

*Pashinyan Admits
Rejecting Karabakh
Peace Plans Before
2020 War*

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Sparking opposition allegations of a deliberate sacrifice of Nagorno-Karabakh and thousands of Armenian lives, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on August 25 admitted that he rejected international proposals to end the Karabakh conflict before the 2020 war with Azerbaijan.

“Today I also want to answer a question that is perhaps the most important for understanding the history of the last seven years,” Pashinyan said in a week-end statement on the 35th anniversary of a declaration of independence adopted by Armenia’s first post-Communist parliament. “After all, why did Armenia, our government and I personally not make concessions before September 2020, which was the only theoretical opportunity to avoid a 44-day war?”

“The key reason for this was that as a result of those concessions, all the threats and dependencies we had would have increased disproportionately, leading to the loss of Armenia’s independence and statehood. We adopted a strategy to preserve Armenia’s independence and make that independence real.”

Pashinyan clearly referred to peace plans jointly drafted by the United States, Russia and France and based on their so-called Madrid Principles of a Karabakh settlement. The three co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group presented the conflicting sides with an updated version of the draft peace deal in 2019, one year after Pashinyan came to power. The latter reluctantly acknowledged this fact in February after repeated denials.

Armenian opposition leaders maintain that Pashinyan’s failure to accept that plan paved the way for the disastrous 2020 war and Azerbaijan’s subsequent recapture of Karabakh. Some of them seized upon his latest statement to accuse him of deliberately provoking the six-week war that left at least 3,800 Armenian soldiers dead.

“So he knowingly did not prevent the war as a result of which we suffered thousands of casualties, lost the Republic of Artsakh and a part of Armenia’s territory, and promised Azerbaijan a land corridor,” charged Artur Khachatryan, a lawmaker from the main opposition Hayastan alliance.

Levon Zurabyan, a deputy chairman of former President Levon Ter-Petrosian’s Armenian National Congress (HAK), said Pashinyan’s “bombshell” admission will “forever change” political debate in Armenia regarding the causes of and responsibility for the 2020 war.

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**Turkey Breaks Ground on Its Section
Of TRIPP Rail Corridor**

The Turkish government is moving quickly to capitalize on new economic opportunities created by US President Donald Trump’s peace plan for Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Turkish officials held a groundbreaking ceremony on August 22 for a new 224-km rail line stretching from the eastern Turkish hub of Kars to Dilucu at the frontier with Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan exclave. The Kars-Dilucu rail line is envisioned as the largest section of a new transit corridor that is the centerpiece of the Trump peace plan. The new route would be initially capable of handling up to 15 million metric tons of freight and 5.5 million passengers per year.

The possibilities opened up by the Trump plan “will increase economic cooperation in the South Caucasus and accelerate the opening of borders and the normalization of diplomatic relations,” Turkey’s minister for transport and infrastructure, Abdulkadir Uraloglu, said at the groundbreaking festivities, reading a message from Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Uraloglu also described the rail link as “an international bond of steel that will further strengthen the socio-economic relations between Asia and Europe, extending from China to Europe.”



Turkey's minister for transport and infrastructure, Abdulkadir Uraloglu, waves his hand to start a groundbreaking ceremony for the Kars-Dilucu rail line. (Photo: gov.tr)

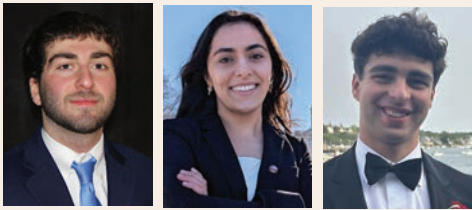
Provided the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace process is finalized, the Kars-Dilucu railway will connect to an existing rail line in Nakhichevan, which, in turn, will link up with the planned “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity” (TRIPP), an envisioned transit corridor connecting

Azerbaijan proper and the exclave, traversing Armenian territory. Once completed, TRIPP would become perhaps the prime route in the developing Middle Corridor network of transit routes connecting East Asia and Europe.

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**Three Interns Spend Summer
With the *Mirror-Spectator***

WATERTOWN — This summer has been an unusually full one at the Mirror-Spectator, with three interns joining the paper thanks to three different sponsoring programs or individuals – the Armenian Students’ Association Inc. (ASA) Journalism Internship Award, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Boston Global Leadership Program, and Dean Vahan Shahinian, Esq.



(left to right) Harry Chakmakian, Shushanik Hayriyan, Raffi V. Arkun

Harry Chakmakian, who was sponsored by the AGBU Boston Global Leadership Program. He is from Boston and will be starting his junior year shortly at Maris University in Poughkeepsie, NY, where he majors in sports communication and minors in journalism.

Chakmakian said, “Journalism and Sports Communication have been passions of mine since I was young. I remember waking up early on weekends, not to watch cartoons, but to watch the newest episode of ‘SportsCenter.’ Ever since then, I knew I wanted to be a part of the topic which gave me so much

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**Watertown Native Harry Parsekian’s
Adventures Span the Globe**

By Raffi V. Arkun
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — “My country is the world, my countrymen are all mankind.” This motto, based on the words of American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison in 1838, is how Watertown native Harry Parsekian describes his philosophy in life.

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Harry Parsekian, center with Nipmuc Tribe members Harry “The Hawk” Edmonds and his brother Lee “Brave Heart” Edmonds

MUMBAI
**Students Win Three Medals
At International Olympiad
On Astronomy and
Astrophysics**

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**The Armenians
Of Boston’s
Waterfront**

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CONNECTICUT
**Joel A. Martin:
With Jazzical
Komitas and Love
for Armenia**

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Ararat Museum
Receives Travelers'
Choice Award

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Ararat Museum received the Travelers' Choice award by Tripadvisor, one of the world's largest travel platforms.

The Travelers' Choice title is based on comprehensive analytical data, including regularly published visitor reviews, and is awarded to only 10 percent of tourist destinations featured on Tripadvisor globally.

It is worth noting that this is the second time the museum has received this esteemed recognition.

Sargsyan Criticizes
Washington Agreement

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Former Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan on August 26 strongly criticized the peace agreement presigned by Armenia and Azerbaijan in Washington earlier in August.

The document, titled "Agreement on Establishment of Peace and Inter-State Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan," was initiated by Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov during a meeting in Washington on August 8.

"That document should not be called a peace agreement, but rather a tale of how the capitulant once again fulfilled Azerbaijan's demands," Sargsyan said ahead of a court hearing on August 26.

Court Rejects Search
Record Motion in
Archbishop Case

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The trial of Archbishop Mikael Ajapahyan has entered its final phase. The next session is scheduled for August 28, to be held outside regular working hours.

Judge Armine Meliksetyan on August 26 denied a motion filed by defense attorney Yerem Sargsyan, which sought to declare inadmissible the record of a search conducted at the Shirak Diocese. Meanwhile, the diary found on the archbishop's computer has been deemed admissible by the court.

The proceedings began on August 15, and the court has already concluded the main hearing phase. Prosecutors requested time to prepare their final statements, prompting the scheduling of the next session for August 28.

On June 27, officers from the National Security Service entered the courtyard of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in an attempt to detain Ajapahyan, head of the Shirak Diocese, but later withdrew. Ajapahyan subsequently presented himself to the Investigative Committee. He was arrested on June 28 and charged with "publicly calling for the usurpation of power, violation of territorial integrity, renunciation of sovereignty, or the violent overthrow of constitutional order."

On Anniversary of Armenia's Declaration of Independence,
Pashinyan Blames USSR for Karabakh Movement

By Nate Ostiller

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan issued a statement on the 35th anniversary of Armenia's declaration of independence, on August 23, calling the "key ideological provisions" of the document "conflict-oriented" and a result of "collective patriotism" that had been "instilled in us by the Soviet Union."

The ideology, Pashinyan argued on Saturday, August 23, "shaped our socio-psychology, which eventually led to the Karabakh Movement," adding that "its deep, subconscious goal was the strategic impossibility of the existence of an independent Armenian state."

"A complete and comprehensive analysis of the information and reality available to me as prime minister has brought me to the unshakable conviction that we should not continue the Karabakh Movement, as it means abolishing the independence of the Republic of Armenia."

Pashinyan's statement was the latest instance of him criticizing the Karabakh Movement, which pushed for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh in the 1980s and 1990s. Two full-scale wars were fought over the territory, as well as several smaller clashes, with Azerbaijan ultimately seizing Nagorno-Karabakh in a final lightning offensive in 2023 that resulted in the exodus of virtually all of the region's Armenian population.

In Saturday's statement, Pashinyan also addressed the Second Nagorno

Karabakh War.

Pashinyan said that offering concessions at the time was "was the only theoretical opportunity to avoid the 44-day war."

But at the same time, the concessions would have resulted in the loss of Armenia's independence, Pashinyan said, adding that, "instead, we adopted a strategy to preserve Armenia's independence and make that independence a reality."

Pashinyan then went on to argue that "The expression of that strategy is the ideology of the 'Real Armenia', which has made peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan possible, has made real dialogue with Turkey possible, which has given us an opportunity to deepen our relations with Georgia and [Iran], and has allowed us to become a real and interesting partner for the world."

Pashinyan was referring to his "Real Armenia" ideology, which stipulates that Armenians must accept modern Armenia within its current borders.

"Peace has been established, and it must become a subject of daily care and concern, it must become institutional. August 2025 has become the beginning of a peaceful and prosperous life for the Republic of Armenia", Pashinyan concluded.

Earlier in August, Armenia and Azerbaijan made unprecedented steps towards cementing a peace agreement at a meeting between Pashinyan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and US President Donald Trump in Washington.

The White House meeting resulted in



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

both Aliyev and Pashinyan signing a seven-point declaration enshrining the progress towards peace, as well as initialing a 17-part peace deal. Nonetheless, the peace agreement remains unsigned officially, as Azerbaijan has demanded that Armenia change its constitution as a precondition. It is unknown when the peace treaty will ultimately be inked.

Perhaps the most tangible outcome of the meeting was the announcement of a plan, dubbed the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), to connect Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan, through Armenian territory. The route is intended to be managed by a yet-unnamed US company.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on August 25.)

Farwell Reception in Honor of Ambassador Lilit Makunts

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On August 22, the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the United States hosted a farewell reception in honor of H.E. Lilit Makunts, marking the conclusion of her tenure as Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States.

The event was attended by high-ranking U.S. officials, members of the Kansas National Guard, honorary consuls of Armenia to the United States, representatives of bipartisan think tanks, and members of the Armenian American community.

In her farewell address, Makunts expressed gratitude as she reflected on her four-year tenure. She highlighted the initialing of a historic peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan on August 8 in Washington.

Makunts emphasized the significance of elevating Armenia-U.S. relations to a strategic partnership as a key element for the trajectory and sustainability of bilateral ties. She extended her sincere appreciation to the United States and its partners for their continued support, reaffirmed the strength of Armenia-U.S. relations grounded in shared democratic values, and acknowledged the vital contributions of the Armenian American community throughout the decades.

She also expressed thanks to the embassy team for their service and dedication, and to her family for their steadfast support during her tenure.

Makunts was awarded the "Medal of Excellence" by the Kansas National Guard in recognition of her four years of meritorious service and her significant contribution to strengthening bilateral security cooperation between Armenia and the Kansas National Guard.

The medal was presented by Brigadier General Jason P. Nelson during a ceremony



Ambassador Makunts and guests at the reception

honoring her exceptional efforts to advance ties between Armenia and the United States.

The Medal of Excellence is one of the highest honors bestowed by the Kansas National Guard. Established in 1995, it is reserved for both military and civilian individuals who have demonstrated excep-

tionally meritorious service in positions of great responsibility or performed acts of heroism involving personal risk. Recipients may include Guard members, civilians, former personnel, or state and federal officials whose contributions significantly advance the Guard's mission and values.

Errata

In Mariam Pashayan's article "Adrineh Mirzayan Amplifies the Armenian Voice through Film Production" in the August 23 issue of the Mirror-Spectator, the following corrections should be made. Instead of "Adrineh professionally works as the director of employee relations at the Four Seasons Hotel," read: "Adrineh has a 25-year hospitality career spanning positions with InterContinental, Omni Hotels, and Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts in Los Angeles." In place of Baku in the sentence "To escape the massacres her grandfather fled to Krasnodar, Russia, and later to Baku..." read after the word Russia "but the oppression of communism soon pushed the family to seek freedom in Iran. Finally, the German company name spelled Ximena should read Siemens."



ARMENIA

Pashinyan, Mirzoyan Address Country's
Foreign Policy at Diplomatic Forum

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Armenian government will pay a US law firm \$3.2 million to represent it during international arbitration hearings on the legality of its seizure of Armenia's national electric utility owned by a jailed critic of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Pashinyan pledged to "quickly" nationalize the Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA) company on June 18 hours after its principal owner, billionaire Samvel Karapetyan, was arrested following his strong criticism of the premier's campaign against the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Armenian parliament approved on July 2 a bill allowing the government to "temporarily" take over ENA's management before nationalizing the company or changing its owner.

Karapetyan's Tashir Group launched arbitration proceedings in Stockholm later in July as the government began enforcing the controversial law. The conglomerate based

in Moscow is seeking as much as \$500 million in compensation for what it sees as an illegal "expropriation" of its biggest asset in Armenia. Tashir has dismissed government allegations that it has mismanaged the electricity distribution network, saying that they are part of Pashinyan's politically motivated crackdown on Karapetyan.

In an interim win for Karapetyan, the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce (SCC) ordered the government late last month to refrain from confiscating ENA from Tashir, changing ENA's top management or revoking its parent company's operating license pending a verdict in the case. The government essentially defied the injunction, refusing to reverse its decisions to replace the top company executives with members of Pashinyan's Civil Contract party and other government loyalists.

Following a weekly meeting in Yerevan on Thursday, Pashinyan's cabinet announced that it has hired Arnold & Porter, a US law firm specializing in internation-

al arbitration proceedings, to represent it during the Stockholm tribunal's consideration of the ENA case. The firm will be paid \$3.2 million for that purpose, it said.

Infrastructures Minister Davit Khudatian expressed confidence last week that the government will win the arbitration battle. Some Armenian legal experts insisted, however, that the arbitration body is far more likely to rule in Tashir's favor. They said Yerevan's failure to comply with its recent injunction increased the likelihood of such an outcome.

The hefty compensation sought by Tashir is equivalent to 5.5 percent of the government's overall budgetary spending projected for this year.

Critics view ENA's seizure as a serious blow to Armenia's business reputation. They say it will scare away major foreign investors who have already shown little interest in the South Caucasus nation during Pashinyan's seven-year rule.

Tashir claims to have invested at least \$700 million in ENA and sharply cut its

Symphonic Das A
In Gyumri

GYUMRI — The educational program Symphonic Das A will launch the new academic year from Gyumri, the cultural capital of Armenia. Students from all high schools in Gyumri will have the opportunity to embark on a unique symphonic journey into the world of classical music.

