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From left, President Vahagn Khachaturyan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Speaker Alen Simonyan at the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial (Tsitsernakaberd)

Pashinyan Issues Carefully-Worded Statement On Armenian Genocide Anniversary

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan again did not explicitly condemn the masterminds and perpetrators of the 1915 Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey as Armenia marked its 110th anniversary on Thursday, April 24.

Tens of thousands of people marched to

the Tsitsernakaberd memorial to commemorate the genocide victims. The daylong procession followed an official wreath-laying ceremony at the hilltop memorial led by Pashinyan, parliament speaker Alen Simonyan and President Vahagn Khachaturyan.

Catholicos Karekin II, the supreme head

of the Armenian Apostolic Church increasingly at odds with Pashinyan's government, was again excluded from the annual ceremony. Karekin and other top clergymen held a prayer service at Tsitsernakaberd later in the morning.

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Reverend Vardish Baghdasaryan, Bishop Sevrop Isakhanian, Reverend Christopher Easthill. (ZAD photo)

Events in Germany Honor Genocide Victims

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — Every April Germans join with Armenians to commemorate the victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, with prominent events in Berlin and Frankfurt organized by the Central Council of the Armenians in Germany (ZAD) and the Diocese of the Armenian Church in Germany. This year, the 110th anniversary, several other cities hosted events, from Stuttgart to Bremen, Hamburg to Cologne and Munich.

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The Armenian community marching through New York City (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)

Armenians and Friends Gather at Times Square to Mark 110th Genocide Anniversary

By Taleen Babayan

NEW YORK — As a wave of Armenia and Artsakh flags, held by Armenian youth, and commemorative signs, raised high by community members, cascaded up Broadway and made its way into Times Square, the past and present merged as the Armenian people called for recognition of the atrocities of the Armenian Genocide over a century ago, and the ongoing injustices against the Artsakh Armenians today.

see TIMES SQUARE, page 10

Trump Statement On April 24 Avoids Saying 'Genocide'

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's statement on April 24, unlike his predecessor, President Joseph Biden, mentioned the "Medz Yeghern" instead of the "genocide." In addition, there was no reference to the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh (Karabakh), whereby its entire population was forced to leave or face death, in 2023.

His statement read in full:

"Today we commemorate the Medz Yeghern, and honor the memories of those wonderful souls who suffered in one of the worst disasters of the 20th Century. Beginning in 1915, one and a half million Armenians were exiled and marched to their deaths in the final years of the Ottoman Empire. On this Day of Remembrance, we again join the Great Armenian

"WE ARE FORTUNATE THAT SO MANY ARMENIANS HAVE BROUGHT THEIR RICH CULTURE TO OUR SHORES"

Community in America, and around the World, in mourning the many lives that were lost.

"Every year on April 24th, we reflect on the strong and enduring ties between the American and Armenian peoples. We are proud of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, a groundbreaking effort established in 1915 that provided crucial humanitarian support to Armenian Refugees, and grateful for the thousands of Americans who contributed or volunteered to help the Armenians expelled from their homes.

"On this day, we bear witness to the strength and resiliency of the Armenian people in the face of tragedy. We are fortunate that so many Armenians have brought their rich culture to our shores, and contributed so much to our Country, including decorated soldiers, celebrated entertainers, renowned architects, and successful business people.

"As we honor the memory of those lost, my Administration remains committed to safeguarding religious freedom and protecting vulnerable minorities. We look forward to continuing our strategic partnership with Armenia, and upholding regional stability as we continue to pursue enduring prosperity and security."

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Proodian Magic Carpet Ride Ends After 89 Years

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Oganezz's Paintings Combine Armenian Traditions with Spirituality

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COMMENTARY

Trump "Unrecognizes" The Armenian Genocide

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia, Estonia Prime Ministers Meet

TALINN, Estonia (news.am) — An Armenian delegation, led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, was received by Estonian Prime Minister Kristen Michal, as part of their official visit to Estonia, on April 29.

Pashinyan signed the book for honored guests of the Estonian government building.

A private talk between the prime ministers conducted, followed by an expanded meeting between the representatives of the two governments.

Karabakh Government Building Transferred to Armenia

YEREVAN (news.am) — The building of the Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) representation in Yerevan, which was the property of the Artsakh government, has been transferred to the management of the government of Armenia, the Pastinfo news agency reported on April 29. Five years ago, former President of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan had pledged this building as collateral for \$800,000 to Artsakhbank, Pastinfo noted.

Last week, the National Assembly of Armenia made amendments to the Civil Code of Armenia, as well as to the law on amendments to the law on state registration of legal entities, separated subdivisions of legal entities, institutions and individual entrepreneurs.

Kocharyan Criticizes Pashinyan's Handling of Karabakh Conflict

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Former President Robert Kocharyan at a press conference on April 29 criticized Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for rejecting peace proposals that could have averted the devastating 2020 war in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

At a meeting with students and professors at the Armenian University of Armenia, Kocharyan highlighted the 2001 Key West agreement as a “turning point” in peace talks. Although never signed, the draft document saw Azerbaijan accepting the possibility of Nagorno-Karabakh joining Armenia — a stance Kocharyan described as unprecedented. “Even the later Madrid Principles, which included full recognition of the people’s right to self-determination, became framed by our side as major concessions,” he said.

He also pointed to a 2019 proposal ignored by the Armenian leadership, stating that Yerevan’s refusal to engage in negotiations led to a loss of international support.

Drawing parallels with the war in Ukraine, Kocharyan accused Armenian leaders of political irresponsibility and shortsightedness. Referring to Pashinyan’s claim that he avoided a ceasefire in October 2020 to prevent being labeled a “traitor,” Kocharyan countered, “Wouldn’t it have been better to be called a traitor then, rather than face this catastrophe now?”

Pioneering Turkish Historian Links Genocide Recognition to Democracy

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Turkish historian Prof. Taner Akçam, founding director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program at Clark University’s Armenian Institute in California, presented the Armenian edition of his book, *The Origins of the Genocidal State*, at the Faculty of History, Yerevan State University, reports Factor.am.

Translated from English, the book explores the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Republic of Turkey between 1918 and 1923.

Akçam emphasized that democratization in Turkey is a fundamental prerequisite for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

A prolific author, Akçam has written extensively on the topic. In his latest book, he critically examines the century-long history of the Turkish Republic, highlighting its structural flaws and the persistent lack of democracy. He questions why a state based on equality was never realized and outlines how the official narrative has been distorted to serve state interests. Akçam argues that the Turkish state was founded on a system of discrimination, repression, and violence, likening it to an apartheid regime.

“Since 1918, Turkey has been building an apartheid regime. My main argument is that this regime completed the program initiated by the Committee of Union and Progress. Turkey created a system where Christians were systematically excluded from the political, social, and cultural life of the country,” Akçam stated.

He revealed that his book includes evidence of how Turkish authorities assigned numbers to birth certificates and passports to identify ethnic origins and block minorities from attaining high-ranking positions.

“In this numbering system, Greeks were



Prof. Taner Akçam in Yerevan

labeled as one, Armenians as two, Jews as three. Even if a newborn’s parents forgot or chose not to mention their ethnic background, the state would never forget,” Akçam explained.

Discussing Armenian-Turkish relations, he stated that recognition of the Armenian Genocide should not be a precondition for establishing diplomatic ties. According to him, Armenia’s leaders have never made such a demand. However, Akçam stressed that it is crucial to illustrate the link between democratization and genocide recognition.

“Connecting democracy and Genocide recognition is not easy. Why? Because recognition is about justice, and justice means nothing without democracy. Even democratic states like the U.S. can deny the Armenian Genocide. Democracy doesn’t guarantee justice—but it seems to be a ticket to pursue it. That’s why we empha-

size that democratization in Turkey is one of the key prerequisites for Genocide recognition and justice,” Akçam said.

He also called for a new perspective on history — one that acknowledges the mistakes of the past.

EU Mission in Armenia Edits Out Word ‘Genocide’ From Statement

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The European Union’s monitoring mission deployed along Armenia’s border with Azerbaijan appeared to have removed on Thursday, April 24, the word “genocide” from its statement on the 110th anniversary of the slaughter of some 1.5 million Armenians in Ottoman Turkey.

The initial version of the statement posted on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, paid tribute to “the victims of the Armenian Genocide.” The phrase was changed to “the Armenian victims of 1915-1923” shortly afterwards.

The Armenian genocide has been officially recognized by the parliaments and/or governments of most, but not all, of the EU’s 27 member states, including France, Germany and Italy. EU bodies and officials have not used the word “genocide” in their public statements on the matter.

“The Armenian Genocide began 110 years ago,” French President Emmanuel Macron said in an X post. “On this April 24, the national day of remembrance, let us remember all the victims and keep their memory alive.”

The editing of the EU mission statement prompted a scornful reaction from Russia. “Incredible cynicism and vileness!” Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, wrote on Telegram.

Zakharova mentioned the genocide anniversary when she spoke at a news briefing earlier in the day. She stressed that Russia was one of the first countries to recognize the genocide.

“In Russia, we have always perceived the grief of the brotherly Armenian people as our own,” she said.

Moscow has been very critical of the EU monitors deployed on the Armenian side of the long and heavily militarized border two years ago. It has claimed that the mission is part of EU efforts to drive Russia out of the South Caucasus.

Ruben Vardanyan’s Family Calls on Vatican To Help Release Armenian Captives

YEREVAN (news.am) — The family of former Nagorno-Karabakh state minister, businessman and philanthropist Ruben Vardanyan has expressed condolences over the death of Pope Francis and called on the Vatican to continue the late pontiff’s efforts to free Armenian captives.

“The Holy See can play an important role in diplomatic efforts to free the captives, thereby remaining true to Pope Francis’ commitment to justice and human dignity. Holding the captives is contrary to the principles of peace and reconciliation that Pope Francis has consistently followed during his time on the throne,” the family said in a statement posted on social media.

The philanthropist’s family recalled Pope Francis’ words that religion cannot be used for war, only peace is holy. Vardanyan’s family urged the Vatican to put the pontiff’s words into practice by supporting the demand for the immediate release of the Armenian captives.

“These Christians deserve to be protected from persecution. They face hardship today because of their faith. Now is the time to act. We call on all people who have a conscience to join our call in defense of the 23 Armenian captives, including Ruben Vardanyan. They remain in captivity only because of their beliefs and heritage,” the statement notes.



Ruben Vardanyan meeting with Pope Francis



ARMENIA

Pashinyan Issues Carefully-Worded Statement On Armenian Genocide Anniversary

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The genocide began with mass arrests on April 24, 1915 of Armenian intellectuals and activists in Constantinople. An estimated 1.5 million Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire were massacred or starved to death in the following months and years. About three dozen nations, including Russia, France, Germany and the United States, have recognized the genocide.

“Today we remember the innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide, who fell victim to the massacres and mass deportations that raged since 1915,” Pashinyan said in a statement issued on the occasion.

In contrast with his past statements, Pashinyan did not mention the regime of the so-called Young Turks that ruled the crumbling empire during that time. He also continued to put the emphasis on the Armenian phrase “Meds Yeghern” (Great Crime), rather than the term “genocide,” in reference to the events of 1915.

Pashinyan used the occasion to promote his policy towards Turkey and Azerbaijan, saying that Armenia should “survive the tragedy of Meds Yeghern” with “delimited and demarcated borders” and “normalized relations with neighbors.”

He condemned through his press secretary, Nazeli Baghdasaryan, the burning of Turkish and Azerbaijani flags during an annual torchlight procession to Tsitsernakaberd organized by the young wing of the opposition Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) party late on Wednesday, April 23.

“That is a provocative and inflammatory practice,” Baghdasaryan said in a statement to the state-run Armenpress news agency.

“This statement exposes Pashinyan’s political vector: to restrain his own people, fight against them, and justify any action of



Throngs of people crowded the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial (Tsitsernakaberd).

the enemy,” countered Kristine Vartanyan, a Dashnaksutyun lawmaker. “Pashinyan sees a danger not from Azerbaijan or Turkey but from his own people.”

Over the past year, Pashinyan has faced growing accusations of questioning and even denying the genocide for the sake of pleasing Turkey, which continues to deny a deliberate government effort to exterminate the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. He declared in January that Armenians should “understand what happened” in 1915 and what prompted the subsequent



Members of the clergy and the public at the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial (Tsitsernakaberd)



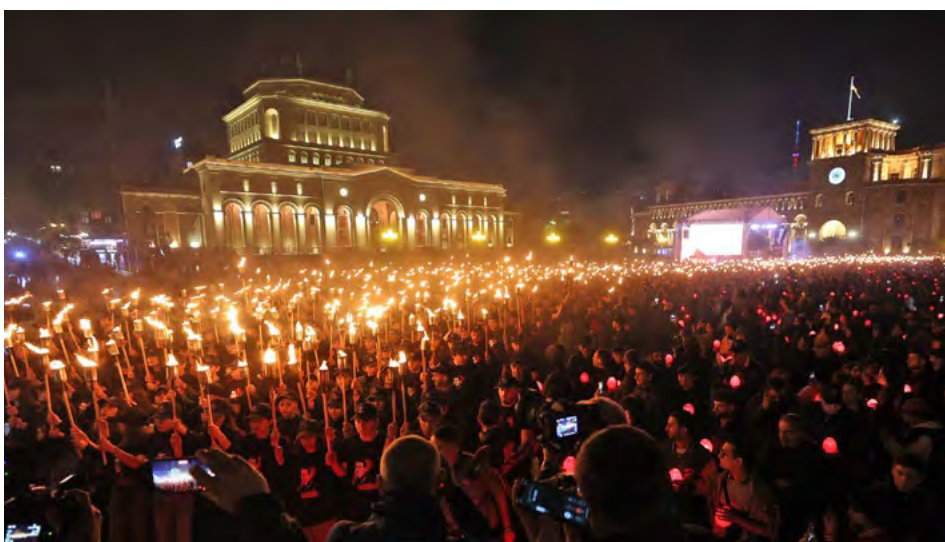
Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II at the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial (Tsitsernakaberd)

campaign for international recognition of the slaughter of some 1.5 million Armenians as genocide.

Armenian historians, opposition figures and retired diplomats expressed outrage at that statement, saying that Pashinyan cast doubt on the fact of the genocide. Armenian Diaspora groups that have long been campaigning for genocide recognition also

deplored it.

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



A torchlight procession on the eve of April 24



People paid their respects to the martyrs at the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial (Tsitsernakaberd)



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Netanyahu to Visit Azerbaijan on May 8

TEL AVIV (*Times of Israel*) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will visit Azerbaijan on May 8.

He will meet with President Ilham Aliyev and members of the Jewish community.

Azerbaijan is not party to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, and as such there is no danger that Netanyahu will be arrested.

EU Monitoring Mission Hosts Finland Ambassador

YEREVAN (*News.am*) — The European Union civilian monitoring mission in Armenia (EUMA) hosted the Finnish ambassador, Kirsti Narinen on April 29, it noted in a post on the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

“Honoured to host H.E. Ms Kirsti Narinen – Ambassador of Finland to Armenia and brief her about EUMA’s tasks, activities and recent developments on the ground. Finland is a steadfast contributor to EUMA with 7 Finnish experts deployed to Armenia,” wrote EUMA.

Pashinyan, Georgian President Meet

YEREVAN (*Armenpress*) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with President of Georgia Mikheil Kavelashvili who paid an official visit to Armenia on April 28 and 29.

