

## Turkish Journalist Questioned over Article about Armenian Youth Released after Brief Detention

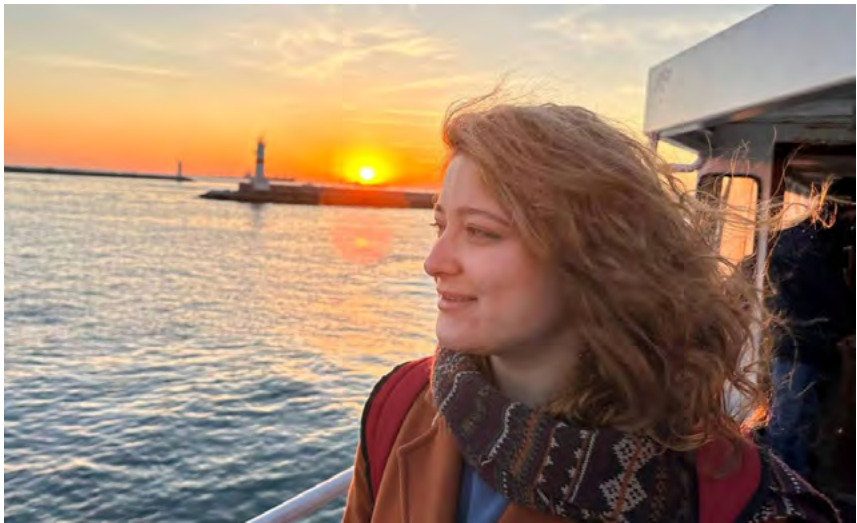
ISTANBUL (Stockholm Center for Freedom) — Tuğçe Yılmaz, an editor at the independent Turkish news outlet Bianet who was detained by police during an identity check in İstanbul on June 4, was released from custody on the same day after testifying to prosecutors about a report on Armenian youth, Turkish Minute reported.

24, 2024, titled, “Young Armenians of Turkey speak: A mourning that has lasted 109 Years,” referring to the mass killings of Armenians in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. Armenians mark April 24 as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, and in her article Yılmaz referred to the mass killings of Armenians as

criminalizes “insulting the Turkish nation” and has been widely criticized by human rights groups for restricting freedom of expression. In her statement to the prosecutor, Yılmaz said that the article was based on interviews with two young members of Turkey’s Armenian community. She said the piece did not contain any language that insulted individuals, institutions or state authorities and denied the accusations against her.

Following her testimony the journalist was released from detention. Writing on the Armenians in Turkey and their mass killings at the hands of the Ottoman Empire is a sensitive issue in Turkey that can lead to the prosecution of journalists, writers and others. Supported by historians and scholars, Armenians say 1.5 million of their people died in a genocide committed under the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Turkey accepts that both Armenians and Turks died in huge numbers as Ottoman forces fought czarist Russia but vehemently denies a deliberate policy of genocide and notes that the term had not been legally defined at the time.

Turkey, which is one of the world’s leading jailers of journalists according to press freedom organizations, dropped to 159th out of 180 countries see JOURNALIST, page 6



Tuğçe Yılmaz

Yılmaz, who was detained at the Kadıköy ferry terminal, was later transported to the İstanbul Courthouse in Çağlayan early on Wednesday to testify to prosecutors. The prosecutors asked the journalist about an article she wrote on April

genocide, a term Turkey categorically rejects. The case file was submitted to the court just two days ago, resulting in charges against the journalist. According to Bianet, prosecutors are investigating Yılmaz under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which

## Pashinyan Demands Armenian Church Head’s Resignation

**By Susan Badalian** YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan demanded the resignation of Catholicos Karekin II on Monday amid growing support for the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church voiced by opposition and public figures, including former President Levon Ter-Petrosian. He said Karekin must leave the church headquarters in Echmiadzin after ten days of vicious attacks which his political enemies claim is coordinated with Azerbaijan.



Former President Levon Ter Petrosian meets Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, Echmiadzin, June 7, 2026

Pashinyan began his social media campaign with allegations that Karekin and many other senior clergymen have had secret sex affairs in breach of their vows of celibacy and must therefore be defrocked. He has been focused on the Catholicos in recent days, saying that the latter must prove the opposite or step down. see RESIGNATION, page 4

## Sargsyan’s Party Again Tries No-Confidence Vote In Pashinyan

**By Shoghik Galstian** YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Former President Serzh Sargsyan’s opposition Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) is making another attempt to put a motion of no confidence in Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his government. Sargsyan’s political allies first floated the idea of ousting Pashinyan in this way in April. But they failed to win over the other, larger parliamentary opposition group, the Hayastan alliance, even after offering to nominate its top leader, former President Robert Kocharyan, as their prime-ministerial candidate.



Senior Hayastan members argued that the two opposition groups lack the votes to even force a debate on the issue in the National Assembly controlled by Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party. Some of them claimed that the long-shot initiative is a ploy designed to undercut Kocharyan. The latter described it as “unserious” and “unrealistic.” The no-confidence vote sought by the HHK added to see SARGSYAN, page 2

## Pashinyan and His Wife Under Fire for Using State Budget for Education Campaign

**By Arshaluys Barseghyan**

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — The Armenian authorities have revealed that the Learning is Trendy education campaign founded by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s wife, Anna Hakobyan, has been funded by the state — an initiative critics say is part of a pre-election strategy. Learning is Trendy is a series of talks mimicking Ted Talks, which was created by Hakobyan as part of the movement bearing the same name, launched in November 2024. The talks have been held since March by Hakobyan’s My Step Foundation, with Pashinyan frequently featuring as a guest speaker in events across the country.

On Friday, June 6, Pashinyan’s



PM Nikol Pashinyan and his wife, Anna Hakobyan

Chief of Staff, Arayik Harutyunyan, revealed that the campaign was being funded from the state budget,

adding that it was a “priority program” for Pashinyan. see PASHINYAN, page 3







ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

US–Armenia Tech Ties Grow

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — US–Armenia cooperation in the field of technology is registering significant growth, according to the US Embassy.

The US Ambassador hosted the leadership of NVIDIA on June 10.

“Ambassador Kvien held an engaging discussion with NVIDIA executives on AI and digital infrastructure initiatives that open new prospects for our two countries,” the statement reads.

The NVIDIA company established a research center in Armenia in April 2022.

Government to Study New Reactor Models

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Authorities are yet to determine the model for a new nuclear power station. A Cabinet minister told lawmakers on Monday, June 9, that the model will be chosen as a result of ongoing studies that will also determine the capacity and funding structure.

“The studies of active nuclear technologies, including modular reactors around the world continue with the purpose of building a new nuclear reactor in Armenia,” Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Davit Khudatyan said at a parliamentary committee meeting on the 2024 budget report.

“For this purpose, the government established last year the Construction of New Atomic Reactor CJSC, which is now in the phase of involving cadres,” he said.

At the same time, the work for modernizing the second power unit of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant and extending it by 2026 are underway.

Garni, Stone Symphony, Urartian Yerevan May Be Added To UNESCO List

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Armenia Zhanna Andreasyan announced that it is planned to include the Garni Temple, the Stone Symphony, and Urartian heritage in Yerevan on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

“For the first time in 29 years, we’ve added a new site to the UNESCO Tentative List — the dragon stones and cultural landscape of Tirin Katar. We will have two more monuments on that list,” Andreasyan said, as reported by Armenpress on June 9.

She noted that after a long hiatus, Armenia is actively working to inscribe its monuments on the World Heritage List.

According to the minister, the initiative is supported through budget allocations and consistent institutional efforts.

Over 50 Trucks Carrying Armenian Brandy Cross Georgia after Weeks-long Obstruction

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — After being effectively obstructed for weeks, 52 trucks carrying Armenian brandy have been allowed to cross the Georgian border into Russia on June 6. Georgia has additionally “promised” to resolve any issues regarding 72 more trucks carrying brandy “within the next five days.”

Armenian Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan announced the update at the Armenian Parliament just days after describing the situation as “very dangerous” for Armenian businesses.

He called the trucks’ crossing “significant progress,” noting that in the previous

two weeks, no Armenian brandy shipments had been allowed to enter Russia through Georgia. Papoyan said that the preliminary agreement would only allow 33 trucks through Georgia, noting the positive development that a total of 52 transited in the end.

Armenian cargo has been subjected to inspections in Georgia for over one and a half months, effectively preventing the delivery of Armenian brandy to other countries through Georgian territory via the Lars checkpoint, the only open border crossing into Russia.

Papoyan said that during a call with Georgian Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Davit Songulashvili

on Thursday, June 5, the latter had “promised” that all 72 Armenian trucks still held up in Georgia would be let through “within the next five days.”

Earlier this week, Papoyan announced that Songulashvili would be visiting on June 6 to offer a “preliminary, so to speak, solution package,” to the blocking of the Armenian trucks.

At the time, Papoyan expressed his intention to “organise meetings in different formats on that day, [...] so that we don’t leave the room until a solution to the problem would be found.”

However, on June 5, Papoyan said that Songulashvili will not be able to visit Armenia to meet with him, and that his deputy minister would visit in his stead on June 6.

On June 6, Economy Ministry spokesperson Lilit Shaboyan told OC Media that Songulashvili’s planned meeting was cancelled because the minister was “overloaded” with work. While his deputy arrived in Armenia to participate in an unspecified event, no official meeting will take place — instead, the negotiations are ongoing.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, Papoyan refrained from commenting on whether the issue had a political context, only saying that he intended to find a solution to the problem.

Armenian brandy-producing and exporting companies staged two protests in front of the Georgian Embassy in Yerevan in May against the ongoing disruptions to their exports, which have lasted around 50 days, according to RFE/RL.

The Georgian Revenue Service claimed in mid-May that “customs control procedures are being carried out as usual. Vehicles are not being delayed.”

Later in May, following the meeting at the embassy, the protesters said that a consul at the embassy had suggested they “sue the Georgians in Georgia.”

AUA Launches Center for Ethics

YEREVAN — On May 22, the American University of Armenia (AUA) hosted the public launch event for the Center for Ethics in Public Affairs (ETICA). The Center is the result of a €2.5 million grant awarded to the University from Horizon Europe’s highly coveted and prestigious European Research Area (ERA) Chair competitive funding. To date, Armenia is the first country in the South Caucasus to receive such ERA Chair grants.

The Center is led by Professor Maria Baghramian, ERA chair and professor of philosophy, with Assistant Professor Dr. Arshak Balayan serving as the deputy director of the Center and project coordinator. The project will conduct its primary activities of research, teaching, outreach to the general public, and academic reform under the theme of “Trust and Hope in a Time of Crises.” ETICA is currently recognized as the number one featured project on CORDIS, the European Union’s official platform for showcasing successful research and innovation initiatives. This distinction marks a significant milestone for AUA and for Armenia as a whole, with the national flag proudly displayed on the site.

Hosted in Manoogian Hall, the public launch featured various guests who introduced the project and its plans. AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian opened the event by emphasizing the relevance of ETICA at this juncture in Armenian and world history: “At a time when societies worldwide, and our Armenian society in particular, are navigating a period of turbulent transformation and facing profound ethical choices, the role of interdisciplinary research has become vital in informing responsible governance, public policy, and societal debates. Our country is courageously forging a new social contract based on democratic principles, while simultaneously tackling very 21st-century problems, including climate change, environmental stewardship, the rise of artificial intelligence, and the abuse of data to proliferate misinformation. To my mind, such efforts, undertaken in the face of so much adversity, exemplify the very best ethical behavior of which humanity is capable. I hope this grant will help build appreciation of this unique moment in history and

Armenia’s part in this struggle.”

Dr. Stephan Astourian, director of the Turpanjian Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), then took the stage to contextualize the role of ETICA within broader contemporary geopolitical and ethical developments. Going beyond learning, the Center, Dr. Astourian highlighted, will teach students how to think. He also mentioned ETICA’s upcoming “International Conference on National Identity in a Time of Crisis,” co-funded by the European Union and organized in partnership with TISS, the Armenian Society of Fellows, and New York University’s Global Institute for Advanced Study, to take place at the end of June.

Next, Baghramian laid out the specific goals of the ERA program, primarily to establish ETICA as a national and regional hub for excellence in research, training, and outreach in ethics in the public and professional arenas. ETICA is based on four academic pillars: Research & Internationalization, Teaching & Training, Public Outreach, and Structural Reforms in Higher Education. These four pillars are supported by the Communication and Management work packages, coled by Chief Communications Officer Narek Ghazaryan and Ani Khandimaryan, respectively, as well as international advice and consultancy provided by Dr. Jenny Knell, research development officer at University College Dublin.

Baghramian continued by reviewing the importance of ethics in human life and specifically in Armenia, which is the only country in the region with a functioning, if imperfect, democracy.

She then introduced Dr. Balayan, who presented Pillar II: Teaching and Training. Among the expected initiatives, he noted the *Handbook of Applied Ethics in Armenian*, which will cover everything from the ethics of war to biomedical ethics; training sessions; and 20 videos on moral philosophy, to be produced in partnership with BoonTV. Following Dr. Balayan’s presentation, Alen Gasparian Amirkhanian, director of the AUA Acopian Center for the Environment, provided a brief overview of ETICA’s successful predecessor in Armenia, Peritia, which empowered locals to engage in open dialogue regarding issues highly relevant to the public.

Sargsyan’s Party Again Tries No-Confidence Vote In Pashinyan

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simmering tensions between the two opposition forces.

Nevertheless, Hayastan’s parliamentary leader, Seyran Ohanyan, announced on Monday that he and the 27 other parliamentary deputies from Kocharyan’s bloc are ready to sign the HHK’s latest motion. Ohanyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that they would like to hold “further discussions” with Sarkisian’s party on the issue.

The HHK’s candidate for the post of prime minister this time around is Davit Hambardzumyan, the mayor of Masis, a small town just south of Yerevan.

Under Armenian law, such an initiative must be supported by at least 36 members of the 107-seat parliament before it can be debated on the parliament floor. This means that the HHK, which controls only six parliament seats, still needs two more votes.

One potential source of those votes is two parliament deputies who were expelled from the Civil Contract party late last year. But they made it clear over the weekend that they will not back the HHK motion.

Even if the opposition manages to include the issue on the parliament agenda, it will have to win over at least 18 pro-government deputies in order to oust the government. Sarkisian and his political team have still not clarified exactly how they think they can trigger so many defections.





## ARMENIA

# New China Ambassador Wants Closer Ties with Armenia

By Davit Mamyan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Armenia, Li Xinwei, in a recent interview, emphasized the importance of further strengthening the multi-faceted Armenian-Chinese relationship. He expressed confidence that cooperation between the two countries will continue to develop across various areas and levels in the near future.

Speaking with Armenpress in late May, Li highlighted that Armenian-Chinese relations are built on the principles of mutual respect and mutual benefit, despite the geographical distance and cultural differences between the two nations.

Speaking about the current state of bilateral ties, the ambassador noted the strong shared values and perspectives that unite Armenia and China.

“Although our two countries have cultural differences and are geographically

distant, we still share many commonalities. Both nations have ancient and rich histories, diverse cultures, complex languages, and aspiration for peace,” he said.

“The governments of both countries aim to continuously improve the lives of their citizens. This common goal can serve as a solid basis for building effective cooperation,” Li added.

He also emphasized that the recently launched direct Yerevan–Urumqi flight will significantly contribute to strengthening bilateral ties. According to the ambassador, cooperation has expanded in recent years across several areas, including legislative bodies, political parties, education, science, trade, and the economy. “This is a very solid foundation for the development of our future relations, and we should work to further deepen this cooperation,” he stated.

Li recalled recent high-level contacts between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, including their meetings during the BRICS Summit and events commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War in Moscow, as having given a new impetus to bilateral relations.

Addressing the prospects for further collaboration, the ambassador acknowledged that although the current trade turnover between Armenia and China remains modest, there is considerable potential for growth.

“In particular, fields such as artificial intelligence, the digital economy, and other



Ambassador Li Xinwei

innovative sectors are very promising. I see Chinese electric vehicles and smartphones in Armenia, which is very encouraging.

“I am aware of Armenia’s plans to develop an Academic City and establish a dry port in Gyumri. China has extensive experience in these areas, and I believe we will see cooperation in these directions as well,” he said.

On educational and cultural ties, Ambassador Li expressed enthusiasm over the growing interest among Armenian youth

in the Chinese language and educational opportunities in China. He reaffirmed his commitment to promoting people-to-people exchanges, especially among younger generations.

“I am ready to foster active engagement and communication between young people. I am confident that Armenian-Chinese relations will continue to grow in various fields and at multiple levels. I am personally committed to contributing to this cause,” the ambassador concluded.

## Pashinyan and His Wife Under Fire for Using State Budget for Education Campaign

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Harutyunyan did not provide details on how much money had been allocated to the program since its launch months ago.

RFE/RL reported that the authorities had told them that only events involving the Prime Minister had been financed by the Prime Minister’s Office. They added that Pashinyan had participated in ‘almost all major meetings of this campaign, sometimes even during working hours, delivering speeches and answering questions’.

The fact that the events, which had been promoted as an initiative of the Hakboy-an-led foundation, had been funded by the budget raised concerns among government watchdogs, with some describing it as a pre-election strategy.