Initiated by the "SymphonicA" NGO, with the support of the Manoogian Simone Foundation and in strategic partnership with the Visual Armenia Foundation, musicians from the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra will conduct interactive lessons for Gyumri's youth during the months of September and October. These educational sessions will culminate in grand gala concerts featuring the full symphonic ensemble of the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra, to be held at the Vardan Ajemian Drama Theatre in Gyumri, presenting masterpieces of classical music.

The educational content of the Symphonic Das A project in Gyumri is being developed by the Visual Armenia Development Foundation, utilizing the innovative Brainograph educational platform. This collaboration allows the integration of scientific thought, technological solutions, and modern teaching methods, making the educational material more visual, engaging, and accessible.

With the support of the Manoogian Simone Foundation, the Symphonic Das A program aims to inspire students to appreciate and listen to classical music, foster refined musical thinking, and, in many cases, encourage further musical education. The implementation of the program will contribute to expanding and rejuvenating the audience



This collaboration will mark the beginning of a new educational and cultural movement in the Shirak region, set to expand across all provinces of Armenia and engage thousands of young people.

Pashinyan Admits Rejecting Karabakh Peace Plans Before 2020 War

PEACE PLAN, from page 1

"He finally admitted that in 2020, it was possible to make concessions and avoid the war," Zurabyan wrote on Facebook.

"It means that Pashinyan had rejected the peace plan proposed by the US, Russia and France, under which we would have kept all of Nagorno-Karabakh, Lachin, and Kel-

bajar under Armenian control for generations without having to give [Azerbaijan] any Zangezur corridor," he said.

Originally put forward in 2007, the Madrid Principles upheld the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination while calling for their withdrawal from Azerbaijani districts around Karabakh occupied in the early 1990s. Karabakh's internationally recognized status would be determined through a future referendum.

Pashinyan said until now that he did not accept this peace formula proposed by the US, Russia and France because it was all about "returning Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan." Armenian opposition leaders dismissed his claims as a hapless attempt to dodge responsibility for the loss of Karabakh.

Last December, Ter-Petrosian challenged Pashinyan to publicize all peace plans drafted by the three mediating powers along with Yerevan's official responses to them. Pashinyan claimed that he is ready to do that but that his administration has not managed to find those documents.



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan greets the US, Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group before talks with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, Vienna March 29, 2019

losses since buying the utility from Russia's RAO UES energy giant in 2015. The acquisition followed street protests in Yerevan against a UES attempt to raise electricity prices in Armenia. Tashir has kept the prices unchanged.

Karapetyan, who has mainly lived in Russia since the early 1990s, was initially prosecuted for allegedly calling for a violent overthrow of Pashinyan's government. He was also charged with tax evasion, fraud and money laundering after pledging to fight for regime change in Armenia and setting up a new opposition group for that purpose. He denies the accusations.

Opposition,
Government
Disagree on
Trucks Entering
Russia from
Armenia

YEREVAN (Caucasus Watch) — On August 24, Garnik Danielyan, an Armenian opposition MP, stated that hundreds of trucks carrying agricultural products were forced to return to Armenia from the Russian border. Danielyan emphasized that the trucks first traveled from Armenia through Georgia and then reached the Russian border, where they were turned back. He noted that the vehicles carried tons of plums, peaches, and grapes, and their owners and recipients would suffer heavy losses. Trucks transporting construction materials were also reportedly turned back, which Danielyan described as uncharacteristic for the sector. He suggested the issue might be linked to customs or border regulation violations.

On August 25, Gevorg Papoyan, the Armenian Economy Minister, denied Danielyan's statement, stressing that "hundreds of trucks with fruit" were not turned back by Russia. Papoyan wrote on social media that in August, 2,427 trucks carrying Armenian exports entered Russia, averaging more than 101 vehicles daily. He detailed that these included 610 trucks with beverages, 447 with fruit, 315 with vegetables, 234 with perlite sand, 141 with plants, 84 with processed fruits and vegetables, 75 with stone and plaster goods, 68 with fish, 79 with electrical appliances, 21 with cigarettes, 19 with dairy products, and 16 with knitwear.

The minister underlined that heavy-duty trucks carrying Armenian goods did not face difficulties entering Russia through the Upper Lars checkpoint on the Georgian border. He clarified that only four trucks returned from Georgia to Armenia without entering Russia, and these carried fruits and vegetables. Danielyan had earlier attributed the alleged return of many trucks to phytosanitary issues and claimed that other vehicles were subjected to long and detailed inspections.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Wizz Air Launches
Gyumri–Larnaca
Flights

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Wizz Air has announced the launch of new flights connecting Gyumri (Armenia) with Larnaca (Cyprus), marking another step in strengthening its presence in Armenia, according to Armenia International Airports CJSC.

The flights, starting September 30, will operate twice weekly. Until October 25, they will run on Tuesdays and Saturdays; from October 30 onward, the schedule shifts to Thursdays and Sundays. Tickets are already on sale via Wizzair.com and the WIZZ mobile app, with prices starting at 14.99 euros.

President Khachaturyan
Congratulates Uruguay
On Independence Day

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturyan received the Ambassador of Uruguay to Armenia, Silvana Leska Barolin, on the occasion of Uruguay's Independence Day, on August 26.

He congratulated President Yamandú Orsi, highlighting the significance of the country's 200th anniversary of independence, the Presidential Office has said.

Barolin expressed gratitude and reaffirmed her commitment to strengthening bilateral relations.

The two discussed expanding cooperation in trade, culture, and information technologies, including the planned opening of a Tumo Center branch in Uruguay by 2026 and a representative office of Uruguay's Ceibal Digital Technologies Educational Center in Armenia.

South Caucasus
Discussed in Putin-
Pezeshkian Call

MOSCOW (Armenpress) — Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone on Monday, August 25, with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to discuss a number of issues, the Kremlin reported. The discussion featured the “developments in the South Caucasus,” the Kremlin said in a statement.

“During the phone call, Vladimir Putin informed the President of Iran of the key outcomes of the Russia-US summit held in Anchorage. Masoud Pezeshkian expressed his support for the diplomatic efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine crisis. The leaders discussed a number of pressing bilateral matters, notably in the energy and transport sectors. The situation surrounding Iran's nuclear program as well as the developments in the region of South Caucasus were addressed as well. Vladimir Putin and Masoud Pezeshkian confirmed their willingness to further strengthen the cooperation between Russia and Iran in various areas and agreed to hold a bilateral meeting at the upcoming SCO summit to be held in China,” the Kremlin said in its readout of the call.

Armenia, UK Agree to Upgrade
Ties to Strategic Partnership

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On August 26, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Vahan Kostanyan, and the Minister of State for Europe, North America and the Overseas Territories of the United Kingdom, Stephen Doughty MP, held the second round of the Armenia-UK Strategic Dialogue in

nia's progress and reiterated its support for the continuation of these reforms.

The parties agreed to upgrade the relationship to a Strategic Partnership. Both parties discussed expanding cooperation in the areas of security and defense, including future high-level engagements, the exchange of defense attachés, and closer co-

Turning to regional and international issues, the parties exchanged views on key developments, including the situation in the Middle East. Special attention was given to the South Caucasus. The United Kingdom welcomed the recent agreements reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Washington D.C., emphasizing that these represent a decisive step towards full normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, based on mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders in line with the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration.

The parties reaffirmed the importance of the opening of communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan for the promotion of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and in its neighborhood on the basis of reciprocity and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and jurisdiction of the States. The parties also discussed the “Crossroads of Peace” initiative as a platform for enhanced regional connectivity and economic cooperation.

Looking ahead, the parties discussed Armenia's hosting of two major international events in 2026: The European Political Community Summit and the 17th Conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17). The United Kingdom expressed its readiness to support Armenia in the successful organization of COP17, ensuring that the conference delivers concrete and meaningful outcomes.

The Dialogue concluded with a mutual reaffirmation of the shared commitment to deepen bilateral relations and expand close collaboration by establishing a Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Armenia and the United Kingdom.

In addition, Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan held a working breakfast in Dilijan with Doughty. Grigoryan presented the agreements reached in Washington within the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the unblocking of regional communications and the economic opportunities offered by the implementation of the “Crossroads of Peace” project.

Doughty expressed support for the agreements reached in Washington and underlined the importance of achieving lasting peace in the South Caucasus.



Vahan Kostanyan, Armenia's deputy foreign minister, with Stephen Doughty

Yerevan.

Building on the inaugural meeting of the Strategic Dialogue held in London in 2023, the two parties reviewed the progress achieved and reaffirmed the importance of regular high-level exchanges to further strengthen and expand the bilateral partnership between Armenia and the United Kingdom, the parties said in a joint communiqué.

The parties reiterated their commitment to democracy, rule of law and the protection of fundamental human rights both regionally and globally, based on shared values, respect for international law, democratic principles, and a rules-based international order.

Kostanyan spoke about the country's efforts in strengthening democracy, advancing the rule of law and protection of human rights, enhancing anti-corruption measures. The United Kingdom commended Arme-

operation in the fields of cyber security and countering hybrid threats.

In the context of upgrading the relationship, the importance of continuing to deepen economic ties was underscored by both parties. The parties looked forward to furthering business relations and to drive growth through collaboration, including support for Armenia's inclusive economic development, reform and diversification in partnership with International Financial Institutions. The parties discussed the Armenia/UK Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Armenia recognized the potential of United Kingdom Export Finance (UKEF) to further boost trade and investment.

The parties also welcomed the growth of people-to-people contacts and emphasized the significance of further cooperation in education, culture, and professional exchange.

Azeri Demands for Corridor ‘Accepted By Armenia’

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia accepted Azerbaijan's demands to open a land corridor to its Nakhichevan exclave during the August 8 peace talks in Washington, Azerbaijani Prime Minister Ali Asadov said on Tuesday, August 26.

“After the [2020] patriotic war, President Ilham Aliyev repeatedly and resolutely stated that unhindered land passage from the main part of Azerbaijan to the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic should be ensured,” Asadov told an extraordinary cabinet meeting in Baku. “Despite all the difficulties, disagreements and different positions, this demand of the head of state has also been accepted by the Armenian side.”

Asadov pointed to agreements reached by Aliyev, US President Don-

ald Trump and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the White House. Pashinyan pledged to give the United States exclusive rights to a transit corridor that will connect Nakhichevan to the rest of Azerbaijan through Armenia's Syunik province. Asadov said this was the “result of the Azerbaijani people's struggle for historical justice.”

The opening of what Baku calls the “Zangezur corridor” has been one of Aliyev's conditions for making peace with Armenia. Pashinyan has repeatedly insisted since August 8 that the transit corridor named the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) will not undermine Armenian sovereignty over Syunik. However, he has so far declined to publicize crucial details of this arrangement, which Ar-

menian opposition leaders say amounts to the kind of an extraterritorial corridor that has been sought by Baku.

A joint declaration by Aliyev and Pashinyan makes only a general reference to the TRIPP, while a relevant US-Armenian memorandum also signed in Washington on August 8 has still not been made public. The memorandum reportedly calls for a long-term US lease on the transit routes.

Aliyev has said all along that the transit of people and cargo through Syunik must be exempt from Armenian border controls. He insisted ahead of the Washington summit that Azerbaijanis traveling to from Nakhichevan “should not see the faces of Armenian border guards or anyone else.” Pashinyan has made ambiguous statements on this subject.

Armenian Artists to Take the Stage
At Emir Kusturica's Music Festival

YEREVAN — From September 4 to 6, the renowned ethno-village “Mečavnik,” created by celebrated film director Emir Kusturica, in his native Serbia, will host the next edition of the International Classical Music Festival Kustendorf Classic.



Conductor Sergey Smbatyan

The festival annually gathers young talents and distinguished masters from around the world.

This year, Armenia will have a prominent presence on the festival stage. Upon the recommendation and with the support of Emir Kusturica's longtime friend — violinist, producer, and founder of Almazian Productions, Khachatur Almazian — several Armenian artists will feature in the program.

The festival's special guest will be Sergey Smbatyan, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra, as well as Principal Conductor of the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra. He will deliver an open lecture to

participants, sharing his vision and experience with the next generation of musicians.

The stage of “Mečavnik” will also welcome Eva Gevorgyan, a young but already acclaimed Russian-Armenian pianist, who will perform Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1.

For years, Kusturica's festivals have been distinguished by their unique atmosphere and an impressive roster of international stars. Previous editions have welcomed Monica Bellucci, Johnny Depp, Salma Hayek, Jim Jarmusch, Valery Gergiev, Yuri Bashmet, Denis Matsuev, and many others.

Among the anticipated guests this year is also mezzo-soprano Vasilisa Berzhanskaya, one of the brightest stars of today's international opera stage.

Trump Claims He Ended War Between
‘Aber-baijan’ and Albania

By Nate Ostiller

US President Donald Trump has claimed that he stopped a war between “Aber-baijan” and Albania during a long-winded rant to conservative talk show host Mark Levin. Trump has repeatedly struggled to correctly pronounce Azerbaijan in public statements.

Trump's comments were an apparent reference to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the recent meeting he hosted at the White House between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. During the meeting, the two leaders signed a joint declaration and initialed, but did not sign, a peace treaty.

The comments came amidst a list of seven conflicts that Trump claimed he had resolved in the first six months of his second term as president.

Following an apparent assertion that the India-Pakistan war was the ‘easiest’ to solve, he went on to discuss the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

“A lot of amazing, amazing things. You saw the Aber-baijan. That was a big one

INTERNATIONAL



The Armenian team

Armenian Students Win Three Medals at International
Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics

MUMBAI, India — Armenian schoolchildren won two silver and one bronze medal at the 18th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA), held from August 11 to 21 in Mumbai, India.

The Armenian team was represented by five students from the A. Shahinyan Specialized Physics and Mathematics School: 12th graders Narek Galstyan, Emil Musheghyan, Gor Hasratyan, Vahe Mkrtchyan, and 11th grader Natali Margaryan. Each participating country could present a maximum of five contestants. This year's Olympiad brought together 288 students from 60 countries.

Silver medals were awarded to Emil Musheghyan and Gor Hasratyan, while Narek Galstyan earned a bronze medal. Vahe Mkrtchyan and Natali Margaryan received honorable mentions for their performance.

The Armenian delegation was led by Hrant Topchyan of the Yerevan Physics Institute and Artashes Mkrtchyan of the A. Shahinyan Specialized School.

Last year, at the 17th IOAA held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Armenian team achieved three bronze medals.

going on for 34, 35 years with, uh, Albania. Think of that. I mean, going on for years, and I got to know the heads, and I got to know them through trade. I was dealing with them a little bit, and I said, ‘Why are you guys fighting?’ Then I said, ‘I’m not gonna do a trade deal if you guys are gonna fight.’ It’s crazy.”

Trump then continued addressing the issue, describing the circumstances of the Pashinyan-Aliyev meeting in the White House.

“Anyway, one thing led to the other and

I got that one settled. And that was one that people said is not — you couldn't settle it. Even when I had them both in the Oval Office at the end, when they were getting ready to sign, they were sitting next to each other. They were trying to get away. They didn't feel good. By the end of an hour, they were hugging each other and congratulating each other. It was beautiful to watch, actually.”

