts and performances, as these events provide a powerful connection to Armenia, helping them maintain and preserve their Armenian identity from afar. This connection plays a key role in deciding where the ensemble performs next. Rena Gevorgyan, representative and communications lead of Berd, mentions how they actively consider the diasporan communities, often receiving direct requests for performances in their regions.

"The goal is to reach and perform at every Armenian community across the globe."

That being said, a large number of their audience members are non-Armenians, yet they are just as engaged.

With all the international acclaim, their achievements were celebrated at home as well, where they were recognized as the Berd "Honored" Dance Ensemble of Armenia while Boris Gevorgyan became an Honored People's Artist of the Republic of Armenia.

While staying true to its roots, the ensemble is constantly innovating, creating new dances and stage performances. If they're not on stage, they're preparing for the next show, ensuring that every piece they present is authentically Armenian. Berd believes that tradition holds endless inspiration — there are always new stories to uncover and history to draw inspiration from.

Today, the Ensemble has made its mark

not only in the Armenian communities but the global stage, captivating audiences in over 40 countries and performing for more than a million people worldwide. Their latest endeavor was their solo performance in France, at the Casino De Paris on March 2, 2025, with a packed hall and more than 1,500 attendees, the performance transported the audience to Armenia during the two unforgettable hours that the ensemble took over the stage.





INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Criminal Proceeding Launched into Azerbaijani Blogger's Presence in Yerevan

YEREVAN (News.am) — Armenian law enforcement agencies are investigating the circumstances behind the presence of an Azerbaijani blogger in downtown Yerevan, and the Investigative Committee of Armenia has launched a criminal proceeding into this case.

Kima Avdalyan, the press secretary of the Investigative Committee of Armenia, said on April 1 that a criminal proceeding has been initiated into this case under Section 2 of Article 422 of the Criminal Code of Armenia (public call to seize power, violate territorial integrity, or forcibly overthrow the constitutional order, made through publicly displayed works or mass media or using information or communication technologies).

On March 25, a video was circulated on the internet, according to which a young Azerbaijani man was freely walking around downtown Yerevan, and declaring that he is in a “historical city.” The National Security Service of Armenia has not made any public comment on this incident.

Vietnam Parliament Chair Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Vietnam's National Assembly (NA) Chairman Tran Thanh Man is visiting Armenia on April 1-5, the Armenian parliament's press service reported.

This marks the first official visit to Armenia by a top Vietnamese legislator since the two countries established diplomatic ties in 1992.

Viet Nam News, in an article about the upcoming visit, noted that it is expected to further deepen the relationship between the two countries.

High-Tech Minister Visits Estonia to Discuss Cybersecurity

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — At the initiative of the Ministry of High-Tech Industry of Armenia and at the invitation of the Estonian digital transformation consulting company Proud Engineers, a delegation led by Minister of High-Tech Industry Mkhitar Hayrapetyan arrived in Estonia on April 1.

The visit aims to study Estonia's advanced experience in digital governance, cybersecurity, and the digitalization of public services, as well as to facilitate discussions on deepening bilateral cooperation between Armenia and Estonia.

According to the Ministry of High-Tech Industry, the scheduled working discussions began on April 1. At the “e-Estonia Briefing” center, the Armenian delegation attended a presentation titled “General Theory of Estonia's Digital Transformation,” which covered the key mechanisms of digital governance and their effective application.



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and his wife visit the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan (Armenpress photo)

Armenia Welcomes German President

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/BERLIN — In the first presidential visit between the two nations, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier arrived with his wife, Elke Bundenbender, on March 30 in Yerevan. Although a German president is not the policy-maker and his office is considered ceremonial, the visit promised to be more than a gesture of protocol. Their schedule over two days included substantive talks in Yerevan with Steinmeier's counterpart, Armenian Presi-

dent Vahagn Khachaturyan, as well as with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and travel to other cities for meetings with representatives of Armenian industry, culture, and church.

The Steinmeiers began their tour with a visit on Monday morning March 31 to the Tsitsernakaberd memorial, where they laid wreaths in memory of the victims of the genocide against the Armenians. A delegation of UNICEF accompanied Germany's First Lady to the Children's Center of the Fund for Armenian Relief. FAR, a leading humanitarian aid organization founded after the 1988 earthquake disaster in Armenia, has continued to provide aid to families, children in need, local enterprises, educational institutions and much more. The purpose of her visit was

to learn more about the newly introduced Barnabus model for abused children, meet with displaced individuals from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), and gain insights from the social workers.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier was then received with military honors by his Armenian counterpart President Vahagn Khachaturyan, after which the two held official talks and a joint press conference. Steinmeier expressed Germany's support for Armenia's desire to develop relations with the European Union. Recently a large majority in the Armenian parliament voted

full confidence” on their bilateral agenda, which included sector cooperation, “security issues and current challenges,” further expansion of their partnership “including within the AM-EU framework.” Khachaturyan's hopes for expansion of bilateral economic relations, including in cutting-edge technologies, are well-founded; Steinmeier assured him of cooperation in this area, and, in the afternoon following lunch with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, they visited the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies.

In August 2018 then-Chancellor Angela Merkel had been to TUMO on her trip to the South Caucasus, and on return “imported” the project. Berlin opened the first German TUMO center in November 2020; since then, three more have followed, in Mannheim four years later, Hirschaid in early 2025, and Lüdenschaid this summer.

That evening, following a dinner offered by the prime minister, the German guests were taken on a tour of the exhibition in the Komitas Museum Institute. Steinmeier then addressed a cultural reception hosted by German Ambassador Claudia Busch and the official opening of the Yerevan Goethe Institute by its President Gesche Joost.

Not only the Armenians hosting the German president but perhaps even the Germans attending the event might have been surprised by the speech that Steinmeier delivered on March 31. As posted on the presidential website, he began with a poem:

“It is the thrushes as they sing,
The stirrings of my heart in spring;
I feel the spirits all around
Arising sweetly from the ground.
Life flows as if it were a dream,
I am as flower, leaf and tree.”

And he was the first to stress the point: “When a German Federal President stands in the Armenian capital and recites odes to spring penned in his home country,” he began, “then two things must be true. Spring is indeed here. And we are probably at the Komitas Museum-Institute, where German poetry — as we have just seen — very much has its place.”

The poem “April,” which he read in English translation, was written by German poet Theodor Storm and set to music by

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Visit to the Center for Creative Technologies TUMO Yerevan March 31, 2025 (photo Bundesregierung Marvin Gungör)

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in a third reading for a bill in favor of initiating the process of EU membership.

“Germany,” said Steinmeier, “would like to make its contribution toward Armenia's success in this direction,” adding that “the ambitious reform program of the Armenian government would certainly be required.” Although the country does not yet have candidate status, Khachaturyan stated, “We simply want to become a member of the European Union.” He went on to assure his guest, “I do not believe that you will find one single person in Armenia who would be opposed.”

On the platform formerly known as Twitter, Khachaturyan, expressing his “great pleasure to host Steinmeier” on his first visit, reported that they had “open and productive discussions in an atmosphere of



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Komitas while he was a student in Berlin. Steinmeier cited this, as well as other German poems the great composer transposed into music, as “powerful evidence of this most famous Armenian composer’s connection with Western verse as well as music, from Franz Schubert to Richard Strauss.” Steinmeier said the great musicologist and clergyman “embodies like no other this Biblical land between Asia and Europe, a country shaped by a millennia old culture that is at once Eastern and Christian, marked by a history full of suffering, persecution, and exile.”

Not only was his biography closely linked to the history of Armenia, Steinmeier continued, but also to Germany: “His ties to Berlin make Komitas a trailblazer in German-Armenian relations in the fields of culture, religion and academia.” Thus, the unique appropriateness of the venue for honoring the bilateral relations in culture.

The German president concluded with the good news of another step in the cultural dialogue: the Goethe Center will be converted into an official Goethe Institute this year, “where the German-Armenian friendship has a home.”

He noted the growing interest in German language studies in Armenia, “reflected not least in almost 50 bilateral university cooperation arrangements” as well as in Germany, which has become second choice of Armenian students for study abroad. Steinmeier expressed the hope that Armenian students might soon be studying at Leipzig university, perhaps a reference to an agreement just signed between Yerevan and Leipzig for a city partnership. At the same



Visit to the Armenian Church on Lake Sevan with Primate of the Armenian Church in Germany Bishop Serovpe' Isakhanyan (Photo Bundesregierung Marvin Güngör)

ny. And in Dilijan they saw the City Park Project for Renovation and Development. This project, initiated in 2022 to develop the city’s green public space, has been conducted with the active participation of local residents together with engineering, sociological, architectural, and other specialists.

Over lunch at a local restaurant, there was an opportunity to exchange ideas with local entrepreneurs.

And the afternoon program included a visit in Gegharkunik to a hydro-meteorological station being inaugurated as a joint project with the Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

The final day of the presidential visit

perspectives for a peace treaty. It is to be hoped that another important issue was put on the agenda: the liberation of Armenians being held in prison in Azerbaijan.

Prior to the trip, a leading human rights organization in Germany issued an appeal to Steinmeier, entitled “Federal President must work for the release of Armenian political prisoners.”

The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) called on Steinmeier to “stand up for the rights of displaced Armenians, the release of Armenian political prisoners, and a just

Sarah Reinke, head of the STP’s human rights work, expressed great concern regarding “Azerbaijan’s repressive policy at home and the country’s aggressive foreign policy, especially towards Armenia.”

The STP warns that the current peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan could amount to a “dictated peace.” “Armenians around the world are protesting against the conditions being discussed, as they came about under military and political pressure,” wrote Reinke.

Together with the Working Group on Recognition – Against Genocide, for International Understanding (AGA), the STP called on Steinmeier to “form his own critical picture of this process and the texts of the treaties” and to “advocate for the EU Border Observation Commission (EUMA) to remain on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.” The STP opposes the proposed treaty, on grounds that “Azerbaijan has no right to demand constitutional changes from Armenia, because these are a purely internal matter and could only take place via a referendum.”

The STP urged Steinmeier to work for the release of Armenian political prisoners imprisoned in Azerbaijan. “We have reports of the torture of the prisoners. The court hearings are a pure farce,” the letter reads. “Please use your trip to show your solidarity with and support for the dis-



President Steinmeier speaking at the Komitas Institute (Photo courtesy of Alexan Ter Minasyan)



(ABOVE l-r) Cerstin Gammelin, Spokesperson for the Federal President, Armin Laschet, Doerte Dinger, Head of the Office of the Federal President, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Thomas Bagger, State Secretary at the Federal Foreign Office, sit in the Prime Minister’s official residence on Republic Square during a meeting with the Prime Minister of Armenia, Pashinyan. Steinmeier and his wife visit Armenia and Azerbaijan during their three-day trip to the Caucasus. Bernd von Jutrczenka/dpa

time, Armenian TV broadcast the news that the rectors and prorectors of 19 German universities were hosted by the Armenian National University of Economics.

Church Leaders and Entrepreneurs

On April 1, the German guests left the capital for Lake Sevan, where they visited the Armenian church. Greeting them was Bishop Serovpe' Isakhanyan, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Germa-

concluded at Vagharshapat, the Holy See of Echmiadzin, with a meeting with Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

From Yerevan to Baku

The last stop on Steinmeier’s Caucasus tour is Baku, where his schedule included meetings with President Ilham Aliiev. The top agenda item is relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, with focus on the

peace order in the region during his trip to Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

Following the September 2023 attack by Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabakh, and the expulsion of more than 120,000 Armenians, 16 leading political figures were arrested. Since their trial on January 17, 2025, they have been incarcerated, including the three former presidents of Nagorno-Karabakh, Arayik Harutyunyan, Bako Sahakyan, and Arkady Rukasyan.

placed Armenians and to ensure that the illegally detained former political leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh are released,” the organizations appeal.

In addition to the peace treaty, Steinmeier’s official agenda for the Baku stop included an exchange with Christian, Muslim, and Jewish religious figures on “Understanding and Tolerance among Religions,” as well as a discussion about women in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan’s Pro-Government Media Amplifies Weeks-Old Threat Over Armenia Peace Talks

GUNSHOTS, from page 1

Kamela Ohanyan, a woman from Khnatsakh, said she was woken up by the sound of gunfire on Sunday night.

“There was shooting again at night,” Ohanyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service by phone. “It happened several times and for a long time.”