Welcoming Kavelashvili’s official visit, Pashinyan congratulated him on his election as president of Georgia, the Prime Minister’s Office said in a readout.

He wished Kavelashvili successes during his tenure for the welfare of Georgia, and to the benefit of the bilateral ties and the region.

“You know how much we value our bilateral relations with Georgia and we have already elevated our relations to a level of strategic partnership. I think it is a step that reflects our long-term intentions. I’ve always said and I continue to be convinced that Georgia and Armenia have common interests and we must build our relations on these interests,” he said.

Kavelashvili said he was honored to visit Armenia for the first time as president.

“Our nations have lived side by side for many centuries, our friendship spans over 3000 years, which is very exemplary all over the world. I spoke about this also with the President of Armenia, and truly this is very special, that today our nations exist. Certainly, our relations must deepen and develop,” the Georgian president said.

He welcomed the finalization of the talks around the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement and expressed hope that it will be signed soon.

Pashinyan and Kavelashvili also discussed various items on the cooperation agenda between the two countries pertaining to the joint projects in the economy, tourism, infrastructures, education and other areas.

Aliyev Says Relations with China ‘Are Excellent’ in CGTN interview

By Yousef Bardouka

In his second interview with Chinese state media in a week, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev talked about his recent visit to Beijing, trade and transport cooperation with China, and, on two occasions, tea.

Aliyev’s English-language interview with China Global Television Network (CGTN) was published on Sunday, April 27.

It was largely focused on his recent visit to Beijing and ties between Azerbaijan and China, with Aliyev echoing many of the same sentiments he had made in his interview with Xinhua, China’s state news agency, on April 22, a day before his visit kicked off — his first since 2019.

During the interview with CGTN, Aliyev discussed the strategic partnership declaration he signed with Chinese President Xi Jinping and the volume of trade between the two countries.

Asked what a strategic partnership with China would bring to Azerbaijan, Aliyev praised ties between the two countries, and said that they ‘strongly support each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.’

“We strongly support [the] ‘One China’ policy. We were among the first countries, which publicly and openly denounced illegal elections in Taiwan,” he said, adding that the strategic partnership with China is “really an important achievement for Azerbaijan.”

“I can tell you that Azerbaijan signed the Declaration on Strategic Partnership with many countries in our region and also with some European countries, but China is the strongest among them,” he said.

The interviewer then asked Aliyev about his “very deep rapport” with Xi, and how they “interact with each other.”

“At one meeting, he called me a good friend of China. That was kind of an award to me,” responded Aliyev, going on to praise Xi as a “very experienced statesman” and a person he “deeply respects.”

Aliyev again said that Azerbaijan was “among the first” countries to join the Belt

and Road initiative, a Chinese-led global initiative aimed at developing transport infrastructure — among other projects — to facilitate more Chinese trade globally.

The reporter then asked Aliyev what he would tell his late father, President Heydar Aliyev, about the “level of relationship” between Azerbaijan and China.

Aliyev said that his father’s visit to China was one of his first state visits, and that Baku to this day follows his “path, including in our foreign policy priorities.”

“Among these priorities, China has a special place,” said Aliyev. “I think if he could see from heaven where we are now, I think, he would be proud of Azerbaijan and of [the] Chinese-Azerbaijan relationship.”

Aliyev then spoke about Chinese investments in Azerbaijan’s green energy sector, saying that the contacts would give Azerbaijan 6,500 megawatts of renewable energy by 2030.

“Just for comparison, the total installed capacity of Azerbaijan is 8,000 megawatts,” he said, adding that 6,000 megawatts of the energy would come from solar and wind power.

He also said that Azerbaijan will this year start jointly manufacturing electric buses with China’s BYD at a capacity of 500 buses a year.

Halfway through the interview, the interviewer paused and exclaimed that she was thirsty and suggested that they have a sip of tea.

Aliyev laughed, and the two clinked their teacups, proceeding to briefly talk about tea customs and traditions in Azerbaijan and China, with the reporter segueing into Azerbaijan’s decision to unilaterally exempt Chinese nationals from visa requirements in 2024. Aliyev emphasized that it was the first time Azerbaijan had made such a unilateral decision.

“Usually we did it on bilateral grounds. But in this case, we did it unilaterally to demonstrate our friendship and openness,” he said, adding that he hoped to see more Chinese tourism in Azerbaijan and vice versa.

Aliyev then revealed that he was visit-

ing China again to take part in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit later this year. He said that developing close ties with the organization would be beneficial for both Azerbaijan and SCO, “because we are on the western side of the Caspian. We are, at the same time, the South Caucasus country with strong political ties with transportation and infrastructure projects.”

He then went on to criticize global unilateralism and spoke about his personal role in defending “the interests of the Global South” during the COP29 summit in Baku in late 2024.

“And we, in Azerbaijan, consider China as a leader of the Global South,” he said. “so this is a special role, which we think China is playing, uniting countries among particularly those principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, the so-called Bandung principles, actually reflect everything you said, plus sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, equality, multilateralism, and no domination by any country or group of countries.”

“This is a principle that is very close to us, and we defend it by protecting our national interests and being a very active member of the international community,” he concluded.

Aliyev’s official visit was preceded by the Minister of the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party Liu Jianchao’s visit to Azerbaijan. Liu’s visit was followed by reports, both by Russian state news agency Sputnik and Azerbaijani pro-government media, that the Chinese minister said that Chinese companies would participate in the construction of the “Zangezur corridor” — a Baku demand for control of a strip of land through Armenia to link mainland Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan.

China’s Charge d’Affaires to Armenia, Chen Ming, refuted the reports to Armenian media on the same day.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on April 29.)

EU and Azerbaijan Appear to Cement Energy Partnership

Azerbaijani media outlets are characterizing a recent visit to Baku by the EU’s top foreign policy official as a “landmark event” during which Brussels demonstrated a desire to “abandon previous stereotypes and recognize Azerbaijan as a key partner.”

Kaja Kallas, the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, held talks with President Ilham Aliyev, Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and other top officials on April 25. Official statements from both sides arising out of those discussions contained the usual pleasantries and acknowledgements, but did not signal any significant deals were in the offing.

A statement issued by Kallas’ office did contain one intriguing nugget, however. “I am also happy to say that we agreed to resume our negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Azerbaijan,” the statement said.

It was not until the weekend when the fanfare started blaring in Baku, with state-connected media outlets characterizing Kallas’ visit as a breakthrough, erasing years of rancor generated by differences over the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, the EU’s criticism of Azerbaijan’s rights abuses and

haggling over natural gas supplies.

“This visit not only eliminated accumulated contradictions but also laid the foundation for the deepening of a strategic partnership that promises significant benefits for both Azerbaijan and Europe,” stated an April 26 commentary published by Vesti.az. “Both parties demonstrate pragmatism, realizing that further confrontation is counterproductive.”

Details about whatever Kallas and her Azerbaijani interlocutors agreed to in Baku remain hazy, but the talks appeared to clarify the future Azerbaijan’s role as a natural gas supplier to the EU. Aliyev had assailed the EU earlier in April for dragging its feet on the expansion of Southern Gas Corridor to handle a planned expansion of Azerbaijani gas supplies.

“One of the main pillars of the new stage of cooperation is the energy partnership,” according to the Vesti commentary. It went on to quote Kallas as saying, “the Southern Gas Corridor is not only infrastructure, but also a symbol of our partnership.”

(This article originally appeared on the website Eurasianet.org on April 28.)



INTERNATIONAL

Impunity Leads to More Crimes Against Humanity, Spanish Lawmaker Says

MADRID (Armenpress) — The likelihood of repetition of mass crimes increases with impunity, Spanish legislator Jon Inarritu said this week.

The MP made the remarks when asked about Turkiye's continual denial of the Armenian Genocide.

Inarritu told Armenpress that the systematic denial of the Armenian Genocide by Turkiye isn't simply an insult to the memory of the victims, but it also perpetuates the culture of impunity.

He said Turkiye ought to recognize the Armenian Genocide not only as a matter of historical justice but as a moral imperative.

"Turkiye has institutionalized its denial as state policy, combining historical revisionism, diplomatic pressure, economic threats and well-funded disinformation campaigns through international lobby. This kind of approach disrupts truth, distorts the present and closes any real path towards reconciliation," he said.

He said the international community ought to have a stronger approach towards the matter.

"The international community should have a strong and principled stance in line



Parliament Member Jon Inarritu

with international law and human rights. The recognition of the Armenian Genocide isn't just a matter of historical justice, but a moral imperative. Furthermore, comprehensive pressure must be exerted on Turkiye to open its archives, assume responsibility

and head towards full and unequivocal recognition. Sustainable peace can be built only through truth," Inarritu added.

The Spanish legislator said it would take a deep transformation of culture and identity for Turkiye to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. He pointed out Germany facing its own past in terms of the Holocaust.

"Recognition would require a deep cultural transformation, a transformation of identity. Germany facing its own past after the Holocaust is a strong example: Only when the society sincerely faces its history can it begin a true democratic evolution. In case of Turkiye this would mean dismantling the fundamental nationalism based on denial. It requires the Turkish civil society, especially the younger generation, to reconcile with the fact that in the final years of the Ottoman Empire more than 1.5 million Armenians, as well as other Christian minorities like the Assyrians and Pontic Greeks, were systematically exterminated. This is not about reopening the wounds, but recognizing these wounds in order to heal them," he said.

Nonetheless, according to the Spanish legislator, such a recognition by present-day Turkiye, which in his words has a political environment formed as a result

of "authoritarianism, political Islam and neo-Ottoman" histories, is unlikely in short-term.

"Nevertheless, I hope that with time another Turkiye will emerge, more democratic, more pluralistic and more ready, to face its history without fear," Inarritu said.

He also spoke about the Armenia-Turkiye normalization process and the possible impact of the Armenian Genocide on the dialogue.

"The fact that Armenia and Turkiye are engaged in dialogue is a commendable development in itself, especially at times of global atmosphere of polarization and diplomatic deadlocks. Any effort aimed at mutual understanding, even if initially aimed at pragmatic issues such as opening of borders or economic links, must be encouraged. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine that the genocide issue will evidently appear in the agenda. Addressing this tragedy requires political maturity, ethical determination and institutional courage, which unfortunately the current Turkish leadership lacks. Nevertheless, if the dialogue is maintained over time and is based on mutual respect and good faith, it could gradually create the conditions for honestly and constructively approaching the Armenian Genocide issue," he added.

The "never again" slogan, in terms of the Armenian Genocide or other genocides, must become a universal guarantee and not just an empty motto, the Spanish MP stressed.

"The Armenian case is very symbolic, the fact that the genocide was denied for over a century created a dangerous precedent. The truly developed mankind must invest in active remembrance, strong historic education and transitional justice as pillars of our ethnical foundation. At the same time, clarity is significant, not every crime amounts to genocide, and [tossing around] the term disrupts its meaning. But when we talk about a coordinated, planned extermination fueled by ethnic or religious motives, as was the case of the Armenians, there can't be any justification or relativity. Naming such crimes is not simply a duty for the past, but a guarantee for the future," Inarritu said.

Azerbaijan Leads CIS in Education System Corruption, Study finds

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan stands out in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) for corruption in its educational and scientific systems, the Geghard Foundation said in a statement.

Following the United Nations' adoption of the Convention against Corruption on October 31, 2003, Azerbaijan joined the countries committed to implementing its requirements, initiating legislative and administrative reforms aimed at combating corruption. However, despite these measures, Azerbaijan continues to lead the list of the most corrupt states.

While corruption is widespread across all sectors in Azerbaijan, it is particularly blatant in the fields of education and science, where access to supposedly free services is mostly limited to educational and religious institutions. Unlike other sectors where bribery is seen as an abuse of official power, in education it also reflects broader societal behaviors.

Since the early 2000s, international organizations like Transparency International and Freedom House have consistently reported that Azerbaijan is particularly corrupt in the education sector among CIS countries.

Research from the 2010s shows that despite some changes, corruption remains deeply entrenched in Azerbaijani society, earning the label "national disgrace." While officials have acknowledged the need for reforms and announced some progress, actual issues in the education system have worsened, and new corruption scandals have surfaced, particularly in school construction projects.

Since 2012, funds for building and refurbishing educational institutions have been transferred to local authorities, reducing the transparency of tender processes and increasing construction costs. For example, a school built in Baku with U.S. Embassy support in 2007 cost six times less than a

similar institution funded by the Ministry of Education's budget in Gabala.

International monitoring has not only highlighted Azerbaijan's place among the world's most corrupt nations but has also drawn attention from local researchers. However, local analyses often attribute corruption to low salaries and socio-cultural factors. Despite the country's oil and gas wealth, investments in education and science are considered insufficient, and public school programs fail to adequately prepare students for university admission.

As a result, financially capable families often resort to private tutoring or bribery to secure educational success. It has also been noted that teaching materials and resources are outdated.

Corruption has deeply penetrated Azerbaijan's scientific system, particularly within the National Academy of Sciences, where embezzlement of state funds, construction and procurement fraud, and unmonitored salary payments to absent employees are common.

State hiring policies emphasizing diplomas over professional qualifications have further fueled this trend. Arrests and dismissals of education officials often appear superficial, aimed more at boosting public image than systemic reform.

A notable case is that of Jeyhun Bayramov, who, during his tenure as Minister of Education, faced waves of corruption complaints in Baku. Despite initiating some disclosures, corruption deepened across all levels of the education system and spread into regional scientific and educational platforms.

Today, corruption remains a systemic feature of Azerbaijan's education and science sectors, embedded in an environment where legal neglect and bribery are normalized. Despite Baku's high-profile actions, international rankings remain unchanged, with Azerbaijan retaining its leading position among the most corrupt countries.

Canada Liberal Party Commemorates Genocide in Statement

OTTAWA — On April 24, the Liberal Party of Canada of Prime Minister Mark Carney issued a statement condemning the Genocide.

"On this April 24th, I join tens of thousands of Canadian Armenians and millions of Armenians around the world in commemorating the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide," the statement reads.

He noted that 1.5 million Armenians were killed during acts of violence that were systematically planned and carried out by the Ottoman Empire.

"On the occasion of the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, we honor the memory of those who perished and reflect on their stories, ensuring that they are never forgotten," said Carney.

He also extended words of support to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, emphasizing their courage in overcoming unimaginable hardships and rebuilding their

communities and institutions.

Mark Carney firmly condemned genocide denial and stressed the importance of recognizing historical injustices, especially in the context of ongoing human rights concerns in the region.

"Although 110 years have passed, this genocide continues to be actively denied by the perpetrators. The Armenian people continue to face persecution and oppression. This was tragically manifested in September 2023, when more than 120,000 indigenous Armenians were forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh following months of an illegal blockade that deprived them of their most fundamental rights.

By commemorating this important day, we honor the memory of those who were lost and reaffirm our commitment to building a stronger, more tolerant Canada — one free of discrimination and hatred," the statement concludes.

INTERNATIONAL

Events in Germany Honor Genocide Victims

GERMANY, from page 1

Jonathan Spangenberg, chairman of the board of the ZAD, opened the gatherings both in Berlin and Frankfurt, and Bishop Serovpé Isakhanyan, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Germany, offered concluding remarks and requiem prayers. Cornelia Izakaya Seibeld, President of the Berlin Abgeordnetenhaus (parliament) and Dr. Bastian Bergerhoff, Frankfurt City Treasurer, greeted guests in the two venues, respectively.

