

NEWS ANALYSIS:

Lots of Obstacles Still Stand in the Way of Armenia-Azerbaijani Peace

The geopolitical struggle among the United States, Russia and Iran is poised to intensify before any durable peace comes to the Caucasus.

The provisional peace deal signed August 8 at the White House by US President Donald Trump, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev is a potential diplomatic thunderbolt that transforms the Caucasus, giving the United States the upper hand in what traditionally has been Russia’s backyard and Iran’s playground. But it is important to understand that the August 8 Joint Declaration is merely the end of the beginning: there is a long way to go before the aspirations outlined in the document are fulfilled.

Though the three signatories to the Joint Declaration touted it as transformative, marking the dawn of an era of “eternal peace,” the document’s provisions are vague and non-binding. In effect, it is a memorandum of understanding, not a contract.

Pashinyan and Aliyev “initialed” what was described as a “peace agreement.” In fact, what they signed was a pledge to keep on talking about a lasting settlement, adding little to what the two had already stated many times previously.

“We acknowledged the need to continue further actions to achieve the signing and ultimate ratification of the [Peace] Agreement, and emphasized the importance of maintaining and strengthening peace between our two countries,” the Joint Declaration reads.

It is worth noting that the Joint Declaration does not mention the main obstacle believed to be preventing the signing of a peace treaty — Azerbaijan’s demand that Armenia amend its constitution to unequivocally recognize Baku’s sovereignty over the Nagorno

see OBSTACLES, page 7



From left, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Washington

Pashinyan Reaffirms Armenian Sovereignty Over Transit Route After US-Brokered Deal with Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON (Azatutyun) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reaffirmed that any transit route through Armenia, agreed upon following talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in the presence of US President Donald Trump, will respect Armenia’s sovereignty, jurisdiction and territorial integrity.

The agreement, reached during US-hosted negotiations on August 8, grants the United States exclusive rights to oversee the implementation of a transit road through Armenia’s southern Syunik province. The road is intended to provide unimpeded connectivity between mainland Azerbaijan and its western Nakhichevan exclave “with reciprocal benefits for international and intra-state connectivity for the Republic of Armenia.”

The full text of the agreement was released on August 11 and can be seen on this page.

see PEACE, page 2

AGREEMENT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE AND INTER-STATE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

The Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan (hereinafter, the Parties),

Realizing the urgent necessity of the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region;

Desiring to contribute to that end through the establishment of inter-state relations;

Being guided by the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (1970), the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (1975), and the Almaty Declaration of 21 December 1991, and aiming to develop relations on the basis of norms and principles enshrined therein;

Expressing their mutual will to establish good-neighborliness between them;

see AGREEMENT, page 3

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Gather for 107th Grand Convocation in Washington

WASHINGTON — The 107th Annual Grand Convocation of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan took place July 14 to 20 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Bringing together over 210 delegates and members from across the country, the weeklong event featured strategic planning sessions, training workshops, annual reports, and special recognitions honoring exceptional service and contributions. The Knights also elected a new slate of leaders promising regenerative change. Over 300 attendees at the Saturday gala banquet heard Woman of the Year Annie Simonian Totah’s historic speech on her 25-year leadership role.

Newly elected Grand Commander (Avak Sbarabed) Robert M. Avakian of Boston presented a four-part plan for the next 2-3 years, which begins with analysis of the mission of the organization and how best to serve it. He declared that the target audience should be re-examined and through a rebranding process the Knights will work better to strengthen our communities in this country and Armenia.

Secondly, the Knights will seek support from outside their membership, first finding professional grant writers to apply to charitable foundations and groups for contributions towards their programs. Joint ventures will also be explored.

Thirdly, cooperation with Armenian churches of all denominations will be strengthened and expanded, with clergy encouraged to work together for the mutual benefit of our community and churches.

Fourthly, Avakian said that a national prayer day, days, or week should be created in the US to commemorate victims of genocide and hate crimes. This would be an ecumenical prayer time led by globally known Armenian clerical leaders as well as local priests. The promotion of acts of kindness and mercy can become a positive way for the Knights to light a candle wherever they have a presence in the world.

see CONVOCATION, page 10

BEIJING


Generation AI Students Win Bronze Medal at The International Olympiad



Page 5

VATICAN

Vatican Ties With Azerbaijan Under Fire



Page 6

BOSTON

Intersection of Arts And Science: Healing Children Through Music Therapy



Page 13



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenian, Iranian FMs Talk Regional Connectivity

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan held a phone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi on August 11, discussing the outcomes of the August 8 meetings in Washington. The talks covered agreements on unblocking and developing regional communications, as well as the follow-up work required.

Mirzoyan stressed that, as Armenia has repeatedly stated, and as reflected in the Washington Declaration, all infrastructure operations — including those built in Armenia with American partnership — will take place within the framework of the countries' territorial integrity, sovereignty, and jurisdiction.

He thanked Araghchi for his principled remarks regarding the Washington agreements. The two ministers also exchanged views on preparing for upcoming consultations and high-level contacts between Armenia and Iran.

Garó Paylan Calls For Armenia-Turkey Border Opening

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Former Turkish parliament member Garó Paylan, of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, has called on President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to open the border with Armenia. He made the statement on his X (formerly Twitter) account on August 12.

"Azerbaijan and Armenia's leaders signed a historic agreement in the presence of U.S. President Donald Trump, ending decades of hostility. Our duty is to take immediate steps to make this peace lasting. Mr. Erdoğan, open the Turkey-Armenia border immediately, unite the peoples of Armenia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. Let's take this step right now," his post read.

Armenian, Russian FMs Discuss Deal

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On August 11, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan held a phone conversation with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Following up on the recent conversation between the two countries' leaders, Mirzoyan briefed his Russian counterpart on the agreements reached in Washington on August 8, notably the initialing of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty, the joint proposal to dissolve the OSCE Minsk process and related structures, and the reaffirmed fundamental principles on unblocking regional communications.

Mirzoyan thanked Lavrov for his congratulations and support at this important stage.



From left, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Washington

Pashinyan Reaffirms Armenian Sovereignty Over Transit Route After US-Brokered Deal with Azerbaijan

PEACE, from page 1

Opposition groups in Armenia criticized the agreement, calling it a concession to Azerbaijan and raising doubts about its potential to secure lasting peace in the South Caucasus.

Answering questions from the media hours after the signing of the joint declaration at the White House, Pashinyan said the document did not include technical details but emphasized that all future solutions must align with the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and jurisdiction of the States.

Pashinyan said the inclusion of such wording, along with Trump's verbal reiteration of the same principles, addressed public concerns over the implications of the transit project.

"We have not gone into details at this stage," Pashinyan said. "But whatever the solutions that we will discuss are, they must be within the principles of sovereignty, jurisdiction, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders and be applied on the basis of reciprocity."

At the same time, he did not rule out the use of advanced border technologies to reduce contact with entities using the transit route.

Pashinyan described the Washington agreement as a historic opportunity for Armenia, stating that it would unlock regional trade routes and deliver economic and security benefits.

"We are getting a railway connection with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is very important. We are getting a railway connection with Central Asia, through a ferry line. Also, China is getting a new railway route to the West, which it does not have at the moment," he said, suggesting that the project could create opportunities for broader international cooperation, including between Iran and the United States and Russia and the United States.

Pashinyan added that the project, dubbed the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), has no military component and poses no threat to Iran.

Opposition figures in Armenia have voiced strong objections to the agreement, warning that it effectively creates an extraterritorial corridor through Armenian territory — a claim the government denies.

Tigran Abrahamyan, a member of the opposition Pativ Unem faction in parliament, questioned the special status of the 43-kilometer section of the road crossing Syunik.

"No matter how hard the sides try to show that this is not about a corridor, given everything that is taking place on the ground and

is being presented, it can be viewed more within the corridor logic than the logic of a regular road," Abrahamyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Kristine Vardanyan, of the opposition Hayastan faction, argued that the agreement strengthens the positions of Azerbaijan and the



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan holds a signed trilateral declaration during a ceremony with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and US President Donald Trump at the White House, Washington, August 8, 2025.

United States, while Armenia's gains remain questionable.

"The fact is that Aliyev has got what he demanded: an unimpeded connectivity through Armenian territory, as stated in the joint trilateral declaration, as well as a [joint] application to dissolve the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group," Maru said, referring to the only international mediating body, spearheaded by the United States, France and Russia, that had for decades sought a negotiated settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

"The American side gained an image advantage, appearing as the party bringing peace to the region. And Armenia in fact once again gains nothing, which is why we are talking about unilateral concessions," the opposition lawmaker added.

Edmon Marukyan, leader of the extra-parliamentary Bright Armenia party and a former ambassador-at-large in the Pashinyan administration, also voiced criticism of the agreement. He noted that the transit arrangement was signed not only with the United States but also with Azerbaijan, arguing that this effectively gives Baku a role in the infrastructure passing through Armenian territory.

"This means that the Republic of Armenia makes the state of Azerbaijan a stakeholder on the communication passing through

continued on next page



ARMENIA

AGREEMENT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE AND INTER-STATE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

AGREEMENT, from page 1
Have agreed to establish peace and inter-state relations between them on the basis of the following:

ARTICLE I

Having confirmed that the boundaries between the Soviet Socialist Republics of the former USSR became the international borders of respective independent states and have been recognized as such by the international community, the Parties recognize and shall respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of international borders and political independence of each other;

ARTICLE II

In full compliance with Article I, the Parties confirm that they do not have any territorial claims to each other and shall not raise any such claims in the future.
The Parties shall not undertake any act, including planning, preparing, encouraging and supporting such acts, which aim to dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of the other Party;

ARTICLE III

The Parties, in their mutual relations, shall refrain from the use of force or the threat of use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations. They shall not allow any third Party to use their respective territories for using force against the other Party inconsistent with the UN Charter;

ARTICLE IV

The Parties shall refrain from intervening with the internal affairs of each other;

ARTICLE V

Within ____ days after the exchange of instruments of ratification of this Agreement by both Parties, the Parties shall establish diplomatic relations between them in accordance with the provisions of the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations (1961 and 1963, respectively);

ARTICLE VI

In full compliance with their obligations under Article I of the present Agreement, the Parties shall conduct in good faith negotiations between the respective border commissions in accordance with the agreed upon regulations of the Commissions to conclude the Agreement on delimitation and demarcation of the state border between the Parties;

ARTICLE VII

The Parties shall not deploy along their mutual border forces of any third party. The Parties, pending the delimitation and subsequent demarcation of their mutual border, shall implement mutually agreed security and confidence-building measures, including in the military field, with a view to ensuring security and stability in the border regions;

ARTICLE VIII

The Parties condemn and shall combat intolerance, racial hatred and discrimination, separatism, violent extremism and terrorism in all their manifestations within their respective jurisdictions, and shall uphold their applicable international obligations;

ARTICLE IX

The Parties undertake to address the cases of missing persons and enforced disappearances taken place in the armed conflict which involved both of the Parties, including through the exchange of all available information about these persons, directly or in cooperation with relevant international organizations, as appropriate. The Parties, hereby, acknowledge the importance of investigating the fate of those persons, including searching for and returning the remains as appropriate and ensuring that justice is served in relation to these persons through proper investigations, as a means of recon-

ciliation and building confidence. Corresponding modalities, in this regard, shall be negotiated and agreed upon in detail in a separate agreement;

ARTICLE X

In order to establish cooperation in various fields, including economic, transit and transport, environmental, humanitarian and cultural, the Parties may conclude agreements in respective areas of mutual interest;

ARTICLE XI

The present Agreement does not infringe upon the rights and obligations of the Parties under international law and treaties concluded by each one of them with other UN Member-States. Each Party shall ensure that none of the international engagements now in force between it and any third party undermine its obligations taken under this Agreement;

ARTICLE XII

The Parties in their bilateral relations shall be guided by international law and this Agreement. None of the Parties may invoke the provisions of its internal legislation as justification for its failure to perform the present Agreement.

The Parties, in accordance with the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), shall refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of this Agreement prior to its entry into force;

ARTICLE XIII

The Parties guarantee the full implementation of this Agreement and shall establish a bilateral commission to oversee implementation of the present Agreement. The Commission shall work on the basis of modalities to be agreed upon by the Parties;

ARTICLE XIV

Without prejudice to their rights and obligations under international law and other treaties which bind them in their mutual relations, the Parties shall strive for settling any dispute with respect to the interpretation or application of this Agreement through direct consultations, including within the Commission referred to in Article XIII. Should such consultations not yield result acceptable for both Parties within 6 months, the Parties shall seek other means of peaceful dispute settlement;

ARTICLE XV

Without prejudice to Article XIV, the Parties shall withdraw, dismiss, or otherwise settle any and all interstate claims, complaints, protests, objections, proceedings, and disputes related to the issues existed between the Parties before the signing of this Agreement in any legal forum within one month from the date of entry into force of this Agreement and shall not initiate such claims, complaints, protests, objections, proceedings, and shall not be involved in any manner into such claims, complaints, protests, objections, proceedings initiated against the other Party by any third-party.

The Parties shall not take, encourage or be involved in any manner in any hostile action against each other contrary to the present Agreement in diplomatic, information and other fields and shall conduct regular consultations to this end;

ARTICLE XVI

The Agreement shall enter into force after the exchange of instruments notifying about the completion of the internal procedures in line with the national legislations of the Parties. This Agreement shall be registered in conformity with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations;

ARTICLE XVII

The present Agreement is concluded in the Armenian, Azerbaijani and English languages, with all three texts being equally authentic. In case of divergence as to the meaning of a provision under any of the authentic texts, the English text shall prevail.

Date, venue

(Text from mfa.am)

from previous page
its territory and it is not defined under any norm of our Constitution, our legislation and it is impossible to imagine even in the worst nightmare,” Marukyan said.

Azerbaijani Constitutional Demands

Following his talks with Pashinyan in Washington, Aliyev indicated late on August 8 that the signing of an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty remains conditional on a change of Armenia’s constitution.

The treaty was initiated, rather than signed, during the talks hosted by US President Donald Trump at the White House. In a separate joint declaration, Aliyev and Pashinyan “acknowledged the need to continue further actions towards the signing and final ratification of the Treaty.”

“After appropriate changes are made to the Armenian constitution, the peace treaty can be signed at any time,” Aliyev told Azerbaijani media.

“I have no doubt that in the event of a change in the Armenian constitution — and the Armenian side itself declares the need for such changes — territorial claims against Azerbaijan will be removed from it,” he said. “Otherwise, it would, first of all, be disrespectful towards the United States.”

Aliyev specifically wants Yerevan to remove a constitutional preamble that mentions Armenia’s 1990 declaration of independence, which in turn cites a 1989 unification act adopted by the legislative bodies of Soviet Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. The only legal way to do that is to adopt a new constitution.

Pashinyan has repeatedly denied that the preamble amounts to territorial claims to Azerbaijan. Even so, he has pledged to try to enact a new constitution through a referendum. It remains to be seen whether he will hold the referendum simultaneously with Armenia’s next parliamentary elections due in June 2026.

Armenia’s leading opposition groups have vowed to scuttle the adoption of the new constitution which they believe is imposed by Baku. They say that Pashinyan’s appeasement policy will not bring real peace and only encourages Aliyev to demand more concessions from Yerevan.

TRIPP of a Lifetime

At the tripartite meeting, Trump emphasized that the “momentous” declaration also calls for the opening of a “special transitory that will allow Azerbaijan to get full access to its Nakhichevan territory while fully respecting Armenia’s sovereignty.” Armenia will establish an “exclusive partnership with the United States to develop this corridor, which could extend for up to 99 years,” he said, seemingly confirming reports about a long-term lease on the transit routes sought by Washington.

The US government is reportedly planning to sublease the land to a consortium of private companies. Trump said American companies are already prepared to invest “a lot of money” in what has been officially named the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP).

Aliyev, who has been pressuring Yerevan to open an extraterritorial corridor to Nakhichevan, stressed the im-

portance of the TRIPP in his remarks at the ceremony. Pashinyan also touted the transit arrangement condemned by his domestic critics as a sellout.

“Today we reached a significant milestone in Armenia-Azerbaijan relations,” he said.

The corridor would pass through Syunik, the only Armenian region bordering Iran. Armenian opposition leaders say US administration of the movement of people and cargo to and from Nakhichevan would undermine Armenian sovereignty over Syunik. They say it would also put Armenia at loggerheads with Russia and neighboring Iran.