According to RFE/RL, the audiences of the talks mostly consisted of teachers. Audience members have to register in order to attend the talks, and their phones and other video recording devices were reportedly collected during the event.

“In fact, these are disguised pre-election meetings and campaigns for the benefit of their personal ratings, political force, and party — [all funded] by our taxes and the [state] budget,” Gor Madoyan, a government critic and a columnist wrote on Facebook, adding that the state budget “should serve all of us, not the narrow interests of a small group through closed meetings and limited publicity format.”

Madoyan also questioned if the funding was legal.

On Saturday, June 7, a day after the funding sources of the campaign were made public, Armenian Parliamentary Speaker Alen Simonyan announced that the country’s next parliamentary elections would be held on June 7, 2026.

“The countdown has begun...,” wrote Simonyan in a post on Telegram.

Previously, Pashinyan revealed that the Family Podcast, hosted by him and Hakobyan, and launched in late 2024, was produced and filmed by a crew working for the government.

“Even though it’s a family podcast, it’s also part of the Prime Minister’s activities. The same operators who cover my visits, government sessions [etc.], also film the podcast, edit it in the same way, and so on,” Pashinyan said during a press briefing in January 2025.

## Jewish Extremists Spit on Armenian Church Wall in Jerusalem

By Anahit Voskanyan

JERUSALEM (Panorama.am) — A video emerged from Jerusalem on Tuesday, June 10, showing a group of young Jewish men spitting on the wall of an Armenian church, highlighting the ongoing tension



A still from the video of Israeli extremists spitting on Armenian Church wall

surrounding the Armenian Quarter and the longstanding struggle over the Cows’ Garden property.

The Armenian community in Jerusalem has been engaged in a principled, consistent and round-the-clock defense of the Cows’ Garden, a piece of land in the Armenian Quarter. The controversy began back in November 2023, when armed individuals accompanied by trained dogs

attempted to seize the area from Armenians based on a controversial deal. The agreement in question, currently under judicial review, allegedly transfers control of Armenian Patriarchate properties to developers to demolish them and build a hotel in the area.

The already tense situation risks further escalation due to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s attacks on the Armenian Apostolic Church, including his vague and disgraceful allegations of pedophilia and breaches of the vow of celibacy against clergymen. Some fear that his statements might embolden Israeli groups to justify their attacks on the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

## Armenian Prisoners’ Statements Distorted in Baku Court, MP Warns

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The testimonies of Armenian prisoners are being distorted at the sham trials held in Baku, opposition lawmaker Tigran Abrahamyan has warned.

In a social media post on Monday, June 9, the Pativ Unem faction MP highlighted a recent incident involving former Artsakh parliament speaker David Ishkhanyan, who had asked the court for access to the transcripts from the May 24 and 26 hearings, but the judge had responded evasively.

“Why is this important? The entire judicial process involving Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan is heavily marred by falsifications — from testimonies to translations,” Abrahamyan wrote.

“Several prisoners have told their families that statements attributed to them in Azerbaijani media reports are inaccurate. In many cases, their remarks have been distorted or completely reversed.”

Abrahamyan believes Ishkhanyan’s demand to review the transcripts is an attempt to expose these falsifications and prevent future misrepresentations.

“Nonetheless, our compatriots continue their struggle under extremely unequal conditions,” the MP stated, once again calling for the release of all Armenian prisoners.

Concerned about the incident, this reporter reached out to activist Bedig Giragosian, who confirmed that he and others rushed to the church as soon as they learned what had happened. He identified the perpetrators as Jewish extremists, or as he put it, “children.”





## ARMENIA

# Armenian, Iraqi Presidents Discuss Boosting Ties

NICE, France (Armenpress) — Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan has met with his Iraqi counterpart Abdul Latif Rashid during a visit to France.

Khachaturyan's office said the presidents discussed the Armenian-Iraqi bilateral relationship.

The sides highlighted the need for deepening political dialogue and cooperation, the presidential office said in a readout.

The presidents discussed regional developments, issues pertaining to peace and stability, stressing the importance of developing effective partnership and mutual trust.

President Khachaturyan and his Iraqi coun-

terpart attached importance to the expansion of bilateral economic partnership, especially in trade and investments and other areas of mutual interest. In this context the need for launching direct flights between Yerevan and Baghdad was underscored as an important tool for boosting political, economic and tourism ties.

The presidents also discussed the possibilities for intensifying the work of the intergovernmental commissions to promote cooperation and develop practical grounds for implementing new initiatives.

The COP17, to be held in Armenia next year, was also discussed.



President Vahagn Khachaturyan, left, with his Iraqi counterpart Abdul Latif Rashid

# Pashinyan's Motorcade Blamed for Another Car Accident

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Three people, including a police officer, were injured on Sunday, June 8, when their cars collided on a highway in Armenia's southern Ararat province just seconds after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's motorcade raced through it.

The Armenian Interior Ministry released a short video of the incident meant to absolve Pashinyan of any blame for the accident that reportedly occurred inside a local village. It shows one car making a U-turn, hitting another and then bumping into a road police vehicle, parked a few meters away, moments after the passage of the long

motorcade.

All three injured persons were hospitalized from the scene. Two of them were discharged from the hospital on June 9.

The ministry insisted that the accident was not caused by Pashinyan's limousine, vehicles of his bodyguards accompanying it or police cars that led the motorcade or regulated traffic along its way.

Tigran Keyan, who leads a non-governmental organization protecting motorists' rights, put the blame on the road police, saying that they did not act professionally enough.

"The escorting team didn't do its job properly, and as a result we are having this problem," Keyan told RFE/RL's Armenian

Service.

Some prominent lawyers critical of the Armenian government also disputed the official version of events. One of them, Yervand Varosyan, said the Interior Ministry video only "proved that the accident occurred as a result of the highway being hastily blocked for Nikol's convoy."

"No impartial person can claim that Nikol Pashinyan's deadly motorcade was unrelated to the accident that fortunately ended with [non-fatal] injuries this time around," wrote another lawyer, Raffi Aslanyan.

Aslanyan represents the family of Sona Mnatsakanyan, a 28-year-old pregnant woman who died in Yerevan in April 2022 after being hit by a police car leading Pashinyan's motorcade. The car's driver, Major Aram Navasardyan, was arrested twice by investigators but freed by courts despite being charged with reckless driving and negligence. The Armenian police did not fire or

even suspend him.

Navasardyan continues to deny the accusations during his ongoing slow trial that began in November 2022. His lawyers blame the young woman for her death.

Mnatsakanyan's parents and other relatives have repeatedly alleged a high-level coverup of the accident. They pointed to the investigators' failure to prosecute any members of Pashinyan's security detail.

Nor has there been a formal inquiry into the disappearance of what would have been a key piece of evidence: the audio of radio conversations among security personnel that escorted Pashinyan that day. Security services claim that the conversations were not recorded due to a technical malfunction.

Pashinyan's limousine and six other cars making up his motorcade drove past the dying woman moments after the accident. The prime minister never publicly commented on her death.

# Pashinyan Demands Armenian Church Head's Resignation

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In his latest Facebook post, Pashinyan charged that Karekin cannot head the ancient church because he had broken his celibacy and fathered a child. He pledged to "prove that in the necessary format." Pashinyan also urged followers of the church to "unite around the agenda of liberating the Seat of the Catholics with love and in a Christian manner."

The church's Mother See in Echmiadzin did not immediately and officially react to what looked like a call to occupy it. But the head of its museums and archive, Father Asoghik Karapetyan, expressed concern over what he called violent actions "openly planned at the state level."

"Are you leading the people to a clash?" Karapetyan asked the government. "Do you want to fill the courtyard of the Holy Church with blood?"

"In the Armenian Church, there are no Judases who would sell out and accompany a mob against the Lord's Anointed One," he wrote.

Archbishop Mikael Ajapahyan, the outspoken head of the church diocese encompassing Armenia's northwestern Shirak province, said the church is prepared for any scenario. "The Church continues its mission serenely," Ajapahyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Meanwhile, Armenian opposition leaders strongly condemned Pashinyan's latest statement and reaffirmed their support for Karekin. Artur Khachatryan, a lawmaker from the opposition Hayastan bloc, claimed that Pashinyan may be planning to send supporters to Echmiadzin to commit "hooligan acts" there. Other opposition figures urged their supporters to be ready to

converge on the church headquarters and defend the Catholicos.

Karekin received a major boost on Saturday, June 7, when former President Ter-Petrosian, who rarely makes public appearances, visited him to voice what the Mother See described as "full support for His Holiness" and strongly condemn Pashinyan's "unconstitutional encroachments" against the church. Pashinyan reacted furiously to the visit, branding Ter-Petrosian "the founder of the practice of election fraud" in Armenia.

The accusation is extraordinary given the fact that Pashinyan played a key role in a protest movement led by Ter-Petrosian in 2007-2008. He famously declared at the time that the ex-president, who had led Armenia to independence in 1991, "always turns out to be right."

Pashinyan's detractors say that he launched his campaign against the church at the behest of Azerbaijan. They argue that it followed Azerbaijani officials' renewed criticism of the Armenian Church that has blamed Pashinyan for the fall of Nagorno-Karabakh and denounced his unilateral concessions to Baku.

Karekin addressed late last month an international conference in Switzerland on the preservation of Karabakh's Armenian religious and cultural heritage. He again accused Azerbaijan of committing ethnic cleansing in Karabakh and illegally occupying Armenian border areas. He also denounced the ongoing "sham trials" of eight former Karabakh leaders captured during Azerbaijan's September 2023 offensive. He described them as hostages.

By contrast, Pashinyan and other Armenian officials now refrain from openly

# RA, UNESCO Discuss Support for Displaced Artsakh Armenians

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan met with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay to discuss support measures for Armenians forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, on June 10.

Mirzoyan noted that despite current challenges, Armenia — as a member of UNESCO's Executive Board — continues to actively participate in implementing initiatives aligned with the organization's mandate.

The two exchanged views on ongoing activities within various UNESCO structures and examined prospects for Armenia-UNESCO cooperation, particularly in light of Armenia's upcoming hosting of the COP17 conference in autumn 2026. The potential relevance of UNESCO's extensive experience and tools applicable in this field was underscored.

At the end of the meeting, as a gesture of gratitude, Mirzoyan awarded Audrey Azoulay the Order of Friendship, granted by the President of Armenia, in recognition of her significant contributions to strengthening Armenia-UNESCO relations and upholding humanitarian values.



UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, left, with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan





INTERNATIONAL

# COP17 in Armenia Will Serve as a Crucial Milestone, Mirzoyan Says

NICE, France — The 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Armenia will serve as a crucial milestone, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said at the “From Mountains to Oceans: Preserving Biodiversity Across Environmental Boundaries for a Sustainable Future” conference held on the sidelines of the UN Ocean Conference in Nice.

The side event was jointly organized by Armenia and France, as the host countries of COP-17 and the UN Ocean Conference, respectively.

“It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this high-level event organized by Armenia as the host and President of the upcoming Biodiversity COP17 and France as the host and co-president of the Third UN Ocean Conference, organized in the beautiful city of Nice. This is one of many occasions when Armenia and France are joining their forces to ensure that the global environmental agenda remains at the forefront of our international efforts and we jointly advance the objective of addressing such challenges as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and other issues which have brought the current generation to the verge of a planetary crisis,” Mirzoyan said in his opening remarks.

“Armenia with the trust of the international community and with the support of its partners, is putting its best efforts for holding a very successful and result oriented COP17 next year, which we hope will help reverse the tide of biodiversity loss and ensure a more sustainable, greener and nature friendly path for development,” he said.

“What we need is a revisited comprehension that environmental challenges are not isolated phenomena – they affect all of us whether up in the mountains or deep in the seas, and we need to reconsider our attitude towards nature itself and renew our commitment to environmental action,” he added.

“In this context, COP17 in Armenia will serve as a crucial milestone. It will bring together Parties, governments, public and



Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan at the biodiversity conference

private stakeholders, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities in a global review of our collective and individual achievements in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. I am using here the word “achievements”, but we all understand that apart from achievements, this review is going to help us assess and identify the gaps, shortcomings, and needs as well as do our best to devise the most efficient and comprehensive solutions that could help us remain on track in achieving our biodiversity commitments while ensuring the attainment of sustainable development goals,” Ararat Mirzoyan stated.

“The discussions and deliberations here at the Ocean conference are extremely relevant to the COP17 objectives, as ocean biodiversity is an essential pillar of global biodiversity preservation. We are glad that such undertakings as negotiations over a legally binding instrument against plastic pollution or the most recent breakthrough of adopting the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, the BBNJ, are boosting the global efforts in that regard. I would like to thank France for being a strong voice be-

hind the two processes,” he noted.

“We are actively engaged in both processes and have just yesterday signed the BBNJ, to show that although Armenia is a landlocked developing country, with predominantly mountainous terrain, we share the common concern of preserving marine biodiversity as a common heritage and an important environmental domain. We also believe that the protection and preservation of marine ecosystems are closely linked to what we are doing inland and in the mountains because in many ways they impact marine ecosystems,” the Armenian Foreign Minister said.

“This high-level discussion is precisely about identifying the deep interconnections between marine and terrestrial ecosystems and their interrelated vulnerabilities and considering the ways of ensuring more comprehensive and integrated approaches to global environmental issues,” he noted.

“I look forward to hearing and learning from the high-level panelists about their valuable thoughts and recommendations on these matters, with a hope that this will contribute to leveraging the outcomes of this discussion in support of the Biodiversity COP17 in Armenia next year,” Mirzoyan concluded.



The speakers and organizers of the conference

## Hebrew University Hosts Conference Dedicated to Armenian Genocide

JERUSALEM — On Monday, June 9, a commemorative evening and academic conference dedicated to the Armenian Genocide took place at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem informs.

Representatives of the Armenian Patriarchate included Bishop Koryoun Baghdasaryan, Rev. Vazken Alekryan, Rev. Aghan Gogchyan, and Rev. Sion Takoushyan. Kevork Nalbandian represented the Armenian community of Jerusalem, and Arman Hakobyan, Ambassador of Armenia to Israel, was also in attendance.

The keynote address on behalf of the Patriarchate was delivered by Chancellor Gogchyan.

The evening concluded with a reception honoring the attendees.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Catholicos Visits UAE

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — On June 9, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, traveled to the United Arab Emirates on a one-day visit, the Mother See reported.

During his stay, Catholicos Karekin II was scheduled to meet with the Board of Trustees of the Holy Nazareth Church and the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy in Calcutta. The discussions will focus on matters concerning the institution’s activities and community life.

### Zakharova: Russia Recognizes Karabakh as Part of Azerbaijan

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Assistant to the President Vladimir Medinsky’s comments on Karabakh should not be taken out of context, clarifying that he was referring solely to historical and sociocultural aspects.

According to Zakharova, “Russia officially recognizes Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan,” as reported by TASS.

“The reference was solely to the tragedy of armed conflict. One should not extract nonexistent assertions from the context or reorder words to create a completely different meaning,” Zakharova emphasized.

Earlier, Medinsky, who leads Russia’s delegation in negotiations with Ukraine, had said in an interview with RT that if the Ukrainian conflict ends along the current front line without achieving “real peace,” the region will turn into a “huge Karabakh,” describing it as a “disputed territory between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

That remark sparked official discontent in Baku, as portraying Karabakh as a disputed territory reportedly caused “regret and astonishment,” according to Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesman Ayhan Hajizadeh.

### Azerbaijan and Turkey Launch Joint Military Drills near Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Azerbaijani and Turkish troops have started joint military exercises in Nakhichevan, Varuzhan Geghamyan, a geopolitical strategist and regional security expert, has warned.

“While Armenia’s de facto leader is attacking the Armenian Apostolic Church as a national institution, Azerbaijan and Turkey have launched two military drills – Unshakable Brotherhood 2025 and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 2025 – right under our nose, in Nakhichevan,” Geghamyan wrote on Telegram on Tuesday, June 10.

He stressed that the exercises highlight the pressing national security challenges facing Armenia. “This is exactly what Armenia’s leader should be dealing with. It’s the only national priority that truly matters,” he stated.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Turkey's State Broadcaster TRT May Have Violated US Foreign Agent Law

By Abdullah Bozkurt

STOCKHOLM (Nordic Monitor) — Turkey's state-run broadcaster, Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu (TRT), widely regarded as the primary propaganda arm of the ruling Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), may have submitted false information in its latest mandatory disclosure under the US Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). This misrepresentation could expose the organization's Washington, D.C., director, Enes Adli, to serious legal consequences, including fines and potential imprisonment.

In a filing dated May 21, submitted as part of TRT's periodic reporting obligation following its 2019 designation as a foreign propaganda outlet by the US Department of Justice, the broadcaster claimed it had not engaged in political activities on behalf of a foreign principal.

The statement, signed by TRT's Washington director, appears to contradict the network's well-documented alignment with Erdogan's ruling AKP government's foreign policy objectives and ideological stances, particularly those aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, designated as a terrorist organization by both the US and the EU.

Under Section 1(o) of FARA, "political activity" encompasses any action intended to influence US government agencies or the American public in regard to US domestic or foreign policy, or to the political or public interests of a foreign government or political party. TRT's conduct appears to squarely fall within this definition.

