

France, Armenia
To Formalize
‘Strategic
Partnership’

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — France and Armenia are planning to cement their close ties with a document on “strategic partnership,” French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said during a visit to Yerevan on Monday, May 26.

French-Armenian relations are already “very largely strategic,” Barrot said after talks with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan. He gave concrete examples of that, including bilateral military cooperation.

“Together with my colleague Ararat, we are going to put all this to paper, preparing a document on strategic partnership which will further formalize the existing relations, and also mapping out other programs, including in the area of defense, for the years and decades to come,” he told a joint news conference.

Mirzoyan confirmed plans for such an agreement. But he too did not go into its details.

“My visit today is an opportunity to underline France’s support for Armenia, for its future and its place and integration in the region,” Barrot told Mirzoyan at the start of their talks.

The top Armenian and French diplomats spoke at an international security forum in the Armenian capital later in the day.

France, which is home to an influential Armenian community, has emerged in recent years as Armenia’s leading Western backer and supplier of weapons. It regularly voices support for Armenia in the conflict with Azerbaijan. Baku has repeatedly condemned this stance as well as French-Armenian defense contracts signed since 2023.

Russia has also voiced concerns over those contracts. Visiting Yerevan last week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that while Yerevan is free to buy weapons from any foreign supplier, it should bear in mind that France currently leads the anti-Russian “enemy camp” in the West.

Armenian leaders say these and other arms acquisitions are designed to counter a continuing Azerbaijani military buildup. They argue that oil-rich Azerbaijan’s defense budget is more than twice bigger than Armenia’s.

An Apt Musical, Creative
Tribute to the Memory of
Dr. Aram Chobanian

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The late Dr. Aram Chobanian, a noted cardiologist, academician and modern-day renaissance man, received a worthy tribute on May 15 at a program organized by the Armenian American Medical Association (AAMA) of Boston at the Mosesian Center for the Arts.

The program, titled the inaugural “Aram V. Chobanian Medicine and Humanities Program,” honored the lecture series’ namesake, by exploring the humanities and the arts and their role in medicine.

To sum up the late Chobanian’s list of accomplishments is not easy. He was a part of the fabric of Boston University, serving in many positions until in 2022,

thanks to the generosity of his childhood friend, Edward Avedisian, his name and that of his friend became part of the name of the medical school.

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From left, Dr. Armen Arslanian and Dr. Gail Guzelian present the Chobanian Medicine and Humanities Award to Dr. Raffi Tachdjian (Ken Martin photo)



Closeup of artist Kevork Mourad as he paints (Ken Martin photo)

Lavrov Says He Sees
‘No Reason for the
Ukrainization’ of
Armenia

By Yousef Bardouka and
Zandie (Alexandra) Kuenning

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that he sees no reason for the “Ukrainisation” of Armenia, following a meeting with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan in Yerevan.

During a joint press conference following the meeting in which the two several times disagreed, Lavrov said there was “no need” for the “Ukrainisation” of Armenia, as it remained a Russian ally.

“Armenia is our ally, our friend, Armenia does not outlaw the Russian language and Russian culture, does not deprive ethnic Russians and those who simply want to speak Russian of their legal rights,” he said.

Lavrov arrived in Yerevan on Tuesday, May 20, where he was met by a small number of protesters. Ahead of his visit, the pro-Western opposition party For the Republic displayed a poster on Yerevan’s Kyiv Bridge depicting Russian President Vladimir Putin in handcuffs and the word “killer” written in Armenian, Russian, and English. A similar poster was also displayed near the Russian Embassy in Armenia.

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Armenia with Armenia’s Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan

Baku Adamant Despite Pashinyan’s Fresh Appeal

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Monday, May 26, continued to call on Azerbaijan to drop its preconditions for signing a peace treaty with Armenia finalized by the two sides in March.

Baku was quick to dismiss Pashinyan’s appeal made during the Yerevan International Dialogue forum in Yerevan. And it again referred to much of modern-day Armenia as “historical Azerbaijani lands.”

In a lengthy speech delivered during the conference, Pashinyan insisted that the draft treaty fully addresses the stated Azerbaijani concerns about territorial claims to Azerbaijan allegedly contained in the Armenian constitution.

“There is no chance that Azerbaijan’s expectations will not be met if the treaty is signed,” he said. “We can be 100- percent sure that all concerns will be dispelled, and for this, the peace agreement must be signed.”

While insisting that the constitution does not lay claim to Nagorno-Karabakh recaptured by Baku in 2023, Pashinyan said: “If the [Armenian] Constitutional Court decides that the peace treaty does not conform to our constitution, then I will initiate constitutional amendments.”

Pashinyan promised to try to enact a new constitution through a referendum a year ago and has repeatedly reaffirmed that pledge since then. He admitted last month

that he wants the kind of constitutional change that is demanded by Baku.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry swiftly dismissed Pashinyan’s fresh assurances. A ministry spokesperson said they only called into question Yerevan’s commitment to peace.

Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev expressed confidence last week that Pashinyan’s government will accept his key preconditions for signing the peace deal. Those include not only a change of Armenia’s constitution but also the dissolution of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group on Nagorno-Karabakh.

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VATICAN CITY
Armenian Clergy
Attend Inaugural
Mass of Pope Leo XIV



IRAN
The Endlessly
Fascinating
Iran



Annual Summer Break

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will be closed for two weeks for its annual summer break.

The last issue before the summer break will be that of June 28 and the first issue back will be that of July 19.

Happy summer!



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Ukrainian
Parliamentarian Visits

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On May 27, the Head of the Armenian National Assembly Armenia-Ukraine Friendship Group Hrachya Hakobyan, members of the Friendship Group Arsen Torosyan and Hayk Tsurunyan and the Head of the Ukraine-Armenia Friendship Group of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Dmytro Mykysha, the Parliament's press service has said in a readout.

Hakobyan highlighted the development of the cooperation between the friendship groups of the legislative bodies of the two countries. He expressed hope that the strengthening of the inter-parliamentary ties will also promote the development of the relations in other spheres.

At the meeting reference was also made to the regional issues and Crossroads of Peace project.

Dmytro Mykysha emphasized the ongoing negotiations on the peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Official Cites 'Once-in-A-Lifetime Opportunity' To Create Peace

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia is trying to change the dynamic of the region of the South Caucasus, Vice Speaker of Parliament Ruben Rubinyan said at the Yerevan Dialogue 2025 forum on May 26.

"It's not a secret that Armenia has been in a partial blockade ever since it gained its independence, basically. And we are trying to change the dynamic of the region of the South Caucasus, which will itself change the dynamic in the wider European region, and also the dynamics in Central Asia, Middle East," he said.

Rubinyan, who is also Armenia's special representative for normalization with Turkey, presented Armenia's stance.

"Right now, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create peace, lasting peace in the South Caucasus. We have a rare situation where neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia have to concede anything," Rubinyan said, adding "we have a text of a peace treaty ready, negotiations have been finalized and closed. And we have a historic opportunity to sign and ratify this peace treaty."

"We have a historic opportunity to unblock all communications in the region of the South Caucasus, which means all communications between Azerbaijan and Armenia. And in a separate track, all communications between Armenia and Turkey. And this will change the whole dynamic in the South Caucasus, the whole security architecture. And since we are discussing the theme of our panel is how can small countries navigate in these turbulent times, well, this is how small countries can navigate. The number one source of uncertainty for small countries ... is conflict. You eliminate conflict, you eliminate uncertainty. You unblock communications, you eliminate uncertainty. And you also eliminate the risk of new conflicts. So, this is our strategy."



Guests standing before the plaque dedicated to Admiral Louis Dartige du Fournet unveiled at Tsitsernakaberd Memorial

Plaque Honoring Admiral Louis Dartige du Fournet
Unveiled at Tsitsernakaberd Memorial

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A memorial plaque dedicated to French Admiral Louis Dartige du Fournet, who extended a helping hand to Armenians during the heroic self-defense of Musa Dagh, was unveiled on May 26 at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex.

Soil brought from the admiral's grave was added to the memorial wall of the Armenian Genocide Memorial.

du Fournet played a key role in rescuing more than 4,000 Armenians of Musa Dagh, who had resisted forced deportation during the Armenian Genocide. The Armenians, besieged for 53 days and running out of food and ammunition, raised flags made of sheets in a desperate plea for help. du Fournet, following his conscience, ordered the rescue of the Armenians.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Baron, who is on an official visit to Armenia, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan,

and the French Ambassador to Armenia, Olivier Decottignies.

"One hundred and ten years after the Genocide, we commemorate the Armenians of Musa Dagh, who, upon hearing the order for forced deportation, chose to resist," said Baron. "We pay tribute to the memory of Admiral Louis Dartige du Fournet and, through him, to the crew of the French Third Fleet in the Mediterranean who saved more than 4,000 Armenians from the clutches of the Genocide. He acted without orders, guided only by his conscience and the honor of a French officer."

The French minister also honored the enduring spirit of the Musa Dagh resistance, highlighting the determination and loyalty displayed by both the people of Musa Dagh and Admiral du Fournet.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan noted that this moment is deeply personal for him. Long before entering

politics, Mirzoyan researched the stories of those who risked their lives to save Armenians during the Genocide.

"The history of the Genocide is, of course, first and foremost a story of tragedy, but it is also a story of hope," Mirzoyan said. "Admiral Louis Dartige du Fournet and others who saved Armenians did so at great risk to their lives and careers. People like him continue to restore our faith in humanity."

Edita Gzoyan, director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, described the day as historic for both the Armenian and French peoples.

"One hundred and ten years after the Armenian Genocide and the self-defense of Musa Dagh, the Armenian people express their gratitude to the French admiral who saved thousands," Gzoyan said. "After a pause of more than 13 years, we are once again adding soil to the memorial wall, and installing a plaque in his honor."



Prime Minister Robert Fico and his delegation at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial in Yerevan

Prime Minister of Slovakia visits Armenian
Genocide Memorial in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico and his delegation on May 27 visited the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial in Yerevan to honor the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims.

PM Fico was accompanied by Armenian Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan, Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan

and First Deputy Mayor of Yerevan Armen Pambukhchyan, the ministry of economy said in a press release.

Fico placed a wreath at the memorial and laid flowers at the Eternal Flame, commemorating the victims of the Armenian Genocide by observing a moment of silence.

Baku Adamant Despite
Pashinyan's Appeal

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Shortly after Pashinyan's latest comments, Aliyev issued yet another statement describing much of Armenian territory as "Western Azerbaijan" and "our historical lands." Last week, he again demanded that Armenia ensure the return of Azerbaijanis who lived there until the late 1980s and give them "security guarantees."

"We have repeatedly said that there cannot be Western Azerbaijan in the sovereign territory of Armenia," Pashinyan said in this regard on Monday.

Pashinyan's domestic critics maintain that his appeasement policy only encourages Aliyev to demand more Armenian concessions that would prelude Armenia's very existence as a viable state. They have also decried his refusal to raise in peace talks with Baku the right of safe return of Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population that fled the region following Azerbaijan's September 2023 military offensive.

The draft peace treaty reportedly does not call for their repatriation. Pashinyan has repeatedly made it clear that the Karabakh issue is closed for his administration.



ARMENIA

Secretary Rubio: US Working to Stop Azerbaijani Invasion of Armenia

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Marco Rubio told House Foreign Affairs Committee members on May 22 that the United States is actively working to prevent an Azerbaijani invasion of Armenia, responding to bipartisan calls from Representatives Jim Costa (D-CA) and Chris Smith (R-NJ) to enforce Section 907 restrictions on U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan and secure the immediate release of Armenian hostages, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

“We thank Congressmen Smith and Costa for raising the urgent need for stronger U.S. leadership in holding Azerbaijan accountable for its aggression and ongoing abuse of Armenian hostages, and welcome Secretary Rubio’s constructive response — in particular his assurance that the Trump-Vance Administration is committed to preventing an Azerbaijani invasion of Armenia and ensuring the release of Armenian prisoners,” stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

Smith raised concerns about Azerbaijani war crimes and political hostages: “It’s very clear that after the genocide committed by Aliyev against the Armenians, there are many, many political prisoners and POWs being held... I would just encourage you to do whatever you can to get those men and women released — at least 300.”

Rubio acknowledged the urgency of the issue, stating that the U.S. is using its diplomatic presence to prioritize human rights and peace. “The issues you raised about prisoners and human rights are critical... Azerbaijan provides us an opportunity to

do that in the context of the broader peace that we’re trying to establish.”

Costa urged U.S. support for Armenia and called for an end to U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan, stating: “We’ve tried to get Republican and Democratic administrations to forego the waiver on Section 907 on military aid to Azerbaijan. Finally, last year, the Biden Administration rightfully refused to issue the waiver. I think it should be permanent.”

Secretary Rubio replied, “We have not made a determination on that yet because what we are focused on now is getting them to agree to a peace agreement that does not cause them to invade a neighboring country, Armenia,” calling an Azerbaijan-Armenia war, “destructive, counterproductive, and the last thing we need right now in the region.”

The ANCA reiterated its longstanding call for full enforcement of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, which restricts U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan until it ceases offensive force against Armenia and Artsakh.

“We continue to urge Secretary Rubio and the Trump-Vance Administration to maintain and uphold the enforcement of Section 907 restrictions on military assistance to Azerbaijan — a critical tool at our disposal to deter the very real threat of war,” stated Hamparian. “We thank our Congressional allies for their continued leadership to ensure not a dollar of U.S. taxpayer money is used to arm Azerbaijan’s genocidal regime.”

The ANCA has been working with Con-

gressional leaders to press the Trump/Vance Administration to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its genocidal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh’s Armenian Christian population, enforce Section 907 restriction on U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan, sanction the Aliyev regime for war crimes, work to secure Azerbaijan’s immediate release of Armenian hostages, support the protected right of return of Artsakh’s Armenian Christian population, bolster Armenia’s security, and expand aid to Armenia to assist Artsakh genocide victims.

In March, sixty U.S. Representatives called on Secretary Rubio to fully enforce Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act — demanding an immediate end to U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan, citing Baku’s ethnic cleansing of Artsakh’s 120,000 indigenous Armenian Christian population, continued occupation of sovereign Armenian territory, and illegal detention and abuse of Armenian prisoners. In the ANCA-backed letter, led by Representatives Mike Lawler (R-NY), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), and Gabe Amo (D-RI), Representatives urged the Administration not to waive Section 907, stressing that “having faced no material consequences or accountability for its actions, Azerbaijan continues to undermine efforts to ensure a just, durable, and dignified peace in the region through its ongoing aggression against Armenia.”

On April 8, Congressional Armenian Caucus leaders Frank Pallone, David Valadao (R-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA) and Gus Bilirakis were joined by two dozen

U.S. House members in cosigning a letter — again backed by the ANCA — urging Secretary Rubio and National Security Advisor Michael Waltz to secure the release of Armenian prisoners and strengthen U.S. policy safeguarding Armenia’s sovereignty and security as part of expanded engagement in the South Caucasus. “We strongly agree with Secretary Rubio’s statement that ‘now is the time to commit to peace’ in the South Caucasus and NSA Waltz’s call to ‘finalize this peace deal now, release the prisoners, and work together to make the region more secure and prosperous,’” wrote the Representatives, underscoring the urgency of U.S.-led confidence-building measures.

On April 11, 36 U.S. Representatives — led by Representatives Dina Titus (D-NV) and Chris Smith — called on Rubio to impose Global Magnitsky sanctions on Azerbaijani officials responsible for grave human rights abuses against Armenians, including the illegal detention, abuse, and sham trials of Armenian prisoners of war and former Artsakh leaders. The ANCA welcomed the effort, which urged the State Department to “immediately exercise your authority to impose sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act on Azerbaijani officials responsible for the perpetration of grave human rights abuses and war crimes against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

On April 29, Smith chaired a Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing on Azerbaijan, where he urged the Trump/Vance Administration to “ratchet up” pressure on Azerbaijan.

Lavrov Says He Sees ‘No Reason for the Ukrainization’ of Armenia

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Armenian Interior Ministry spokesperson Narek Sargsyan stated later that day that police had removed all the posters ahead of Lavrov’s visit.