Key details of the TRIPP are not yet known, with the Armenian-Azerbaijani declaration making only a general reference to it. Earlier on Friday, CNN quoted an unnamed Trump administration official as saying that Washington and Yerevan will set up working groups to “fully implement the details of the roadmap over the coming months.”

The legally non-binding declaration does not address other thorny issues such as the delineation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border or the release of at least 23 Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan. Nor does it say anything about Nagorno-Karabakh and its ethnic Armenian population that was forced to flee to Armenia following the September 2023 offensive that restored Azerbaijan’s full control over the region.

During a news conference at the White House, a Western journalist wondered whether the Karabakh Armenians will be allowed to return to their homeland. Both Aliyev and Pashinyan ignored the question.



ARMENIA

Russia Claims Trilateral Agreements With Armenia, Azerbaijan ‘Still Valid’

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Russia has warned that any reconciliation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan “must be situated within the regional context” and stressed that Moscow’s trilateral agreements with the two South Caucasus nations remain valid.

Moscow’s reaction came after an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal was announced at a Washington meeting hosted by US President Donald Trump late last week.

In an August 9 comment Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that neither Armenia, nor Azerbaijan has formally withdrawn from the 2020 agreement that Moscow brokered to stop a six-week war over Nagorno-Karabakh that included a provision regarding regional connectivity with Russian involvement.

After initialing a peace agreement at a ceremony in the White House on August 8, Armenia and Azerbaijan also signed a declaration along with the United States under which Armenia pledged to give the United States exclusive rights to a transit route — named the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) — through its territory, which Azerbaijan has demanded as a transport corridor to its western exclave of Nakhichevan.

Observers said the Washington deal undermines Russia’s hopes of reverting to previous agreements regarding the deploy-

ment of its border troops along the route — a role that appears to have been effectively rejected by both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“We will carefully assess Washington’s statements regarding the restoration of regional communications. The trilateral agreements with Russia remain valid, as neither party has formally withdrawn from them,” Zakharova said.

She reminded that Armenia is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, a Russia-led trade grouping of five post-Soviet nations, and has commitments in terms of the single customs space, including the regulation of transit operations through its territory. She also stressed that Armenia’s border with Iran remains under the protection of Russian border troops under a 1992 interstate treaty.

“The most suitable option to resolve the problems in the South Caucasus is to search for and implement solutions developed by the region’s countries themselves, with support from their direct neighbors — Russia, Iran and Turkey,” Zakharova said.

Earlier, while welcoming the finalization of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Iran also voiced its misgivings regarding a US role in the transit route in Armenia’s Syunik region bordering the Islamic Republic.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the finalization of a peace agreement between the two countries, considering it an important step towards achieving lasting

peace in the region,” read a statement released by the Iranian Foreign Ministry over the weekend.

“At the same time, the Islamic Republic expresses concern over the negative consequences of any form of foreign intervention, especially near its shared borders, that could undermine the security and lasting stability of the region,” it said.

Later, according to Iran’s Mehr news agency, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Tehran’s demands in relation to a corridor agreed upon by Armenia and Azerbaijan have been met.

“Of course, this corridor is not what has been exaggerated about in the news,” he said.

“The framework of preserving territorial integrity, establishing a connection with Europe, and not cutting off it with the north, which was meant by the Islamic Republic, have been witnessed in this issue.”

“The only matter of concern is that an Armenian company and an American company want to build this road,” Pezeshkian added.

Answering questions from the media on Saturday, August 9, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan insisted that the TRIPP would actually provide more opportunities for regional countries like Russia and Iran.

“This project can become a good opportunity to start economic cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and

the United States, and between the Russian Federation and the United States,” he said, stressing that the TRIPP has no military component and poses no threat to Iran.

The West and most regional countries have welcomed the outcomes of the Washington meeting, including the initialization of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The European Union, in particular, described the signing of the political declaration by Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, in the presence of President Trump in the White House, as “a major development for both Armenia and Azerbaijan, paving the way to lasting, sustainable peace for both countries and across the entire region.”

In their joint statement, European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that “it will now be important to ensure the timely implementation of the agreed steps to guarantee steady and uninterrupted progress towards full-fledged normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

“The EU strongly supports the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process and stands ready to invest in regional connectivity and full opening, to benefit first and foremost populations divided by conflict legacies, and to bring the region closer to sustainable peace, stability, and prosperity,” the EU leaders said.

Armenian Court Rules Samvel Karapetyan’s Arrest Unlawful

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — On Monday, August 11, the lawyers of detained Russian-Armenian tycoon Samvel Karapetyan announced that the Armenian Court of Criminal Appeals decided that Karapetyan’s arrest “was unlawful”. In turn, Armenian authorities vowed to appeal the decision.

Karapetyan was detained on 18 June, a



Samvel Karapetyan

day after making a statement in defense of the church in its confrontation with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Following his viral remarks, his house in Yerevan was raided and he was taken into custody and charged with calling for the usurpation of power in Armenia.

In the aftermath of his arrest, after several raids and inspections in his businesses in Armenia, Karapetyan faced a second set of charges — money laundering.

On Monday, Karapetyan’s lawyer Liana Gasparyan noted in her Facebook post that with the court’s verdict considering Karapetyan’s arrest “unlawful” confirmed the tycoon was “illegally held in detention” for over nine hours on 18 June.

“Despite this, Samvel Karapetyan has remained in detention for 53 days now. His detention has not been lifted as of this

moment, and most likely, under the current circumstances, a motion to extend it will be submitted,” Karapetyan’s legal team wrote in a separate Facebook post.

The lawyers further noted that the Court of Criminal Appeals previously ruled that the authorities’ raid of his house was unlawful as well.

Following statements by Karapetyan’s team, the Prosecutor General’s Office vowed to appeal the court’s decision.

In an interview with state-run media Armenpress, the Armenian authorities dismissed Karapetyan’s lawyers’ claim that he is being illegally detained.

Armenpress quoted the Prosecutor General’s Office as saying that Karapetyan was released following his initial arrest on 18 June and was later detained “on a different basis, which they claimed was recognized as lawful, including through the outcome of the

subsequent appeal”.

However the authorities did not elaborate on the details of the case.

The contradictory statements of the Armenian government and Karapetyan’s lawyers over the court ruling are not unprecedented, with the two sides most recently disputing over what appears to be their interpretation of an international arbitration case regarding Karapetyan’s management of the Electric Networks of Armenia.

Additionally, on Monday, Kareptyan’s defense group shared a video showing Robert Amsterdam, a controversial American lawyer, arriving in Yerevan. Amsterdam was previously hired by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s government for a case against Erdoğan’s foe, Fethullah Gülen, and was also involved in a number of other controversial cases. (See story in

Armenian Volunteer Network Celebrates Fifth Anniversary

YEREVAN — The Armenian Volunteer Network (AMVN) cofounders Seroj Terian, Kristina Terian, and Hasmik Torosyan recently gathered in Yerevan with a group of volunteers, students and partners to celebrate AMVN’s 5th anniversary.

AMVN is an educational nonprofit founded in 2020 by educators in the US and Armenia with the goal of improving educational opportunities for Armenian students and create ties between the people of Armenia and the rest of the world.

They do so by recruiting, training, and linking volunteers with Armenian universities, institutions and organizations where they can teach and share their knowledge. They also focus on training educators in Armenia so they become the best teachers they can be.

Seroj Terian stressed that the organization assumes everyone can volunteer and contribute. “You don’t need to be a

teacher or have a PhD to make a difference. If you’re a native English speaker, you can help students in Armenia learn English. If you’re fluent in another language, you can teach that language. If you are a computer programmer, a lawyer, a singer, a graphic designer – you get the idea,” he said.

Volunteers come from all over the world. Each volunteer applicant is interviewed, and then he or she is paired with an educational need in Armenia which would complement their strengths. They conduct the matching through partnerships in Armenia with primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities, NGOs and cultural institutions.

Most volunteers teach remotely, once or twice a week, via Zoom. They can also choose to volunteer in-person. Instructors have been sent to Yerevan, Gyumri and Ijevan, among other locales.

To volunteer, find out more or to do-



Celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Armenian Volunteer Network



INTERNATIONAL



Armenian representatives at IOAI

Generation AI Students Win Bronze Medal at the International Olympiad in Artificial Intelligence

YEREVAN/BEIJING — A team of Armenian high school students from the Generation AI program represented the country at the International Olympiad in Artificial Intelligence (IOAI), held August 2–9 in Beijing, and returned with a bronze medal.

The team was formed from 11th-grade students of the Generation AI program, jointly implemented by the Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST) and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia. The selection was based on the results of a local stage involving around 400 participants. As part of this process, FAST

16th, while in the individual competition, Aram Amirkhanyan earned a bronze medal.

Now in only its second year — the inaugural Olympiad was held in Bulgaria in 2024 — the IOAI has quickly earned a reputation for its complexity. This year’s format featured three stages: three home assignments in July; an on-site team challenge in two parts, a simulation exercise and the Galbot robot; and six individual AI tasks, also completed in two stages. “This is a very important achievement for Armenia, marking our country’s entry onto the international map of nations leading in artificial intelligence,” said Anush Ayvazyan,



Aram Amirkhanyan

on the experience: “The students’ strong baseline preparation enabled them to reach a significant level in a short period. The team demonstrated strong AI knowledge and creative approaches to applied problem-solving.”

“While we focused on a deep understanding of the subject this time, future competitions will also demand sharp competitive abilities such as precise prompt engineering and advanced programming. This first experience will serve as a foundation for achieving even greater results in the future.”

Launched in 2023, Generation AI High School Project is now available in all regions of Armenia, across 19 cities and 23 schools. The program makes Armenia one of the few countries in the world — alongside China and the United States — to integrate AI education in the school curriculum.

FAST was founded in 2017 with the aim of creating a favorable ecosystem to promote technological innovation and scientific advancement in Armenia. FAST develops and pilots programs with the potential for a long-term, sustainable impact on Armenia’s science, technology, and innovation ecosystem. Over its eight years of operation, the foundation has implemented 30 programs and impacted more than 24,000 beneficiaries.



Generation AI students at AI Olympiad in China

obtained accreditation and became the official representative of the Olympiad in Armenia.

Competing against 80 teams from more than 60 countries, four students — Aram Amirkhanyan, Seryozha Nazaryan, Vahe Pluzyan, and Davit Jaghatspanyan, from Vanadzor’s Evrika and High School No. 11 — completed the challenges under the guidance of their AI teacher, Tigran Ishkhanyan.

In the team competition, Armenia placed

FAST’s Head of Education Programs.

“In particular, the Olympiad’s challenges required not only general literacy in AI but also deep algorithmic and mathematical thinking. Unlike many other countries that relied on extracurricular training, our team included students from the regions who had studied AI as part of their academic curriculum, and with only a short period of additional preparation, they were ready to compete and succeed.”

Coach Tigran Ishkhanyan reflected

INTERNATIONAL

Iran President to Visit Armenia

YEREVAN (News.am) — Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian will pay a visit to Armenia from August 18 to 21.

As part of the Iranian president’s visit, an Armenian-Iranian business forum will be held in Yerevan on August 19.

Georgia Deports 34 Foreigners

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — In recent days, Georgia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs Migration Department carried out comprehensive operations resulting in the deportation of 34 foreign nationals, including citizens of Armenia, on August 12.

Among those deported also were nationals of India, Russia, Nigeria, Iran, Egypt and Azerbaijan.

Mirzoyan Meets with Omani Deputy FM

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan received Omani Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa al-Harthy, who is in Yerevan for Armenia-Oman political consultations, the Armenian Foreign Ministry announced, on August 12.

The sides discussed new opportunities for expanding cooperation between the two countries.

Referring to the results of last week’s meetings in Washington, Minister Mirzoyan presented Armenia’s views on the international situation and its vision for establishing lasting peace in the region.

Macron Reaffirms Support for Armenia’s Territorial Integrity

PARIS (News.am) — On August 11, French President Emmanuel Macron wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, that he had spoken with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan following the meeting held in Washington on August 8.

Macron wrote, “I once again welcomed the agreement reached, thanks to the commitment of the United States, between Armenia and Azerbaijan with a view to normalizing relations between the two countries. I hope that this agreement can quickly lead to the signing and ratification of a Peace Treaty that respects everyone’s interests.”

He added, “In this context, I reaffirmed my full support for respecting Armenia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as France’s commitment to peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus. I also reiterated our readiness to support and contribute to ongoing efforts, including those aimed at the strengthening of interconnections, in conjunction with all regional stakeholders and partners. We ultimately agreed to continue to deepen our bilateral relations in all domains, following the Prime Minister’s visit to Paris on July 14.”



INTERNATIONAL

Vatican Ties with Azerbaijan under Fire amid Accusations of Cultural Genocide

By Claire Giangrave

VATICAN (Religion News Service) — As President Donald Trump hosts peace talks this week with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, two former Soviet states that have been in conflict for decades, Armenian activists continue to raise the alarm about the Vatican's growing financial ties with Azerbaijan. They say the relationship is part of Azerbaijan's broader effort to use its oil wealth to deflect criticism of human rights abuses and religious freedom violations.

The Vatican has received substantial Azerbaijani funding to restore holy sites in Rome and Europe. According to the Investigative Reporting Projects Italy, Azerbaijan has spent roughly 640,000 euros restoring Vatican-owned catacombs (most recently the Catacombs of St. Callistus), masterpieces of the Vatican Museums and numerous books and manuscripts in the Vatican's Library. Azerbaijan also funded the restoration of a bas-relief adorning

Since the 1980s, Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought wars over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, historically inhabited by both Armenian Christians and Azerbaijani Muslims. In 2023, Azerbaijan launched a military offensive and took control of the region, displacing more than 100,000 Armenians and destroying a number of Christian sites, including churches and cemeteries. Azerbaijani authorities argued that some of the Armenian Christian sites, such as the Gandzasar Monastery, were examples of Caucasian Albanian heritage and accused Armenia of falsifying historical inscriptions. These claims were disputed by Armenian and UNESCO representatives.

Azerbaijan has also come under fire by humanitarian groups and watchdog agencies for its arrests of journalists and other opposition figures. The U.S. Commission of International Religious Freedom listed the country, which requires religious groups to register with the government in order to operate legally, as "of particular

The Vatican did not respond to requests in time for the publication of this article.

Azerbaijan has been campaigning to restore its credibility among Western nations for decades, under the leadership of Ilham Aliyev, who succeeded his father, Heydar Aliyev, as president in 2003. Leveraging its significant oil reserves, the country's efforts to coax Western alliances through generous donations and lavish gifts has been dubbed by critics as "caviar diplomacy."

Meanwhile, relations with the Holy See have been quietly growing, with a new memorandum signed July 25 underscoring their joint commitment to interreligious dialogue. Cardinal George Koovakad, prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, praised the document as "a valuable instrument for promoting the principle of religious freedom."

"The Vatican has been receiving money from Azerbaijan for some time," said Orthodox Archbishop Vicken Aykazian of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, in an April interview with the Pillar. In the in-

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and the head of the department for Eastern Churches, Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, who was the papal representative to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the early 2000s.

During an official visit to the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in November 2024, Gugerotti praised the "policy of multiculturalism led by the government of Azerbaijan, the peaceful co-existence of representatives of different religions in the country, and the freedom of religion (as) the biggest contribution to peace," according to the foundation's website.

Gugerotti also thanked the foundation for building the new Catholic church in Baku.

Relations between Azerbaijan and the Holy See began in 1992, after it gained its independence from the Soviet Union. The now-Saint Pope John Paul II was the first pontiff to visit the country in 2002, which helped gain recognition for the Catholic community there. Pope Francis visited Baku in 2016, where he praised Azerbaijan as an example "that among followers of different religious confessions, cordial relations, respect and cooperation for the common good are possible."

The Vatican's balancing act has created tensions. Pope Francis twice used the word "genocide" to describe the 1915-1917 mass killings of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire, despite Turkish objections. But Vatican officials have been more circumspect about Azerbaijan's recent actions against the Armenians.

Parolin visited both countries in July 2023, following the events of the Nagorno-Karabakh. In Baku, where Parolin celebrated the 30th anniversary of the relations between the Vatican and Azerbaijan, the country's leaders rejected accusations of cultural genocide and accused Armenia of a "slander campaign." In Armenia, Parolin acknowledged the "tragedy" of the Armenian genocide and promised the Holy See's support. He also met with Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians at the Holy Etchmiadzin Mother See, who highlighted the crisis of Azerbaijan's blockage of the Lachin Corridor, which provides recourse to the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Parolin emphasized the importance of having a permanent representation of the Holy See in the Armenian capital of Yerevan to improve relations.