As a broadcaster operating in multiple languages, including English via TRT World, the state-controlled network consistently promotes the Turkish government's viewpoints to a global audience, including the American public. Its editorial content often mirrors the rhetoric and policies of President Erdoğan, who consistently expresses an anti-West stance in public speeches, frequently bashes US and Euro-

pean leaders and threatens to attack neighboring Greece.

For instance, TRT's editorial stance on Hamas — which President Erdogan describes as a resistance movement rather than a terrorist organization — clearly illustrates how Turkish state broadcasting promotes the talking points of a foreign leader. In recent years Erdogan has escalated his rhetoric against Israel, a trend that began well before the October 7 Hamas attacks and has continued since. He has even labeled Israel a national security threat, provided sanctuary to Hamas leaders in Turkey and facilitated financial support for the group's operations.

Erdogan and his Islamist associates' pro-Hamas and anti-Israel diatribes have been repackaged under the guise of journalism and transformed into soundbites and footage by TRT.

TRT frequently avoids characterizing Hamas attacks as acts of terrorism. Instead, its reports frame these actions as responses to Israeli occupation or military aggression, often describing them as "clashes" or "exchanges of fire." In opinion and analysis segments, TRT World regularly features contributors who express sympathy toward Hamas and promote narratives consistent with Ankara's geopolitical messaging.

Given this pattern, TRT's denial of political activity in its FARA disclosure raises significant legal concerns. By contrast, China's state broadcaster, CGTN — similarly classified under FARA — openly acknowledges its engagement in political activity on behalf of a foreign government.

This isn't TRT's first attempt to sidestep FARA requirements. Initially, the network resisted registration altogether, claiming editorial independence despite overwhelming evidence of direct government control over its management, editorial stance and reliance on taxpayer funding. In 2019 the Department of Justice ultimately compelled TRT to register, ensuring public awareness of its foreign affiliations and political motivations.

A review of TRT's FARA filings reveals a persistent lack of transparency. Omissions, incomplete explanations and misleading statements about the broadcaster's activities suggest a pattern of non-compliance. Under US federal law, false statements in such disclosures constitute a criminal offense, punishable by up to five years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000 per count for individuals — potentially more for organizations.

The individual most at risk appears to be TRT's Washington bureau chief Adli. According to his LinkedIn profile, he has served in this capacity since November 2023, though the FARA filing claims he assumed the role on October 1, 2024. Adli, whose background is in finance and contract management at TRT, now represents the broadcaster in the US and oversees its operations in the US.

FARA disclosures also reveal that TRT spends more than \$1 million annually on its US operations. In the past six months alone, its headquarters in Ankara transferred \$548,000 to fund the DC office.

The expense sheet also shows that TRT paid \$50,000 to Saltzman & Evinch, a law firm that lobbies for the Turkish government and represents its embassy in Washington in legal matters.

In a separate FARA filing dated January 26, 2025, Saltzman & Evinch reported earning \$50,000 from the Turkish Embassy between July and December 2024. The firm has a standing \$1.5 million contract with the embassy. Among its notable alumni is Rumeysa Kalın Karabulut, daughter of Turkey's intelligence chief, Ibrahim Kalın. She previously worked at the firm as a law clerk and has been employed by TRT in Turkey since 2019.

The Wall Street Journal has previously reported that the Turkish government used Saltzman & Evinch to gather intelligence on Erdogan critics residing in the US.

The FARA filings also reveal that TRT manager Adli is handsomely compensated by US standards. According to the records,

he earns \$135,000 annually, in addition to healthcare and other benefits — the bulk of which was funded by Turkish taxpayers. By comparison, average journalist salaries in the Washington, D.C., area range from \$60,000 to \$90,000, according to data from the job platform Indeed.com. Adli's compensation puts him on par with some of the highest-paid journalists in the US.

TRT, which employs roughly 10,000 people, enjoys a substantial budget drawn largely from mandatory licensing fees — known as bandrol taxes — imposed on nearly all electronic goods sold in Turkey, including televisions, radios and computers.

In 2023 TRT's total revenue reached 21.14 billion Turkish lira. A staggering 86.3 percent — roughly 18.24 billion TL — came from bandrol fees, while only 13.7 percent came from advertising and other sources. This marked a steep rise in the reliance on taxpayer-derived funding compared to 2022, when bandrol income accounted for 80.1 percent of the total. Advertising revenue, meanwhile, declined from 17 percent in 2022 to 13.7 percent in 2023.

TRT also previously benefitted from surcharges on electricity bills, which had provided 40 to 50 percent of its income between 2003 and 2015. This revenue stream was legally abolished in 2023, prompting the government to significantly increase licensing fees to offset the loss.

According to a 2024 report by the Turkish Court of Accounts, a government fiscal watchdog, TRT's expenditures rose by 90.9 percent in 2023, reaching 14.24 billion TL. Of this, 7.79 billion TL was allocated to outsourced services and benefits, often channeled to government-aligned production firms.

Critics argue that TRT has strayed far from its mission as a public service broadcaster and now operates as a de facto extension of the Erdogan administration, functioning more like a propaganda outlet for the ruling party than an independent media

## EU Accession Could Resolve Armenia's Economic But Not Security issues, Says Swedish Legislator

By David Mamyan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A Swedish lawmaker has lauded Armenia's recent EU moves, emphasizing however that the country's possible accession to the bloc could resolve its economic but not security-related problems.

"It's very good that these steps are being taken, it is very important," Arin Karapet, a member of Sweden's Riksdag, the country's parliament, representing the Moderate Party from the Stockholm Municipality constituency, told Armenpress during the Yerevan Dialogue 2025 forum last week when asked about Armenia's EU aspirations, particularly the recently adopted EU bill.

"There's a long path towards EU membership, reforms must be made for EU standard compliance, the economy must be diversified. Armenia is landlocked, and it's important also in terms of logistics. As much as Armenian goods or production are attractive or affordable, they can't access the EU market if they don't match EU standards," he added, emphasizing that Armenia's culture is closer to the EU than its neighbors.

"For example, in terms of education, it would be great to have at least one EU-standard university in Armenia, where European students would come to study. It is very important that Armenia has been taking steps towards the EU. But by join-



Arin Karapet

ing the EU you won't resolve your security problems, you will resolve economic issues, educational issues, issues pertaining to standards, roads, manufacturing and so on, but security issues are another matter," the MP said.

Karapet, an Armenian by ethnicity, was asked to comment on the developments in the South Caucasus and the likelihood of a swift signing of the Armenian-Azeri peace treaty, given the two parties have already finalized the terms and Yerevan has reiterated readiness to ink the document as soon as possible. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has been stalling the process by making preconditions.

"I don't know when or if the agreement will be signed, but I would like to say this, indeed, the issue of security is a very serious matter in Armenia, and I wouldn't want

to downplay the issue. I think now Armenia is in a hybrid war. I don't think Azerbaijan would want a new war with Armenia now. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev is a dictator who inherited power from his father. He needed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to retain power in Azerbaijan. Now, unfortunately, we [Armenians] have lost Nagorno-Karabakh, as a result of which 120,000 Artsakhtsis left it. Now, if we look at the situation realistically, if, for example, the road to Nakhichevan were to be highly important for Azerbaijan, they would have captured it during the 44-Day War, because back then the Armenian military was weakened. Now, in post 44-Day-War, Armenia has been able to acquire new armaments from India, France, reforms are underway in the military, albeit slowly, but reforming or creating an army anew is very difficult. The military is the most sophisticated institution. Sweden, which is 6th or 7th globally in terms of arms industry, needs 5 to 10 years to implement reforms in its army. Sweden produces virtually all types of weapons, aircraft, ammunition, tanks, it only doesn't produce air defense systems and instead buys it from the US. If Sweden needs 5-10 years for military reforms, imagine how long Armenia would need. And I'd say now Armenia is making the right steps. Azerbaijan is engaged in a hybrid war because it owes to Russia and Türkiye, and this is a big game where Armenia is caught in the middle. I don't know

what conditions exist, but I really think that peace is needed. And I am truly happy that Armenia is a democratic country," Karapet said.

He lauded Yerevan Dialogue forum for its significance in terms of bringing together professionals and experts from around the world.

### Turkish Journalist Released after Brief Detention

JOURNALIST, from page 1  
in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in early May.

Turkish authorities frequently use broad counterterrorism laws and insult charges to prosecute members of the press.

"Bianet," which stands for "Independent Communications Network," was established in January 2000 by a group of journalists. The platform, which focuses on human rights in Turkey, is mainly funded by a Swedish organization.

The news outlet is among the few outlets in Turkey that is not under government control.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Marks the 110th Anniversary with International Conference

YEREVAN — The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI) in Yerevan commemorated the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with a groundbreaking three-day international conference. Titled “A Century of Armenian Genocide Studies: Scholars Reflect on Legacy, Explore New Horizons,” the conference took place from May 29 to 31.

More than 50 scholars from Armenia, Turkey, Poland, Israel, Sweden, Lebanon, Canada, Germany, Brazil, Australia, and the United States participated in the conference. Representing a wide range of disciplines — including history, political science, law, anthropology, literature, and digital humanities — the participants brought diverse perspectives to the evolving landscape of genocide studies. The conference provided a vital platform not only to reflect on the development of Armenian Genocide scholarship over the past century but also to engage with unresolved historical, ethical, and methodological questions. By fostering dialogue across national, disciplinary, and generational lines, the event helped shape a forward-looking research agenda, reaffirming the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in advancing the field.

The conference opened with a series of welcoming remarks emphasizing the moral and scholarly imperative of sustained research on the Armenian Genocide — particularly in the face of ongoing denial, geopolitical challenges, and the global urgency of prevention.

“This conference aimed to critically assess Armenian Genocide studies as an academic discipline,” said Dr. Edita Gzoyan, director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute. “We sought to revisit and honor the foundational work of early scholars who built the groundwork for this field, while also evaluating the progress made to date, identifying unanswered questions, overlooked areas, and envisioning a more inclusive and interdisciplinary future. One of our key goals was to outline future trajectories for the field, including deeper integration with digital humanities, comparative genocide research, and interdisciplinary studies. The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute remains committed to fostering rigorous scholarship, preserving memory, and serving as a global hub for academic collaboration and innovation in genocide studies.”

## Reconstructing a Century of Knowledge

The first day of the conference opened with Panel One, which focused on the development of Armenian Genocide historiography and the establishment of institutional frameworks. Prominent scholars including Raymond Kévorkian, Bedross Der Matossian, Armen Marukyan, and Stephan Astourian offered critical reflections on the trajectory of genocide studies, tracing its emergence in both Western academia and Armenia, the vital contributions of Armenian institutions, and the persistent thematic and methodological gaps in the field. These discussions reaffirmed the need for continual reevaluation of archival practices, scholarly priorities, and models of public engagement. Anna Ohanjanyan presented the newly established research group at AGMI dedicated to the study of Late Ottoman society, transformations, and historical violence, outlining its interdisciplinary mission and future directions.

Panel Two centered on early documentation efforts. Mihran Minassian and Boris Adjemian have both examined the foundational role played by Aram Andonian and institutions like the Nubar Library in Paris. Speakers also emphasized how Armenian newspapers and individual memoirists helped shape the initial narratives of the genocide, spotlighting lesser-known survivor-documenters such as Garabed Kapigian and the underutilized archives of Gevorg Mesrop.

Panel Three delved into the intricate relationship between memory, archives, and oral history. Shushan Khachatryan, Arman Khachatryan, and Manuk Avedikyan examined the evolution of oral history in the context of the Armenian Genocide. The panel featured also comparative insights from Holocaust studies, such as Sharon Kangisser Cohen’s work on testimony, and innovative research on archival memory from the perpetrator’s perspective, as presented by Hazal Halavut. The panel underscored oral history’s significance as both a source and a methodological tool, highlighting its unique ability to weave together narrative, trauma, and historical truth. Armen Marsoobian and Catherine Masud explored the use



Panel at the AGMI International Conference

of visual storytelling as a powerful medium for genocide education and public engagement.

Panel Four concluded the first day with a focus on witnessing and humanitarianism. Presentations brought attention to previously underexamined figures such as Leopold Gaszcyk, Marzped and Heinrich Militonian as well as community-led initiatives by Armenians in Artsakh aimed at supporting genocide survivors. These contributions highlighted the indispensable role of rescuers, aid workers, and intellectuals in alleviating suffering and preserving human dignity amidst catastrophe.

## Expanding Horizons: New Approaches and Lived Legacies

Day two of the conference opened with Panel Five, which showcased innovative and cross-disciplinary approaches to Armenian Genocide studies. From the ethical and regulatory implications of generative AI in genocide representation (Narek Poghosyan), to ecological frameworks (Samuel Dolbee), localized microhistories (Suren Manukyan) and casual frameworks (Henry Theriault), the panel revealed how new methodologies are reshaping scholarly understanding of both the causes and consequences of genocide.

Among the standout presentations was “The Madagascar Plan: Armenian Case” by Edita Gzoyan and Aram Mirzoyan, which examined the little-known Armenian resettlement proposals of the 1920s. Their research demonstrated how ideologies of demographic engineering circulated globally in the early 20th century, drawing provocative parallels with later resettlement schemes such as the Nazi “Madagascar Plan.”

Panel Six turned to the enduring legacy of genocide in shaping trauma, memory, and identity within post-genocide Armenian communities. Topics ranged from comparative studies of memory transmission in Brazil to re-readings of April 24 commemorations and in-depth analyses of intergenerational trauma in diasporic settings. Collectively, the presentations illuminated the psychological, linguistic, and cultural dimensions of inherited trauma.

Additional contributions explored symbolic and psychological modes of survivor expression. Tehmine Martoyan analyzed the “language” of genocide survivors through the lens of victimology, while Gevorg Vardanyan and Narine Hakobyan examined the memorialization of the Hamidian massacres among Armenian Americans—linking early episodes of violence to broader narratives of identity formation and the ongoing imperative of genocide recognition and prevention.

Panel Seven, dedicated to the intersection of gender and genocide, addressed the complex dynamics of sexual violence, displacement, and resistance. Elyse Semerdjian drew powerful parallels between Armenian and Indigenous experiences of gendered violence, while Mariana Boujikian examined the enduring effects of gender-based trauma in the Armenian diaspora of Brazil. Roy Knocke highlighted the often-overlooked humanitarian contributions of women in the late Ottoman Empire, and Inesa Stepanyan provided a compelling comparative analysis of women’s resistance during the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust—emphasizing both common patterns and the specific forms of agency that emerged in different historical contexts.

## Contextualizing the Armenian Genocide Globally

The final day of the conference opened with Panel Eight, which focused on the ideological and political

roots of genocide. Hamit Bozarslan explored the continuities between Hamidian authoritarianism and contemporary Turkish nationalism, shedding light on the persistent structures of repression and exclusion. Other presentations offered critical demographic and legal insights—Arpine Bablunyan presented demographic shifts of Western Armenians before the genocide, Robert Tatoyan analyzed varying death toll estimates through meticulous demographic research, while Mehmet Polatel examined post-war restitution efforts and their limitations. Hilmar Kaiser provided a detailed case study of the Trabzon deportations from the perspective of the Ottoman state, highlighting the bureaucratic and political logic behind genocidal policies.

Panel Nine broadened the discussion through comparative genocide studies, drawing connections among the Armenian, Assyrian, and Jewish genocides. Vincent Duclert, David Gaunt, and Melanie O’Brien engaged with complex legal, theoretical, and ethical questions, including Raphael Lemkin’s concept of genocide and the evolving pursuit of justice. Keith David Watenpaugh introduced the concept of “social death” to analyze the long-term effects of genocide on Armenian children, revealing the deep ruptures in identity, kinship, and belonging caused by systemic violence.

The conference concluded with Panel Ten, which returned to the themes of survival and reconstruction. Presenters highlighted the resilience of Armenian survivors and the reconstitution of communal life in new contexts. Discussions focused on the resistance of survivors, urban transformation of Yerevan, the establishment of new neighborhoods (Lusine Amirjanian), and the preservation of Turkish-language oral traditions by Western Armenians, an often-overlooked yet vital dimension of cultural continuity. Viki Tchapanian’s paper focused on the Arabic sources on the Armenian Genocide, another aspect that needs to be explored more. These presentations affirmed not only the profound loss experienced during and after the genocide but also the enduring capacity for renewal, adaptation, and cultural preservation.

Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska–Lincoln), who participated in the conference, remarked: “This has been one of the most intellectually stimulating and professionally rewarding conferences I have attended throughout my academic career. The breadth of topics covered, along with the depth and sophistication of the arguments presented by scholars from around the world, clearly marks a new and exciting phase in the study of the Armenian Genocide.” He went on to commend the host institution and its scholars: “I am particularly impressed by the extraordinary research being conducted by the scholars at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute. Their rigorous, interdisciplinary approaches—not only rooted in archival scholarship but also incorporating fields such as memory studies, cultural anthropology, and gender studies—demonstrate the Institute’s growing importance as a global hub for Armenian Genocide Studies. The dedication, innovation, and collaborative spirit on display here have set a new standard for future scholarly work in this field.”