The Russian state-run media agency TASS separately reported that activists attempting to disrupt Lavrov’s visit accidentally staged a protest in front of Iranian Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh’s motorcade.

Mirzoyan and Lavrov held an expanded meeting behind closed doors, where the Armenian foreign minister was quoted as saying that he reaffirms Armenia’s “readiness to continue effective political dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation in accordance with the interests of our people and both states.”

In their joint press conference following the meeting, Mirzoyan and Lavrov touched on a variety of issues pertaining to Armenia’s rocky relationship with Russia, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and Russia’s provision of arms to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

During the briefing, a Russian reporter asked Mirzoyan about statements he made about “reformatting” relations with Russia.

Mirzoyan denied that Armenia was preparing to “reformat [its] allied relations with Russia.”

“Our obligations, rights and our intentions towards each other are clearly written on paper, signed, ratified and no one has dissolved them,” he added.

He separated this from Armenian relations with the CSTO, which he said Armenia was “not satisfied” with. The CSTO is a Russia-led military alliance whose charter stipulates that members of the security bloc are obliged to mutually defend each other against external threats or attacks.

Yerevan announced in early February that it was “freezing” its participation in

the bloc for its failure to come to Armenia’s defense.

A reporter from Armenpress asked Lavrov why Russia did not “respond adequately” in the face of Azerbaijan’s attack on Armenia in September 2022.

In response, Lavrov said that he did not know what the reporter “meant by an adequate response,” but said that Russia responded immediately via the CSTO.

“The CSTO fact-finding mission went to the scene to familiarize itself with the situation, presented an operational report with specific and practical recommendations that a CSTO observer mission should be sent there to stabilize the situation,” he said.

He went on to say that there was a “gentleman’s agreement” that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue would be “subject to further coordination” between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Mirzoyan chimed in saying that this was “one of those cases” where Armenia and Russia had differing interpretations of events.

“The attack in the direction of Jermuk [in September 2022] is just such an issue, and that event was a cornerstone for further developments and positions, including in the context of freezing our CSTO membership.”

Mirzoyan said that Yerevan informed Moscow and other allies in the CSTO about the attack, but “the actions that followed were not satisfactory for Armenia.”

According to Armenpress, Mirzoyan stated that Armenia’s position on Nagorno-Karabakh “has not been shared by any international partner for years,” noting that Russia recognized that Nagorno-Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan.

“Armenia does not dispute this approach,” he added. “I would like to take this opportunity to say again that Arme-

nia recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan on the basis of the Alma-Ata Declaration, and naturally, expects and has received assurances from Azerbaijan on the recognition of Armenia’s territorial integrity, again on the basis of the Alma-Ata Declaration,” he said.

In response to a question about the use of Russian weapons in its final attack on Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023, the Russian foreign minister said, “there are also Russian weapons in Mozambique — there is a Kalashnikov assault rifle on their coat of arms.”

Lavrov was also asked about delays to the delivery of Russian weapons purchased by Armenia, stating the issue had been settled.

“As for new supplies, we have a situation where we are fighting against the whole of Europe,” Lavrov said. “Russia needs weapons in the war against Ukraine, and in such conditions, our Armenian partners, I think, understand that we cannot fulfill all obligations on time.”

Lavrov also touched on Armenia’s purchase of weapons from other countries. *Armenpress* noted that Lavrov had “ironically” said that it was Armenia’s prerogative to do so.

“No problem, that’s up to our Armenian friends, if they want to have a French or any other country’s base in exchange for extra supplies, so be it, we will not impose anything,” he said.

“But of course, when an ally relies on a country like France, whose president and all ministers simply breathe hatred towards Russia, which leads the hostile camp against Russia... our allies themselves must decide where to buy weapons, even with everything I said,” he continued, according to CivilNet.

Lavrov also said that Russia considered the presence of its military base in

Armenia “an important component for guaranteeing the country’s security interests,” and that Moscow was interested in restoring Yerevan’s CSTO membership.

Russia Ready to Support Yerevan and Baku in ‘Achieving Full Peace’

During discussions on May 21, Lavrov also touched upon the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process, which has stalled since the treaty’s text was ostensibly agreed upon by both states on March 13.

“You can always count on our support in terms of communication, as well as in the delimitation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and in resolving humanitarian issues, taking into account the interests of all parties,” he reportedly said during the one-on-one meeting with Mirzoyan.

“Russia is ready to continue to support Yerevan and Baku in achieving full peace and agreement in the future by signing a peace treaty, then also by unblocking economic and transport infrastructure and demarcating the state border,” Lavrov similarly stated during the joint press conference with Mirzoyan.

He paid particular attention to the 3+3 regional cooperation format, which envisions cooperation between all three South Caucasus countries and their three major neighbors — Russia, Turkey and Iran. Georgia has refused to participate in any such meetings, however.

According to Lavrov, the platform could become an “important pillar” for connecting the countries of the region, with Russia ready to support the process to host the next events in Yerevan and Baku.

Lavrov’s visit to Yerevan came amidst an apparent thaw in Armenian-Russian relations, which had significantly deteriorated following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

INTERNATIONAL

Erdogan, Aliyev, Sharif to attend Lachin Airport Ceremony

YEREVAN (News.am) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and Pakistani Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif were scheduled to attend the opening ceremony of Lachin International Airport on Wednesday, May 28, Turkish Agency Anadolu reports.

This is the third airport built by Azerbaijan on the territory of occupied Artsakh.

Fahrettin Altun, Head of the Communications Department of the Turkish Presidential Administration said, Erdogan will participate in the May 28 Independence Day anniversary of Azerbaijan.

Russia to Send Humanitarian Aid To Displaced Artsakh Armenians Soon

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — At a press briefing on Tuesday, May 27, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova responded to a question about whether Russia continues to monitor the situation of displaced Artsakh Armenians and whether additional humanitarian aid is planned.

“Naturally, this humanitarian issue remains a priority for Russia. A new and fairly large humanitarian initiative is scheduled to take place soon, organized by the Russian Humanitarian Mission, one of our domestic public organizations,” she said.

“On the Armenian side, the local branch of ANO Eurasia and other relevant agencies are addressing the situation. As you may recall, the Russian Humanitarian Mission previously sent aid to Armenia. For example, in October 2023, six tons of food, hygiene products and other essential supplies were delivered to displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh,” Zakharova stated.

Reuters: Turkey FM, Putin Discuss Efforts To End War in Ukraine, Source Says

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkey’s foreign minister discussed at a meeting in Moscow efforts to end the war in Ukraine and developments since direct talks between the warring parties, a Turkish Foreign Ministry source said, on May 26.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was on a two-day visit to Moscow, where the source said he met Putin on Monday and also Russia’s lead negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky.

Fidan was scheduled to meet his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on May 27.

In their meeting, Putin and Fidan discussed “the initiatives carried out recently to end the war between Ukraine and Russia, (and) developments following the negotiations held in Istanbul,” the Turkish source said.

Armenian Clergy Attend Inaugural Mass of Pope Leo XIV

VATICAN CITY — In recent years, the presence of Armenian Church representatives in significant events at the Vatican has underscored the long-standing historical and spiritual ties between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Roman Catholic Church. The inaugural Mass of Pope Leo XIV on May 18, which gathered around 200,000 people in Saint Peter’s Square, is a notable example of this relationship, as it brought together leaders from various Christian denominations and faiths. Prominent Armenian clergy present included Patriarch of Constantinople Archbishop Sahag Mashalian, who was representing the Catholicos of All Armenians from the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin in Armenia, and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, who is the Pontifical Legate of Western Europe and representative of the Armenian Church to the Holy See. They illustrated the Armenian Church’s commitment to ecumenism and collaboration among Christian communities. Representatives from the Great House of Cilicia, including US prelates Archbishop Kegham Khacherian and Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, attended. Moreover, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem was represented by Bishop Goryun Baghdasaryan and Fr. Aghan Gokchyan, highlighting the global nature of the Armenian Apostolic Church and its pivotal role in the Christian landscape. The collective presence of these represen-



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, left, meets Pope Leo XIV

tatives not only signified the Armenian Church’s active participation in international religious dialogues but also symbolized a message of unity and brotherhood among diverse Christian traditions. On May 19, a meeting took place between Pope Leo XIV and the ecumenical and interfaith representatives. During this encounter, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian conveyed heartfelt greetings from Cathol-

icos of All Armenians Karekin II. This exchange of goodwill further strengthened the bonds between the Armenian Church and the Vatican, reinforcing the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect among Christian communities worldwide. Through such interactions, the Armenian Church continues to play a vital role in fostering unity and understanding within the broader Christian faith.

Jerusalem Brotherhood of Patriarchate Holds Meeting

JERUSALEM — The General Assembly of the Brotherhood of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem convened on May 21-22, at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate. This gathering saw the participation of 22 members of the Brotherhood, reflecting both the commitment and the sense of community that undergirds the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Holy Land. The meeting was presided over by Archbishop Nourhan Manougian, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, who initiated the assembly with a prayer, setting a tone of reverence and mindfulness as the participants prepared to discuss significant matters concerning the Patriarchate.

One notable aspect of the assembly was the leadership provided by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, who chaired the discussions. He ensured that the meeting proceeded smoothly, maintaining a focus on the key issues at hand. The assembly opened with the reading and acceptance of the minutes from prior three meetings, a ritual that not only fosters continuity but also reinforces accountability among the members of the Brotherhood.

A critical point of the assembly was the election of three Holy Synod members of the Brotherhood, which was conducted through a secret ballot. Following the elections, Patriarch Nourhan delivered an opening message to inspire and unify the members as they prepared to delve into reports of their ongoing initiatives.

The secretary of the Holy Synod then presented a comprehensive report on the activities undertaken by the Synod. This report was noteworthy for its emphasis on educational initiatives, ecumenical outreach, real estate management, communication, and holy places. These areas are crucial for the sustainability and growth of

the Patriarchate, as they encompass both spiritual outreach and practical resources. The members of the assembly engaged actively, raising questions and seeking further clarifications on the report, demonstrating a collective dedication to the advancement of their community.

In response to these inquiries, Bishop Theodoros Zakaryan, the chairman of the Holy Synod, provided thorough explanations and elaborated on the formation of the Advisory Committee of the Armenian Patriarchate. Established at the Patriarch’s request by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian. This committee comprises proficient Armenians from the United States, who bring expertise in legal, financial, political, diplomatic, and communication fields. Their role is to offer guidance on management, real estate, financial strategies, and communication matters, thereby ensuring that the Brotherhood operates with a contemporary, informed approach to governance.

Another key moment of the assembly was the detailed financial report presented by Bishop Theodoros, the Director of the Accounting Office of the Patriarchate. The meticulous nature of his presentation invited many questions from the assembly’s members, reflecting a shared concern for the financial health of the Patriarchate. His responses not only addressed the questions raised but also included suggestions aimed at improving the financial situation, including the proposal for a new auditing project. Such initiatives underscore the commitment to transparency and fiscal responsibility within the Brotherhood.

The discussions further included an extensive report provided by Bishop Goryun Baghdasaryan, the director of the Real Estate Office of the Patriarchate. His Grace detailed the operations and successes of

his office, which were met with enthusiasm from the participants. The level of detail and the positive feedback about improvements in real estate management marked a pivotal moment for the Brotherhood, suggesting a promising future in this area. The assembly members expressed satisfaction at receiving such detailed insights for the first time, reinforcing a sense of collective progress.

Bishop Goryun addressed the assembly regarding the ongoing challenges surrounding the “Cowes Garden” issue, a significant concern for the Patriarchate. In his report, he emphasized that the Patriarchate has engaged one of Israel’s most reputable law firms to navigate this complex situation. He also highlighted their collaboration with an expert mediator aimed at reaching a viable settlement. Throughout the meeting, he answered numerous questions from the Brotherhood members, demonstrating transparency and a commitment to resolving the matter effectively. His leadership in this challenging situation aims to protect the interests of the Patriarchate while fostering understanding among the assembly.

The two-day assembly unfolded in a cordial atmosphere, characterized by open dialogue and mutual respect. This environment fostered collaborative spirit and reaffirmed the Brotherhood’s commitment to their mission. At the conclusion of the meeting, His Beatitude Patriarch Nourhan expressed his heartfelt appreciation to all participants. His acknowledgment of their efforts and contributions served to enhance the unity and determination of the assembly, paving the way for future endeavors.

In summary, the General Assembly of the Brotherhood of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem served as an essential platform for reflection, cooperation, and strategic planning.



INTERNATIONAL

The Endlessly Fascinating Iran

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

“Again Iran?” — asked those around me upon hearing that I’m traveling to Iran for the fourth time, and for the third time at the initiative of the Cascade Iranian Cultural Center of Yerevan.

Yes, again — and with great pleasure! For me, that neighboring country is like an inexhaustible source of riches. Its rich history, layered culture, breathtaking sites and warm hospitality keep drawing me back.



Rock reliefs, Taq-e Bostan, Kermanshah (Suren Manukyan photo)

Despite the ongoing sanctions and the negative image portrayed in some circles, Iran is truly one of the top must-see countries in the world. It’s no coincidence that it ranks among the countries with the most UNESCO World Heritage sites. Iran is boundless in its colors, wealth, and generosity toward visitors.

This time, I found it even freer — the enforcement of the mandatory hijab seemed more relaxed in many places (rest in peace, Mahsa Amini!).

The journey began with visits to the Armenian heritage sites in the Eastern Azerbaijan region of northern Iran. The monasteries of St. Stepanos and St. Thaddeus, and the Shepherd’s Chapel, are architectural



Statue of the goddess Anahita (Suren Manukyan photo)

masterpieces of the historical Parskahayk region. Though no longer functioning, these sites welcome visitors with recordings of Armenian religious music. From the Iranian side, one can even see into Nakhijevan — a region gifted by Bolshevik Russia to the artificially created Azerbaijan SSR, along with Artsakh. Across the Araks River lies the site of the destroyed Julfa khachkars in Nakhijevan.

While Armenia’s eastern neighbor systematically erases Armenian cultural traces and instills hostility toward Armenians, the

Iranian government protects Armenian sites. One such site is the picturesque caravanserai of Khoja Nazar on the banks of the Araks River, built in the 17th century by an Armenian merchant.

For Armenians, the historical Av-arayr Plain on the banks of the Tghmut River always evokes deep interest — even if the exact site is only assumed. A natural wonder occurs where the muddy Tghmut (literally “muddy” in Armenian) flows into the clear Araks — a visible line separating two waters.

The bus sped across mostly arid landscapes, with cities appearing one after another, each unlike the last.

First came Kashan, known for its Fin Historical Garden and Bathhouse, History Museum, Castle of Love, handicrafts, and market of rosewater, rose oil, and other aromatic extracts.

Next was Yazd, a city of unique and captivating architecture. In the old city, time feels frozen — its clay buildings and ancient air-cooling systems are marvels of ingenuity. The Zoroastrian Fire Temple, with its eternal flame and chanting of passages from the *Avesta*, leaves an indelible impression. In contrast, the Tower of Silence — the ancient Zoroastrian burial site where bodies were offered to vultures until just 70 years ago — evokes a somber, eerie atmosphere.

On the road to Shiraz, we visited Persepolis, the ancient capital of the Achaemenid Empire. Its monumental ruins bear bas-reliefs depicting the empire’s subjects, including Armenians — a source of pride for us.

Poetic Shiraz enchants with the Narenjestan Garden and Palace, and the Mausoleum of the great medieval poet Hafez, where many visitors read his poetry. Two architectural gems stand out: the *Nasir al-Mulk Mosque*, with its stained-glass windows casting a kaleidoscope of colors across the floor, and the grand *Shah Cheragh Mosque*, its interior dazzling with mirrored surfaces that turn the space into a sparkling jewel.