Guest speaker Cem Özdemir, agriculture minister of the outgoing federal government, addressed the gathering in the capital, and Dr. Otto Luchterhandt, legal scholar and professor emeritus, spoke in the St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt. Luchterhandt provided an in-depth review of the juridical foundations for and history of anti-genocide legislation.

The German Role, Then and Now

"The genocide is also inextricably linked to Germany," Spangenberg stated, setting the tone by focusing on the historical role Germany played at the time, and its moral, political consequences for the present. If the military and political circles of Imperial Germany knew about the crimes committed by their wartime allies "and remained silent" nonetheless, "we cannot remain silent today," he said. Quoting William Faulkner, he declared, "The past is never dead; it's not even past."

And regarding Turkey, "to the present day the Turkish state has neither recognized the genocide nor uttered a syllable of apology to the descendants." The need to break the silence and to overcome, he would show, are crucial factors in guaranteeing the security of Armenia today. "Had Turkey recognized the genocide and apologized to the descendants of the victims," said Spangenberg, "it surely would have

he demanded the fulfillment of commitments contained in the genocide resolution passed in 2016 by the Bundestag, specifically regarding the need to include study of the genocide in school, university, and political education.

Instead of living up to these moral and legal commitments, on the 110th anniversary of the genocide, officialdom has been silent.

"It is tragic enough," Spangenberg said, that neither the German president nor government nor parliament "had a word of commemoration to offer the Armenians living here." Even more tragic, he said, is



Dr. Bastian Bergerhoff (ZAD photo)

the fact that on April 25, EU Vice-President and Representative for Foreign Affairs and Policy Kaja Kallas "was courting dictator [Ilham] Aliyev in Baku." This was a "slap in the face to all those who believe in European values," as well as a "painful example of our culture of remembrance," a reminder that the past can indeed return.

One German political figure named by Spangenberg as an exception to the rule of silence is Özdemir. And Özdemir spoke out clearly in Berlin. In his keynote address, he developed themes introduced by Spangenberg, with special emphasis on the need to fulfill the provisions of the Bundestag resolution. Glad to have

been able to participate in the work leading up to its passage, Özdemir recalled that it was after "intense debates" that the atrocities were finally named by name as genocide and that the Bundestag "recognized the complicity of the German Empire and Germany's special historical responsibility." However, it was the "sober truth" that this past and co-responsibility are still not



Dr. Otto Luchterhandt (ZAD photo)



Jonathan Spangenberg (ZAD photo)

part of the compulsory curriculum in any one federal state; if it is discussed in the classroom at all, that is due to the personal initiative of the teacher. It is the political forces, Özdemir said, who must push this through.

Addressing the relevant social context, with a large ethnic Turkish community in Germany, Özdemir said, "it's not a matter of pointing the finger at Turkey or ethnic Turks in Germany," but rather ensuring that "students of all backgrounds learn that a systematic genocide took place, and with German co-responsibility." In view of the close connection between the German and Turkish societies, he said "if German schools work through the Armenian genocide as part of the common history of the Ottoman and the German empires, then in a certain sense a new resonance space may come into being. Young people here could become in daily life transnational bridges of a critical culture of remembrance." To those critics who complain that this would "force students of Turkish background to accept a specific reading of history," Özdemir quipped that such criticism "comes precisely from those who have done just that for decades."

The issue for Özdemir is the active defense of democracy, and that requires "continuously renewing and strengthening the culture of memory in a pluralistic society." And, concluding on an optimistic note, he mused aloud, "Who knows, who might in the future ... be sitting next to the Armenian ambassador at such a ceremony? Perhaps the Turkish ambassador. I never lose hope."

Fighting Cultural Genocide

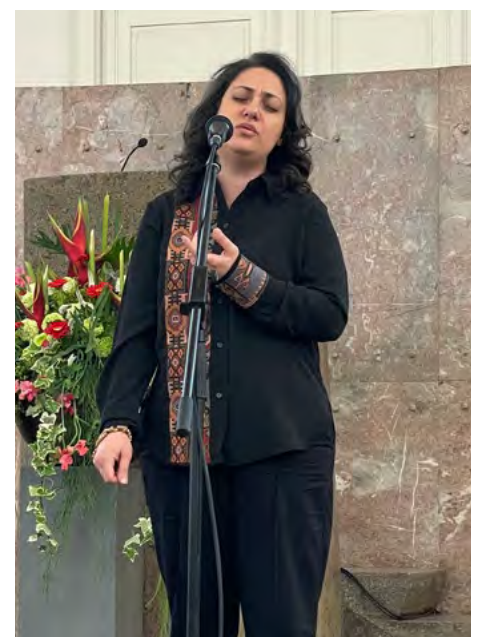
The need to preserve culture figured in remarks by all the speakers, several of whom referenced the wanton destruction of Armenian churches, monasteries, and cultural identity itself through revisionist pseudohistory. As is traditional in April 24 commemorations, Armenian music and literature interspersed the presentations. In Berlin, pianist Karine Gilanyan and soprano Narine Yeghiyan performed pieces by Bach, Komitas and Mirzoyan, whereas in Frankfurt, Maria Khachadourian-Spangenberg sang *Krunk* (Crane) and *Hov areq sarer djan* (Send me a fresh breeze, you lovely mountains), and Talin Jobanian, dressed in traditional garb, presented *Tik zarkem*, a work song from Shatak region, and *Msho Gorani*, a song of longing for the homeland. In brief remarks,



Talin Jobanian (ZAD photo)

the young woman declared her intention to dedicate her life to the preservation and spreading of Armenian culture. Anna Pffingsten Sahagian delivered a moving reading of selections from the memoirs of a survivor, "I remember everything..."

Bishop Isakhanyan concluded with very moving words of commemoration, with an appeal for peace, remembrance, and reconciliation. In Frankfurt his requiem prayers and final message assumed an ecumenical aura, as Reverend Christopher Easthill of the St. Augustine's Anglican Church also took part.



Maria Khachadourian-Spangenberg (ZAD photo)



Cem Özdemir (Nicolai Foundjian photo)

responded differently during the genocidal hunger blockade of Artsakh and the subsequent violent expulsion of Armenians from their thousand-year-old homeland."

Spangenberg reviewed the several authoritative voices raised in protest in 2023, from the UN and International Court of Justice, who warned of impending genocide, as well as of statements by German politicians; but nothing followed. As a signer of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, he emphasized, Germany not only has a "moral duty ... but is bound by law to prevent crimes against humanity and genocide and to bring the perpetrators before an international court." Concretely, he called on the incoming German government and Bundestag (federal parliament) to actively engage for the liberation of the "Armenian hostages in Baku" — whom he compared to the intellectuals arrested on April 24 in Constantinople — as well as the right of return for the Artsakh refugees. In addition,



Community News

UC Berkeley Human Rights Center Cancels Film Screening On Genocide Remembrance Day

By Ella Chakarian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERKELEY, Calif. — On Thursday, April 24, University of California, Berkeley's Human Rights Center was set to screen "My Sweet Land," a documentary film that follows an 11-year-old Armenian boy navigating displacement during the Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The film was set to be screened at the Berkeley School of Law, on the evening of April 24, or Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.

However, the Armenian students and faculty received a notice in the middle of the night on April 24 about the cancellation of the event, leaving them confused — and enraged.

"Free speech is really under threat in this campus," Myrna Douzjian, an Armenian studies lecturer and the speaker at the screening, said. "I'm totally shocked."

The event was canceled after the Azerbaijani Consulate of Los Angeles sent an email to co-sponsors of the film screening. In the email reviewed by this reporter, a member of the Consulate General of Azerbaijan urged that the co-sponsors "cancel the event or reconsider your institution's association with this event." It also wrote that the trailer of the film "emphasizes themes of conflict and violence, including the use of children to communicate these messages." The Armenian Studies Program, despite being a co-sponsor of the screening, was left off the recipient list.

Azerbaijani state media was jubilant. Jeyhun Khalilov, a UC Berkeley law student from Azerbaijan, on Facebook celebrated the cancellation of the event. Khalilov wrote that he and two other Azerbaijani students at the law school visited the university's law advising office and expressed concern about the use of "Artsakh" — the Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh — in the film.

For Armenian students, the cancellation was not just bureaucratic. "It's heartbreaking," Sarine Nazarian, a third-year urban studies student, said. To Nazarian, the week is meant to bring the Armenian community on campus together. "It just feels a bit different, just because of all these hits that we keep on taking."

This week, Armenian students at UC Berkeley hosted events to commemorate the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. In past years, students pitched tents around a genocide remembrance monument on campus — this year, the university instructed students to remove the monument overnight.

see SCREENING, page 11



The iconic Proodian and Sons neon camel sign, designed by Bob Proodian's uncle in 1952, now belongs to neon sign preservationist Dave Waller, who maintained it for years before adding it to his collection. "It's a glowing testament to the American Dream," Waller said. (photo Dave Waller)

Proodian Magic Carpet Ride Ends after 89 Years

By Isaac Green

LYNN (ItemLive.com)— After 89 years in business, W. Proodian & Sons Rug Store, a Lynn institution known for its handwoven rugs, deep family roots, and iconic neon sign, has officially closed. The store held its final day of operation on Sunday, March 30, 2025.

The business was founded in 1936 by Walter Proodian Sr., a survivor of the Armenian genocide who immigrated to the United States in 1921. He opened the original shop on Eutaw Avenue before relocating in 1945 to the building at 32 Western Ave., where it remained for the next 80 years.

Walter Sr. ran the store with his wife, Nora, who grew up in Chelsea, and their two sons: Walter Jr. and Robert "Bob" Proodian. Now in his 80s, Bob has spent nearly his entire life in the Oriental rug business in Lynn. In 1985, he took over the company as president and CEO, assuming full leadership while his brother pursued other endeavors.

"The business was started by my father," Bob Proodian said. "Then my brother and I joined. Later, my nephews got involved. My mother helped too. It was a family thing."

The store specialized in hand-knotted Persian rugs, offering both geometric and floral patterns. Bob is especially fond of Persian Serapis, bold, geometric designs that have long been popular in the American Southwest.

One of the shop's most recognizable features was its large red neon sign, installed in 1952. Designed and fabricated by Bob Proodian's uncle — Walter Sr.'s brother—the sign featured a blinking red camel and the words "Proodian & Sons Rugs." It became a beloved landmark within Lynn, much like the Citgo sign in Kenmore Square, Boston.

see CARPETS, page 8



Robert "Bob" Proodian sits atop a stack of rugs inside his Lynn shop on March 28, 2025 — two days before its final closing after 89 years in business. Behind him hangs a Persian Serapi, one of his favorite rug styles, known for its bold geometric patterns. (photo Isaac Green)

Genocide Educators' Guide Now Available for Award-Winning Novel *Who She Left Behind*

BOSTON — Educators in Rhode Island and Massachusetts now have a powerful new tool to teach genocide education and social studies with the release of the free downloadable Genocide Educators' Guide for the award-winning historical fiction novel, *Who She Left Behind*, by Victoria Atamian Waterman.

This curriculum aligns with core standards for Rhode Island and Massachusetts and is designed for middle and high school students in courses such as Social Studies, Civics, and World History II. The guide addresses Genocide Education Legislation, making it an essential resource for schools meeting new statewide mandates.

The comprehensive guide includes: Social Studies Standards and genocide education context; College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language Arts; Setting and plot summaries; Key themes and discussion questions and Activities and excerpts for classroom engagement



"I AM PROUD TO OFFER THIS PERSONAL AND IMPORTANT RESOURCE TO EDUCATORS, HELPING TO SPARK MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS BOTH IN AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM"

—VICTORIA ATAMIAN WATERMAN

Set in Western Armenia, the Ottoman Empire, Aleppo, Syria, and later Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, the novel is based on the author's own family history and has been praised for its emotional depth and historical relevance.

"In honor of the 110th anniversary of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, I am proud to offer this personal and important resource to educators, helping to spark meaningful conversations both in and beyond the classroom," said Waterman, who is also available for classroom visits.

The book is available in print, e-reader, and audio formats.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Proodian Magic Carpet Ride Ends after 89 Years



Bob Proodian's 43-year-old Chevy delivery van, still bearing the faded lettering of W. Proodian and Sons Rug Store, remains in working condition. (photo Isaac Green)

CARPETS, from page 7

The sign was preserved by Dave Waller, a neon sign preservationist and longtime customer of the shop, who maintained it for years and acquired it for his collection when the store closed.

Carrying on in the family tradition, Bob Proodian's nephew, Walter Proodian III, owns and operates Proodian Rug Cleaners Inc., located at 52 Columbia Ave. in Lynn. Though the two businesses are separate and independently owned, both have upheld the family's reputation for quality craftsmanship.

While preparing to close the store, Bob Proodian arranged to donate the remaining rugs to a dealer.

"I didn't want to see them go to waste," he said. "These are good rugs — they should be enjoyed."

Bob Proodian also still owns the shop's 43-year-old Chevy delivery van, which bears faded lettering from the business.

"The body's worn, but I've kept it in top shape," he said. "I wouldn't hesitate to drive

it to California."

The Proodian family's connection to Lynn stretches back more than a century. When the family first acquired the Western Avenue building, it housed an ice cream parlor and a restaurant — where a New York sirloin steak dinner cost just \$1.95. At the time, part of the street was still filled with gravel, a remnant from when trolleys ran along Western Avenue.

As the Proodians began to grow their rug business, they rented out the extra space to a variety store and a kindergarten. Years later, with business booming, the family converted the entire building into retail and showroom space for their growing operation.

The future of the building at 32 Western Ave. remains uncertain. Some have speculated that it could become a barbershop or restaurant, but no official plans have been filed.

(Isaac Green is a reporter for the *Daily Item*, where this article first appeared on April 4.)

Vicky Kherlopian Gives Insights into Education in Armenia Today

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Vicky Kherlopian gave a lecture about education in Armenia today in both Armenian and English, accompanied by PowerPoint slides, on April 3 at the Baikar Center in Watertown. Her particular focus was the work of EduArmenia in Armenia. The talk was sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Boston Chapter.

Kherlopian based her presentation on the five years of work she has done with EduArmenia. She said, "After teaching all these years in public schools, understanding what teaching is all about, from kindergarten to high school level, I thought that it is my duty to train educators in Armenia and help my Armenian motherland in the best way possible."

In the public sphere of education, Kherlopian noted that the Armenian government in recent years has introduced reforms attempting a transition to a competency-based curriculum fostering critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving from the old rote memorization approach, together with teacher development programs, renovation of school buildings and integration of technology into classrooms.

EduArmenia, she said, is a program of volunteer Armenian lecturers and teachers globally to promote education in Armenia. It organizes free training for people in the fields of education and science in Armenia so that current achievements in the academic system globally can be implemented also in Armenia. Thus it promotes professional development there, educational reform, and a reservoir of educational scientific resources. It also establishes experimental centers in Armenia.

The two founders of the organization are Lilit Mukurtchyan, who works as a member of the Armenian Ministry of Education, and Seda Kocharyan, who currently is an educator in Germany. Kherlopian presented a brief video message from the two of them in Armenian. Kocharyan said that when they began EduArmenia (in 2017), the two of them were ordinary teachers in Armenia who sought to solve many of the problems of the educational system and

sought the opinions of their fellow teachers for this purpose. Mukurtchyan mentioned the annual international pan-Armenian conferences conducted over the last four years which brought together educators, scholars and administrators and whose recordings are available on the EduArmenia website.