## A Renewed Commitment to Justice and Truth

The conference concluded with reflections from both organizers and participants, underscoring the importance of honoring the scholarly legacy built over the past century while embracing innovative, comparative, and intersectional approaches for the future. A recurring theme in the discussions was the critical role of Digital Humanities in broadening the academic scope of Armenian Genocide Studies, enabling new methods of analysis, visualization, and engagement. Visits to the Armenian Genocide Memorial and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin further anchored the conference’s intellectual dialogues in spaces of profound national and spiritual significance, reinforcing the inseparable link between memory and scholarship.

At a time when genocide denial and historical revisionism continue to pose challenges, the conference affirmed that Armenian Genocide Studies must remain a vibrant and evolving interdisciplinary field—one that not only commemorates the past but also contributes meaningfully to global conversations on justice, human rights, and the prevention of mass atrocities.





# Community News

## Belmont Man Accused of Hatchet Attack On Motorist Faces Judge

BOSTON (CBS Boston) — The man accused of attacking a car with a hatchet in Boston last month appeared in court on June 5 for a dangerousness hearing.

Andrew Oprian, 27, of Belmont, began wiping tears from his eyes while the prosecution showed shocking video of him taking a hatchet to someone's car in an alleged fit of road rage.

It happened on May 17, and now he faces charges of assault with a



Andrew Oprian, 27, of Belmont appears in court for a dangerousness hearing after he was accused of attacking a car with a hatchet. (CBS Boston)

dangerous weapon and destruction of property.

Video shows the victim's car crashed into a pole on Commonwealth Avenue in Brighton. The victim told police he was driven off of the road.

WBZ learned in court that Oprian was part of a similar incident in 2021.

He has been seeing a psychologist off and on since then. That man, Dr. Eric Brown, testified that Oprian was diagnosed and hospitalized with bipolar disorder, and that at times he does not recognize what he has done.

Dr. Brown says Oprian is on numerous medications but has been resisting it in recent years. He says last year, Andrew's friend passed away and ever since he has been in manic states. Brown testified that at times Oprian is getting in skirmishes with people.

The prosecution says in March, Oprian told police he was in the mafia and had an AK-47. Brown told the court Oprian is only a risk to himself or others if he isn't on medication and in routine therapy to stay on it.

Oprian was scheduled to be back in court on Monday, June 9, and the judge is expected to have an answer.



A still from a video showing Oprian's attack



## ACYOA Juniors Enjoy Hye M'rtsoom Weekend in Watertown

WATERTOWN — ACYOA Juniors from 14 Diocesan parishes enthusiastically gathered at St. James Church over Memorial Day weekend, for the 47th annual Hye M'rtsoom ACYOA Juniors Sports Weekend. The St. James ACYOA Juniors chapter hosted 226 of their peers, together with adult chaperones.

On Friday evening, participants gathered with anticipation as buses began to arrive from out of town to kick-off the weekend, which had the theme "Let's Make History," selected by the ACYOA members.

Saturday's events began with a morning service and welcoming words from parish pastor Fr. Arakel Aljalian and Youth Minister Maria Derderian, followed by a day of sports competitions, including basketball, volleyball, and individual sports.

Opportunities for fellowship continued throughout the weekend, including a service project where participants prepared blessing bags for donation to a local shelter.

Evening events on Saturday and Sunday gave the participants opportunities to enjoy fellowship, dancing, and a trophy ceremony to celebrate the tournament's victors. Participants, host families, chaperones, and volunteers gathered for breakfast on Monday morning before returning home with new friends made and new memories formed.

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## Maranci Among Five Named as Harvard College Professors

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (*Harvard Gazette*) — Five faculty members were awarded a Harvard College Professorship for excellence in undergraduate teaching, in fields ranging from high-dimensional geometry to comparative politics. Hopi Hoekstra, Edgerley Family Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, announced the recipients on May 6. They are Christina Maranci, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies, Denis Auroux, Herchel Smith Professor of Mathematics; Michael Smith, John H. Finley Jr. Professor of Engineering and Applied Sciences; Karen Thornber, Harry Tuchman Levin Professor in Literature and Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations and Yuhua Wang, Ford Foundation Professor of Modern China Studies.

Maranci, an art historian with a focus in pre-modern Armenia, likes to begin her classes with images — perhaps a 7th-century Armenian manuscript depicting the Annunciation, or photographs from fieldwork in Eastern Turkey — and let her students first experience the image, then learn to understand it.



"One of the wonderful things about working with art and visual culture is that you can really confront them with things before they know what they are, and they just look," Maranci said. "Then you teach them to ask questions about what they're looking at. For me, it's a really helpful way of teaching and it also promotes curiosity."

Maranci's area of expertise falls at the intersection of art, architecture, and material culture of medieval Armenia. She teaches courses on all aspects of Armenian culture and history, from liturgical textiles to art and literature.

For Maranci, teaching is a "whole-body" experience. She doesn't read from notes, choosing instead to walk around the room as she lectures, welcoming questions and drawing individual students into lively, public dialogue.

She vividly recalled her own undergraduate struggles — grappling with material that seemed easily understandable to her peers. That experience, she said, informs the way she teaches today.

"I really like to talk them through things," Maranci said. "I'm putting myself in their shoes and I want to break things down in a way that makes everybody feel that they can learn this stuff. Even when it's obscure 7th-century Armenian Church architecture, at bottom it's all knowable, and that's something I try to get across."





COMMUNITY NEWS

General Theological Seminary Confers Honorary Degree on Primate

On May 26, Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Theology degree from the General Theological Seminary (GTS), the leading Episcopalian seminary in the country, with a long history of collaboration with the Armenian Church.

GTS President Ian Markham conferred the degree on Bishop Parsamyan during a Baccalaureate Evensong and Blessing of Graduates service in the seminary’s historic Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Honored alongside the Primate was Bishop Jeremiah Williamson, the new Episcopal Bishop of Albany.

Diocesan Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian, St. Nersess Seminary Dean Fr. Mardiros Chevian, and St. Vartan Cathedral Vicar Fr. Davit Karamyan accompanied the Primate.

Bishop Mesrop called the ceremony “a deeply humbling and memorable moment for me. The Armenian and Episcopal churches share a long and meaningful bond. Over a century ago, in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, it was the Episcopal Church that first opened its



Diocesan Primate Mesrop Parsamyan at the ceremony

doors to Armenian survivors arriving in America. They not only welcomed our people but also offered us the opportunity to celebrate the first Armenian badarak in America within their sanctuaries. That legacy of compassion and ecumenical

solidarity continues to inspire us today.” He added: “I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Dean, faculty, trustees, and entire GTS community for this great honor. To stand in that historic chapel, where generations have been formed in faith,

and to feel the embrace of friendship from our Episcopalian brothers and sisters was truly moving. “May our churches continue to walk together in faith, bearing witness to the healing love of Christ in a broken world.”

Firefighter Who Battled Eaton Fire May Be Paralyzed after Motorcycle Crash

By Jory Rand

PASADENA, Calif. (KABC) -- Just months ago, he battled the Eaton Fire, helping to save lives and homes. Now, the community is rallying behind a Pasadena firefighter in his time of need after an off-duty accident left him severely injured.

According to loved ones, Armen Hagopian -- a firefighter paramedic from Pasadena Fire Department Station 36 -- was involved in a serious off-duty motorcycle crash on May 20.

When friends and family got the call that Hagopian was severely injured in a motorcycle crash, they thought the worst.

“Your mind just goes straight to, like, ‘Is he dead?’ You know? My heart dropped,” said Hagopian’s cousin, Ani Khachoyan. “To see him in that condition is really dif-

ficult.”

Thankfully, he wasn’t dead, but Hagopian did suffer a severe spinal cord injury. After the crash, he’s paralyzed from the waist down with limited sensation, and his fellow firefighters say there’s “no indication that his condition will improve.”

“It hits you hard, you know? Most of the time when you see us at emergencies, we keep our composure when it’s out in the public. We’re trained for all these situations, but when it’s one of your own, it just drives a little different,” said Raffy Bitchakdjian, the president of Pasadena Firefighters Local 809.

Members of his Station 36 family have rallied around Hagopian’s family and girlfriend.

“We’ve been by his bedside pretty much since the occurrence,” Bitchakdjian said.

“We actually just saw him today, and he was in so much better spirits... having his therapist give him so much encouragement, and I saw him smile today, so I was super excited about that,” Khachoyan said.

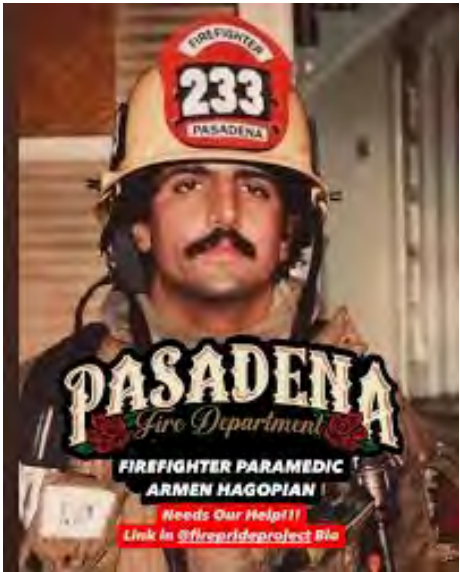
Hagopian’s friends and family say he has the right personality to stay positive during his recovery.

“Armen is honestly the kind of guy that comes by the station, definitely is a fun day. He’s a big jokester. He’s got a good heart, hard worker,” Bitchakdjian said.

“He’s so funny. He’s so positive. He’s such a hard worker, that I have no doubt that he’s gonna fight. Whatever he has to do, he’s going to do it,” Khachoyan said.

Loved ones set up a GoFundMe dedicated to supporting Hagopian’s medical care and recovery. So far, it’s raised nearly \$85,000, but this is going to be a long and likely very expensive journey ahead.

“Armen has dedicated his career to selflessly protecting others. Most recently, he spent days battling the flames of the Eaton



fire, risking his life to save the lives and homes of many in our community,” loved ones wrote on the GoFundMe page “Now, it is our turn to rally around him and support him in any way we can.”



Holy Trinity Armenian Church Elects Parish Council

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Holy Trinity Armenian Church recently conducted its Parish Council elections in May. Six members were elected to serve two-year terms joining the 5 remaining on the council. They are, front row (L to R): Anoush O’Connor (Secretary), Gregory A. Kolligian, Jr. (Chairman), Fr. Vasken Kouzouian (Pastor/President), William Melkonian (Vice Chairman), Kevork Atinizian II (Treasurer); Back row (L to R): Paul Jamgotchian (Advisor), Alla Belubekian (Advisor), Margarit Gevorkyan (Advisor), Suzanna Soukiasian (Advisor), Ara Dermovsessian (Advisor), Richard Diranian (Asst. Treasurer). Not pictured is Armen Skenderian (Asst. Secretary).

Racine’s St. Hagop Church to Hold Annual Picnic on June 29

RACINE, Wis. — On Sunday, June 29, St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church will hold its annual Armenian (“Madagh”) Picnic at Johnson Park, 6200 Northwestern Avenue, in Racine. St. Hagop’s has held their traditional picnic or “Madagh” since

1938. The word “Madagh” means offering and goes back to the time of Abraham who was willing to offer his only son, Isaac, to God to prove his love, faith and obedience to the Lord. When God witnessed this testimony, He asked Abraham to spare his son and offer a ram instead.

The blessing will be officiated by Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America. From 10:30 am - 5:00 pm, the public is invited to attend the picnic featuring traditional Armenian food. From 1-5 pm, live Armenian music will be performed by the Mideast Beat for everyone’s listening and dancing pleasure. Also, traditional Armenian dances will be performed by the Chicago Hamazkayin Sardarabad Dance Ensemble.

Tickets are also available for a cash raffle, with the raffle drawing at 4 pm. There is no admission charge to this event.

St. Hagop Armenian Church is located at 4100 N. Newman Road, Racine.



Pictured here in this 1940s photo are two church members, one of which has been identified as Mr. Margos Shahninian (right) serving the traditional “Madagh” stew and bulgur pilaf to Mrs. Armenouhi Bagdasarian.





## COMMUNITY NEWS



# Detroit Hosts the 2025 ACYOA Assembly & Sports Weekend

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — Over the Memorial Day holiday, some 200 Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Seniors and Armenian young adults from across the Eastern Diocese gathered for the 2025 ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend, hosted by the ACYOA Seniors of St. John Church in Southfield, MI.

Presiding over the General Assembly and witnessing the weekend was the Primate of the Eastern Diocese, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan.

The weekend kicked off on Friday, May 23, with the 2025 ACYOA General Assembly, where 42 ACYOA chapter delegates representing a dozen parishes, plus ob-



ing, for the Divine Liturgy. Bishop Mesrop was the celebrant and delivered an inspirational sermon, with many of the weekend attendees participating on the altar, in the choir, and among the congregation. The service concluded with the installation ceremony for the new ACYOA Central Council.

A brunch prepared by the St. John Women's Guild followed services, before athletes and spectators moved to St. John Church's Recreation Center for the sports finals.

Sunday evening began with a special ACYOA Alumni reception featuring lavish mezze and time to mingle



servers and clergy, came together to conduct the business of the ACYOA, reflect on the past year of ministries, hold elections, and engage in meaningful discussions.

Additionally, a presentation was made to discuss the importance of recruitment and the many opportunities for young adults to explore educational opportunities at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

## ACYOA Central Council Elections

Newly elected to the 2025-2026 ACYOA Central Council are Peter Bogosian (secretary), Lori Dorian (ministries and outreach), Shahe Der Torossian (ministries and outreach), and Alex Madajian (alternate). Remaining on the Central Council are Mara Najarian (chair), Alisha Panthier (vice chair), Dn. Garen Megrdochian (treasurer), and Sarah Tavitian (communications).

The ACYOA Central Council expressed gratitude to outgoing members Ani Misirliyan, Jackie Russell, and Andrew Yenicag for their many years of dedicated service to the ACYOA and the Armenian Church.

In addition to Bishop Mesrop and host parish pastor Fr. Aren Jebejian, clergy attending the General Assembly and Sports Weekend included Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, Fr. Hratch Sargsyan, Fr. Abraham Ohanessian, and Fr. Andreas Garabedian.

During the General Assembly's Primate's Luncheon,

ACYOA Central Council presented its annual awards to individuals and chapters for their service and dedication to the youth organization and to the Armenian Church.

## Motor City Social Events

On Friday evening, young adults gathered at Fifth Avenue in Royal Oak for billiards and dancing to the music of DJ Esso, in anticipation of Saturday's sports competition.

Saturday morning, athletes boarded buses early to head to a local high school for a full day's schedule of sports competitions that included Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, Co-Ed Volleyball, Pickleball, Backgammon, and various e-Sports. In an authentic expression of Midwest hospitality, participants were treated to breakfast, lunch, and snacks throughout the day.

After a brief respite at the hotel, everyone headed to the Little Caesars Arena Biergarten downtown Detroit for a lively Saturday evening of dancing, with music by the Nigolian Band.

The pews of St. John Church were filled with ACYOA Seniors from across the Eastern Diocese on Sunday morn-



and reminisce, before the doors opened for the ACYOA Awards Dinner and Banquet. The Hamazkayin Dance Ensemble took center stage before the ballroom floor filled with dancers enjoying music from the Yerakouyn Band and DJs MKay and Esso.

Participants departed on Memorial Day energized for further involvement in the life of the Armenian Church among their home parishes.

The ACYOA Central Council congratulates St. John Church's 2025 ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend Committee, the parish ACYOA Seniors, and the Detroit-area parish community for their fruitful efforts in organizing the weekend. Special appreciation is extended to the steering committee composed of Fr. Aren Jebejian, Paul Andonian, Lisa Mardigian, Mara Najarian, Talia Oknayan, Armen Arslanian, and Celene Philip.