Isfahan is another jewel — a city with a subtle European air. The palaces of Shah Abbas (Chehel Sotoun and Ali Qapu), Naqsh-e Jahan Square, the Great Mosque, and the historic bazaar immerse you in the grandeur of the former Persian capital. But for us Armenians, the New Julfa district holds a special place in our hearts, with



The Shepherd’s Chapel, Parskahayk (Suren Manukyan photo)

the Holy Savior Monastery (Vank) and its two museums showcasing the Armenian contribution to Iranian history and culture. Nearby stand the Holy Bethlehem Church, an Armenian school, and Armenian heard in the streets. In a small square, I greet the bust of my late acquaintance, film critic Zaven Ghookasian — a sign of Iran’s respect for worthy individuals, regardless of ethnicity.

There are no longer Armenians in Hamadan, the birthplace of famed singers Hovhannes Badalyan and Viguen Terterian, known as the “Sultan of Iranian Pop.” Still, the connection to Armenia persists — in the Ganjnameh inscriptions of King Darius (written in three languages, including a reference to Urartu-Armenia), the ancient city of Ecbatana, the awe-inspiring Behistun reliefs with Hercules and the tale of Armenian beauty Shirin and Persian Farhad, immortalized by Nizami. At Tagh-e Bostan, Sassanian kings are carved into rock, surprisingly flanked by large angelic figures. And among the ruins of the temple of the goddess Anahita, a splendid bust of the deity survives.

In Lalejin, a ceramics hub, local artisans create clay treasures for the world. A visit to Ali Sadr Cave, with its glowing walls and boat ride through surreal, dreamlike waters, adds yet another dimension to the experience.

Finally, Tabriz greets us with its sprawling 4-kilometer bazaar, bursting with goods of every kind. The journey ends with one last wonder — the Kandovan cave village, where residents live in rock-hewn homes equipped with modern amenities.

But even these marvels would be incomplete without the joyful camaraderie of fellow travelers: strangers who become friends, sharing laughter, songs, and stories on the bus. Add to this the delicious Iranian food and especially the sweets, and the picture is complete.

The people of Iran are curious and kind

to visitors. With relatively few tourists, locals are eager to engage. When we sing and dance in the streets, people join to the joy immediately. Strangers of all ages approach us with asking “*Verar yufrom?*” and cheerfully adding, “*Velkom to Iran!*” Of-



A mansion belonging to an Armenian family in New Julfa, Isfahan (Suren Manukyan photo)

ten, that’s all they say — and it’s enough. We’re moved, too, by how frequently we hear expressions of respect toward Armenians. At one hotel, a man overheard our conversation and came over to say he deeply admired Armenians and hoped Armenia would soon join the European Union.

The driving force behind these trips is George Abrahamian, who has been organizing a minimum of eight bus tours to Iran annually for the past 15 years. Thanks to him, around 3,000 people from Armenia — and beyond — have discovered Iran. Many, like me, return again and again, unable to resist the call of this endlessly fascinating country.



Community News

Craig Missakian Appointed U.S. Attorney for the Northern District Of California

Craig Missakian, a member of the Armenian Bar Association, has been nominated by President Trump to be the next United States Attorney for the Northern District of California. A seasoned litigator both in the public and private sectors and as much an impressive and eloquent Armenian-American, Missakian will officially assume office upon Senate confirmation.

Missakian brings the experience, dedication, and leadership required to serve with distinction as the chief federal law enforcement officer for one of the country's most vital districts.

Missakian joins another Armenian Bar member, Rick Hartunian, as most qualified and deserving occupants of this position. Hartunian served as the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of New York from 2010-2017 and has been a consistent participant, panelist and presenter at many Armenian Bar events.

Craig Missakian has for decades worked closely with the leadership and members of the Armenian Bar Association. Throughout his distinguished career, he has exemplified the qualities we most value: integrity, excellence, and an unwavering commitment to justice. In a telling tribute to the Armenian experience in America and to the ideal of "paying it forward," Missakian has been guided by Armenian-American judges and community stakeholders and he, in turn, has mentored and supported young Armenian-American lawyers and law students.

A graduate of Georgetown University Law Center, Missakian previously served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Central District of California, where he prosecuted cases involving terrorism, public corruption, and cybercrime. In private practice, he has represented public-sector clients — including law enforcement officials and municipal employees — in high-profile and complex matters.

His expertise also extends to the legislative branch of government. From 2014 to 2016, Missakian served as Deputy Chief Counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Benghazi.

"Craig's appointment is a testament to his unwavering dedication to justice and public service," said Lucy Varpetian, Chairwoman of the Armenian Bar Association. "As an Armenian American and veteran federal prosecutor, he represents the very best of our community's tradition of leadership, service, and professional excellence."

Missakian's path in public service began as an intern to then-California Senator Pete Wilson and included a 1996 campaign for the Republican nomination for California's 43rd Assembly District. Whether in the courtroom, the legislature, or private practice, he has consistently demonstrated a principled approach to the law and a deep respect for the public trust.



In an effort to expand ACT's global ties, Amalya Yeghoyan, Executive Director of Gyumri Information Technologies Center (GITC) and founder

Empowering Armenia's Next Generation: ACT College Expands Global Ties

NEW YORK/YEREVAN — Located in Armavir Province, ACT College is Armenia's first Creative Technologies College, offering inclusive, innovative, and industry-aligned education in computer science, digital art, and engineering. The college's mission is powered by strong diaspora ties and supported through generous donors, government partnerships, and global collaborations.

In an effort to expand ACT's global ties, Amalya Yeghoyan, executive director of Gyumri Information Technologies Center (GITC) and founder of ACT College, visited the US in late March. With stops in Chicago, New York/New Jersey and Washington, DC, she showcased ACT's vision, mission, and programs to enthusiastic supporters and formalized key partnerships with businesses and organizations, laying the foundation for Armenia's students.

In a heartfelt gathering at St. James of Nisibis Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in Evanston, Ill., Yeghoyan met with members of the Armenian-American community at a special fundraising event dedicated to the future of education and innovation in Armenia.

The event underscored unity, purpose, and vision. Alongside contributions from attendees, she announced that several classrooms and labs at ACT College will be named in honor of long-term donors.

"Your belief in ACT is not just inspiring — it's transformative," Yeghoyan told the assembled crowd. "Every donor, every supporter, becomes part of our students' journey. We are doing more than just shaping the infrastructure for the next generation of Armenian talent — we are building futures."

Oscar Tatossian, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Chicago, and Paruir Sarkisian had organized the evening.

While in Chicago, she also announced a key milestone: a partnership agreement with cloud-based software company [ServiceNow](#). Formalized on March 25, this agreement will provide ACT College students with access to world-class technology training and career pathways in cloud computing and digital workflow development.

Shelly Holt, VP and Learning Business Partner, and Geoffrey Browning, Director, Global Government Affairs and Public Policy, hosted representatives of ACT and the Chicago Armenian community, including Oscar Tatosian, Nick Bazarian, Vartan Paylan and Paruir Sarkisyan, for the official signing ceremony at the ServiceNow Chicago office.

"We are very excited for the Spring launch of this new college in Armenia and to provide its students with skilling opportunities through ServiceNow University this coming Fall," Holt said.

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Luther J. Khachigian Estate Leaves Substantial Bequest To AECP

During his life, Luther J. Khachigian was a dedicated and profound supporter of the Armenian Eye-Care Project (AECP) and its mission in Armenia. In his passing, the late Khachigian, who was a Central Valley California farmer and businessman, continues to support the nonprofit's sight-saving initiatives posthumously through his estate. The Estate of Luther Khachigian recently provided AECP with a substantial bequest empowering the organization to continue its lifelong mission to eliminate preventable blindness in Armenia and make quality eye care accessible to every resident in the country.

"Words cannot express how proud I am of my father," Luther Khachigian II, son of the late Khachigian and the executor of his estate, said. "Luther Khachigian's contributions to AECP



Luther J. Khachigian

and his philanthropy overall is emblematic of his broader commitment to improving health outcomes in underserved communities. Through initiatives like AECP, he has played a vital role in providing essential eye care services to both children and adults in Armenia. By championing these causes, my father has taught me to continue to strengthen the fabric of Armenian society through improved health outcomes and increased access to necessary medical resources."

The estate's recent bequest is just one example of the late Khachigian's commitment to AECP. A supporter of the organization since its founding, Khachigian's contributions to AECP also include: underwriting the John Ohannes Khachigian AECP Regional Eye Center in Gyumri, a massive initiative named after Khachigian's father that has made quality eye care both convenient and accessible to residents in and near the second-largest city in Armenia, sponsorship of valuable pieces of medical equipment (RetCams) for AECP's Center of Excellence for the Prevention of Childhood Blindness in Yerevan, essential tools for identifying eye disease among infants and children in Armenia, and much more.

Khachigian's continued dedication to AECP was directly tied to his passion for eye care. Diagnosed with glaucoma at age 30, Khachigian became increasingly interested in eye care and knew it would be the primary cause he would support in his

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Northern NJ Foundation to Honor Fund's Advisors Supporting Charitable Efforts

Hackensack, N.J. — The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation (NNJCF) announces Gina Wilson and Lisa De Dominicis, advisors to the organization's Andrea Tilbian Halejian Memorial Fund and cousins of the Fund's namesake, will receive the first Belonging and Opportunity Award at the inaugural Community Changemaker Night on Thursday, June 5, at 6 p.m., at a cocktail reception at Forte Ristorante, 160 Prospect Ave.

Wilson and De Dominicis will receive the NNJCF's first Belonging and Opportunity Award for their work supporting inclusive communities through the Andrea Tilbian Halejian Memorial Fund. The fund memorializes late Wyckoff, New Jersey



(Left to right). Gina Wilson, Andrea Tilbian Halejian, Lisa De Dominicis
Photo credit: Lisa De Dominicis

resident Andrea Tilbian Halejian and contributes to qualified charitable organizations she supported.

Since the Fund's founding, a range of organizations received grants to support various causes. These organizations include the Fund for Armenian Relief and the Center for Peace, and Justice & Reconciliation (PJR) at Bergen Community College. The NNJCF's Fund also awarded grants to the Center for Food Action, Vitalant, Eva's Village, KEYS (Kids Empowered by Your Support, Inc.), Armenian Relief Society of Eastern USA, Careers Through Culinary Arts Program and LA Family Housing. Recent grants have been awarded to Armenian General Benevolent Union, Healing the Children Northeast and United Way of

Bergen County.

The NNJCF will honor local heroes, who have made their communities better places to live, work and be. These 2025 award recipients, who exemplify excellence in the Foundation's focus areas — green and healthy places, creative communities, and belonging and opportunity — as well as overall community leadership, will also be honored:

South Orange Mayor (and Lt. Governor candidate) Sheena Collum — Visionary Leadership Award for significant contributions to the betterment of a North Jersey community.

New Jersey Assemblyman (District 36) Clinton Calabrese — Creative Communities Award for helping communities through the arts, supporting artists, or enhancing cultural ecosystems.

Fairleigh Dickinson University Professor and Biology Department Chair Dr. Marion McClary — Green and Healthy Places Leadership Award for protecting the environment or advancing public health.

The festivities will be emceed by humorist and *Bergen Record* columnist Bill Ervolino performing, in conjunction with a fun, interactive game-show awards ceremony presented by Ryan Huban of Howdy Stranger. Attendees will also have an opportunity to network with leaders and advocates dedicated to making North Jersey a better place to live, work and be, while enjoying artisanal bites and a selection of wines and beers in a vibrant atmosphere.

"The proceeds from this celebration will help the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation enhance North Jersey communities. By working together, we can build community partnerships that achieve more impact than any organization can do alone," said Leonardo Vazquez, executive director of the foundation.

The cost per ticket is \$130 per person. Special ticket rates are available for parties of three, five, and ten. Tickets can be purchased online at <https://www.nnjcf.org/ccn25/>.



Armenian-American Marchers Take Part In Watertown Memorial Day Parade

WATERTOWN — For the first time, several Armenian-Americans took part in the town's annual Memorial Day parade, which this year was on May 26.

The organizers intended to show the town their appreciation for the residents' participation in the defense of the US.

Empowering Armenia's Next Generation: ACT College Expands Global Ties

ACT, from page 6

In the nation's capital, the ACT delegation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with EXPLR Media to bring a STEM-focused conference to Armenia in 2026. EXPLR PBC Inc. is a global leader in STEM education, renowned for producing high-quality educational content and organizing impactful events that engage and inspire youth worldwide.

The conference, hosted by ACT College, will be Armenia's first large-scale international STEM conference.

This MoU follows strategic discussions led by Narek Mkrtchyan, Armenia's Minister of Labour and Social Affairs and ACT-College Board Chairman. The signing ceremony, held at the Embassy of Armenia to the United States, featured a keynote speech from Ambassador Lilit Makunts, who emphasized the transformative impact of international cooperation in STEM education.

The final stop in the U.S. was the metro New York and New Jersey area where the ACT delegation met with supporters in both the business and academic sectors and made visits to the New York Stock Exchange as well as Columbia University.

Yeghoyan was interviewed live by *NYSE TV Live* anchor Kristen Scholer. The discussion centered on why a skills-based approach to higher education is key

to Armenia's integration into the global economy. Amayla first met the anchor in March 2024, after her address at the United Nations about the importance of tech training to help women earn wages and support their families. See that interview here: [Amalya shines light on #WomenIn-Tech: Exclusive interview with Cheddar \(farsa.org\)](#)

With more than 10 million views per month, NYSE TV Live provides real-time coverage of financial and business trends across all major streaming platforms, including AppleTV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, and Roku.

"Armenia is already developing in technology, and we have many technological companies and startups," Yeghoyan told Scholer. "There is a high demand for skilled young professionals ready for future careers, not just for now, but long-term. This is the goal of our three departments at ACT College: Digital Art, Computer Science, and Engineering & Manufacturing."

While in New York, GITC also formalized and announced an upcoming collaboration with [Columbia University](#), which will include joint programs, exchange opportunities, and curriculum development. This initiative was first sparked by FAR board member Armen Avanesians.

Through this partnership, Armenian

students will have access to Columbia's SHAPE summer program, semester-based visiting scholar opportunities, and even support for competitive undergraduate admissions.

At the invitation of ACT supporters and Armenian community leaders Lisa Boyajian and Dawn Hourdajian, members of ACT College delegation, were introduced to the New Jersey Armenian community at a reception at [St. Leon Armenian Church](#) in Fairlawn, NJ.

It was an inspiring evening where the vision and mission of ACT College were introduced as a beacon of innovation, inclu-

sion, and opportunity for Armenian youth. The gathering brought together Armenian Relief Board members, GITC Board members, dedicated donors, and passionate supporters from the New York and New Jersey diaspora communities.

Dennis Tarzian, FAR board member and longtime supporter of GITC, remarked, "On the behalf of FAR, I along with other board members, laud Amalya's trailblazing efforts and recognize her as a true changemaker who is tirelessly driving impactful collaborations between the private sector, government, and international organizations."

Luther Khachigian Estate Leaves Bequest to AECP

BEQUEST, from page 6

life. Khachigian's benevolence was all-encompassing — having donated to over 50 charities in his life —but he admitted he had a special place in his heart for AECP.

"Luther Khachigian was a true philanthropist," AECP Founder and President Dr. Roger Ohanesian, said. "I will remember him most by our pleasant conversations over the phone. He would occasionally call and ask, 'What else can I do?' I could feel how strongly he cared through his voice... how so very much he wanted to help all

the people in Armenia he possibly could through his support."

AECP honored the late Khachigian at its annual gala in 2023. The organization also had a chance to speak to Khachigian several years before his passing. Reflecting on the motivation for his contributions, Khachigian said, "If these babies had not been seen and had not had treatment, they would have gone blind. These kids are going to see the year 2100 and they will never know who did it for them. There's something exciting about that."



COMMUNITY NEWS

An Uplifting Spirit and Warm Tributes at The 123rd Diocesan Assembly Banquet

HAVERHILL, Mass. — The Diocesan Assembly Gala Banquet on Friday, May 2, 2025, was an uplifting evening of heartfelt tributes, capping a Diocesan Assembly built on the theme “Love One Another.”

The host parish, Holy Archangels Church of St. Michael and St. Gabriel, of Haverhill, MA, ensured that the banquet was an elegant stage on which to honor church leaders for their contributions to the life of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan presided over the evening. Diocesan Legate Archbishop Vicken Aykazian delivered the invocation. Words of welcome were given by parish council chair Kim Kazanjian Dandurant, and Diocesan Assembly chair Diran Jebejian offered a toast. Host parish Assembly Committee chair Mark Kazanjian served as Master of Ceremonies.