EduArmenia offers both free online university lectures and a lab school platform allowing collaborative planning, sharing of educational experience and professional de-

velopment. Mukurtchyan mentioned several popular programs, such as "Zoom-drinking," which are informal meetings and discussions on Zoom over a cup of tea or coffee, and preservation of Armenian identity through traditional holidays like Easter, Vartavar or Hampartzoum.



Vicky Kherlopian (photo Aram Arkun)

velopment. Mukurtchyan mentioned several popular programs, such as "Zoom-drinking," which are informal meetings and discussions on Zoom over a cup of tea or coffee, and preservation of Armenian identity through traditional holidays like Easter, Vartavar or Hampartzoum.

Kherlopian then continued her talk, mentioning some of the topics of her own 45 presentations over the past five years. She said that there is a steering committee of EduArmenia in the United States with representatives from different areas. In addition to herself, she said it is composed of Marineh Fstkchyan Khachadour, who teaches in the Pasadena Unified School District in California; Flora Keshishian, researcher, public speaker, and writer (in New York); Karine Armen (Kurkjian), a

psychologist and teacher in Glendale, California, who has done many presentations on how to accept Karabakh students in Armenia's public schools (and is a contributor to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* too); Yeprem Mehranian, an associate professor of education at Georgia College in the United States; and Araksya Ghukasova, head expert of a language teaching committee and an English language teacher in Moscow, Russia.

Kherlopian pointed to Visual Armenia, as

complex life in the 21st century.

Kherlopian recognized the presence of EduArmenia member and Bentley University professor Tamara Babaian in the audience. A lively question-and-answer session covered topics such as improvements in education in the rural areas of Armenia (with the government providing salary incentives to teachers there), language and social adjustment difficulties for students from Artsakh, the approach of the Ministry of Education to reforms proposed by EduArmenia volunteers, STEM education in Armenia, .

TCA of the US and Canada Executive Director Aram Arkun served as the master of ceremonies and at the start of the program introduced Kherlopian as a Boston University Field Supervisor who supervises teacher candidates for Elementary Education Certification and Bilingual/ELL teaching certification. She has played a key role in accreditation of schools, presenting professional development courses and workshops, engaging in curriculum development projects within school systems and educational publishers and private institutions.

Kherlopian was chosen as a distinguished mathematics teacher to be awarded as the Massachusetts Presidential Award Finalist (1997), for Best Elementary Level Mathematics Teacher. A veteran K-5 public school teacher, as well as a Bilingual/ELL Specialist (K-12), she has taught for 38 years. In Watertown Public Schools she fully engaged the students, faculty, community, parents and administrators preparing schoolwide cultural events promoting diversity under her leadership. At the secondary level Vicky taught ELL (English Language Learners) at Belmont High School for the last ten years after retiring from full time teaching.

At the end of the evening, Arkun called the attention of the audience to TCA's Sponsor A Teacher Program which continues after several decades to support teachers in Armenia and is also an effort worthy of patronage and promotion.

a good example of using new technology in Armenian public schools to excite and encourage students to learn. Visual Armenia developed the program Ashkharhatsuyts, literally "world view," which through an interactive map provides students information about specific events and locations in different parts of the world.

She noted that the Armenian government in 2023 fully renovated or built 29 schools and 167 kindergartens while in the following year 264 schools were to be worked on. Laboratories and IT resources are being included in the schools encompassed in this effort, she said.

Kherlopian concluded by stressing that a focus on collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking are necessary to prepare students for increasingly



COMMUNITY NEWS

Easter at St. Vartan Cathedral: ‘God Will Remove the Stone’

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

NEW YORK — The Easter Sunday Divine Liturgy on April 20, at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral rejoiced in *Sourp Zadig*, marking a major feast day of the Christian calendar.

Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, celebrated the Divine Liturgy before the faithful in the cathedral, as well as to a global audience via the livestream broadcast. Upon entering the sanctuary to the ethereal hymns of the choir, Bishop Mesrop, accompanied by a procession of clergy and altar servers holding colorful liturgical tapestries, walked among the worshippers, bestowing his blessing and announcing the Good News of Christ’s Resurrection with the words, “Krisdos hanyav ee merelotz! Christ is raised from the dead!”

In his procession through the sanctuary, as people young and old advanced towards him to kiss the gold hand-cross he held, Bishop Mesrop’s movement signified Christ moving among his people as a teacher during His ministry.

Sunlight streamed through the cathedral’s stained-glass windows, bathing the sanctuary in multi-colored rays of light, exemplifying the warmth and infinite spectrum of God’s love. As an expression of purification and spiritual cleanliness, Bishop Mesrop symbolically washed his hands in a small basin and assumed his priestly function at the altar, turning to the faithful to make the Sign of the Cross and peace upon them.

After the reading of Scripture in Arme-



At the conclusion of the Easter Liturgy at New York’s St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan led the “Release of Doves” ceremony on the cathedral plaza. (Credit Harout Barsoumian, Bars Images)

nian and English by the deacons, prayers and hymns were sung together by the choir and congregation, underscoring the congregation’s steadfast conviction as one unified body in Christ. Thereafter, the chalice containing bread and wine representing the Body and Blood of Christ was presented to Bishop Mesrop, who blessed and raised it to the heavens for the faithful to witness and experience Christ’s mystical presence.

Holy Communion (*haghortootiun* in Armenian) brought hundreds of worshippers forward to the altar to receive the Sacrament from Bishop Mesrop, who was assisted by Cathedral Vicar Fr. Davit Karamyan

and Fr. Bedros Kadehjian.

The congregation also played an important role in the badarak by giving and receiving the Kiss of Peace (or *Voghchooyun*) — one of the oldest Christian customs, still practiced by the Armenian Church, in which members of the congregation declare: “Krisdos ee mech mer haydnetsav! Orhnyal eh haydnoutiunun Krisdosee!” (Christ is revealed among us! Blessed is the revelation of Christ!).

Throughout the service, the soaring voices of the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, directed by Khoren Mekanejian and accompanied on the organ by Kris Kalfayan, director of the Gomidas Choir, surrounded participants with an ethereal sense of peace and redemption.

Following the Eucharist, Bishop Mesrop delivered his Easter Sunday homily with passion and certainty, as he underscored the magnitude and timeless significance of Christ’s resurrection.

Who Will Remove the Stone?

Bishop Mesrop began his sermon with the story of the first Easter Sunday morning, when three faithful women, followers of Jesus, traveled to His tomb. Consumed with grief and pain over Christ’s death, they contemplated who would remove the enormous stone blocking the tomb’s entrance. But when the women arrived to anoint Jesus’ body, they found the heavy sealing stone rolled aside, and the tomb empty — an event described in the Gospels accounts of Christ’s resurrection.

“The Easter message is clear,” Bishop Mesrop said. “The resurrection power of our Lord Jesus Christ is still at work today, and can remove any stone blocking the entrance of your heart. The only condition is that you have to walk towards God — like those faithful women did.”

The Primate expounded his theme by recounting a recent personal experience, when he felt a tremendous burden “blocking his path.” It came when he was first contemplating the financial challenge of

repairing the damage that time and the elements had inflicted on St. Vartan Cathedral.

“About two years ago, we learned that the cathedral roof was leaking and in urgent need of repair,” he recalled. “At that moment, I felt like a huge stone was blocking our path to move forward. I worried about how we were going to ‘move that stone,’ to raise the considerable amount of funding needed to restore our cathedral.”

After taking a brief, contemplative pause to reflect, Bishop Mesrop revealed to the faithful what gradually became clear to him. “When you take the first step, God takes the second step. When you move, Heaven moves with you,” he said. “Little by little, step by step, we raised the funds. And today, I stand here and say that the dome of our St. Vartan Cathedral is renovated and stronger than before. The golden cross atop it is shining and proclaims to the world the resilience and faith of the Armenian people, despite the Genocide and persecution we have endured.”

Bishop Mesrop concluded by reassuring the faithful over the various “stones” that may be blocking their path—whether these involve burdens of health, financial or relationship issues, fear, despair, or any discouragement telling you to give up. “Do not believe those lies,” he said.

Release of Doves on the Plaza

At the conclusion of the service, a procession of clergy and the faithful exited the cathedral to gather outside on the plaza for the “Release of Doves” ceremony, symbolizing Christ’s sending out his apostles into the world to preach the gospel. The special ceremony is a beloved, decades-long Easter tradition at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral.

The godparents of this year’s ceremony were Richard and Dawn Papalian, parishioners of St. Gregory the Enlightener Church in White Plains, NY. As chairman of the Diocesan Council, Mr. Papalian’s leadership and dedication to the Cathedral Restoration Project made his participation in the Cathedral Easter Sunday service particularly significant.

The Easter Sunday service marked two of the Armenian Church’s days of note: the culmination of Holy Week, the sacred commemoration of the events leading to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as the beginning of Eastertide, the 50-day period known as *Heenoonk* in Armenian, that lasts from Easter to Pentecost.

Holy Week services took place at the cathedral in the days prior to Easter Sunday, with Bishop Mesrop presiding over the Holy Thursday “*Vodunluva*” (Washing of Feet) ceremony.

As in previous years, the viewing audience for St. Vartan Cathedral’s Easter Sunday liturgy included thousands of people from across the Diocese and around the world, sharing in the service as it was broadcast over the Internet. The small, dedicated production team included Yervant Keshishian, who directed the program, producer and cameraman Mano Baghjajian, and host and narrator Christopher Zakian.



The godparents of this year’s “Release of Doves” ceremony were Richard and Dawn Papalian of St. Gregory the Enlightener Church in White Plains, NY.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenians and Friends Gather at Times Square To Mark 110th Genocide Anniversary

TIMES SQUARE, from page 1

The march, led by Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, and Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, displayed a show of unity that kicked off the 110th Commemoration in Times Square, New York, on Sunday, April 27, in an event sponsored

ably displaced will have the right of return.

“We are working with the Armenian Caucus to make sure Armenia is strong, and to recognize that what happened in Artsakh was a form of ethnic cleansing and genocide,” said Pallone. “We will continue to be vigilant and strong.”

Photographer Scout Tufankjian shared her experiences while working with young Artsakh natives before the war, encour-

ing everything they could fit to try to rebuild their lives, their books, their lemon tree, their cat,” she recounted. “I met an 8-year-old boy who was being displaced for the second time in his life, I met a woman born in 1920 in Martakert who is now a refugee.”

“I am still haunted... by the parents celebrating their son’s 22nd birthdays, not at home, but at the cemetery in Yerablur,” she continued.

In the aftermath of the Artsakh (Karakakh) War and the forced displacement of Artsakh Armenians, Tufankjian emphasized that a “concerted effort” is needed to get people help now, from financial and educational support to trauma and housing support.

“We have lost the land, and we might not ever get it back,” she concluded. “But we have not yet lost Artsakh’s people and her culture, and they need our support.”

Following Tufankjian’s poignant message, musician and Artsakh native Valeri

between the past and the present.

“It’s fresh and signifies the experiences of the Armenian nation,” said Ghazaryan. “Stop crying for Artsakh, and act for Artsakh.”

Philanthropist and Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Noubar Afeyan, in a surprise appearance, applauded the efforts of the Armenian-American community for organizing the significant Commemoration event and reflected on his days as a youngster in Beirut, Lebanon, when he was a part of Armenian Genocide recognition efforts and activism. He encouraged the younger generations to “commit yourselves to doing this for the next 50 years, the way I have.”

“Generation after generation we are obligated to remind people and demand justice, because when we stop doing that it gets worse, which is what we are seeing today in Artsakh,” said Afeyan.

He reflected on two key figures during his remarks, Dr. Vartan Gregorian and



Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr (D-NJ) Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images

by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, and co-sponsored by a number of important community organizations, that featured inspiring remarks and a powerful musical performance.

New York Senior Senator and previous Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), who demonstrates his support to the Armenian-American community every single year in Times Square, reflected on the importance of “honoring Armenian history and culture.”

“The proud and heroic Armenian people stand so tall today, a little more than a century after the cruel Ottoman Empire waged a campaign of genocide against your ancestors,” said Senator Schumer. “I’m always inspired to see all of you today as witnesses to the tragedy and moral outrage of the *Medz Yeghern*.”

Schumer reflected on the loss of his own ancestors during the Holocaust, and commended the Armenian people on their “acts of remembrance.”

“I will make sure the injustices done to you by the Turks are never forgotten,” he said. “Your presence honors the memory of your ancestors whose lives were brutally cut short.”

He referenced the continued suffering from the “unlearned lessons of the *Medz Yeghern*,” including ethnic cleansing in Artsakh, and pledged to “continue speaking out against human rights abuses by the Azeri government.”

Schumer, who also took a moment to honor the memory of Hirant Gulian and Sam Azadian, co-founders of the Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration, emphasized that he will “watch developments like a hawk” as they unfold, and concluded his speech in Armenian as he offered appreciation and support.

Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr (D-NJ), an equally staunch supporter of the Armenian people, referenced the genocide against the Armenian people in Artsakh, and the work the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues is doing to ensure that those who were forc-

aging them to “show their Artsakh to the world” and capturing invaluable images as an eyewitness to the Artsakh War, which harkened back memories of the Armenian Genocide.

“We have lost Hajin and Gurun and Kharper, and now history has repeated itself,” said Tufankjian. “Once again Armenians have been forced to flee their homeland of millennia and make the unimaginable choice between staying and dying, or leaving with the hope to live, saving the land or the culture, saving our homes or our children.”

Drawing a parallel between the two tragic genocides, Tufankjian said that “we are no longer talking about the losses of our grandparents and great-grandparents, we are talking about our sons, husbands, students and cousins.”

Tufankjian emphasized the loss of ancestral homes and of actual homes in the current day as Artsakh Armenians were forcibly displaced in less than a week in September 2023.

“I was there, and I saw the families car-



Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian and Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan lead the Commemorative March following a special Badarak service at St. Vartan Cathedral

“Lyoka” Ghazaryan, delivered a powerful performance of original songs that were written during and in the aftermath of the Artsakh War. The songs, which included *aTun Treq* (Take Me Home), *Es Ter Kam* (I Am Still Alive), *Hascen Im Nuyn A* (My Address Is The Same), among others, share Ghazaryan’s story of being displaced three times since his childhood in the early 1990s, and the theme of survival. His remarks, translated by fellow Artsakh native Nina Shahverdyan, forged another bridge

Rouben Vardanyan, co-founders of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

Afeyan stated that Gregorian, who was a “giant in American and Armenian culture and society,” had shared with him that in the face of the suffering that was inflicted on the Armenians during the Armenian Genocide, “we can turn the tables and have as much gratitude and kindness to help others around the world.”

He also elaborated on Vardanyan, who remains in Baku as a prisoner on sham charges by the Azerbaijani government, and whom he considers a “hero,” because when he saw the situation in Artsakh following the war in 2020, Vardanyan risked his life to help the Armenian people and became State Minister of Artsakh from 2022 until his arrest in 2023.

“I wish all of you determination and willingness to carry the cross of being Armenian and being honest and truthful for the rest of the world to see,” concluded Afeyan.

The Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan, Hunan Arshakian, spoke about not only remembering the tragedy and lives lost during the Armenian Genocide, but also highlighting the legacy of the survivors.

“Our organization has spent generations preserving our culture, our faith, and our mission for justice, and we will not stop,” said Arshakian. “When the world forgets, we remember, and when others deny, we

continued on next page



Philanthropist, and co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Noubar Afeyan (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

speak up, and when history is erased, we write it again with the truth," he said.

Arshakian expressed that Armenian Genocide recognition is about "healing, human dignity and ensuring what happened to us never happens to anyone."

He asked the younger generation to learn Armenian history.