(This article first appeared in oc-media.org on August 20, 2025.)

Turkey Breaks Ground on Its Section of TRIPP Rail Corridor

CORRIDOR, from page 1

Many Questions Remain

While Turkey may have officially broken ground on the Kars-Dilucu segment, much remains unclear, including a construction timeline. Uraloglu in his speech hinted the project would take four to five years, but political analysts in Turkey are wondering whether the groundbreaking ceremony actually marked the start of construction or was merely a symbolic gesture tied to Turkey's domestic political agenda.

Ankara did conduct tenders for consultancy work on the Kars-Dilucu route in late 2024, but according to Turkey's state tendering and contract database, contracts have yet to be awarded. And there is no sign yet of a tender for actual construction work on the line.

The project does officially exist. It has been listed in Turkey's investment program since 2022 at an estimated cost of \$3.4 billion, of which \$2.7 billion is expected to come from external credit. But of those totals, only \$61 million has so far been al-

located, of which \$50 million is designated as external credit.

A significant amount of external credit appears to have been lined up. In late July, Ankara announced that the project had secured a €2.4 billion external financing package led by Japan's Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, MUFG Bank, in partnership with Sweden's EKN Export Credit Agency and the OeKB export credit agency of Austria and the Islamic Development Bank. The international financial institutions have not yet confirmed the deals separately.

Existing Rail Lines

Also unclear is what will happen to the existing rail links between Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Prior to the Soviet collapse and the outbreak of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in the late 1980s, there was a direct rail link from Kars to the Armenian capital Yerevan and from Yerevan to the Azerbaijani capital Baku. The bulk of those lines are believed

to be still operational requiring only border sections to be refurbished and reopened.

According to the Joint Declaration on August 8 signed by Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Trump, Azerbaijan recognized Armenia's right to reopen all transportation routes. Accordingly, these existing rail routes could be revived, but the declaration does not indicate whether they will play a significant role within the Middle Corridor context.

Questions are already being raised over the role of an existing Middle Corridor route through Georgia, which only began operating in 2017, following the construction of a new rail line from Kars to the Georgian border. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars line (BTK), as it is known, has not proved to be as popular a freight transit route as originally projected, and is expected to lose much of its Middle Corridor traffic to TRIPP.

BTK was designed to have a freight transit capacity of up to 6.5 million metric tons

per year, with the possibility of expanding annual volume to 17 million metric tons if the route proved profitable. However, by May 2023, the railway had handled a total of only 1.47 million tons. A combination of factors has contributed to the underwhelming results, including the poor condition of the Georgian rail network and the mountainous Georgian terrain through which the line passes.

The line was closed to freight traffic for a year until May 2024 to allow for urgent maintenance work and the reconstruction of some sections to ease transit.

The future of the route was discussed in a meeting August 8 between Erdogan and Georgian President Mikheil Kavelashvili with Erdogan noting the importance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars line and the need for it to operate at full capacity. But the Turkish leader did not offer any ideas on how BTK could realize its potential.

(This article originally appeared on www.Eurasianet.org on August 25.)



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Medical World Congress Spotlights Henar Primary Care Programs

MADRID — At the 14th Armenian Medical World Congress in Madrid on July 3-5, the Henar Foundation was highlighted in the progress to transform medical education and strengthen primary care in Armenia. Henar was showcased as an example of how strategic partnerships between the Armenian Diaspora and local institutions can catalyze systemic and sustainable improvements in Armenia's primary healthcare system.

On the first day of the Congress, Henar cofounder Dr. Arman Voskerchyan moderated the session titled "Health Professions Education: Opportunities for Diaspora-Armenia Partnership." The session described upgrading models of medical residency education and curriculum development in Armenia. Henar has developed several

continue to reform and build the Armenian healthcare system in the future.

Dr. Jeff Markuns, director of Boston University's Global Health Collaborative, discussed BU's successes in primary healthcare reform in Southeast Asia and southern Africa over the last 25 years, and adapting the model for Armenia. He also described his role as the director of Boston University's Master's program in Health Professions Education (HPE), and developing a hybrid degree program set to begin this September for six Armenian doctors. This program aims to empower these leaders with advanced skills, evidence-based education methods, and leadership tools necessary to upgrade Armenia's medical training system, improve faculty capacity, and ultimately raise the quality of health-

care by Dr. Kim Hekimian of Columbia University. Louis described his role as Henar program director of the Community Health Worker (CHW) program in Syunik, adapted from the CHW program he helped develop in the West Bank over the past several years. Other highlights included Samvel Kharazyan of the State Health Agency giving an update on Armenia's progress to providing Universal Health Coverage.

This was followed by a Q&A session in which Deputy Minister of Health Lena Nanushyan joining the panel to field questions regarding developments on the ground in Armenia.

On Day 3, several panelists presented developments in medical education in Armenia during the session titled "Adapting New Models of Post-Graduate Medical

the Health Ministry's commitment to the advancement of medical residency education in Armenia. Dr. Khachatur Margaryan described medical residency advances at YSMU, and Dr. Bazarchyan noted the concurrent advances they have undertaken at the ANIH.

The final session, titled "The Essential Need for Strengthening Primary Healthcare in Armenia," featured Libaridian describing her role as consultant to the World Bank. Henar co-founder Voskerchyan described all the organization's main projects in Armenia since its founding in 2021. He also described the Pediatric Residency Program which began in 2023, as well as the Healthcare Leadership Program and the Community Health Worker pilot launched in 2024. Finally, Voskerchyan described the upcoming Master's degree program in Health Professions Education, designed to improve medical education across residency programs in Armenia.

At the closing ceremony, Dr. Vicken Sepilian, president of the Armenian Medical International Committee (AMIC) commended Henar as "a model of how the Diaspora and Armenia can effectively collaborate to bring systemic changes in healthcare." His remarks underscored the critical importance of aligning efforts across borders to build sustainable health infrastructures.

In her closing address, Avanesyan emphasized the urgent need to prioritize medical education and workforce development amidst evolving healthcare demands. She highlighted the value of reinforcing public-private partnerships and cited Henar's master's degree in Health Professions Education program and the Pediatric Residency Program as exemplary initiatives that successfully align multiple stakeholders to achieve important reforms. Furthermore, she announced the imminent launch of Armenia's first competency-based family medicine residency program.

Supported by AIFA (Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia) and its global partners, Henar remains committed to modernizing medical education, advancing preventative health, and strengthening Armenia's healthcare system through innovation, capacity building, and Diaspora engagement.

Founded in 2021 by Noubar and Anna Afeyan, Ruben Vardanyan, and Arman Voskerchyan, Henar aims to contribute to the transformation of Armenia's healthcare ecosystem. For more information, visit <https://henar.am>.



Attendees at the Armenian Medical World Congress

projects aimed at advancing medical education in Armenia, based on hands-on patient care and evidence-based medicine, to meet international standards. Dr. Aram Kaligian, director of the Boston University – Armenia Medical Partnership, discussed partnering with Henar and the Ministry of Health through the Health for Armenia Foundation's Healthcare Leadership Program, which was launched in 2024. The Healthcare Leadership Program, of which Henar leads the medical knowledge and skills component, was developed to improve healthcare access and quality in Armenia's underserved rural communities, and to develop a strong core of highly skilled primary care doctors who will

care delivery across the country.

Dr. Henry Louis, Henar program director for the Healthcare Leadership Program and the Master's in HPE program, described working with Kaligian and Markuns to adapt these models to Armenia, and the challenges that have been overcome.

Finally, Armenia's Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan joined Voskerchyan, Kaligian, Markuns, Louis and Lorky Libaridian in a Q&A session regarding medical innovation in Armenia and advances in post-graduate medical education.

The following day, Henar's Community Health Worker Program was highlighted during the session "Preventive Screening: Priority Setting and Development," mod-

Education: The Residency Program," co-moderated by Aleksandr Bazarchyan, director of the Armenian National Institute of Health (ANIH) and Dr. Jose Maria Lasso. Dr. Lorky Libaridian described the new Pediatric Residency Program developed in 2023 in conjunction with Henar, the MoH, Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU), ANIH, and Children's Hospital of Los Angeles.

Libaridian described the challenges of bringing a more clinically-oriented, competency-based medical education model to Armenia in developing pediatricians with the skills to provide patient-centered, evidence-based care that meets international standards. Nanushyan described



From left, Dr. Arman Voskerchyan, Anahit Avanesyan, Minister of Health, Republic of Armenia, Dr. Lorky Libaridian, Dr. Aram Kaligian, Dr. Jeffrey Markuns, and Dr. Henry Louis, Henar Project Manager



Community News

Prof. Bazylar to Speak On Nazi Looted Art Recovery as A Model For Recovery of Armenian Genocide Looted Art

FRESNO — Prof. Michael Bazylar (Chapman University) will give a presentation on "Nazi Looted Art Recovery as A Model for Recovery of AGLA: Armenian Genocide Looted Art" at 7:00PM on Friday, September 5, in the Grosse Industrial Technology Building, Room 101, on the Fresno State campus.

The presentation is co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program at Fresno State.

Bazylar will speak about the Armenian Genocide Looted Art (AGLA) Research Project of the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute, which brings together American law students and art students, many of them Armenian-Americans, to search online col-



Prof. Michael Bazylar

lections of museums and other public institutions holding Armenian art objects. The goal of this research is to create a comprehensive list of all Armenian art in the United States and their listed provenances. The AGLA Project seeks to identify all objects which probably or possibly were looted during the Armenian Genocide.

Bazylar is professor of law and the 1939 Society Law Scholar in Holocaust and Human Rights Studies at Chapman University in Orange, California. He is holder of previous fellowships at Harvard Law School, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (The World Holocaust Remembrance Center), where he was the holder of the Oppenheim Chair for the Study of Racism, Antisemitism and the Holocaust. He received his B.A. from UCLA and his JD from USC and is currently completing his PhD at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU) in Germany. He is an award-winning author of seven books and over 50 book chapters and essays on subjects covering Law and the Holocaust and restitution following genocide and other mass atrocities. His current research involves restitution of looted artworks, including Nazi looted art, Armenian Genocide Looted Art (AGLA), and art dispossessed by European colonial powers.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

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



Abstract Sculpture at Armenian Heritage Park. Photo credit: Matt Conti

The Armenians of Boston's Waterfront

By Jessica Dello Russo

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BOSTON — The Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway is one of the main entrances to the North End/Waterfront neighborhood from the Wharf District and Faneuil Hall. Its size and location make it hard to miss as you walk through the Rose Kennedy Greenway. A closer look rewards you with more insight into the Park's features, such as a walkable Labyrinth, towering, shape-shifting Abstract Sculpture, fountain, and benches around the Park's leafy enclosure. The Park's accessible layout offers visitors various ways to engage with the space. As a close neighbor, I walk by the Park almost daily while entering and exiting the North End.

Decades ago, I would have only overheard the cooing of pigeons perched on the rusting steel beams of the old Fitzgerald Expressway. I have vivid childhood memories of noise, darkness, stagnant water, decaying litter and a host of unpleasant smells in the area where the park now stands. At the time, I was too young to comprehend the consequences of the highway's impending demolition and the changes to follow.

An invitation to speak about Italian heritage in the North End as part of the Park's series, "Celebrating What Unites Us!" co-sponsored by the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park and the City of Boston's Office for Immigration Advancement, not only inspired the personal reflections shared above, but also genuine curiosity about the connections between the Armenian and Italian communities in Boston. Despite the city's historical parochialism, interactions among native Bostonians often lead to personal connections (as it turns out, the event organizer, Barbara Tellalian, and I had attended the same grade school).

Thanks to my involvement in a recent photo digitization project focused on the North End, I was already aware of a fascinating Armenian-Italian connection in see WATERFRONT, page 12

Aurora Honors Changemakers On World Humanitarian Day

WASHINGTON — On World Humanitarian Day on August 19, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative in a news release expressed its solidarity with humanitarians across the globe who are risking their lives daily to provide assistance, restore hope, and uphold the dignity of people caught in crisis.

To mark the day, Aurora's CEO Armine Afeyan and co-founder and president of Women's Solidarity for Inclusive Peace and Development (SOFEPAID) Julienne Lusenge shared an op-ed on how to better support those brave humanitarians on the frontlines:

"World Humanitarian Day is a reminder that even in the darkest places, there are selfless individuals quietly doing the work — not for recognition, but because lives depend on it," said Dr. Tom Catena, the sole surgeon serving more than a million people in Sudan's Nuba Mountains and an early recipient of the Aurora Prize. "Don't forget that there are people here, right now, who need our help. And we must not turn away."

Amidst historic foreign aid cuts and escalating crises around the world, it is crucial to recognize the resilience and dedication of local humanitarian workers and to mobilize global support in response to the mounting needs on the ground. Nearly 190 million people are living in life-threatening conditions, according to the United Nations, with the number of forcibly displaced persons more than doubling, from 59 million to 123 million, since 2014.

"Today, we honor not only those who respond to suffering, but also those who inspire others to act. At Aurora, we shine a light on the individuals who step in where institutions fall short. These grassroots humanitarians are the foot soldiers of humanity, working on the ground, often unseen," noted Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder and Chair of the Board of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and Founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering. "Our mission is to amplify, support their lifesaving work, and remind the world that even in the face of overwhelming need, courage and compassion remain powerful forces for positive change."

In recognition of World Humanitarian Day, Aurora reaffirms its commitment to the principle of Gratitude in Action—the impulse to give back when you yourself have benefitted from the courageous action of another.

"For us to do this work, we need people who will raise funds. We need people who will tell our stories. We need people who will protect the people we've rescued. We need people who will fight fights in rooms that we wouldn't go to," stated Dr. Yolanda George-David, Founder of Aunt see AURORA, page 9



OBITUARY

Paul Kalinian

Award-Winning Filmmaker, Saroyan Collaborator

FRESNO — Paul Kalinian was born on Sunday, February 14, 1932 in Beirut, Lebanon. He passed away after a short illness, on Wednesday, July 16, 2025 in Fresno, California at the age of 93. Paul spent the majority of his childhood in Damascus, Syria, where at the age of 14, he discovered his passion for photography, and began learning the skill at the Photo Gulbenk Studio in Damascus. Four years later he returned to Beirut, Lebanon opening his first photography studio, Photo Paul, in 1961. In 1964 he moved to Canada, then to the United States to further pursue a future in photography and filmmaking.

Attending the New York Institute of Photography, Paul received degrees in Photography and Motion Picture Production in 1967. That same year he returned to Beirut to marry his longtime sweetheart, Araxie Deuvletian, his wife of 58 years. They immigrated to the United States and were blessed with twins: a son Harold and a daughter Susie, making Fresno, California their permanent home, the birthplace of his childhood hero William Saroyan.

In 1972, Paul opened his second studio, Paul's Photography Studio, in Fresno, California. Throughout the years, he photographed countless people from all walks of life, from politicians and generals, to models and musicians, artists and clergy leaders. His works have been published in over a dozen books, numerous newspapers and magazines, and have been displayed in over a dozen different locations, such as government buildings, museums, theatres, schools and libraries.