Performing artists for the evening were vocalist Knarik Nerkaryan and pianist Arpine Arakelian, who offered selections by Satyan and Babajanyan.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of Diocesan awards to two distinguished honorees, each of whom was introduced with a short video and a personal tribute from a longtime friend.

Host parish pastor Fr. Vart Gyozyan introduced the 2025 “Friend of the Armenians” award recipient, Fr. John Delaney, pastor of Sacred Hearts Catholic Church of Haverhill. In remarks filled with emotion, he paid tribute to the personal friendship he had with Fr. Delaney, which began during a prayer service after the Boston Marathon bombing, and blossomed in the years after. He expressed gratitude for Delaney’s generosity in opening his church to the Armenian faithful of Haverhill when their own church was under construction.

In accepting the award, Delaney said he was doing so in the names of “all the parishioners who have built bridges between the two faith communities” throughout that time. “We are truly blessed by this deep friendship,” he said.

He lovingly recalled his own passage to Armenia as part of a pilgrimage led by Gyozyan. Being in the company of faithful Armenians, praying together before the Genocide Monument at Tsitsernakaberd, and having an audience with Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, were all deeply moving experiences for him, he said.

Delaney also mourned the recent passing of Pope Francis, whom he called “the people’s Pope.” “The Pope’s historic visit to Armenia in 2016 was an expression of the bonds of love and friendship that exist between our churches,” he said, “and I am honored to be reminded of that friendship in this award.”

A Message of Gratitude

To introduce the “Armenian Church Member of the Year,” Diocesan Council member Gregory Kolligian delivered a touching tribute to his lifelong friend James Kalustian — this year’s award recipient. “My friendship with Jim has made me a better servant of Holy Trinity Church and our Diocese,” he said, extolling the honoree’s modesty as “a testament to the upbringing he received from his parents, Martin and Mimi.”

Kalustian — a member of Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge and an ordained deacon with a distinguished history of service to Holy Echmiadzin, and leadership in the Eastern Diocese — approached the podium to say he felt humbled by the evening’s presentations. “Today should not be about me,” he insisted, “but about our entire Armenian Apostolic community, and the many blessings we’ve received.”

In his uplifting message about service, gratitude and looking to the future, Kalustian acknowledged the blessings all Armenian Americans share, and the personal blessings he received from his parents. He appealed for outreach to Armenia and its people, adding: “But let us not only think of Armenia, or our church communities, when we think of giving back. People around us here need our help too.”

“Give thanks, assess the present moment, and look to the future,” he said, reflecting on words of advice offered by His Holiness Karekin II. “I can only stress that I will continue to strive to be worthy of your kindness.”

To conclude the program, Gyozyan spoke graciously

about the inspiration he had received from each of the honorees, and expressed thanks to Bishop Mesrop, the parish committee, his parishioners, his wife Yn. Lusine and their children.

Parsamyan offered his own words of blessing on the honorees and the banquet attendees. Reflecting on the sense of vision that precedes every meaningful achievement and every great stride forward, the Primate asserted that “Vision, fueled by love, allows us to see miracles happen.” He went on: “That’s the spirit we need — in our Diocese, and throughout our church and community.”

Holy Archangels Church’s Diocesan Assembly organizing committee, under the leadership of pastor Fr. Vart Gyozyan, included Mark Kazanjian (Assembly Committee chair), Vania Mardirossian Kim (vice chair), Kristina Bebirian (vice chair), Armen Derderian (treasurer), Viken Dumeciyian (assistant treasurer), Diane Shadbegian (recording secretary), Sarah Tavitian (corresponding secretary), and members Yn. Lusine Aharonyan, Barbara Arthur, Eleni Bebirian, Michael Bebirian, Myles Couyoumjian, Knar Felegian, Charlene Hovana-

This year’s “Armenian Church Member of the Year,” James M. Kalustian, has been actively involved in the life of the Armenian Church since his childhood. At age 10, his pastor at Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge, Fr. Papken Maksoudian, invited Kalustian to serve on the altar as a candleholder, and he has continued his altar service for over 50 years, rising through the ranks to deacon. His dedication expanded over the years to the parish, Diocesan, and global levels. At Holy Trinity, he served on the parish council for 12 years, and six years as chair. Jim sang with Fr. Oshagan Minassian and the Erevan Choral Society. He was elected to four six-year terms as a Diocesan delegate, and serves as Chair of the Parish Trust Fund, which manages the parish’s endowment.

Kalustian served on the Diocesan Council for 18 years, including four years as chair. He implemented the retirement/401K plan for the staff and Diocesan clergy. He created a performance review, development plan for the staff, and brought Diocesan borrowing from its endowment under control and then to zero.



Fr. John Delaney (at left), pastor of Sacred Hearts Catholic Church of Haverhill, was named the 2025 “Friend of the Armenians.” James M. Kalustian (at right), a lifelong member of Holy Trinity Church of Cambridge, MA, with a distinguished history of leadership in the Eastern Diocese and service to Holy Echmiadzin, was the 2025 “Armenian Church Member of the Year.” (Photo credit: Mano Baghjanjian)

sian, Anahit Kibarian, Ervant Kibarian, Nathan Kibarian, Andrea Korbey, Robert Korbey, Kathy Meranian, Elaine Meuse, Stephanie Naroian, Nancy Sahagian, Scott Sahagian, Robert Serabian, Daniel Shadbegian, and David Tavitian.

The parish also extended special acknowledgements to Debbie Ohanian (in memory of Michael and Sonia Ohanian), Ira Dewitt, David Tavitian, Andre Garabedian, and Andrea Aghavnie Korbey — all of whom contributed to a pleasant and hospitable weekend.

Meet the 2025 Diocesan Award Winners

Every year the Eastern Diocese bestows its “Friend of the Armenians” and “Armenian Church Member of the Year” awards to express gratitude to people who have profoundly benefitted the church; to deepen existing relationships with important figures in the community; and to strengthen the honorees in their continuing efforts.

The 2025 honorees are people of extraordinary vision and determination, motivated by a belief in something greater, and a responsibility to share the fruits of their accomplishment with others.

Jim was appointed by the Primate to work with the Lawrence and Haverhill parishes to guide the process leading to the unification of both churches into a new Hye Pointe church — now Holy Archangels Armenian Church. While chair of His Holiness Karekin II’s Pontifical Visit to the Eastern Diocese in 2007, Jim developed a relationship with His Holiness, and this connection led to His Holiness’ visit to Hye Pointe during the consecration of the cornerstone of the new sanctuary.

He served on the Supreme Spiritual Council of the worldwide Armenian Church for over 15 years, where he helped to develop the Global Church bylaws, the National Ecclesiastical Assembly, and the By-laws for the Dioceses within Armenia. He committed to his role on His Holiness’ advisory committee raising funds, distributing aid and services to the displaced population of Artsakh after the 2020 war.

The root of his involvement and support of the Armenian Church and community comes from his parents Martin and Mimi: both children of Genocide survivors who grew up from humble stations. Strong believers in

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COMMUNITY NEWS

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family, church, and community, they instilled in their son a love of church and heritage. Most of his philanthropy is done in their names.

Kalustian serves as president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, which secured the land, designed and built Armenian Heritage Park on the Rose Kennedy Greenway. It is the only place where the Armenian Genocide is acknowledged on US federal land. The governor of Massachusetts appointed Kalustian to the Board of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy. In addition, he has participated in the U.S. Board of City of Smile; served on the Board of NAASR; and is a member of the Armenian Assembly and Armenian National Committee. He served on the Visiting Committee of Radiation Oncology at Mass General Hospital, is a member of the Leadership Giving Committee with the Harvard College Fund, and is a Corporation Member and class agent at Belmont Hill School. He is a recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the St. Gregory the Illuminator and St. Nersess Shnorhali Medals from Holy Echimadzin, as well as the Movses Khorenatsi Medal from the President of the Republic of Armenia and the Medal of Appreciation Erakhdakidoutiun from the Prime Minister of Nagorno-Karabagh, among distinctions.

Professionally, Jim Kalustian has spent the past 30-plus years founding and helping to scale entrepreneurial healthcare services and technology businesses. He served most recently as co-founder and chief operating officer of RxAnte, and prior to that Jim served in high-level, often founding capacities with such innovative enterprises as the Board of Ambassadors Group, Health Resources Information Network, Fair Isaac Corporation, Braun Consulting, and Vertex Partners. Jim holds a BA from Harvard College and an MBA from the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University.

The 2025 “Friend of the Armenians,” the Very Rev. Fr. John W. Delaney, is a native of Lawrence, the son of Dorothy and Jack Delaney. He attended local schools and graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in

1983. He possesses advanced degrees in Chemistry and Engineering. He worked in the field of environment chemistry and analysis for several years before entering St John Seminary and being ordained to the Roman Catholic Priesthood on May 20, 1995. He celebrates his 30th anniversary to the priesthood this year.

Delaney has been assigned to various parishes in the Archdiocese of Boston and describes himself as a “general practitioner” in the field of ministry. He enjoys all aspects of parish life — working with people of all ages, celebrating the sacraments, visiting the sick and homebound, counseling, preaching and teaching the Catholic faith. He is a staunch supporter of Catholic education, through Catholic Schools and parish faith formation programs.

He currently serves as the police chaplain of the Haverhill and Groveland Police Departments and fire chaplain for the Haverhill Fire Department. He has served on several Boards in the community including Mary Immaculate Nursing Home, Lawrence, Pennacook Nursing Home, Haverhill and the Trauma Intervention Program, North Andover.

When he arrived at Sacred Hearts in April, 2012, Gyoalyan was the first clergyperson to welcome him to the community. Since then, the friendship between them and their two faith communities has deepened. During construction of the Holy Archangels Church and Hall, the Armenian Church used Sacred Hearts Chapel and hall for worship and fellowship.

Outreach

As part of our Outreach initiative and continuing the theme of “Love One Another”, 230 delegates and clergy came together to prepare 750 lunches for four local shelters, putting faith into action. Those shelters were: St. Martha’s Food Pantry (part of Lazarus House) Lawrence, Emmaus House Shelter (Haverhill), Merrimack Valley Dream Center (Lawrence) and Daybreak Shelter (Lawrence).

The Outreach Program was conceived by Bishop Mesrop and the Diocesan Council. Fr. Vart and the pa-

rishioners of Holy Archangels feel especially proud that our parish was the first to implement this program. This will become part of Diocesan Assemblies going forward. Surpazan later stated, “Jesus said, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’ (Matthew 25:40). When we serve others, when we go out of our way to bless someone in need, we’re not just helping them, we’re honoring Christ.”

On Friday morning, Yn. Lusine Gyoalyan hosted the Yeretzgins’ Lunch, marking the 40th anniversary of this beloved Diocesan tradition. Twelve Yeretzgins participated in a spirit-filled morning, including a special session led by Ani Babayan on the Armenian letter Վ (Eh) and its spiritual meaning. Each Yeretzgin painted the letter as a lasting memory of this sisterhood gathering.

The evening concluded in celebration, with dancing and fellowship shared among clergy, delegates, and parishioners with music by the Jason Naroian Ensemble featuring the voice of Michael Gostanian.

The Women’s Guild Central Council held their Assembly. Women’s Guild members from across the Diocese attended their events and the Assembly and concluded with the Women of Wonder luncheon on Saturday. Nancy Kassabian, Chairlady of the Women’s Guild Central Council welcomed the attendees. Those who were honored were Charlotte Mosto and Katherine Meranian. Honored posthumously were Melanee Naroian, Sylvia Tavitian, Azaduhi Loosian.

The week concluded with Holy Badarak celebrated by V. Rev. Fr. Poghos Vartanyan, delegate from Holy Etchmiadzin, who traveled by the blessing of His Holiness Karekin II and at the invitation of His Grace Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan. In his sermon, he reflected on the sacred calling of building a church and how our parish has now joined the sacred chain of ancestors in that holy mission.

Following Holy Badarak, a farewell brunch was served at the church, where Assembly Chair Mark Kazanjian offered words of thanks and recognition to all who made the week possible.



Scenes from the Diocesan Assembly

COMMUNITY NEWS

An Apt Musical, Creative Tribute to Dr. Aram Chobanian

CHOBANIAN, from page 1

In addition, he was active in trying to bring American standards of medical education to Armenia, through his work with the Fund for Armenian Relief.

As dedicated to music as medicine, he encouraged medical students to partake of music and was a longtime member of the Friends of Armenian Culture Society which has helped organize the annual Armenian Night at Pops.

He died in 2023 at the age of 94.

Tribute to a Mentor

The program was opened by Dr. Armineh Mirzabegian, and Dr. Hovig Chitilian, president of the AAMA Executive Committee.

In her opening remarks, Mirzabegian, the AAMA's Medicine and Humanities Committee Chair, paid tribute to the artistic nature of Chobanian, who had been a co-founder of the AAMA.

"Inspired by his insight and wisdom, we continue his legacy by renaming our lecture series at the intersection of arts and medicine in Dr. Chobanian's honor," Mirzabegian said.

Chitilian spoke about the AAMA and its goals moving forward.

Next, Dr. Richard Babayan, professor emeritus and former chief of urology at Boston Medical Center, offered a brief introduction of Chobanian, and with a quivering voice, called him his mentor long before he became a colleague at Boston University.

In 1973, he said, Chobanian established the Cardiovascular Institute at BU, "the first of its kind, that connected hypertension and cardiovascular disease. His research and his work worldwide in hypertension is at the top rung of medical research," he said.

"He was a mentor, colleague and friend.

He was an amazing physician ... at the top rung of medical research," he said, noting that he had done groundbreaking work in the field of cardiovascular health.

"He would be very proud of the program that is being presented to night. He would be honored that the sum of his passions is presented to you all this evening," Babayan said.

Babayan noted that Chobanian had been named the dean of the Boston University school of Medicine in 1988, before being named in 2003 as the acting head of the entire university when it was experiencing a turbulent period.

Of course, later, he would leave an even bigger mark when the BU medical school was renamed the Boston University Chobanian and Avedisian School of Medicine.

Bree Carriglio, the executive director of FAR, an organization with which Chobanian had collaborated for directing help to Armenia after the 1988 earthquake, also spoke. She paid tribute to his legacy with FAR, which led to a "new generation of Armenian physicians" and massive improvements in the healthcare system of the country by helping to better train physicians there.

Music Teacher

Justin Casinghino, assistant professor of music at Fitchburg State and lecturer of composition and theory at Boston University, was in a different position that many during the program, as he was Chobanian's teacher rather than student; he had taught Chobanian music composition for several years, starting when the latter was in his 80s.

When Chobanian had approached him for lessons, he had asked him to help him arrange an opera. However, Casinghino

had refused, suggesting to him, "I'm not going to write arrangements for you, but I will teach you how to do write your own music," he said. "That's when our relationship started to blossom, when I gave him that challenge. ... We ended up working together for 12 years and I know that the study of music had a significant impact on his life. He told me so regularly."

"Aram wrote reasonably tonal music," he said. "Trying something new at that age was exciting for him and was certainly inspiring for me."

Chobanian was often composing pieces for his wife, Jasmine. When she passed away in 2014, he began delving more deeply into music, Casinghino said, to deal with the void. "It was a void that you only have when you have a Jasmine in your life. And I know it helped him because he would talk about it," he said.

Chobanian wrote several operas and hired students from Boston University to sing them. Among the subjects he picked for operas were Isabella Stewart Gardner, Tom Jones and Enrico Caruso.

One of his compositions, for string quartet, was performed on May 15, with Haig Hovsepian on violin, June Chung on violin, Cara Pogossian on viola and Dilshod Narzilaev on cello.

Later in the program, the quartet, led by Hovsepian, performed several pieces from Komitas, with the visual accompaniment of Kevork Mourad, who painted traditional scenes while the musicians performed. The drawings were available for sale afterwards.