Residents of Khnatsakh as well as the nearby village of Khoznavar reported gun-

fire from nearby Azerbaijani army positions for several consecutive nights last week. They said the gunshots were mainly fired into the air from around 10 pm until the early hours of the next morning. Defense Minister Suren Papikyan downplayed the significance of the gunshots, saying that they are “not directed towards Armenia.”

Azerbaijan began accusing Armenia of violating the ceasefire regime on a daily

basis just a few days after the two sides finalized on March 13 a bilateral peace treaty. Armenian opposition figures and pundits suggested that the accusations, denied by Yerevan, are aimed at preparing the ground for a military attack on Armenia or forcing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to make more concessions.

Yerevan already made a number of concessions to remove the remaining dis-

agreements on the text of the draft treaty. It has repeatedly appealed to Baku to promptly sign the treaty.

Baku has set a number of conditions for that, notably a change of Armenia’s constitution which it says contains territorial claims to Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry reiterated on Monday that the constitution is “the main obstacle” to peace.



INTERNATIONAL

Report on Destruction Of Artsakh Heritage Presented in Greece

ATHENS (Panorama.am) — On March 28, the Armenian Embassy in Greece, in collaboration with the Greek-Armenian Friendship Association, hosted an event titled “Identity Transformation and the Destruction of Armenian Monuments in Artsakh.” The event featured a report by historian and cultural heritage expert Armine Tigranyan, a lecturer at Yerevan State University, who stressed the urgent need to protect Artsakh’s cultural heritage from systematic erasure and appropriation by Azerbaijan.

“This was a crucial event because the issue of Artsakh’s endangered monuments was raised not just within Armenian circles but on an international platform,” Tigranyan told [Panorama.am](#) in an interview. “After years of global silence, we have reignited awareness of the destruction of Artsakh’s heritage.”



Armine Tigranyan

She highlighted that the Armenian Embassy in Greece explicitly condemned Azerbaijan’s policies and sent a clear message to UNESCO, urging it to take action.

In her report, Tigranyan detailed Azerbaijan’s deliberate destruction, desecration and appropriation of Armenian heritage sites, including churches, historical cemeteries and *khachkars* (cross-stones).

“The hostility towards Artsakh’s cultural heritage is not merely an attack on monuments; it is a denial of identity and an infringement on individual and collective rights,” she asserted.

The historian emphasized that Azerbaijan’s multi-vector strategy seeks to erase every aspect of Armenian cultural identity. It includes physical destruction of spiritual and cultural heritage (churches, *khachkars*, inscriptions, relief sculptures), erasure of victory and genocide memory (monuments from Artsakh’s independence era, memorials dedicated to the Artsakh Liberation War, the Armenian Genocide and World War II), elimination of historical traces (cemeteries, entire districts and villages) and destruction of global heritage sites (museums and contemporary cultural landmarks).

Tigranyan stressed that the destruction of cultural heritage violates the cultural rights of the displaced Artsakh Armenians.

“Respecting cultural rights means ensuring that people can freely participate in their cultural life without interference or exclusion,” Tigranyan stated. “Heritage must be preserved, developed, enriched and passed on to future generations as a testament to human experience and aspirations.”

She quoted a statement by former UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova: “There is no need to choose between saving lives and preserving cultural heritage. The two are inseparable.”

Echoing this sentiment, Tigranyan stated: “The destruction of heritage means killing a people twice.”

The event also featured speeches by Armenian Ambassador to Greece Tigran Mkrtchyan and President of the Greek-Armenian Friendship Association Antonis Pavlidis.

Writer, Photographer Karine Armen Presents Book in Spain

By Karine Armen

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

CUENCA, Spain — On Sunday, March 9, Karine Armen gave a book presentation in Cuenca, Spain at a program organized by the Garcia and Chico Foundation, hosted by writer and activist Luz Gonzalez Rubio. A reception followed the presentation.

Armen talked in Spanish about her photography, traveling alone around the world and writing articles as well as poetry. She read some of her poems in English, and an English professor translated each poem on the spot. The Spanish audience asked questions about Armenian culture and cultural identity.

Armen met Gonzalez Rubio, who has published several books about women’s rights, in Los Angeles 23 years ago. They kept in touch and met in Madrid several times. In August 2007, they attended the Women In Black conference in Valencia, Spain. She wrote an article about attending the peace conference, which was published in the *Armenian Reporter*.

In February 2025, Armen published her collection of English poems, *A Mosaic of Words*.

Armen has a master’s degree in education and a bachelor’s in social work and photography. She was an elementary school teacher for 32 years.

The primary purpose of her trip was to pass her books to the Armenian communities of Spain. In 2010, Armen published a book called *Inner Heaven* about her mother, Berjik Kurkjian, who had written self-help articles in Farsi, pub-



Karine Armen and Aghavni Grigoryan

lished in *Fogholadeh* magazine in Los Angeles. Kurkjian died at the age of 57 from spinal cancer in 1990.

Karine said, “One of my Peruvian coworkers asked me to translate it into Spanish so she that could send it to Peru. That comment planted the seed for publishing the book in Spanish,” she said. She used Google Translate, and her Chilean friend, Ruby Jackson, edited the Spanish version called *Paraiso Interior*. Karine published the pocket-size Spanish version in February of 2024 and took some copies to Costa Rica. But she still wanted to connect with the Armenians in Spain.

“I am thankful to the caring people who connected me with active members of the Armenian communities in Spain,” Karine said. She met Aghavni Grigoryan, a musician and writer from Madrid. Aghavni introduced her to several Armenians in other parts of Spain.

She visited the Armenian Sunday school in Valencia and passed her books to the principal and the teachers. She also met with the teacher of the Hayq Armenian Dance School in Barcelona.

“My mission was accomplished. I had a book presentation and met with active Armenians in Spain,” she said. “Traveling with a purpose is energizing for me,” she added.



The Spanish audience with Karine in Cuenca, Spain

Pope Francis Approves Canonization of Archbishop Killed During Genocide

VATICAN (Panorama.am) — Pope Francis has cleared the way for the canonization of Catholic Archbishop Ignatius Choukrallah Maloyan, who was murdered during the Armenian genocide, Vatican News reported on April 1.

He was born in 1869 in Mardin, in present-day Turkey. Ordained a priest in 1883 in Lebanon, he took the name Ignatius and became known as an excellent preacher in both Arabic and Turkish, devoting himself to parish ministry and the study of sacred texts in Alexandria, Egypt.

In 1911, Pope Pius X appointed him Archbishop of Mardin during the Synod of Armenian Bishops in Rome, which examined the situation in Turkey after the rise of the Young Turks movement.



After Turkish forces entered the First World War, Archbishop Maloyan was arrested along with 13 priests and 600 other Christians in the tumult that included forced enlistments and harassment against Christians, particularly Armenian Christians.

Maloyan and his companions were executed on June 3, 1915, when they refused to renounce the faith. He was beatified by Pope St. John Paul II on October 7, 2001.

Azerbaijan’s Pro-Government Media Amplifies Weeks-Old Threat Over Armenia Peace Talks

THREATS, from page 1
outlets have also picked up the story in recent days without explanation.

During the press conference in Buenos Aires, Amirbayov said Azerbaijan had ‘called on Armenia to speed up the process of signing a peace agreement, noting that such an opportunity will not exist indefinitely’.

‘One of the factors that pushed Armenia to reach an agreement is the realization that this chance may disappear’, he said.

His comments had originally come a day after Armenia and Azerbaijan announced they had finalized the terms of what could be a historic peace agreement.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on March 26.)



Community News

Elyse Semerdjian to Speak at NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host a hybrid (in-person and online) lecture in observance of the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide by Dr. Elyse Semerdjian of Clark University, titled “April 24: The Origins of Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day,” on Thursday, April 24, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern) / 4:30 (Pacific), at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

The program is open to all and free of charge.

There will be a Musical Prelude by pianist Tanya Barteveyan prior to the lecture, and a reception will follow the program.

Semerdjian’s lecture will outline the genesis of Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day on April 24. Beginning with the first official commemoration of Armenian survivors in post-war Istanbul, the lecture will examine both official and unofficial commemoration activities, which will be reconstructed with archival photographs, memoirs and letters. From the Armenian Genocide Memorial (Tsitsernakaberd) in Yerevan



Dr. Elyse Semerdjian

to the efforts to construct the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Holy Martyrs Church in Der el-Zor, Semerdjian will offer a history of Armenian memory and ritual activities in the killing fields of the Syrian Desert and beyond.

Semerdjian is the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. She is a social historian of the Ottoman Empire whose research focuses on the experiences of women and the empire’s Armenian subjects. She is the author of “*Off the Straight Path*”: *Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (Syracuse University Press, 2008) and *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide* (Stanford University Press, 2023) as well as articles on gender, Ottoman Armenians, urban history, and law in the Ottoman Empire.

This will be an in-person event and also presented online live via Zoom (Registration: <https://bit.ly/41Vy-0DK>) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/c/ArmenianStudies).



Dr. Sergio La Porta (photo Aram Arkun)

La Porta Explores Christian-Muslim Relations In Medieval Armenia

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Dr. Sergio La Porta presented a lecture titled “When Things Fall Apart: Disentangling Christian-Muslim Relations in Medieval Armenia” at the Baikar Center in Watertown, for the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Boston Chapter on March 25. The talk was organized with the support of Dean Shahinian and cosponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Armenian Cultural Foundation,

After the loss of Armenian independence with the fall of the Bagratuni and Artsruni kingdoms in the Armenian highlands, Turkic and Kurdish populations moved into majority Armenian-populated areas during the chaotic 12th century. La Porta examined Christian-Muslim relations in the Armenian highlands in this period through four brief stories, the first two of which were related as episodes in histories written in the 13th century, 100-150 years after the events they describe, and the last two as martyrologies not usually used as historical sources. La Porta accompanied his talk with PowerPoint illustrations.

The first tale, from Vardan Areveltsi’s *Historical Chronicle* (written AD 1268), concerned Grigor, the keeper of the keys of the Armenian cathedral of the city of Ani. While passing a Turkmen encampment outside the city of Dvin, Grigor praises Christ and at first is imprisoned. However, he is released by Fadlun, the Kurdish ruler of Ani and Dvin after being frightened by a vision at night. La Porta speculates that Grigor may have been proselytizing, while Fadlun, who had an Armenian Bagratuni grandmother and great-grandmother, may have had personal reasons for sparing Grigor.

A story from a slightly later period written by Kirakos of Gandzak (1203-72) as part of his *History*, took place in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Catholicosate of the Caucasian Albanians. Catholicos Stepanos sent a bishop to Gandzak to collect income from the priests and Christian city dwellers. The emir or ruler of the city, named Gurji Badradin, asks the bishop to summon the catholicos to bless the waters. Indeed, he does, but when the Muslims of the city see the catholicos pour oil into the water, they fear he is trying to convert them, and lock both him and the emir up. They inform the emir’s superior, the *atabeg* in Isfahan, who orders the emir to be sent to him.

La Porta observes that in fact, the blessing of the waters is a service which is part of the celebration of Christ’s baptism — a major Christian religious ceremony — which explains the panic of the local Muslims. Moreover, Badradin is called Gurji, or “Georgian,” implying some kind of connection with the expanding Christian Georgian kingdom to the north.

These first two stories, therefore, indicate an attempt to minimize the appearance of both Muslim anxiety over being converted and the existence of local rulers with some sort of connections to Christians. Both stories are preserved in 13th-century Armenian historical works.

Unlike these two stories, in two accounts of martyrdoms that are said to occur in the same period, and in fact were written down only a couple of decades after the events they purport to recount, Christian agency is highlighted. The focus is also on ordinary people, not elites as in the first two stories.

see LA PORTA, page 8

Armenian Assembly, Western Diocese Partner at Event ‘Honoring Our Heroes’ in LA

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) and Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America partnered for the “Honoring Our Heroes” luncheon and blessing event honoring the brave men and women of the Los Angeles County Police and Fire Departments, on Sunday, March 23, at the St. Gregory Armenian Church in Pasadena.

The event, which was attended by officers and firefighters from the Pasadena Police and Fire departments and the Glendale Fire Department, paid tribute to all the men and women of Los Angeles County Police and Fire Departments for their heroism during the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires, and shared gratitude for their heroic efforts to protect their communities on a daily basis.