Aside from having a passion for photography, Paul had a dream of one day being able to photograph internationally renowned Armenian-American, Pulitzer Prize and Oscar winner, William Saroyan. After 12 years of chasing this dream, Paul was finally able to capture portraits of the famous writer and playwright on March 26, 1976. One such characteristic portrait was selected by the United States and Soviet Union Postal Services, among 400 other photographs, to be used for their Commemorative Postal Stamps. This was the first time in history that an individual was selected, as a humanitarian symbol of peace and friendship, between two super-power nations. First-day-issue ceremonies took place simultaneously on May 22, 1991 in Fresno, and in Yerevan.

After William Saroyan's death in 1981, Paul created a 22 minute presentation of Saroyan's portraits, along with his narration "How I shot Saroyan," which was shown over 100 times in various cities, and televised on public stations. In light of the positive response, Paul and his daughter, Dr. Susie Kalinian, decided to collaborate and create a documentary film about Saroyan's life and works, narrated by another

famous Fresnan whom Kalinian admired and respected, television and motion picture star, actor Mike Connors.

Titled "William Saroyan: The Man The Writer," the film was written and directed by Paul and produced by his daughter. It is a symbol of Paul's admiration for Saroyan as one of the greatest writers of our time. The film, also

narrated by Saroyan, was created to preserve and present his works, recognize his dual cultural heritage, and spread his message of peace and hope around the world. The film, a labor of love, has won numerous awards of recognition, including six international film festival awards and a Gold Award for Best Documentary Film, among 12 competing nations. The film premiered on April 9, 1991 in Fresno at the William Saroyan Theatre. Today, over one million people have seen this film, in more than 60 cities and 19 countries around the world. The film not only pays tribute to Saroyan, but pays tribute to Armenians and Fresno, California.

The documentary portrays Saroyan's childhood memories, growing up in Fresno, how he decided to become a writer, his prolific 60 year writing career, his international fame, character, philosophy and the undying love and passion he felt toward the country where he was born, America and the country of his forefather's, Armenia.

Saroyan spoke for Armenians and for other minorities, to the world, at a time when they remained dispersed and continued to meet with prejudice and outright hatred. At the conclusion of the film, Saroyan speaks passionately about the Armenian Genocide and the resilience of the Armenian people. His famous and widely quoted message about the Genocide is not only historically impressive, but very powerful and relevant to this day, especially as April 24, 2025 marks the 110th anniversary. Paul Kalinian wanted to pay tribute to William Saroyan, the man whose powerful words are spoken at every commemoration event and who put Armenians and Fresno on the map.

Kalinian believed it was only through the medium of film, that a nation could be powerfully and effectively presented to the world, for this generation and the generations to come. The Kalinians have donated all film proceeds of the documentary screenings, to fundraising organizations around the world.

Paul believed in service to his community, church and strong Christian faith. He supported both the Armenian Diocese and Armenian Prelacy and believed in the unity of the churches. He was a proud member of the Masonic Fraternity since 1966, through Ani Lodge No 11 of Beirut, Lebanon, and a member of Fresno Lodge No 247, the Scottish Rite, and Tehran Shriners since 1978. He served as Chief Photographer of the

Shriners from 1987-1990 under three Potentates and was an active supporter of the Shriners Hospitals for Children for the past 47 years. He was also a very proud member of the fraternal brotherhood, the Knights of Vartan, Yeprad Lodge No 9 since 1994, and an active supporter of Armenia, Artsakh and the Knight's charitable causes for the past 31 years.

Paul's greatest achievement however, is his love for his family. The sixth child of seven, born from Kharpertzi father Hrant, and Marashtzi mother Haigoubie, he learned sacrifice, hard work and humility at an early age, from his parents, both survivors of the Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Turks in 1915. His grandfather, known as "Lera-Garo," Garabed built-like-a Mountain, was a brave courier and spy for the Armenians, having saved many Armenian lives, including smuggling his two older sisters on a ship during his last mission to America.

Unfortunately he was betrayed by an Armenian priest and lost his life, on the way home, before he could do the same for his own immediate family, who all perished at the hands of the Turks. Paul's 18-year-old father Hrant, who had been sent to America earlier, to work in his uncle's factory in Rhode Island, left the safety of America and joined the French Legionnaires overseas, to fight the Turks and free the Armenians, becoming a courier-spy himself, in the footsteps of his father Lera-Garo. Unfortunately once the war ended, Hrant learned of the tragic fates of his entire family, and now an orphan, decided to stay in Lebanon, get married and raise a family of his own. Paul heard stories of America growing up,

and was deeply affected by the struggles and bravery of his father and grandfather. Once he became established in the United States, he vowed to sponsor each and every one of his relatives, on both sides of his family, and helped them to escape the 1975 Lebanese Civil War, establishing lives and homes in Fresno, California, and becoming the patriarch of the Kalinian Family.

On March 7, 2017, the lifelong contributions of Fresnan Paul Kalinian, a philanthropic and award winning filmmaker, known for his documentary on Armenian-American William Saroyan, was honored, celebrated and recognized in the House of Representatives, of the United States of America, by Congressman Jim Costa of California, "for dedicating his life to preserving American and Armenian culture, through the art of photography and film, and for his philanthropic and educational contributions to his community, his country, and our world."

Paul Kalinian is survived by his beloved wife Araxie, his loving children: daughter Dr. Susie Kalinian, son Harold Kalinian, grandson Sebastian Kalinian, and his 101 year old sister Mary Kalinian. A Memorial Celebration of Paul Kalinian's life, including a Knights of Vartan Service will be held at 11:00 AM on August 31, 2025 at St. Paul Armenian Apostolic Church in Fresno. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that friends and brethren contribute to: Knights or Daughters of Vartan 4341 East Santa Ana Avenue, Fresno CA 93726, and/or Armenian American Museum & Cultural Center of California 116 North Artsakh Avenue, Suite 205, Glendale, CA 91206.

Gérard Chaliand

Academic and Adventurer

PARIS (*Le Monde*) — Gérard Chaliand, a travel writer, poet, adventurer, war and geostrategy specialist, died on August 20 at age 91.

He was the author of some 40 books, including one on the Armenian Genocide published by the Zoryan Institute.

He was born in Brussels to Armenian parents and was raised in Paris.

Chaliand spent more than five years as a visiting professor in the United States at Harvard, UCLA and UC Berkeley. He worked autonomously throughout his career, unconstrained by the perspectives of national governments and policy institutes. As a result, his work provides an independent perspective on many of the major conflicts that characterized the 20th and 21st centuries. He is also a published poet.

He received his PhD from Sorbonne University in Paris in 1975. His dissertation was published in 1976 and quickly translated into English: *Revolution in the Third World, Myths and Prospects*, Viking Press, Penguin Books, New York, 1977.

Chaliand taught in Paris, France, at the École nationale d'administration (1980-1987) and at Ecole de Guerre (the French War College) from 1990 to 1995.

He spent more than five years as a visiting professor in the United States at Harvard, UCLA and UC Berkeley.

Chaliand delivered over five hundred lectures in major Universities and research centers, including the Rand Corporation and the US Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California (1969-2009).

He was also a visiting professor at the military academy, Bogota (Colombia), and Universities of Cape Town (South Africa),

Montréal (Québec), Salamanca (Spain), Sussex and Manchester (United Kingdom), Vladikavkaz (Northern Ossetia), Sulaymaniyah (Iraq), and Ilia Chavchavadze (Georgia). He was senior visiting fellow at the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies, Kabul (Afghanistan) from 2005 to 2011. He taught a summer course

at Nanyang University (Singapore) from 2004 to 2014 and Hawler University (Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, since 2012).

He also lectured at Strategic Institutes in Washington D.C., London, Canberra, Beijing, Madrid, and Tokyo.

Other work

Chaliand was Director of the European Centre for the Studies of Conflicts (Foundation for Strategic Research), Paris from 1997 to 2000.

He was an independent adviser to the Centre for Analysis and Planning of the French Foreign Ministry from 1983 to 1994.

Chaliand founded and was the Director of Minority Rights Group (France), from 1978 to 1987.

He was the initiator of the session of the Permanent People's Tribunal dedicated to the genocide of the Armenian people whose jury comprised three Nobel Prize winners, including Sean Mc Bride, Founder of Amnesty International, and which took place at the Sorbonne and saw the sentence towards the Turkish state delivered to the National Assembly.

In addition, Chaliand undertook several maritime expeditions aboard La Boudeuse (goëlette) [fr], a 1913-built three mast ship.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Aurora Honors Changemakers On World Humanitarian Day

AURORA, from page 7

Landa's Bethel Foundation in Nigeria. Dr. George-David is part of the network of Aurora Luminaries and has dedicated her life to rehabilitation and empowerment of survivors of sexual abuse, human trafficking, and gender-based violence.

Since its founding, Aurora has impacted the lives of over 3.5 million people across 63 countries and territories through its flagship \$1 million Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity and other humanitarian programs. The Initiative encourages individuals and organizations to nominate exceptional humanitarians for the next Aurora Prize to help raise global awareness and provide life-changing support to grassroots efforts making a tangible impact worldwide. On November 6, 2025, Aurora will host the 2025 Aurora Prize Ceremony on Ellis Island in New York City, honoring exceptional local humanitarians and celebrating a decade of impact. The event will bring together grassroots humanitarians, visionary philanthropists, and global changemakers, including Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners and leaders who serve on the Aurora Prize Selection Committee.



In the DRC, Julienne Lusenge is helping 40 children reclaim their futures through a project supported by 2024 Aurora Prize Laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege's participatory grant. Image courtesy of SOFEPADI

Interns Spend Summer With the Mirror-Spectator

INTERNS, from page 1
entertainment. I am very thankful for this opportunity and the lessons that the Mirror-Spectator has taught me this summer. I am looking forward to what the future holds for me and will forever be grateful for this summer."

The second intern is Shushanik Hayriyan, and she is originally from Artsakh. A beneficiary of the ASA award and a senior at the College of Idaho majoring in international political economy, Shushanik noted about her extracurricular activities that "Beyond my studies I have been active in Armenian advocacy in the US, working with community organizations to raise awareness about Artsakh and Armenia in policymaking."

She said about her summer experience: "I chose to intern at the Armenian Mirror-Spectator because I wanted to combine that advocacy experience with journalism, telling stories about the displaced Artsakh community, cultural heritage, and more. This internship has not only sharpened my writing and research skills but also deepened my commitment to using my voice and education in service of my community."

The third intern, Raffi V. Arkun, is also from the Boston area and will be starting Tufts University soon as a freshman. He just graduated Lynnfield High School, where he was vice president of the National Honors Society, student government class representative, a debate team captain, and a captain of the tennis team which is a four-time state finalist. Raffi's internship was sponsored by Dean Shahinian, who has been a generous supporter of the Mirror-Spectator.

The Mirror-Spectator thanks the three sponsors of the summer internship programs for their promotion of journalism and their trust in this newspaper.



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

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

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LARRY BEDROSIAN

COMMUNITY NEWS

Harry Parsekian's Adventures Span the Globe

PARSEKIAN, page 1

Harry is young at heart and perhaps thanks to his various athletic endeavors over the years, he also appears much younger than his chronological age. He was born at his parent's home on Hazel Street in Watertown in 1935 and grew up in an Armenian family and community environment. At home, the Parsekians spoke Armenian primarily, though when older Armenians got together Turkish would be mixed in. They knew everybody on the street by name, whether they were Armenian, Italian, Greek, or Irish, due to the closeknit nature of the Watertown community.

Harry's mother Myreni (Mary) was born in Efkere (today Bahceli), a village northeast of Gesarea or Caesarea (Kayseri), while his father Sarkis was born in Nirze, another village in the same region. Sarkis and his brother came to the US prior to the Armenian Genocide and started a cement block manufacturing business in Watertown. Harry as a youth hated going there so much, but his clever father would take Harry's dog early in the morning with him, knowing that Harry would then come along and work. Mixing the sand and creating cement blocks, Harry recalled, was some of the hardest work he ever did.

Years later, Harry was able to get the intersection of Dexter Avenue and Nicholas Avenue in East Watertown named Missak and Sarkis Parsekian Square after his uncle and father, as this area became considered "Little Arme-



The sign marking Parsekian Square in Watertown (photo courtesy Harry Parsekian)

nia" due to the number of Armenian stores. Missak and Sarkis were the ones who built two blocks of these Armenian stores.

Harry recalled how the Nirze Armenians continued many of their traditions after they settled in Watertown. For example, in early or mid-May in Nirze, the Armenians would go to a nearby fountain called Gat Aghpiur or Milk Fountain, which they believed held mystical powers of increasing fertility. Consequently they would rub the water on cow's udders or women to increase lactation and fertility. This feast day continued to be celebrated at the corner of Dexter and Nichols Avenue at the Harachtimagan (Armenian Progressive League of America) club. Most Nirze Armenian events were held there because of its central location since most people did not have cars in those days.



Harry Parsekian while serving in the army at Fort Knox, 1956 (photo courtesy Harry Parsekian)

Harry graduated from Watertown High School and then had a short business venture into the world of gas stations. In 1953, Harry and his brother operated an Amoco station on Mt. Auburn Street. After realizing this was not a business for them, he and his friend from school, George Lembo, decided to enlist in the army. The draft was mandatory and three years long at that time, but by enlisting voluntarily it would be reduced to two years. After Harry's tank training at Fort Knox, Ky., an officer asked, "Anybody here know how to type?" which prompted Harry to immediately raise his hand. Actually, he had limited experience typing, but he ended up anyway in the supply room, under the supervision of Sergeant Bailey, while simultaneously taking psychology courses.

After the army, when a local Armenian band needed a dumbeg player in 1956, which Harry conveniently played, he ended up joining the Armen Orchestra alongside Carl Zeytoonian, Armand Janjigian, Jimmy Garabedian, Eli Nazarian and Gary Alexander. They traveled, playing Armenian folk music upon varying stages from Syracuse to Times Square in New York City (for New Year's Eve). It was due to this band that Harry ended up a part of the youth group of the Harachtimagan's, the Armenian Youth of America (AYA), and met his first wife, Berjig Javian. She and her sister were part of the AYA dance group which often rehearsed in the Javian basement and her father Martin or Mardiros Javian was prominent in the Armenian Progressive League. (Harry has been happily married to his second wife, Hripsime Kassabian, since 1973.)

Harry said that he was awed by the AYA and the Progressives because he was previously only exposed to the local Boston area, and when they had conventions, people came from all over the US and Canada. He recalled that they had such "wide-ranging thoughts" about Armenians and remembered thinking, "Oh my God! These are dedicated Armenians!"

Harry then moved to Fall River and went to textile school but the plant he was working in was sold. He then returned to Watertown and went to night school at Northeastern University. While working at a textile factory in Newton by day and studying at night, Harry realized that his true passion was real estate. When he learned of an opening at a real estate office in Brookline, Harry jumped at the chance to work there.