Despite diplomatic efforts by the Holy See, the relationship remains skewed in favor of Azerbaijan, which continues to funnel funds into the Catholic coffers. An article published in Vatican newspaper *l'Osservatore Romano* in July 2024 referred to ancient Armenian monasteries from the 9th-13th centuries in the Nagorno-Karabakh region as Caucasian Albanian.

"You can't preach coexistence and then ink deals with a government that is destroying Christian churches," Pechdimaldji said. "The Vatican isn't just any government. It has a holy responsibility," he added.

While experts predict the Trump-hosted talks are unlikely to produce a breakthrough — Azerbaijan demands Armenia amend its constitution before signing any peace treaty — the meeting has put new scrutiny on Azerbaijan's international relationships, including with the Vatican.

"The Vatican needs to be careful who it aligns itself with," Pechdimaldji said. "When you're sitting at the same table with Trump and Aliyev and calling it peace, you're legitimizing people who have no interest in actual peace."



An Armenian man dismantles a cross from the roof of his house in Karmiravan village, as ethnic Armenians leave the area prior to the Azerbaijani forces being handed control in the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020. (AP Photo/Sergei Grits)

St. Peter's Basilica depicting Pope Leo I's meeting with Attila the Hun.

"They're using their donations and their money to the Vatican to whitewash what they've done, to whitewash the destruction of Armenian heritage, to whitewash the ethnic cleansing that they've committed," said Armenian-American Stephan Pechdimaldji, a communications strategist.

Over 350 scholars and professionals worldwide, including Pechdimaldji, denounced the Holy See in an April letter, accusing it of "moral bankruptcy" for hosting a conference, "Christianity in Azerbaijan: History and Modernity," which they said legitimized the Muslim-majority country's "cultural genocide" against Christian ethnic Armenians.

"Of all institutions, of all places in the world that you would think would side with us, you would think the Vatican would be on our side," said Pechdimaldji, whose grandparents survived the Armenian Genocide of the early 20th century.

concern" in 2024 and kept it on its watchlist in 2025 for violations of religious freedom. In 2024, when Azerbaijan hosted the COP29 United Nations climate summit in its capital, Baku, activists and global leaders called out the human rights violations in the country, but many religious groups stayed silent.

Pechdimaldji said many Armenians, including the diaspora, feel "disappointment" at the Vatican's acceptance of Azerbaijan's donations. "They are doing what other countries have been doing — turning a blind eye because of Azerbaijan's resources," he said.

The Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the Holy See, Ilqar Muxtarov, and the Apostolic Prefecture of Azerbaijan did not respond to Religion News Services' request for comment.

The Armenian Ambassador to the Holy See, Boris Sahakyan, told RNS that he was not available for an interview until September.

interview, Aykazian pointed to the recent restoration of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome made possible through Azerbaijani funds.

The Azerbaijan donations flow through the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, run by Azerbaijan's first lady, Mehriban Aliyeva, who is also the vice president of the country. In February 2020, she was awarded the highest civilian honor offered by the Holy See, the Papal Order of Knighthood of Pope Pius IX, just months before the country launched one of its efforts to capture Nagorno-Karabakh.

For the Vatican, the relationship with Azerbaijan offers quick cash for its struggling finances, but it's also a continuation of the Ostpolitik launched by Cardinal Agostino Casaroli in the 1960s, aimed at improving relations with Communist countries in Eastern Europe. Today, similar efforts are led by the head of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, the Vatican's Secretary of State,

INTERNATIONAL

Pashinyan Briefs Iranian, Russian Leaders on Washington Talks

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had phone meetings with the leaders of Iran and Russia on Monday, August 11, to brief them on the results of recent negotiations with Azerbaijan hosted by the United States.

Earlier, both Iran and Russia had voiced concerns about a US role in a proposed transit route through Armenia, which Azerbaijan has demanded as a link to its Nakhichevan exclave.

In a declaration signed by Pashinyan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and US President Donald Trump in Washington on August 9, Armenia, in particular, pledged to grant the United States exclusive rights to this connectivity project, which has been dubbed the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) in honor of the US leader.

While speaking to journalists on Sunday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian acknowledged that Armenia and Azerbaijan had met Tehran’s demands not to jeopardize its northern border connections, he still expressed concern over a US role in

building the road through Armenia’s southern Syunik province, which borders the Islamic Republic.

Russia, meanwhile, quickly reminded both Armenia and Azerbaijan that their trilateral agreements signed in 2020 remained valid, noting that neither party has formally withdrawn from them. The agreements, which ended a six-week Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Nagorno-Karabakh, included provisions for regional connectivity with Russian involvement.

“We will carefully assess Washington’s statements regarding the restoration of regional communications,” Maria Zakharova, a spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, said in a comment released on Saturday, August 9.

She added that “the most suitable option to resolve the problems in the South Caucasus is to search for and implement solutions developed by the region’s countries themselves, with support from their direct neighbors - Russia, Iran, and Turkey.”

According to Pashinyan’s press office, while briefing Pezeshkian on the results of

the recent negotiations in Washington, the Armenian leader highlighted “the opportunities that peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan opens up for the region.”

He reportedly stressed that “regional communication channels will operate within the framework of the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and jurisdiction of countries, and on the basis of reciprocity.”

The press release also noted that Pashinyan thanked the Iranian leader for his “objective assessment of the Washington agreements” and underlined the importance of Pezeshkian’s upcoming visit to Armenia.

According to Iran’s Mehr news agency, during the phone call Pezeshkian emphasized the preservation of Armenia’s sovereignty over the transit route and the non-interference of any military or security force in its implementation.

“It must be ensured that this path will truly be a path of peace and development, not a tool for achieving the hegemonic goals of foreigners,” he added.

In his phone call with Putin, Pashinyan reportedly presented “the results of the negotiations held on August 8, 2025 in the US capital Washington, in particular the initialization of the “Agreement on Peace and Interstate Relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan,” the joint application to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the dissolution of its Minsk Group’s mechanisms, the unblocking of regional communications within the framework of the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and jurisdiction of countries and on the basis of reciprocity. as well as the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity” project.

He reportedly expressed conviction that the establishment of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan “opens up new opportunities not only for Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also for all countries in the region.”

Pashinyan reportedly presented the results of the Washington talks also in phone calls with other world leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Turkey Hails US-brokered Azerbaijan–Armenia Declaration, Eyes Corridor Linking Caspian to Europe

ISTANBUL (Turkish Minute) — Turkey has welcomed a US-brokered declaration between Azerbaijan and Armenia that both sides say could pave the way for a formal peace treaty and open a strategic transport corridor.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on August 9, congratulated Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev for his role in the peace process during a phone call, according to official readouts.

Aliyev praised Erdoğan’s support and said the planned link between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave would “boost prosperity across the entire region.” Erdoğan reaffirmed Turkey’s commitment to “standing by brotherly Azerbaijan” and to regional stability.

Earlier, the Turkish Foreign Ministry described the declaration as “a historic opportunity” for peace in the South Caucasus. Ankara also thanked the US for its mediation.

The announcement, made this week at the White House, is seen as a potential turning point for trade, energy and security in the South Caucasus. It commits both countries to halting hostilities, reopening transport links and working toward full normalization of relations. Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought multiple wars since the late 1980s, most recently in 2020 and again in 2023, when Azerbaijani forces regained control of Karabakh.

On August 8, US President Donald Trump hosted Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the White House, where they signed a joint declaration confirming a draft peace deal. A formal treaty awaits constitutional amendments in Armenia, whose charter still contains territorial claims against Azerbaijan.

While the declaration is not a legally binding treaty, it marks a significant diplomatic step toward normalizing ties.

The TRIPP corridor would bypass Iran and Georgia, cutting travel time between Turkey and Azerbaijan and improving Turkey’s access to Central Asia. EU officials say it could diversify energy supplies away from Russia, with potential for oil and gas pipelines to run alongside the transport links. The plan would also mark the end of the decades-old OSCE Minsk Group mediation process.

Analyst Mehmet Akif Koç says Ankara supports opening the corridor, Iran opposes it and Russia — while not in favor — has stopped openly resisting. He warns that a stronger US

role would tilt the balance against Tehran and Moscow, likely prompting them to seek ways to undermine the project.

Koç describes Pashinyan’s government as politically fragile and urges Baku and Ankara to avoid actions that could weaken him. He also points to Azerbaijan’s growing ties with US pro-Israel lobbying groups, which he says have influenced

OBSTACLES, from page 1

Karabakh territory, reconquered by Azerbaijani forces in 2023.

The Joint Declaration does appear to potentially overcome another major obstacle — Azerbaijan’s insistence on a corridor between its mainland and its Nakhchivan exclave providing unhindered access for Azerbaijani citizens. The solution is American management of the corridor.

But the American-managed route cannot yet be considered a sure thing. The Joint Declaration acknowledges as much, stating that US and Armenian officials merely express their “determination to pursue efforts in good faith to achieve this goal in the most expeditious manner.” Key operational details remain up in the air, and there is no timeline for negotiations.

“This [August 8] summit was a step forward in the peace process, but the agreements reached leave a lot of questions unanswered. Much of what was agreed at the White House was a repackaging of things that Armenia and Azerbaijan had already agreed in principle,” Joshua Kucera, a senior analyst for Crisis Group, said in a statement.

“Some of Baku’s and Yerevan’s motivation was surely the desire to get on Trump’s good side by giving him a role,” Kucera added.

The transit corridor has been dubbed the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, or TRIPP. Given his predilection for self-aggrandizement, putting the president’s name on the corridor may well increase the odds that Washington remains closely engaged, keeping pressure up on Armenia and

Washington’s stance.

The corridor’s future depends on Armenia passing constitutional amendments, finalizing security arrangements and attracting investment. Construction timelines have not been set, but regional analysts say implementation could begin within two years if political hurdles are cleared.

Azerbaijan to keep the process moving forward.

For Trump, his personal brand is now at stake. He has got a lot of skin in this game.

But there are plenty of other forces at work that are intent on scuttling the deal. Russia and Iran, for one, are unlikely to stand idly by as the United States seeks to usurp their regional influence.

If the ideas outlined in the Joint Declaration come into being, “in essence, an American semi-state military base [will be] created in Armenia,” explained Russian political scientist Sergei Markov in a Telegram post. “This is a strong blow to Russia’s interests [and] this is a strong blow to Iran’s interests because all this is right next to Iran’s northern border.”

“This changes the entire strategic situation throughout the entire South Caucasus,” Markov added.

Influential Iranian leaders have already indicated that Tehran will use all means at the government’s disposal to prevent the plan from becoming reality. Ali Akbar Velayati, a former long-time Iranian foreign minister and now a policy advisor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, characterized the corridor as a “political plot” posing a mortal threat to Iranian security and economic interests, the Tasnim news agency reported.

“NATO wants to lie between Iran and Russia like a viper, but Iran will not permit it,” the Iranian news agency quoted Velayati as saying. He threatened that a US-managed corridor would “turn into a graveyard of the mercenaries of Donald Trump, not a route owned by the US president.”

Erdoğan’s office said Turkey “will continue to contribute to efforts to realize this opportunity and support the devoted efforts of brotherly Azerbaijan.” If completed, the TRIPP corridor could reshape trade and energy flows across the South Caucasus, creating new opportunities — and new tensions — in one of the world’s most contested regions.

The Kremlin, meanwhile, is clearly not pleased with developments, but has been more circumspect in revealing how Russia will respond.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova hinted that heavier US involvement will cause heightened volatility in the Caucasus. “The involvement of extra-regional players should work to strengthen the peace agenda and not create additional difficulties and dividing lines,” Zakharova stated. “We would like to avoid the sad experience of Western assistance in resolving conflicts in the Middle East.”

Beyond probable mischief-making by Moscow and Tehran, final approval by Armenia is a question mark. Pashinyan is likely to face determined domestic opposition to the plan. Polling data indicates that only about one-third of Armenians believe the country is headed in the right direction.

“For Armenia, [the peace deal] offers a path toward economic diversification and greater strategic autonomy, but its success hinges on navigating domestic polarization and countering external interference,” said Nima Khorrami, an associate research fellow at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

Ultimately, there are lots of hurdles on which TRIPP could stumble.

“If Trump is looking for an easy peacemaking win, he’s not there yet in the South Caucasus,” Kucera said. “A lot of hard work remains to be done to achieve a real, sustainable peace.”

(This analysis originally appeared on the website www.eurasianet.org on August 11.)

Community News

NAASR / Gulbenkian Series to Present Webinar on Artsakh Refugees in Armenia

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host a webinar with Antranig Kasbarian and Gegham Stepanyan titled “Demography, Politics, Resettlement: Artsakh’s Refugees in Armenia Today,” on Friday, August 22, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. (Eastern) / 9:00 (Pacific).

The program will be presented under the auspices of the NAASR / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues, and can be accessed online via Zoom (Registration: <http://bit.ly/45rWhSD>) or YouTube (www.youtube.com/c/ArmenianStudies).

For some 30 years, significant efforts and resources were devoted to assisting the Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) to build secure and prosperous lives. The violent expulsion in 2023 of all Armenians from the region, however, resulted in a massive exodus to the Republic of Armenia and the dissolution of the Art-



Antranig Kasbarian and Gegham Stepanyan

sakh Republic. The ensuing refugee crisis has necessitated a shift in focus toward resettlement, livelihoods, and social integration as Artsakh’s Armenians build new lives. We will hear about some of the challenges and successes from two experts well-positioned to share their insights.

Kasbarian holds a PhD in geography from Rutgers University, where his dissertation was entitled “We Are Our Mountains: The Geography of Nationalism in the Armenian Self-Determination Movement, Nagorno-Karabagh, 1988-1998.” He is a former editor of the Armenian Weekly and has served the Armenian-American community in various capacities over four decades. He continues to publish and lecture on topics pertaining to Armenia, Transcaucasia, and especially Artsakh. Professionally, he serves as development director of the New York-based Tufenkian Foundation, pursuing charitable and strategic endeavors in Armenia and for Artsakh.

Stepanyan has served as the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Artsakh Republic. He defended human rights during the Artsakh blockade and ethnic cleansing, submitting over two dozen reports to the international community, while documenting Azerbaijan’s criminal policies. Now based in Yerevan, he continues to raise awareness and advocate for the rights of people forcibly displaced from Artsakh, and since June 2024 has served as an independent national expert on refugee issues for UNDP Armenia.

For more information contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



YP Yerevan Chair Haykaz Nahapetyan kicks off Perspectives meeting

AGBU Focus 2025 Yerevan Reinforces Diaspora-Homeland Unity

NEW YORK/YEREVAN — From July 16 to 20, AGBU Focus 2025 marked a milestone moment with Armenia hosting the global summit for the first time. The five-day event drew 600 young professionals from 28 countries far and wide — from Argentina, Brazil, Canada and China to Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Japan, Lebanon, Spain, and the United States, to name but a few of the diverse communities represented.

Focus is driven by an overarching goal to unite young Armenian professionals through their own shared interests and perspectives. In the words of Christina Lalama-Nappi, the global manager of AGBU Young Professionals (YP): “The Focus concept stands apart because it is designed for young professionals and organized and implemented by them. Since its launch in 2001, a local Young Professionals (YP) group gets to take the lead on a global scale, with the guidance of the AGBU Central Office. It is a remarkable opportunity to build confidence and organizational skills, while curating an agenda that projects their own sensibilities, concerns and aspirations into the world.”

As a result, each Focus summit has helped strengthen the global YP network overall. The growing numbers of attendees convene to celebrate Armenian cultural heritage and identity and find common purpose through cause-related global fundraising campaigns. This year, over \$180,000 USD was raised in support of the AGBU Scholarship Program. At the same time, Focus 2025 sponsors were instrumental in making the multi-dimensional event possible. They include Lead Benefactors William and Caroline Nazarian, Nicholas Nazarian, Armenia-based companies like Freedom Broker Armenia, Zulal Wines, and PicsArt, tech-based companies like JoBlo and One Pillow, other entities in the private and public sector, plus well-wishers from across the YP network.

Many attendees — some visiting Armenia for the first time — immersed themselves in the Yerevan scene to discover AGBU Armenia’s signature initiatives, connect with program beneficiaries, take part in community service and explore the cultural landscape, as well as exchange perspectives on Armenia-Diaspora relations after 34 years of Armenian independence.

see AGBU, page 12



Tree planting at the newly renovated AGBU Children’s Center

Sen. Schiff, Rep. Friedman Introduce Bill to Rename Glendale Post Office After Former U.S. Navy Secretary

WASHINGTON — On July 24, U.S. Senator Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) and U.S. Representative Laura Friedman (D-Calif.-30) introduced a bill to name a U.S. Postal Service facility in Glendale, after former U.S. Navy Secretary Paul Ignatius, honoring his legacy of military service.