Assemblyman John Harabedian (AD-41) addressing honorees and luncheon attendees, after offering special certificates in their honor

“We are proud to partner with the Western Diocese and bring our community together to honor our true heroes, the men and women of LA County fire and police departments, whose heroism was on display at an unprecedented level during the wildfires last January,” said Assembly Western Region Director David Ojakian. “This event, made more meaningful by the attendance of elected officials, was an opportunity to share our appreciation for the risks they take daily to keep our communities safe, and to offer a special prayer and blessing for their safety and protection.”

Armenian Assembly SCRC, LACRC, Western Region Director David Ojakian, Event Co-Chair Delilah Shahbazian, Archpriest Sarkis Petoyan, Sarkis Nazerian, and community-wide co-sponsors with First Responder honorees, alongside Pasadena Mayor Victor Gordo, State Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, State Assemblyman John Harabedian, and Field Representative Sean Regan of Rep. Brad Sherman’s office, following the luncheon in honor of

The luncheon following the church service featured remarks by Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), Sean Regan, Field Rep. for Congressman Brad Sherman’s office (D-CA), State Senator Sasha Renée Pérez (D-CA), State Assemblyman John Harabedian (D-CA), and Pasadena Mayor Victor Gordo.

see FIREFIGHTERS, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

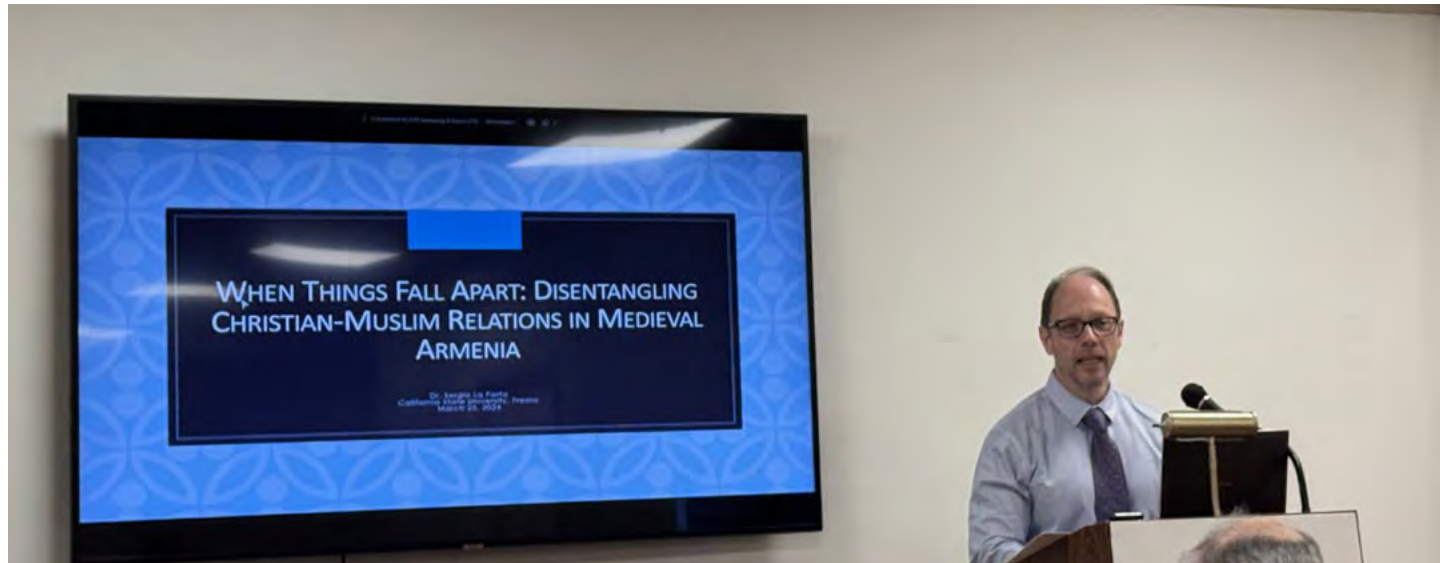
La Porta Explores Christian-Muslim Relations in Medieval Armenia

LA PORTA, from page 7

The martyrology of Hovsep of Dvin, a Persian or Kurdish Muslim immigrant to Armenia who converted to Christianity and was rebuffed by various monasteries who were not convinced of his sincerity and feared reprisal from the Muslim authorities, takes place on the banks of the Araxes River close to the foot of Mt. Ararat

Finally, the 1167 martyrdom by stoning of Khosrov, a Christian wrongfully accused of impregnating a Muslim neighbor in the small town of Arkhanashen outside of Gandzak, where the population was half Muslim and half Christian, ends with Khosrov's relics and the wood of the mulberry tree on which he had been tied healing both Muslims and Christians. Thus, physical neighbors who were turned hostile to one another were again united through the spiritual realm — and this story ultimately does encourage the spiritual conversion of Muslims to Christianity.

La Porta concluded that all four stories show Christians and Muslims living connected lives in urban/suburban areas in which violence was not the usual state of affairs. It seems that Christians were ready



Dr. Sergio La Porta at the Baikar Center (photo Dr. Aida Yavshayan)

to proselytize among Muslims in this period when Christian Georgian power was growing, but this was not sanctioned by ecclesiastical elites who downplayed this in revisions of the original stories.

La Porta answered questions from the audience during a formal session after his presentation and continued to informally talk with guests for long after during the

reception period.

TCA Executive Director Aram Arkun served as the evening's moderator. He noted at the start of the evening that La Porta, a fellow New Yorker, attended Columbia University as an undergraduate and was not a stranger to Boston, as he received his doctorate from Harvard University.

La Porta, who traveled to Washington

D.C. to give a second talk two days later, is currently the acting dean of the Kremen School of Education and Human Development at California State University, Fresno. Prior to assuming this role, he was the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities and the Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies.

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



Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents

“Remnants”: Armenian Genocide April 11 Lecture

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



with author **Elyse Semerdjian**

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

7 p.m. Friday at the Baikar Center

755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA

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



Tekeyan Metro LA Chapter Screens Film On Egyptian Armenians

ALTADENA, Calif. — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Metro Los Angeles Chapter screened the film “We Are Egyptian Armenians” on Sunday, March



Talene Hachikian of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro LA Chapter gives former Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Egypt Armen Melkonian a gift after the event

20, cosponsored by the California Kalousdian-Noubarian-Boghosian Armenian Schools of Egypt Alumni Association. Former Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Egypt Armen Melkonian spoke about this historically important diasporan Armenian community after the film. TCA Metro LA Chapter Secretary Hrant Vartzbedian served as master of ceremonies and Rubina Tabakian of the cosponsoring alumni association also spoke.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly, Western Diocese Partner at Event ‘Honoring Our Heroes’ in Los Angeles

FIREFIGHTERS, from page 7
Gordo, with each official sharing his or her gratitude for the efforts of the first responders who saved lives during the wildfires, and offering certificates honoring each officer and firefighter.

Delilah Shahbazian, Assembly Los Angeles County Regional Committee Member who served as the luncheon event’s Co-Chair, emphasized the “bravery, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment” of the first responders who “inspire us all.”

“It is an honor to come together as a community to recognize and celebrate our heroes, and we are grateful to our co-sponsor organizations who joined this mission, demonstrating the true spirit of unity and service.”

Fellow Assembly LA County Regional Committee Member and event Co-Chair Ellen Vartanian highlighted that “events like these are essential,” and that “our first responders dedicate so much to protecting and serving our community, and honoring them through these gatherings is the least we can do to show our gratitude and give back.”

“St. Gregory parish, as well as the Western Diocese, remain grateful for the opportunity to partner with the Armenian Assembly to acknowledge the dedication of the first responders who protected life and property during the Eaton Canyon Fire,” said Rev. Fr. Sarkis Petyan, Pastor of the St. Gregory Armenian Church in Pasadena, California.

The event brought together various Armenian organizations to honor the first responders and provide a platform for community members to have a meet and greet with them and with local officials.

The Armenian Assembly of America received a Certificate of Congressional Recognition from Rep. Judy Chu in recognition of the organization’s “high standards of excellence and outstanding achievements,” as well as its “unwavering commitment to uplifting the heroes of the 2025 Los Angeles Wildfires.”

State Senator Sasha Renée Pérez shared gratitude and thanks to the first responder honorees and offered special certificates in their honor



Pasadena Fire and Police and Glendale Fire Engine 21 with Archpriest Fr. Sarkis Petyan, pastor of St. Gregory Armenian Church, Archpriest Fr. Moushegh Tashjian, St. Gregory Pasadena Parish Council Chair Sarkis Nazerian, and altar servers following a special blessing service for the protection of the first responders

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.

Donation

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* thanks Vahe Artinian for his \$100 donation.

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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

ԳԻՆԵՋՈՒ-BOOK LAUNCH

WITH PROF. BARLOW DER MUGRDECHIAN
ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM, FRESNO STATE

WITH HONORED GUEST HONORABLE FRANCO ZIMMERLI

HONORARY CONSUL OF SWITZERLAND IN LOS ANGELES



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

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



Sunday, April 27, 2025 • 5:00PM
Western Diocese of the Armenian Church
3325 N. Glenoaks Blvd., Burbank, CA
Յայտագիրը Անգլերէնով եւ Հայերէնով



COMMUNITY NEWS

AIWA Awards More than \$80,000 in Scholarships to Women Worldwide

BOSTON — The Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) has announced the names of more than 40 recipients of a total of over \$80,000 in scholarship aid for the 2024-2025 academic year. Applications are now open for the 2025-2026 academic year.

The AIWA scholarship program is international, and recipients this year hail from eight different countries. Most students are from the United States and Armenia, but several other countries are represented as well: Lebanon, Canada, Great Britain, France, Turkey and Germany. The higher educational institutions attended by these students are equally international, ranging from North America to Europe, the Middle East and Armenia.

The fields of study pursued by scholarship recipients this year are also diverse, including law and politics, as well as biology and medicine, arts, social sciences, and education. In addition, a number of awardees are advancing in traditionally male-dominated fields such as finance, management, computer science, and engineering.

AIWA scholarships are based on financial need and merit, and are funded by endowments as well as ongoing donations. Scholarships are available to women of Armenian descent who are attending higher educational institutions at the level of college junior or above. Applications are due on April 18, and awards are announced in the late spring.

New in 2024 was the establishment of the Arline Arpine Kharajian scholarship endowment, thanks to the generosity of the Kharajian family of Arlington and Watertown, Mass. and Nashua, NH. With this scholarship fund, the Kharajian family and AIWA will support Armenian women pursuing studies in health care with a focus on eradicating diseases, and those studying to become social workers focused on the well-being of women and children. The family seeks to support scholars in Syria, Lebanon, and the United States, and to have a meaningful impact on communities facing challenges related to health and social welfare.

The new Arline Arpine Kharajian scholarship endowment, in the amount of \$20,000, honors the values and commitment to service of its namesake, who passed away in 2021. She was born in Aleppo, Syria, and came to the United States in 1969, settling in Arlington with her husband Eli and children Ani and Ara. She was a welcoming and enthusiastic supporter of AIWA and other Armenian organizations, events and initiatives in the Greater Boston area. The Kharajian family continues her legacy of service: her daughter, Ani Kharajian, was an AIWA board member and former AIWA president; one granddaughter, Torie

nes K. Missirian, an early AIWA member and advocate for women's rights. Over the years, donations have been made in the names of Lucy Kasparian Aharonian (for students in the sciences), Nshan and Margrit Atinjian, Ethel Jaferian Duffett, Rose "Azad" Hovannesian, Arpine Kharajian (for a student in the health sciences), Eva and Jack Medzorian (with a preference for students from the Tavush Region), Arshalous Tashjian Medzorian, Dr. Carolann S. and George Najarian, Hripsime Parsekian (for a student in the field of International Relations), Azniv Melidonian Renjilian, Mary V. Toumayan, and the Hinckley Allen Women's Forum.

The AIWA-Los Angeles Affiliate awarded five Hasmik Mrdichian Scholarships this year, along with an additional grant and four Glendale Community College scholarships. AIWA's New England affiliate awards scholarships including the Olga Proudian Scholarship for diplomacy, and the Nina and Raffi Festekjian scholarship.

AIWA, along with its San Francisco affiliate, also supports tuition aid for students at the American University of Armenia for studies in computer science. The John Mirak Foundation also supports multiple scholarships in memory of Alice Kanlian Mirak.

AIWA scholarships provide unique opportunities for donors to remember a loved one while at the same time providing recognition and much-needed financial assistance to young Armenian women students pursuing higher education and preparing for careers.