Music and the Brain

The keynote speaker for the evening was Tufts University psychology professor, Aniruddh Patel, who detailed the link between

music and the brain. In a talk that was both accessible to a lay audience and inspiring, he showed examples of the power of music and the physical changes it makes to the brain.

Patel is a cognitive psychologist known for his research on music cognition and the cognitive neuroscience of music. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2018 to support his work on the evolution of musical cognition.

He is also the author of the 2008 book, *Music, Language, and the Brain*, and contributed a chapter to the 2024 book edited by opera star Renee Fleming, *Music and the Mind*.

In his talk, titled "Music, Emotion and Brain Health," Patel explained that since his undergraduate days at Harvard, he had wanted to combine the studies of music and science, to see its effects on a healthy living brain. However, in the late 1980s, science had not yet devised a way to see a living brain respond to music.

"Fast forward from then to now and I just cannot believe how the field has changed," he said. "There is now enough research on music and brain and health that there is a website called the <https://soundhealth.ucsf.edu/> that tries to share the research with the general public."

"We are all familiar with how music can deeply touch our emotions," he explained, further asking, "That's wonderful and very powerful in the moment but what lasting effects can music have on neurological functions on our brains?"

Language, movement and memories, he showed, are all affected by music.

He went on to discuss how people who have had strokes and cannot get sentences out, are helped by music when

continued on next page

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COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

speaking. “Some patients can sing fluently. So fluently you wouldn’t know anything was wrong with them,” he said, which leads to the question whether singing and speaking are controlled in different regions of the brain.

Patel has conducted research in the archives of the Veterans’ Health Administration (VA) Hospital in Boston and realized that for many years, people had pondered the spaces for singing versus talking in the

al pathways in the brain that connect the auditory and temporal regions.”

He showed a very touching video from a group called Sing Well, which puts together choirs to help “people with communications disorders to sing together in groups so that way it helps their communication and benefits them socially.”

In a short video, participants included people with strokes or Parkinson’s, who clearly blossomed in choirs.

Patel is spearheading the OPERA hypothesis, which posits that musical training enhances the neural encoding of speech. According to the theory, the precision demands music places on the neural system, in addition to the emotions that music engage and repetition, all can improve speech in those who need it. “When you have all of those, the

prediction is musical training can benefit speech processing,” he explained.

Another major related area benefitted by music is movement, namely dance or understanding the beat, which is instinctive, Patel said.

“When people in a brain scan are listening to music, or a rhythm that has beat, if you look at their brain, you see activity not just in the hearing centers, but very strong activity in their motor planning regions. These people aren’t moving or going to move, so what is going on,” he asked. “We think this has to do with the predicting of the timing of the next beat.”

This research can benefit with Parkinson’s patients. “Some patients with Parkinson’s can move much better when there is music on with a beat. It kind of releases them from their freezing status and makes them move more fluidly.”

Again, a brief clip from the movie “Capturing Grace” showed this theory in action. In one clip, a woman who seemed rooted to the spot, unable to take a step, was able to do so after upbeat music started to play.

He advocated for more research in medical schools to see how this can be advanced.

He next addressed issues with memory.

“Music has a deep connection to memory. That is why the ancient epics like *The Iliad* or *Bhagavad Gita* were chanted or sung. That’s how they were passed on from generation to generation,” he said.

Memory is created in the hippocampus region of the brain. “Music must be interacting in that system in a very powerful way,” he explained. He and a colleague at Tufts, Prof. Elizabeth Race, are working on experiments showing the tie, by “playing music with a beat and we just show pictures every once in a while,” as part of a memory test, he said. “People remember pictures that appear on the beat better than those that were off the beat.”

They are now extending it toward Parkinson’s research.

The bottom line, he said, was that incorporating music in any way in one’s life — listening, practicing, learning, dancing — improves one’s brain.

“Just regular engagement with music as an amateur, singing in a choir, learning an instrument informally for pleasure, can benefit cognitive reserve [Cognitive reserve refers to the brain’s ability to withstand and compensate for damage or decline in brain function.] in the brain and make the brain age in a healthy way. It’s a way we can

protect our brains by doing something that feels good,” he concluded.

Award to Tachdjian

Later in the program, Doctors Gail Guzelian and Armen Arslanian presented Dr. Raffi Tachdjian with the “Aram V. Chobanian Medicine and Humanities Award” for his work integrating music with the care of young cancer victims.

Tachdjian is an Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics in the Division of Allergy and Clinical Immunology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Tachdjian had founded the Children’s Music Fund in 2002 after as an intern, he met a young patient with bone cancer at Mass General Hospital. “That is the torch I carry to this day to continue to bring musical instruments and music therapy to any kid that needs it,” he said during a short video showing the work the foundation conducts with young patients.

Music, he said, can relieve the anxiety of anticipating procedures.

“Music makes all of life’s senses pop for me,” he said in the short film.

“Thirty years ago, almost to the month, I got to meet Dr. Chobanian at the Boston-based Armenian Medical World Congress in 1995,” he said when accepting his award. “He was an inspiring, humanistic visionary individual, but he was all about the collective,” he added. He thanked his many mentors in the audience.

“It’s just astounding that Dr. Chobanian, at his mature age, got to learn with you and you both learned from each other and made the world a better learning place,” he said.

“This award embodies the collective. In accepting this award, I say keep spreading music, keep spreading the humanity and in his honor, keep spreading Aram,” Tachdjian said.



From left, Haig Hovsepian, June Chung, Dilshod Narzillae and Cara Pogossian (Ken Martin photo)

brain and suggested music therapy of one form or another.

“They are largely separate but there is enough overlap that maybe we can use music to recover brain function,” he said. “That’s exactly what was done at the VA Hospital.”

That kind of research eventually led to with Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT), where a patient would sometimes be able to sing a sentence rather than speak it.

“This turned out to have some efficiency with some patients,” he said. “We were able to go back and look with brain imaging. We saw changes in important structur-

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Acts of Outreach Take Center Stage at Diocesan Assembly

HAVERHILL, Mass. — The 123rd Diocesan Assembly of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America convened on Thursday, May 1, and continued through Saturday, May 3. It was the third Diocesan Assembly to be presided over by Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan.

The newly consecrated Holy Archangels Armenian Church of St. Michael and St. Gabriel, of Haverhill, MA, hosted the 123rd Assembly, with business and social functions taking place at the Hilton Boston/Woburn Hotel. The weekend's liturgical events took place at Holy Archangels Church.



Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan eagerly joins in the “community outreach project” during the 123rd Diocesan Assembly, in which Assembly participants made meals for a local homeless shelter. (Photo: Carl Russo/The Eagle-Tribune)

The inaugural session was called to order on May 1. Delegates and guests were welcomed by host parish pastor Fr. Vart Gyozyan and parish Assembly Committee chair Mark Kazanjian.

A formal message from His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, was read to the delegates, after which Bishop Mesrop set a warm-hearted tone of the meeting with his welcoming words.

In all, 142 parish representatives—clergy, parish council chairs, and Diocesan delegates—along with a substantial number of observers, gathered in person for the proceedings. Among the guests were two visitors from the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin: V. Rev. Fr. Poghos Vardanyan and Rev. Fr. Zareh Ashuryan.

Elections and Reports

Under the guidance of Diocesan Assembly chair Diran Jebejian (of St. Leon Church, Fair Lawn, NJ), business moved forward at a brisk pace. Serving alongside him were vice chair Zaven Kalayjian (St. Mary Church, Washington, DC) and Secretary Laurie Bejoian (Holy Translators Church, Framingham, MA).

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Fr. Tadeos Barseghyan (Church of Our Saviour, Worcester, MA) took to the podium to explain the secure method of voting that would be employed throughout the proceedings. Continuing an innovation that emerged from the experience of holding assembly meetings virtually during the pandemic, all voting was conducted using a secure online balloting platform. (See below for all election results.)

As business went forward, Fr. Hovnan Demerjian (St. Hagop Church, Pinellas Park, FL) presented highlights of the Clergy Conference, which had met in the days prior to the main gathering. The delegates also heard highlights of the Parish Council Chairs Meeting, which had immediately preceded the inaugural session. Gregory Kolligian (Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge, MA) delivered the report on behalf of the assembled parish council chairs of the Eastern Diocese.

Diocesan Council chairman Richard Papalian (St. Gregory the Enlightener, White Plains, NY) delivered the report of the Diocesan Council, giving detailed information on the Diocesan operations, visualized graphically and projected onto display screens. Enhancing his presentation was an impressive Annual Report that had been

printed for the delegates in advance of being distributed to the public.

The council report included remarks from administrators of the Diocesan Center, including form Interim Executive Director Fr. Davit Karamyan, current Executive Director Gregory Kazanjian, and Interim Director of Diocesan Ministries, Fr. Hratch Sargsyan.

The various diocesan organizations also reported to the assembly. Presenters included Gregory Melconian and Marie Vanerian of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF); Andrea Karanian of the Ararat Youth and Conference Center; Fr. Mardiros Chevian of St. Nersess Seminary; Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan of the Sacred Music Council; Nancy Kassabian of the Women's Guild Central Council; and Bree Carriglio and Sarah Stites of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), and its crowd-sourcing platform, “Ayo!”

The Diocese's new Vocations Department Advisory Committee made its debut at the assembly, outlining its mission to inspire and guide the next generation of clergy and lay leaders in the Eastern Diocese. Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian, and Nora Knadjian-Kachian led the presentation.

Delegates also heard from Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director, who spoke about the persecution of Christians throughout the world, his work with the International Forum on Religious Freedom, and his efforts through his leadership role in World Council of Churches

to awaken the world's churches and governments to the plight of Armenians of Artsakh and Jerusalem.

Reports from the various Diocesan Ministries departments were delivered during “breakout sessions,” in which groups of delegates rotated among different rooms to engage in small-group presentations and discussions, featuring staff from the Youth and Young Adult Ministry department and Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA); the Diocesan summer camps; Armenian Language Ministry; and Children and Family Ministry.

A special two-part presentation came from the St. Vartan Cathedral Renovation and Fundraising Committees. Richard Papalian walked the delegates through a detailed presentation on the major project to renovate and restore the Diocesan Cathedral in New York City. He described Phase 1 of the project — the restoration and repair of the cathedral exterior — which was completed on time and on budget in 2024. He informed the assembly about the budgets for all project phases, and the prospective schedule for going forward with Phases 2 through 4.

Oscar Tatosian, Melanie Dadourian and Laurie Onanian delivered a presentation on the efforts of the Fundraising Committee over the past several years. They announced that the campaign's fundraising has surpassed \$19 million, and urged the attending parish leaders to use the tools developed by the campaign — including printed posters and brochures; social media; and a website that explains the project, charts its progress, and provides a secure platform for contributions — in their home settings.

During previous assemblies, the delegates had shown support for the restoration project, which has also been approved by the Diocesan Council and Board of Trustees. To conclude the presentation this year, the 123rd Assembly passed a resolution to proceed with the renovation project and fundraising effort.

(Learn about and support the St. Vartan Cathedral Renovation campaign on its website: StVartan.org.)

‘Love One Another’

The Diocesan Assembly theme, “Love One Another,” was brought to life in words and actions throughout the assembly. Setting the tone was a special “community outreach project” at the Holy Archangels host parish on Thursday night, that saw the entire body of delegates and clergy making meals for a local homeless shelter.

The next morning, Bishop Mesrop expanded on the

theme in his engaging address, reflecting on Christ's command to “Love One Another” (Jn 13:34). After recounting his personal experiences of outreach to others, and surveying charitable projects at the Diocesan Center and among local parishes, the Primate reflected on the meaning of active concern for the surrounding society. “These acts of love and service address the question: If your parish was to disappear tomorrow, would the larger community notice?”

The Primate noted that the Diocesan Center in New York has been a hub of growth and activity — spiritual, physical, and operational — through the year. He cited the completion of Phase One of the St. Vartan Cathedral Restoration Project; the great strides made in the Diocesan Ministries Department and its multimedia outreach efforts; steady growth in youth outreach and participation in the Diocesan summer camps; and new acquisitions in staff positions.

As milestones in his ongoing ministry to the Diocese, Bishop Mesrop noted that he had now visited every local parish and community in the Diocese, ordained more than 100 altar servers, consecrated two churches—St. Nerses Church in Jacksonville, FL, and Holy Archangels Church in Haverhill, MA—and ordained a new priest in the person of Fr. Nerses Krajekian.

Bishop Mesrop expressed the joy he felt whenever visiting parishes in person. In concert with such visits, the Primate also led “virtual visitation” meetings with church leaders in more than 50 local parishes, during which pastors, parish council members, and Diocesan delegates share their successes and challenges.

To close his address, the Primate returned to the “the deepest meaning of Christ's command to Love One Another.” He assured listeners: “By obeying those words, we are doing what Christ would do, and becoming more like Him. May that loving spirit animate all that we do, in our churches and communities, and draw us all closer together.”

A video titled “Love One Another” produced by the Diocesan Ministries department, and a set of personal testimonies, followed the Primate's remarks. Dawn Houradjian (St. Leon Church, Fair Lawn, NJ), Michael Kazarian (St. John Church, Southfield, MI), Linda Yenigag (Holy Martyrs Church, Bayside, NY), and John Soraghan (Holy Archangels Church, Haverhill, MA), each spoke with passionate conviction about community outreach efforts undertaken by their local parishes.

Final Blessings

The final Assembly session began with a requiem service for departed delegates, clergy, and Diocesan leaders who had passed away in the previous year, followed by a stirring reflection on the assembly theme of “Love One Another” by Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian (St. Peter Church, Watervliet, NY).

The final session also saw the passage of a balanced revised budget for 2025 and a balanced budget for 2026—both introduced and explained in a detailed visual presentation by Diocesan Council treasurer Alex Topakbashian.

Three proposals were considered during the assembly. The first, which sought to permit online/remote participation in parish assemblies, was voted down by delegates.

The second proposal sought to revise select articles in the Diocesan Bylaws, to formally recognize a voluntary “stewardship” pledge system, as an authorized alternative to the dues-paying membership system that has traditionally prevailed among parishes. The delegates voted to table that proposal until next year, so it can be discussed in greater detail.

A third proposal, extending the timeframe of the stewardship system “pilot project” that has been active among Diocesan parishes for several years, was passed by the delegates.

Before adjourning the 123rd Diocesan Assembly, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan approached the podium to thank the host parish and all the Diocesan leaders for their ongoing faith, love, activity in the church. Holding up a local newspaper, which included a feature story on the community outreach project the delegates had undertaken, the Primate offered congratulations for “embodying the spirit of our theme, ‘Love One Another,’ for all to see—just as our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to do. I encourage you to take that spirit back to your parishes, to strengthen your continuing mission.”

The 124th Diocesan Assembly, meeting in May of 2026, will convene in Milwaukee, WI, hosted by St. John the Baptist Church.



COMMUNITY NEWS

13 Members and Associates of Rival Armenian Syndicates Arrested on Federal Complaints Alleging Attempted Murder, Kidnapping, Theft

LOS ANGELES — Law enforcement officials in California and Florida on May 20 arrested 13 alleged members and associates of Armenian organized crime syndicates who are charged in five federal complaints with a series of crimes – including attempted murder, kidnapping, tens of millions of dollars' worth of thefts of online retailer shipments, and illegal firearm possession – to expand and maintain their control in the San Fernando Valley.

Among the defendants charged are Ara Artuni, 41, of Porter Ranch, who is charged with attempted murder in aid of racketeering, and a rival, Robert Amiryan, 46, of Hollywood, who is charged with kidnapping.

The defendants arrested in California are expected to make their initial appearances the afternoon of May 20 and the afternoon of May 21 in United States District Court in downtown Los Angeles. Vahan Harutyunyan, 50, of Hollywood, Florida, made his

initial appearance earlier today in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and was ordered detained. Two of the remaining defendants, Levon Arakelyan, 45, of Las Vegas, and Ivan Bojorquez, 33, of Gardena, are presently detained in state custody on unrelated matters.

Law enforcement is still seeking one defendant and seized approximately \$100,000 in cash, three armored vehicles, and 14 firearms during today's operation.