(All photos by Mano Baghajajian)







COMMUNITY NEWS

2025 ACYOA AWARDS

**ACYOA Seniors Chapter “A” Award:**  
St. James Church, Watertown, MA

**Sam Nersesian Service Award:**  
Yn. Lucine Sabounjian, Holy Resurrection Church, New Britain, CT

**Gregory Arpajian Leadership Award:**  
Maria Panthier, St. Gregory the Illuminator Church, Chicago, IL

**Very Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Melkonian Award:**  
Rev. Fr. Hratch Sargsyan, St. Gregory of Narek Church, Cleveland, OH

**Rev. Fr. Haroutiun and Yn. Patricia Dagley Award:**  
Paul Andonian, St. John Church, Southfield, MI

\*\*\*

2025 ACYOA SPORTS COMPETITION

**Outstanding Sportsmanship:**  
Michael Rose  
Sarah Babikian

**Co-Ed Volleyball:**  
Chicagoland ACYOA  
Runner Up: Holy Martyrs ACYOA, Bayside, NY

**Women’s Basketball:**  
St. John ACYOA, Southfield, MI  
Runner Up: Chicagoland ACYOA, IL

**Men’s Basketball:**  
Chicagoland ACYOA  
Runner Up: St. John ACYOA, Southfield, MI

**Pickleball:**  
Celene Philip & Michael Armen Kadian  
Runners Up: Peter Crane & Michael Nersesian

**Backgammon:**  
Tadeh Derstepanian  
Runner Up: Andrew Yenicag  
Mario Kart:  
Eric Trimble  
Runner Up: Nick Sarafian

**Super Smash Bros:**  
Andrew Boskovich  
Runner Up: Christian Khachian



ACYOA Juniors Enjoy Hye M’rtsoom Weekend in Watertown

2025 Hye M’rtsoom Award and Sports Winners

INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION

- Beginner Tavloo  
1st Place: Maria Sargsyan – Watertown, MA  
2nd Place: Sona Abrahamyan – Framingham, MA  
Beginner Chess  
1st Place: David Stepanian – Providence, RI  
2nd Place: Narek Khanjyan – Cambridge, MA  
Advanced Tavloo  
1st Place: Rafael Kazazian – Fair Lawn, NJ  
2nd Place: Raffi Garibian – Cheltenham, MA  
Advanced Chess  
1st Place: Vahag Gyulnazaryan – Cambridge, MA  
2nd Place: Stephen Gregory – Cambridge, MA  
Girls Ping-Pong  
1st Place: Perri Simonian – Wynnwood, PA  
2nd Place: Nina Asatrian – Fair Lawn, NJ  
Boys Ping-Pong  
1st Place: Shant Kazazian – Fair Lawn, NJ  
2nd Place: Armen Sharoyan – Wynnwood, PA

TEAM SPORTS

- Girls Basketball  
1st Place: St. Leon – Fair Lawn, NJ  
2nd Place: Sts. Sahag & Mesrob – Wynnwood, PA  
Boys Basketball  
1st Place: Sts. Sahag & Mesrob – Wynnwood, PA  
2nd Place: St. Leon A – Fair Lawn, NJ  
Volleyball  
1st Place: St. Leon B – Fair Lawn, NJ  
2nd Place: St. Leon A – Fair Lawn, NJ  
3-Point contest – Boys  
1st Place: Jacob Topakbashian – Sts. Sahag & Mesrob, Wynnwood PA  
3-Point contest – Girls  
1st Place: Grace Yacobe – Sts. Sahag & Mesrob, Wynnwood, PA  
Sportsmanship Awards  
Boys: Christian Diaz – St. James, Watertown, MA  
Girls: Christina Hovnanian – Holy Trinity, Cambridge, MA  
Overall Champion  
St. Leon – Fair Lawn, NJ







COMMUNITY NEWS

# COAF Raises \$400,000 to Build New Sports Complex at its SMART Center in Armenia

NEW YORK — The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) announced on June 4 the successful completion of its 2025 Spring Appeal campaign, raising over \$400,000 to build a new sports complex at the COAF SMART Center in the rural region of Lori, Armenia. This doubles the original goal of \$200,000 set upon the launch of the appeal in early April.

COAF received an outpouring of generosity from hundreds of donors around the world, as well as community and philanthropic partners. These funds will allow COAF to significantly expand its

original plans for the facility, which will now include: A FIFA-regulation soccer field, named in honor of Vahe and Anni Bedian; a dedicated basketball and volleyball court, named after the Armen and Gloria Hampar Family Foundation and a new playground and recreational area, named after Focus on Children Now (FCN).

Joining these anchor donors is the JHM Foundation, which was instrumental in providing essential support to the project’s success.

Once complete, the multi-use complex

will serve children from 30 rural communities, offering a safe and welcoming space to build confidence, foster teamwork, and enjoy active play.

“We know that sports are essential to childhood development,” said Liana Ghaltaghchyan, executive director of COAF. “The fact that we were able to elevate our vision to new heights is thanks to our incredible community. Our supporters transformed many futures this Spring.”

“This is an investment in Armenia’s youth,” added Dr. Garo H. Armen, Founder and Chairman of COAF. “Ev-

ery contribution reflects a shared belief that children, regardless of where they are born, deserve opportunities to grow, dream, and thrive. We are deeply thankful to our community for bringing this vision to life.”

The new complex will be located on the campus of the COAF SMART Center in Lori, which offers afterschool programming for more than 1,700 young students from across the region, every week.

For more information on this and other COAF initiatives, or to support COAF’s mission, visit [www.coaf.org](http://www.coaf.org).

## OBITUARY

### Njdeh F. Yaghoubian Pioneering Iranian-Armenian Immigrant Engineer

LOS ANGELES — Njdeh F. “Jack” Yaghoubian, a civil engineer known for his pioneering work in earthquake protection systems, died on May 29, 2025. He was 91.

Born on August 8, 1934, in Tehran, Iran, Yaghoubian was the son of Hagob and Arashalous Hagobian (Yaghoubian), both survivors of the Armenian Genocide who met in an orphanage. Yaghoubian’s insightful memoir, *...And Then I Met the Getty Kouros* (2014), is dedicated to his parents.

Raised in a close-knit Armenian community in Tehran, Yaghoubian was active in the Armenian Youth Cultural Organization (later Ararat), eventually becoming a scout leader.

Yaghoubian used to say that he was born to be an engineer, and he convinced his parents to support his education in the United States. In 1957 he headed off to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to study structural engineering. Writing with wit and nostalgia about his early years in the US, Yaghoubian relates the shock of communal showers, amazement at the tea bag and confusion over the “hot dog” — experiences familiar to many immigrants — and how he took them in stride.

His studies coincided with the launch of the Soviet Sputnik satellite, which in-

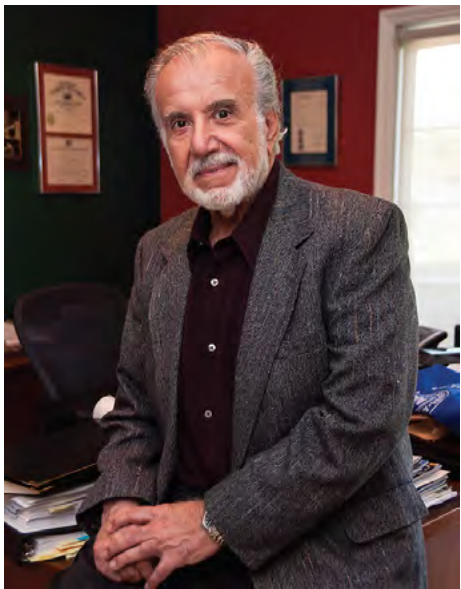
tensified the US focus on engineering education. He specialized in geotechnical, environmental, and structural engineering, particularly reinforced concrete design.

After graduating, he returned to Tehran, accepting a local engineering position at a modest salary compared to foreign engineers. Recognizing his potential, the Dutch government awarded him a postgraduate fellowship to study in Europe.

In 1965, during a family trip to the US, a series of serendipitous events led him to San Francisco, where he was hired by Dames & Moore (D&M), the premier geotechnical and environmental engineering firm in the world. Over 18 years, he contributed to major infrastructure projects worldwide: power plants, refineries, dams, offshore platforms and berthing facilities, airports, highways, high-rise buildings, and subway transit systems. Career highlights included:

Introducing the first slurry trench system in the US for the California Bank headquarters in San Francisco — a method later used at the World Trade Center.

Preparing California’s first successful Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a cross-state oil and gas corridor.



Museum, Yaghoubian was also involved with the design and construction of the renowned Blackhawk vintage car museum in California.

Based on the success of this new technology, Yaghoubian was asked to evaluate the fragmented Getty Kouros dating to 530 BC — “Kouros” being the ancient Greek marble statues of male nudes.

His ingenious invention of an earthquake base isolation system for fragile antiquities, combined with a mechanical joint system, made it possible for the Getty Kouros to stand again after 2,500 years. News of the conservation breakthrough at the Getty spread quickly and museum staff was dispatched around the world to make presentations.

Yaghoubian considered his art preservation technology among his most important achievements, and that inspired the title of his memoir.

Njdeh Yaghoubian is survived by his widow, Lilit Marzbetuny Yaghoubian; son David N. Yaghoubian; daughter Christina Hillman (John) Dahlberg; grandchildren Matt, Grant, and Daniel Hillman; sister Rita Bagdasarian; stepsons Vahe (Zarui) Marzbetuny and Zareh (Armine) Marzbetuny; and step-grandchildren Davit, Ava and Ella Marzbetuny.

### Taguhi Ambarjyan Pioneering Computer Scientist, Devoted Grandmother

BELMONT, Mass. — Taguhi Ambarjyan of Belmont passed away unexpectedly but peacefully at home on June 2, 2025. She was 76 years old.

Taguhi was born in Yerevan, Armenia on March 19, 1949, to the late Karapet and Mariam (Injeyan) Ambarjyan — survivors of the Armenian Genocide who courageously repatriated to Armenia from Bulgaria.

Raised in a home filled with resilience, culture and deep faith, Taguhi inherited a strong sense of purpose and compassion that guided her life.

Taguhi is survived by her daughters, Lusine and Elen Galajyan, and their husbands, Vigen Sargsyan and Edgar Manukyan of Belmont. She was the grandmother of Tamara, Maria and Hasmik Sargsyan, and Gregory Manukyan. She was the wife of the late Grigor Galajyan, and a sister to Haroutioun Ambarjyan of New York, Margaret Ambarjyan of Yerevan, and the late Petros Ambarjyan. Taguhi also leaves behind many nieces, nephews, extended family members, and friends whose lives she touched deeply.

In her early years, Taguhi was among the first to enter the field of computer science, with a career as a software engineer during the Soviet era. Her intellect and determination earned the admiration of colleagues and peers. Later in life, Taguhi dedicated



herself wholeheartedly to her family, especially to the upbringing of her grandchildren, nurturing them with unconditional love, wisdom and grace. Her home was a sanctuary of warmth, Armenian traditions and the enduring values of kindness, learning and service to others.

Funeral services were held at St. James Armenian Church, Watertown, on Thursday, June 5. Interment was private. In lieu of flowers please consider memorial donations to St. James Armenian Church or to the Zinapah National Foundation for Servicemen Insurance

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# USCIRF Hearing on Azerbaijan Highlights Lack of Religious Freedom and Destruction of Armenian Heritage

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) held a virtual hearing on Thursday, June 5, on Religious Freedom Conditions in Azerbaijan that highlighted political prisoners and lack of freedom of speech in the country, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

The hearing focused on Azerbaijan's "concerning" religious freedoms and destruction of cultural heritage, particularly religious sites in Nagorno-Karabakh that remain threatened as Azerbaijani authorities "eliminate Armenian cultural heritage."

In February 2025, USCIRF traveled to Azerbaijan to survey the country's religious freedom conditions and met with religious communities, human rights activists, and government officials. In its 2025 Annual Report, USCIRF recommended that the U.S. Department of State designate Azerbaijan to the Special Watch List for "severe violations of religious freedom."

In his opening remarks, USCIRF Chair Stephen Schneck described Azerbaijan's law on religion as among the "most repressive in the world." He criticized recent legislative amendments that reinforced the regime's control and distanced the country even further from international norms.

Schneck expressed concern over President Ilham Aliyev regime's "continued destruction and repurposing of ancient Armenian churches and other religious and cultural sites in Nagorno-Karabakh." He urged the U.S. Department of State to maintain Azerbaijan on the Special Watch List and continue to monitor religious rights and freedoms in the country.

Commissioner Vicky Hartzler condemned the repression and brutality faced by religious groups in Azerbaijan, and called for political and economic sanctions against officials and entities involved in violating religious rights.

Hartzler also stressed the importance of protecting Armenian religious and cultural heritage from further destruction, and

recommended sending international observation missions to Nagorno-Karabakh to assess the situation and inventory the sites, calling on Congress to remain engaged in this critical issue.



Artsakh. They criticized the lack of international response to the policies of Azerbaijan's autocratic regime and called for targeted sanctions, including those under the Global Magnitsky Act. They also advocated



documented by independent bodies such as Caucasus Heritage Watch, Save Armenian Monuments, and Monument Watch and other cultural actors."

The organization referred to the destruc-



Satellite images from Caucasus Heritage Watch show St. Karapet Monastery of Abrakunis (founded in 1381), its destruction (between 1997 and 2001) and the reuse of the monastery grounds for a mosque built in 2013.

The witnesses, including Audrey L. Altstadt (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Felix Corley (Editor of Forum 18 News Service), Arzu Geybullu (Co-founder of Free Voices Collective), and Husik Ghulyan (Lead Researcher of Caucasus Heritage Watch), discussed religious freedom conditions in Azerbaijan and shared recommendations for the U.S. government to support religious freedom in Azerbaijan.

The panelists presented their findings regarding the situation in Azerbaijan, the government's repression of religious and political rights, and the systematic destruction of Armenian religious and cultural heritage in

conditioning any political or economic relationship with Azerbaijan on the regime's commitment to protecting religious, political, and other fundamental human rights.

This hearing follows last week's International Conference on the Preservation of Armenian Religious, Cultural and Historical Heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh, that was held in Bern, Switzerland, wherein the World Council of Churches (WCC) issued a statement that they "bear witness to the erasure of millennia of Armenian Christian presence in the region and to the widespread destruction of churches, cemeteries, monuments, and other sacred and cultural sites, as

tion of cultural heritage as a "violation of international humanitarian law and can amount to a crime against humanity, and indicia of genocidal intent. We call on the international community, particularly the United Nations and UNESCO, to ensure accountability and uphold their mandates for the protection of cultural and religious heritage."

Calling for coordinated international action, the WCC urged "governments and international bodies to take diplomatic and legal steps based on OSCE and other conventions to prevent further erasure of Armenian cultural heritage, support the return of

## Glendale Youth Center Hosts Suciyan for Conversation on Survival, Memory, Resilience

GLENDALE — Hosted by the Glendale Youth Center, a talk by Prof. Talin Suciyan titled "Outcasting Armenians: A Powerful Conversation on Survival, Memory, and Resilience," took place on the evening of May 27. The program brought together members of the Armenian-American community, students, educators, and civic leaders for an engaging and thought-provoking discussion centered on the silenced histories of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and modern-day Turkey.

Suciyan, an associate professor of Turkish Studies at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, has built a career dedicated to uncovering and analyzing the lived experiences of Armenians in the post-genocide era. Born in Istanbul and educated at Armenian schools, she completed her undergraduate studies at Istanbul University before earning her Ph.D. in Germany in 2013 with a dissertation titled "Surviving the Ordinary: The Armenians in Turkey, 1930s to 1950." Her groundbreaking research explores the long-term impact of state denial, cultural erasure, and systemic marginalization on the Armenian population that remained in Turkey after the genocide. Her scholarship includes several landmark publications: *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics and History* (2016), *Outcasting Armenians: Tanzimat of the Provinces* (2023), and her most recent work,

*Armenians in Turkey After the Second World War: An Archival Reader of USSR Consular Documents* (2025).

"The Armenians in the Ottoman Empire survived many tyrannies and vehemences throughout decades, but we never have even inquired about their livelihoods," said Suciyan. "We may be able to piece together and understand it if we read Raffi (Hagop Melik Hagopian), but it is imperative that we delve into the study and analysis of the history of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, in order to bring justice to their stories, and give meaning to their suffering."

The discussion was moderated by Garen Jinbanchian, Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region Community Coordinator, who guided the evening's program through themes of historical memory, state violence, and the moral imperative to confront uncomfortable truths. Prof. Suciyan delivered a compelling presentation grounded in extensive archival research, emphasizing the ways in which Turkish official discourse has systematically erased and marginalized Armenian communities over the past century. Drawing from Ottoman records and Armenian sources, she challenged the dominant narrative of the Tanzimat reforms as progressive, instead exposing the ongoing oppression faced by Armenians in the provinces and beyond.

Suciyan's research methodology centers



Prof. Talin Suciyan

around the use of overlooked and often deliberately buried primary sources — ranging from Ottoman state archives to Armenian provincial newspapers, letters, and the archives of the Armenian Patriarchate. Through cross-referencing official records with Armenians accounts, she reconstructs a far more complex and troubling picture of the 19th-century reforms. Where official Ottoman narratives celebrate the Tanzimat as a civilizing mission, Armenian sources reveal a parallel reality of broken promises, unprotected ethnic minorities, and increasing state surveillance, systematic discrimination, and persecution. By juxtaposing these archival voices, Suciyan shows how the rhetoric of reform masked a deeper structure of unequal treatment, such as unfair and exces-

sive taxation of Armenians and practices reminiscent of slavery, effectively allowing the Empire to present a modernizing face to Europe while perpetuating violence and exclusion on its eastern frontiers. Her work not only challenges the dominant historiographical consensus, but also restores dignity and agency to the Armenians whose stories were systematically silenced.

"If there is one thing to take from this wonderful conversation with Prof. Suciyan, it's that we, as the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, not only should not, but shouldn't be allowed to minimize the importance of the hard facts of the Armenian Genocide," said Jinbanchian. "At the very least, we should be able to master this section of History. We should be able to know the why, where, how, of the Armenian Genocide. It is only after knowing, that we can start educating others completely oblivious to the subject, and seek justice and retribution for the loss of our homeland."

A vibrant question-and-answer session followed the presentation, reflecting the audience's deep engagement with issues of historical justice, intergenerational trauma, and cultural preservation. The evening was both intellectually rigorous and emotionally resonant, underscoring the urgent relevance of Suciyan's work to the Armenian community and to broader global efforts for truth and accountability.



# Arts & Culture

## Aneesh Chaganty's 'Doppelgänger' to Be Produced by Qasabian, Ohanian Production Companies

By Anthony D'Alessandro

HOLLYWOOD (Variety) — After an intense bidding war with multiple parties interested, Skydance has won the next project — *Doppelgänger* — from Searching and Run filmmaker Aneesh Chaganty with his Search Party team and Ryan Coogler's Proximity Media to produce.