A full list of 2024's scholarship recipients, along with instructions and a link to the online application can be found on the AIWA website, <https://www.aiwainternational.org/scholarships>.



The Kharajian family, who funded an AIWA scholarship endowment this year, photographed in January 2020. Left to right: Arline Arpine Kharajian, Ani Kharajian, Westley Abruzzese, Becca Kharajian Abruzzese, and Torie Kharajian.

Kharajian, served as AIWA board treasurer, and another, Rebecca Kharajian Abruzzese, is former AIWA New England treasurer.

AIWA's scholarship program was initiated in 1996 with an award in memory of Bentley University professor Ag-

ST. LEON ARMENIAN CHURCH
&
TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
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ANTON CHEKHOV'S
The Marriage Proposal
A Comedy Directed by
HAROUT CHATMAJIAN

*Performed in Armenian
with English Subtitles*

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MAY 10, 2025**

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ANTON CHEKHOV'S
The Marriage Proposal
A Comedy Directed by
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Dr. Bedross Der Matossian To Discuss Denial of the Armenian Genocide in the Digital Age

FRESNO — Historian Dr. Bedross Der Matossian will speak on "Denial of the Armenian Genocide in the Digital Age: Refashioning the 'Events of 1915' on the Internet and Beyond" on Friday, April 11, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center (5245 N. Backer Ave.), Alice Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus.

His presentation is sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program and supported by the Florence Elaine Hamparson Armenian Memorial Fund.

This lecture examines the role of the internet in the denial of the Armenian Genocide, focusing on how both the Turkish state and non-state actors utilize digital platforms to spread misinformation and distort the historical facts surrounding the 1915 events. It contrasts methods of genocide denial in traditional printed materials with strategies employed in the digital realm, emphasizing the unique features of the internet that make it an effective tool for the dissemination of false narratives. The lecture investigates key online platforms — including websites, social media, and digital forums — used by pro-Turkish actors to promote denial and revisionism, and explores how these efforts contribute to the global distortion of history. By analyzing these tactics, the lecture aims to highlight the dangerous implications of digital propaganda and the ways in which it perpetuates historical amnesia, undermining efforts toward justice and recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem, Der Matossian is a Professor of Modern Middle East History and the Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He is the author, editor and co-editor of seven books. His most recent edited volume, *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century*, was published by the University of Nebraska Press in 2023.

The presentation is free and open to the public.

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



Dr. Bedross Der Matossian



COMMUNITY NEWS

Prof. Maranci Speaks on Destruction of Artsakh’s Monuments at ARF Anniversary Event

By Kenneth Martin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

CHELMSFORD, Mass. — Hundreds gathered on March 22 at the St. Vartanantz church hall to mark the 130th anniversary of the founding of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), at a program sponsored by the Lowell Aharonian Gomideh (committee) is part of a series of presentations on Armenian history, life and culture.

Lowell was the birthplace of the ARF in North America in 1895.

Opening the program was began after an introduction Dr. Ara Jeknavorian, the Merrimack Valley Armenian National Commit-



Prof. Christina Maranci with Dr. Ara Jeknavorian (Kenneth Martin photo)

tee co-chair, who spoke about the founding of the Lowell ARF Chapter and the work of the members, along with the Armenian National Committee, to present the Armenian Cause locally and nationally. Next, Lowell Gomideh chairman Stepan Dulgarian, wel-

comed the audience with opening remarks and recognized 50th year ARF members.

The keynote speaker was Prof. Christina Maranci, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, who addressed the tragic destruction of Artsakh’s cultural heritage.

Ani Babaian, Gomideh member and curators at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), introduced Maranci.

Maranci began her illustrated lecture with a brief history of the loss of Armenian territories in Western Armenia and Nakhichevan (Nakhijevan), and the continuing destruction of nearly all traces of Armenian physical and cultural habitation in the region since the 2023 loss of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) to the Azerbaijani military forces.

She spoke about the documentation and inventory of many sites, including churches, cemeteries, cultural and religious centers, museums, villages and major buildings in the capital Stepanakert, which has been named recently. The human, cultural and financial losses to the residents of Artsakh and the Armenian nation are huge.

She made a comparison to similar erasure of Armenian culture in Armenian lands in what is now Turkey over the past century, with photographs showing the condition of Armenian ancient buildings there. In many cases, as often being in stable condition and still functioning in Armenian regions under Turkish control, and the intentional destruction by the Turkish military, treasure hunters, and others. Later, images of



Prof. Christina Maranci (Kenneth Martin photo)

demolition of sites, properties, and memorials in Artsakh, many monitored by satellite photos, show complete erasure of many sites by the government of Azerbaijan.

She also noted the work done by the Cornell University’s Caucasus Heritage Watch, which is monitoring the situation as it unfolds and continues.



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Arts & Culture

Golden Thread Productions and Hakawati NGO Present World Premiere of 'Azad' in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO — Golden Thread Productions, the first American theatre company devoted to the Middle East, and Hakawati NGO, a nonprofit dedicated to bridging divides in the Middle East and beyond, are proud to present the world premiere of the play "Azad" (the rabbit and the wolf). This kaleidoscopic multimedia performance is written by Syrian-Armenian-American theatre and film artist Sona Tatoyan in collaboration with two-time Obie Award-winning theater director and multimedia designer Jared Mezzocchi.

"Azad" (the rabbit and the wolf) features a revelatory fusion of ancient Karagöz shadow puppetry, indigenous Middle Eastern folk music, oral storytelling, video projection, and movement. The result is an immersive, autobiographical, theatrical experience performed by Tatoyan herself alongside a tribe of 120-year-old Karagöz puppets and world-renowned oud player Ara Dinkjian.

Performances will take place April 11 – May 3, at Potrero Stage (1695 18th Street, San Francisco), with an opening night set for Monday, April 14 at 8 p.m. The performance sched-



Sona Tatoyan

ule is Wednesday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. Tickets, which start at \$20 for previews, \$30 for regular performances. Tickets can be purchased at www.goldenthread.org.

In 2019, Tatoyan found herself stranded in her family's abandoned Aleppo home during the Syrian war.

At the same time, her dear friend and mentor, Turkish human rights activist Osman Kavala, had been recently jailed and was facing a possible life sentence. While confronting historical trauma and the present-day tragedies of her friends and family, Tatoyan discovers her great-great-grandfather's handmade Karagöz shadow puppets, salvaged from the Armenian Genocide. Guided by the spirit of Scheherazade from see AZAD, page 13



A scene with Anna Maxim as Nazik Avdalyan

Anna Maxim Discusses Career and Weightlifting Film 'The Reverse Side of the Medal'

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Actress, director and scriptwriter Anna Maxim Harutyunyan spoke at the Capitol Theater in Arlington after each of the two screenings of her new film, "The Reverse Side of the Medal," (in Armenian with English subtitles) on February 6 and 9, which was organized by the Boston-area Hay Cultural Alliance (HCA).

Later in February, Maxim, as she is now known professionally, gave an interview to the *Mirror-Spectator* about her career and how she wrote, directed and starred in her latest movie, which won "Best Feature Film" in Toronto's 2024 Pomegranate Film Festival.

"The Reverse Side of the Medal" is a biopic telling the inspiring story of weightlifter Nazik Avdalyan, a native of Gyumri. A world champion who won a gold medal in the 2009 World Weightlifting Championships in South Korea, she was forced to stop competing for seven years after a serious car accident but nevertheless overcame all physical and mental obstacles to win a gold medal at the European Weightlifting Championships in Norway. This is the first major sports drama film made in Armenia.

During the question-and-answer session after one of the screenings, Maxim was asked what led her to choose Avdalyan's story to turn into a film. She said that she was always involved in sports as an amateur and one day when she experienced a minor injury, she asked her trainer how athletes manage to overcome serious pain to keep competing. At that point, she immediately thought of Avdalyan's well-known story and saw how it could become a film with universal appeal, since every person has goals and faces obstacles to realizing these goals.

She elaborated that the film has multiple layers and meanings, "but the most important message of the film for me is twofold: first, not to give up, and second, that a person, independent of whether he is a man or woman, should not deprive himself from the possibility of trying. She [Avdalyan] says something in the film which is very precious for me. When her husband asks, 'are you convinced that you will win,' she says, 'I just want to try.'" Maxim said that she felt that people who only live a safe life lose a lot, because great deeds require great risks.

Although the protagonist is a woman, Maxim said, the film's message applies equally to men and women. "As far as women are concerned, I am not a feminist, and there is no special message directed at women. The protagonist is a person, independent of gender."

During the discussion at the theater, she noted the specifically Armenian significance of the film, especially in the current difficult circumstances for Armenia politically. She recalled, "When the idea came to me and I assembled a team, I said that we must be aware that this film is not only about our good champion Nazik Avdalyan but about our hymn, anthem and tricolor."

She said, "I think it is important that films with similar themes will be viewed a lot as I consider that culture, especially through film and through its accessibility has great power and it can disseminate [Armenian] national [azgayin or nationalist] ideology. My goal is for this to be disseminated also outside the borders of Armenia."

see MAXIM, page 14

ACF Salutes Armenian Women Composers

ARLINGTON, Mass. — In world music, the millennia-old Armenian history records the legacy of two Armenian women musicians: Sahakdukht and Khosrovidukht, who lived in the 8th century. Hymnographers, poets, and pedagogues, they have left a treasury of ecclesiastical poems as well as liturgical chants.

In tribute to Armenian woman composers, on Sunday, April 13 at 5 p.m., the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF), in cooperation with Amaras Art Alliance, Armenian Women's International Association (AIWA), and Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), New England District, will be presenting a piano recital by internationally renowned pianist Şahan Arzruni at the Robbins Memorial Town Hall in Arlington.

The program will include wide range of compositional styles of works by world-renowned Armenian women composers from Armenia and Diaspora, including, Lucaper (Lucy) Hazarabedian (1863-1855), arguably the first Armenian woman composer to write for piano in modern times and Koharik Gazarossian (1907-1967), from Scutari and Constantinople in Turkey, respectively; Gayane Chebotaryan (1918-1998), "grande dame of Armenian music" and Geghuni Chitchyan (b 1929) two of the most pivotal figures in classical music in Armenia; Alicia Terzian (b 1934) from Cordoba, Argentina; Sirvart Karamanuk (1912-2008), also from Scutari, Turkey; Sirvart Kazandjian from Ethiopia (1944-2020); and Mary Kouyoumdjian (b 1983) of Beirut, Lebanon.

Arzruni has achieved recognition as a composer, ethnomusicologist, teacher, lecturer, writer, recording artist, broadcasting personality, producer and impresario. He has toured in these capacities throughout North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australia. Arzruni has become a familiar figure through many television broadcasts, such as Johnny Carson and Mike Douglas Shows. He has been featured in a number of PBS specials — Around the World in '82, Gala of Stars and A Place of Dreams: Carnegie Hall at 100 — and has recorded for European radio networks, including the BBC. Arzruni has given command performances at the White House, as well as the British, Danish, Swedish and Icelandic courts.

In recognition of his invaluable contribution to the Armenian musical heritage, Catholicos of All Karakin I in 1996, bestowed upon him an encyclical and the St. Sahak and St. Mesrob Medal. In 2015, the president of the Republic of Armenia awarded him the Movses Khorenatsi Medal for exceptional achievement in cultural development.

This program is the first of the Mirak Chamber Music series.



ARTS & CULTURE

Golden Thread Productions and Hakawati NGO Present World Premiere of ‘Azad’

AZAD, from page 12

One Thousand and One Nights, the puppets act as a bridge between Osman’s work to heal the ruptures of various indigenous communities of Anatoliakara, the war that surrounds Tatoyan, and the greater human experience. The puppets unveil bawdy, hilarious and harrowing tales that transport Sona through an intergenerational, psychedelic journey, alchemizing a radiant truth: stories, when reimagined, possess the power to transmute trauma to healing.

“At a time when our communities are reeling from the livestreamed Palestinian genocide, presenting Sona’s story of survival, intergenerational trauma, and healing holds powerful resonance,” says Golden Thread Executive Artistic Director Sahar Assaf. “‘Azad’ inspires resilience and reminds us of the importance of collective healing to build towards social justice and more compassionate communities. We’re honored to collaborate with Hakawati to present the world premiere of this important piece.”