Ignatius was the highest-ranking Armenian American in the U.S. government when serving as the 59th U.S. Secretary of the Navy under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

“Paul Ignatius dedicated a lifetime of service to the country, one that deserves recognition and respect. The designation of the ‘Paul Ignatius Post Office’ in his hometown recog-



Paul Ignatius, the former US Navy Secretary

nizes his storied career, remarkable achievements, and celebrates his prominent legacy within the Glendale and Armenian community. His family is the epitome of the American Dream, and his legacy serves as an inspiration for generations of Americans,” said Schiff.

“Paul Ignatius represents the best of Glendale and the best of America — a patriot, a trailblazer, and a proud Armenian American. Naming this post office in his honor is a fitting tribute to his legacy of service, from his time in uniform to the highest levels of government. I’m proud to help lead this effort with Senator Schiff to recognize all he’s given to our community and nation,” said Friedman.

The bill would designate the post office at 6444 San Fernando Road as the “Paul Ignatius Post Office” after the 104-year-old. His family was one of the earliest Armenian families to settle in Glendale in 1911 — the city with the second largest Armenian population in the U.S. only behind Los Angeles. Senator Schiff represented Glendale for over 20 years in the House.

Ignatius worked at the Glendale Post Office as a temporary clerk when he was a college student, and the post office is located on the same street that his grandfather built their house nearly a century ago. Paul Ignatius served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He went on to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Army and Under Secretary of Defense for the late John F. Kennedy, before being promoted to Secretary of the Navy under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Friedman (D-Calif.-30) introduced companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives. Schiff first introduced this bill in 2022 in the U.S. House of Representatives.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Trump Cites UMass Student's Death in Push for Washington Police Takeover

By Ted Wayman

WASHINGTON (WCVB) — President Donald Trump on August 11 referenced the shooting death of a University of Massachusetts student among the justifications for placing the Washington, D.C., police department under federal control and deploying the National Guard to make the nation's capital safer.

The Republican president, who said he was formally declaring a public safety emergency, compared crime in the American capital with that in other major cities, saying Washington performs poorly on safety relative to the capitals of Iraq, Brazil and Colombia, among others.

Speaking to reporters in the White House briefing room, Trump referenced numerous examples of violent crime, including the death of UMass Amherst student and congressional intern Eric Tarpinian-Jachym.

"In June, a 21-year-old Congressional intern was tragically killed after being hit by a stray bullet in a drive-by shooting," Trump said.

Tarpinian-Jachym was one of three people shot on June 30 after police said he was caught in a dispute between rival groups. The Granby native was a rising senior at UMass Amherst, studying politics and finance, and had just started a summer internship in the office of Kansas Republican Rep. Ron Estes.

Trump announced that he signed an executive order to invoke presidential powers under the Home Rule Act to take over the city's police force. He signed what the administration called statutorily required notification letters to D.C. Mayor Bowser and relevant congressional leaders. He

also signed a presidential memorandum directing Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to deploy the National Guard in the nation's capital.

About 500 federal law enforcement officers are being tasked with deploying throughout the nation's capital as part of the Trump administration's effort to combat crime, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Monday.

More than 100 FBI agents and about



The late Eric Tarpinian-Jachym

40 agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives are among federal law enforcement personnel being assigned to patrols in Washington, the person briefed on the plans said. The Drug Enforcement Administration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Marshals Service are also contributing officers.

The person was not authorized to publicly discuss personnel matters and spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity. The Justice Department didn't immediately have a comment Monday morning.

OBITUARY

Steven Aret Kavak

Gentle Soul with Unwavering Work Ethic

WATERTOWN — Steven Aret Kavak, 37, of Watertown, passed away on August 9, 2025, surrounded by his loving family. He was born on November 2, 1987 in Boston.



He grew up in Watertown, where he attended AGBU as well as St. Stephen's Armenian schools and later obtained a Bachelor's Degree from UMass Boston.

He was the cherished son of Migirdic and Silva (Cinar) Kavak and the beloved younger brother of Chris Kavakian. He was the adored grandson of Suna Kavak and nephew to Siran Kokyan, Diruhi Kavak, Karolin (Kavak) Zencefil, Zabel (Kavak) Cakir, and Seta (Cinar) Campbell. He is also survived by his godchild Danielle Ozcan, along with numerous cousins and extended family members in Istanbul and the greater Boston area.

Steve dedicated nine years of his professional career to Cambridge Savings Bank and was known for his unwavering work ethic. He left a lasting impression on his coworkers, always ready

with a joke, a smile and a helping hand. He loved his family and friends deeply and treasured the time spent with them. Whether it was getting together for a barbecue, playing soccer, skiing, fishing, watching sports and movies, he always found joy in life's simple pleasures.

His warm spirit, kindness and generosity touched all who knew him. Steve truly was a selfless person in every aspect of life, always willing to do anything for those he cared about. He had a natural ability to bring laughter to any situation and lived each day determined to spread happiness to everyone around him. His memory will live on forever in the hearts of those who knew him.

Funeral services were held at Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown, on August 14. Interment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Saint James Armenian Church.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrossian Funeral Home.

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator thanks the following recent donors for their support:

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Tekeyan Cultural Association
Zelle: **info@tekeyanla.org**
Call or text: **818.730.1100**

COMMUNITY NEWS

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Gather for 107th Grand Convocation in Washington

CONVOCATION, from page 1

The members of Avakian's Grand Council for 2025-26 include six other officers: Grand Lieutenant Commander Gregory Norsigian, Grand Chaplain Der Stephan Baljian, Grand Recorder Aram Arkun, Grand Treasurer Arman Manoukian, Grand Master of Ceremonies Antranig Mardiros, and Grand Sentinel Haig Gulian.

Lily Sarkissian of Tenafly, NJ, was elected as Grand Chairwoman (Avak Dirouhie) for the 2025-26 term for the Daughters, while the other six members of her Grand Council include Grand Associate Chairwoman Tanya Bukucuyan, Grand Chaplain Nancy Tutunjian Burdman, Grand Secretary Lucy Ohanian Murad, Grand Treasurer Hilda Beatrice Adil, Grand Mistress of Ceremonies Christine Akyemeniciyan, and Grand Sentinel Emma Artun.

Activities and Presentations

Before the formal meetings began, one of the highlights of this year's Convocation was the impactful advocacy event on July 16. A total of 65 members traveled by bus to Capitol Hill, where they met with congressional representatives and joined forces with the Armenian National Committee of America, and Armenian Assembly.

The Knights and Daughters held two full days of business meetings, training, and workshops. A special Economic Sustainability Program (ESP) presentation was delivered by outgoing Grand Lieutenant Commander Levon Thorose. During the past fiscal year, the organization provided ESP grants to 240 families, totaling



Daughters of Vartan assembled in Washington, 2025

of research on Armenia and the Armenians.

The Daughters of Vartan raised over \$94,000 for their charities during the last two years. In addition, they donated nearly \$14,000 to the Armenian American Museum of Glendale. This museum will not just be about Armenians but will be about all the varied people who settled in Glendale. It will be the largest museum presenting information on Armenians outside of Armenia.

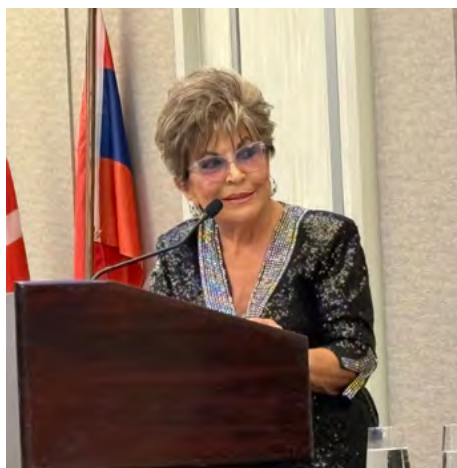
The Grand District Representatives conducted leadership training sessions for Knights of Vartan members, while the Daughters of Vartan Luncheon on Friday offered a warm setting for connection and celebration.

The Convocation was organized by the local Ani Lodge and Dikranouhi Otyag, with Ani's Commander Jake Bournazian playing a key role.

Honorees

Each year, the organization honors a man and a woman for their exceptional service to the Armenian community. The Man of the Year 2025 award was presented to Dr. Michael Rubin — political commentator, journalist, and tireless advocate for Armenian issues. His work has profoundly impacted global discourse on Armenia and its geopolitical context. A senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Dr. Rubin's focus on the intersection of foreign policy and international relations has led him to explore key issues related to Armenia, the broader South Caucasus, and global geopolitical dynamics.

The Woman of the Year 2025 award was presented to Annie Simonian Totah — a dy-



Woman of the Year 2025 Annie Simonian Totah

namic leader, philanthropist, and advocate who has devoted over 45 years to advancing Armenian causes on local, national, and international levels. Totah, a Beirut-born graduate of the American University of Beirut with a master's in business administration, has spent over 45 years as a ded-

icated advocate, fundraiser, and leader for Armenian causes. Widely regarded as one of the most influential volunteer women in Washington, D.C., she has worked closely with US lawmakers to advance awareness and support for Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Totah played a key role in mobilizing relief after the 1988 Armenian earthquake, securing over \$3 billion in US aid for Armenia, and raising funds for mine-clearing and economic development programs. She strengthened interfaith ties, supported Armenian churches, and was the first and only woman to chair the Armenian Assembly of America's board. Though appointed ambassador to Israel, she is best known as Armenia's "unofficial ambassador" on Capitol Hill.

Since 2023, the Avak Tivan introduced a new honor to recognize extraordinary service: St. Vartan Mamigonian Knight of the year. The Knights of Vartan is proud to honor Richard Hagopian as the 2025 Mamigonian Knight of the Year for his

continued on next page



From left, Grand Chairwoman Lily Sarkissian, Grand Commander Robert Avakian and Past Grand Commander Hunan Arshakian

\$109,335. Of the 45 recipients, 42 are families from Artsakh. Some families recorded as high as a 80 to 100 percent increase in revenue after receiving this support.

All of the recipients of these grants continue to live in Armenia after a year of receiving the grant, indicating the positive psychological impact of the ESP in addition to the financial or business aspect of it. These families from Artsakh were able to stay occupied and employed, which helped them temporarily escape the harsh reality of losing Artsakh and the trauma of war. To learn more about the program or to support it, please see <https://kofv.org/economic-sustainability-program-esp/>

Reports were made on a number of projects which were implemented during the last fiscal year, including scholarships in both the US and Armenia, the renovation of schools and kindergartens, and the support



Dancing at the banquet



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

lifelong dedication to preserving the Armenian musical heritage. A master of the oud and a pioneer of Armenian-American folk music, Hagopian has inspired generations through his artistry and deep cultural commitment. Born in Fowler, California, he studied under renowned musicians and rose to prominence through his work with the Kef Time Band, helping to revive and



Knights and Daughters pledge their allegiance

popularize traditional Armenian “kef” music across the diaspora. In 1989, he received the National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, recognizing his role in enriching America’s cultural landscape.

The following knights were honored for their dedication to the organization as Knights (Asbeds) of the Year 2025: Past Commander Gary Jehdian of Los Angeles, Past Commander Gerald Najarian of Philadelphia, Commander Harutyun Arto Hovannesian of Florida, Commander Gerald Janigian of Fresno, Knight Dro Kanayan of Boston and Past Commander Armen Keshishian of Los Angeles.

During the Convocation, some annual projects were approved: \$12,000 for KV Scholarships in the USA, \$13,000 for the Aygedzor After-School Program in Tavush, Armenia, and \$10,000 for the Economic Sustainability Program (ESP).

At the same time, the Knights of Vartan also continue their longstanding support for the Fuller Center for Housing NGO, building homes for low-income families, Tabibian Family Scholarships at Yerevan State University and Yerevan Polytechnic University, and other charitable initiatives in Armenia and the diaspora.

Gohar Palyan, Liaison of the Knights of Vartan, Inc., and Director of the Knights of Vartan Charities, Inc. branch in Armenia, traveled from Yerevan to Washington, D.C., to present the annual accomplishments made possible through the generous support of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

The Convocation closed with evening celebrations on Friday and Saturday, featuring live performances by The FAB 4 from Detroit, Harry Bandian, a survivor of the Baku pogroms and a world-renowned violinist based in Las Vegas, and Marc2Ray (Marc Toureille), a local hip hop recording artist.

Convention participants extended their gratitude to the immediate Past Grand Commander Hunan Arshakian and his Grand Council, Past Grand Matron Nancy Berberian Thompson, and her Grand Council for their unwavering dedication, vision, and tireless service.

Newly initiated youth members returned this year, with their energy and commitment signaling a bright future for the organization.



Some new members

The Knights of Vartan has 22 lodges with over 1000 brothers while 600 Daughters of Vartan are members in national otyags.

The Knights of Vartan Inc. is a fraternal leadership and service organization of Armenian men dedicated to safeguarding and perpetuating the Armenian heritage and cultural traditions. Its membership represents the spectrum of the leadership of the Armenian community. It was founded in 1916 in Philadelphia and is based in the United States with 22 local chapters which support Armenian causes around the world.

The Daughters of Vartan is an Armenian Sisterhood associated with the Knights of Vartan. It was organized in 1933 in Philadelphia. The Daughters of Vartan is an organization of women whose members are committed to the intellectual, personal, and leadership development of Armenian women and families around the world, while also promoting Armenian heritage and Christian values through its 18 chapters across the US.

For more information about the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, visit <http://kofv.org>. Unattributed photos accompanying this article were taken by Greg Manougian, Jean Mazmanian or Gohar Palyan.



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

Dr. Nubar Berberian 2025 Annual Awards



Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either **International Law or Political Science**.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either **International Law or Political Science**.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **September 30, 2025**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2025** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winners will receive their awards in **November, 2025**
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, July 14, 2025

COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU Focus 2025 Yerevan Reinforces Diaspora-Homeland Unity

AGBU, from page 8

A Warm Welcome

Day one kicked off with a reception in the courtyard of AGBU Armenia, where participants were greeted by the local leadership: President Vasken Yacoubian; Executive Director Marina Mkhitarian; and YP Yerevan Chair Haykaz Nahapetyan. Staff from the AGBU Armenia office, along with the volunteer organizing committee and visiting staffers from the New York Central Office put the power of collaboration and cooperation into action with remarkable results.

Yacoubian captured the spirit of the gathering by welcoming participants to their homeland and encouraging them to forge connections. “While you enjoy the five-day specially curated program, please remember to make new friends, connect with peer professionals, and come up with projects that will strengthen our country. For with a strong Armenia — a country deeply rooted in history and guarantor of our identity — we will have a strong Diaspora and a nation we are all proud of. So, let’s make history together with creativity, courage, and unity — for in unity is strength.”

The reception featured a traditional Armenian dance recital, performed by the AGBU Children’s Center dance group, after which some participants took a dance workshop whereas others took part in a city quest through Yerevan, exploring sights and landmarks such as the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Visual Gap Gallery, Moscow Cinema, and the Clock Factory, which offered a silkscreen printing workshop. They also enjoyed spectacular rooftop views from the Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, the History Museum and National Gallery of Armenia, and the Yerevan Municipality, where they were welcomed by Yerevan Mayor Tigran Avinyan.

Visit to Etchmiadzin

The AGBU YP Executive Meeting of over 60 participants took place in Etchmiadzin, at the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Matenadaran. The gathering focused on how to make YP activities more efficient and inclusive, both administratively and ideologically, while fostering stronger synergies between YP groups and their communities.

The meeting was followed with a private audience with the Supreme Patriarch

questions on topics such as youth involvement in church life, the training and service of clergy, and challenges currently facing the homeland.

In parallel, a group of 150 Focus participants toured the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, viewing religious national treasures such as the Mother Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, the Museum of the 125th Catholikos of All Armenians Mkrtich I Khrimian and the Ruben Sevak Museum. They also became acquainted with AGBU’s contributions to Etchmiadzin, including the renovation of the Old Pontifical Residence and the founding of the Alex and Marie Manogian Treasury House Museum.