Soon, Harry's brother-in-law found a fully furnished apartment in South Boston that was being sold, which helped Harry start his career. After putting \$1,000 down, with a second mortgage, he began renting out the apartment to anybody who came his way, which taught him a lot about the difficulties people go through in life.

Snowballing the profit from his first investment, Harry accumulated multiple properties in South Boston because, he said, "at that time, they were giving them away. You can't even buy them now." Properties were run down and sold cheaply, so they could be fixed and then rented out. After a while, he said, "I could tell who would be a good tenant" just from a single meeting. He bought buildings in Cambridge and later in Provincetown. Most of his property was in South Boston, but he has already sold just about everything, with one more deal on the way.

Athletics

Besides his finances, Harry also kept in touch with his athletic side. He wanted to run a marathon because "it was a tough thing to do, and something to be proud of." In 1983, Harry joined a group of runners who would practice at L Street in South Boston, and ended up running 20 consecutive Boston Marathons, all the way up to 2002. The group was called the "noontime nuts" because summer, fall, winter and spring, they would run at noon no matter what the weather was outside, even if there was a snowstorm or pouring rain. Later he had a plaque put on a bench. He said that the bottom line is "'These were the best years of our lives.' We had so much fun, so much camaraderie."

Harry connected with the earth by camping, his favorite area being Provincetown, as well as driving across North America (including Mexico and Canada) with his family in a tent trailer in 1976.

He kept traveling, and in 1984, took a trip around the world with a small group of people, which included visits



Harry Parsekian on top of Mount Ararat, holding a purported "piece of Noah's Ark" (photo courtesy Harry Parsekian)

to Russia, Siberia, Mongolia and China.

After some recreational hiking in New Hampshire, Harry decided he wanted to climb Mount Ararat, again because "it's a challenge and something to be proud of." After an attempt in 1985 was foiled at the last minute due to fighting between Kurds and the Turkish military, he returned the next year. In August 1986, accompanied by a



Harry Parsekian, far right, at Vayots Dzor during an Armenia bikeathon in 2006 (photo courtesy Harry Parsekian)

French group, Harry reached what he called the "bosom of the Armenian people." Though other climbers began descending after reaching the summit, Harry lingered, as he felt very connected there to his roots there, to the point where he started singing Armenian liturgical songs at the top of his lungs to the heavens above.

In 1989, Harry rafted the Grand Canyon, while in 2006, he completed a bike tour from Armenia to Artsakh. In 2007, when he was 71, Harry biked across America with a group of 39 cyclists from California to Boston "for adventure," he said, and to raise money for the Boys and Girls Club. This 3,415-mile trip was done over 45 days and helped raise thousands of dollars.

Armenian and American Activism

Harry participated in various protests such as against the Vietnam War and activist groups such as the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). Harry was involved with a concert bringing Pete Seeger, the noted folk singer, as well as the famous comedian Steve Allen, among others, to Boston to help protest against nuclear weapons.

Native Americans went through the same types of oppression and colonization that the Armenians did. Harry

continued on next page

from previous page

said he strongly emphasizes with the former, particularly as the atrocities committed against them are not taught in school nor generally recognized. Harry contributed to their associations and attended some powwows and other Native American events. He also was able to bring together Chief John Peters, executive director of the Massachusetts Commission of Indian Affairs, with State Sen. William N. Brownsberger at the Massachusetts State House. "That's my job," Harry said, "to put good people together with good people."

Not unexpectedly, his activism extended to the Armenians. During his first trip to Soviet Armenia and Soviet Russia with his mother, in 1968, Harry was surprised to see much of the propaganda he had heard was false. After a long flight to Moscow, Harry went to the bathroom and was disappointed to see that the toilets were in terrible shape, with plumbing systems overall dissatisfactory. This situation was prevalent throughout Armenia.

It led Harry to get pictures, books, and brochures on plumbing in America, and bring them to Armenia, to try to improve toilets there. Unfortunately, in order for change to occur in Armenia, the orders had to come straight from Moscow, and his ef-



From left, Harry Parsekian, Yerevan Mayor Ardashes Geghamyan, and Mayor Ray Flynn, May 1990, Yerevan (photo courtesy Harry Parsekian)

orts were in vain. "I was very disappointed, very disappointed," he stressed.

Harry later became involved with the Cambridge Yerevan Sister City Association, as well as the UAF (United Armenian Fund). He took Eduard Avagyan, the mayor of Yerevan from 1985 to 1989, Yerevan State University Rector Sergey Hambarzumyan, and other Soviet Armenian dignitaries around when they first visited Cambridge in an official Yerevan delegation to sign the sister city protocols. After the devastating 1988 Armenian earthquake, Harry himself took over half a dozen UAF flights to Armenia to distribute aid, usually only staying five or six hours on the ground in Yerevan. He said he loved the flights, which were great adventures, and related another one of the mottos he lives by – "Life is an adventure. Fear and worry only spoil it."

He also continued his interest in his immediate heritage and ancestral villages. During Harry's first attempt in 1985 to climb Mount Ararat, which was foiled due to fighting between the Turkish military and Kurds, he and his fellow climbers had to become acclimated to higher altitudes by first climbing smaller mountains in the Taurus mountain chain to the south. During this time, Harry asked the tour guide to take him to Nirze which was on the way. At Nirze, Harry found only Turks and Kurds left, and no Armenians. Initially, he said, he "didn't feel a thing." As he matured over the years, he appreciated the fact that "I was able to walk on the same cobblestones that my mother and father walked on."

Harry later on went there again and edited a book about the village, Armenians of Nirze, Turkey: Roots of an Armenian-American (Watertown: Nirze Educational Society, 2015) in order to have people remember that there were Armenians who lived in that place and through education to help prevent the denial of the Armenian Genocide.

In 2016, Harry was one of the initiators



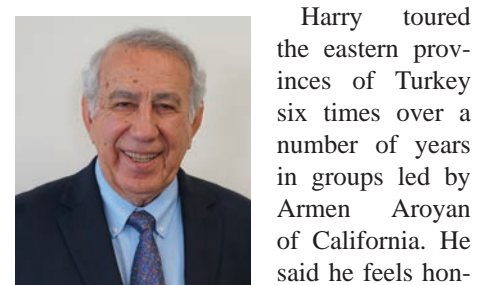
Harry Parsekian, center, during his visit to Nirze in 1986 (photo courtesy Harry Parsekian)

of a group that became called Armenian Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery. The group raised money and erected a monument in 2022 for Simon Antranigian, the first known Armenian to have been buried in the cemetery in 1855 in an unmarked grave. Harry also has work to call attention to merchant Joseph Iasigi (1800-1877), the first Ottoman consul in Boston, who was an Armenian from Smyrna also buried in this cemetery.

Harry also founded the Friends of Hrant Dink organization in 2009, after the assassination of the Armenian-Turkish newspaper editor Hrant Dink, in 2007 in Istanbul. Harry was honored to meet Dink in Turkey in 2006, only months prior to his murder. Harry said he "visualized him as the Martin Luther King of today," a man who died for the sake of human rights. Harry said that he had a lot of respect for Harvard University and thought that Dink's legacy could be perpetuated there due to its prestigious stature, so he and several colleagues including Dr. Taner Akçam and Gonca Sön-

mez-Poole met with Harvard officials to make the connection.

Starting in 2014, the organization funded and organized a Hrant Dink Memorial Lecture at Harvard, as well as occasional panel discussions on timely topics. Harry said, "I was hoping that the Armenian cause could find a berth at Harvard."



(PHOTO BY ARAM ARKUN)

Harry toured the eastern provinces of Turkey six times over a number of years in groups led by Armen Aroyan of California. He said he feels honored to have made many Turkish friends there and in the United States, who are mostly journalists and academics, in part through attending lectures at Harvard University.

Ever active, he hopes to go to Istanbul again to be present on September 15 for the commemoration of Dink's birthday.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenians of Boston’s Waterfront

WATERFRONT, from page 7
Boston that dates back to the China Trade Era, from 1783 to the 1850s. The photo I had in mind depicts a group of Italian Americans with the men in uniform and their elegantly dressed wives, all standing in front of a statue of Christopher Columbus. The iconic backdrop of this scene is undoubtedly Louisburg Square.

The Columbus statue is one of two marble statues, likely of Italian manufacture, that were erected in this privately owned park in the mid-nineteenth century. The other statue represents the ancient Athenian statesman Aristides, perhaps as a subtle nod to Boston being referred to as the “Athens of America.” Both statues were donated by merchants with family ties to Smyrna, which is today known as Izmir in Turkey.

The Marquis Nicholas Reggio (1807-1867), of Genoese descent but born in Smyrna, is said to have donated the statue of Columbus. Meanwhile, his fellow Smyrinote of Armenian heritage, Joseph Iasigi (1800-1877), is credited with arranging the dedication of the statue of the Classical hero, who later earned the nickname “Uncle Louie” from college students living nearby.

In the early 1830s, Reggio and Iasigi were “exotic” fixtures in Boston. Their wealth and international connections facilitated their acceptance into Boston society, aided by their willingness to assimilate; for example, Niccolò became Nicholas, and Josef Yasigi, also known as Yazejian, adopted a more Italian-sounding name, Iasigi/Iasici. As ship owners and traders, their offices on the centrally located Boston wharves became hubs for Mediterranean trade. Partnering with Yankee merchants, they engaged in trading fruits, wines, carpets, spices, and other goods, and, like their Yankee counterparts, they were also involved in the opium trade. The effects of this drug were felt not only in distant China but also quite close to home, particularly in the “Black Sea” area of the Boston

wharves, adjacent to what is now the Armenian Heritage Park.

The “safe and profitable” trade in Ottoman products attracted more traders from prominent Armenian mercantile families, including Vincent Azarian. Around 1840, he established the merchant shipping firm Azarian & Company on India Wharf. Although his ships operated under the American flag, his newly built 400-ton bark, launched in Newburyport in 1859, was named “Armenia.” The Italian artist Raffaele Corsini painted this ship at the end of its maiden voyage from Boston to Smyrna in 1860. In Corsini’s watercolor, the maritime flag displaying “Armenia” is proudly on display.

Meanwhile, Iasigi’s Race Horse clipper ship lived up to its name by setting a record in 1850 for the New York-San Francisco route. Shortly after, it departed for Smyrna carrying American Protestant missionaries to the Armenian community there. Within the exclusive circle of Boston’s merchant elite who had their own distinctive signal flags, the most notable “exotic” names were associated with Iasigi & Goddard, and V. Azarian & Co. Today, you can see a reproduction of Azarian’s flag in the rotunda of the Boston Custom House, which is open to the public. The building is just one block away from the Armenian Heritage Park.

Until the late 19th century, Armenian merchants were a unique and prominent presence in Boston. Arriving with strong recommendations, they quickly became integral to the business community due to their social and diplomatic connections. The Armenian population in Massachusetts grew significantly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This surge was primarily driven by the dire circumstances of persecution, making immigration to the United States a matter of survival. Along Long Wharf, there were not only offices for shipping companies

but also an immigration processing center. Despite facing numerous challenges, many Armenians managed to preserve their ethnic identity while adapting to the laws and customs of the United States.

This historic period of mass immigration is still fresh in memory. At the end of my street in the North End, a faded sign still advertises the import firm of George Armenis, whose last name suggests Greek or Armenian descent. On more solid ground, Barbara connected me with the Ararat Grocery family, who had a warehouse on Commercial Street until the 1960s, just a block from the Armenian Heritage Park. They also operated a retail store on the other side of the North End at 9 Endicott Street.

Twentieth-century city directories listed other Armenian-owned import companies in the area, such as Arax Grocery Company on Fulton Street. These businesses coexisted alongside storerooms and factories owned by Italians, Jews and other immigrant groups. The street index locates dealers in dried and fresh fruits, spices, wine, olive oil, dairy, meats, poultry, fish, grains, chocolate, candy, and more, providing a tantalizing glimpse into Quincy Market’s final decades as a food hub. While many businesses competed with one another, the market district that extended into today’s North End was a common denominator of success for immigrants from various backgrounds.

Of course, this was long before streets like Fulton and Commercial became primarily residential, as they are today. Businesses used to close at night, and workers would return to their homes, mostly in the city’s outer neighborhoods and the suburbs. Instead of Italian restaurants, luncheonettes

served as key social contact points. During the daytime, waterfront taverns were busy serving the working waterfront, and there were storefronts and stands offering virtually every kind of good or service.

The North End Waterfront only became a virtual “ghost town” in the post-World War II era of the 1950s and 60s. The elevated highway cut off the North End from the rest of central Boston, and the new wholesale produce market opened in Chelsea in 1968. Historic wharves like T-Wharf were



[196] BARK “ARMENIA” OF BOSTON, BUILT AT NEWBURYPORT IN 1859.

The Bark “Armenia” Entering Smyrna Bay, 1860. Original watercolor by Raffaele Corsini. Private collection. https://tert.nla.am/archive/NLA%20TERT/Armenian%20weekly/1970/43_ocr.pdf

demolished or dramatically restructured. However, this revival of a depressed urban area no longer required the tearing down of entire neighborhoods. Instead, the buildings began to “glitter,” as a New York Times article described in 1976, indicating they were ready for new opportunities.

Eventually, this transformation included the creation of the Rose Kennedy Greenway and its Armenian Heritage Park. In a unique turn of events, Armenians returned to the old Boston Waterfront, where they had previously opened the portals of the Mediterranean to Boston, forever altering the city’s destiny and their own.

(Jessica Dello Russo, Ph.D. serves on the Board of Directors of the North End Historical Society.)

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Arts & Culture

2025 Jewel City Concert Series to Bring Live Music To Downtown Glendale

GLENDALÉ — The Jewel City Concert Series returns this fall with five consecutive Saturdays of live music on the Artsakh Paseo, located at 127 Artsakh Avenue in Glendale’s Downtown Arts & Entertainment District. From September 27 through October 25, the community is invited to gather at 5 p.m. each Saturday for an eclectic mix of performances that reflect Glendale’s creative spirit and cultural diversity.

“The Jewel City Concert Series is part of our ongoing commitment to enliven the Artsakh Paseo and create meaningful cultural experiences in Downtown Glendale,” said Director of Glendale Library, Arts & Culture, Lessa Pelayo-Lozada. “The series highlights the creative talent within our community and adds something special to Saturday nights, bringing people together through music in a setting that feels uniquely Glendale.”



Dream Phases at the 2024 Jewel City Concert Series, courtesy of Glendale Library, Arts & Culture.

Presented by the City of Glendale Library, Arts & Culture Department and sponsored by the Arts and Culture Commission through funding from the Urban Art Program, the series brings neighbors, families, and friends together for a casual evening of live music in the heart of the city. Each concert turns the Paseo into a welcoming outdoor space where people can unwind, connect, and enjoy the rhythm of the city.