At the heart of the play is a collection of 180 Karagöz shadow puppets. These ancient puppets are symbols of survival and the ongoing refugee experience. Abkar, a storyteller and survivor of the Armenian Genocide, was forced to leave his home in 1915, but he salvaged both his family and his art. Today, these same 120-year-old puppets, discovered in the attic of Tatoyan’s family home in Aleppo, find themselves as refugees once more — this time, displaced by the violence and destruction of the Syrian war.

“When I found my great-great grandfather’s Karagöz shadow puppets that he saved from the Armenian Genocide, I had this epiphany,” said Tatoyan. “All my life, I’ve been identifying with the trauma of my inheritance, but these puppets, storytelling, are also my inheritance. This ancient technology allows me to navigate that trauma, transmute it. I believe I was summoned back to Aleppo to find these puppets, to build on the work of Osman Kavala, and to enter into a quantum collaboration with my great-great grandfather on a story that



Puppets in the play

serves as a spell. We’re creating a space together to heal.”

“Working with Sona and this cast of amazing Karagöz puppets (which, of course, speaks to the brilliant puppeteers who bring them to life), I am profoundly moved by this project and the innovative ways we are seeking to tell these stories in this crucial moment of global politics,” said Jared Mezzocchi. “Blending the ancient technology of shadowplay with contemporary multimedia design, ‘Azad’ has a one-of-a-kind opportunity to actualize a multi-century collaboration between innovations of the past and present, in hopes to offer audiences a new way of thinking about the future of theatrical storytelling and the obligation we have as artists to inspire the global community to take better care of one another.”

The creative team includes world-renowned oud player Ara Dinkjian, Karagöz creative consultant and puppet maker Ayhan Hulagu, puppeteers Vinny Mraz and Kalli Siringas, scenic designer Marcelo Martínez García, costume designer Valérie Thérèse Bart, lighting designer Betsy Chester, sound designer Evdoxia Ragkou, multimedia designer Camilla Tassi, immersive designer Isaac Saboohi, choreographer and movement designer Chelsea Didier, and stage manager Olivia Fletcher. Footage and sound in Aleppo was captured by Antoine Makdis. Documentary Inserts were created by filmmaker Emily Jo West.

Hakawati NGO is a nonprofit organization dedicated to using art as a vehicle for social change, fostering dialogue and healing through theater, film, and multimedia performance. Founded by Sona Tatoyan,

the organization focuses on addressing the ongoing cultural and historical ruptures experienced by marginalized communities in the Middle East and beyond, using storytelling as a means of bridging divides and promoting empathy and understanding. With the recent addition of Raffi Niziblian as a producing partner, Hakawati NGO has reached new heights, expanding its reach and impact. Together, Tatoyan and Niziblian continue to drive the organization’s mission forward, creating opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and deeper cultural engagement. www.hakawati.org

The organizers thank producers Bill Pullman and Noubar and Anna Afeyan for their ongoing support and championing of this project.

For more information, visit www.goldenthread.org/productions/azad/

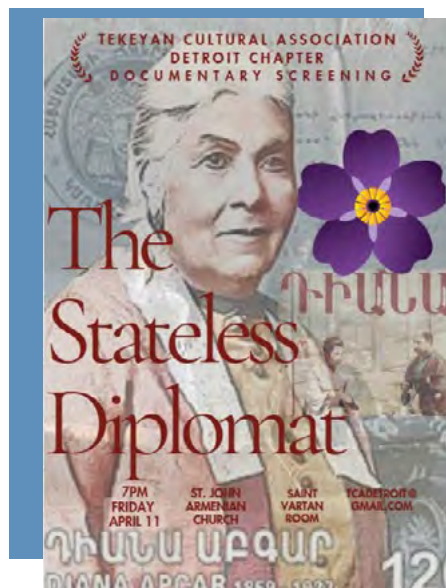
St. John Armenian Church

in collaboration with The Tekeyan Cultural Association

Metro Detroit Chapter, presents a film by Mimi Malayan

The Stateless Diplomata historical docudrama about Diana Apar

Commemorating the 110th Anniversary of The Armenian Genocide



After her son took over the family business in Japan, Apar had more time to concentrate on her humanitarian, literary, and diplomatic career. She started working with numerous journals and newspapers such as *The Japan Advertiser*, *The Far East*, *The Japan Gazette*, and *Armenia* (later to be known as *New Armenia*). She focused much of her literature on the oppressed and their circumstances. She wrote about the Armenian plight in the Ottoman Empire in order to raise global awareness. By 1920 she had already written over nine books in dedication to the Armenian Genocide. She also wrote many articles on international relations and the impact of imperialism on world affairs and global peace.

The documentary “The Stateless Diplomat” brings attention to the legacy of Diana Agabeg Apar, the first female Armenian diplomat and possibly one of the first female diplomats ever.

And with its gentle, artistically gorgeous approach, it succeeds. The documentary follows the timeline of Apar, her family and her dedication to her people at the time of the Armenian Genocide and later the creation of the Armenian Republic.

Mirror Spectator

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Refreshments will precede the movie....

Friday, April 11th
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ARTS & CULTURE

Anna Maxim Discusses Career and Weightlifting Film ‘The Reverse Side of the Medal’

MAXIM, from page 12

In the interview, she said that she wanted very much to remind Armenians through the film about small but vital victories, and that if someone truly wish something, they could achieve it.

As far as why she uses the name Maxim in her professional career as her surname, she said, “If anyone wants to say Harutyunyan, I am happy. I am proud of my surname, but in films I appear as Maxim. It is both my father’s name and translated from English means a short, smart saying. I have no intention of hiding my Armenian surname or presenting myself in a modern way, but I think it has turned out pretty sonorous.”

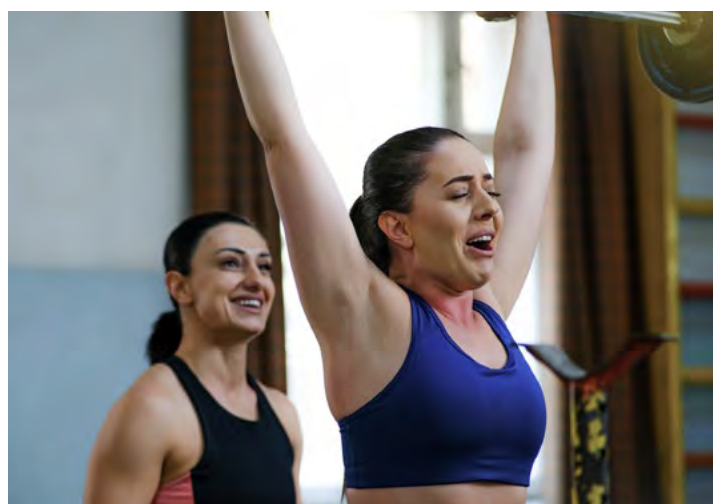
Early Career

Maxim, in her mid-thirties now, said that her parents and family members had no connection at all to the arts so that it seems as if she is the first to work in this sphere in her family. Her artistic talent became apparent at a young age.

As a child, she enjoyed assembling everyone to portray circus acts and receive prizes. She made her own prizes out of whatever toys or statues there were in the house and instructed everyone to give her one. Her sister advised her to apply to the Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinematography and, Maxim said, she was only accepted with great difficulty, being practically the last one on the list.

She said that Armen Mazmanyan, her teacher at the Institute, forbade students to appear in television soap opera serials through the third year of the program, but afterwards she began to work in this arena. She worked ten years as an actress, appearing in a number of serials such as “*Generali aghjiku*” [The General’s Daughter] (2012-2013) and “*Urishi Hogin*” [Stranger’s Soul] (162 episodes, 2015-16) as well as in sup-

porting roles in comedy films such as “*Chikago Tsaghkdzor Tranzit*” (2012) and “*Siro gortsakits*” (2015) and action films like “*Chghjiker: Chezok goti*” [Bats: Neutral Zone] (2012) before she stopped and instead went to Moscow in 2017 to learn directing at the S. A. Gerasimov All-Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK). She felt the institute in Russia was the most serious one in the region, she said, and she had no problem studying in Russian. Maxim noted that she has always loved Russian literature, and never mixes Russian politics with art.



Anna Maxim, with the real-life Nazik Avdalyan in the background

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She filmed several short films in this period. The first two were short films, while the third, “*Aniko*,” was some 50 minutes long and served as her diploma work in Moscow. Maxim said, “In general, if you look at the journey the artist has travelled, short or long, you understand that the person usually speaks about the same thing/topic in different stories.”

Her first film was called “*Taraskhalnerov Karot*” [Longing with Misspellings]. It was about a village teacher whose son was in the army. This teacher was so committed to the

preservation of the Armenian language that whomever he encountered he would teach Armenian, just like his students, said Maxim. Even when his son wrote letters from the army, he corrected them with red ink and sent them back, not allowing the mother to



An ad for the film “Aniko”

read them. On the one hand his longing was suffocating. On the other hand, Maxim explained, when a man has principles, he must never betray them.

The second film was about a family whose child had died due to burns experienced during the Trndez festival. That couple could not return to their everyday lives until, as the result of defending the child of a neighbor, they decided to have a child again. That film, Maxim said, was about not losing

hope for the continuation of life.

“*Aniko*,” said Maxim, “is the story of my childhood, of how I liked literature. Generally, directors wait until the end of their lives to film about their childhood, but I decided to do the opposite.” The main topic of the film is Aniko’s summer vacation in Tavush, in the northeast of Armenia. Maxim’s grandparents grew up in Tavush and though she and her parents were born in Yerevan, and her mother’s side is from Goris in Syunik, Maxim said she considers herself a “Tavushtsi.”

She said she had to film “*Aniko*” with practically no budget and the assistance of friends, yet it won international prizes, beating out a number of large budget films. And she thinks she knows why: because it was a very honest film.

“Generally, when professionalism comes, the creator becomes less honest,” Maxim said. “As a result of professionalism, he may be able to create good films but that cannot be long lasting if there is not truly that sincerity. For that reason, if you have noticed, the latest films of successful directors are generally very weak because they are more about professionalism. I hope that my love may help me not to lose that.”

As far as which filmmakers Maxim likes who may have influenced her, she declared that the films of the Soviet period, including Armenian films by Henrik Malyan or Frunze Dovlatyan, are impressive, but the heritage of world cinema, especially Italian

Neorealism and French New Wave, is also important. She said, “I find myself more cosmopolitan in the sense of culture, in that for me a good film, good cinematographic art, does not have national boundaries with the exception of certain instances.”

Nevertheless, she said, “No matter how much you learn, no matter how impressed and inspired you may be, what is most important is that you realize what is in your heart — not try to copy someone else but be able to recognize and learn and then create something that is your own.”

Before making “*The Reverse Side of the Medal*,” Maxim served as co-director of the film “*The Armenian*” [*Hay haye*] (2021) with Mikayel (“Michael”) Poghosyan, who also wrote the script and acted in that film.

Making “*The Reverse Side of the Medal*”

The process of writing the script for “*The Reverse Side of the Medal*” and then filming and editing it took two years, which Maxim said was

a very short time considering all that was involved, including covering four seasons, getting the right results from the actors, and filming on a level appropriate for Europe and the rest of the world.

She had to apply to the National Film Fund of Armenia to obtain financing and found out on January 28 that the application deadline was February 28. She said that she had only done interviews of Avdalyan and others involved in her life so far. She realized she said that in one month she would have to write the script. After listening to 72 hours of interviews, she told herself that she could not leave her room until she wrote it.

She also read an American book, *How to Write a Movie in 21 Days*, which evidently helped her succeed in meeting the deadline.



Hay Cultural Alliance host Raya Gevorgyan looks on as Anna Maxim thanks a young boy for flowers in Arlington (photo Aram Arkun)

Thinking about the stress, she said, “Now, when you remind me, I am just saying the words, but when I remember it, I just want to cry.”

The budget for the filming was not very large, so that Maxim said that a lot of equipment was lacking. She had to film the incident of an automobile accident in Moscow without having basic equipment as a result.

While in Armenian many protest that there is not enough money for making films, Maxim said that an even more important problem is a lack of specialists and experience, so that collaboration and exchange of experience with European or American companies and experts, including those Armenians living abroad, would be very help-

ful. That is something she would like to do on her next film, she said.

She did not act in her first three films. “I had even become cold concerning my specialty, but through this role [of Avdalyan], which returned life to me in the acting world,” she said with a laugh, “I understood that I had learned directing in order to film good films for me in which I can act.”