Kick-Off Conference

As the official opening event on the Focus agenda, Perspectives included a panel of international speakers who addressed the theme Between Two Worlds: Bridging Perspectives, Shaping the Future. The conference was hosted at the historic Komitas Museum in Yerevan and featured Kristina Ayanian, executive producer and client experience lead at NASDAQ (New York, USA); YP Barcelona Chair Levon Grigorian, Banking & Finance Partner at Crowe (Barcelona, Spain); Egyptologist Arto Belekdanian (Cairo, Egypt); and New-York-based eminent portrait artist Tigran Tsitoghdzian. Moderated by communications expert Alexander Plato Hakobyan (Yerevan, Armenia), the discussants explored the evolving meanings of Armenian identity, how Diasporans navigate between their citizenship and Armenian ethnicity, what defines constructive contributions to the homeland, and harnessing the immense potential among diverse communities as a force for sustainable impact.

Perspectives then extended to the picturesque park of the Komitas Museum, with Armenian wine generously provided by Zulal Wines. Participants were also treated to a performance by ART ALIVE, which transforms the works of popular Armenian artist Minas Avetisyan and French-Armenian artist Jean Carzou into an interactive dance show.

AGBU Day of Action

The first order of the day was introducing guests to AGBU’s work and impact in Armenia. The second half of the agenda was seeing the fruits of these efforts at the AGBU Mentorship Expo. Beneficiaries of AGBU Women Entrepreneurs (WE), Women Coders, LEAP (Learn to Earn Artsakh) and AGBU Business Mentors were showcased at Yerevan’s Marriott Hotel. An exchange of ideas ensued, moderated by professionals from across the globe. These sessions offered practical advice, career insights, and valuable networking opportunities in fields such as strategic planning, digital innovation, and AI in business.

One Armenia-based beneficiary remarked, “We are inspired to see such professional Armenians who have built their careers in the Diaspora and have come here to volunteer their knowledge and expertise. It’s truly inspiring and demonstrates how AGBU continues to elevate its beneficiaries with such valuable opportunities.”

Next on the agenda was a visit to the newly renovated AGBU Children’s Center, one of the many educational initiatives of AGBU in Armenia, situated in the Malatya district of Yerevan. Nearly 200 young professionals prepared 300 hygiene kits, filled 500 school backpacks with supplies for Artsakh students, and planted 720 bushes and trees

around the Center’s grounds donated by Armenia Tree Project. For over 25 years, these youth afterschool centers in Nork, Malatya, and Arapkir have operated in partnership with the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, annually serving about 1,700 students.

Focus on Art

Yerevan’s rich and varied cultural offerings did not disappoint. The discovery and experiential agenda began at the Matenadaran Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts — long supported by AGBU — guests were treated to an Expo showcasing Armenian handmade products, a guided tour of the Matenadaran, and two workshops demonstrating the basics of manuscript restoration and the formulation of the ancient Armenian red pigment vordan karmir (Armenian cochineal), used in medieval miniature art.

Guests were also introduced to the missions of various cultural initiatives and institutions, such as the Keron Development Foundation and Hosq; TUMO Studios, a creative technologies hub for young artists and designers; Newmag Publishing House known for its strategy to influence Armenian mindsets; Ardean Designs, which reinterprets Armenia’s traditional motifs with modern sensibilities; and Melonpan, a boutique bakery blending traditional Armenian flavors with Japanese-style sweet bread techniques. Afterwards, guests enjoyed a dance performance by Lebanese-Armenian dancer and artist Sarine Semerjian, accompanied by Miqayel Voskanyan’s solo on the Armenian folk instrument Tar.

Gala Night

The culmination of Focus 2025 took place at the Dvin Music Hall attended by 525 guests, making it the most attended single event in the series. With host Focus Gala Chair Lia Yeghoyants setting the high energy tone of the evening, inspiring speeches were made by AGBU President Sam Simonian; AGBU board member Camilio Azzouz; YP Yerevan Chair Haykaz Nahapetyan; and AGBU scholarship recipient Hovsep Patvakanyan.

In remarking on the empowering envi-

ronment that the Focus summit creates for new generations of leaders, Simonian — an alumnus of AGBU schools and recipient of AGBU scholarships — spoke to the totality of the impact of AGBU worldwide. “We are all proud of the tremendous work our chapters have accomplished to preserve our identity. We are all living proof of that vision...Tonight, let’s celebrate the great work we accomplished here in Armenia — whether in humanitarian aid, education, culture or socio-economic development — under the leadership of our regional president and good friend Vasken Yacoubian. Our diversity, political neutrality, generosity and financial transparency are the core strengths that have guided us since 1906.”

Nahapetyan thanked all who were involved in making Focus 2025 a success: from the Organizing Committee and the AGBU Central and Armenia offices to the guests who made the trip: “This isn’t just a night of glamour; it’s a statement that our homeland is at the center of the Armenian story...” he remarked. “YP Yerevan has expanded its network of professionals over the years, as have all other YP groups, old and new, across the globe. We hope to enhance this network with every possible opportunity in the years to come...”

The Tarontsiner dance group led the entertainment with traditional folk performances and invited the guests to join them on the floor for several numbers. The rest of the evening was filled with the fusion of traditional instruments and international contemporary sounds from By the Way and Relax Project, providing one last chance to cement cherished memories of a once-in-a-lifetime Armenian experience.

Focus 2025 is the 12th in a series of biennial summits that have taken place in a destination city, including New York (2001, 2007), Montreal (2003), Miami (2005), Chicago (2009), Paris (2011), San Francisco (2013), Toronto (2015), Beirut (2017), São Paulo (2019), Madrid (2023). The next summit will take place in the summer of 2027 in a location to be determined.



Catholikos of All Armenians Karekin II welcomes AGBU Armenia President Vasken Yacoubian and YP Executive Committee to Etchmiadzin

and Catholikos of All Armenians Karekin II, accompanied by Archbishop Nathan Hovhannisian and moderated by Vasken Yacoubian. His Holiness reflected on the long-standing relationship between the Church and AGBU, highlighting the organization’s significant role in supporting both the Diaspora and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. He also expressed hope that visiting the homeland would inspire young people to grow more committed to national values and spiritual traditions and carry activities that will strengthen the state and statehood, following the example set by respected AGBU leaders and board members. The Catholikos also took time to answer

ARMENIA FEST

2025

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Knights of Vartan

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Arts & Culture

Professors Berberian And Grigor to Discuss New Book on Armenian Women in Iran

FRESNO — Dr. Houri Berberian and Dr. Talinn Grigor will give a presentation on their new book *The Armenian Woman, Minoritarian Agency, and the Making of Iranian Modernity, 1860-1979* at 7 p.m. on Monday, August 25, in the Grosse Industrial Technology Building, Room 101, on the Fresno State campus.

With this book, Berberian and Grigor offer the first history of Armenian women in modern Iran. Foregrounding the work of Armenian women's organizations, the authors trace minoritarian politics and the shifting relationships among doubly minoritized Armenian female subjects, Iran's central nodes of power, and the Iranian-Armenian patriarchal institutions of church and political parties.

Engaging broader considerations around modernization, nationalism and feminism, this book makes a conceptually rich contribution to how we



Dr. Houri Berberian and Dr. Talinn Grigor

think about the history of women and minoritized peoples. Berberian and Grigor read archival, textual, visual, and oral history sources together and against one another to challenge conventional notions of “the archive” and transform silences and absences into audible and visual presences. Understanding minoritarian politics as formulated by women through their various forms of public and intellectual activism, this book provides a groundbreaking intervention in Iran's history of modernization, Armenian diasporic history, and Iranian and Armenian feminist historiography.

Berberian is professor of history, Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies and director of the Center for Armenian Studies at the University of California, Irvine. Her research focuses on late 19th- and early 20th-century transimperial Armenian history, especially revolutionary movements and women and gender.

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

Copies of the new book, *The Armenian Woman, Minoritarian Agency, and the Making of Iranian Modernity, 1860-1979*, will be on sale at the event.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, visit <https://fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies>.



Scene from the Vahan Artsruni concert

An Exceptional Concert On the Stage of the National Opera Theater

YEREVAN — On July 25, an extraordinary concert program titled “Mashtots-Komitas” took place on the stage of the Alexander Spendiaryan National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. This cultural event seamlessly bridged the ancient and contemporary realms of Armenian music, presenting them within a unified artistic framework.

At the heart of the program were 5th-century sharakans (liturgical hymns) by Mesrop Mashtots, interpreted by composer Vahan Artsruni, alongside his song cycle “Komitas: Ten Revelations” based on the poetry of Komitas. Artsruni embraced a compositional approach rooted in chamber music, fusing the monodic tradition of medieval sacred music with modern harmonic and timbral sensibilities. This synthesis offered the audience an immersive experience of the continuity of Armenian musical heritage — without compromising its authenticity.

Soprano Nelly Kalashyan, a soloist of both the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and the Yerevan State Chamber Choir, performed in both parts of the program. With her deep experience in sacred music, Kalashyan delivered Mashtots' hymns with spiritual intensity, drawing the audience into the profound and refined essence of ancient Armenian music. In the Komitas cycle, performing duets with the composer-singer himself, she conveyed the worldly charm of Komitas' lyrical universe, while highlighting the unique qualities of Artsruni's musical language.



Scene from the Vahan Artsruni concert

For Artsruni, this concert marked not just another milestone in his decades-long career but a particularly significant artistic statement. His collaboration with the orchestra of the National Opera Theater, under the invitation and baton of the theater's director, Karen Durgaryan, ensured the highest level of performance. Durgaryan's conducting was distinguished by exceptional professionalism and a deep sense of inspiration, maintaining the stylistic nuances of each work while achieving the expressive scale suited to a grand stage.

Stage design and lighting played a crucial role in shaping the concert's aesthetic integrity. The mysterious, soft and concentrated lighting evoked the impression of a sacred space—an atmosphere in which sound became an extension of the spiritual realm. The silence that filled the hall and the audience's unwavering attention testified to the fact that the concert was perceived not merely as an artistic performance, but as a moment of spiritual communion.

The Mashtots-Komitas concert can be regarded as a truly exceptional cultural event — one that builds a bridge between the profound depths of 5th-century Armenian sacred music and the contemporary compositional approaches of the 21st century. It reveals the depth of Mashtots' musical genius, highlights the melodic potential of Komitas' poetic language, and affirms the union of these two national treasures through Vahan Artsruni's creative vision and refined artistry.

At the Intersection Of Arts and Science: Healing Children Through Music Therapy

By Dr. Raffi Tachdjian

Children's Music Fund (CMF) is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit dedicated to bringing the healing power of music to children facing chronic conditions, life-altering illnesses, and trauma. Through customized, one-on-one music therapy sessions, CMF brings comfort, emotional support, and safe environments for patients and their families. Since its founding in 2002, the organization has delivered thousands of sessions led by board-certified Music Therapists.

Children's Music Fund was born from a single, powerful moment that proved music could bring healing where medicine sometimes could not. What began as a deeply personal journey for me, ultimately became a national nonprofit that brings the



Dr. Raffi Tachdjian with Justin, a patient he met during his pediatrics residency

healing power of music to children facing serious illness. This is the story that started it all.

I met Justin in 2002, during my residency in pediatrics at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). Justin was one of the 40 patients I was assigned to care for, and he was being treated for bone cancer. Our lives collided right as his latest round of experimental treatment had sadly failed. He'd been through several rounds of treatments, and this one had been one of the last options available. I was there when the news of its failure was delivered to him, and I watched his will and energy drain from the room.

I wanted to do more to help, beyond the limits of traditional medicine. Since arriving at MGH, I had gotten to know Justin and knew he was a fantastic guitar player. As a musician myself, I understood the joy and escape music can offer — and I believed that reintroducing music back into Justin's life could be more than just a mood boost. It could be truly therapeutic.

The hospital didn't have any instruments on hand at the time, so we arranged to buy him a guitar. Playing music together became a focus of his treatment. And together with his family, we saw how music brought happiness and comfort to Justin and his family. And with that, CMF was born.

Music Therapy's Research-Backed Impacts

Music therapy is a research-backed, established health profession that see MUSIC THERAPY, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Pan Roasted Cauliflower with Pine Nuts and Raisins

“After seeing Armenia from the Georgian border in 1989, Paula Wolfert wanted to travel to the country, but conflicts in the region prevented her. Instead, she collected Armenian cookbooks, especially community cookbooks from Armenian churches around the United States. The celebrated British-Armenian cookbook author, artist, cook and translator Arto Der Haroutunian, who taught Paula this dish, caramelized cauliflower on the stove before baking it with eastern Mediterranean flavorings: chopped tomatoes, plumped raisins and Marash red pepper flakes. (You can use any cazuela or flameware pot, but Paula likes the unglazed black La Chamba roasting pan from Colombia, which she says imparts sweetness to the dish.)”

“Arto Der Haroutunian was born in Aleppo, Syria in 1940 and grew up in the Levant, but came to England with his parents as a child and remained here for most



Paula Wolfert in her Sonoma kitchen in 2017

of his life. He studied architecture at Manchester University and established a career designing restaurants, clubs and hotels. In 1970, in partnership with his brother, he opened the first Armenian restaurant in Manchester which eventually became a successful chain of six restaurants and two hotels. Given his passion for cooking it was a natural progression that he should then begin to write cookery books as they combined his love of food with his great interest in the history and culture of the region. It was his belief that the rich culinary tradition of the Middle East is the main source of many of our Western cuisines and his books were intended as an introduction to that tradition. All the many cookbooks written by Der Haroutunian have now been out of print for many years and second hand copies fetch hundreds of pounds. He wrote 12 cookery books in total, several of which were translated into foreign languages.”

“He died in 1987 at the untimely age of 47. He is survived by his wife and son who still live in Manchester. As well as his passion for cooking, Arto Der Haroutunian was a painter of international reputation who exhibited all over the world. His other interests included composing music and translating Turkish, Arab, Persian and Armenian authors. He was a true polymath.”

Paula Wolfert is an expert on Mediterranean food and the author of nine cookbooks, including *The Food of Morocco*, *Mediterranean Clay Pot Cooking*, *The Slow Mediterranean Kitchen* and *The Cooking of Southwest France*. She has won the James Beard Award, the Julia Child Award, the M. F. K. Fisher Award, the Tastemaker Award and was a finalist for the André Simon Award. In 2008, she was inducted into the Cookbook Hall of Fame by the James Beard Association. A regular columnist for *Food & Wine*, she lives in Sonoma, Calif.

“In *The Food of Morocco*, she brings to bear over 40 years of experience of, love of and original research on the traditional foodways of that country. The re-

sult is the definitive book on Moroccan cuisine, from tender Berber skillet bread to spiced harira (the classic soup made with lentils and chickpeas), from chicken with tangy preserved lemon and olives to steamed sweet and savory breast of lamb stuffed with couscous and dates. The recipes are infused with the author’s unparalleled knowledge of this delicious food. Essays illuminate the essential elements of Moroccan flavor and emphasize the accessibility of once hard-to-find ingredients such as saffron, argan oil and Moroccan cumin seed.”

Paula has spent years wandering into kitchens from Marrakech to Istanbul, including Morocco, France, Greece, Spain, Georgia, Turkey, Dagestan, Sicily, Puglia, Syria, Jordan and Tunisia and emerging with recipes that her new friends have entrusted to her. Because she lived outside Tangier from 1959 to 1976 for a total of seven, intermittent years — she has been welcomed into many home kitchens with open arms. “I bring presents and I always kiss the chefs,” she said. She wrote about her travels in *Saveur* in “On the Recipe Trail in South-Eastern Turkey,” in 1998:

“I have come to southeastern Turkey and the region around Gaziantep, the gastronomic capital of the country, to learn about Turkish-Armenian cooking, in which bulgur plays a starring role. A cooked wheat byproduct, bulgur is not to be confused with cracked wheat (though it often is) and is ubiquitous in southeastern Turkey, where it originated. It is used in nearly every dish, including soups, pilafs, salads, desserts, even drinks. Bulgur and the traditions, recipes — and cultural humor — that surround it span the generations. They form a common meeting ground for a people torn asunder, as my friend Ayfer Unsal has discovered. Ayfer may be Turkish, but there could be no better way for me to learn Armenian cooking than through her. For years, Ayfer has been reaching out to Turkish-Armenian women, for their cooking secrets and their friendship...”

“The city of Gaziantep, formerly known as Aintab, isn’t particularly beautiful. With so many new buildings — it has grown markedly since I first visited five years ago and now has a million people — it doesn’t have the aesthetic charm of other Turkish cities. But I love its covered market below the citadel, with gypsies selling purslane and grape leaves from baby carriages and farmers selling pistachios and green almonds from wagons. Most of all I love it for its human qualities, the warmth and kindness of its people. And I love its cooking. Because of its location on the ancient Silk Route, the food here has become a blend of the best of Armenian, Arabic, Greek, Jewish, Kurdish and Anatolian cooking.”