"Your voice matters, and as we remember and mourn the Armenian Genocide today, we also rise with every child who learns about the Armenian Genocide because we are descendants of survivors, and we are living proof that they did not succeed in erasing us," he concluded.

The Daughters of Vartan Grand Chairwoman Nancy Berberian Thompson remarked on humanity and how Armenian lives matter.

"We continue to pray for Artsakh and for Armenia, and we hope one day very soon Artsakh will return to Armenia," she said.

A Commemoration statement from State Sen. Andrew Gounardes (D-NY) was read, which showed his support of the Armenian-American community and provided his reflections on the Armenian Genocide.

"We have an obligation not only to never forget the awful legacy, but to remember it



Featured speaker photographer Scout Tufankjian (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)

and to honor its victims," he said. "By consistently remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities committed against the Armenians and honoring the survivors, as well as other victims of similar heinous conduct, we guard against repetition of such acts of genocide."

Gounardes expressed that it has been his "honor" as a Member of the New York State Senate to introduce a resolution commemorating the Armenian Genocide every year and "to speak on the importance of remembering the history." This year's resolution will be adopted on Tuesday, May 6.

The statement concluded: "Thank you to the incredibly strong Armenian-American community here in New York for your unwavering commitment to honoring your history, and speaking truth about what happens when good people stay silent while terrible things happen to other people. Your perseverance is inspiring, and I stand with you always."

Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, delivered the invocation, and Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, delivered the benediction. Obed Bazikian of the Armenian Evangelical Church led a prayer and conveyed remarks, and Rev. Fr. Richard Shackil, pastor of the Sacred Heart Armenian Catholic Church, represented Bishop Mikael Mouradian, Primate of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of the USA and Canada.

Vocalist Evelina Malkhasyan, a graduate of Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School, sang the American and the Armenian National Anthems, and *God Bless America* was performed by Gomidas Choir Member Nina Purut.

Members of the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) and the Homenetmen Scouts stood with the Armenian and Artsakh flags throughout the program's duration.

A special Badarak service at St. Vartan Cathedral that honored the memory of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide,



Hilda Hartounian (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)

preceded the March and Commemoration.

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan have sponsored the Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration since 1985, along with the support of a multitude of Armenian American community organizations. This year the event was co-chaired by Haig Gulian, Ari Minnetyan and Christopher Artun.

Diran Jebejian (Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey), Chantelle Nasri (Armenian National Committee of America) and Nanor Hartounian (UCLA's The Promise Armenian Institute), served as masters of ceremonies, while Bryan Ardouny, executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America served as media spokesperson.

Co-sponsoring organizations shared remarks by their representatives, including the Tekeyan Cultural Association, represented by Hilda Hartounian, Member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Board of Directors of US and Canada and Chair of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater New York Chapter; and the Armenian Democratic Liberal - Ramgavar

Party, represented by Dr. Shahe Sanentz.

Other speakers of cosponsoring organizations included the Armenian Assembly of America, represented by Bryan Ardouny, Executive Director; Armenian General Benevolent Union, represented by Natalie Gabrelian, Director of Districts, Chapters, and Central Board Administration; Armenian National Committee of America, represented by Gev Iskajyan, National Grassroots Director; Armenian Bar Association, represented by Taline Sahakian, Past Chair of the Armenian Bar Association and Current Member of the Board of Governors; as well as the Armenian Missionary Association of America; and the Armenian Council of America.

Participating organizations included the Armenian Network of America, Armenian Youth Federation, Homenetmen Scouts of NY and NJ, Armenian Relief Society, Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, AGBU Young Professionals, Armenian Students Association, Hamazkayin Cultural Association of NY and NJ, and tri-state Armenian college and university clubs.

UC Berkeley Human Rights Center Cancels Film Screening on Genocide Remembrance

SCREENING, from page 7

"They kept emailing statements, being like, 'we're going to kick you out, we're going to take it down if you don't take it down yourselves,'" Nazarian said. "They would come in person and tell us that this is unacceptable, and we had to relocate, like, at night."

A request to illuminate the bell tower in the red, blue and orange of the Armenian flag was also denied by campus administration, which said that it has declined similar requests in the past "in order to stay impartial."

"We [were] silenced in not being able to have our monument on the [Memorial] Glade, which is one of the busiest areas on campus, and we weren't able to camp out," Alexander Tavidian, president of Berkeley's Armenian Students' Association, said. "Foreign politics [are] getting involved in our free speech."

UC Berkeley has upwards 300 Armenian students, majority of whom are members of the Armenian Students' Association. One student said that the cancellation of the event has sparked debate between members of the group — some wished to lay low and host a silent screening of the film, while others believe that to be an act of complacency.




In an increasingly intense climate across American campuses, Armenian students have been caught in the crosshairs. The intrusion of a foreign consulate in the planned film screening has left many Armenian

students feeling disillusioned. What was meant to highlight Armenian voices on a day of collective remembrance ultimately became a flashpoint for controversy. "They totally crumbled under that pressure," Tavidian said.

"This is the first time so overtly Armenian voices have been silenced on campus," Dzovinar Derderian, the Armenian Studies program chair, said. Derderian has taught seminars about Nagorno-Karabakh in the past, without any backlash from the university. "This came as a complete surprise," she said.

"We deeply regret having to make this decision, and we recognize that the timing — on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day — caused pain for members of our community," the Human Rights Center (HRC) wrote in an email to this reporter. "That was never our intention, and we sincerely apologize."

The center also released a statement announcing that the film screening would be postponed to the fall semester, adding that the cancellation of the screening was not based on the content of the film or rooted in denial of the Armenian Genocide. "HRC fully acknowledges the Armenian Genocide and mourns the loss of hundreds of thousands of Armenian lives during the genocide," they wrote. "It is a moral imperative to recognize genocide, and we sincerely apologize for causing any confusion of our stance."

**AGBU LA Special Events Committee
& Tekeyan Cultural Association, LA Chapter
are honored to Invite you to
a lecture by renowned Attorney
ROUPEN AVSHARIAN
"Syria - Post Assad Environment
& the Syrian Armenians"
Սուրիա: Յետ-Ասատեան Իրավիճակն
ու Սիրիահայուրթիւնը**

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2025 AT 7:00PM
AGBU VATCHE & TAMAR MANOUKIAN CULTURAL CENTER
2495 E MOUNTAIN ST., PASADENA, CA 91104
Reception to follow - Free Entry . Հիրասիրութիւն - Մուտքը ազատ



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Heritage Walk Groundbreaking Launches ‘Extraordinary Journey’ of Cultural Appreciation in Philadelphia

By Melissa Markaridian Selverian

PHILADELPHIA — Throngs of local Armenians gathered as the groundbreaking of the Armenian Heritage Walk of Philadelphia was held on Sunday, April 27.

Kurk Selverian, chairman of the project board, told the exuberant members of the community one word applied: “Yerakh-dakedootoon,” The Armenian word for appreciation. That feeling toward America and a strong pride in the Armenian story are the driving forces behind the Armenian Heritage Walk project of Philadelphia, he said.

A crowd of hundreds gathered on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway across from the north entrance of the Philadelphia Museum of Art to celebrate the historic expansion of a parcel where a 22-foot-tall statue of the mythical Armenian figure Young Meher has stood for 50 years. Created by artist Khoren Der Harootian and presented by the Armenian community as a gift of thanks to America on its 200th birthday in 1976, the statue that symbolizes the courage and faith of the Armenian people will remain a centerpiece of the new Walk that will be unveiled in time for the nation’s 250th birthday in April 2026. Groundbreaking fundraising chair Karolyn Chebookjian reflected on the historic undertaking by forebears who brought Young Meher to its original stand as she exalted the present-day community for “embarking on an extraordinary journey that far exceeds that monumental effort.”

The winding trail will feature lighted artwork stations and natural elements of Armenian and American origin intended

to draw visitors of every race, religion, and creed. Each piece will be designed and installed to inspire guests to reflect on the value of cultural diversity as they walk through the story of the Armenian people who, though exiled in genocide, found a new home in America and made a lasting contribution to it. Phase 1 of the project includes construction of the walkway and



Students of the Armenian Sisters Academy perform at the Armenian Heritage Walk groundbreaking in Philadelphia on Sunday, April 27.

restoration of the Young Meher statue. Phase 2 will feature selection and installation of the art.

Selverian commended the Philadelphia Armenian community — its five churches, day school, and numerous organizations — for a unified effort to make this dream

a reality, heralding that “unity is power.” He gave special thanks to the City of Philadelphia for its collaboration through the arduous but rewarding process of gaining approvals for design and construction.

Groundbreaking committee chairperson Yn. Arpy Minasian offered welcoming words and highlighted the significance of the majestic Walk. Describing age-old

ing of the American and Armenian national anthems. Clergy offered invocation and blessings. Those in attendance included Very Rev. Boghos Tinkjian of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church, Rev. Armash Bagdasarian of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church, Rev. Fr. Hakob Gevorgyan of Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, Rev. Fr. Asadur Minasian of St. Mark’s Armenian Catholic Church, Rev. Dr. Heather C. Ohaneson of Armenian Martyrs’ Congregational Church, and Sister Emma Moussayan of the Armenian Sisters Academy. While a rescheduling of the program from April 26 to April 27 because of rain made them unable to attend, His Grace Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese; His Eminence Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy; and His Excellency Bishop Mikael Mouradian, Bishop of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg in the USA and Canada sent their blessings in written messages. Two large video screens projected the day’s events and ran moving images of the Young Meher dedication of 1976 and Armenia landscapes.

Selverian and Chebookjian saluted the entire Armenian community, recognizing them as the backbone of the project and asking for their continued support to realize fundraising goals. To date, nearly \$5 million has been collected. They offered special thanks to board members, architect Simon Koumjian III, donors and the many committee members. All attendants were invited to sign their names to stones to be laid in the Walk’s foundation. Donations were accepted at the end of the program, as refreshments were served.

boulders that were transported all the way from Armenia to America to flank the plot, she likened them to the strength of the Armenian people, exclaiming, “Like these boulders, we are unbreakable!” In recognition of the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and in honor of those who fought to defend Artsakh in recent years, she added, “We the Armenian people endure... The harder they strike, the taller we stand... We will remember, and we will always prevail!” Community member Antranig Garibian took the podium to pay tribute to Pennsylvania House Resolution PA HR171 that named April 24, 2025, as Pennsylvania’s Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 and reminded guests that Armenians have friends throughout the state. Stone and soil from the historic Armenian cities of Akhtamar, Ani, Ararat, Sepastia, and Van were added to a time capsule to symbolize the resilience and perseverance of the Armenian people through the generations.

Students of the Armenian Sisters Academy and flutist Kevork Kechichian graced the afternoon with enriching Armenian song and dance. The Hamazkayin Akhtamar Choral Group led gatherers in the sing-

Board members include Steven Barsamian, Esq.; Karolyn Chebookjian, Harry S. Cherken, Jr., Esq.; David Hoplamazian, Ned Moore, Michael Santerian, Kurk Selverian and Nanette Zakian. Groundbreaking committee members include Yn. Arpy Minasian, chair; Aram Frounjan, Aram Hovagimian, Vahe Minasian, Sarah Selverian and Lena Ohanessian Streeter. Among the organizations and individuals thanked for their contributions to the event were the Armenian Sisters Academy, ACYOA youth, AYF youth, Gary Altoonian, photography; Aram Hovagimian, video; Karen Bogosian and Visual Sound, audio/video equipment; Flowers by Nora, Friends of Armenian Heritage Walk, ice cream truck; and the Philadelphia police.

Donations may be made at www.armenianheritagewalk.org.

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.



Guests sign their names to stones that will be laid in the foundation of the Armenian Heritage Walk at the groundbreaking ceremony in Philadelphia on Sunday, April 27.



Arts & Culture

Marine Zulyan to Debut New Art on May 9

WINDERMERE, Wash. — Acclaimed artist Marine Zulyan, chosen as Windermere's artist of the month, will debut her newest collection of miniature pieces on May 9, from 6 to 8 p.m., at Windermere Mill Creek, located at 15418 Main St. M103, Mill Creek.

Zulyan will reveal a new collection of miniature works. The collection consists of replicas of her most popular works throughout her career.



Marine Zulyan

This collection features intricate replicas of some of her most beloved pieces, offering admirers a variety of choices while also keeping the essence of the originals that are more accessible as collectibles. Zulyan's artwork emphasizes storytelling through cultural, traditional, and contemporary themes -- this latest series showcases her attention to detail, demonstrating how even the smallest canvas can hold profound artistic expression. "This collection acts as an homage to the works that



Spring Song, Oil on Canvas, 24" x 20", 2025

have shaped my career to this day. Through a timeline," said Zulyan.

"Guests will have the opportunity to meet the artist and purchase selected pieces from her collection, making this the perfect prelude to Mother's Day, offering a special way to celebrate this most adored holiday. Limited original miniatures will be available for purchase."

Zulyan was born in Armenia and studied at the School of Fine Arts Yeghishe Tadevossian and at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Yerevan State University of Khachatur Abovyan. She has participated in numerous exhibitions in Armenia and Canada. Her works are found in many private collections. Solo Exhibitions: Zorayan Museum, St. Leon Cathedral, Burbank, CA.; Gallery Klimantiris, Montreal; Tekeyan Armenian Cultural Association, Montreal. Duo Exhibitions: Centre Sanahin, Montreal; AGBU Montreal; St. Vartan Armenian Church, Vancouver; Association Polsahay, Montreal.

For more information about the artist and her work, go to: <http://www.zulyan.com/>



Kristina Oganezz's Paintings Combine Armenian Traditions with Spirituality

By Dikran Kapoyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — Kristina Oganezz is a Los Angeles-based, award-winning artist. Originally from Armenia, Oganezz is renowned for her vibrant acrylic paintings, skillfully crafted with palette knives and brushes, blending classical techniques with a contemporary edge.

She is a member of the Union of Artists in Armenia, the International Association of Art (USA), the Visual Artists Association (UK) and the Portrait Society of America.

Over the years, she has exhibited her work globally in more than 30 solo and group exhibitions, with pieces featured in private, public, and museum collections, including Modern Art Museum and the History Museum, both in Yerevan. Her outstanding achievements include winning the International Frida Kahlo Prize in Milan for her portrait of Charles Aznavour.

Kristina has developed several interesting artistic approaches, including the creation of bird-numbers (*trchnatver*), which complements the Armenian art of calligraphy called bird-letters (*trchnagir*). The latter is included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. She also pioneered the innovative "preaching exhibition" concept, an artistic approach that merges spiritual and philosophical narratives into immersive visual storytelling, inviting audiences to engage with art on a deeper, more reflective level.

see OGANEZZ, page 17



Books

Irina Malakian Simmons Publishes Novel *A Dangerous Time*

BOSTON — *A Dangerous Time* is an eye-opening, fictional account of the early days of the drugs bazaars in India. Set in the period before independence, the story brings together a group of fascinating characters whose lives intersect in fateful and at times explosive ways. The action unfolds against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world, and the rise of the pharmaceutical industry.