Maxim said that though there are some extra demands when the director is acting in a scene, it does have the advantage of concrete knowledge of what the director and script demand of you as an actor and may also save time during studio editing. Moreover, she stated: “When I had to undertake this film, I recalled Orson Well’s “*The Citizen*,” which for me is one of the best international films, where he served as chief actor, director, producer and screen writer. I thought that if it succeeded with him, it could succeed with me too and it seems that it did.”

The main events of the film are factual, Maxim said, though the order of some were changed. The marriage scene, in which the weight was placed on the barbell just like a ring on the finger of the spouse did not take place in reality, she said, but was a directorial addition to strengthen the meaning of the film.

In the after-screening discussion with the audience, Maxim confessed that it was very hard for her as an actress to learn the dialect of Gyumri (Leninakan), as she was always inclined to speak in the Tavush dialect, but in the end she said the people from Leninakan were satisfied.

She said in response to an audience question that “*The Reverse Side of the Medal*” was in Armenia’s 2024 Oscars competition but the 46 members of the Armenian Film Academy chose a different film, which was 70 percent Russian and had little chance to win anything under international conditions then.

In the interview, she observed that so far the film has not yet been shown at big European or American film festivals. It is

represented by her production company, called Maxim Production, but she said she wished to focus her energy on creating her next film, so she hoped that someone will be found who can be flexible in dealing with this matter. Maxim said that she came to the United States in part to prepare for this new film but is not yet ready to speak about it. After her US trip, she was going to Europe to participate in more screenings of “*The Reverse Side of the Medal*.”

At the February screenings of “*The Reverse Side of the Medal*” in Arlington, HCA leaders Naira Balagyozyan and Raya Gevorgyan welcomed guests and moderated questions to the director from the audience after the presentation.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Arugula and Strawberry Salad With Fig Balsamic Vinaigrette

CANTON, Mass. — In 1980, John Boyajian began selling specialty foods to restaurants and hotels in the Greater Boston area as a way to pay for graduate school. Boyajian Inc. is a company specializing in fine infused oils, vinegars, and other specialty food products. Today the company offers a range of products for cooking and entertaining. With a focus on quality and authenticity, Boyajian Inc. provides customers with unique flavors and ingredients to elevate their culinary experiences.

“I grew up in a large, close-knit Armenian family where food always played a central role. Some of my warmest childhood memories are of my grandmother’s kitchen, where each summer my grandparent’s would infuse olive oil and vinegar with fresh garlic and herbs from their garden. Using the same recipes today, we take the time and care to do it right, says Boyajian.

In 1987, drawing upon his Armenian heritage and family tradition, John made his first bottles of garlic-infused olive oil for the customers of his new retail operation in Cambridge. Not realizing the public had never before seen herb infused olive oils, the surprising response to Boyajian’s garlic-infused olive oil was overwhelming, and soon the company would outgrow its Cambridge storefront.

The Boyajian line is made from 100% pure olive oil that is slowly infused with fresh herbs and spices to achieve remarkable aroma and flavor. These oils are wonderful for sautéing, on pastas and focaccia, in vinaigrettes and marinades, as bread dippers, as anointing oils,



Satenig and Levon Katcharian (John Boyajian’s grandparents), Brockton, MA., circa 1946. Photos courtesy Boyajian Inc.

and for anything the creative cook or entertainer decides to do with them.

Boyajian Inc. currently resides in a 30,000-square-foot, state-of-the art production facility and corporate headquarters in Canton, MA. Boasting a line of fine infused oils, bread dipping oils, vinegars, pure citrus oils, and natural flavorings and extracts, Boyajian products are regarded as “essential tools” by consumers and food professionals around the world. Boyajian products are featured in numerous food publications, regularly appear on television cooking shows and are referenced in over 100 cookbooks.

INGREDIENTS:

4 or 5 cups arugula or other fresh salad greens
3/4 cup fresh strawberries, sliced
1 medium cucumber, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced
10 cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
4 tablespoons Boyajian Extra Virgin Olive Oil, to taste
2 tablespoons Boyajian Fig Balsamic Vinegar, to taste
Kosher salt and freshly cracked pepper, to taste

For the vinaigrette:

Whisk Boyajian Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Boyajian Fig Balsamic Vinegar together in a bowl. Add the salt and black pepper. Set aside.

For the salad:

Rinse all fruits and vegetables under cool running water before use. Place arugula, cucumber, tomato and strawberries in a large bowl. Add vinaigrette and toss gently until evenly distributed. Divide evenly onto serving plates and serve immediately

Servings: 2 main or 4 side salads

QUESTIONS FOR JOHN BOYAJIAN:

What makes Boyajian oils different?

Boyajian is the only company in the USA that uses a true infusion process, placing fresh herbs and spices, into the olive oil, to capture the perfect balance of flavor and aroma.

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Boyajian sources the finest quality pure and extra virgin olive oils from California and the Mediterranean. The infusion and bottling take place in the Boyajian manufacturing facility located in Canton, MA.

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How are the citrus oils made?

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How much Boyajian Citrus Oil should I use in my recipe?

A little citrus oil goes a long way. Start with a 1/4 teaspoon of oil per cup of ingredients called for in your recipe. You can always add more, according to your taste. Citrus oil is ideal for baking, but should be avoided for stovetop sautéing.

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How long has Boyajian been in business?

Boyajian has been operated by its original founder, John Boyajian, since its inception in 1980.

Do you ship to destinations outside the United States?

Unfortunately, we do not ship directly to addresses outside the USA. Our products are available worldwide through our network of distributors.

We welcome new retail and wholesale partners. Please visit our Wholesale page and fill out the form to open an account.

More info: <https://boyajianinc.com/shop/>

Contact:

Boyajian Incorporated
144 Will Drive
Canton, Massachusetts 02021

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Secret Trio Charms Watertown

TRIO, from page 1

Yavshayan and Merdinian greeted the guests. Yavshayan explained that there are 16 Armenian schools operating today in Istanbul, five of which are high schools. Each school is affiliated with an Armenian charitable foundation which acts as its benefactor. In the 2022-23 academic year, there were 2,865 students, she said. SOIAB supports three to five of the schools annually.

Merdinian noted that SOIAB usually doesn’t organize this kind of large concert, but Ara

Dinkjian had reached out to offer to perform for it after a prior SOIAB event with the Zulal trio. Dinkjian later during the concert said that he had never done this before, but he has a particular affection for Istanbul Armenians.

Dinkjian periodically gave context to the pieces the band was performing. At one point, he opined that by definition, one can’t tell who the composer of folk melodies is, but that in his opinion, one can tell by the character of the melody where it originated geographically, and it was Armenians, Turks, Kurds and others who were living on those lands.

The Secret Trio donated some of its CDs and LPs to SOIAB so that proceeds from their sale would help the Istanbul Armenian schools along with income from ticket sales.



Dr. Aida Yavshayan and Mardiros Merdinian (photo Aram Arkun)

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

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

APRIL 10 — LET'S PARTY FOR THE PARK! Thursday, 7-9 p.m. Abigail Adams Ballroom, InterContinental Hotel, Boston. Benefit to raise funds to Care for & Maintain Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway. Advance Reservations only. For reservations, ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support

APRIL 11 — Lecture by historian and author Dr. Elyse Semerdjian sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter. Semerdjian is the holder of the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair of the Armenian Genocide Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide, Clark University. Her new book is called Remnants. 7 p.m., Friday, the Baikar Center, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. (Use Norseman Ave. entrance.) Free admission. Book signing. For info, email syogurtian@comcast.net.

APRIL 12 — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church presents a nostalgic concert by Marten Yorgantz and Meghedi Vocal Ensemble, artistic director Marina Margarian. If your child would like to perform on stage, they can audition to join Meghedi Children's Chorus every Saturday, 3.15 to 4.15 p.m. 200 Lexington St., Belmont. For registration and information, call 781-929-3415 or 781-439-3702.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEW JERSEY

MAY 10 — St. Leon Armenian Church and Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group present Anton Chekhov's "The Marriage Proposal," a comedy directed by Harout Chatmajian for an evening of dinner theater. Play will be performed in Armenian with English subtitles. Saturday, cocktails at 7 p.m. and dinner at 7.30 p.m., St. Leon 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.

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.

Concert Marks Aznavour's Centennial

NEWPORT, R.I. — A concert on March 6 held at Belcourt Mansion in Newport, hosted by Caroline Rafaelian, paid tribute to the centennial of Charles Aznavour.

The event featured renowned singer, guitarist, composer, and Aznavour's translator from French to Armenian, Berge Turabian, alongside the remarkable singer Alvard Mailyan.

The concert was a collaboration between the Cultural Committee of the Armenian Church of St. Sahag and Mesrob of Providence and the Belcourt Museum.

Tickets were sold out well in advance, and the audience warmly embraced the program, which included Aznavour's timeless songs, some of which were performed in Armenian for the first time.

The stunning performances by Turabian and Mailyan captivated everyone in attendance, making the evening a resounding success. The night concluded with a reception to honor the performers and guests.



Berge Turabian with the late Charles Aznavour



Berge Turabian on guitar and Alvard Mailyan singing

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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Developments Regarding Iran Should Be Armenia's Primary Concern

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Currently, the Trump administration lacks a clear strategy regarding Iran, evidenced by inconsistent statements from administration members on US policy. US President Donald Trump's potential normalization of relations with Iran would involve negotiations and binding agreements, which I believe both Iran and Trump would honor.

Trump's past withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal stemmed from his lack of involvement in its creation and his perception of it as detrimental to US interests. Interestingly, the future of Section 907 enforcement is a key indicator. US security assistance to Azerbaijan, consistently framed as a countermeasure against Iran, implies continued support and signals potential action against Iran under the Trump administration. The US president's annual waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act of 1992, an ongoing practice since 2002, stems from the absence of a definitive US strategy regarding Iran.

Unrefuted reports in US media outlets suggest Trump has approached the Russian president to mediate a potential normalization of relations between Iran and the US, indicating a possible improvement in relations. This is a positive development, particularly given National Intelligence Director Tulsi Gabbard's assertion that US intelligence currently believes Iran is not developing nuclear weapons, likely influencing Trump's decision to grant Iran two months to begin negotiations.

Despite hawkish voices within Trump's team, advocates for negotiation persist, as exemplified by Gabbard's cautionary stance. A peaceful approach will definitely be supported by top diplomat Marco Rubio, who will lead the negotiations if the final decision is made. However, as a final decision is still not here, it is obvious that the US is working with all regional partners in the region to prepare for any eventuality involving Iran.

In this regard Turkey is a key actor, and recent US diplomacy has engaged with it to de-escalate regional tensions stemming from Turkish support for Baku's aggressive rhetoric. Escalation would undermine both US-Russia negotiations, given Russia's likely involvement in possible developments, and potential US-Iran talks. As Iran's foreign minister met with Armenia's Prime Minister

Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan, Turkey's foreign minister met with Rubio in Washington, D.C. Following the meeting, Rubio called the Armenian prime minister but not Azerbaijan's foreign minister. This may suggest that any agreement with Azerbaijan might be facilitated through Turkey. This also suggests Rubio may have delivered messages to Yerevan and received some from Armenia concerning regional developments around Iran.

It should always be kept in mind that it is clear from Iran's statements that if actions were taken by Azerbaijan against the Syunik region of Armenia, Tehran would be compelled to take measures to prevent the loss of its external border, which, in turn, would lead to Turkey's involvement if there are clashes between Iran and Azerbaijan. Israel would undoubtedly take advantage of such developments. Besides Israel, Turkey also opposes US-Iran normalization, fearing it would diminish Turkey's strategic value to the US while simultaneously bolstering Iran's regional influence.

Iran remains Turkey's main regional competitor. Despite Israel's influence on Trump, the latter prioritizes US interests regarding Iran. While a US-Iran deal may not benefit Israel, it could serve US strategic goals, particularly in countering China. Trump's "America First" policy underscores that US and Israeli interests are not always 100 percent aligned.

Of course, the best possible development for Yerevan would be the normalization of relations between Iran and the US. The lifting of restrictions on Iran

could help Yerevan establish more active economic, trade, and political ties with Tehran. Moreover, improved US-Iran relations could reduce Turkey's role and significance in the region, which would serve as an additional deterrent against potential Turkish and Azerbaijani aggression. In any case, it is in Yerevan's best interests to see both improved US-Russia and US-Iran relations, as this would finally allow Armenia to exist in a cooperative rather than a competitive environment — something that is of utmost importance for the country's security.