This year’s lineup includes:
Saturday, September 27: Triosyn-thesis - Armenian / World Jazz
Saturday, October 4: Low Poly Cactus - Jazz Fusion Funk
Saturday, October 11: The Guest Room - Indie Pop / R&B
Saturday, October 18: Marzoña - Rock
Saturday, October 25: Maria De La Vega and the Wayward Five - Jazz and Blues

Concertgoers are encouraged to arrive early to explore the surrounding district and support local businesses before the music begins. All performances are free and open to the public. Attendees are welcome to bring their own chairs, as seating is not provided. Performances run approximately 60 minutes without intermission.



Joel A. Martin

With Jazzical Komitas and Love for Armenia

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/NORWALK, Conn. — Joel

A. Martin is the creator and registered trademark owner of “Jazzical,” an internationally renowned and award-winning classical and jazz pianist, producer, composer, and arranger. At age 17 Joel was the youngest and the first African-American pianist to compete in the 1985 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition (the Olympics of classical piano). Trained as a classical pianist at the Hartt School of Music and SUNY-Purchase, he created his registered trademark “Jazzical” in 1995 as a celebration of creative fusion.

In 2016, inspired by Jazzical, he created the Sonicals, a piano duo with George Lopez. In 2017 he joined with Paul Winter Consort multiple Grammy-winning cellist Eugene Friesen to create the Friesen and Martin Cello/Piano Duo, playing composed and improvised music infused with pop, jazz, rock, and world folk styles. In 2019 Joel debuted a concert reading of his first opera, HIOPERA at the Darien Arts Center in Connecticut. On December 23, 2024, Martin’s original Christmas song Christmas Will Soon Be Here premiered on ABC TV’s “Live with Kelly and Mark” for 3 million viewers. The song was performed by the Grammy Award Winning Brooklyn Youth Chorus with Joel at the piano. As a result, a three-year licensing deal was signed for this song. He has collaborated with, and/or written music for, Grammy Award-winners Alan Menken (Disney composer), Fergie of the Black Eyed Peas, Brooklyn Youth Chorus, among many others. For the last 13 years he toured as pianist with 5-time Grammy-winning MET Opera legend soprano Kathleen Battle.

With all that he has done, his greatest achievement was discovering and creating two Jazzical Komitas albums, a journey of music celebrating Komitas and Armenia’s cultural heritage in jazz and classical for the 21st century and beyond! Since its debut in December 2019 at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York, Jazzical Komitas concerts have been presented in Yerevan, NYC, Clayton Piano Festival (Raleigh, NC), San Francisco and Los Angeles. A world tour and documentary are planned for Jazzical Komitas in 2025-2026.



Joel Martin before a painting of Komitas

Armenian Museum of America to Present ‘The Art of Disruption,’ Paintings & Music Scores by Serj Tankian

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America will host an upcoming exhibition titled “The Art of Disruption: The Art and Impact of Serj Tankian,” a biographical and multimedia showcase that explores the life, art, and activism of Serj Tankian, an internationally renowned musician, visual artist, poet, and human rights advocate.

The exhibition opens to the public on September 6 and will run through February 28, 2026.

The exhibition is curated by Ryan Casey and sponsored by Carolyn Mugar and the Alan and Isabelle Der-Kazarian Foundation.

Inspired by Tankian’s 2024 memoir, Down with the System, this immersive exhibition highlights the intersections of music, painting, and protest that define his work. Best known as the electrifying frontman of the Grammy Award-winning rock band System Of A Down, Tankian has also emerged as a powerful visual artist and outspoken advocate for social justice, genocide recognition, environmental protection, and Armenian cultural identity.

“The Art of Disruption” highlights Tankian as a genre-defying musician and a multidisciplinary creator whose impact transcends stage and studio. Featuring original paintings, music, video, and personal artifacts, the exhibition offers an intimate look at the ways Tankian has used creative expression as a tool for activism and healing.

“We are honored to present this landmark exhibition celebrating one of the most compelling artistic voices of our time,” said Executive Director Jason Sohigian. “Serj’s commitment to truth and justice resonates deeply with our mission, and we’re excited to share his powerful story with audiences of all backgrounds.”

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of programs including a Curator Chat and a video of the artist streaming in our Rose and Gregory A. Kolligian Media Room. All of the works in the show are available for purchase, with proceeds of the sales benefitting the mission of the Armenian Museum of America.

Five different lithograph prints by Serj Tankian are also available in the Gift Shop, which are hand-signed and hand-numbered by the artist in a limited edition of 30, created especially for this exhibition

All of the works are accompanied by music scores created by Tankian. Arloopa created an app in Armenia, which uses augmented reality to recognize each piece using a smartphone. Visitors are encouraged to download the app before viewing the show and bring their headphones to experience the works as the artist intended.

The opening on September 6 will include a Curator Chat with the artist, and it is already sold out. It is not a signing event, but rather an opportunity to view the works. For more information, visit: www.armenianmuseum.org/serj-tankian

ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Kouppa: Chicken Kokkinisto with French Fries Photos courtesy https://miakouppa.com/

Mia Kouppa: Chicken Kokkinisto With French Fries

This Greek chicken kokkinisto, or stewed chicken in a rich tomato sauce, served with homemade French fries is from the Mia Kouppa food blog. “Blogging since 2016, we have published over 400 recipes, each of which is tested again and again before appearing on our site. We are your go-to resource for reliable, delicious Greek recipes, and more. Recipes are written in clear and detailed language, making them accessible to the novice in the kitchen, the experienced cook, and everything in between. We focus primarily on traditional Greek cuisine, and modern takes on Greek classics. You’ll find other Mediterranean favorites, plenty of vegetarian and vegan options, and more, including many desserts,” says Helen Bitzas. “Our parents were both born and raised in Messinia, Peloponnese (from different villages) and believe in the value of good food and healthy eating. Because they cook by intuition and experience, they don’t have actual recipes. The name Mia Kouppa means one cup and pays homage to the fact that they use random cups from the cupboard to measure out ingredients. This works for them, but not for us. The recipes we share have been carefully created by cooking with our parents, and measuring everything that they do...with actual measuring cups.”

“We live in Montreal, Quebec, a city which has a vibrant European flair and a variety of cultures. Walk down any street and you will hear a panoply of languages, and smell every delicious smell wafting through kitchen windows. Our passion and respect for food, and its link to tradition and culture led us to celebrate multi-ethnic cuisine. Here you will find family recipes that are not Greek, (Xenes means other than Greek) like a traditional Italian family recipe for homemade pasta and meat sauce. We have spent years trying to replicate the delicious Greek foods coming out of our parents’ kitchen. Mia Kouppa is our attempt to demystify these vague units of measure; to standardize them so that one metric cup actually equals 250 ml, no matter whose kitchen you are in. We cook with our parents, jotting down notes, taking photos and videos, and chasing after them with proper measuring instruments so that their delicious offerings can be re-created easily by us...and you.”



Behind most Mia Kouppa recipes are parents, George and Dimitra Bitzas Photos courtesy https://miakouppa.com/

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 whole chicken (approx. 3-4 lbs.)
- Juice of 1 large lemon
- 1/3 cup olive oil, to taste
- 1/2 tablespoon salt, to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 cups tomato sauce
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

PREPARATION:

Carve chicken into 8–10 serving size pieces, 2 drumsticks, 2 thighs, 2 breasts, which you can cut in half, and 2 wings. Remove excess fat and skin. Place chicken in a large bowl and pour the juice of one lemon over the pieces. Add salt and pepper over the chicken and distribute it evenly. Add 1/3 cup olive oil to medium sized frying pan. Turn heat up to medium high and add the chicken pieces, being careful not to overcrowd the pan. You may need to cook the chicken in 2 batches. Fry chicken for about 4–5 minutes per side, until golden brown. As your chicken pieces cook, transfer them to a medium sized pot. When all of your chicken has cooked and has been placed in the pot, pour the cooking oil into the pot as well. To the pot add the tomato sauce and cinnamon. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to medium. Cover the pot and cook for 45 minutes. Serve chicken with the sauce and French fries or pasta.

French Fries

“Unless French fries are a last minute impulse, it is a good idea to soak your cut up potatoes in cold water for several hours or overnight. The water helps remove much of the potato starch, which results in crispier fries that won’t stick together as they cook. Our parents are not really sticklers for the type of potato they use, often frying up yellow fleshed potatoes, red skinned, or large russets. The trick is to use medium to large potatoes, otherwise you end up with small fries (which they don’t like). They cut them up so that each potato piece is about 1/4-inch thick -- but the actual size is less important than ensuring they are all about the same size, so that they cook equally.”

INGREDIENTS:

- Potatoes (1–2 large yellow flesh potatoes per serving, depending on how hungry people are)
- Vegetable oil for frying
- Sea salt to taste
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano

PREPARATION:

Prepare your potatoes by peeling them, cutting them into 1/4-inch thick slices, and soaking them for at least an hour (longer is better) in cold water. Drain the potatoes and dry using a clean kitchen towel or paper towels. Heat oil in deep frying pan or a pot (at least 1 inch of oil). Insert one potato and when that potato starts to sizzle, drop additional potatoes into the oil carefully. Do not overcrowd the pan. Cook over medium/high heat for approximately 15 minutes or until potatoes are golden brown on all sides. Remove carefully with a slotted spoon and let drain in a colander lined with paper towels. Sprinkle with sea salt and oregano while still hot. Repeat with remaining potatoes.



For these recipes, go to: <https://miakouppa.com/recipes/>
For the best Greek bread recipes, go to: <https://miakouppa.com/2022/03/22/best-bread-recipes/>
For feta cheese facts, see: <https://miakouppa.com/feta-facts-everything-you-need-to-know-about-greek-feta-cheese-and-how-to-use-it/>
For the Mia Kouppa Lenten Recipe e-book, see: <https://miakouppa.gumroad.com/l/gqeduo>
Ten delicious and simple recipes that are perfect for Orthodox Lent, or anyone who is looking to include more plant-based options into their diet. You will find a comforting Moroccan soup, quick and delicious peanut butter noodles, a sweet and satisfying apple pie baked oatmeal and more. Each of these recipes has been tested until perfect and all are meat-free, egg-free and dairy-free. Many are also free of soy and gluten.
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ARTS & CULTURE

Joel A. Martin: With Jazzical Komitas and Love for Armenia

JAZZICAL, from page 13

He added, “I believe in the music of Komitas with all my heart. If I, a non-Armenian with no affiliation to Armenia, can be entranced and changed for the better because of the music of Komitas and the Armenia experience, then there are millions more who need to bear witness to the uniqueness of the music, art and culture of Armenia.”

Dear Joel, your “Jazzical Komitas” concert on June 14 truly energized the Yerevan audience. I believe even those who were initially skeptical about hearing Komitas interpreted through jazz left the hall impressed. Were you satisfied as well?

YES, I was quite pleased for a variety of reasons. Seeing my vision coming to life, a celebration of Armenian folk music and Komitas, capturing the visuals of Armenia past present and future with Ardean’s unique set design, it is a one-of-a-kind experience for the mind, heart and soul. Soon the world will be able to touch through this concert that which I already know and love, Armenia.

Although the concert was titled “Jazzical: Komitas,” you also performed works by other Armenian composers. From a professional standpoint, what makes Armenian music so well-suited for jazz interpretation?

To be honest, I do not approach it as a “jazz” or “classical” thing. Yes, classical is the foundation of my playing, jazz is an expansion of that foundation with creativity, but to me it is about the song, the melody, and what supports it. My journey is one of musical exploration, a spiritual, musical, artistic and aesthetic journey of self. Here only MUSIC rules, the culmination of 45+ years of playing classical, jazz, funk, pop, R&B, world music and musical theater. And I want to apply the experiences I have learned and mastered over the years to Ar-

menian music. With “Jazzical Komitas” I start with the melody itself and move from there. Then I look at the underpinnings of the song, the harmonies and rhythms, the ebb and flow of the lead line, then I think of ways to enhance that. Whatever is available musically, if it serves the song I will try and incorporate. All the while I am thinking about form, structure, telling a story through

tech companies. At a party in Queens NY, she introduced to the man called Komitas and Armenia. I listened, and then that evening I went back to my normal life of recording and writing. But 6 months later, the name Komitas was still in my mind and so finally, to come to any conclusion about this man and country I knew nothing about, I listened this music on YouTube thinking that it would



Joel Martin’s painting by Mher Evoyan

the music, so the classical and jazz forms merge into one experience. Jazzical.

You’ve visited Armenia 12 times and call yourself ABC – Armenian by Choice. What inspired this choice?

If you had told me over five years ago that Armenia would become a central part of my life, I probably would have said, “No way.” It happened by chance — or perhaps it was divine intervention — that I met Emma Arakelyan, a successful businesswoman, entrepreneur, and fundraiser for Armenian startup

only be 15 minutes. My listening session lasted about 2 hours wherein I pulled my daughters in and said: “Now you must listen to THIS.” My youngest daughter said “Well Dad, I think another CD project is starting.” She was absolutely correct. I had never heard anything like this before, and so I started setting this music to Jazzical sensibilities. After I had created the broad strokes of music that would be part of my first CD, I came across a fundamental problem: I had no real experience with Armenia because I had never been to Armenia. So, I called up Emma and told her that I could not finish this recording until I stepped on Armenian soil. She suggested I come to the WCIT conference in Yerevan in 2019 and we would figure it all out. That week changed my life starting with this sentence upon reaching Yerevan “I am home.”

Komitas’s music is often described as magical.

I believe in the healing power of Armenian /Komitas music. I have first-hand knowledge. Two years ago, I was diagnosed with Margi Splenic Lymphoma Cancer. While undergoing chemotherapy for 1.5 years, I listened to Komitas and created my second recording “Jazzical Komitas – Intimate Healing” while I was in bed. It is largely responsible for my healing through this cancer journey. And past that...Komitas and Armenian folk music just makes me “FEEL” good inside. Even the painful parts of the music have a positivity about it because there is something imbedded in the music that is so inherently beautiful. If one knew the history behind some of the songs, that person would only think it is so pure, simple, and moving.

During the concert, you mentioned you would like your children to grow up in Armenia. Could you elaborate on that?

YES. In America I wish we placed greater value on the role of the arts in our nation, our cities and towns. I was most impressed with Armenia’s emphasis on education and arts for the youth. This emphasis begins “in utero” (in the womb) when babies coming into the world are consistently being sung to, music playing all around them. Then as the babies become kids they are brought to the Komitas Museum for education about their art and culture. This continues on and on until they become adults, and they in turn share in and celebrate Armenia’s art and culture with their children. We do not value the arts in the same way in America which I believe stymies the ability to create well-rounded individuals and adults. A few days after my concert I toured the Tumo Center and was blown away by the fact that 20,000 students, Armenians and non-Armenians alike, had access to the finest in digital technologies, with a complete learning mechanism in place to foster imagination and creativity of its youth. I wish we had centers like this in America. Maybe if my daughters had these kinds of experiences they would achieve much more in life (and they are already doing well in my humble opinion).

You also spoke about the parallels between Black and Armenian histories. That reminded me of an article by American-Armenian writer Hripsime Ivison about Alex Haley’s novel Roots: The Saga of an American Family. Drawing comparisons, Ivison noted that while the gravest injustices against Black people occurred in the 17th–18th centuries, those against Armenians took place in the so-called “enlightened” 20th century. Would you like to comment further on this?