“Gaziantep is known for its kebabs and two of my favorites are kusbasi kebabs, made with lamb loin strips spiced with pungent savory, cinnamon, dried mint, cumin and black pepper; and yeni dunya kebabi, made with ground lamb köfte spiced in the same manner as the loin strips and loquats. The complex spicing, the intensity of the heat and the speed while cooking make these dishes among the best of their type. A delicious onion-parsley salad, called piyaz salata, is often served as an accompaniment to the kusbasi kebabs.”

“Ayfer takes me to the apartment of Canan Direkci, a handsome 50-year-old regarded as one of the most talented home cooks in the city. As we’re led into her stylish living room, I note numerous plaques attesting to her gastronomic prowess. Canan serves us a superb meal consisting of, among other dishes, a soup that combines skinned wheat berries with dark lentils and tarragon leaves, a fascinating striped cucumber called a cur that is stuffed with green wheat, bulgur and meat; and siveydiz, a thick stew of lamb, yogurt and green garlic shoots. The shoots, which are unformed cloves, give the stew a subtle garlic flavor. For dessert we have a superb sut muhallaba, a voluptuous milk pudding subtly scented with rose-flower water and garnished with pistachio slivers. What is fascinating about the foods we are eating is how seamlessly Armenian influences — the subtle tarragon flavoring in the soup, for instance — have been integrated into Canan’s Turkish cooking, to a degree I don’t think she is even aware of.”

In 2013, Paula wrote that she had been diagnosed with MCI (Mild Cognitive Impairment), an early stage of Alzheimer’s disease. She told the *Washington Post* that she had stopped teaching and writing to devote herself completely to Alzheimer’s activism: speaking out about the disease, urging people who suspect that they may have it to get tested and asserting her belief that “denial is not a viable option.” In 2013, she was featured on the PBS *NewsHour* in which she spoke about her role as an Alzheimer’s activist.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tablespoons raisins (not golden)
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, to taste
- 1 head cauliflower, cut into florets (about 4 cups)
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 cups fresh tomatoes, drained, peeled, seeded and chopped
- Pinch of crushed red pepper, preferably Marash
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a small bowl, cover the raisins with water; let stand until softened, about 10 minutes. Drain.

In a 10- to 12-inch cazuela or ovenproof skillet, heat the oil. Add the cauliflower and sugar and cook over moderately low heat, stirring, until the cauliflower starts to soften, about 10 minutes. Raise the heat to moderate and cook until the cauliflower is lightly browned, about 5 minutes longer. Stir in the tomatoes and crushed red pepper, season with salt and black pepper and cook until the tomatoes have begun to soften, about 5 minutes.

Add the raisins to the cauliflower, along with 1/4 cup hot water, the pine nuts and chopped garlic. Transfer the cazuela to the oven and bake the cauliflower for about 30 minutes, until it is very tender. Stir in the parsley and lemon juice and let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Serve the cauliflower warm.

Serves 4



ARTS & CULTURE

Roland Godel

Writing for Teenagers and on Armenians

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN-MULHOUSE, France — Swiss-French writer Roland Godel (born in 1958, Geneva) has been working as a journalist for more than 15 years. In 1999, he joined the State of Geneva as head of communications and since then he has been writing stories and novels for young audiences. He received the 2008 Chronos Prize for *The Little Secrets of the Mimosas Boarding House*, as well as the 2010 Youth Historical Novel Prize and the 2010 Tatoulu Prize for **The Witch of Porquerac**. Some other his novels include **My Father’s Secret, The Meaning of Honor, The Last Stronghold**. In 2016 Godel received the UNICEF Children’s Literature Prize for *I Dared to Say No!*, recognizing its powerful message about standing up against harassment.

Roland Godel is father of two children, and lives between France and Greece.

Dear Roland, in your writings you explore various social issues and delve into human relationships, emotions, and feelings. Your literature is often aimed at young readers. Can this be explained by the fact that you have remained young at heart?

Yes, at 67, I try to stay young at heart, and imagining and writing novels for teenagers constantly brings me back to my own youth and personal experiences. It helps prevent me from becoming a bitter, disillusioned old man stuck in his certainties. I deeply believe that young adolescents have a wonderful ability to receive and absorb stories that move them with completely open minds, allowing themselves to fully feel the range of their emotions. This is how they question things, develop their critical thinking, and shape their identities. Later, after the age of 15 or 16, young readers begin to be constrained by prejudice, certainties, and defensive postures.

Your short children’s novel *I Dared to Say No!* focuses on bullying, a subject that is very close to me. Do you think this topic will always remain relevant, even though it seems that schools — particularly in the West — are trying to reduce it to a minimum?

It seems to me that this issue is more relevant than ever. Just look at the authoritarian, ruthless men who currently occupy the highest positions of political power — Trump, Putin, Netanyahu, Orbán... These are typical profiles of bullies and intimidators. They are men shaped by power dynamics, who seem to enjoy having control over others. Of course, if you look deeper into the psychology, you’ll often find that bullies are people who themselves suffered in childhood and whose lives are driven by a dark story of revenge. So, it’s a complex issue, and that’s precisely why we need to raise awareness among children at the earliest possible age — an age of openness.

Aside from violence and sex, what other restrictions or limitations do you consider when writing for a young audience?

Children’s literature has completely changed over the last 30 years. Today, we can speak about everything with freedom and sensitivity: death, separation, racism, loneliness, jealousy, frustration, family, drugs, emotional distress, illness, even suicide... We can even touch on violence and sex, as long as it’s done sincerely and not provocatively, and remains within the bounds of what is accessible at that age, with an approach rooted

in modesty and respect for the reader.

You come from an intellectual family — your grandfather was a Swiss linguist, philologist, and Armenologist, a professor at the University of Geneva (1902-1984), whose name we encountered in our lectures on constructive linguistics. Fluent in 16 languages, he also knew Armenian. What kind of person was this remarkable academic?

My grandfather, Robert Godel, was a true scientific mind in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Methodical, thorough, self-demanding, but also open to doubt and self-questioning. What particularly defined him was the influence of Calvinist Protestantism at its most noble — rigorous, sober, honest, spiritual and rational, with a strong emphasis on merit and integrity.

He was genuinely interested in other people, especially those who were different, and without prejudice. Imagine this young Swiss man heading to teach French in the 1920s at Galatasaray High School in Istanbul, falling in love with a young Armenian woman — my grandmother — and later becoming passionate about the Armenian language and culture. That didn’t prevent him from later publishing a grammar of the Turkish language as well. At the time, that was quite uncommon!

They say all grandmothers are special, but Armenian grandmothers are even more so. What are your fondest memories of your grandmother Meliné Godel (née Papazian)?

Alongside my German mother, my Armenian grandmother — a survivor of deportation and genocide — was the sunshine of my childhood and the person I loved most. In the very reserved and emotionally modest Protestant Geneva of the time, she amazed me with her laughter, her oriental cooking (which was completely unfamiliar in Europe back then), her expressive affection, her occasional outbursts, her songs in Greek or Armenian. I often think back to the way she would hold me tightly against her chest, sigh with joy, and whisper sweet words in Armenian. It was a spontaneous exchange — we gave each other happiness.

In both France and Armenia, I had the pleasure of meeting your father, the poet and translator Vahe Godel, on three occasions. His contribution to introducing Armenian poetry to French readers is truly remarkable. I’m happy to know he is doing well at the age of 94. What is the relationship between Roland Godel the writer and Vahe Godel the writer?

On a personal level, we share a sincere but rather modest and reserved bond. I think my father inherited more of my grandmother’s temperament than that of my grandfather! He was an avant-garde poet, and his writings are not always easy to grasp. When I was young, his poetry seemed quite mysterious and inaccessible. I rediscovered his texts in adulthood. For his part, I know he’s proud that I write and is impressed by my bibliography. But to be honest, I don’t think he’s read many of my novels!

Two of your books deal with Armenian history: *In Anouch’s Eyes: Armenia 1915* and *The Song of Smyrna*. How have these works been received by readers? And aside from these tragic chapters, are there other aspects of Armenian culture or history that interest you?

The story inspired by my grandmother’s deportation, published by Gallimard and awarded two prizes in Paris, was well received and has earned lasting recognition. It is often studied in French schools, as it is — so far as I know — one of the few French-lan-



guage novels for adolescents that addresses the Armenian Genocide. That said, it’s not as easy to sell as a mystery or adventure novel — it’s more of a reference work than a bestseller. The other book recounts the “catastrophe” experienced by Greeks in Asia Minor between 1919 and 1922. It is extremely well-researched — I even visited the region for firsthand insights. It’s a historical novel that mainly resonates with readers who are interested in that specific period.

And the last question: have you ever been to Armenia?

No, I haven’t yet been to Armenia — that’s something I plan to do. But I must say that, to me, “Armenia” is the Asia Minor of my

grandmother, who spoke Armenian, Greek and Turkish fluently. I’ve traveled several times to the region where she spent a happy childhood before deportation, back when Asia Minor was cosmopolitan, multilingual, cultured, and at the forefront of European cultural and commercial exchanges. Today, I spend half the year in Greece; my children were baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church, I continue to learn the Greek language, and I feel very much at home in that environment — where I sometimes encounter Armenians of the diaspora, descendants of exiles from Turkey.

You are always welcome also to the Republic of Armenia!



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Կիրակի, 5 Յոկտեմբեր 2025
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Կլենտլիյի Կեդրոնական Գրադարան

222 E. Harvard Street, Glendale, CA 91205
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TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
METRO LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

Under the Auspices of
His Eminence
Archbishop Hovnan Derderian,
Primate, Western Diocese of the
Armenian Church of North America

A Program Dedicated to
STEPAN ALAJAJIAN
1924 - 2010
Writer, Prosaist and Translator

Keynote Speaker
Hratch Sepetjian

Cultural program
with the participation of
Nune Avetisyan &
Ripsime Rshtuni

Sunday, October 5, 2025, 4 PM
Glendale Central Library



ARTS & CULTURE

Armenian Museum of Fresno Showcases
Tapestries by Marina Mamyan

FRESNO — The Armenian Museum of Fresno’s newest exhibition is showcasing the work of contemporary artist Marina Mamyan, on view now through the end of September.

Featuring 17 hand-woven tapestry works, the exhibition offers a rare chance to experience the intricate, and deeply expressive art of one of Armenia’s leading contemporary voices in textile and visual art. The main exhibition will be on display at the Armenian Museum of Fresno on Shaw Avenue, with a special showing of select works during Art Hop night at the



One of the tapestries by Marina Mamyan

museum’s ZARTONK Gallery on Fulton Street in the Helm Building.

Mamyan is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice spans tapestry, painting, mixed media and photography. Born in Yerevan, Mamyan lives and works between Armenia and the United States. With a career that bridges tradition and innovation, her work has been exhibited across Europe, the U.S., and Armenia, and is included in both public and private collections — including the Ministry of Culture of Armenia, the Municipality of Ponte de Lima in

Portugal, and the Armenian Museum in Fresno.

Best known for her evocative and structurally rich tapestries, Mamyan draws from modernist movements such as Constructivism while maintaining a deeply personal and sensory aesthetic. Her works explore themes of perception, memory, and space, blending geometry and abstraction with emotional depth. In series such as Closed Windows, inspired by the shuttered architecture of Guimarães, Portugal, Mamyan uses textile as a medium to explore boundaries — between inside and outside, presence and absence, light and shadow.

This exhibition continues the Museum’s commitment to celebrating Armenian heritage through contemporary art and culture. Mamyan, a former educator at Yerevan’s National Center of Aesthetics and a longtime member of the Artists’ Union of Armenia, brings a uniquely reflective voice to the global conversation on textile art and visual storytelling.

“This exhibition invites visitors to experience tapestry not only as a craft but as a profound language of emotion and form,” said Museum Director Varoujan Der Simonian. “Mamyan’s work is deeply rooted in Armenian tradition but speaks universally through its beauty and conceptual strength.”

The exhibition will run through September. There will be a reception with the artists at the Armenian Museum of Fresno, University of California Building, 550 E Shaw Ave, Thursday, August 21, 3 – 6 p.m.

At the Intersection of Arts and Science:
Healing Children Through Music Therapy

MUSIC THERAPY, from page 13 addresses physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs of a patient. It’s delivered by a board-certified Music Therapist, and can include creating, singing, moving to, and listening to music.

It’s especially impactful for children. When a child is diagnosed with a serious medical condition, especially one that requires a hospital stay, they are taken out of their normal routine. Often, feelings of isolation and fear are involved as they are put into a strange, new environment. Their family’s new day-to-day often includes waiting for test results, with the space between filled with beeping monitors, silence, and hushed voices.

Music brings life and joy back into a sterile environment. It helps a child talk about their feelings and understand what is happening, teaches coping mechanisms, even alleviating pain and helping kids stay on track with developmental milestones.

Music 5herapy empowers kids to manage chronic conditions or life-altering illnesses, such as different forms of cancer, blood disorders, lung/heart/kidney disease, autism, rare diseases, and immune deficiencies to help improve their quality of life. It helps reduce pain, fear and anxiety, and provides a much-needed coping mechanism to improve their mental well-being while undergoing medical treatment, during hospitalization and throughout their lives.

The Barriers to Music Therapy

So many children and their families are experiencing the difficulty of a chronic condition or life-altering illness, yet an

alarming percentage are not aware that this natural, complementary form of treatment is even an option for them.

On the flip side, it can also be a difficult profession to break into. To practice Music Therapy, students must complete a clinical internship before sitting for boards and earning certification to practice. Conventionally, these internships can take up to a year to complete and often are either unpaid or pay a small stipend that doesn’t cover living expenses.

CMF has provided over 10,000 fully-funded music therapy sessions to children and their families experiencing difficult medical diagnoses. Most recently, we established a stipend to cover the living expenses for two Music Therapy interns at UCLA. Since graduating from Berklee College of Music’s undergraduate program, they began their clinical internship at UCLA Health and are projected to complete it this month. They’ll then take their boards and go out into the world to continue practicing and supporting families.

CMF’s work includes connecting eligible children and young adults to board-certified Music Therapists who provide a personalized treatment plan at home and in hospitals. CMF also gifts musical instruments in support of those receiving Music Therapy services and conducts and sponsors research on Music Therapy to further innovate the field and work to integrate music with medicine.

Children’s Music Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and member of the American Music Therapy Association. To help support the mission or to learn more, visit CMF.org.

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

AUGUST 24 — Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection annual church festival at 1910 Stanley Street, New Britain. Live Armenian band, authentic Armenian food, Armenian dancing, bake sale, Armenian vendor. Sunday, noon to 5:00 pm. Come experience the legendary New Britain Armenian hospitality.

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 17 — Celebrating What Unites Us! Sunday at 4 pm. Highlights: Italy. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston. RSVP appreciated. hello@armenianheritagepark.org

AUGUST 17 — Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Sunday, Holy Mass at 10:30 a.m., followed by the traditional Blessing of the Grapes, Harissa, and Distribution of the Miraculous Water of Lourdes at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church in Belmont.