(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.)



Artsakh's Cultural Heritage Erasure May Continue Thanks to Peace Treaty

By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The agreement on the terms of a peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia includes Armenia's potential withdrawal from the international legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice and at the European Court of Human Rights. It was announced on March 13, 2025. I have already elaborated on the negative consequences over the right of return of Artsakh people if it materializes. The agreement is silent on other aspects of Nagorno-Karabakh case, including the fate of prisoners and the protection of Artsakh cultural heritage.

There are many reports detailing the destruction of cultural monuments by Azerbaijan since its resumption of control over the Nagorno-Karabakh ("Artsakh" in Armenian) *oblast* after the forced displace-

ment of its population. We are witnessing a systematic destruction of Armenian cultural and historical heritage. The intention to erase all traces of Armenian civilization is obvious and has been denounced around the world.

Armenian diplomatic circles raised this issue during the interministerial conference of the Forum of Ancient Civilizations on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024. UNESCO, an organization within the UN that has never been noted for its effectiveness, initially adopted a neutral position during the 2020 conflict, then expressed concerns and finally declared in February 2022 its intention to send a mission of experts, provided that both Armenia and Azerbaijan agree on the mission. Azerbaijan has not responded, and therefore no mission has been established. The destruction continues: the press regularly reports about it

and the Center For Truth and Justice published a report. Caucasus Heritage Watch, an entity affiliated with Cornell University, monitors and documents threatened and damaged cultural heritage using high-resolution satellite imagery. They reveal visual evidence of past and present cultural erasure using the latest Earth observation technologies.

On the political front, the European Parliament Resolution on the Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh of March 10, 2022, is a landmark document, the most comprehensive ever adopted on the issue of threatened cultural heritage. The resolution strongly condemns Azerbaijan's policy of erasing and denying Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, in violation of international law. It notes that the erasure of Armenian cultural heritage is part
see HERITAGE, page 18



COMMENTARY

Artsakh's Cultural Heritage Erasure May Continue

HERITAGE, from page 17

of a broader state policy of systematic Armenophobia, historical revisionism and engendering hatred against Armenians promoted by the Azerbaijani authorities, including through dehumanization, glorification of violence and territorial claims against the Republic of Armenia, which threaten peace and security in the South Caucasus. It stresses that cultural heritage has a universal dimension as evidence of history inseparable from the identity of peoples and the need to address the protection of historical and cultural heritage in the broader context of the resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the final determination of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

This being said, it is appropriate to examine the legal issues that arise regarding the protection of cultural heritage and the repression of acts of destruction in the light of the recent official announcements that the terms of the peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia are agreed upon.

What are the legal instruments applicable? Who are the victims, and what remedies are available? Does Armenia not already have a solid legal basis and a judicial mechanism in place to hold Azerbaijan responsible?

I - Destruction of Cultural Heritage in the Context of Armed Conflict Is a War Crime

The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (May 14, 1954, entered into force in August 1956) and its protocols are instruments of international law that apply to armed conflicts (international and non-international) and situations of occupation. They do not cover situations of domestic tension or internal disturbances, such as isolated acts of violence.

The protective treaty provisions apply naturally in peacetime from the moment they enter into force and apply in the event of declared war or any other armed conflict arising between two or more High Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one or more of them. In the event of an armed conflict not of an international character, each Party to the conflict shall be required to apply at least the provisions of this Convention relating to respect for cultural property. According to Article 4.1, "The High Contracting Parties undertake to respect cultural property situated within their own territory as well as within the territory of other High Contracting Parties by refraining from any use of the property and its immediate surroundings or of the appliances in use for its protection for purposes which are likely to expose it to destruction or damage in the event of armed conflict; and by refraining from any act of hostility directed against such property."

From Protection to Repression

If the obligation of protection is violated and instead destruction of cultural heritage occurs, then it is considered as a war crime under customary international law since the 1907 Hague Convention. This was recognized by the International Military Tribunal of Nuremberg and then reconfirmed and sustained by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Finally, this criminal offense was added to Article 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC, Permanent Court established by the Treaty of Rome of 17 July 1998, which entered into force on 1 July 2002).

The Hague Convention (IV) (18 October 1907) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annexed Regulations represent the rules of customary international law. Two articles are relevant. Article 27 states that "In sieges and bombardments all necessary steps must be taken to spare, as far as possible, buildings dedicated to religion, art, science, or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not being used at the time for military purposes." and Article 56 adds that "The property of municipalities, that of institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences, even when State property, shall be treated as private property. All seizure of, destruction or willful damage done to institutions of this character, historic monuments, works of art and science, is forbidden, and should be made the subject of legal proceedings."

Article 6 (b) of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg (IMT) establishes that "plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity" are recognized as war crimes. The collective

indictment of the great Nazi criminals at Nuremberg pointed to it.

The IMT also found Alfred Rosenberg guilty of crimes against humanity, notably through the organization of the infamous Einsatzstab Rosenberg, a vast operation to confiscate works of art, loot museums, libraries, and private collections. It did the same with Julius Streicher, guilty of having, in addition to numerous acts of persecution against Jews, ordered the destruction of the Nuremberg Synagogue in 1938.

The IMT at Nuremberg constituted the first step towards criminalizing acts that destroy cultural heritage. However, it was not until the Second Protocol (1999) to the 1954 Hague Convention that the issue of individual criminal responsibility was formally transcribed into positive international law.

Beginning in 1991, the former Yugoslavia was the scene of targeted and systematic destruction of cultural heritage. Experts have described this as a true "cultural catastrophe," in which destruction is being carried out to erase the identity and memory of the adversary. Examples include the bombing of the old city of Dubrovnik in Croatia, the burning of the Sarajevo library, and the destruction of the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Given the religious and ethnic specificities of the Yugoslav conflict, Article 3(d) of the ICTY Statute was invoked primarily in cases involving the destruction of religious or educational institutions, but also in other cases involving the destruction of historical monuments. The two most emblematic cases in this second category are *The Prosecutor v. Miodrag Jokić* and *The Prosecutor v. Pavle Strugar*.

Reduced Effectiveness of International Law

Despite the efforts of States Parties, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNESCO, and the international community, between 2004 and 2019, we witnessed the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan (2001), the city of the "333 Saints" in Timbuktu, Mali (2012), the 16th-century mausoleums and libraries in Tripoli and Zliten in Libya (2012), pre-Islamic works in Mosul, the Roman city of Hatra and cultural objects in Baghdad, Iraq (2015), the monumental triumphal arch of the ancient city of Palmyra, the Assyrian archaeological site of Tell Ajaja, the Seljuk minaret of the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo, and several other historical sites in Syria (2015).

On August 22, 2016, the trial of militia member Ahmad Al Mahdi, head of the "Ansar Eddine" morality squad, opened before the ICC. He was being prosecuted for the war crime of destroying nine of the "333 Saints" mausoleums and the gate of the Sidi Yahia Mosque during the occupation of Timbuktu, northern Mali, between April 2012 and January 2013.

The ICC Trial Chamber found on September 27, 2016, that Ahmad Al Mahdi was guilty of the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against buildings of religious and historic importance in Timbuktu, Mali, in June and July 2012. The defendant admitted his guilt and was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment and fined €2.7 million. The Court, having recognized his indigence, it encouraged the Trust Fund for Victims to supplement the reparations awarded.

'Cultural Genocide' or 'Ethnocide?'

Some authors use these expressions, but neither has legal validity. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide specifies in Article 2 that genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. The acts covered by this article do not include the destruction of historical and cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, it remains politically and factually established that the deliberate destruction of heritage pursues a long-term strategy of cultural cleansing and is directly associated with ethnical cleansing. This is why the protection of cultural heritage is much more than a cultural issue; it is a security imperative, inseparable from the protection of human lives. UNESCO, which filed *amicus curiae* observations in the Al Mahdi case, states that the loss of heritage during armed conflict can "deprive a community of its identity and memory, as well as the physical evidence of its past," adding that "those who destroy cultural heritage intend to weaken the social fabric of the communities concerned."

A recent example shows how the Israeli authorities have not only destroyed all homes in Gaza but are also striving to erase all traces of the population's millennia-old presence by systematically destroying the exist-

ing cultural heritage in the territory. UNESCO's protection mechanisms have failed in this case too.

ECHR Offers Recourse for Individual Cases

It is always possible for individual claimants to file a petition with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) based on a different legal basis — that of human rights. The Armenian Church could — and actually has tried (back in 2021) — petition the European Court to protect the Armenian religious immovables in Nagorno-Karabakh. Some 20 applications have been submitted so far.

ECHR has territorial jurisdiction over Nagorno-Karabakh because Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians have been exempted from exhausting Azerbaijani domestic remedies.

II - Who Are the Victims, and What Remedies Are Available to Protect the Armenian Cultural Heritage of Artsakh?

In the Al Mahdi case, the ICC identified three distinct groups of victims: the Timbuktu community, the population of Mali as a whole, and the international community, because this act of destruction affects humanity as a whole. UNESCO ultimately declined to submit a claim for reparations on behalf of the international community, stating that the main victims were the local communities. The Court concluded that reparation for the harm suffered by the inhabitants of Timbuktu "will also effectively remedy [the harm] suffered more broadly by Malians and by the international community as a whole."

It appears that the Armenians of Artsakh, as a population that lived in their ancestral and autonomous region for centuries, albeit under different state guardianships, and forcibly displaced between 2020 and 2023, could constitute themselves as victims of the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage and have a legal standing to bring the perpetrators to justice before international courts.

However, while Azerbaijan has ratified the 1954 Hague Convention and its protocols for the protection of cultural property in times of war and peace and also has legal obligations under customary international law, it has not ratified the Treaty of Rome (ICC). Thus, the question of territorial jurisdiction of the Court would be subject to fierce legal battles over the extraterritoriality of the Rome Treaty to destructions operated in Nagorno-Karabakh. In theory, the ICC does not have jurisdiction over crimes committed within the territory of Azerbaijan. In practice, options are defensible. In the case of Mali, the question did not arise because it had ratified the Treaty of Rome, the crimes were committed on its territory and Mali deferred the situation to the Court.

Therefore, the best solution to ensure that the destruction of the cultural heritage of Artsakh (and perhaps even that of Nakhichevan) is prosecuted as a war crime or a crime against humanity would be the creation of an ad hoc international criminal tribunal with special statutes. This diplomatic undertaking would require the mobilization of numerous States, primarily the government of the Republic of Armenia.

In 2015, for the first time in history, the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of a country, Mali, was included in the mandate of a United Nations Mission, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). This Mission was tasked with "protecting the country's cultural and historical sites against all attacks, in collaboration with UNESCO." The creation of an ad hoc United Nations mission in Nagorno-Karabakh would be possible for a similar purpose. Azerbaijan would undoubtedly reject the creation of such a mission or its presence on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The only way to achieve its creation would be to obtain a decision from the United Nations Security Council, whose mission would consist in protecting the cultural heritage and ensure the safe return of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. This is another diplomatic challenge, certainly, but one for which Armenia already has the tools to hold the Azerbaijani state accountable (criminal liability of State does not exist in international law) for its violations of international law, recognize its international responsibility and the ensuing consequences, namely reparation measures: restitution or compensation, as well as guarantees of non-repetition.

III - Armenia Has a Solid Legal Basis and Judicial Mechanism to Establish Azerbaijan's Responsibility

I have already written an article and a report on the importance of the inter-state action brought by Armenia

continued on next page



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Gives Another Misleading Interview: Can't Keep his Mouth Shut

Every time Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan gives an interview, he puts his foot in his mouth. One of his close advisors should suggest that he simply remain quiet.

I don't want to bore readers with Pashinyan's continuous detrimental statements, but I believe that his words and actions must not remain unchallenged.

On March 21, 2025, Pashinyan gave a 45-minute interview, this time to Armenia's Public TV, a taxpayer-funded media outlet exploited by the Prime Minister as his propaganda tool. Once again, he repeated his usual baseless statements. However, I must commend journalist Datev Danielyan for her persistent attempts to challenge Pashinyan's answers.

Pashinyan once again bragged that his cherished "Peace Agreement" is complete and accepted by both sides, even though Azerbaijan refuses to sign it, demanding endless concessions from Armenia, such as making constitutional changes, the resettlement of 300,000 Azeris in Armenia, getting rid of the weapons recently purchased by Armenia, and opening of the so-called "Zangezur Corridor," etc.