I said this in the concert, “Black people and Armenians have much in common if we can only get past the language.” Both groups of people have been through unspeakable horrors, with some of the permutations of these atrocities continuing to this very day. However, I do not believe that the pain and suffering that both groups have gone through are the culmination of who they are today. Yes, it is a part of their experience but not the totality of it. Before slavery, before the Armenian Genocide, they were already strong people with a great set of values and understanding about who they were. These atrocities did not take its place. Armenians and Black people are here BECAUSE they are strong people, because of their culture, because of their faith, because of so many factors. If the disenfranchised could band together on a human level, we would have much more power to make our world a better place. I know that sounds a little “cheesy” (and one might mistake these words as naïve), but if you look deep into what I am saying you will see that we all have many similarities, and we must use that to impact society. We cannot do this alone. We must show the world that it can be achieved. I feel very close to the Armenians because they are so nice, smart, respectful, trying to do the right thing by their neighbors, being strong and resilient. I want Armenians to see and appreciate my world just as much as I want the world to see and appreciate Armenia. It is reciprocal in its cumulative impact.

Besides music, what else do you love about Armenia?

I love everything about Armenia. It is about the people, the culture, the faith, the music, the impact of the Caucasus region surrounding them. Nature, old world values on family units while still trying to adjust to a new capitalist world. I am not saying that Armenia does not have its share of problems, everybody does. But what I am saying is that the great outweighs the negative by 10-1 margin. I am not Armenian by blood, but I am deeply connected to Armenia. It is my mission to spread what I know throughout the rest of the world. There is much to learn, like, and love about Armenia. And remember this: If there is one of me that has been touched to the core by Armenia, there are millions more like me that need to bear witness to this great country. And how do we achieve this lofty goal? By reaching out to one person at a time through music, good deed, and hard work. Until there is a groundswell of positive thinking.

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TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
METRO LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

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Archbishop Hovnan Derderian,
Primate, Western Diocese of the
Armenian Church of North America

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STEPAN ALAJAJIAN
1924 - 2010
Writer, Prosaist and Translator

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Hratch Sepetjian

Cultural program
with the participation of
Nune Avetisyan &
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ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Narine Abgaryan's *To Go On Living*: Does Life Always Conquer Death?

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

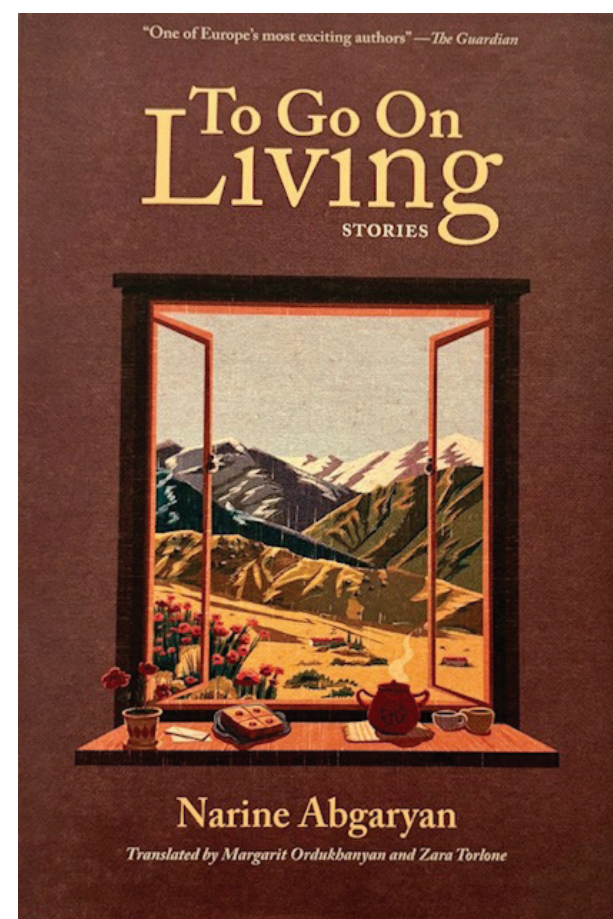
To Go On Living: Stories (Plough Publishing, 2025) is the portrait of a community fighting for survival. More than the story of the individual characters we meet in its thirty-one episodes, the book tells the story of a war that the inhabitants of Berd, a small Armenian mountain village along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, had the misfortune of experiencing. Abgaryan's strategy of opening and ending an episode with the same words gives the stories closure, even as they exist as part of a larger narrative. It is through the characters' flashbacks that we learn of hostilities that broke out "so suddenly and so stealthily" in the early 1990's and "escalated seemingly overnight." As "any dweller of borderlands knows, once [war] starts, it tends to never end," writes Abgaryan. The villagers lose their loved ones to explosions. They are shot by snipers and mutilated and maimed by projectiles. Yet, even as they mourn their children and bury the dead, they continue to care for those who survive because, as great-grandmother Tata always said, "Life always conquers death."

Abgaryan has the amazing ability of evoking the devastation by depicting the disruption war causes to the characters' peaceful daily lives of going about their household chores of kneading the dough, baking the bread, tending their orchards, harvesting crops, preparing winter preserves, making medicinal brews, and so much more. Once a war broke out in Nugzar's village, however, people were

forced to quit their little town leaving the barns and the rabbit cages open so the animals would not starve to death. Vineyards remained untended for decades. Abgaryan's "When the next explosion came . . . human fear—bulky, billowing—breathlessly spread from yard to yard, filling the cracks between the rows of firewood, the slanting chimneys, the attics, and the crawl spaces. Hopelessness and misery reigned supreme; it was as if anything that could inspire hope had been snuffed out at once," highlights the horrors of war more vividly and effectively than the graphic details of violence she occasionally indulges in.

Indeed, rather than enhance, the description of Poghosants Vasak's daughter Anishka witnessing "through the attic window how her father was axed to death and how her mother, who had long been wheel chair-bound, rose up and, calling to her husband, stumbled down the stairs, how they reached her, hit her over the head with the back of the axe and dragged her towards the fence by her hair," distracts and detracts from the forcefulness of "Back then, all was silent. Not even the wind sang, because back then the war ruled over that mountain pass," or the almost poetic beauty of, "in Pashoians Sona's drawings of the fogs of her childhood. . . the fogs smell of loneliness and longing."

It is impossible to read *To Go On Living* without recalling Abgaryan's earlier novel *Three Apples Fell from The Sky* that brings to life the simple, almost idyllic world of Maran, a village perched on a cliff in the Armenian



Highlands. The Maranians gather together over strong tea with thyme, they laugh together, and are just content with the way things "are supposed to be, so that's how they'll stay." The "That is how it was meant to be" of the villagers of Berd does not convey the same good-natured acceptance of the misfortunes of life.

The ongoing and the new wars between 2015, when *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* was published in its original Russian and 2018, when *To Go On Living* was published, must have taken their toll on the enchanting world of Maran. The uncharacteristic sadness and sense of loneliness of the characters in the stories in *To Go On Living* evidence the loss of the villagers' joyful spirit. In fact, the stories, the later stories in particular, convey a sense of hopelessness, even of bitterness and resentment at times. Old Maro will never make baklava again because she never managed to overcome the bitterness of losing her son and her daughter-in-law to the war. It must indeed be difficult to maintain the same serenity when "Every ceasefire is nothing but an excuse to break it," and when the only possible choice for the villagers is, as the village tailor's apprentice Masis well knows, "to leave, taking with you everyone you love."

Notwithstanding, a brief lull in the war restores the villagers' faith in the goodness of life, no matter what it throws their way. The final episode in *To Go On Living*, "In Lieu of An Epilogue," reaffirms the truth of Tata's words. To the immense joy of the family, Pashoians Sona finally has a baby boy. The episode concludes with: "Life is fairer than death, and that's what encapsulates its unbreakable truth. It is necessary to believe this in order to go on living." In Abgaryan's world it is always time to go on living.

The stories have great relevance in our times when the whole world, just like the villagers of Berd, live in fear of the next war breaking out "suddenly and stealthily." When the land is lost, in other words, when Hovinants Mariam's orchard remains "on the other side of the border forever," something deep inside in people's souls must also be lost. "What must happen to people's souls . . . to do such things to a seventy-year-old man," wonders Ashkhen in "Immortelle," when her father, his head completely shaved and strewn with tattoos, is returned from captivity, emaciated and in horrific pain.

Abgaryan is a gifted writer. She observes the world around her and recreates it with painstakingly chosen details and rich images. "Vayinants Nunufar smells of simple soap, dried fruit, and leavened dough—that is, of everything that ordinary Berd grandmothers smell of" is delightful. The howling and the wailing of the jackals, on the other hand, "who had arrived with the war and decided to stay in those parts forever," instills fear, desperation and anguish in the hearts of the villagers and the domestic animals as well. Abgaryan's use of veritable regional names—usually collective family nicknames which in the distinct regional dialect of Armenian spoken in Berd end with the suffix -ants—adds local color and gives the stories a sense of authenticity.

To Go On Living was translated into English from the original Russian by Margarit Ordukhanyan, a New York-based scholar and translator, and Zara Martirosova Torlone, a professor in the classics department at Miami University, Ohio.

ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 31 — First Armenian Church and Armenian Memorial Church have joined together for worship and fellowship this summer. All are welcome and invited to join Sunday Services @ FAC Belmont at 10:00 am and attend a Presentation by Georg Ayvazyan to Support Fight Life Armenia during Fellowship Hour at noon. Refreshments will be served. FAC Belmont 380 Concord Avenue, Belmont.

SEPTEMBER 7-FEBRUARY 28 — Armenian Museum of America, through February 28, 2026 Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries "The Art of Disruption: The Art & Impact of Serj Tankian" World renowned musician Serj Tankian is the lead singer and songwriter for the band, System Of A Down, a visionary poet, visual artist, and outspoken advocate for human rights. Inspired by his 2024 memoir, *Down with the System*, the exhibition immerses visitors in the dynamic intersections of music, painting, and protest that define Tankian's work. This exhibition is curated by Ryann Casey. Sponsored by Carolyn Mugar and the Alan K. & Isabelle DerKazarian Foundation. Hours: Thursday-Sunday 12pm-6pm 65 Main St., Watertown. (617) 926-2562 or armenianmuseum.org

SEPTEMBER 8 — Monday, St. James Men's club and Holy Trinity Men's Union will have a joint meeting at the Charles and Nevart Talanian Hall at Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Mezza 5.45 p.m., Dinner 6.45 p.m. Losh Kebab or Kheyima Meal \$22. Guest speaker will be John Garabedian, lifetime career in the radio business WJIB 720am, and 101.3 FM.RSVP is highly encouraged, email tmu@htaac.org or call the church office 617-354-0632

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 21 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents A Summer Concert featuring Greek-Armenian violinist Emilya Gaspar and her mother, pianist Jasmine Atabekyan. The duo will perform Armenian and classical masterpieces. 4.30 p.m. 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Please use Norseman Avenue entrance. Free, followed by a small reception. All donations will support Emilya's education. For reservations or information, call Sossy at 617-281-1647 or email syogurtian@comcast.net.

SEPTEMBER 27 — Armenian Museum of America Music in Color Concert with Musician-in-Residence, violinist Haig Hovsepiyan 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

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.

Armenian Artists in the Spotlight in Germany

BERLIN — Artist and gallerist Archi Galentz's project space, InteriorDasein, is presenting an exhibition titled "Aspects of Armenian painting. From Ivan Aivazovsky to Narine Zolyan," as part of projects that not only represent visual culture but also invite discussion about the prospects for the existence and development of a distinctive culture.

A little over a century after the genocide, Armenians have once again been subjected to ethnic cleansing from their historical homeland in Artsakh, with a significant portion of them held hostage in Baku and the remnants of the republic blockaded and gradually suffocated. The government's assurances of impending peace and prosperity only serve to heighten our anxiety and concern.

The exhibit opened on August 29 and will run through September 28.

Further information at: <https://koloniewedding.de/projektraeume/interiordasein/#4441>

Since 2008, InteriorDasein has regularly presented Armenian visual art and now houses a collection of canvases and works on paper by numerous artists of Armenian descent. The exhibition "Aspects of Armenian Painting. From Ivan Aivazovsky to Narine Zolyan" shows works from the period 1860 to the present day from the project space's collection as well as on loan from Berlin collections. The exhibition invites discussion about the orientations and developments in the painting of a cultural nation that has been fighting for its survival since ancient times and has had to accept expulsion and life in the diaspora once again in recent years.

In addition, on Saturday, September 13, a group exhibition at the studio of artist Zorik Davidyan in Chemnitz, Germany, will open. Participating artists: Karine Abel, Zorik Davidyan, Archi Galentz, Sam Grigorian, Ararat Haydeyan, Hasmik Hovsepyan-Haydeyan, Narine Zolyan.

The opening reception will take place on September 13 at 7 p.m. at Reichsstraße 21. The exhibit will run for two months.



Narine Zolyan Armenianischer Krieg in Jahr 2020, Acryl auf Leinwand, 2020



Tekeyan Cultural Association
Boston Chapter
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A Summer Concert

Greek-Armenian violinist

Emilya Gaspar and

her talented mother pianist

Jasmine Atabekyan

perform Armenian

and classical master-

pieces **Sunday**

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COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
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UNITED STATES

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When Will the Trump Route Start Operating?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

I have previously argued that the United States does not have a strategic presence in the South Caucasus and has never had one. I expressed the opinion that the Trump administration is not an exception to this situation: it also has its own clear interests in the South Caucasus, but the desire and need to ensure a strategic presence there had not been formed. Of course, the South Caucasus has an extremely complex geography: it borders the arguably main competitor of the United States — Russia, its main adversary — Iran, and a strategic ally, Turkey.

In recent weeks, the policy of the United States in the South Caucasus has been discussed quite actively. This is due to Trump's announcement of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, at the core of which is the idea of building a corridor in the South Caucasus; that is, through the territory of Armenia. The corridor would connect Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan, and from there, through Turkey, to Europe. With this step, of course, the United States can ensure a presence in the region, if the plan is implemented during the Trump presidency.

This will be possible in particular if, as a result of the implementation of the project, American companies are involved in the project of this road as investors and, at the same time, as guarantors of road safety. However, this will be a business presence, not a strategic presence in the South Caucasus.

Yes, the business presence may turn into a strategic one over time if this road acquires great importance and the volume of cargo transportation carried out through it is so large that it will provide a huge financial inflow, both to the Armenian budget and to the American companies that will be represented on this road. Experts argue that this road can begin to bring real benefits only from 2030.

However, from now to 2030 is a rather long period of time: by then not only will the Trump administration no longer exist, but it will also face the period of mid-term elections for the 48th president. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine that after making such long-term investments, there can be clear American guarantees regarding the preservation or continuation of the “Trump Road.”

That means that this is a long-term investment, about which — yes, as of today — there may be some American guarantees, as long as Trump continues to be president of the United States. But what will happen in four years is extremely difficult to predict, especially taking into account regional factors. For example, Iran and Russia are unlikely to come to terms with the idea that the

United States can provide a business presence in their immediate neighborhood, which has the potential to become strategic in the future.