AUGUST 24 — ANNUAL PICNIC 12-5PM Lamb Shish Kebab, Chicken Kebab, Losh Kebab and Kheyma. Pastries-Cuisine Table and Armenian Coffee. Live music by the Jason Naroian Ensemble. Holy Archangels Armenian Church, 1280 Boston Rd., Haverhill MA

SEPTEMBER 16 — Holy Archangels 2nd Annual Golf Tournament Hickory Hill Golf Course 200 North Lowell St., Methuen, MA 7:30 AM Registration; 9:00 AM Shotgun Tee off. For Golfer Registration Info and Sponsorship opportunities, contact Mark Kazanjian (508-633-7447) Markkaz55@aol.com

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

SEPTEMBER 27 — Armenian Museum of America Music in Color Concert with Musician-in-Residence, violinist Haig Hovsepian and pianist Joey Vasconi, 7- 9 p.m., 65 Main Street Watertown, MA 02472, (617) 926-2562

SEPTEMBER 28 — Book Launch and Reception. An afternoon with Muriel Mirak-Weissbach on the occasion of the release in English of her book, A German General and the Armenian Genocide: Otto Liman von Sanders Between Honor and State. Sunday, 4 p.m., at ACF. Co-sponsored by NAASR, the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Goethe Institut and Berghahn Publishing House. Free and Open to the Public

OCTOBER 4 — National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) - “Celebrating 70 Years- Building the Future of Armenian Studies” Gala at the Fairmont Copley Plaza in Boston. Honorees, Pamela Avedisian and Yervant Chekijian. For tickets and sponsorship opportunities please go to <http://naasr.org/gala70>

OCTOBER 25 — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church 85th Anniversary Gala Fundraising Dinner, Saturday, 6:00 PM Cocktail, 7 p.m. Dinner & Program, Sheraton Boston Hotel. Celebrate 85 years of Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church in New England. Details and tickets: www.holycrossarmenian.com

NOVEMBER 21 — AMAA’s Boston Child Care Committee presents an evening supporting the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan, Armenia, FEATURING COMEDIAN KEV ORKIAN. COCKTAILS, DINNER & LIVE AUCTION. Wellesley Country Club, Wellesley Hills. SPONSOR BY AUGUST 1, 2025, TO BE LISTED ON THE INVITATION! (Individual Tickets will commence at a later date). For more info visit: <https://amaa.org/hyeminds-boston2025/>

NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 22 — 12 VOCATIONS: VARIETY OF GIFTS - ONE SPIRIT. Join St. Nersess Seminary and celebrate the vocations of its next 12 alumni, including three bishops, seven priests, a deacon and a lay minister at a gala banquet to be held at Macaluso’s, Hawthorne, NJ. Starts at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$200 per person. Details, invitations, and booklet donations can be found on www.stnersess.edu.

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 14 — St. Paul Armenian Church, Syracuse: Annual Shish Kebab Picnic at Ryder Park under the pavilion. Games, Great Food, and Good Times. All are welcome!

To send Calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirror-spectator.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.

(Raffi Tachdjian, MD, MPH, is the Founder & President of the Children’s Music Fund. He is Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics in the Division of Allergy and Clinical Immunology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and is double board certified in Adult and Pediatric Allergy and Immunol-

ogy. Dr. Tachdjian received his medical degree from Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, followed by an internship and residency in Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School in Boston, then completed a fellowship in Allergy, Immunology, and Rheumatology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. He is voted one of the UCLA Health System’s Best Doctors.)



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

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The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is
published weekly, except two weeks in
July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.A.	\$80 one year
Canada	\$125 one year
Other Countries	\$200 one year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston,
MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

Postmaster: Send address
changes to The Armenian
Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount
Auburn St.,
Watertown, MA 02472

Other than the Editorial, views
and opinions expressed in this
newspaper do not necessarily
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publisher.

Overlooked or Underaddressed Details of the Trilateral Meeting

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The Pashinyan–Aliyev–Trump meeting has recently dominated Armenian discourse, both domestically and in the diaspora. Reactions range from celebrating a historic peace achievement to condemning a treacherous act by Armenian authorities. While experts across various fields analyze the meeting, and with most aspects already discussed, I will focus on overlooked or underaddressed details.

First of all, the signed statement carries the same legal weight as the November 9 Armenia–Azerbaijan–Russia statement. It is a non-binding statement.

Another key consideration is the potential impact of oral statements following a written statement. For instance, after initialing the Armenia–Turkey protocols, Armenia refrained from making oral statements to prevent Turkey from adding verbal preconditions. Despite the written statement’s avoidance of the word “corridor,” Trump repeated the term three times, reinforcing that perception. Therefore, to the argument that “the word ‘corridor’ is not in the text of the statement,” one could respond that it is present in the subsequent oral statements.

Naturally, the question arises as to meaning: the Armenian representative signed under the written text, but Trump’s words belong only to Trump. In this case, it would have been necessary for the Armenian representative to correct the person using the term “corridor,” stating that it is not a corridor and that the term is not applicable in this case. Now, it is a fact that Trump maintains it is a corridor, and his assertion remains unchallenged.

A key issue is the United States’ decision to grant both Armenia and Azerbaijan the same status as strategic partners. Unlike that Mirzoyan–Blinken agreement between foreign ministers, the Azerbaijani document was signed at the higher Trump–Aliyev presidential level. Armenia’s signing its partnership agreement days before President Joe Biden’s departure from office suggests a pro-Democratic orientation; otherwise, the Armenian authorities could have waited to maximize its impact on the current administration. Interestingly, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s change in demeanor upon Trump’s criticism of Biden during the trilateral meeting circumstantially adds further credence to this point.

The repeal of Section 907, a long-standing grievance for President Ilham Aliyev, is an important development. This provision of the Freedom Support Act was enacted by Congress and could only be overturned through further congressional action, though the president has repeatedly waived it with congressional approval. While Trump pursuing a legislative change with majorities in the House and Senate is possible, it would be a long and complex process facing opposition, including from the Armenian Caucus.

Trump is more likely to annually sign the waiver, which Azerbaijan has already presented to its people as a full repeal.

The repeal of Section 907 does not automatically authorize arms sales to Azerbaijan or Armenia, contrary to claims circulating on Armenian and Azerbaijani social media. The United States typically avoids selling arms to warring countries that are both friendly states, and sales are usually blocked until a formal peace agreement is in place. Arms sales are subject to complex US legal and bureaucratic procedures, including Congressional oversight. One example of Congress contradicting the executive branch is the blocking of arms sales to Turkey, a NATO ally of the US.

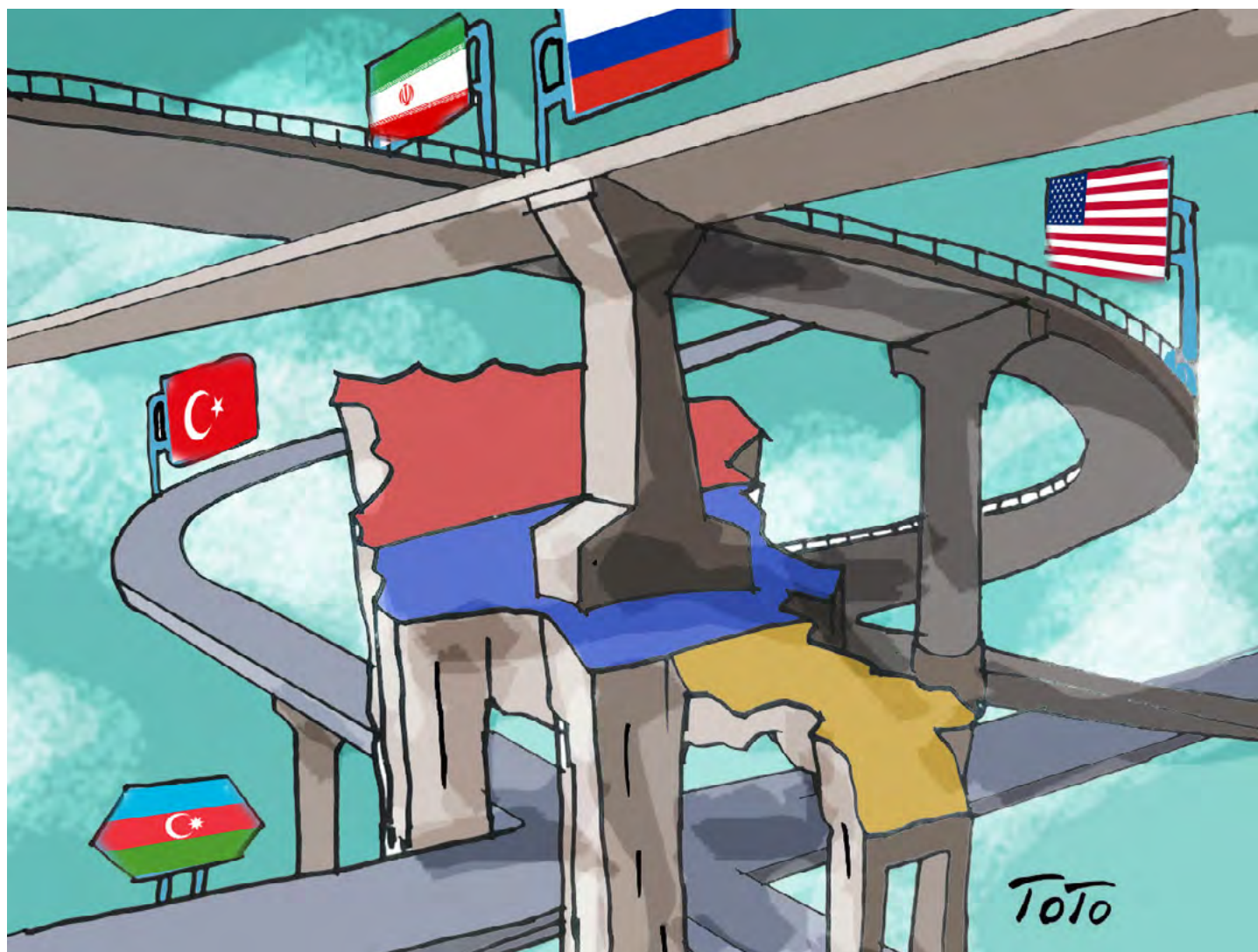
Another widely discussed topic on social media in both Armenia and Azerbaijan concerns military aid to both countries. The United States has never provided military aid or sold weapons to either Armenia or Azerbaijan. It has provided security assistance, which differs significantly from military aid, and has openly stated that its assistance to Azerbaijan is aimed against Iran, not Armenia.

An interesting fact is that Pashinyan had never had a highest-level meeting with any American counterpart (aside from one or two quick “on-the-go” encounters with Trump). Moreover, the last US president to meet with Aliyev was Barack Obama. In other words, the very fact of being invited to the White House was in itself a serious domestic public relations topic for both leaders which was widely disseminated.

Naturally, this process raises far more questions than it provides answers. The fact that Iran has already begun issuing rather harsh statements on the matter is cause for concern. Equally troubling are the remarks by Turkey’s foreign minister, who insists that this is, ultimately, a corridor, while Aliyev is already presenting his well-known preconditions to sign the peace treaty.

The investment plans, timeline for a peace agreement, and the legal enforceability of the Trump initiative remain unclear. The situation unfolded rapidly, prioritizing immediate results over detailed planning, raising concerns among American experts too. While each side may have achieved short-term goals, critical calculations appear incomplete. The US approach to the South Caucasus lacks a comprehensive strategy, seemingly favoring a business-driven solution similar to the Qualified Industrial Zones established for Israel and Jordan back in 1996, rather than a strategic framework that Washington apparently does not have for the South Caucasus region.

(Suren Sargsyan is an expert on US foreign policy, researcher and author. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University, American University of Armenia and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Suren Sargsyan is a founder of the Armenian Center for American Studies, a research center based in Yerevan.)





COMMENTARY

Gaza and the Beast: Genocide In Real Time

By Hrayr S. Karagueuzian

On July 24, 2025, French President Emmanuel Macron made a historic and controversial declaration: France would officially recognize the State of Palestine at the upcoming UN General Assembly session in September. The announcement, first delivered by French Consul General Nicolas Kassianides to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, came with Macron’s unequivocal pledge: “France will fully recognize Palestine as a State.”

France was not alone. On May 22, Ireland, Norway and Spain also recognized Palestine — marking the first time since Sweden’s move in 2014 that European nations have taken such a symbolic step. Earlier that same month, Slovenia initiated its own recognition process and UK is in full force following France. Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide stated plainly: “A Palestinian state is fundamental to realizing the two-state solution conceptualized in the UN’s 1947 partition plan. Israelis and Palestinians cannot return to coexistence if the current state of violence continues.” In Washington, however, Macron’s decision was denounced. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, echoing hardline positions, called it “a slap in the face to the victims of October 7” and accused France of “serving Hamas propaganda.” But Rubio, lacking any genuine diplomatic experience and parroting lines drawn by Donald Trump, demonstrated not statesmanship but blind ideological fealty. The Trump-led administration’s alliance with right-wing governments — Hungary, and Israel’s most extreme coalition in history — has gone so far as to police dissenting views in American universities. In France, pro-Israel members of Parliament erupted in protest. One MP evoked October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a brutal assault that killed some 1,200 Israeli civilians and took nearly 200 hostages. That day of horror must never be forgotten — one day of terror is one too many. But the monopoly on horror does not belong to one people. As I write these words on August 3, 2025, 666 days have passed since that bloody dawn. That number sends a chill down the spine. In the Book of Revelation (13:18), 666 is the mark of the beast — a symbol of evil, moral collapse, and unchecked power. First, associated with Nero, the Roman emperor who presided over cruelty and chaos, it has come to signify monstrous regimes that devour the innocent. Now, Gaza has become a smoldering graveyard, ravaged across these 666 days by bombardment, blockade, and systematic ruin. Under the command of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Defense Forces waged a campaign by air, land, and sea that defies every norm of modern warfare. Schools were flattened. Hospitals reduced to rubble. Homes incinerated. Markets turned into mass graves. Humanitarian aid was blocked. Water and electricity cut off. Over 65,000 Palestinians have been killed, and the death toll rises daily. Survivors live in apocalyptic conditions, their children gaunt, staring skyward for help that never comes. If this is not the work of the beast, what is? For 666 days, the world has watched in silence, and at times, in complicity. Macron’s recognition of Palestine is not just symbolic — it’s an indictment of a world that has grown numb to suffering. It rips away the veil of political convenience and forces us to confront a question the powerful would rather ignore:

Has Genocide Returned in Our Time — And Is Gaza its Name?

Even Thomas L. Friedman of the New York Times, long viewed as a centrist Middle East analyst, offered this stark commentary: “That did not seem like an accident. It seemed like the product of something deeper, something quite shameful, playing out within the extremist government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.” Friedman described intentional starvation policies championed by far-right ministers like Itamar Ben-Gvir, noting that Netanyahu provided only enough aid to prevent international backlash, while appeasing the Jewish supremacist factions that hold his coalition hostage.

Legal scholars and historians often hesitate to use the word “genocide” until all the boxes are checked. But how long must we wait while children die under rubble and women starve in open-air prisons? Even as intellectuals debate, key voices are breaking the silence. On July 29, 2025, two major Israeli human rights organizations — B’Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel — declared that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Their statement marked a turning point, aligning with assessments from Amnesty International and others. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in January 2024, warned of a “real and imminent risk of irreparable harm under the charge of genocide.” The International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened prosecutions against Netanyahu, former defense minister Yoav Gallant, and Hamas commander Mohammed Deif (now deceased) for crimes against humanity. B’Tselem’s director, Yuli Novak, said: “We are witnessing a reality that has left us no choice but to acknowledge the truth.”

Who Has the Right to Call It Genocide?

The identification of genocide is often reserved for scholars and lawyers. But this is not merely a legal question, it’s a moral one. To insist that only those with PhDs in History or law degrees may speak the word “genocide” is to silence survivors, journalists, and ordinary citizens who witness its signs and suffer its consequences. Genocide is not a legal abstraction — it is a human catastrophe. As defined in the UN Genocide Convention (1948, Article II), genocide involves acts committed “with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group,” including:

Killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction, imposing measures to prevent births, forcibly transferring children. By this standard, Gaza has crossed the threshold. Mass killing? Yes. Conditions of destruction? Yes. Starvation, disease, denial of medicine, and targeted bombings? All evident and ongoing.

When Dr. Gregory Stanton, American jurist, academic, human rights activist, first outlined the Ten Stages of Genocide, he drew heavily from the Armenian Genocide — the mass extermination of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire. His framework was meant not only to understand past atrocities, but to identify the warning signs of genocide in real time. Today, Gaza reflects that mirror with painful clarity.

Stanton’s model is not rigid or linear. The stages — Classification, Symbolization, Discrimination, Dehumanization, Organization, Polarization, Preparation, Persecution, Extermination, and Denial — often overlap. But if we dare to look with honest eyes, we can trace many steps in the ongoing destruction of Gaza.

Us vs. Them

It began long ago. After the 1973 Arab Israeli War, Palestinians were increasingly framed not just as an enemy, but as an existential threat to Israel’s survival. “Terrorist” became their defining label. This satisfies Stage One: Classification, drawing a hard line between “us” and “them.”

Stage Two: Symbolization followed quickly. Palestinian identity itself became suspect. A child’s name, a family’s location, a flag — everything became symbolic of a supposed threat. This symbolism feeds and justifies systemic Discrimination, Stage Three, which is no longer covert but deeply embedded in policy. An illustrative example: when an elderly South African Jewish woman immigrated to Israel and settled on a dry hillside, water pipes were swiftly installed to serve her new home. Yet just below, Palestinian families queued with buckets in hand, waiting their turn at a single communal faucet. In apartheid South Africa, this would have looked familiar.