The "Peace Agreement" that the prime minister constantly promotes is nothing short of one-sided capitulation. Instead of explaining that Armenia's crushing defeat in the 2020 war leaves him no choice but to make concessions to Azerbaijan, Pashinyan eagerly misrepresents this defeatist document as a great achievement. This is the same man who, in 2018, stood before a large crowd in Republic Square and promised not to sign any agreement without first getting their consent. Now, he is ready to sign a document whose contents remain a secret. For Aliyev, the "Peace Agreement" is a worthless piece of paper that will not deter him from any future attacks on Armenia.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan regularly threatens Armenia, referring to it as "Western Azerbaijan." With a straight face, Pashinyan claims that once peace is established, Armenia will get rid of the EU Monitors, since they will no longer be necessary.

Pashinyan even suggested that he might sign the "Peace Agreement" unilaterally, without waiting for Azerbaijan's signature, while admitting that he did not know if such a precedent existed in "the history of mankind."

The only correct statement Pashinyan made in his lengthy interview was his rejection of the resettlement of 300,000 Azeris in Armenia, which President Aliyev calls "Western Azerbaijan." However, given Pashinyan's constant contradictory statements, no one can be sure that he will stick to his word on this or any other issue.

Pashinyan claimed once again that Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed "to recognize each other's territorial integrity, sovereignty, have no territorial demands from each other, and are committed not to propose such territorial demands in the future too." This is untrue. The fact is that while Pashinyan has acknowledged Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, Aliyev has yet to accept Armenia's territorial integrity.

The Public TV's reporter asked Pashinyan: how peace could be achieved when the other side does not want peace and keeps demanding concessions? How many more concessions are we going to make? Pashinyan incredibly, replied: "What have we conceded?"

Pashinyan conveniently ignored the several major concessions he has made to Azerbaijan, including the surrender of Artsakh; Azerbaijan's occupation of parts of the Republic of Armenia since 2021, while Pashinyan is declaring that he will take no action to oust the Azeri troops; dissolution of the Minsk Group; removal of EU Monitors from inside Armenia's borders, saying: "we will no longer bother the [European] Monitors;" changing Armenia's Constitution, while admitting that Azerbaijan's Constitution refers to territorial demands from Armenia, with Pashinyan stating that he will not demand that Azerbaijan amend its Constitution; withdrawal of Armenia's international lawsuits against Azerbaijan, prompting the resignation of the lawyer representing Armenia in international courts; loss of thousands of Armenian soldiers and the wounding of thousands more; doing nothing to secure the release of detained Armenian prisoners in a Baku jail where they are tortured and subjected to a sham trial; refusal to support Artsakh Armenians' right of return; and many more concessions to come.

When asked who would guarantee the "Peace Agreement," Pashinyan responded: nobody. "Peace is the guarantor." It is alarming that the Prime Minister of Armenia would make such naïve statements.

Meanwhile, President Aliyev, the brutal dictator of Azerbaijan, continues his hateful rhetoric, calling Armenia a "fascist state." During his 15-minute speech in Aghdam on March 27, Aliyev used the word "enemies" 11 times to describe Armenians, without mentioning peace even once. In 2024, Aliyev referred to Armenians as "jackals," "bloodthirsty enemies," and "vandals." These are the words of a warmonger, not a man interested in peace.

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against Azerbaijan on the basis of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the possibility for any State to join this procedure, as permitted by the Statute of the Court and as provided for in the Draft Articles on the Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts.

The issue of the protection of the Armenian cultural heritage of Artsakh is already included in Armenia's first request for the indication of provisional measures under the ICERD in the Armenia v. Azerbaijan dispute. It has also been satisfied with the measures set out in the order of December 7, 2021.

Armenia alleges that acts of destruction and vandalism have been perpetrated by "Azerbaijani soldiers and mercenaries" against Armenian religious and cultural heritage sites, and that acts of desecration of Armenian cemeteries and religious artefacts, such as the "khachkars" (or "cross-stones") have also occurred. Armenia further alleges that Azerbaijan, by carrying out what it calls restoration works on the cathedral of Shushi, has altered features characteristic of Armenian cultural heritage. Considering the alleged general context of anti-Armenian hatred, Armenia contends that the repeated destruction, alteration and desecration of Armenian cultural heritage and religious sites in territories controlled by Azerbaijan constitutes "racial discrimination" in breach of Articles 2 and 5 of ICERD and therefore that its rights under these provisions are plausible (Para. 50).

Azerbaijan states in its pleadings that its legislation prohibits the damage and destruction of religious and cultural heritage and asserts that it "facilitates efforts to protect and preserve" Armenian sites and artifacts relevant to the rights guaranteed by ICERD (Para. 54).

Azerbaijan further claims to have acknowledged publicly "its international obligation to protect and uphold historical, cultural and religious heritage in the liberated territories". It observes that the protection of historic and cultural monuments is also enshrined in Azerbaijan's Constitution and in its statutory law, which criminalizes the deliberate destruction or damaging of over 6,300 sites that are listed on its State Registry, which includes sites identified by Armenia. Azerbaijan adds that it has undertaken to "provide support for investigations of all credible allegations of vandalism, destruction, and unau-

thorized alteration of historical and cultural monuments and cemeteries used by ethnic Armenian individuals" (Para. 79)

The Court concludes that, pending the final decision in the case, Azerbaijan must, within the framework of its obligations under CERD, take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of damage to and desecration of Armenian cultural heritage, including, but not limited to, churches and other places of worship, monuments, sites, cemeteries, and artifacts (Para. 92).

It should therefore be noted that solid treaty bases, ICJ provisional measures imposed on Azerbaijan, and the latter's recognition of its international obligations to protect the Armenian cultural heritage of Artsakh already constitute a set of legal assets that could lead to the recognition of Azerbaijan's State responsibility by the United Nations' Court, entailing an obligation of reparation.

A final judgment from the ICJ would open the way for requesting from United Nations Security Council the creation of a protection mission for both the population and the cultural heritage of Artsakh Armenians, especially if Azerbaijan is recalcitrant to enforce the judgment. It may be called to order or even sanctioned by the United Nations. A categorical refusal on its part and continued violations over time may give rise to resolutions and sanctions from the United Nations Security Council if a third State refers the matter to it. It would, of course, be natural that Armenia be the first State, but this is not mandatory.

It should be recalled that the Security Council adopted Resolution 2347 (March 2017). This resolution "underlines that the illegal destruction of cultural heritage, the looting and smuggling of cultural property in situations of armed conflict, including by terrorist groups, and attempts to deny historical roots and cultural diversity in this context, can fuel and exacerbate conflicts and hinder post-conflict national reconciliation, thereby undermining the security, stability, governance, and social, economic, and cultural development of the affected States." It affirms that directing unlawful attacks against sites and buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, or historic monuments may constitute, under certain circumstances a war crime and that perpetrators of such attacks must be brought to justice.

The Resolution elevates the protection of cultural heritage to a central issue of global peace and security. In this regard, it integrates the often dispersed and fragmented

regimes of international law—cultural heritage law, humanitarian law, criminal law, and state responsibility—into global, regional, and national policies aimed at combating crimes against cultural heritage committed during armed conflict. Second, it also strengthens the principle of international cooperation, broadening its scope beyond relations between states, international organizations, and agencies, and promoting more inclusive participation of various stakeholders, including non-state actors, for better protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict.

Conclusion

Only a just peace can be a true peace. The acknowledgment of Azerbaijan's responsibility for the violation of the ICERD in all its forms is key in this process and the only path to sustainable peace. Otherwise, impunity for systemic anti-Armenian hatred, forced displacement of the Armenian population and destruction of the cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh, mistreatment and unlawful trials of Armenian prisoners will prevail and cause irreparable harm to the rights of the people of Artsakh and to the Armenian cultural heritage in their ancestral territory.

The withdrawal of the ICJ proceedings initiated in 2021 would nullify all the gains obtained from the orders already issued by this Court. As analyzed above, the ICC jurisdiction to investigate acts of destruction committed on Azerbaijani territory or to prosecute the perpetrators of these acts is complex and uncertain. It therefore does not offer solid guarantees. If the ICJ withdrawal becomes reality, the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians will be obliged to restart all the legal and political process from the beginning to assert their rights. It will provide temporary but sufficient time of impunity for Azerbaijan to continue its destruction.

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OCHRE and École des Arts Décoratifs-PSL Launch Project on Urfa Embroidery

PARIS — OCHRE, in collaboration with École des Arts Décoratifs-PSL, one of France's leading design schools, have launched the Heritage Rewoven project. Part of the group's ongoing commitment to researching and revitalizing Armenian textile traditions, this initiative explores the Armenian embroidery tradition that once flourished in the city of Urfa.

OCHRE was founded in 2020 as a creative social enterprise, merging creative ideas with artisanal expertise to craft artist-designed, artisan-made products. Its mission is to develop commercially viable designs, using the proceeds — along with additional funding — to support independent artistic creation, foster research, and revitalize Armenian textile traditions while promoting artistic expression from Armenia on an international scale.

Textiles offer insights into various developments, including technology, agriculture, trade, ritual, language,

art. They serve as both utilitarian and decorative mediums, trade commodities, and tools for self-expression, encapsulating the aspirations and aesthetics of their time. For Armenians, textiles also carry the history of displacement. This displacement extends beyond material culture, encompassing savoir-faire and symbolic values that, though originally rooted elsewhere, have evolved and adapted across new contexts. Emerging from a singular source, these traditions have followed diverse trajectories, influenced by the distinct environments where survivors settled.

Urfa embroidery, like many other techniques developed by Armenians in the Ottoman Empire — such as those from Marsh and Antep — derives its name from the city where it originated. Traditionally, it was used to adorn everyday items such as towels, scarves, handkerchiefs, and tablecloths. The patterns often feature nature-inspired motifs, including vegetation, animals, and geometric or architectural symbols, with the vegetation style being the most prominent. Today, Urfa embroidery is mainly practiced by Armenians in Syria and Lebanon, where descendants of survivors of the Armenian Genocide have preserved this intricate savoir-faire.

Heritage Rewoven unites students and professors from École des Arts Décoratifs-PSL and artists, artisans and researchers from Armenia and the Armenian diaspora, to engage with the displaced tradition of Urfa embroidery through active exploration and exchange.

As the first step in this program, artists Anush Ghukasyan and Aleksey Manukyan, embroidery artisan Maral Shohmahlian, and Anush Zeinalian, Co-Founder of OCHRE, collaborated with École des Arts Décoratifs-PSL professors Giuseppe Caccavale (Mural Art Studio) and Orsina Visconti (Textile and Texture Design Department) to conduct a series of meetings, discussions, and workshops with a selected group of École des Arts Décoratifs-PSL students, launching the creative exploration. Participating students: Charlotte Gaillard, Violette Rouquet, Matis German, Mia Naja, Martin Bourgaux, Claire Maurice and Theo Etrillard.

The project is funded by the “Armenia 2041” Foundation within the framework of the “Galvanizing Diaspora” Grants Program and the French Embassy/French Institute in Armenia.

For more information about the organization, visit info@ochre.am or www.ochre.am.



Urfa embroidery technique in practice



Artist Anush Ghukasyan



Student Violette Rouquet presenting her work

Tekeyan Cultural Association | Philadelphia Chapter
Villanova Armenian Students Organization
Present

My Sweet Land
A film by SAREEN HAIRABEDIAN

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

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Detroit Community Hosts Programs Commemorating 110th Anniversary of Genocide

DETROIT — On March 26, St. John Armenian Church hosted an event with local activist David Terzibashian following the Lenten Service and Fish Dinner, dedicated to the Armenian Genocide on behalf of the St. John's Men Society.

The program, hosted by the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, featured remarks by Terzibashian and a film, “They Won Through Living,” a documentary directed by Ani Manoukian and produced by Lilit Mkhitarian. The documentary delves into the lives of orphaned girls who found refuge and resilience in the American Near East Relief orphanages in Alexandrapol/Gyumri during the turbulent years from 1919 to 1931. The film was the winner of “Best Short Documentary” at the Pomegranate Film Festival (Canada).

The event was free and open to the public and guests were visibly moved by the poignant documentary.



David Terzibashian

This event is just one of several offered to the Metro Detroit American Armenian community in commemoration of the 110th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