While the story is being kept secret, rumor has it that it is an original take on the spy thriller, with the potential to be a franchise-starter. We're told there are two very meaty lead roles for an actor and actress. The team secured a seven-figure deal, which is notable in the marketplace since there aren't any cast attachments yet.

Chaganty and Dan Frey wrote with the former set to helm. "*Doppelgänger*" is produced by Natalie Qasabian and Aneesh for Search Party and Sev Ohanian, Ryan Coogler and Zinzi Coogler for Proximity Media.

*Doppelgänger* reps the third movie from writer-director Chaganty. He burst onto the scene with Sundance hit, *Searching*, (which minted \$75.4M worldwide against a sub \$1 million budget) and followed-up with *Run*. That movie was originally dated for theaters on Mother's Day 2020, but COVID pushed it to streaming, where it then debuted as the most watched



From left, Sev Ohanian, Aneesh Chaganty and Natalie Qasabian

original movie in Hulu history at the time. His most recent film, *Missing*, which he co-wrote and produced alongside his longtime Search Party partners Sev Ohanian and Natalie Qasabian, was released in 2023.

Coogler and Zinzi Coogler of Proximity Media, along with Ohanian, recently had the period vampire hit *Sinners* which has accumulated over \$350M around the world to date. Since Proximity's first film, 2021's *Judas and the Black Messiah*, which was nominated for six Academy Awards, winning two; the company has produced a wide variety of projects, notably including Michael B. Jordan's directorial debut *Creed III* which grossed over \$276M globally.

Frey is a novelist and screenwriter whose credits include *The Rise of Red*, and sequel *Wicked Wonderland*. He has been developing his novel *The Future Is Yours* also with Search Party and Proximity Media with Chaganty attached to direct. Frey is represented by TFC Management and Myman Greenspan.

Chaganty is repped by CAA, entertainment 360 & attorney Arine Harapeti. Proximity Media is repped by WME and Cohen Gardner, Esq.

Qasabian is repped by Arine Harapeti.



Alec Van Khajadourian

## 5-Year-Old Piano Prodigy Preparing for Debut at Carnegie Hall

By Rob McMillan

LOS ANGELES (KABC) — A five-year-old pianist from Los Angeles is set to make history this summer as one of the youngest to ever perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Alec Van Khajadourian first started playing the piano when he was just learning to walk. Years later, he's performing entire songs.

"He would walk over to the piano when he first started walking, punching a few notes, and you could just see this huge grin on his face," said Alec's father, Joe Khajadourian.

"He immediately showed some real promise, and now it's developed real fast."

The proud father said his son is also blessed with perfect pitch, which is the ability to identify musical notes just by hearing them.

It's a skill only one in 10,000 people are estimated to have the ability to perform.

"He's still very much just a goofy five-year-old and loves to play all day, but once he gets on the piano, it's a whole different story," said Alec's father.

Alec is scheduled to perform in July not only at Carnegie Hall, but also the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

"[His mother] and I look at each other, and laugh sometimes when he's jamming," said Joe Khajadourian. "We're not able to believe he's able to do that."

He said they don't feel like they have to pressure their son to keep practicing; it's something they say he enjoys all by himself.

"As long as he's happy and enjoys doing it, we'll let him keep doing it."



## New Book Twins Gaza, Artsakh Narratives in the Media

Analyzing media coverage in cases where cultural heritage sites have been destroyed during conflict, occupation, and war, *Media Framing and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage* highlights the important role media play in the preservation of cultural heritage when states or other combatants engage in human rights violations.

Author Mischa Geracoulis — a human rights journalist and critical media literacy expert — illuminates the role that digital and legacy news reporting, investigative journalism, social media, literature, film and other art forms play in social consciousness and discourse.

She argues that accurate reporting is critical particularly when vulnerable populations face mostly tendentious actors among international governmental and non-governmental bodies unwilling to acknowledge endangered heritages on indigenous lands.



*Media Framing and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage* examines the media coverage, language, and discourse surrounding two key situations — the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Artsakh/ Nagorno-Karabakh and that of Palestinian cultural heritage in Gaza — and explores the ways media coverage has succeeded or failed in accurately illustrating the destruction of cultural heritage as a human rights violation.

This book will be of interest to students and scholars of media, journalism, and cultural studies, as well as media professionals, human rights advocates and legislators interested in the role and influence of media framing and narratives on war, conflict, human rights, and humanitarian response.

Geracoulis is a human rights journalist and critical media literacy expert. She is managing editor at the media watch and education organization Project Censored and its publishing imprint The Censored Press. Mischa is a contributor to Project Censored's *State of the Free Press* yearbook series, a Project Judge and also serves on the editorial board of *The Markaz Review*. Her journalistic and educational work focus on the intersections among critical media and information literacy, human rights education, civil liberties, and democracy and ethics, while prioritizing issues on truth in reporting, press and academic freedom. Mischa's work can be found at Project Censored and independent news outlets, including *Common Dreams*, *Consortium News* and *CounterPunch* and academic publications, such as the *International Journal of Human Rights Education*.

The book is available for purchase through Routledge.com and Amazon.com.





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Gregory V. Diehl

## *The American of Kalavan*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN-KALAVAN, Gegharkunik region, Armenia — American writer Gregory V. Diehl (born 1988) calls himself a game-changer, caretaker, figure-outer, lecturer, listener, salesman and stalker. He was raised in California and left home as a teenager to travel extensively. By the age of 30, he had lived and worked in more than 50 countries. Based in Kalavan since 2019, Diehl draws from years of global cultural experience to lead the Kalavan Retreat Center — an educational NGO devoted to personal growth, critical thought and pursuit of intellectual freedom. The center has become an international hub for those seeking alternatives to traditional learning and societal conformity. Gregory is the author of the following books: *Travel as Transformation* (2016), *Brand Identity Breakthrough* (2016), *The Influential Author* (2018), *The Heroic and Exceptional Minority* (2021), *Everyone Is an Entrepreneur* (2022), *Our Global Lingua Franca* (2023), *The Romantic Ideal—The Highest Standard of Romance for a Man* (2024).

I wanted to interview Gregory after reading the Armenian translation of his book, *Everyone Is an Entrepreneur* (translated by Tatev Sahakyan).

Gregory, your book can be considered



an example of educational-motivational literature. But we know that the authors of such books have often not achieved in real life the successes they write about. Napoleon Hill, author of *Think and Grow Rich*: This Book Can Make You a Millionaire, was not a millionaire. Dale Carnegie, who wrote *How to Win Friends*, didn't have friends. Paul Bragg, the advocate of healthy eating who wrote *The Miracle of Fasting*, died at 81 — an age many who don't eat healthily have surpassed. And Leonard Orr, author of *Stop Dying*, passed away six years ago. So, are you a successful entrepreneur?

The answer to that question depends on what you mean by the words “successful” and “entrepreneur.” In my book, I talk about entrepreneurship as a universal way of seeing how people apply their knowledge, skills, tools, and other resources to pursue the things they value. And they get better and better at this as they learn more, technology advances, and the economy evolves in such a way that they have more freedom and opportunities to do this without restrictions or interference. We in the West are the beneficiaries of growing up in a culture that supports and encourages this way of thinking and acting, as opposed to here in the post-Soviet world that is largely still recovering from the communist paradigm. So to answer your question: Yes, I successfully use the economic principles of entrepreneurship to pursue what I value

to a high degree of effectiveness, which includes but is not limited to making money. It's what I am trying to help bright and ambitious Armenians do too.

**In your book you present the stereotypes and fears that residents of post-Soviet Armenia have toward entrepreneurship. Among other things, there is the mindset that one is supposedly born an entrepreneur, that it has to be in a person's blood. Through your book, you try to convince us that not only can everyone be an entrepreneur, but that everyone is an entrepreneur, and that entrepreneurship is not a calling but a worldview.**

The only thing preventing Armenians from being as entrepreneurial as Americans and other Westerners is their restrictive, shame-based culture that makes it very difficult for them to think independently and try implementing new, original solutions to common problems. It feels like I've gone back in time to the 1950s here. The nature of entrepreneurship is to experiment with superior ways to get things done. Monetary profit is the reward for that. Under these repressive cultural conditions, you have to be exceptionally self-confident and outgoing to stand in opposition to the “go with the flow” mentality of 99 percent of Armenians who socially penalize individuality.

Well, but it's not only in the post-Soviet reality that a person who is solely engaged in intellectual or artistic activity becomes helpless, unable to sell their services or creative output. That's why the institution of the manager or impresario exists—something that was absent in Soviet times.

Managers and investors play vital roles in entrepreneurship. They apply their knowledge, skills, and resources (one of which is financial capital) to solve problems and provide better value to humanity. Artists and intellectuals need these types of people because they provide complementary value for bringing new ideas to the world in a marketable and affordable fashion.

**And to develop an entrepreneurial worldview, isn't it necessary to have a solid grasp of the fundamental principles of economic theory? Based on your book, it seems you yourself are quite well-versed in these.**

Yes, certainly. And growing up in the West, we take for granted that fundamental economic knowledge as an unspoken part of our culture. I've often said that living here in Armenia sometimes feels like living in a society that never invented the wheel and doesn't understand why such a simple machine might be valuable to them. Basic concepts like supply and demand can be understood by any moderately intelligent person. But if the knowledge isn't proliferating in the culture, only a few individuals who go out of their way to study and apply it on their own will receive the benefits of it. One of the primary purposes of *Everyone Is an Entrepreneur* is to help spread that fundamental knowledge where it's needed here. It's also why I had the book translated into Armenian.

**I agree that “Many modern Armenians consider their national mentality to be depressive, with a psychology of victim-**



**hood and failure. Yet I have never been to a country with so many intelligent and active people who, nonetheless, refuse to set ambitions for themselves and to apply their knowledge and skills toward innovation.” So how can we get rid of this “post-Soviet self-defeatist syndrome” (your definition) as quickly as possible?**

Culture always changes slowly because it is an amalgamation of the thoughts and habits enforced by the general populace. Armenians have a very nasty trait of shaming and punishing people who violate their traditional and outdated cultural norms, even when those norms are clearly causing problems in their lives and preventing them from enjoying the benefits of the modern world. I've learned it's much easier and more effective just to provide a living demonstration of the principles you espouse than to try to sit and educate them against their will. I can sit here all day and explain in a perfectly rational and comprehensive manner how economics and entrepreneurship work to make life better for everyone, but you're not going to pay attention unless you can see it happening in your life and the lives of the people you identify with in a way that is undeniable. Then people will start to believe in their ability to direct their own lives again.

**You write that there are “various guidebooks to entrepreneurship, but they don't serve their purpose, because the real prerequisites for entrepreneurial activity are missing — especially ideals.” But your book seems to have fulfilled its purpose at least once: after reading it, one of the residents of Kalavan opened the village's first store.**

Beyond teaching Armenians themselves to act more entrepreneurially, I wanted to teach other Westerners like me who think they already understand these principles how lacking they are in the rest of the world and how to convey them to the people who would benefit most from them. I've had many Western readers who even studied economics and entrepreneurship in university tell me they learned more practical knowledge from my book than they did from four or more years of school. It helps explain the scope and cause of the problem of global poverty and economic restrictions that anyone can start to act on in virtually any culture or environment.

**You write that it was thanks to your**

**Armenian grandmother — who found refuge in California during the First World War — that you initially decided to study Armenian history, to visit the country, to obtain citizenship in your ancestral homeland and finally to settle here. Could you please tell us more about your grandmother and the Armenian traditions present in your family?**

My grandmother was Mariam Goekjian, who was from Cilicia and fled as a young girl during the genocide. I actually didn't really grow up with a strong sense of Armenian identity, and I think that allows me to be much more objective in my assessment of Armenia's cultural strengths and shortcomings. Even my half-Armenian mother has never been to Armenia, but we did occasionally cook Armenian food at home or visit Little Armenia in Los Angeles. I care more about helping humanity than about helping any particular nation or culture. I identify with virtue, intellect, ambition, and curiosity, no matter what country the people who have them come from or how they dress or eat.

**In your book, you mention that you wouldn't want to spend the remaining decades of your life publishing books on the same topic. What kind of topics would you like to write about in the future? Perhaps move into fiction?**

I've taken a somewhat uncommon route as an author by writing on a variety of topics instead of niching into just one area. But there are common themes and threads among all my work, such as enabling self-expression and self-actualization. I'm working on three new books currently. One is about solving suicidal ideation that results from ideological sources, such as feeling out of place with the state of the world. One is about *Star Wars* and what it has to say about how good people become bad (i.e., “turn to the dark side”). And the third is my first fiction work, which will be a science fictional novel discussing the Fermi Paradox and the realistic nature of highly advanced life and sentience throughout the universe.

**Thank you for your answers, Gregory! I hope Kalavan and other communities will flourish thanks to individuals like you. And I wish that your example will be an inspiration for the millions of Armenians who love Armenia from afar!**

Thank you. I'm always looking to work with other people in Armenia who share my values.





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine  
Vartanian Datian



The late WAVE veteran Arpeni "Penny" Mirigian (1922 – 2019) holds a photograph of herself in the service at age 22. She was placed in a unit to record Japanese codes. JOHN WALKER, THE FRESNO BEE

## ‘Uncovering a Veil of Secrecy’

(Fresno’s Mary Ekmalian is the current Home Guild President at the California Armenian Home. Here are excerpts of a story from April 19, 2009 published in *The Fresno Bee*, written by Paula Lloyd and Vanessa Colon, about Arpeni “Penny” Mirigian, Mary’s mother, who helped protect our country during World War II.)

FRESNO — For 50 years, Arpeni “Penny” Mirigian kept the secret about what she really did in the Navy WAVES during World War II. When people asked, she simply said: “I was a radio operator.” “Spy” would have been closer to the truth. From 1943 to 1945, Mirigian was part of an elite group of “intercept operators” who typed up Japanese radio broadcasts to be decoded. The work was top secret. “It was highly classified,” she said. “They drilled into us that we were doing highly secret work, and we couldn’t tell anyone – including when you wrote to your parents.”

The Fresno woman was one of just a few still around to tell their stories. “They were told if they divulged what they were doing, even though they were women, they’d be shot,” said John Gustafson, membership secretary of the U.S. Naval Cryptologic Veterans Association in Pensacola, Florida. “Some still won’t talk about it.” So Mirigian kept quiet. She got married. She had four children. She divorced and – much later – she married again. She taught English at Edison High School for 23 years before retiring. Through it all, nobody knew that she once had lived a very different life. Yet she never forgot about the war, or the four close friends she made in the WAVES – or the blue uniform in her closet that still fits as well as it did five decades ago.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the WAVES – Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services – in 1942. The WAVES made up about 2.5% of the Navy’s personnel by the end of the war, according to records from the Naval Historical Center at the Department of the Navy. Women served in a variety of duties, from medical to intelligence. About 4,000 WAVES were intercept operators during World War II, Gustafson said. “By putting women in there, it freed up the men to go overseas,” he said.

Mirigian enlisted in 1943, three months before she was to graduate from then Fresno State College. In November 1943, she boarded a troop train in Fowler.

She rode the train for three days to her boot camp at Hunter College in New York. After six weeks of basic training, she was assigned to Bainbridge Island in Washington. Her task was to listen to Japanese radio broadcasts being made in Morse Code.

“You were just listening to dots and dashes,” Mirigian said. “When we would hear it, we would type it on a code typewriter.” What the operators typed didn’t make any sense to them.

Mirigian became close friends with four other WAVES living in tight quarters in the barrack.

The Navy began declassifying information on the intercept operators’ work in the early 1980’s, Gustafson said. Before then, the federal government didn’t require any war information to be declassified, he said, “so it would just sit there as classified information.”

Mirigian didn’t learn about the declassification until 1996, when she read about it in a Navy newsletter.

When she finally could talk, the first people she told were her parents. Mirigian’s family and friends were shocked when they heard the truth about her Navy assignment. “I knew she went into the service – that was the talk of the town,” said Milton Torigian, who grew up with Mirigian in Fowler and has been a CPA

for many years. “I just thought she was a clerk.”

The next thing Mirigian did was to contact “the girls” – the four friends she hadn’t seen or talked to in 50 years. They made plans to meet at a Navy veterans’ reunion in Seattle. “When we found each other, we were squealing like young, silly girls,” Mirigian said. They caught up with each other’s lives and they’ve been in touch ever since. Mirigian also finally let her husband in on the truth. She had married former Fowler High classmate George Emerzian in 1989 at their 50th high school reunion. When he learned about his wife’s secret past, Emerzian was impressed. “I thought there weren’t too many women who could have done that kind of work,” he said.

Note: Arpeni “Penny” Mirigian passed away on May 3, 2019 in Fresno at the age of 97, and was buried with military honors at the Ararat Armenian Cemetery on June 29, 2019. She received the American Campaign and World War II Victory Medals. For more information on Penny Mirigian’s military service and other Armenian-American World War II, Korea, and Vietnam Heroes, go to Richard N. Demirjian’s 2003 book *The Faces of Courage*. The Armenian Cultural Conservancy has a copy available for ACC members to check out. Arpeni was a respected figure in the Armenian community through her active involvement with the Armenian-American Citizens’ League, the Armenian Community School, the California Armenian Home, and the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church.