A Dangerous Time is the first book in a trilogy. The theme of this project is the evolving role of the pharmacist during the 20th century. Irina's father

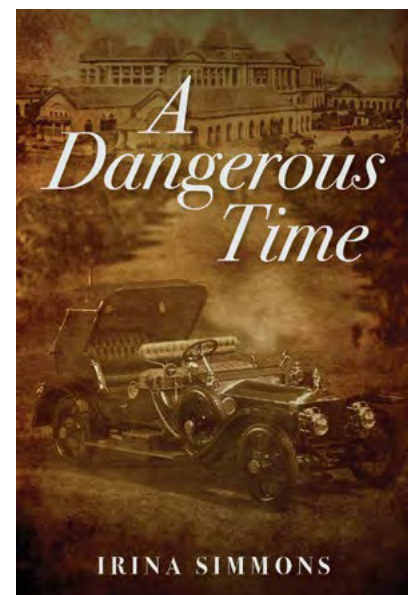


was a pharmacist, and his story provides some of the inspiration for these tales.

Her second, releasing later this year, is set in Lebanon, while the third will focus on the US.

Each book covers a time period of extreme change and sets out to explain the present by better understanding the past.

Irina is an Armenian-American author. Born in Beirut, Lebanon, she immigrated to the US with her family in 1976. After a long and successful career in the technology sector, she



retired and began writing short stories. *A Dangerous Time* is her first novel.

Dr. Mamta Sagar, Professor of Contemporary Art Practice and Creative Writing at Srishti Manipal Inst. of Art, Design and Technology in Bengaluru, India, declared: "*A Dangerous Time* is well researched and a must-read book."

Matt McAvoy, of the Book Review Blog, wrote: "Irina paints India and Pakistan with an eye-catching palette; you can genuinely see the streets and the people in your mind, the way they lived, the smells, even feel the temperature, as if you are right there with the characters."

To purchase a copy, see <https://a.co/d/bh58jYB>. Aside from Amazon paperback, it is available in Kindle and Nook eBook versions.



ARTS & CULTURE

Gregory Jundanian:

Once There Was and Was Not

By Daniel George

I met Gregory Jundanian at last year's Review Santa Fe. During our review, Greg and I discussed his photographic projects exploring his Armenian heritage and the lingering generational trauma of the Armenian Genocide that started on this day in 1915 and lasted for a number of years.

While researching for this interview, I was intrigued to learn that the term *genocide* was coined in the 1940s by Raphael Lemkin—a Polish lawyer who fled Holocaust persecution. He created the word to describe what he called “a crime without a name”: the deliberate destruction of a nation or ethnic group. Lemkin was inspired in part by the atrocities committed against Armenians, whose perpetrators largely went unpunished, as well as by the horrors of World War II. He recognized that to prevent future atrocities, precise language and international law were essential. In 1948, the United Nations adopted this new terminology in its treaty *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*.

Learning this gave me a deeper understanding of Greg's project, *Once There Was and Was Not*, and his motivation to explore the absence and trauma he felt within his family growing up. While deeply personal, his work resonates more broadly—speaking to the experiences of many in the Armenian community. I appreciate Greg's calm, introspective approach to image-making as he confronts what he describes as “a haunting that was at the core of who we were.”

For me, this reflects a critical step in healing from trauma: the act of speaking about it. And in that process, artists hold a distinctive power—to use visual language to acknowledge atrocities and create space for accountability and collective healing.



Photograph by Gregory Jundanian

Gregory Jundanian (Boston) is an artist and founder of the community digital archival site, the Armenians of Whitinsville. He studied history at the College of the Holy Cross and graduated from the University of Hartford with an MFA in Photography. His work has been shown in the United States and internationally.

Jundanian's primary focus is on communities, why and how they come together and their visual language. His two most recent projects, *Once There Was and Was Not* and *In Their Footsteps...An Identity Fractured by Genocide* speak to the lingering traumas that genocide has had on his immediate and extended Armenian communities. Photographs from *Once There Was and Was Not* were included in the 2024 British Journal of Photography Portrait of Humanity publication, and the book dummy for this project was shortlisted for the 2024 Blow Up Press Book Award. He recently received an award for this work through the 2025 Mass Cultural Council Grants for Creative Individuals.

Follow Gregory on Instagram: @gjundanian

Once There Was and Was Not

Once There Was and Was Not is a visual response to



Photograph by Gregory Jundanian

what is a particular tradition in the Armenian experience, the memory book or *houshamadyan*. Written by genocide survivors about their ancestral homes across the Ottoman Empire, the aim of these memory books was to preserve the history and traditions of village life, hence our identity, as communities reimagined themselves in the new world. *Once There Was and Was Not* explores the effects of genocide on Armenian identity.

Armenians have a strong tradition of storytelling, and many stories start with the opening of *Gar u chi'gar*, or as translated into English, *Once There Was and Was Not*. It is a way of introducing a story with one foot in reality and one in poetry. I decided to use this as the title as my work honors the past, recalls the complexities of our history, and works to provide a touchstone to greater understanding.

This body of work is about Armenian identity 110 plus years after the Armenian Genocide. I grew up in the remains of what was once a thriving Armenian community in central Massachusetts. Both sides of my family came to the United States as refugees. They arrived in the early 1900's as a result of the 1894-1897 pogroms under Sultan Hamid that were the precursors to the *Tseghasbanutyun*, or, as it later became known, the Genocide of 1915. Almost all Armenians had loved ones that were killed, enslaved or simply disappeared. Entire communities were forever disrupted.

My grandparents, relatives and other survivors, knew instinctively that trauma could be passed down across generations, and tried to stop the wounds from festering by not talking about what they witnessed, their abject losses and the absence they must have felt at the very center of their beings. The past was omnipresent but seldom mentioned. It became a presence that manifested itself through absence, a haunting that was at the core of who we were. The history of genocide had a profound effect on generations of Armenians and arguably still does today.

In 2019, I went to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh to begin exploring how to photograph the idea of Armenian identity. I began a body of work called *In Their Footsteps...An Identity Fractured by Genocide*. I was to work there extensively, but Covid and the war with Azerbaijan broke out. I returned to the United States and started an archival project, the Armenians of Whitinsville, to honor the people of my community, and continued to explore the topic of Armenian identity in the diaspora.

In a book form, *Once There Was and Was Not* will be comprised of my photographs along with vintage community photographs of people once precious and now forgotten, writings taken from interviews, and newspaper clippings from the early 1900's, all to contextualize the present.

The photographs have been created in the Blackstone River Valley of Massachusetts, and comprise a series of reflections strung together to explore the absence, abandonment and estrangement I felt as a child, but didn't un-

derstand. The photographs focus on the landscapes of the area, the mills that drew Armenians here for work, and the community of the people that remain. It is a survival story in an aftermath of a genocide some 110 plus years later.

Daniel George: To begin, tell us more about the beginnings of *Once There Was and Was Not*. What led you to create this work that is rooted in your cultural identity?

Gregory Jundanian: I've always been fascinated by the need for community, what makes up a community, the visual markers of a community, and how this all plays into one's identity. Before focusing on my heritage and photographing in the places where I grew up, I worked on a number of different community-based projects. My first project was working with poets in the Boston spoken word community, then photographing underground basement hip hop concerts and finally working with different barbershops across greater Boston, each barbershop a separate community. While I enjoy creating other types of work, it's this work around the concept of community and identity that I love.

I started to think about why I was drawn to the concept of community, and began to reflect on my personal journey growing up in what was at the time the remnants of an Armenian refugee community in central Massachusetts. I loved where I grew up, but given our history and heritage, Armenians were set apart to some extent. Our culture, family and friends were an enormous part of our identity, yet we were in New England in the 50's and 60's, and not unlike today, differences were not always celebrated.

I did not think about what this all meant when I was younger. It just was. However, I made the decision to first explore this by photographing in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh) and in the Gyumri area of Armenia in 2019. The idea was to think about what represents the core of our culture, what survived after both the Genocide and the Soviet Union, and who we are today in what is the now the homeland. Unfortunately, war with Azerbaijan broke out with disastrous consequences for Armenians. That war, along with the outbreak of COVID, forced me to rethink my approach. I decided to continue to explore these same issues around identity and the diaspora, but do so where I grew up in central Massachusetts.

It was more difficult to do this than I originally thought. To be immersed in the familiar with all the baggage of the past, and at the same time create work with a fresh point of view was a challenge. I started a community archival website with childhood friends called the Armenians of Whitinsville as a gift to the community, but also thinking that it would inform my work. It certainly did to some extent, but the website took on a life of its own.

Working on the website provided clarity around how to approach this issue for me. I'd meet with people across town, speak to them about their lives, scan their photographs and documents and photograph their memory objects if they had any. The site provided them the opportunity for people to tell their story before it disappeared. This was important because many Armenians feel that they have been forgotten. The genocide of the Armenians is commonly referred to as the Forgotten Genocide. Until President Biden recognized the Genocide in 2021, many Armenians had resigned themselves to the possibility of it

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

never being recognized. With that sense came the feeling that we as a people had been forgotten; that the Ottomans had ultimately been successful.

I learned here that photography is as much an act of listening as it was an act of visualization.

DG: In your statement, you write that memories of the Armenian Genocide were “omnipresent but seldom mentioned” in your childhood. This leads me to consider your creative vision for this project—and revisiting this aspect of your life through a developed perspective. Would you talk about this convergence of memory? As you were making these photographs, did anything new come to your awareness?

GJ: The convergence of memory is at the heart of my work. Many people come from a past where certain things were never fully named. In some families it's migration, in others it's war, trauma, or even the quiet sacrifices made to simply survive. That unspoken legacy becomes part of one's internal landscape, like one is carrying stories never told, but somehow known. For me it was genocide, it's history and the aftermath.

That the Armenian Genocide was “omnipresent but seldom mentioned” in my childhood reflects a kind of silence that was charged with an unspoken tension. It shaped everything from the way my family told stories, the food we cooked, to the sense of displacement that lingered in our home and surrounding community. Even though we were proudly Americans, my father, who was born in the United States, on many occasions told us that he wished he could have grown up in Turkey, with his family intact and memories not laced with such tragedy.

The times when elders spoke about their experiences in any detail were the exception. Their silence wasn't about forgetting; it was about protecting the next generation from

pain. This realization influenced how I approached the work. I wasn't just documenting landscapes or heirlooms or family members, but photographing the residue of memory, the in-between spaces where what's felt is stronger than what's said. The personal and collective can also blur. I'd look through the lens and sometimes feel like I was seeing not just my own story, but my ancestors' grief, strength, and longing. The photographs became a conversation between the past and present, between silence and voice.

We have a past before we are even born. This wasn't something new that came to me, but it continually struck me that there is an arbitrariness to life that starts at birth. We are born as innocents, but then inherit the memories of our parents, our ancestors and our community. We are then deeply influenced by the identity of our family and community for the balance of our lives.

The paradox is that in the end we are eventually forgotten. There is a beauty to that which may seem hard to reconcile with work about memory, but it was this thinking that evolved for me while creating this work. I see the struggle for identity as an affirmation of life, and work about memory, whether archival or artistic, is a form of intimacy with something ephemeral.

DG: I was drawn to your depiction of the Armenian community through landscape, interiors, portraiture, and archival imagery, and find myself thinking about all this as it relates to the idea of the *houshamadyan*. Would you expand on this tradition and why you felt it was important to approach your personal memory book in such an extensive manner?

GJ: I believe that the concept of the *houshamadyan* or memory book is unique to the Armenian culture, and a vital touchstone for me throughout this project. Traditionally, a *houshamadyan* was created by survivors and descendants of the Armenian Genocide to document the history

and life in their lost ancestral towns of central and eastern Turkey, i.e., the customs, dialects, recipes, songs, even the layout of villages. It wasn't just about mourning what was lost, it was a way of resurrecting it on the page, stitching memory back together through collective remembrance. These writings were a recording of the past in an attempt to act as guides to our future identities in the diaspora. Very few, though, have been translated into English. They were written in the western Armenian dialect, ironically a language that is currently endangered. (The Library of Congress has a collection of some 200.)

There is a beauty inherent in the fragility of memory. These books represent that to me. They resist erasure knowing full well that eventually we are all forgotten. We are all rooted in pasts that have changed dramatically. In my case, it was a town in central Massachusetts. What I remember most were my family, friends and a community heavily influenced by the experience of those still living who had experienced genocide. It seemed fitting to borrow from this rich tradition to speak visually to how, generations later, things have changed and yet remained the same.

My own experience, however, as a diasporic Armenian two generations removed from the Genocide, meant that my approach had to be different. I didn't inherit intact memories. I inherited fragments. I felt compelled to approach this personal memory book in an extensive and layered way, through landscapes, interiors, portraits, and archival materials. Each mode offered a different texture of memory. Landscapes held absence and distance. Interiors carried the intimacy of domestic life and generational continuity. Portraiture gave voice to presence and survival. And archival imagery provided a connective tissue to a broader collective story. I tried to use all these elements to let the photographs echo and contradict each other and to create a space where memory is both personal and inherited, fractured and whole.

DG: I am interested to hear more about the writings and interviews that accompany this work. Would you talk about the process of collecting those? What do you feel they offer this project in addition to the visual component?

GJ: The writings that accompany this work come from a mix of advertisements made in search of lost family members placed in Armenian newspapers at the time, diaries and shoeboxes filled with letters. The interviews used were conducted with survivors in the early 80's and then with their descendants interviewed more recently for the Armenians of Whitinsville project. I have not settled yet on how to best use these materials, but feel that they, along with the photographs of the unknowns, are fragments of the collective memory that provide important context for my work.

While people may feel the sadness and sense of estrangement in the work, few will know what it's about. Most people know very little about this history, and so are not going to understand my work with any intimacy. The narratives and vernacular photographs can provide this dimension.

DG: Since today is Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, it is important to recognize the approximately 1.5 million Armenians that were killed or died from exposure, disease, dehydration or starvation at the hand of Ottoman Empire authorities—as well as the generations of individuals effected by these atrocities. This may be a broad question, but why do you believe the photographic medium lends itself to exploring the lingering traumatic effects of events like these? Why is it important to visualize this, for you personally?

GJ: Photography has a unique capacity to hold space for memory, especially when it comes to historical trauma like the Armenian Genocide. It doesn't just document; it evokes. It brings us closer to experiences we could never fully understand otherwise. The stillness of a photo can feel almost reverent, like a pause in time where we're asked not just to look, but to witness.

When it comes to exploring lingering trauma across generations, photography can show the after which is often invisible: the portraits of people forgotten, the preserved landscapes once walked by those who vanished, the eyes of descendants who carry memory in their blood. In this way, photography becomes a bridge between personal memory and collective history.

Genocides are not just physical atrocities. They are attacks on memory, lineage, and identity. For me personally, the power of visualizing this trauma is an act of confrontation. Visual representation pushes back against this.

(<https://lenscratch.com> is an online platform dedicated to photography.)

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



An Armenian Heroine's Treasured Shish Kebab Recipe

DINUBA, CA — Mouth-watering lamb shish kebab is at the core of award-winning chef Jon Koobation's Armenian heritage and family history. This recipe came from Jon's beloved maternal grandmother, the late Hatoon Bazarian. Growing up in the small farm town of Dinuba, the sight of a pile of grape wood stumps in the backyard and the smell of the lamb cooking on skewers is something Jon will never forget from his childhood.

"When the shish kebab meat finished cooking, it was taken off the skewers and placed into a large pan or bowl that had been lined with fresh Armenian *peda* bread which had been brought to the table. We all grabbed for the warm bread which had soaked up the juices from the barbecued lamb. This family ritual was almost better than the meat itself," he says. In honor of his grandmother, her authentic shish kebab recipe was served for many years at Jon's Bear Club, Jon's celebrated restaurant in Reedley, Calif., and is featured in *Cooking With Jon*, his acclaimed cookbook.