According to affidavits filed with the criminal complaints, Armenian Organized Crime, a Russian mafia-affiliated transnational criminal organization, has made Los Angeles County a center of U.S. operations. Since 2022, two local leaders within the organization, also known as *avtoritet*, which in Russian means "authority," allegedly have engaged in a power struggle for control in their territory, resulting in multiple murder attempts and a kidnapping.

Artuni, an *avtoritet*, is charged with or-

dering the attempted murder of Amiryan during the summer of 2023. In retaliation, Amiryan, also an *avtoritet*, allegedly conspired with members of his own criminal organization to kidnap and torture one of Artuni's associates in June 2023.

In addition to attempted murder, Artuni and his criminal enterprise has, since at least 2021, allegedly committed additional crimes, including bank fraud, wire fraud, and "cargo theft" targeting online retailers such as Amazon.com Inc. Artuni Enterprise members and associates enrolled with Amazon as carriers, contracted for trucking routes, and then, while transporting the goods, diverged from the route and stole all or part of the shipment. To date, the Artuni Enterprise has allegedly stolen goods from Amazon worth more than \$83 million, according to estimates provided by Amazon.

The Artuni Enterprise also ran a "credit card bust-out" scheme in which they charged various credit cards to a sham business then drained the business account before the credit card companies could collect the to-be disputed funds.

"Today's arrests reflect that my office and our law enforcement partners are committed to keeping America safe by dismantling transnational criminal organizations," said United States Attorney Bill Essayli. "Let today's enforcement action be a warning to criminals: Our communities are not your playground to engage in violence and thuggery."

"This transnational criminal organization operated with the structure and brutality of an international cartel, inflicting significant harm on public safety and causing substantial damage to legitimate commerce and supply chains," said HSI Los Angeles Acting Deputy Special Agent in Charge Dwayne Angebrandt. "Dismantling trans-

national criminal organizations is at the core of HSI's mission, and through close collaboration with our law enforcement partners, we are holding these perpetrators accountable and disrupting their criminal enterprise at every level."

"Our commitment to public safety is strengthened through collaboration," said Los Angeles Police Chief Jim McDonnell. "By working hand-in-hand with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, we are united in our mission to identify, apprehend, and bring violent criminals to justice. Together, we are sending a clear message: violence will not be tolerated in our communities."

"Investigators from the Burbank Police Department spent hundreds of hours investigating these heinous violent crimes," said Burbank Police Chief Rafael Quintero. "The Burbank Police Department is grateful for the assistance from its law enforcement partners and the United States Attorney's Office for their work in holding these individuals accountable for their actions."

A complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in court.

If convicted of all charges, the defendants will face statutory maximum sentences ranging from 10 years in federal prison to life imprisonment.

The Los Angeles Police Department Major Crimes Division – Transnational Organized Crime Section; the Burbank Police Department; Homeland Security Investigation's (HSI) Northridge and Ventura offices; the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG); IRS Criminal Investigation; and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Fire-

Armenian Mirror-Spectator Seeks Summer Intern

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

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

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

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

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

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Sarkis Patapoutian

Father of Nobel Prize Laureate Ardem Patapoutian

LOS ANGELES — Lebanese Armenian writer, translator, and playwright Sarkis Patapoutian (Sarkis Vahakn), died at the age of 98 on May 20, Arevelk.am reports. He was the father of Nobel Prize laureate Ardem Patapoutian.

Sarkis Patapoutian was living in the Armenian Ararat Home for the elderly in Los Angeles.

He was the author of numerous books, including a novel about Arshile Gorky.

Sarkis Patapoutian was born in Lebanon and had lived in the United States since 1987.

In 2008, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II had awarded him the Order of Saint Sahak-Saint Mesrop. In 2017, then Minister of Diaspora Hranush Hakobyan had awarded him the William Saroyan Medal of the Ministry of Diaspora of Armenia.

In parallel with literature, Sarkis Patapoutian had showed interest in cinema and theater, too. In 1958-1959, he had published the *New Cinema* art magazine in Beirut.





Arts & Culture

Robert Matosyan

A Life Dedicated to Armenian Cinema



By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The number of online platforms dedicated to Armenian cinema has increased by one. A new bilingual (Armenian-English) website has been launched, presenting the life and work of renowned Armenian film scholar, editor, and Honored Cultural Figure of the Republic of Armenia, Robert Matosyan (<https://robertmatosyan.weebly.com/>). The website features information about the periodicals he has edited, the books he has published, a list of films scripted by him, video interviews, photographs with Armenian and international film figures, his selection of the 10 best films of Armenian cinema, as well as photographs from the history of Armenian cinema.

Matosyan's article "April 16 is Armenia Cinema Day" provides information about an interesting fact: "the first memorable historical footage was the funerary ceremony of Matheus II Izmirlyan in 1911 which had been considered lost for many years. By a wonderful providence, exactly ten years ago in the film archives of the city of Krasnogorsk near Moscow, my sons, Tigran and Samvel Matosyan, while looking for footage for their documentary film 'Bryusov,' noticed on the black and white screen of the editing table the familiar emblem of Pathé cinema company, as well as the title 'Echmiadzin' and the writing 'Funeral Ceremony of Catholicos of All Armenians Matthew II.'"

Matosyan was born in 1945 in the city of Spitak. He graduated from the Journalism Department of Yerevan State University in 1968. While still a student, he worked in the university's cinema-photo laboratory, providing illustrations for the *Yerevan University* newspaper. During his university years, he was drafted into the Soviet army but was discharged after a year and resumed his studies.

In his final year, Matosyan began working at the Armenian National News Agency — now known as see MATOSYAN, page 17



Nora Armani in Cannes (Matthew Bender photo)

Nora Armani Receives Golden Kirk Award in Cannes

CANNES — Actress Nora Armani earlier in May received the Golden Kirk (Le Prix Kirk d'Or) from Associated Artists and its president, Régis Raffi Bakian. The award was given to Armani for her commitment to social cinema.

Le Prix Kirk (The Kirk Award for excellence in Armenian Cinema) and the Le Prix Kirk d'Or (The Golden Kirk) were awarded at the Cannes Film Festival Marché du Film on May 17, at the Pan-Armenian Federation of Film Producers stand in the Palais des Festivals.

A few years ago, Kirk Kerkorian, the American billionaire businessman and philanthropist of Armenian descent, invested \$100 million to produce a film about the Armenian Genocide, "The Promise," directed by Terry George and starring Christian Bale, Oscar Isaac and Charlotte Le Bon.

After Kirk Kerkorian's passing, the French chose to pay tribute to him with the Le Prix Kirk (The Kirk Award), dedicated to his memory and created by Associated Artists and Bakian. The first edition of the awards took place in Nice in September 2018.

This year, the Kirk Award celebrated excellence in Armenian cinema with two awards that were presented by Associated Artists in appreciation of the talent and perseverance of two Armenian filmmakers in the official selection of the 12th edition of the SR Socially Relevant Film Festival in New York in March.

The Associated Artists and Bakian, awarded Le Prix Kirk d'Or to Nora Armani, an actress committed to social cinema, in appreciation of her work promoting socially engaged cinema. The trophy was presented to Nora Armani by film critics Alice Kanterian and Laura Damiola on behalf of Associated Artists. They recognized the enormous contribution Armani has made to the promotion of social cinema in general, and Armenian cinema in particular.

Nora Armani is a multi-award-winning actress in Hollywood, Paris, Egypt, and Armenia. She divides her time between Paris and New York, and makes annual trips to Armenia, where she participates in specific theater, television, and film projects, and presents master classes in theater and acting regularly.

"Absolute Dominion," by Lexi Alexander, is a Hollywood production in which Armani plays a key supporting role. The film has been in theaters in California and online since May 9. "The Last Wish" and "Jukebox" are two feature films, both Finnish-Spanish co-productions directed by Rax Rinnekangas, in which Armani plays lead roles. The films are currently on the international festival circuit and in the Cannes Marché du Film.

In receiving the award, she said, "I am honored and profoundly touched to be awarded Le Prix Kirk d'Or in recognition of my commitment to socially relevant cinema. When you believe in a mission, you do not work to win an award. But when the hard work you put in is appreciated, it makes you proud and honored. I thank the Associated Artists, its president Régis Raffi Bakian, its representative film critics Alice Kanterian and Laura Damiola, who awarded me the Golden Kirk in Cannes.

see ARMANI, page 17

Singer Lyoka Releases New Song Dedicated To Artsakh

YEREVAN — Lyoka, the Artsakh-born rapper known for his raw and deeply personal lyrics, has released a powerful new single titled "Namak Zavakis" (Letter to My Child) — a soul-stirring reflection on identity, memory, and survival. The song is part of his upcoming album "Kyank" (Life) and became available on all major platforms, including Amazon Music, Apple Music, and Spotify, on May 8, a date symbolically chosen to mark the Liberation of Shushi — now tragically under Azerbaijani occupation.

Lyoka first rose to prominence with his breakthrough hit "Tun Tarek" (Take Me Home), which has now surpassed 6 million views on YouTube. His art is inseparable from his life: a life marked by displacement, trauma, and extraordinary resilience. He survived with an iron leg — a prosthesis — and an iron heart, having escaped death on more than one occasion. His family barely survived the Maragha massacre during his childhood. He lost his home again in Nor Maragha on November 9, 2020, and a third time in Stepanakert in 2023. Each time, he had to start over — and each time, music became his compass.

In his words, the new track carries both a personal and collective message:

"This song is one of the most important in my new album 'Kyank'. It starts with the first poetic lines I ever heard — words my father used to recite when I was a child."

"My place is tight and my condition is bad,
I've ended up far from my native land.
Ah, dear brothers, you've surely seen it all,
You must have borne my bitter, dark days' toll.
I beg you, when you receive my letter,
Read it gently — don't let my nation know,

The Armenian heart is fragile — it cannot bear more."

Building on this legacy, Lyoka infused the piece with his own voice, capturing the weight of the present moment and turning it into a letter to his future child — and symbolically, to future generations.

The song ends with three core imperatives:

Remember — who the Armenian is, where we come from, and the importance of our role in the world's history. Love — what you have, what is yours, and what your ancestors passed down to you. Fight — to protect it, to preserve it, and to pass it on to those who come after you. The official music video is now available on [YouTube](#) and includes English subtitles, allowing a broader audience to engage with its powerful message.

Through his music, Lyoka bridges generations of pain and pride — turning personal testimony into a universal call for resilience, identity, and hope.



ARTS & CULTURE

Krikorians Celebrate 35 Years of *Business Life Magazine*

BURBANK — *Business Life Magazine* celebrated its 35th anniversary on May 21, marking more than three decades of honoring the people, businesses, and communities that have driven economic and civic progress across Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena, and the greater San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys.

This milestone holds special meaning for Publisher Greg Krikorian, who co-founded the publication with his late father, John Krikorian — a first-generation Armenian American whose parents fled the 1915 Ar-

country. John and Elsie Krikorian raised eight children in East Hartford.

“As I reflect on 35 years of meaningful relationships and memories, I’m deeply grateful I chose to follow in my father’s footsteps in publishing,” said Greg Krikorian, publisher of *Business Life Magazine*. “At the time, I was newly married in 1989 to Christine Shahrigian and working for *Detroit News Gannett Publishing* in Detroit, while my father was still at the *Hartford Courant*. He called with a bold idea — move to California and launch our own publishing company. That idea became Cal-Conn Enterprises, and in 1990, *Business Life Magazine* was born.”

Since its founding, *Business Life* has published more than 300 issues, profiling thousands of CEOs, business owners, executive directors, civic leaders, and changemakers. The magazine’s mission has remained unwavering: to spotlight the character, promise, and progress of the communities it serves.

Beyond its editorial impact, *Business Life Magazine* has contributed over \$15 million to local, county, and state economies through investments in printing, postage, operations, and employment. The publication has supported a team of more than 50 professionals, including editors, designers, marketing

staff, and vendors—each playing a vital role in amplifying the stories that shape the region.

The premiere issue in 1990 featured the mayors of three cornerstone cities: Larry Zarian (Glendale), Jess Hughston (Pasadena), and Thomas Flavin (Burbank).



Business Life’s May 25 cover



First cover of Business Life Magazine

menian Genocide by the Ottoman Turks and settled in Hartford, Conn. in the 1920s. A proud US Army Master Sergeant who served during the Korean War at Fort Bliss, Krikorian went on to become Vice President of the *Hartford Courant*, the oldest continuously published newspaper in the

That same year, the magazine launched the now-celebrated Women Achievers Awards, one of the first regional programs to recognize the leadership and influence of women across industries. Since its inception, the program has honored more than 1,000 remarkable women who have made lasting

impacts in business, government, education, and nonprofit work.

For more information about *Business Life Magazine*’s 35th Anniversary celebration or to request media inquiries and details for the John Krikorian Legacy, please contact: Info@BusinessLife.com



LEBANESE NIGHT

Organized by

**TCA Pasadena Glendale Chapter
Social Committee**

**Saturday, June 7, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.
At the TCA Beshgeturian Center
1901 N. Allen Ave., Altadena**

Live Entertainment with the Famous Singer

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Contact Sossy 617 281-1647 syogurtian@comcast.net



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Keba – Cracked Wheat Meatballs from Fresno’s Mary Elia

FRESNO — Both of these recipes from Fresno’s Mary Elia are featured in *Breaking Bread with William Saroyan* (by Janice Stevens and Pat Hunter, published in 2016 by Heliograph Publishing), and in *A Hundred Years and Still Cooking*. The authors of *Breaking Bread with William Saroyan* capture the essence of Saroyan’s deep love for his Armenian culture through excerpts of his written word and selected Armenian recipes, including classic recipes from celebrated Armenian-American restaurateur, chef, author, and philanthropist George Mardikian’s *Dinner at Omar Khayyam’s*.

“My mother, Mary Mabel Tootikian, was born in Fresno in 1918,” says Dennis Elia, a longtime Fresno business consultant. “The family tree on her maternal side begins with her grandmother, Sarah Kesamaniakian, who married Mary’s grandfather, Garabed Deverian, who gave birth to Mabel Deverian, my mother’s mother. John Tootikian was introduced to the young and vibrant Mabel Deverian, who had just celebrated her 19th birthday. They were married in 1917. The Deverians can lay claim to being one of the early Armenian clans to locate in Pasadena. Unfortunately, a worldwide Spanish Flu epidemic befell Mary’s young mother at the age of 21, and she passed away.”

When Mary’s father remarried, Mary was forced to adjust to a series of three stepmothers who were neither nurturing nor attentive to her. Having survived the three stepmothers, Mary blossomed into an attractive and intelligent young lady. She graduated from Fresno High School in 1936, and at the age of 19, was introduced to a fellow Fresnan, Joe Elia. A star high school athlete, Joe received a football scholarship to attend UCLA. Encouraged by his Fresno pals attending San Jose State College, he decided to transfer there, and became a starting football quarterback, says Dennis.

“My father Joe was a Fresno legend in city league softball in the 1930s, and was hired to pitch in the state championships by an out-of-town team for \$200 per game. His blistering wind-mill delivery was well-known,” he adds. “My mother married my father on Christmas Day in 1936, at the Elia family home on Van Ness Avenue near Mono Street in downtown Fresno (built in 1915, the Elia home is listed on the *Fresno Local Register of Historic Resources*). “After the ceremony, the couple headed to their intended honeymoon destination of Mexico City. Unknown to them, the driving distance of 1,000 miles was beyond the realm of reality for the newlyweds. They settled for Ensenada, Mexico, some 70 miles south of the border.”

Mary and Joe established their home in Fresno, and raised two sons, Dennis and Allen. Joe started off in the painting contractor business with his immigrant father Samuel, and the partnership thrived. Later, Joe’s extraordinary skills in wood grain-ing, and gold and silver leafing, landed him in *Architectural Digest*. “His skills were in demand throughout California, and he ventured as far as Hawaii to create his work,” says Dennis.

“As a bride, my mother found herself without a mother in her formative years, and received no culinary guidance from a series of uncaring stepmothers. Nonetheless, she learned to cook and make authentic recipes from many cultures, including Armenian and Italian,” says Dennis. During their marriage, his father’s insistence

on traditional home-cooked meals resulted in his mother specializing in Armenian dishes, breads, and desserts.