### Mary Boyajian Mirigian’s Purslane Dinner

“Pepper Abour, purslane is a yellow-flowered species of the genus portulaca, which is widely spread in the world. It is used in salads or can be cooked,” said Penny Mirigian. “Purslane has a fresh, slightly salty and tart taste, often described as similar to spinach, watercress, or even a lemony cucumber. It’s crunchy, juicy, and some find it a bit slimy. The leaves of stems are thick and succulent. It is also considered a pot herb. Purslane is tasty to eat either fresh, cooked or frozen. This is an excellent old-world recipe consisting of healthy grains, vegetables and meats.”

“This recipe was made by my paternal grandmother, Kohar Derosian Mirigian, without measurements. My talented mother, Mary Boyajian Mirigian, perfected the recipe, which I use. I often cook with purslane. This purslane dish can be frozen after it is cooked and will retain its flavor and texture after thawing. Mary Boyajian Mirigian was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1902, the daughter of Krikor and Elizabeth Boyajian. As a child she and her family moved to the town of Fowler, California, known for its grape vineyards and expansive farm land. In 1920, Mary married Mesrob K. Mirigian in Fresno. She and her husband were founding members of the Armenian-American Citizens’ League. As a charter member of the Armenian-American Citizens’ League, Mary was active in the California Armenian Home Guild, American Legion Auxiliary, Fresno County Farm Bureau Women, and St. Gregory Senior Ladies Society.”

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups coarsely chopped purslane, cleaned and washed
- 1/2 cup hulled whole wheat berries (dzedzadz)
- 1 cup white navy beans
- 2 cups red lentils
- 2 (15 oz.) cans garbanzo beans
- Several cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 1 cube butter
- 2 cups white onions, chopped and sautéed
- Salt, pepper and cayenne pepper to taste

#### PREPARATION:

The day before, wash and prepare the purslane. Soak the whole wheat and beans separately overnight. The next day, cook the beans and whole wheat separately. (Separately because they cook differently; also cook the whole wheat in a large vessel that you can use for the rest of the cooking process.) Next, bring a pan of water to boiling and drop the purslane into it until the purslane changes color. Remove; rinse in cold water and drain. Cook lentils in water; keep adding water as necessary until the lentils are pink or yellowish white for some lentils. The more lentils, the better the taste. Garbanzo beans are usually left whole, but they can be put through the blender or mashed like potatoes.

Keep the liquid from the cans. In a large cooking vessel, put 1/2 of the purslane on top of the navy beans and whole wheat. Then put the lentils over the purslane and cover the lentils with the rest of the purslane. Bring to boiling. When ready to stir, add the garbanzo and garlic. Keep stirring while cooking. Add the cube of butter, which will melt while cooking. Add liquid as necessary. (Vegetable juices, meat juices kept for such cooking, or water). Let mixture come to a slow boil, stirring to blend flavors. Add the spices during this time. Add the sautéed onion when cooking is nearly done. This dish can be served hot as a main entrée or eaten cold as a dip with lavash. The final volume will be close to 1 gallon. Eat it hot; enjoy it cold; freeze it for later use.

Note: Purslane is often found at farmers’ markets, Asian and Middle Eastern grocery stores and even in your garden if you live in a warm climate like Fresno. Younger, more tender leaves are preferred. Purslane is high in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins A and C, and minerals like calcium, magnesium, iron, and potassium. Don’t have purslane? Substitute it with herbs like watercress, sorrel, mustard greens, or spinach if it’s for a salad or cooked dish. If it’s for a stew or another dish where it’s being used to thicken the food, try okra, file powder, or Malabar spinach.

Purslane, also known as pursley, pigweed, verdolaga, regelah portulaca paruppu keera, luni bhaji, purslane is in fact a weed.

This recipe was published in *A Harvest of Recipes Cookbook* from The Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church in Fresno. See pages 72-73.





ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Heed The Poet: Vahe-Vahian’s Farewell Poems

By Arpi Sarafian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Even when in despair over his failure to repel “the dark and the ugly” with his singing and wondering why he has not heard from his dreams, the only balm in “ruthless, ruinous old age,” Vahe-Vahian’s gaze is always ahead. “I am the bird reborn from its own ashes,” writes the poet in “Immortality,” a piece in the collection of some thirty poems — written for the most part in the years 1990-1993 when the poet was in his 80s — published posthumously under the title *Farewell Poems* by Aram Sepetjian in 2009, in Beirut, Lebanon (Sipan Printing & Co). While the poet never ceases to highlight the “ashes and the tears” of a history of shared suffering, his vision is, at all times, of a sunny tomorrow. The vulnerable position of our homeland today, with the ongoing threats to its territorial integrity and the relentless demands on its sovereignty, gives the poet’s words a unique relevance.

There is indeed much to be dismayed about. Lies and false claims abound. Most egregious is the recent conference organized by Baku, titled “Christianity in Azerbaijan: History and Modernity,” held at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome with the involvement of senior Vatican officials. A conference that attempts to distort the millennia-long legacy of the Armenian Church in Artsakh, now occupied by Azerbaijan, is a betrayal of the spiritual and historical bond that exists between two quintessentially Christian entities — the Vatican as the symbolic focus of Christianity and Armenia as the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, evidenced by the countless churches, monasteries and cultural monuments on its soil. Even in the context of the total abandonment of ethical and moral principles by the international community, the choice of venue is alarming.

Equally offensive is the last-minute cancellation at the University of California, Berkeley, of the screening of *My Sweet Land*, a documentary depicting the disruptions caused by war to the peaceful lives of the inhabitants of a village in Artsakh. While Azerbaijan celebrated the cancellation as “a political triumph,” it took UC Berkeley, the notorious champion of human rights, over a month to respond to the protests to the recall, only to claim that “it was not pressured by Azerbaijan.”

Rather than focus on the aberrations, however, it would perhaps be more useful to concentrate on “the genius of our people,” to borrow the poet’s words, its rich history, its artistic and cultural heritage and creativity. The signs of survival and of progress are many. Most exciting is the adoption by pioneering young historians of inclusive, non-hierarchical approaches to the research and the documentation of our past. Talin Suciyan, Bedros Der Matossian, Vahe Tashjian, among others, peer into the family archives of ordinary people to draw conclusions about the approaching 1915 catastrophe. These scholars highlight the importance of first-hand accounts, of letters, postcards, diaries etc. — thus far untapped sources — in making revelations that cannot be made through official archives. The recent publication of the letters written by peasants to their spiritual leader Catholicos Khrimian Hayrig are powerful testimonies



of the cruel circumstances — the kidnappings, the high taxation, the lack of food and shelter etc. — that existed during the 1894-1896 Hamidian Massacres. Witnessing what the people endure on a daily basis gives us insight into the repercussions of oppressive policies so we are vigilant of upcoming catastrophes, notes Suciyan.

Equally heartening is the proliferation of programs, webinars, lectures — hybrid and in-person — events in dance, music and theatre that highlight the role our Armenian heritage plays in preserving our identity. There is an unprecedented effort to revive Western Armenian — listed as an endangered language — to raise a new generation of Western Armenian speakers. We also have numerous community-centered health initiatives and Camps that help children recover from the trauma of loss and displacement of the recent Artsakh Wars.

The determination to survive culturally, seemingly oblivious of the “imminent” doom — for some have forecast the “liquidation” of the Republic of Armenia — must be paying off. The April 2025 issue of AGBU Magazine — full of stories of the individual successes of composers, actors, outstanding leaders — and the countless award-winning musicians, photographers, filmmakers are a tribute to our enduring beauty. Most astonishing is the tremendous success of fundraising galas to expand our schools. In the words of principal Lena Garabedian, the sixtieth anniversary banquet of the Armenian Mesrobian School, the first elementary day school in the United States, “was not just a celebration of our past — it was a declaration of our future.”

Cultural preservation can be a potent force in helping us survive. The commemorative activities marking the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide — a torchlight procession to Tsitsernakaberd, the Genocide Memorial Monument in Yerevan, April 24 Remembrance Day Proclamations, concerts, lectures in every corner of the world — reaffirm the poet’s, “We were, we are and we will be,” “*Yegher enk, gank ou bidi mnank ays hoghin vran.*”

Which is not to say that we are not invulnerable. Vahe-Vahian is well-aware of our disadvantageous position as a small country. His *kharazan e bedk* — “a whip is in order” — calls on Armenia to strengthen itself militarily, evoking that other great humanitarian, Catholicos Khrimian Hayrig’s legendary paper ladle metaphor that deplored the dependence of the Armenian

delegation on foreign powers at the 1878 Congress of Berlin. The poet is, in fact, torn between his frustration over his people “running towards the abyss of annihilation with closed eyes” and his “insatiable longing for sunshine.” “Let us enjoy the warmth of the smiling sun today . . . Tomorrow has no pathway that leads up to light” highlights the irony of his “eternally sunny Artsakh.”

Perhaps there is no way to resolve the dichotomy. The discrepancy between the four hundred elementary students at Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian School chanting *gank, bidi mnank* in unison at their recent end-of-the-year *hantess*, and Azerbaijan’s claim that the Republic of Armenia is “Western Azerbaijan” remains, but our creativity goes on, evidenced by our continuing presence on this earth.

Lies are weak, even if they shake us to the bone. Caving in to the arrogance of Azeri president Aliyev’s, “We expect the

Armenian leadership to provide security guarantees to return the Azeris to their historical homeland” is not an option. Our academicians are meeting the challenge beautifully, exposing the falsities with their groundbreaking research and publications.

What is ultimately at stake is the survival of the human species. As stated at the recent Armenian Heritage Conference in Bern, Switzerland, hosted by the World Council of Churches, “The heritage of Artsakh belongs to the whole of humanity.” When twisting the truth and spreading misinformation has become so much easier in the digital age, bringing awareness to the falsehoods and to the destruction they cause is more important than ever.

Vahe-Vahian’s Epitaph reads: “He scattered his songs, balm for others’ wounds/ His own wounds always remained wounds.” The poet may not have alleviated humanity’s pain, yet his vision of a “new dawn” for Armenia shines in eve poem.

CALENDAR  
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

- 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](mailto:holycrossbostonma@gmail.com).**
- JUNE 22 — Celebrating What Unites Us! Sunday at 4 pm. highlights: Ghana. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. RSVP appreciated. [hello@armenianheritagepark.org](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org)**
- 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 hrshapar 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 10 — Under the July Moon. Thursday at 8 pm. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Meet & greet, old friends & new. Enjoy grilled chicken satay with the bone sauce, hosted by chef Joe Johnson, owner & founder. RSVP appreciated. [hello@armenianheritagepark.org](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org)**
- JULY 20 — Celebrating What Unites Us! Sunday at 4 pm. Highlights: Ireland. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. RSVP appreciated. [hello@armenianheritagepark.org](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org)**
- 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**
- AUGUST 3 — Under the August Moon. Sunday at 7.30 pm. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Meet & greet, old friends & new. Enjoy Dan Teager’s Black Sea Salsa Combo while sipping on refreshing citrus spritzers. RSVP appreciated. [hello@armenianheritagepark.org](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org)**
- AUGUST 17 — Celebrating What Unites Us! Sunday at 4 pm. Highlights: Italy. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. RSVP appreciated. [hello@armenianheritagepark.org](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org)**
- SEPTEMBER 20 — Celebrate Armenia! Heritage. Culture. Traditions. Saturday, 1:30-8 pm. On the occasion of Armenian Independence Day on September 21. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. Rain date: September 27. RSVP appreciated. [hello@armenianheritagepark.org](mailto:hello@armenianheritagepark.org)**
- NOVEMBER 21 — AMAA’s Boston Child Care Committee presents an evening supporting the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan, Armenia, FEATURING COMEDIAN KEY 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](mailto:alin@mirrorspectator.com) or [alin.gregorian@gmail.com](mailto:alin.gregorian@gmail.com). You can also visit our website, [www.mirrorspectator.com](http://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.





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COMMENTARY

# How Armenia Might Respond to Azerbaijan’s JF-17 Fighter Acquisition

By Paul Iddon

In an acquisition that will significantly alter the military balance in the South Caucasus, Pakistan is selling 40 fourth-generation JF-17 Thunder fighter jets to Azerbaijan. The move will undoubtedly worry neighboring Armenia.

Azerbaijan has officially expanded its order for JF-17s from 16 jets to 40 as part of a \$4.6 billion defense agreement, the Pakistani government confirmed in a post on the social media platform X on Friday. It is Pakistan’s largest-ever defense export contract and undoubtedly a boost for the aircraft, which Pakistan co-developed with China.

Azerbaijani media reported in late May that Baku had increased the number of jets and the value of the deal from \$1.6 billion to approximately \$4.2 billion. However, such reports were not immediately publicly confirmed by either Baku or Islamabad. Azerbaijan accepted the delivery of its first JF-17 on September 25, 2024. Baku is receiving the latest version, the JF-17C Block III, equipped with active electronically scanned array radar and other systems and weapons typically found on advanced 4.5-generation aircraft.

“While the fourth-generation fighter has some notable operational limits, such as the lack of complete stealth compared to fifth-generation fighters and certainly six-generation ones in development, from Baku’s perspective, these are likely outweighed by numerous upsides,” Sam Lichtenstein, director of analysis at the risk intelligence company RANE, told me. “First and foremost is that the JF-17 is a cost-effective option compared to many competing Western or Russian options, and acquiring more would also help upgrade Azerbaijan’s older and less capable Soviet-produced aircraft,” Lichtenstein said.

The acquisition is an enormous upgrade—both quantitatively and qualitatively—for the country’s air force, which hitherto relied on just over a dozen aged MiG-29 Fulcrum fighters and subsonic Su-25 Frogfoot attack planes.

“With continuing Western sanctions on Russia and uncertainty over whether Russia’s defense industry has sufficient capacity to provide new systems, or even replace certain key parts, acquiring more JF-17s enables Baku to skirt concerns about acquiring more military capabilities from Russia,” he added. “Furthermore, the JF-17 is compatible with a number of Turkish systems that Azerbaijan already has, making it even more attractive.”

According to Azerbaijani media, the JF-17s are not going to replace these older

aircraft instantly, which makes sense given that Baku recently had its Frogfoots upgraded to carry Turkish weapons.

The deal will undoubtedly set off alarm bells in Yerevan. Armenia had previously sought to enhance its modest air force, which lacked any fighter jets, through the acquisition of expensive Su-30SM Flanker fighters from Russia in 2019. While it initially sought 12, Armenia has only received four to date.

Far from deterring Baku, these Flankers sat idle when Azerbaijan pulverized Armenian positions with modern Israeli and Turkish-made drones during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. The jets also failed to deter Azerbaijan in subsequent border clashes and the Azerbaijani military’s September 2023 lightning offensive that captured the entire Nagorno-Karabakh and displaced its Armenian population.

Now, with Azerbaijan acquiring 40 JF-17s, it will have ten times more fighter jets than Armenia—and that’s not even counting its current fleet of MiG-29s or its extensive and expanding arsenal of advanced Israeli and Turkish drones.

“From Armenia’s perspective, Azerbaijan’s expansion of its fighter aircraft only worsens Yerevan’s weak military position compared to Baku,” RANE’s Lichtenstein said.

“Despite signing a peace deal in March 2025 designed to resolve their decades-long conflict, Azerbaijan is requiring Armenia to make contentious constitutional changes that are delaying the agreement’s official signing and implementation,” he added. “This delay, which is likely to persist until after Armenia holds general elections in 2026, leaves the door open to another military escalation as Baku grows impatient with Yerevan and calculates that it will engender little to no blowback from the West, Russia or other key external powers.”

In contrast to sweeping Azerbaijani claims over sovereign Armenian territory, a full-scale invasion of Armenia still seems unlikely. Nevertheless, there could be more ground incursions and border clashes, especially if Baku seeks to link up with its western Nakhchivan exclave by establishing its self-styled Zangezur corridor overland through Armenia’s southernmost Syunik frontier province.

“With the threat of another conflict still on the table, Armenia is likely to leverage its growing defense partnerships with France, India and Iran – alongside an ongoing attempt to reduce tensions with Russia – to try to mitigate against Azerbaijan’s military dominance,” Lichtenstein said.

Armenia long relied heavily on Russia for discounted military hardware. Accord-

ing to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 94% of Armenia’s arms imports between 2011 and 2020 came from Russia. That drastically changed after Armenia suffered a disastrous defeat in the 2020 war. Yerevan has since sought to diversify its defense sources, reducing arms imports from Russia to as low as 10 percent by 2024.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov publicly blamed the Ukraine war for delays in supplying Russian armaments to Armenia in recent years but still scrutinized Yerevan’s growing defense ties with France, saying “it does raise questions,” according to The Moscow Times. Meanwhile, France recently sold Armenia Caesar self-propelled howitzers, a deal that both Azerbaijan and Russia criticized.

It’s unclear if Armenia will ultimately turn to France for multirole Dassault Rafale fighter jets to match Azerbaijan’s JF-17 procurement, especially given the prohibitive price tag for Yerevan, which invariably has significantly less to spend on armaments than its oil-rich rival.