Stripping Away Humanity

Words are weapons. Stage Four: Dehumanization is often a precursor to mass violence. Israeli officials including a former Defense Minister have described Palestinians as “human animals,” a chilling echo of Ottoman language that cast Armenians as traitors, viruses, or cancers in the body of the empire. Once stripped of their humanity, people become easy to eliminate.

The Machinery of Destruction

Genocide is not spontaneous. It is organized — Stage Five — through government and military infrastructure. Israel’s actions in Gaza, with blockades, bombardments, and forced displacement, are part of a carefully constructed system of Polarization, Preparation, and Persecution — Stages Six through Eight. These are not defensive reactions; they are strategic policies of control and subjugation. In the Armenian Genocide, the Ottoman authorities formed paramilitary death squads under the guise of the Special Organization (Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa), who rounded up, deported, and killed en masse. In Gaza, we see a modern variation: relentless airstrikes, food and medicine blockades, mass displacement, and the destruction of every lifeline — from hospitals to bakeries.

Extermination — Stage Nine — is not a metaphor. More than 65,000 Palestinians have been killed. Thousands are buried under rubble. Children die not just from bombs but from hunger, thirst, and infections that would be treatable anywhere else. The word “genocide” is not used lightly. But when a state imposes conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of a group “in whole or in part,” it meets the legal definition.

Lies as the Stage Ten of Genocide: Denial And then comes the most grotesque stage of all: Denial. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed that there is “no hunger” in Gaza, and that civilians were not shot as they rushed toward food distribution trucks. This is not just denial — it is gaslighting the global public. Video footage, satellite imagery, and firsthand accounts show skeletal children, bombed aid convoys, and breadlines turned into killing fields. This echoes the long-standing denial of the Armenian Genocide. More than a century later, the Turkish government still refuses to acknowledge it. To deny genocide is to kill the victims a second time, to erase them from history, and to shame the memory of the living.

What We Must See

The parallels are not coincidental — they are structural. Both the Armenian and Palestinian cases demonstrate how an ethnic group can be demonized, isolated, starved, and destroyed under a veil of national security or wartime necessity. The difference is: Gaza is happening now. In real time. Before our eyes. The world cannot plead ignorance. What is unfolding in Gaza is not just a humanitarian disaster. It is not a tragedy. It is a crime — possibly the most egregious of all crimes. And if we fail to call it by its name, if we remain silent in the face of extermination and lies, we become accomplices in history’s next denial. There will come a day — sooner than we think — when our children will ask what we did when Gaza burned. When the evidence was live-streamed and the victims cried out, were we still debating semantics?

The moral imperative is clear. We must recognize genocide while it is still unfolding — not just mourn it after the ashes settle.

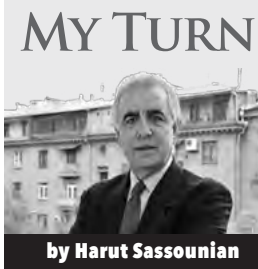
Final Words: Silence Is Not Neutrality

The world’s passivity in the face of this unfolding genocide will haunt future generations. History will not absolve those who remained silent — or worse, made excuses. What is happening in Gaza is not collateral damage. It is not complex. It is not symmetrical warfare. It is systematic annihilation. The bulldozing of ruined homes to pave the way for settler expansion speaks volumes about the intent to permanently erase a Palestinian’s presence and future. We must not allow the definition of genocide to become the exclusive property of courts and professors. It belongs to the world. And the world must name it — loudly, clearly, and urgently — before the number of days rises from 666 to something even more unspeakable.

(The author is Professor Emeritus of Medicine, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. He is the author of the book with Yair Auron: “Perfect Injustice. Genocide and the Theft of Armenian Wealth,” Transaction Publishers, Rutgers University, NJ 2009.)



COMMENTARY



MY TURN Nobel Peace Prize for Trump; Road for Azerbaijan; Nothing for Armenia

As expected, President Donald Trump turned the White House Summit for “peace” in the Caucasus into a farcical show, constantly engaging in self-flattery, taking credit for things he had not done, blaming President Biden, and frequently straying from the subject of the meeting.

Trump had only one purpose for organizing this White House event: to secure the Nobel Peace Prize for allegedly brokering peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, claiming it was something no one else could achieve in 35 years.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump shamelessly glorified himself: “Many leaders have tried to end the War, with no success, until now, thanks to ‘TRUMP.’” He also took credit for settling several other conflicts in which he had zero involvement. He conveniently failed to mention his arrogant campaign promise to resolve the war in Ukraine “within 24 hours of taking office.” He has now been President for seven months, yet the war persists.

Cunningly, both Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Ilham Aliyev, aware of Trump’s egotistical tendencies, eagerly engaged in groveling behavior. They even offered to sign a joint letter urging the Nobel Committee to award Trump the Peace Prize — a gesture that delighted him.

The serious issue of addressing the disputed transit road from mainland Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave through Armenia quickly degenerated into farce with the announcement that it would be called “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity” (TRIPP) — yet another example of Trump’s vanity.

The “Peace Treaty” Pashinyan has been touting for months was not signed as announced, but merely initialed during last week’s White House Summit, rendering it a non-binding document. Aliyev has no interest in signing the treaty, knowing that doing so would eliminate his leverage to demand further concessions from Pashinyan, who has thus far capitulated to all his demands. Aliyev will delay signing the treaty until Pashinyan fulfills yet another Azeri demand to amend Armenia’s Constitution, a process that will take 10 more months.

Armenians remain unaware of the “Peace Treaty’s” terms. It is reportedly set for release on August 11. We will then discover what kind of concessions Pashinyan has made to Azerbaijan. He is also violating the pledge he made in 2018 to a large crowd in Yerevan’s Republic Square that he would not sign any agreement without first securing their approval.

Pashinyan has deceived the Armenian public by claiming he is delivering peace to Armenia — hoping that such a promise will help him retain his seat after next year’s parliamentary elections. For Aliyev, this so-called “Peace Treaty” is merely a piece of paper he can violate at will after signing. Should Azerbaijan attack Armenia, neither Eastern nor Western powers will intervene. The Armenian public should not vainly expect the US government to send troops to defend Armenia’s borders. The memorandum signed last Fri-

day makes clear that this is strictly a commercial, not military, arrangement.

There are numerous problems with Pashinyan’s contradictory positions. Months ago, when an Armenian journalist asked if he would consider granting management of the transit road to an international organization, he categorically rejected the idea. Yet, he just handed the transit road’s management to a foreign entity.

Here is another broken promise. A few months ago, when Aliyev demanded that Armenia agree to disband OSCE’s Minsk Group of mediators, Pashinyan said he would do so upon signing the “Peace Treaty.” Yet, last Friday Pashinyan signed the White House Memorandum calling for the dissolution of the Minsk Group — even though Aliyev had not signed the treaty.

More ominously, the initialed “Peace Treaty” contains no provision for the release of Armenian hostages held in Baku, withdrawal of Azeri troops from Armenia’s territory occupied since 2021, or the right of return for 120,000 displaced Artsakh Armenians, despite the International Criminal Court’s ruling for their repatriation. This is a reward for Aliyev’s criminal behavior. Until Azerbaijan reverses course on these issues, Pashinyan should have refused to initial or sign the treaty. I hope he is not relying on promises from Trump, who refused to recognize the Armenian Genocide on April 24 — even though Congress and President Biden had recognized it.

In 2020, Armenia agreed to provide Azerbaijan with a transit road through its territory in exchange for the Lachin Corridor linking Artsakh to Armenia. Since then, Azerbaijan has occupied Artsakh and the Lachin Corridor, eliminating Armenia’s obligation to uphold the ceasefire agreement. This transit link is the “Turan Road,” the Century-old dream of the Turkic world, connecting Turkey and Azerbaijan to the Turkic republics of Central Asia. Regrettably, these issues appear to matter little to Pashinyan, who is more focused on retaining his seat than protecting Armenia’s interests.

One of the major gains for Azerbaijan during last Friday’s White House ceremony was the suspension of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, passed by Congress in 1992, which prohibited direct US government assistance to Azerbaijan. Now Azerbaijan is able to purchase billions of dollars’ worth of advanced US weapons that could be used against Armenia. How does that promote peace?

No details were provided to the public about US management of the transit road. Why was it granted for 99 years with an option to extend another 99 years — effectively handing it to the US government indefinitely, at the expense of Armenia’s sovereignty? It is also unclear what benefit Armenia stands to gain from the billions of dollars’ worth of goods transiting its territory.

For years, Pashinyan objected to Aliyev’s demand for a “corridor” instead of a road through Armenia. A corridor implies that the transit road would be considered Azeri territory. Yet, when President Trump spoke at the White House Summit, he referred to the road as a “corridor.” Furthermore, the agreement signed by the three leaders includes the problematic term “unimpeded” transit. What exactly does “unimpeded entail? Does it mean Armenia has no right to inspect the passports and luggage of those crossing into its territory from Azerbaijan?

Here is the bottom line of the White House Summit: Trump may get his Nobel Peace Prize; Aliyev, Erdogan, and the Turkic World will secure their transit through Armenia; meanwhile Armenia will outsource its sovereign territory and alienate Iran, its only regional ally.

If Azerbaijan Breaks Its Agreements, Are Armenians Prepared To Resist?

By Michael Rubin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On August 8, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev met with President Donald Trump at the White House to sign a document expressing their intent to achieve peace. Many of the details of their settlement remain ill-defined or absent; Trump’s ceremony was akin to a ribbon-cutting for a building still under construction.

Each of the leaders approached the White House meeting with a different motive: Trump openly craves a Nobel Peace Prize. “If I were named Obama I would have had the Nobel Prize given to me in ten seconds,” Trump lamented on Truth Social. He has referenced winning a prize on five other occasions. Marking his administration’s first six months, the White House bragged, “As a result of his historic peacemaking efforts, President Trump has already received three Nobel Peace Prize nominations.”

Pashinyan wants not only peace but an agreement completed before elections, for he fears having to debate his concessions openly and believes the promise if not triumph of the agreement will make that debate moot.

Is Azerbaijan Sincere about Peace?

Aliyev’s considerations are different. He seeks not peace but a process from which he can profit politically and financially while furthering his ideological ambitions to destroy Armenia. Azerbaijani rhetoric does not indicate a desire for peace, nor does his denialism of Armenia’s historic legitimacy suggest the resolution of conflict.

Domestic politics also plays a role: Pashinyan may be personally prickly and his popularity cratering, but Armenia’s post-2018 political debate is broad and vibrant. Pashinyan and his opposition debate directly about domestic issues across the gambit. Corruption remains a problem in Armenia, but it no longer hijacks the state; Transparency International ranks Armenia alongside Greece, Slovakia, Croatia and Malta in its annual corruption survey. Under Aliyev, though, Azerbaijan is a kleptocracy and among the world’s most corrupt countries, on par with Iran and Russia. While Armenia’s score has improved in recent years, Azerbaijan’s trajectory is opposite. Next year’s listing may very well see Azerbaijan fall to Haiti and Myanmar levels. Aliyev and his family may be billionaires, but most Azeris live in squalor.

This creates a dangerous dynamic. Aliyev needs to distract his population with an external enemy, lest they begin questioning his competence and legitimacy. For decades, Armenian control in Nagorno-Karabakh provided that distraction. With Nagorno-Karabakh conquered and its indigenous Armenian population expelled, Aliyev must find a new enemy or face collapse.

That enemy remains Armenia, hence the increase in Aliyev’s rhetoric about Armenia being Western Azerbaijan and his demand Azerbaijanis who claim descent should return Armenia, with Azerbaijani militias deployed to protect them. This is why a signing ceremony for an incomplete deal is so dangerous: Pashinyan embraces di-

plomacy as a means to resolve conflict but Aliyev sees talks as an asymmetric warfare strategy to gain immunity for his actions through a process while consolidating his position. Nor is his supremacist ideology so easily forfeit.

Will the Peace Agreement Last?

Armenia has to date shrouded the peace process in secrecy. This is a bad look for a democracy, because it suggests its leaders rather evade than engage in debate. If Pashinyan believes that his deal represents the best, most realistic, just and permanent outcome, he should not be afraid to defend it.

There is a danger, however, among those in power that they embrace blindly the most optimistic scenario and suppress naysayers who cast doubt or raise valid questions about the likelihood of the most advantageous outcomes. President Bill Clinton, for example, punished dissent as he sought to reach the 1994 Agreed Framework with North Korea. President George W. Bush downplayed the risks of regime change in Iraq. President Barack Obama belittled and silenced those who raised valid questions about loopholes in his 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

The reality is that, effusive statements and pageantry of signing statements aside, Azerbaijan still seeks to eliminate Armenia, and this rushed peace agreement may actually bring Aliyev’s ambitions closer to fulfillment. Trump’s waiver of Section 907 potentially opens the flood gates for Azerbaijan to purchase weaponry from the United States, arms whose only purpose appears to be to kill Armenians.

While an economic corridor — now named the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) — will traverse Armenia, its route remains uncertain. Economically, any such route should intersect Yeraskh, but Azerbaijan demands a southern route across Syunik, see PREPAREDNESS, page 20

If Azerbaijan Breaks Its Agreements, Are Armenians Prepared To Resist?

PREPAREDNESS, from page 19
perhaps cutting Armenia off from the Iranian border near Meghri. Azerbaijan still craves — and increasingly encroaches — upon Syunik, and uses corridor schemes to advance its goals. TRIPP’s longevity is also questionable: There is little likelihood that it will survive Trump. Again, there is precedent: Aliyev agreed to abide by the November 9, 2020 ceasefire, only to violate it with a blockade and renewed invasion.

Will Azerbaijan Seize Syunik?

When Trump leaves office or dies, Aliyev may calculate that he can simply seize Syunik through force, much as he did Nagorno-Karabakh, especially since Azerbaijan’s population is more than three times that of Armenia. Even today, Aliyev respects Trump’s finger-wagging no more than he did Acting Assistant Secretary of State Yuri Kim, whose subsequent humiliation he relished. Simply put, while Pashinyan gambles on peace, Armenians should prepare for the worst.

Every Armenian should visit Kapan, the capital of Syunik, to see a vulnerability that it is possible to ignore living in Yerevan or Glendale. To land at the Kapan airport is to land on the Azerbaijani border; the situation is so dangerous that European Union observers monitor every flight that arrives or departs to ensure Azeri snipers do not try to down the plane. Along roads near the Armenia-Azerbaijan frontier, Armenian workers scramble to build bunkers lest Azerbaijanis occupying the high ground seek to cut off major roads and farmland. Residents in agricultural village like Nerkin Hand or resort towns like Jermuk live life under the constant threat of Azerbaijani snipers or artillery. Azerbaijan is well-practices in citing fictional provocations to justify attacks and occupation.

Are Armenians Prepared to Resist?

In such a situation, prudence dictates preparation, but hardware is not enough. Armenians face perhaps the gravest threat to their existence in the region since the Genocide. Simply declaring Aliyev a man of peace does not make it so anymore than declaring Talaat Pasha a humanitarian would make the chief architect of the Armenian genocide anything other than a man culpable for the mur-



der of more than one million.
Pashinyan is the elected prime minister, but in a democracy, he does not win special status as the only voice for the nation, nor does he have a mandate to control civil society. If their government will not prepare, Armenians themselves should. Ukrainians prevented a Russian walkover of their country with careful preparation. Ukrainians had the patriotism, but they also had the skills – they had trained. Likewise, even when the Islamic State swept across western Iraq and eastern Syria, Kurds resisted, hectoring the Turkish-backed Islamist group from behind its line and rescuing countless Yezidi and Christian captives.
The question Armenians must now ask is whether they are prepared to defend a Syunik under Azerbaijani occupation: Do Armenian men, women, and teenagers have weapons training? Have potential leaders established cells and hidden arms and ammunition caches? Do Armenians

across Syunik have access to satellite phones, jammers, and other electronics they will need to communicate with each other or confuse Azerbaijani drones and patrols? Do Armenian cells have access to night vision goggles, sniper scopes, and even the components for improvised explosive devices to counter invader armor?
Prior to 2020, Armenians were unprepared, especially for Azerbaijani drone warfare and for new ways of fighting. Too many Armenian politicians were in denial that Azerbaijan would simply start a war, especially against the backdrop of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Process. Today, Pashinyan, Aliyev, and Trump might celebrate a new agreement, but Armenians should ask whether history is simply repeating. (Michael Rubin is director of policy analysis at the Middle East Forum and a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.)



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