Hatoon Bazarian disguised as a man, protecting her town during the Armenian Genocide, from "Women of 1915." Photo courtesy Jon Koobation.

As a young woman, Jon says, Hatoon was a heroine to many people before she came to America, after her first husband and young child were killed. Her incredible story is presented in the award-winning film documentary, "Women of 1915."

"The documentary combines facts and emotion to honor the brave and courageous women of the Armenian Genocide, many of whom lost their family and lives, survived to create new lives, or were forced into lives that were not their own. My grandmother appears in the film disguised as a young man protecting her town during the Armenian Genocide. She was a warrior and fighter for her country. At the risk of her own life, my grandmother was able to escape the brutal tyranny by fleeing to Syria, where she emerged as a courageous freedom fighter, defending her family and friends during World War I," he adds.

"In 1922, she immigrated to the United States, met my grandfather, Harry Bazarian, in Detroit, Mich., and they were married. They came to California and settled in the San Joaquin Valley, where she became a proud citizen, and began a new life and a family, grateful for the countless opportunities this land afforded. In her lifetime, this remarkable woman taught us so many things, but she never let her painful past hold her back or make her bitter — she moved on with her life through the sheer power of optimism, love, and hope," says Jon.

As Reverend A.K. Chakmakian said upon her death in 1969, "Born in Fundijak, near Marash, Armenia, on February 15, 1898, Hatoon Bazarian was one of six daughters and one son born to her parents John and Hoopik Yapujian. She had been a helper of her father as a shepherdess rather than attending school. During the flights of Armenian self-defense in World War I, she took up arms with her people in her home town; was severely wounded and hid herself among the dead feigning death when her life...and she was put in an orphanage with her sisters and many other Armenian girls. Soon the Turkish Government gave orders for general deportations of all Armenians, and Hatoon accompanied her dear ones in their march of death to the deserts of Syria. The city of Homs in hunger and disease for over three years."

"When British forces liberated in 1918, Hatoon volunteered to locate and emancipate Armenian girls and women forced to Turkish and Arab harems and boys kidnapped and Islamized by the Moslems. In this the British Occupation Forces assisted and encouraged Hatoon, so that soon she was acting as Supervisor of a Home with over sixty women and orphans delivered from Moslem harems. Presently, Armenians were beginning to breathe once again the sweet air of freedom and liberty when the remnants from Turkish massacres and deportations were repatriated to their home towns. Among these was Hatoon back to Fundijak, and then in Marash."

"But there was another cup of suffering ahead, this time due to the Turkish Kemalist Revolution which was fighting to oust the French occupation forces from Marash. Ali Kulij Pasha had ordered massacre of Armenians of Marash, among them Hatoon but she was not willing to die without self-defense, and had dressed herself with a regular male arm uniform, fighting and trying to save others. When the Armenians had to surrender, Hatoon had to evade arrest and save her skin. This cellar of a shelter from widows and orphans and finally taking refuge, Hatoon had to use a false picture for a passport and had to trail like a Turkish beggar until she found safety in Aleppo, Syria."

"In 1968 Hatoon's husband Harry died. She loved him so much and it was just so hard on her. No longer able to go on, Hatoon died a year later on April 17 of a heart attack. She was such a spectacular woman. She would have given anything to help another in need. People called her Hatoon 'Charoosh'(sp) meaning nice soldier or warrior which is exactly what she was. She was a heroine for all the Armenian people."

Reverend Chakmakian added, "Mrs. Bazarian was a loyal spouse; a self-forgetful mother; a hospitable hostess with an open heart and bountiful table; a generous friend; a compassionate soul and charity-loving person. She was a member of the Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church in Fresno, and devoted friend of Yetteem Armenian Presbyterian Church. Above all, she was a Friend of OLD PEOPLE, a charter member of the California Armenian Home, and a charter member of Dinuba Chapter of the Armenian American Citizens' Club which has staunchly supported the California Armenian Home."

"My beloved grandmother Hatoon was a very creative cook, she loved working in her kitchen and preparing many outstanding Armenian dishes and desserts for our family for many years. She was an inspiration to all of us. I will never forget her great strength, pride, and dignity in her later years, and the proud legacy she left for her children and grandchildren, including this treasured family recipe," adds Jon.

INGREDIENTS:

1 leg of lamb, boned, cut into 2 oz. pieces (lamb loin may be used instead of the leg, for a more tender piece of meat without gristle)
1 tablespoon whole Greek oregano
6 garlic cloves, minced
Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper

For marinade:

6 yellow onions, small dice
2 bunches flat-leaf parsley, minced
2 cups canola oil
1 1/2 cups cream sherry wine, no substitute

Serves 6.

For the lamb:

The lamb must be seamed and all sinew must be removed. Season meat well in a large bowl or pan, turning and mixing, making sure each piece of meat is seasoned.

Add the onion and parsley, and mix well. Now add the marinade and mix well again. The meat should be covered by the onions and marinade. This should marinate for at least a day or two, stirring or mixing the meat each day. (The meat will keep in the marinade for up to four days.)

Prior to barbecuing, lift the meat out of the marinade, set aside. Strain the marinade through a fine sieve; let it sit for ten minutes.

In a large pan, cook the onions and parsley over medium heat for about 20 minutes or until the onions begin to caramelize. Use this as a condiment on top of the shish kebab.

ORDER TODAY: Professional recipes you can make at home from award-winning chef Jon Koobation. Jon is the recipient of the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award in the California Restaurant Association's "Best of the Valley" award. Contact Jon at: chefjonkoobation@gmail.com to order his cookbook and for a personally signed copy.

For Jon's recipes featured in *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator Newspaper*, go to: <https://mirrorspectator.com/?s=jon+koobation>



ARTS & CULTURE

Violinist Haig Hovsepian and Pianist Ani Hovsepian Perform in Program Marking Armenian Genocide

BELMONT, Mass. — On Friday, April 11, Belmont-based violinist Haig Hovsepian and his mother, pianist Ani Hovsepian (of ACH Music Studio in Belmont), presented a concert dedicated to the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Titled “Echoes of Armenia” it featured an all-Armenian program encompassing a broad range of music from ancient liturgical chants, to music by classics and 20th century composers.

The event was hosted by the Beech Street Center as part of commemorative events this April, which was recently declared by Gov. Maura Healey as Armenian-American Heritage month.

The musicians, their uniquely selected repertoire and high level of performance received an exceptionally warm welcome by a diverse audience, serving as a testament to our Armenian cultural heritage, history and genuine talent.



Haig Hovsepian and Ani Hovsepian perform on April 11 in Belmont. (Jirair Hovsepian photo)

Kristina Oganezz's Paintings Combine Armenian Traditions with Spirituality

OGANEZZ, from page 13

Kristina spoke about the origins of her art: “My artistic inspiration flows from deep love of the colors of this world — vivid reflections of the beauty and love woven into God’s creation. As I co-create with the Divine, I’m continually moved by how my art becomes a vessel for that same beauty and love, offering a moment of wonder and joy to those who experience it.”

are depicted on black canvases with gold lettering. Utilizing the ancient Armenian bird-letters, inscribed on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list, the artworks convey messages of faith, love, and salvation.” This is an example of her “preaching exhibition,” in which she said each piece serves as a reflection of life’s core values and biblical wisdom, and it includes her bird-numbers.



Her current exhibition, “Birds of the Holy Spirit,” is currently at the Center for Armenian Arts in Glendale, California. She said, “Inspired by divine guidance, the exhibition features a series of paintings where Bible verses and spiritual concepts

are depicted on black canvases with gold lettering. Utilizing the ancient Armenian bird-letters, inscribed on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list, the artworks convey messages of faith, love, and salvation.”

Her works have also appeared in the following recent group exhibitions: Apophe-

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

- MAY 1** — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents “The Global World of Armenian Merchants, 1600-1720,” a lecture by Dr. Gayane Ayvazyan, a PhD candidate at Harvard University’s History Department and Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Lecture primarily in Armenian. Thursday, 7 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown (use Norseman Avenue door). Free admission, reception to follow. For more information, contact syogurtian@comcast.net or call (617) 281-1647.
- MAY 2** — 123rd DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY DANCE hosted by Holy Archangels Armenian Church. Music by Jason Naroian & His Band featuring the voice of Michael Gostanian. Friday, from 9 pm to 12 am. at the Hilton Boston Woburn, 2 Forbes Rd. Woburn. \$50.00; reserve your dance tickets at Tiny.cc/AssemblyDance. Walk-ins welcome.
- MAY 3** — CELEBRATE PUBLIC ART! Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Saturday at 12:45 p.m. Remarks: Rita Fucillo, co-Publisher, Art New England followed by participating World Labyrinth Day: Walk As One at 1PM joining all ages in cities and towns worldwide. Refreshments. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org
- MAY 15** — The Armenian American Medical Association presents the inaugural Aram V. Chobanian Medicine and Humanities Program. “Music, Emotion and Brain Health,” presented by guest speaker Aniruddh D. Patel, professor of psychology, Tufts University, with remarks by Justin Casinghino, assistant professor of music, Fitchburg State University, and visual artist Kevork Mourad, in collaboration with Haig Hovsepian and Evan Johanson on violin, Cara Pogossian on viola and Dilshod Narzillaev on cello. Dorothy and Charles Mosesian Center for the Arts, 321 Arsenal St., Watertown. Reception 6 p.m., program 7 p.m. Admission free. Advanced reservations suggested by May 10 to bit.ly/AAMAmay or inquiries to info@amaaboston.org.
- MAY 16-17** — Annual Fair at Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown dine-in or take-out. Beef, chicken, losh kabob or vegetarian meals Friday 4-8 p.m.-Saturday 12 -7 p.m. Sale of Armenian desserts and delicacies. The Church will donate 10% of the fair proceeds to the California Wildfire Relief Fund through the Armenian Missionary Association of America.
- MAY 31** — 72ND Annual Armenian Night at the Pops! Featuring cellist Ani Aznavoorian and the Boston Pops Orchestra, performing works by John Williams, Keith Lockhart conducting. Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Symphony Hall, Boston. Presented by the Friends of Armenian Culture Society. Post-concert reception to pay tribute to Maestro Lockhart. Visit <http://www.FACS-Boston.org> for more information.

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.

RHODE ISLAND

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

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

nia in the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, 2024; PSB Art Show, Los Angeles, 2023; IntoHope Gallery Western group exhibition, Hollywood, 2022; Spring Show, Burbank Art Association, Los Angeles, 2022, and Art Transforming Spaces Exhibition, ART2ART district and gallery, Los Angeles, 2022. She has been featured in the *Los Angeles Art Association*, Volume VI, 2025; and *American Art Collector*, August, 2023.

Oganezz observed that in Armenia painting continues to reflect traditional themes such as landscapes, churches and historical

narratives, yet there is also a strong wave of contemporary exploration. However, the situation is slightly different in the diaspora, where, she said, “Armenian artists often carry their heritage into new cultural environments, creating a powerful fusion between East and West. This dual perspective enriches their work — we carry our roots with us, but also reinterpret them through the lens of our lived experiences abroad. The result is a dynamic and diverse global Armenian art scene that’s constantly expanding, yet always anchored in something deeply familiar.”

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
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Trump 'Unrecognizes' the Armenian Genocide: The History of US Presidential Recognition

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

April 24, 2025, marked the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The recognition of the Armenian Genocide has always been one of the top issues in US-Armenian relations as well as for Armenian diaspora in the USA. In his 2025 statement, President Donald Trump reverted to a neutral stance, omitting the term "Armenian Genocide" used by his predecessor, Joe Biden, suggesting the issue is again a political bargaining chip with Turkey. Moreover, the European Union mission in Armenia removed from its original tweet the term genocide shortly after it was posted. Below is a short history of US policy in this regard.

Back in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one could observe a dangerous pattern in US policy towards the dire plight of the Armenian people. The twenty-eighth president of the United States Woodrow Wilson's two terms of presidency (1913-1921) spanned the years of the Armenian Genocide. The US took a general stance of neutrality during the early years of World War I, which in turn led to a policy of neutrality and non-intervention in the Armenian Genocide taking place in the Ottoman Empire – despite significant concerns and advocacy efforts on the Armenian issue. Even though the USA was receiving credible flow of information about the massacres and mass deportation of Armenians in the Ottoman Turkey, it chose to stay silent and avoid action first because the USA had a strategic goal of staying neutral during the World War I and second of all, the United States was reluctant to take a confrontational position towards the Ottoman Turkey, which was a regional superpower and good relations with it was of substantial geopolitical advantage for the United States. The easily accessible oil in the Near East and US-Turkish prospering trade relations played their crucial role. So, maintaining these relations was Washington's primary goal back then.

US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau during the Armenian Genocide played a pivotal role in reporting to the US government about the atrocities towards Armenians happening in the Ottoman Empire. In a confidential telegram to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Morgenthau wrote: "Deportation of and excesses against peaceful Armenians is increasing and from harrowing reports of eye witnesses it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion. Protests as well as threats are unavailing and probably incite the Ottoman government to more drastic measures as they are determined to disclaim responsibility for their absolute disregard of Capitulations and I believe nothing short of actual force which obviously the United States are not in a position to exert would adequately meet the situation. Suggest you inform belligerent nations and mission boards of this." Later Ambassador Morgenthau wrote a memoir titled "*Ambassador Morgenthau's Story (1918)*," where he described in detail all the atrocities towards Armenians he witnessed and documented. His book, based on his diaries and State Department records, later shaped the US understanding of what happened to Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union and Armenia's independence, two US presidents referred to the issue of the Armenian Genocide. However, only one of them called it a "genocide."

On May 16, 1978, former President Jimmy Carter during a reception honoring Armenian Americans at the White House mentioned that "... it's generally not known in the world that in the years preceding 1916, there was a concerted effort made to eliminate all the Armenian people, probably one of the greatest tragedies that ever befell any group. And there weren't any Nuremberg trials." Later his successor Ronald Reagan in his Proclamation of April 22, 1981 commemorating the "Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust" mentioned the word "genocide" explicitly referring to the Armenian Genocide for the first time in the US history. It reads: "Like the genocide of the Armenians before it, and the genocide of the Cambodians which followed it – and like too many other such persecutions of too many other peoples – the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten."

Most notably, these are lines written by Ken Khachigian, a chief speech writer, senior political advisor, and special consul-

tant to President Reagan. According to Khachigian this speech was cleared with two senior members of the National Security Agency before being presented to Reagan to avoid international political repercussions harmful to the United States. However, later on Ronald Reagan never referred back to this characterization, which faced a backlash from Turkey. In his written responses to questions submitted by the newspaper *Hurriyet* of Turkey to the question "Congress is about to vote on an Armenian resolution – referring to the so-called genocide in 1915. Do you approve congressional action on such a sensitive issue?" President Reagan responded that "On those grounds alone, my administration opposes congressional action on the kind of resolution to which you refer." From that time on the US administration officials avoided calling a spade a spade till 2021 when the word "genocide" was finally uttered by the US president.

The recognition of Armenian Genocide was an important issue for years especially for the Armenian community in the US. The ultimate goal was to achieve recognition by the US president and by both Houses of the US Congress. The path towards recognition was particularly complex since the collapse of the USSR and the formation of independent Armenia. Unfortunately, through the years many candidates who later became presidents, as well as other officials, promised the Armenian-American community to recognize the Armenian Genocide but failed to keep their promise once in office.

It is worthwhile to have a short outlook at US presidents' policies on this issue starting from George H. W. Bush.