“While Yerevan will likely pursue multiple lines of effort, it is likely to focus on acquiring India-built Su-30MKIs given that they are far more cost-effective than French Rafales,” Lichtenstein said. “Moreover, while much is still unclear about last month’s confrontation between India and Pakistan, accusations that India’s fleet of Rafales did not perform as strongly could also affect Armenia’s calculus.”

India builds the unique Su-30MKI variant of the Russian combat aircraft under license. It may soon export some of these aircraft and doubtlessly sees Armenia as a potential customer. Yerevan has already made record-breaking deals for Indian-made weaponry since the start of this decade. Furthermore, as previously outlined in this space, New Delhi is the ideal candidate for upgrading Armenia’s existing Su-30SMs and making them compatible with various Indian-made munitions and weapons.

“India would likely also be interested in supplying these systems to counteract Azerbaijan’s acquisition of fighters from Pakistan, India’s arch-rival,” Lichtenstein said.

“Separate from acquiring new fighters to try to compete with Azerbaijan in the air, Armenia is also likely seeking to upgrade its air defenses with systems from India, Iran and/or others.”

(Paul Iddon is a freelance journalist focused on Middle East affairs. This analysis originally appeared on Forbes.com on June 8.)

# Mining Armenia’s Future: Opportunities and Insights from a Global Industry

By Maggi Esho Nshanian

At a recent Career Day lecture hosted at the National Polytechnic University of Armenia, Srab Terrence Ortslan — a leading global voice in Armenia’s mining sector, the representative of the Armenian International Mining and Metallurgy Society (AIMMS) and the International Chamber of Mines of Armenia (ICMA) — delivered an eye-opening presentation that positioned mining not just as an industry, but

as a national opportunity. His talk, titled “Mining and Metals World: An Aperture of the Past, Present and the Future,” offered a compelling overview of how Armenia can assert itself within the evolving global mining and metals landscape and become a country with political and economic leverage with its metallic output and an integrated mining industry.

A Call to Armenia’s Multifaceted Minds  
Srab’s central message to Armenian students was clear: the mining industry

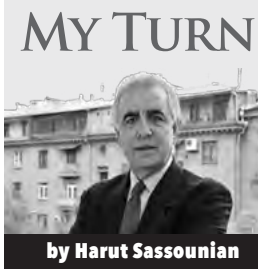
demands more than engineers and geologists — it needs thinkers, planners, policymakers, financiers, researchers, community planners, lawyers, all with multiple skill sets and perhaps most importantly, agile communicators for the much needed proficiency of the public about the mining sector. In short, “If you’re curious, multidisciplinary, and committed to Armenia’s development,” he said, “then this sector is your permanent career home.”

*continued on next page*





## COMMENTARY



by Harut Sassounian

## Pashinyan's Real Interest is Replacing Karekin II, not Clergy Celibacy

At a time when Armenia is facing an existential threat, one would expect Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's foremost priority to be defending the interests of the country. Regrettably, however, he is preoccupied with clergy celibacy – a matter not within the government's purview and one that violates Armenia's constitution, which mandates separation of church and state.

I believe that Pashinyan is raising the clergy celibacy issue for self-serving reasons:

Firstly, his real aim is replacing Catholicos Karekin II with a more compliant clergyman. The Catholicos had requested the Prime Minister's resignation following his disastrous mismanagement of the 2020 war with Azerbaijan.

Secondly, he is attempting to distract the public's attention from his many governmental shortcomings.

Thirdly, if he was truly interested in the celibacy of the clergy, he should not have raised it as Prime Minister during a governmental meeting, but as the personal opinion of a church member.

Lastly, his significant error lies in accusing the Catholicos of fathering a child without any evidence — a clear case of libel that grants the Catholicos the right to sue for defamation. An ethics probe has already been launched in connection with Pashinyan's remarks.

In response, the Supreme Spiritual Council of Echmiadzin issued a searing statement condemning the Prime Minister's campaign against the Armenian Church as “filled with profanity and obscene language, and devoid of fundamental norms of decency.”

Nevertheless, Pashinyan continued his scandalous tirade against the clergy, posting several daily messages on his Facebook page, including:

“We have in fact a consensus that we need to resolve the problem of the blasphemous ‘Srpazans’ [Eminences].”

“If it turns out that Karekin II has indeed violated the vow of celibacy and has a child, he cannot be the Catholicos of All Armenians....”

“The Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin must clarify whether Karekin II has violated the vow of celibacy and has a child. This issue must be clarified without any delay.”

“In my opinion, the Catholicos of All Armenians is an unquestionable authority, an unwavering defender of justice, an incontestable source of truth. I cannot believe that the Catholicos of All Armenians can be in the role of a suppressor of the truth. I cannot believe that anything other than the truth can come out of the mouth of the Catholicos of All Armenians. Let Karekin II himself clarify whether he has violated the celibacy vow and whether he has a child. We, his flock, have the right to hear the truth from him.”

“What does Karekin II's silence signify? We, his flock, await his public clarification regarding his violation of his vow of celibacy and having a child. Remaining silent means consent and excluding oneself from the Patriarchate's residence. Telling the truth also signifies excluding oneself from the Patriarch-

ate's residence. Lying also signifies excluding oneself from the Patriarchate's residence.”

“The state (government) belongs to the people. The church belongs to the people. We have restored the state (government) to the people. We will also restore the church to the people.”

Journalist Norayr Mardirosyan further muddled the waters by writing an article in the Hrabarag newspaper titled: “Is Pashinyan Cheating on his Wife?” He stated: “A few years ago, rumors circulated that Pashinyan is locked in his office for hours with his spokeswoman while strange sounds were emanating from within.” He asserted that he was responding in kind to Pashinyan's accusations against the Catholicos, adding that “if the Prime Minister can say that there are such rumors, let the Catholicos refute them,” then Pashinyan can be asked the same question. Mardirosyan even claimed that Pashinyan's wife discovered his affair and tried to get the spokeswoman fired. The reporter concluded: “We, his electors, await his public clarification regarding his violation of marital faithfulness. Remaining silent or lying means excluding yourself from moral norms.”

Separately from his rumor-based report, Mardirosyan erred by referring to Anna Hakobyan as the Prime Minister's “wife.” Pashinyan clarified his marital status during a live Facebook broadcast on December 18, 2024, while seated next to Anna: “We are not legally married. We are neither married by the state registry office nor by the Church. There is no official document.” Nevertheless, the Prime Minister's official website erroneously claims he is “married.”

The Prime Minister was not amused when Mardirosyan gave him a dose of his own medicine. On his Facebook page, Pashinyan threatened: “I will definitely sue the Hrabarag newspaper to prove that family and spiritual life are values and principles for me, not to be used as means to mislead the people. On this occasion, I also insist that Catholicos Karekin II has violated his vow of celibacy and has a child. Let Karekin II sue me as well to prove his adherence to the declared values and his status as Catholicos. PS: The Armenian Apostolic Church is sacred. It is our identity. We must no longer tolerate those who desecrate its sanctity.”

Finally, Pashinyan was incensed upon learning that former President Levon Ter-Petrosian had visited Catholicos Karekin II on June 7. During that meeting the Church reported, “the president expressed his full support for His Holiness, while strongly condemning the unconstitutional encroachments by the authorities of the Republic of Armenia upon the 1700-year-old Armenian Church.”

Pashinyan angrily responded using entirely inappropriate accusation, stating: “Levon Ter-Petrosian is the founder of the practice of election fraud in the Republic of Armenia, and he must, of course, stand by a people-hating fraudster and fraud like him.” It is worth noting that Pashinyan once was Ter-Petrosyan's right hand man and staunch supporter.

The Prime Minister is hardly in a position to lecture on morality, especially when a reading of his book, “the other side of the earth,” reveals a work replete with pornographic content and a veritable cascade of crude, obscene words.

There is no doubt that all clergymen, irrespective of rank, should uphold the highest moral standards of the church, including the vow of celibacy. However, it is equally imperative that the Prime Minister of Armenia respect the Constitution and refrain from intervening in matters beyond his jurisdiction, especially given his own marital status and his inability to manage the affairs of the state.

## Mining Armenia's Future: Opportunities and Insights from a Global Industry

from previous page

In Armenia's context, where youth often migrate in search of opportunity, the mining sector can become a cornerstone for retaining talent and expanding national skills. It offers roles that span not only science and engineering, but also finance, law, biology, environmental studies, and social policy. Importantly, it's an industry that offers purpose: managing Armenia's natural resources for the public good.

Resource Sovereignty and Geopolitics: Armenia Must Be Strategic

Srab reminded the audience that natural resources are not distributed equally. And inherently, the resources are owned by the sovereign states for its citizens and communities and managed by governments with strategies and policies for the selected operators with permits and lease agreements. In Armenia, these present both a responsibility and a unique opportunity going forward.

As global powers like China dominate primary metal consumption and production, and regions like emerging Asia and Africa becoming the new centers of demand, Armenia must strategically position itself. The era of globalization is waning; regional alliances, fragmentation, polarization and resource security are taking the center stage. For Armenia — positioned at

the nexus of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East — this is an invitation to become a critical player in regional resource diplomacy and supply chains. Armenia has to consider becoming engaged with a third or fourth geopolitical option with their strategic investors and consumers for developing and operating Armenia's mining sector with national partners.

### Growth Sectors and New Frontiers

Srab highlighted the rapidly growing demand for metals driven by increased world population and their need of living standards during expanding green energy transition — particularly for electric vehi-

## ARMENIA'S MINING AND METALS SECTOR IS NOT A RELIC OF THE PAST — IT IS A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE.

cles, which rely heavily on copper, lithium, and rare earths. With Armenia's geological diversity and mining heritage, there's a real opportunity to contribute to global sustainability goals while building a resilient domestic and regional economy.

He also pointed to technological frontiers like ocean mining and the untapped potential of regions like Greenland, which mirror Armenia's own underexplored de-

posits. Though Armenia does not have any oceanic territory, it can for instance entertain joint ventures globally and expand its mining frontiers. Armenia can easily become a hub for research, policy, and regional cooperation with scientifically and environmentally responsible mining technologies for all kinds of mining activities. In the interim, the concept and strategy for a “first mover” advantage must be considered a priority by Armenia as the list of undeveloped mining projects is getting longer and there is limited amount of international capital, permitting and engineering ability to build these prospects.

With proper regulation, transparency, and community engagement, the sector can create high-paying long term careers, become a more skill intensive economy, can fund education and infrastructure, and keep Armenia's brightest minds rooted at home with a global vision and experiences.

Looking Ahead: What Armenia Must Do  
To realize this vision, Srab emphasized the need for education reform that prepares

interdisciplinary professionals; Public-private partnerships to accelerate exploration, mine development, infrastructure and manufacturing; transparent governance to manage resources for long-term national benefit via platforms of the independent institutions focused on first tier governance practices; and diaspora engagement to attract further global expertise, support and investment.

The final takeaway? Armenia's mining and metals sector is not a relic of the past — it is a bridge to the future. With the right policies already suggested and compiled by a strategy group led by an international advisory and audit firm and experienced people and leadership in place, it can be a driving force in a compilation for directions, economic and political independence and regional leadership.

Armenia has all the means for an optimal end. Armenia is steps away for a paradigm evolution to elevate its economy and regions beyond the service sector. These steps should be via a primary sector strategic mix, including resource development and also realizing country's geological endowment for further successful discoveries.

(Maggi Esho Nshanian is Diaspora Relations Administrator for the Zangezur Copper Molybdenum Combine.)





# AUA Holds 33<sup>rd</sup> Commencement Ceremony

YEREVAN, Armenia — On June 7, the American University of Armenia (AUA) held its 33rd commencement ceremony to bid farewell to the Class of 2025. Held in the AUA Large Auditorium, the ceremony was a triumphant salute to over 500 students receiving their degrees. Gracing the graduating class with their presence at the commencement were AUA President Emeritus Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian, outgoing Chair of the AUA Board of Trustees Dr. Lawrence Pitts, incoming Board Chair Zaven Paul Akian, and AUA trustees. The celebration, which was also live streamed, was attended by family and friends of graduates, as well as AUA community members.

AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian opened the ceremony with his congratulatory remarks: “Your academic journey has unfolded during a time of great uncertainty in world history. The instability, geopolitical tensions, economic disruptions, rising inequality, and environmental crises have had tangible ramifications on the environment in which your generation has come of age. In Armenia, these global uncertainties are compounded by the lingering effects of war, unresolved border tensions, political polarization, and severe economic inequality. Nevertheless, you have responded to this turbulence with remarkable resolve. You adapted, you persevered, and you

chose to build rather than retreat. Your pursuit of excellence, spirit of innovation, and deep sense of community are the defining features of the legacy you will leave in our University’s history.”

The President’s address was followed by farewell remarks by Dr. Pitts, in light of his retirement from the chairmanship of the AUA Board, a position which he held for 13 years. In this role, he is succeeded by Akian. “It has been a pleasure and an honor for me to have served on the Board of Trustees and represent the Board. The entire purpose of the Board is to support the University in its growth, its quality, and its ability to add to the quality of life in Armenia. I think you should be proud to be part of the growth of the University, from 500 graduate students when I first was associated, to 2,500 students now. It’s a powerful voice within the country, and you should be proud of it and take advantage of your graduation,” said Dr. Pitts.

After extending his gratitude to Dr. Pitts for his dedicated years of service to AUA, Akian outlined his “clear and steadfast” vision for the next chapter in the University’s history: preserving and championing the institution’s defining values and mission, in addition to realizing the goals outlined in AUA’s long-term Strategic Plan. “It is our responsibility to steer this Plan forward, ensuring that this University continues to

serve our bright young men and women, as a beacon of learning and opportunity, impacting Armenia, here in our homeland. Thank you for entrusting me in this role and for joining me in our shared commitment to the future of this great institution.”

Pitts then took the podium to deliver greetings from President of the University of California Dr. Michael V. Drake: “The regents, officers, and faculty of the University of California send cordial greetings to the American University of Armenia on the occasion of its ninth undergraduate commencement ceremony and its 33rd graduate commencement ceremony. The University of California community of learning extends warmest congratulations to the graduates and to their families on this joyous occasion and all good wishes for success in the years to come.”

This year’s commencement keynote speakers were Rev Lebedarian, vice president of Omniverse and Simulation Technology at NVIDIA, and Vahe Kuzoyan, co-founder and president of ServiceTitan.

In his commencement address, Lebedarian drew upon his storied career in the technological sector to impart advice on how to confront the proliferation of artificial intelligence in their careers. He urged students to preserve the human element in their work and embrace their love of learning

in order to harness budding technologies to their — and Armenia’s — advantage: “We are a startup country, and you are all the shareholders of this country. From my vantage point, you are a great bet. I am betting on you. Your family is betting on you. AUA is betting on you. We are all betting on you.”

In his turn, Kuzoyan shared a few vignettes from his life as the child of Armenian immigrants, recounting his own tumultuous journey from learning to code as a teen to co-founding his own business. Drawing on the instances of failure he experienced when starting ServiceTitan, Kuzoyan shared three pieces of advice to the graduates: to embrace risk, to find something worth obsessing over, and to embrace resilience through their identity. “My story is our story. As you think about how you’re going to write the rest of your story, know that you, too, are surrounded by people who want to see you succeed and who believe in you. Along the way, when life presents you a choice between playing it safe or taking a bet on yourself, I hope you overestimate yourself and find something worth suffering for.”

Keynote speeches were followed by valedictory addresses, in Armenian and English, delivered by undergraduates Anahit Arakelyan (BSN ’25) and Aleksandr Shahramanyan (BSDS ’25), and graduates Nune Poghosyan (LL.M. ’25) and Hermine Harutyunyan (MPA ’25), respectively.

The ceremony featured the presentation of several awards. The 2025 AUA Presidential Commendation award, which is inscribed on special paper made from flowers laid at the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial, recognizes and honors an individual who has made extraordinary contributions to education, research, and outreach that have particularly impacted Armenia. This year, the award was bestowed on Dr. Haroutune K. Armenian, AUA president emeritus and professor in the Turpanjian College of Health Sciences. Dr. Armenian served as University president from 1997-2009 and is currently a Professor in Residence of epidemiology at the University of California, Los Angeles Fielding School of Public Health and professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. As Dr. Armenian was unable to travel to Armenia this year, his granddaughter, Sareen Armenian, accepted the award on his behalf.

The Vartkess M. Balian Merit Award that recognizes the best overall performance of a student went to Nahapet Sukiasyan (LL.M. ’25), from the Master of Laws program. Teaching Excellence Awards were presented to Dr. Ashot Abrahamyan, assistant professor in the Zaven P. and Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering (CSE), and Dr. Nour Alayan, associate professor in the Turpanjian College of Health Sciences and chair of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. The Faculty Research Accomplishment Awards went to Dr. Knar Khachatryan, associate professor in the Manoogian Simone College of Business and Economics and academic director of the Office of Sponsored Programs and Technology Transfer, and Dr. Varduhi Yeghiazaryan, CSE associate professor.

The commencement ceremony culminated with the conferrals of certificates and degrees to the undergraduate and graduate classes of 2025. This year, the university graduated the first cohorts of the Bachelor of Arts in Politics and Governance, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Master of Arts in International Relations and Diplomacy, and Master of Arts in Public Affairs programs.

The commencement ceremony came to a close with the Class of 2025 graduates throwing their caps in the air.



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