“My father was an active church member his entire life. His parents were among the ten founding families of First Armenian Presbyterian Church (FAPC) in 1897. The church has the distinction of being the first Armenian Church organized in the State of California. My mother joined FAPC on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945. She became active as a church elder, along with heading the women’s group at the church.”

Mary remained active into her 80s as a lead cook in the church kitchen. A charter member of the FAPC Young Women’s Society of Fidelis, Mary served as President of the women’s ministry in 1948-1949 and in 1950-1951. In 1964, she became a member of the FAPC General Building Council, which envisioned and constructed the modern campus of the church in three phases from 1969 to 1986. Later, Mary served as a member of the Board of Deacons and the Church Session. From 1992 through 1997, she was a member of the Centennial Commemorative Committee that celebrated the first 100 years of FAPC ministry.

When William Saroyan came to dinner

When hometown native William Saroyan visited Fresno in the 1950s, he would often stop by the Elia home on the edge of Fresno’s Armenian Town to have Armenian coffee, says Dennis. Saroyan was friends with brothers Joe and John Elia. “One day, when Saroyan hit it big in the literary world, he pulled up to our family compound in a brand new luxury convertible, honking his horn, causing my cantankerous grandfather to walk outside and admonish him for the disturbance,” he adds.

“Saroyan was born in Fresno in 1908, to Armenak and Takoohi Saroyan, Armenian immigrants from Bitlis. After their father’s death in 1911, Saroyan, his brother Henry, and his sisters Zabel and Cosette spent several years at the Fred Finch Orphanage in Oakland, while young widow Takoohi took up menial work in nearby San Francisco. The family was eventually reunited back in Fresno, and Saroyan’s formidable maternal grandmother Lucy (also widowed), who was to be a strong influence on him, joined the household. As he grew up there, an American boy also becoming part of the exiled Armenian tribe, he assimilated the raw material for many of his later stories. He continued his education on his own, supporting himself with various odd jobs.”

“He felt strong ties to his ancestral home, in fact, he visited Bitlis in 1964, the birthplace of his family in Turkey. He presented himself as an American-Armenian from Bitlis,” adds Dennis. “Saroyan appreciated good home-cooked Armenian meals and fine cuisine in the major cities of the world, including New York, Paris, London and Lisbon. But in Fresno, he was guarded when it came to accepting dinner invitations. If he suspected he was being invited to enhance the reputation of his host, he would decline such invitations.”

“Saroyan would inquire around town to find the names of the best Armenian cooks, and would often call and ask to come to dinner. Having heard of my mother Mary’s culinary skills in making Armenian dishes, Saroyan called her one day and invited himself to dinner at our home. Of course, my mother was delighted with his call, as this was an acknowledgement of her mastery of Armenian cooking. Another tradition Saroyan enjoyed was handing out signed copies of his books to old friends or new acquaintances that he liked.”

In retirement, Mary and Joe managed the Marlo Regency Apartments in Northwest Fresno. They traveled extensively in California, Mexico, Western Canada, and the Caribbean, and were happily married for 55 years until Joe passed away in 1991. On October 21, 2017, Mary attended the 120th Anniversary Banquet of the FAPC, and was honored for her remarkable 72 years of faithful membership and service. She served as a president of the FAPC Fidelis Women’s Society, and was a tireless organizer and volunteer who cherished supporting her church community. “Her fine oil and china paintings received several awards at the Fresno District Fair between 1975 and 1985.”

Mary passed away on April 4, 2018, a month shy of her 100th birthday. “My mother lived life until her 100th year, and remained happy while having to endure a loss of mobility, limited vision, and memory decline,” says Dennis. She was preceded in death by her parents, her beloved husband, Joe Elia, and son Allen Elia. Her survivors include son Dennis Elia and granddaughter Ariele Elia.

Here are two of Mary’s favorite recipes:

Keba – Cracked Wheat Meatballs

The combination of lamb, bulgur and fresh produce from the garden are found in many Armenian recipes. This recipe from the kitchen of Ruth Elia of Fresno is one delicious way to prepare these tasty foods.

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 pounds ground lamb
1/2 cup large bulgur
1 bell pepper, finely chopped
1/4 cup crushed dried mint
Salt and pepper to taste
Cayenne pepper to taste
Chopped parsley

PREPARATION:

Put lamb, bulgur, bell pepper, mint, salt, black pepper and cayenne in a large mixing bowl. Knead well for a few minutes, adding water. Shape the meat into balls the size of kofta (3 to 4 inches in diameter). Line the balls of meat in a medium-sized cooking pot, in 1 to 2 layers. Place a dish on top of the keba, and cover with water to about 1 inch over the dish. Cook on the stovetop on medium heat for about 45 minutes to 1 hour. Serve with Armenian rice or bulgur pilaf. Garnish with chopped parsley, if desired. Serves 4.



ARTS & CULTURE

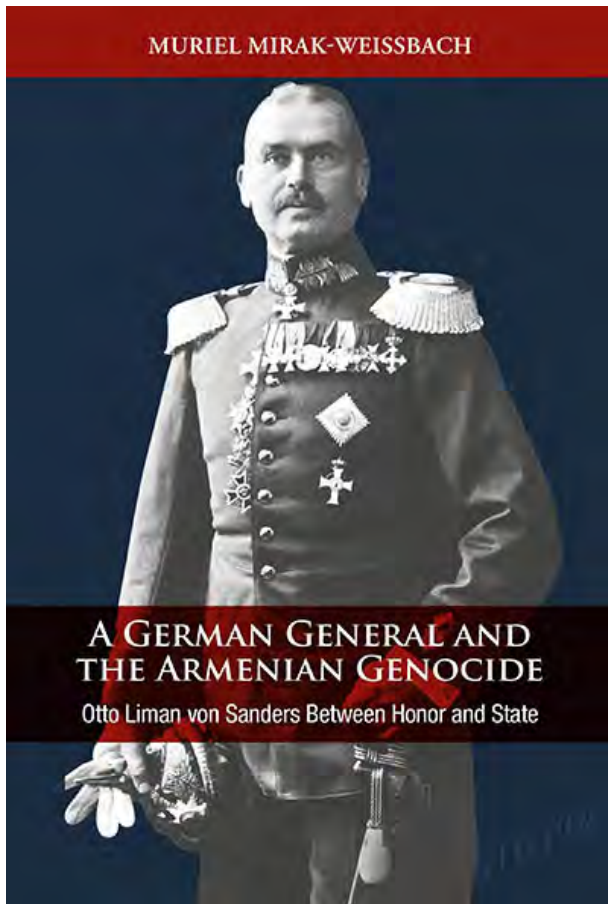
Books

Muriel Mirak-Weissbach Writes New Book On General Otto Liman von Sanders

FRANKFURT — Berghahn books will release a new book this summer by veteran *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* correspondent and historian Muriel Mirak-Weissbach. The book, titled *A German General and the Armenian Genocide: Otto Liman von Sanders Between Honor and State*, will be released in July.

The legacy of the German General, Otto Liman von Sanders, remains highly contested in the history of 20th-century Europe and the Middle East. Noted for leading the 5th Ottoman army's successful defence of the Dardanelles and Gallipoli in 1915, his role in opposing the Young Turks' genocide policy and safeguarding Greeks, Armenians, and Jews is overshadowed by his imprisonment for war crimes in 1919. In this enlightening reassessment of Liman von Sanders' life, Mirak-Weissbach uses previously-unpublished archival materials to uncover new dimensions to this story and, in doing so, explores wider ethical questions concerning the role of the individual in global crises, the nature of morality in military conflict, and the limitations of justice.

Muriel Mirak-Weissbach is a graduate of Wellesley College and a Fulbright scholar, who completed her graduate studies at the State University of Milan. She has pub-



lished articles on politics and culture in the Arab and Islamic world, and on Armenia, as well as essays on literature and philology.

Her recent publications include; *Through the Wall of Fire, Armenia - Iraq - Palestine: From Wrath to Reconciliation* (2013), and *Madmen at the Helm: Pathology and Politics in the Arab Spring* (2012). In 2012 she and her husband established the Mirak-Weissbach Stiftung, a small foundation supporting cultural, educational, and social projects in Armenia.

Robert Matosyan: A Life Dedicated to Armenian Cinema

MATOSYAN, from page 14
Armenpress — as a special correspondent, while also serving as a department head at the *Avangard* newspaper.

From 1969 to 1990, he founded and edited the newspaper *Film* under the Armenian SSR's Council of Ministers' State Cinematography Committee, which later evolved into the Union of Cinematographers. In 1990, building on the foundation of *Film*, he launched *Gegharvest* (Art), the newspaper of the Armenian Republic's Ministry of Culture. The following year, *Gegharvest* gave rise to a video magazine of the same name.

In 1996, Matosyan moved to St. Petersburg, where he contributed to the production of several cultural documentary films. In 2004, together with his sons Samvel and Tigran Matosyan, he founded the Cinematos company in Moscow, producing a num-

ber of documentary films. He returned to Yerevan in 2008 and was instrumental in founding +*Kino* magazine, initially serving as deputy editor-in-chief, later becoming editor-in-chief in 2012.

Over the years, Matosyan has written 15 books and monographs on Armenian cinema and Armenian film professionals, devoting volumes about its eminent figures (Azat Sherents, Henrik Malyan, Frunzik Mkrtchyan, Albert Mkrtchyan, Sos Sargsyan, Levon Atoyan, Rudolf Vatinyan, etc.) and particular subject (for instance, French-Armenian film director Henri Verneul's only visit to Armenia). With more than half a century of dedicated work, he has not merely observed the evolution of Armenian cinema—he has been at its heart. Matosyan's writings are widely regarded as essential reading, particularly for younger generations interested in film and filmmaking.

Armani Receives Golden Kirk Award in Cannes

ARMANI, from page 14

"I would also like to congratulate the Pan-Armenian Federation of Film Producers, its President Hovhannes Galstyan, and its main sponsor, the Gagik Tsarukyan Foundation," she said.

Since 2013, SR Socially Relevant Film Festival New York, and Founding Artistic Director Nora Armani have programmed 795 films from 40 countries, including films from Armenia and the Diaspora. SRFF is present this year at the Cannes Film Festival, at the Pan-Armenian Federation of Producers' stand in the Marché du Film.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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.

MAY 31 — Annual Food Festival 12-6PM Chicken Kebab, Losh Kebab and Kheyma. Cuisine Table, Pastry Table and Jingalov Hatz. Holy Archangels Armenian Church, 1280 Boston Rd., Haverhill.

MAY 18-JUNE 21 — Events at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church.

•Sunday, May 18, 10:30 a.m., with Holy Mass Dedicated to Our Beloved Mothers at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church in Belmont, followed by the Raffle.

•Monday, May 19, Khachkar Café (For Men), at 6:30 p.m., Nishan & Margrit Atinikian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont.

•Saturday, June 7, Jubilee Year Pilgrimage, with departure at 9 a.m. from the church to St. John Paul II Shrine of Divine Mercy, Salem. For tickets email holycrossbostonma@gmail.com

•Saturday, June 21, World Music Day Concert featuring violinist Haig Hovsepian and cellist Dilshod Narzillae, 6 p.m. 200 Lexington ST., Belmont. Reception to follow. For tickets email holycrossbostonma@gmail.com.

JUNE 1 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association will host a Hampartsoum Luncheon cultural program plus entertainment. Program to feature khorovadz (beef, pork and chicken), and mezze, wine, refreshments and dessert. Sunday, 1:30 p.m. Baikar Building, 755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. (Use Norseman Avenue door.) Tickets \$50 for adults, \$35 for students. Children 10 and under free. No tickets at the door. Contact Sossy at 617-281-1647, or syogurtian@comcast.net.

JUNE 2 — St. James Men's Club, dinner, dance 6.15 p.m. mezza, 7 p.m. Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner, \$25 per person, 7.30 to 9 p.m. Monday. Music and dancing, Live Armenian music by Steve Tashjian Middle Eastern Ensemble-Steve Tashjian, John Berberian, Jay Baronian and David Ansbikian. All are welcome, 465 Mt. Auburn Street Watertown.

JUNE 4 – 39th Annual Membership Meeting of the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) with guest speaker Alan Henrikson, Lee E. Dirks Professor of Diplomatic History Emeritus and the founding Director of Diplomatic Studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, speaking on "Educational Diplomacy: An Armenian and American Experience." Business meeting at 7 p.m., guest speaker Dr. Alan Henrikson at 8 p.m., followed by a reception. Free and open to the public. Charles and Nevert Talanian Cultural Hall at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For info, visit www.cambridgeyerevan.org.

JUNE 8 — St. James Armenian Festival – Annual Picnic! Delicious Armenian food, Live Armenian music, children's activities, inflatable slide, and more! Sunday, Rain or shine. Noon-5 p.m. St. James Armenian Church - 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. For more info visit www.stjameswatertown.org/festival or call 617-923-8860.

JULY 2 — St. James Armenian Church in Watertown will host His Beatitude Archbishop Sahak II Mashalian, the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, as he visits the Boston community during his visit to the United States. A community-wide hrashapar service will take place at St. James in the early evening, followed by a reception. All are welcome. Please save the date - full details to follow.

JULY 28 — St. James Armenian Church, 25th Annual Harold Partamian Golf Tournament, Oakley Country Club, rain or shine, scramble format, raffle & silent auction, following golf-cocktails, appetizers and banquet dinner at Oakley Country Club. Monday. Please see church website for full information, church office 617-923-8860

NOVEMBER 21 — AMAA's Boston Child Care Committee presents an evening supporting the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan, Armenia, **FEATURING COMEDIAN KEV ORKIAN. COCKTAILS, DINNER & LIVE AUCTION.** Wellesley Country Club, Wellesley Hills. **SPONSOR BY AUGUST 1, 2025, TO BE LISTED ON THE INVITATION!** (Individual Tickets will commence at a later date). For more info visit: <https://amaa.org/hyemindsboston2025/>

RHODE ISLAND

JUNE 28 — Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenian Evangelical Church and Armenian Music Festival of Rhode Island present 70th Anniversary Concert of Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island. Saturday, 7 pm, Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence. Tickets \$20, children under 12 – free. Gala refreshments following the concert.

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.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

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Why Did the Armenian Government Hire Lobbyists in DC?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

One of the tools used by decision-makers in the United States to influence policies is lobbying (buying influence). This tool is used by both domestic actors and foreign governments through officially registered lobbying organizations in the US. There are two types of lobbying organizations in the US: professional and ethnic.

Professional lobbying refers to lobbying activities carried out by organizations that are specifically created and officially registered for this purpose. Under US law, this information — including the signed contract and services rendered to the client — must be officially registered with the appropriate government agencies to ensure transparency. Such lobbying organizations often employ former legislators and former officials of legislative and executive bodies, since lobbying requires political influence and strong connections with members of Congress, executive officials, and other key decision-makers. Since 2016, foreign states have spent approximately \$6 billion on lobbying in the US, using the services of hundreds of professional lobbying firms.

The second type of lobbying is ethnic lobbying. This operates within a different context and agenda, driven by ethnic lobbying groups within the US. As Zbigniew Brzezinski has noted, among the most effective ethnic lobby groups in the US are Jewish, Greek, and Armenian ones. These groups are well-organized, have clear agendas, and have exerted, and continue to exert, influence on US foreign policy decisions.

For instance, while Turkey and Azerbaijan require professional lobbying firms to achieve their goals, Armenia benefits from an organized Armenian community whose active efforts helped Armenia receive significant aid from the US for many years, whereas Azerbaijan was deprived of such aid for about a decade thanks to the Armenian ethnic lobby's efforts and Section 907. However, there are nuances here.

Since Armenian lobbying efforts are financed by the diaspora community rather than the Armenian government, it is the community that sets the agenda and priorities, and the community's resources are directed toward promoting these goals. For the Armenian-American community, genocide recognition has been a key issue for years. Through persistent efforts, this goal was achieved when both chambers of Congress and eventually President Joe Biden recognized the Armenian Genocide.