Back in 1988, when Bush was running for president and was the Vice President under Ronald Reagan issued the following statement: "The United States must acknowledge the attempted genocide of the Armenian people in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, based on the testimony of survivors, scholars, and indeed our own representatives at the time, if we are to ensure that such horrors are not repeated." However, after becoming the US

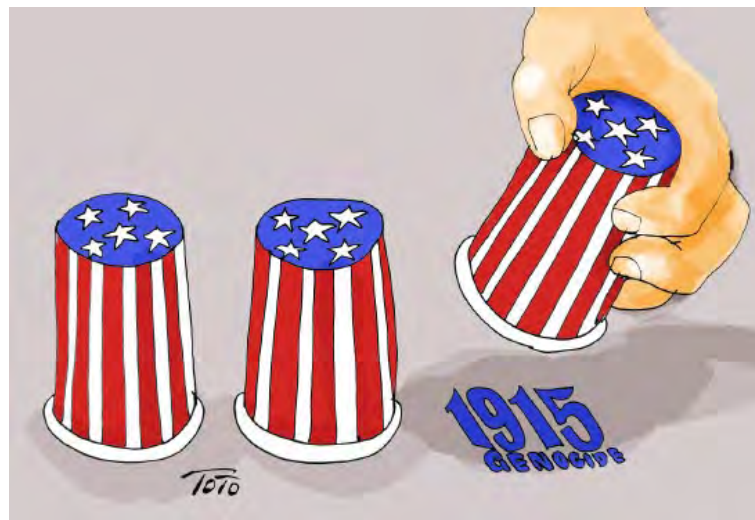
president not only did Bush fail to keep his promise but also tried to prevent the adoption of Armenian Genocide resolution by the Congress. Bush himself referred to the Armenian Genocide as "massacres."

The 42nd US president Bill Clinton acted similarly in this regard. Clinton failed to keep the promise of calling Armenian murders "genocide" instead referring to them as "deportations and massacres." Moreover, Clinton interfered with Congress to cancel the voting on Armenian Genocide resolution which would have been a winning vote. In his letter to the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Dennis Hastert, Clinton stated that the bill "could have far-reaching, negative consequences for the United States." The US leadership was worried about the potential consequences of such a resolution on the US-Turkish relations.

President George H. Bush also had pledged to the Armenian community to recognize the Armenian Genocide in a letter: "The Armenians were subjected to a genocidal campaign that defies comprehension and commands all decent people to remember and acknowledge the facts and lessons of an awful crime in a century of bloody crimes against humanity. If elected President, I would ensure that our nation properly recognizes the tragic suffering of the Armenian people." And once again, the promise never materialized and later President Bush urged members of Congress to refrain from adopting the Armenian Genocide resolution since it would do "great harm" to US relations with Turkey. In his opinion the resolution was "not the right response to these historic mass killings."

The commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide coincided with President Obama's Presidency. Back in 2008 Obama had stated that: "As a Senator, I strongly support passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution (H.Res.106 and S.Res.106), and as President I will recognize the Armenian Genocide...America deserves a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides." However, upon taking office Obama like his predecessors failed to keep it. In his statement on centennial of the Armenian Genocide Obama avoided the term Genocide using instead terms like "mass atrocity" and "terrible carnage." Obama's administration

continued on next page





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

President Trump Is Not Worthy of Pronouncing the Word Genocide

President Donald Trump's message on April 24, 2025, in which he avoided referring to the Armenian Genocide as genocide, is a shameful reversal of decades of U.S. acknowledgements. Turkish and Azeri circles quickly capitalized on Trump's statement. The Turkish newspaper *Türkiye Today* published an article on April 24, headlined: "Trump avoids 'Armenian genocide' term on April 24 in friendly gesture to Türkiye." The Azeri media, *Azernews*, published an article on April 25 with the following title: "US President Donald Trump avoids term 'genocide' in 1915 statement."

The United States government first acknowledged the Armenian Genocide in 1951 in an official document it submitted to the International Court of Justice (World Court).

The House of Representatives passed two resolutions in 1975 and 1984 acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. President Ronald Reagan acknowledged it in his April 22, 1981 Proclamation.

The House of Representatives acknowledged it again on October 29, 2019 by the overwhelming vote of 405 to 11. Despite President Trump's several attempts to block it, the U.S. Senate adopted a resolution on December 12, 2019, acknowledging the Armenian Genocide by unanimous consent (100 to 0).

President Joe Biden then officially recognized the Armenian Genocide in a written statement he issued on April 24, 2021.

After all of these acknowledgements, Armenians are no longer interested in what Trump has to say about the Armenian Genocide in 2025. There is no doubt that Trump simply got his marching orders from his close friend, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, whom Trump admires immensely.

For months, Trump's Armenian supporters have been proudly mentioning that the President is surrounded by three top pro-Armenian cabinet members, namely, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tulsi Gabbard, Director of National Intelligence, and Marco Rubio, Secretary of State. Other than Rubio, the first two have nothing to do with foreign policy. Either none of the three attempted to influence Trump on his April 24 statement or the President simply ignored their advice. Rubio, himself, issued a statement even softer than Trump's on X on April 24: "Under the shadow of unspeakable loss, the Armenian people have endured and prevailed. Today, we remember the Meds Yeghern not just in mourning, but with

resolve. We honor the past and look forward to working towards enduring peace, prosperity, and security for Armenia and the region." Notice that there is no mention of either Turkey or the Ottoman Empire as the perpetrator of the genocide.

Armenians also had to face President Erdogan's twisted statement on April 24 which was intended to deceive those who are naïve enough to be fooled by such ploys. Erdogan sent a "message of condolences" which was dutifully read by Patriarch Sahag Mashalian at the Ferikoy Sourp Vartanants Church in Istanbul. Far from acknowledging the Armenian genocide, Erdogan falsely equated the Armenian Genocide victims with the Turkish soldiers who were killed during World War I. Going even further, Erdogan blamed the Armenian victims for engaging in "rebellions, increasing gang movements, acts of subversion by armed groups," in addition to mentioning the lives lost due to "epidemics that took place during the war years." This is yet another ugly attempt at denial of the truth.

What is most painful to a lot of Armenians is Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan announcements "that the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is no longer a foreign policy priority for Armenia."

Furthermore, in recent months, Pashinyan has raised questions about the basic facts of the Armenian Genocide, such as what happened and why it happened, thus upsetting a lot of Armenians worldwide, but providing great joy to the leaders of Azerbaijan and Turkey. Fortunately, Pashinyan has not engaged in outright denial of the Armenian Genocide, using both Meds Yeghern and Armenian Genocide in his conciliatory April 24 statement. But asking unnecessary questions only serves to cast doubt on the veracity of the Armenian Genocide. Making matters worse, Pashinyan has castigated Armenians' adoration of Mount Ararat, voiced support for change the Coat of Arms of the Republic of Armenia and the National Anthem, and amending Armenia's Constitution. His anti-nationalist statements serve to encourage the denialists in Azerbaijan and Turkey. There is no question that Pashinyan is succumbing to demands for concessions from Aliyev and Erdogan in order to sign a peace treaty with Azerbaijan and open the border with Turkey.

While Pashinyan has taken a soft position on the Armenian Genocide, he harshly condemned Armenians who had burned the Azeri and Turkish flags on April 24 in Yerevan, even before there was any complaint from either one of these countries. In my view, there is nothing wrong with burning the flag of an enemy country. It is an expression of protest against hostile the policies of Azerbaijan and Turkey. Furthermore, those who burned the flags did not violate any laws. Once again, Pashinyan has shown that he is too eager to appease Armenia's enemies while being too harsh on fellow Armenians who disagree with his policies.

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past, and for our ability to work with regional partners to save liveofficial spokesman at the time said that the approach that US administrations have taken is the right "both for acknowledging the s in the present." On the other hand, during Obama's presidency, the so-called "football diplomacy" effort was launched which aimed to normalize Armenian-Turkish relations. This was used as an excuse by the administration to avoid using the term "genocide" arguing that it would harm the process.

Interestingly, years later, some officials of Obama's administration, including Obama's ambassador to the United Nations and USAID director under Joe Biden, said that the administration should have recognized the Genocide and that they were sorry to have disappointed so many Armenian-Americans.

The president who recognized the Armenian Genocide and used the proper term was Joe Biden. Joe Biden had long supported issues of special concern to Armenian-Americans and Armenia. During his presidential campaign in the letter to the Armenian National Committee of America he wrote: "The United States must reaffirm, once and for all, our record on the Armenian Genocide... Failing to remember or acknowledge the fact of genocide only paves the way for future mass atrocities." On April 24, 2020 Biden made a formal promise to recognize the Armenian Genocide: "If elected, I pledge to support a resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide and will make universal human rights a top priority for my administration." As president, Joe Biden kept his promise. On April 23, 2021 Biden had a phone call with Erdogan noting that he was going to recognize the Genocide. On April 24, Biden became the first US president to recognize the Armenian Genocide, for whom it became an official position of the administration, unlike Reagan who just used the term once: "Today, we pause to remember the lives lost during the Meds Yeghern—the Armenian Genocide — and renew our pledge to never forget."

As for the current president of the United States, it is important to refer back to his first presidency (2017-2021). Back in his first term as a president Donald Trump, like his predecessors, adopted an avoidant policy towards the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Even though it was during his tenure that both Houses of Congress passed similar resolutions recognizing the Armenian Genocide – first the US House of Representatives on October 29, 2019 and later the US Senate on December 12, 2019 — President Donald Trump distanced himself from these resolutions. The US State Department later clarified the Trump administration's stance, stating: "The position of the Administration has not changed... Our views are reflected in the President's definitive statement on this issue from last April." In his annual statements Trump has avoided using the word genocide. Instead he has spoken of "one of the worst mass atrocities of the 20th century."

(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.)

We Must Remember — and Act: Why I'm Committed to Armenian Genocide Education and Justice

By Greg Vartan

Every April 24, Armenians around the world pause to reflect on a truth that has shaped our identity, values, and now, for me, my race for Congress: the Armenian Genocide was not only a crime against our ancestors — it was a crime against humanity.

Between 1915 and 1923, 1.5 million Armenians were systematically murdered by the Ottoman Turkish government in what became the first genocide of the 20th century. My great-great-grandfather, Stepan Sapah-Gulian, survived not by fleeing, but by resisting. A political leader and editor, he was condemned to death in absentia and ultimately sought refuge in the United States, where he continued his fight for truth and justice in Providence and later New Jersey.

I'm running for Congress with his legacy close to my heart — and with a deep sense of duty to ensure that America not only remembers the Armenian Genocide, but works to prevent future atrocities, holds perpetrators accountable, and educates the next generation.

That's why I would proudly champion the Armenian Genocide Education Act, introduced by Congresswoman Dina Titus alongside Representatives Gus Bilirakis, Ted Lieu, and David Valadao. This bipartisan bill directs the Library of Congress to launch a national education program about the genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians and other Christian minorities. It allocates \$10 million over five years to develop curriculum, train teachers, and bring this history into classrooms across the country.

This isn't just a good bill. It's a necessary one.

We cannot protect democracy if we fail to understand the truth. We cannot say "never again" if we don't teach what happened the first time. That's why Holocaust education has been so vital: it ensures we pass down the collective pain and lessons of the past to prevent future atrocities. The Armenian Genocide deserves the same commitment to remembrance, education, and truth.

Genocide denial isn't a relic of the past — it persists today. It thrives in silence, ignorance, and geopolitical convenience. And as we mark the 109th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Armenian POWs remain unlawfully detained by Azerbaijan following the forced depopulation of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). Families are torn apart. Cultural sites are desecrated. And the international response has been tepid at best.

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We Must Remember — and Act: Why I’m Committed To Armenian Genocide Education and Justice

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Let me be clear: we need voices in Congress who won’t mince words or hide behind euphemisms. What happened in 1915 was genocide. What’s happening today in the South Caucasus is ethnic cleansing. And when a people who’ve endured genocide are once again being targeted, the US must act.

I will fight for legislation that educates future generations and pressures Azerbaijan to release all Armenian POWs, stop cultural erasure, and face consequences for violating international law. I will stand with Armenian-American communities to ensure US policy reflects our values—not transactional diplomacy.

And I’ll do so not just as a politician, but as the proud descendant of a man who gave everything to make sure his people were not forgotten.

Stepan Sapah-Gulian was born in 1861 near Nakhichevan. He traveled the Ottoman Empire, directed Armenian schools, studied in Paris with future French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré, and edited revolutionary publications like *Yeritasard Hayastan*. His mission was clear: awaken the world to Armenian suffering and demand justice.

Today, I carry that mission forward in my own way.

I was born and raised in Summit, New Jersey. I served on our First Aid Squad and led our City Council through challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. My dad works for Guardian Life. My mom is a secretary at my old el-

ementary school. I’m the first in my family to graduate college. And now I’m running for Congress to make sure families like mine can still build a future here.

But I’m also running to make sure families like my great-great-grandfather’s are never forgotten. Because justice delayed is justice denied — not only for Armenians, but for all persecuted peoples.

The Armenian Genocide became a template for others. Hitler infamously justified his crimes by asking, “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?” We must answer — with our voices, our votes, and our laws.

On April 24, I will remember the martyrs of 1915. I will honor the courage of survivors like my ancestor. And I will recommit myself to ensuring this history is not only commemorated, but confronted — with policy, advocacy, and resolve.

We cannot change the past. But we can shape the future. I intend to do just that.

About Greg Vartan

Greg Vartan is running as a Democrat in New Jersey’s 7th Congressional District to bring honest, responsible, and community-focused leadership to Washington. As an EMT and former Council President of Summit, New Jersey, he has a proven record of public service and a deep commitment to helping others. He is focused on protecting fundamental freedoms, lowering costs and taxes, and making smart investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure. If elected, he would be

WE NEED VOICES IN CONGRESS WHO WON’T MINCE WORDS OR HIDE BEHIND EUPHEMISMS. WHAT HAPPENED IN 1915 WAS GENOCIDE. WHAT’S HAPPENING TODAY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IS ETHNIC CLEANSING.

Trump’s April 24 Statement Avoids the Word ‘Genocide’

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The Armenian Assembly of America’s Executive Director Bryan Ardouny issued a reply, especially highlighting the plight of those who have left Artsakh and those forcibly in custody there.

“The U.S. record and policy on the Armenian Genocide is clear. We remain steadfast in working together to prevent a second Genocide against the Armenian people, as Azerbaijan continues to threaten Armenia’s security, and as 23 known Armenian hostages remain unjustly held in Baku. The Assembly, therefore, strongly urges the Administration to implement President Trump’s pledge last year to protect Armenian Christians who ‘were horrifically persecuted and forcibly displaced in Artsakh,’” Ardouny emphasized.

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) in stronger words condemned Trump’s statement.

“President Trump’s retreat from U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide represents a disgraceful surrender to Turkish threats — a shameful abrogation of our nation’s responsibility to prevent Azerbaijan and Turkey’s ongoing genocidal aggression against Christian Armenians,” stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

“Following Azerbaijan’s ethnic cleansing of Artsakh’s indigenous Christian Armenian population, and amid its ongoing abuse of Armenian prisoners, destruction of Armenian Christian heritage, and occupation of sovereign Armenia — President Trump has a duty to not only honestly and truthfully acknowledge the 1915 Armenian Genocide, but prevent its continuation at the hands of Turkey and Azerbaijan,” concluded Hamparian.

President Trump’s non-recognition stands in opposition to U.S. acknowledgment by the White House, Congress, and all 50 states.

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