On the other hand, initiatives like the unilateral normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations, promoted by the Armenian authorities, have not received the support of the community and its organizations. For nearly three decades, Armenia avoided using professional lobbying firms in the US because the two traditional Armenian organizations — the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Armenian Assembly of America — took on the responsibility of promoting pan-Armenian issues. There were no significant policy goals that the Armenian organizations and Armenia's embassy could not jointly pursue, making external help unnecessary.

Recently, Armenia's authorities signed a service agreement with the US-based professional lobbying firm Mercury Public Affairs. The contract came into force on April 1, 2025, and will remain valid until March 31, 2026. According to the agreement, the Armenian government will pay \$50,000 per month, which is a substantial amount for such services. The lobbying firm commits to defend the interests of the client (the Armenian Embassy in the US) in Congress and the administration; highlight Armenia's geopolitical and strategic importance as a key partner for US regional and global interests in the South Caucasus; develop economic, trade, investment, and technological cooperation between Arme-

nia and the US; position the client as a credible and reliable resource for administration officials when analyzing and discussing relevant issues; and engage the US expert community on topics of interest to the Armenian Embassy (the Armenian government).

It is important to note that the Armenian Embassy did previously sign a contract for lobbying in 2020 with the firm Copper Strategies, from October 30 to November 30, during the Nagorno-Karabakh war. The goal was to assist the embassy in informing the public through US media about the conflict. That service cost \$20,000 and was later extended for another four months with an additional \$24,000.

Given that Armenia traditionally has not needed professional lobbyists, it can be assumed that the current need arises because the agendas of traditional Armenian lobbying organizations differ significantly from that of the Armenian Embassy (government) and the Armenian government and Embassy, perceived as strongly aligned with the Democratic Party, are unable to establish effective connections with President Donald Trump's team.

For comparison, Azerbaijan has long used professional lobbying firms in the US to promote its interests. The Azerbaijani Embassy currently has an active contract with Skyline Capital, signed earlier than Armenia's — on January 1, 2025 — and valid until December 31, 2025. Under this contract, Azerbaijan will pay \$50,000 per month. Its goals are to deepen ties with the US Congress and executive leadership; organize official visits of Congressional

delegations (CODEL) and staff delegations (STAFFDEL) to Azerbaijan; work with both parties in the House and Senate, especially targeting members and staff of the Foreign Affairs, State and Foreign Operations Appropriations, Armed Services, and Judiciary Committees to explore US-Azerbaijan cooperation opportunities; revitalize and expand the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus; identify and engage potential supporters of stronger US-Azerbaijan relations in Congress; and promote trade missions and economic engagement between the US and Azerbaijan.

In addition to this, Azerbaijan also maintains another lobbying contract with the Friedlander Consulting Group, signed by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, valid from February 20, 2024, to February 19, 2025. That service costs \$41,666. According to the agreement, the firm will assist with public relations, media outreach, and other lobbying services to improve US-Azerbaijan relations.

Recently, Azerbaijan has signed some of its largest lobbying deals in connection with the promotion, organization, and media coverage of COP29

(the UN Climate Change Conference) hosted in Azerbaijan. From April to November 2024, Azerbaijan spent over \$5 million on these efforts through contracts between the COP29 Azerbaijan Operations Company and the US lobbying firm Teneo Strategy. Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan lacks influential, well-established community-based organizations in the US. Neither Azerbaijani nor Turkish communities in the US have succeeded in forming structures that can rival Armenian lobbying groups. As a result, Azerbaijan, lacking a strong diaspora, relies on professional lobbying firms to advance its interests. Armenia, on the other hand, has a well-organized lobby but currently chooses not to collaborate with them to promote pan-Armenian interests.

(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.)





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

It is Time to Take Turkey to Court; No Need for More Genocide Recognition

Ever since the Armenian Genocide of 1915, Armenians have fought relentlessly to inform the world about the systematic extermination of 1.5 million Armenians carried out by the Ottoman Empire.

As a result, over 30 countries, several international organizations, and leading genocide scholars have acknowledged the veracity of the Armenian Genocide. After all these acknowledgments, the Armenian Genocide has become a recognized fact — a direct rebuke to Turkey's denialist propaganda. Regrettably, a few major countries, such as the United Kingdom and Israel, have not yet recognized it, not due to ignorance, but out of political expediency and a desire to appease Turkey. Thus, the era of pursuing recognition must be considered over.

The problem is that after decades of Genocide recognition campaigns, Armenians and non-Armenians, including Turkish officials, have come to the wrong conclusion that recognition is the final objective. This is a fundamental misunderstanding. Our real demands are restitution and the return of Western Armenia. Once Turkey realizes that Genocide denial will not prevent Armenians from pursuing these two other goals, Ankara may finally see the futility of its denialist campaign.

Nevertheless, the global Genocide recognition campaign was not in vain. The world now knows the truth about the Armenian Genocide. After 110 years, the Turkish government is still confronted with embarrassing reminders of the heinous crimes committed by its predecessor regime.

However, simply acknowledging the Armenian Genocide and issuing an apology would not heal the wounds or undo the consequences. Armenians still await justice, the restoration of their historic rights, and the return of their confiscated lands and properties.

In 1915, the Ottoman Empire carried out a systematic campaign to uproot an entire nation from its ancestral homeland, depriving survivors of their homes, native lands, cultural heritage, places of worship, and personal properties. A gross injustice was perpetrated against the Armenian people, entitling them, as in the case of the Jewish Holocaust, to legitimate compensation for their enormous losses.

Restitution can take many forms. As a crucial first step, the Republic of Turkey must return all 2,500 Armenian churches to Armenian control, placing them under the jurisdiction of the Istanbul-based Armenian Patriarchate. These confiscated churches, converted into mosques, stables, warehouses, or demolished, must be restored to their rightful owners.

Today's Republic of Turkey — as the successor state of the Ottoman Empire

— should be held legally liable for the Genocide and its continuing consequences. Turkey inherited the assets of the Ottoman Empire, and, therefore, it also inherited its liabilities.

Regrettably, presidential proclamations and congressional commemorative resolutions on the Armenian Genocide have no force of law, and therefore, no legal consequence.

Without waiting any longer — since Armenians have waited over a century, they must pursue legal action through international and national courts, including:

- The International Court of Justice (World Court), where only states have such jurisdiction),
- The European Court of Human Rights,
- U.S. Federal Courts, as well as courts in other countries.

The current Government of Armenia has no interest in filing lawsuits against Turkey on the Armenian Genocide in the World Court, so Armenian-Americans must take legal action themselves. Instead of pushing for another symbolic resolution, they must lobby the House and Senate to extend the statute of limitations, enabling Armenians to file lawsuits based on their material losses caused by the Genocide.

Once the House and Senate pass such a bill, it will then go to the President to be signed by him into law. This legislation would follow the legal framework of existing Holocaust-related restitution laws, such as:

- "The Holocaust Victims Redress Act," enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1998,
- "Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery Act of 2016,"
- California Assembly Bill 2867 signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2024: "Recovery of artwork and personal property lost due to persecution."

Once lawsuits are filed in U.S. courts, they will attract global attention, forcing Turkey to confront its criminal past in a legal arena. The Turkish government's continued denials of the Genocide would then become meaningless.

U.S. courts could issue legally binding judgments requiring Turkey to pay compensation to Armenians for their losses. If Turkey refuses to comply, courts could then order the confiscation of all Turkish government-owned assets in the United States, such as buildings, bank accounts, and planes belonging to Turkish Airlines.

To launch this historic legal battle, Armenians must take two immediate actions:

- 1) Lobby Congress to pass a law allowing these claims,
- 2) Hire top legal experts who specialize in international law.

If Armenians win in court, the recognition debate becomes irrelevant. Any resistance or refusal by the Turkish government to comply with such a US court judgment would create a major diplomatic and legal crisis between Ankara and Washington.

This is how Armenians can finally achieve justice -- not through more recognition, but through courtroom victories.

Armenia, Azerbaijan And Prospects For Peace

By Marie Dumoulin

In a speech on May 9, Armenia's prime minister Nikol Pashinyan hinted at the delicate status of the country's negotiations with Azerbaijan: "Despite all the internal and external provocations [...]. There will be peace." That peace has not seemed so close since the end of the 1980s. But the specter of a new war also looms as near as ever.

The return of Donald Trump to the US presidency saw Yerevan inject a new urgency into its bilateral discussions with Baku. In March, this led the two governments to agree on the text of a peace treaty. But, while the text incorporates some important concessions from Armenia, it does not even touch on the thorniest issues between the two countries. Baku has also introduced new conditions that mean the agreement is unlikely to be signed any time soon.

It appears that Armenia and Azerbaijan are becoming increasingly involved in Middle Eastern dynamics, a development that could make an escalation between them more likely as long as the peace agreement remains unsigned.

The world's no less thorny geopolitical moment creates more risk—for Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also for the EU. It appears that the two countries are becoming increasingly involved in Middle Eastern dynamics, a de-

velopment that could make an escalation between them more likely as long as the agreement remains unsigned. If the EU fails to help prevent such an escalation, the bloc's own neighborhood—and a region that is vital for European energy security and connectivity projects—may remain trapped in its cycle of violence; or even become another playground for proxy confrontation between external actors.

So Near and Yet so Far

Trump likely translates into less American support for Armenia. This is due to cuts in US foreign assistance, but also because the Armenian diaspora in the US does not have strong connections with the MAGA movement. Trump has previous business dealings with Azerbaijan, and the expectation in Baku seems to be that its relations with Washington will thrive in a second Trump term. In anticipation of this, Armenia's government tried to reach a quick agreement with Azerbaijan by accepting two of the latter's key conditions.

First, once the agreement was signed, the EU's border monitoring mission would withdraw. After the 2020 war, the EU had attempted to play an active role in mediating a settlement, deploying its mission on the Armenian side of the border in February 2023 (just a few months before Azerbaijan launched its offensive to take control of Nagorno-Karabakh). The Azeri leadership has long criticized the mission. But many Armenians see its removal as losing their insurance against provocations or an all-out attack, as well as giving up their only mechanism to ensure Azerbaijan does not breach the peace agreement. It is therefore a significant concession that bets on good faith in Baku to uphold the agreement.

Second, Armenia would abandon all legal cases against Azerbaijan in international courts. This has not proven popular in Armenia either. Yerevan's legal claims center around such issues as the protection of the rights of prisoners of war and the Armenian cultural legacy in the region, as well as war crimes that Armenia accuses Azerbaijan of committing during the 2020 war. Dropping such cases looks to many Armenians like legitimizing Azerbaijani narratives and giving up the only trump

card they could use vis-a-vis Baku. This, again, is a significant concession and a potentially risky wager.

Baku, however, has introduced two new demands as conditions for signing the agreement. The first is the formal dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group, which had steered negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh since 1992 with France, Russia and the US at the helm. The Armenian government had signaled openness to this step in the negotiations over the text, with the group having lost relevance since the 2020 war (and then de facto ceasing to function after Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine). The second condition asks for a constitutional revision in Armenia to delete any reference to Nagorno-Karabakh. Pashinyan has suggested such a revision could be on the cards. But, if voters saw this step as imposed from outside, it could create more difficulties for the prime minister domestically.

Indeed, both demands touch on Pashinyan's potential domestic kryptonite: his deliberate choice of Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia's parliamentary election is due to take place in less than a year. With these new conditions, Baku could try to create a dilemma for Pashinyan — accept Azerbaijan's demands despite the domestic risks (and with no guarantee that the agreement would be signed); or reject them and lose the prospect of a peace agreement altogether.

This is not to mention the difficult issues the original text avoids entirely. Nagorno-Karabakh itself, for example, which is not an object of negotiations anymore. Moreover, border demarcation between Armenia and Azerbaijan is negotiated through a parallel process. Pashinyan has already accepted difficult compromises as part of this process. But it could still take years to finalize. Finally, the most difficult issue of opening land communications (notably road and rail links) has been left to future talks.

This includes the connection between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave between Armenia and the border with Iran. Armenia continues to push the "crossroads of peace" initiative, envisioning the reciprocal opening of all communications throughout the region and aiming

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to preserve each country’s sovereignty over its border and infrastructure. Azerbaijan, meanwhile, insists on the establishment of a corridor along the Armenia-Iran border. Such a corridor would give Baku unimpeded access to Nakhichevan and allow it to escape Armenian control. If Azerbaijan fails to achieve this goal through diplomatic pressure, it may be tempted to use force.

To address its perceived vulnerability, Armenia has cultivated new defense partners over recent years. These include Iran, but also such powers as India and France. This cooperation could alter Baku’s calculations on the costs of future military action, also leading it to launch an offensive sooner rather than later if political means seem insufficient.

India has become Yerevan’s largest defence supplier. From the Indian perspective, the development of this relationship was a direct reaction to Azerbaijan’s growing ties with Pakistan, including in the military sphere. Azerbaijan’s support for Pakistan and Armenia’s support for India on the Kashmir issue was mirrored in the respective stances of Islamabad and New Delhi regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

The two countries are also increasingly involved in Middle Eastern dynamics. Azerbaijan is deepening its ties with Israel and has considered joining the Abraham Accords. It has intensified its cooperation with Israel in energy, but also in defense and intelligence: Israel was the source of 69% of all Azerbaijani arms purchases between 2016 and 2020, and Israeli support likewise played a major role in the 2020 and

2023 wars. Azerbaijan is also playing an active mediating role between Israel and Turkey, a development that has prompted concern in Yerevan and Tehran. Armenia, for its part, signed a \$500m deal with Iran in July 2024 for the supply of military equipment, including Shahed drones. It conducted joint military drills with Iran in April 2025.

Rising tensions to the east may therefore result in renewed escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. For example, Armenian foreign policy watchers are concerned that Baku may try to gain support for a deal involving territorial concessions by Armenia in exchange for its support for Israel and the US in pressing Iran—or that Azerbaijan may resort to the use of force against Armenia in the event of a military escalation against Iran.

Still, Armenia and Azerbaijan have a historic opportunity to end a war that has lasted for more than three decades; a conflict that has also increased their dependence on external actors, including Russia. Armenians have reservations about the sincerity of Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev’s intentions to sign the peace agreement. This is due to the new conditions, but also accusations that Azerbaijan has violated the ceasefire as well as its continued aggressive rhetoric. But signing peace with Armenia would offer Aliyev the opportunity to transform the geopolitical outlook of the region and assert the country’s role as a regional power. Europeans should insist on this historic opportunity to use their levers. These come in the form of the EU’s presence on the border and through its connec-

tivity projects and cooperation with both countries. This could all help Europeans incentivize the conclusion of the agreed text for the peace treaty and the normalization of communications in the region.

(Marie Dumoulin is the director of the Wider Europe Programme and this article initially appeared on the European Council for Foreign Relations. This article originally at <https://ecfr.eu/article/the-perpetual-horizon-armenia-azerbaijan-and-prospects-for-peace/>)

New Group of American Peace Corps Volunteers Sworn in

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — U.S. Charge d’Affaires David Allen attended the swearing-in ceremony and administered the oath for the new A30 group of American Peace Corps Volunteers on May 22. This year Armenia will be hosting 18 volunteers in various communities across the country, the U.S. Embassy said in a press release.

The volunteers have successfully completed the intensive 11-week Armenian language and culture training and will depart to various regions and communities in Armenia, where they will be serving for the next two years. The Volunteers will be living with Armenian host families and will be serving their communities by working with English teachers and youth workers. The Volunteers will enrich their communities by supporting students in enhancing their English language skills and aiding young people as they transition from adolescence to become empowered, productive, and civically engaged adults, the embassy said.

“It’s a big day for Peace Corps Armenia and all our partners. Today marks not just another milestone, but a jubilee - a moment of celebration, reflection and deep pride. Today we welcome 18 outstanding new Volunteers to the long legacy of Peace Corps. In just two days, our Volunteers will travel to their towns, cities and villages across Armenia, where they will work with their local partners to inspire students, teachers, and the Armenian youth,” said Peace Corps Armenia Country Director Will O’Roark.

An audience of 250 people attended the event including representatives of the Armenian government, U.S. Embassy staff, current and former Peace Corps Volunteers, families who have hosted Peace Corps Volunteers in their homes, and international and local program partners, etc.



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