Of course, the road could be opened and operational even tomorrow, and cargo from Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan could pass through the territory of Armenia in the coming months. However, it is difficult to imagine that their volumes would be so large and the income so significant that it would be profitable for any American organization to make large-scale investments here. The return on such investments could be over quite a long period and indefinite, given the uncertain level of its profitability.

Most likely, Chinese goods will be transported via this route, since their quantity is quite large. The construction of the so-called “Zangezur Corridor” will reduce the time for delivering goods from China to Europe via the Middle Corridor to 14 days. This was stated by Minister of Transport and Infrastructure of Turkey Abdulkadir Uraloglu in an interview with the Turkish newspaper Milliyet. According to him, after the commissioning of the Kars-Igdir-Aralik-Diluj railway line, which is part of the “Trump Route,” delivery time will be reduced from 18 to 14 days.

The positions of Russia and Iran are important for the implementation of this project. At present, they are moderate and mild, but it is noticeable that the Iranian side still has problems that were not resolved during the meetings with the Armenian side. It is natural that Iran also understands that any business presence near its borders can become a

strategic presence, which Iran will view as a threat.

The same applies to Russia. In the early 1990s, when Russia was in a rather weak state, the George H. W. Bush administration tried to get involved in the South Caucasus as quickly as possible, taking advantage of that historic opportunity. However, this was ultimately not possible because Russia was able to return to the South Caucasus, which it considered as part of its sphere of influence.

In sum, at this moment it is difficult to clearly assess the pace and possibilities of implementing this project, taking into account the constant competition for influence over the South Caucasus.

(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.)



Peace in the Caucasus: Ensuring Europe Plays a Role after Trump's Ceremony

By Jim O'Brian

The Trump-brokered deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan signals public US involvement in one of Europe's most protracted conflicts. But the ceremony may have come too soon, triggering dynamics that could threaten lasting peace.

On August 8, American president Donald Trump hosted the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to announce a framework that could potentially end the two countries' decades-long conflict. While many parts of the deal had been in place for almost a year, the White House ceremony creates the need for swift action for the deal to stick. Europeans can influence the process, with their leverage growing as attention turns to the region's possible integration into global markets.

A central element of the agreement is Armenia's consent to open a 43-kilometer stretch of its territory for an America-administered corridor connecting Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan, which borders Iran and Turkey. The goal is that the officially named Trump Corridor for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) becomes part of a major trade route from central Asia through Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey to global markets.

While this is a milestone worth celebrating, my experience from decades of peace

talks is that international observers leave ceremonies pleased with how much has been done, while the relevant parties fixate on what they did not achieve. And now there is a risk that the White House event could trigger dynamics that undermine the prospects for peace.

First, there will be no final agreement for at least a year because Azerbaijan insists Armenia remove from its constitution any reference to periods when Armenia governed parts of Azerbaijan, including areas that have been historically inhabited by ethnic Armenians. Any amendment to Armenia's constitution will not happen before next year's election — now set to be overshadowed by this very issue.

The deal also excluded key parties whose support is crucial for the corridor's success, such as Russia, Iran — whose border runs near it — and Turkey — through which goods will need to pass for the corridor to be viable. Uncertainty about the corridor's long-term prospects could attract opportunistic actors seeking quick gains, fueling corruption and leaving the project vulnerable to parties that ultimately would like to see it fail.

The EU can help here. European capital could be the cheapest and most reliable way to insure and finance the corridor, ensuring its success. But the EU will need to increase assistance and investment to Armenia, be-

sides preparing for an emboldened Russia, especially as the US shifts focus away from actively supporting Nikol Pashinyan, the Armenian prime minister, or providing infrastructure for free and fair elections in his country.

Trump's Personal Stake

Is TRIPP destined to become another “Lake Trump”, the body of water on the Serbia-Kosovo border where the United States president tried to slap a brand name without actually resolving the conflict?

It feels awkward to ask such a skeptical question so soon after a positive event. The ceremony revealed two truths: that the US is a major player in the south Caucasus, long Russia's backyard, and that peace is achievable, even if politicians in both countries (especially Azerbaijan) keep their publics ready for war. It also marks Trump's personal involvement in a crucial region, potentially kickstarting massive economic benefits. In fact, Trump's involvement might have been the key factor in securing this agreement.

In the Biden administration, we did not offer the president's personal involvement due to concerns over the tens of thousands of Armenians who had fled Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023, as well as about Azerbaijan's crackdown on civil society, including threats to expel USAID. Now the Trump

see TRUMP, page 20

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Nikol Pashinyan's Deceptive Promises on a Nonexistent Peace

On August 18, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan delivered a series of misleading, self-defeating statements about peace while addressing the nation.

Since his August 8 White House meeting, Pashinyan has falsely claimed to have brought peace to Armenia. Armenians advise, “don't take off your clothes before you see the water,” while Americans say, “never count your chickens before they hatch.” In other words, don't make premature judgments.

Seeing that no one took his claims of an illusory peace seriously, Pashinyan finally admitted last week that peace remains distant: “The President of Azerbaijan and I acknowledged the need to continue further efforts to achieve the signing and final ratification of the Peace Agreement.” Pres. Ilham Aliyev confirmed the same point when, shortly after leaving the White House, he repeated his demand that Armenia amend its Constitution before he could sign the treaty.

In his August 18 message to the nation, Pashinyan defended the proposed road linking mainland Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan by stating that it is “based on respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and jurisdiction of states.” In fact, he is agreeing to cede control of a vital part of Armenia's territory to a foreign power for 99 years, with the option to extend for another 99 years. If Pashinyan's intent is to allow Azeris to travel through Armenia, why provide them with a U.S.-controlled “unobstructed transit road,” which means not inspecting their passports and luggage at the border? Since the agreement is supposedly “reciprocal,” why doesn't Armenia demand a similar U.S.-controlled “unobstructed transit road” through Azerbaijan to Russia?

To prepare the Armenian public for further concessions, Pashinyan declared: “We have expressed our readiness to simplify border crossings.” This is a euphemism for depriving Armenia of any control over Azeris crossing its border. He had previously stated that he was ready “to facilitate” their transit through Armenia.

Pashinyan fantasized that Armenia and Azerbaijan will “chart a path for a bright future...not predetermined by the conflict of the past,” insisting that “conditions have finally been created for our peoples to begin good-neighborly relations....” He twice asserted that “peace has been established between

Armenians Deserve More Than a Transactional Peace Deal with Azerbaijan

By Jirair Ratevosian

On August 8, as the White House hosted the trilateral signing of a peace agreement between Armenia, Azerbaijan and the United States, I spoke to a group of Armenian high school students from Los Angeles. We paused to watch the news conference on a laptop in the corner of our crowded room. Their faces — curious, cautious and skeptical — mirrored a sentiment across the Armenian diaspora: hope tempered by doubt, pride shadowed by mistrust.

This conflict's roots run deep. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Armenia and Azerbaijan fought a brutal war over a region within Azerbaijan's borders but claimed by both nations. Azerbaijanis call it Nagorno-Karabakh; Armenians call it Artsakh. A ceasefire held for years but left core disputes unresolved — over territory, governance and the right of self-determination for the region's Armenian population.

War erupted again in 2020. Backed by Turkey and armed with advanced weapons, Azerbaijan gained control of much of the disputed territory. The Trump administration did nothing to meaningfully intervene. For Armenians, it was a devastating loss — of land, security, trust and cultural heritage. For Azerbaijan, it was a political and military victory that shifted the balance of power.

In December 2022, Azerbaijan launched a blockade of the Lachin corridor — the only road linking Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh to Armenia — tightening its grip on a region already reeling from war. For the next 10 months, gas, electricity, internet, food and medicine were cut off to 120,000 Armenians, many of them children and elderly. Families rationed bread. Surgeries were postponed. Schools closed.

I visited the region during this time and stood at the

Armenian end of the corridor, where a silent convoy of trucks stretched out of sight up the road — each loaded with food, medicine and basic supplies, each driver knowing they might never be allowed to deliver them. The air was heavy with frustration and helplessness. In the limited coverage of the siege, the isolated Armenians spoke in hushed tones, their faces drawn from months of fear and deprivation. The International Court of Justice ordered Azerbaijan to reopen the corridor, but Baku ignored it.

I took pride when President Biden officially recognized the Armenian genocide — a moral milestone decades overdue. But his administration failed to punish Azerbaijan during the blockade, and it failed to prevent what came next: Azerbaijan's full-scale military assault on Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh in September 2023. The attack lasted just 24 hours but forced more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians — virtually the entire population of the region — to flee their homes. Centuries-old communities were emptied almost overnight, and families left behind homes, businesses and places of worship, uncertain if they would ever return.

I've felt conflicted watching the Trump administration's peace-making efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On one hand, I love seeing my country, the United States, stand with Armenia and prioritize Armenian issues on the world stage. On the other, this moment feels hollow. And to me, this reflects a deeper problem: U.S. policy toward the South Caucasus has long lacked consistency, accountability and the will to confront aggressors, no matter which party is in power. And in Washington, Armenians have few friends and weak representation.

This agreement — like much of U.S. foreign policy in the current administration — is unmistakably transactional. Armenia gains U.S. security assurances and cooperation on artificial intelligence, including support for an emerging AI hub, which is meant to anchor its Western trajectory. Azerbaijan walks away with de facto immunity instead of being held accountable for its actions against the Armenians of Artsakh, as well as arms sales and a transit corridor to Turkey. The United States gets a geopolitical trophy: Trump's name on the corridor to Turkey, leverage in the region and an apparent diplomatic “win” to market at home.

But this deal is far from complete. It omits the right of

the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan.” Without any real peace in hand, Pashinyan announced that Armenia's defense budget will not increase significantly, if at all, while Aliyev, whose military is already armed to the teeth, is planning to buy billions of dollars' worth of advanced weapons.

In a most insensitive manner, Pashinyan urged Armenians to stop mourning the loss of their family members in the 2020 war: “Even our way of glorifying and sanctifying our martyrs, dealing with their memory, must change drop by drop, millimeter by millimeter.” In effect he is telling grieving mothers to forget the loss of their sons. The message is: “Eat, drink and be merry!”

Pashinyan glossed over Azerbaijan's occupation of more than 77 square miles of Armenia's territory since 2021-2022, claiming in advance of any demands by Aliyev that there are also Azeri territories under Armenian control. He expressed the naïve hope that the exchange of territories will be resolved during future border demarcation.

Pashinyan even justified omitting from the initialed peace treaty any demand to release the Armenian prisoners held by Baku, claiming that any reference to the captives would delay their release. The truth is precisely the opposite. Pashinyan has done nothing to secure their release fearing that, once free, they might challenge his shaky authority.

In a final provocation, Pashinyan dared Armenians to rise up against his rule if they oppose his surrender of Artsakh. Otherwise, he claimed, “the public agrees with me.” This is a false presumption, because the overwhelming majority of the population does not support him, as multiple polls have shown. Regrettably, they have become totally disillusioned and want nothing to do with political issues.

Pashinyan demeaned the Karabagh struggle by falsely claiming that it was “used by certain forces as a tool to prevent Armenia's independence, sovereignty, the establishment and development of statehood.” He thus admitted that he too served as “a tool” for foreign powers when he declared in 2019 that “Artsakh is Armenia. Period.” He now describes as “unrealistic” the possible return of Artsakh Armenians to their homeland. He even says raising this issue is dangerous, damaging to Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, and “will become a new source of tension between the [two] states.” He revealed that he had “shared this understanding of mine with official Baku. And I note that yes, it is a dangerous and harmful topic for the newly-born peace.”

Pashinyan ended his series of misstatements by conveying to Armenians the following defeatist message: “Your defeat is inevitable, and you will inevitably lose, because it is impossible to win endlessly.”

Since Armenia's crushing defeat in 2020, I have urged Pashinyan to resign immediately. A leader who presides over such a major calamity lacks the moral authority and mental fortitude to defend his country's vital interests.

return for displaced Armenians to Artsakh, ignores the destruction of Armenians' towns, homes and businesses, makes no commitment to preserve Artsakh's cultural heritage and says nothing about prisoners of war. For many in the Armenian diaspora, these are glaring and unacceptable omissions.

On paper, the newly named Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, the link from Azerbaijan to Turkey, is billed as a neutral, cooperative route to be administered by the U.S. In reality, it raises serious questions about Armenia's sovereignty. The corridor will run through Armenia's southern Syunik province — its only direct land link to Iran — and could weaken Yerevan's ability to fully control its own borders, regulate trade and ensure unimpeded access to a vital southern lifeline.

At best, the August 8 agreement offers a slim hope for a real resolution of the region's conflicts. If implemented fully, it could help build a more stable and prosperous Armenia for future generations. The challenge is in ensuring this deal yields a U.S. investment in reconstruction, accountability and lasting security, something more than a photo op.

And even incomplete, flawed agreements can create openings. Armenia's pivot West, which the deal underlines, carries risk, but it also offers the possibility of stronger security partnerships, economic renewal and cultural preservation, if those benefits reach the people who have endured war and blockade, not just the leaders who signed the papers. In recent years, Armenia has seen a surprising economic boom, driven by tech investment, tourism and a wave of returning diaspora talent. This fragile momentum could be strengthened or squandered depending on what comes next.

I respect President Trump for pursuing peace agreements — leaders everywhere should make peace their highest priority. The Armenian American students I met on August 8, who carry the inherited pain of their parents and grandparents, deserve more than symbolic gestures or transactional deals. They deserve justice and the freedom to envision a better future for their ancestors' homeland. Ultimately, that is the hope we all share.

(Jirair Ratevosian served as senior policy advisor for the State Department in the Biden administration. This commentary originally appeared in the Los Angeles Times on August 21.)

Peace in the Caucasus: Ensuring Europe Plays a Role after Trump’s Ceremony

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administration itself defunded USAID, and the White House ceremony signals that Washington is no longer concerned over Azerbaijan’s 2020 and 2023 military actions in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Biden approach amounted to a peace-in-practice that key parties would implement as soon as an agreement was reached.

Azerbaijan’s Gains

President Ilham Aliyev did not get the complete climb down by Armenia that he wanted, but he won a great deal. Aliyev leaves with an agreement that deepens his relationship with the US, securing help for a safe connection with Nakhichevan and a promise of US investment in the corridor. One foundation of the peace-in-practice proposed by the Biden team was a US pledge to impose sanctions on officials and companies that build, operate or use a corridor without Armenian consent. From Aliyev’s standpoint, a US promise to back the corridor now, before Armenia has taken the final step of amending its constitution, could mean that this bit of leverage has been surrendered. In short, the US paid up front while Aliyev only had to reiterate peace assurances he has offered many times before.

Armenia’s Strains

The potential backlash in Armenia will be a problem. There will be no substantial peace dividend for Armenia: no open border with Turkey, no extra investments for Armenia’s benefit (beyond what was promised by former secretary of state Antony Blinken in April 2024 and the US-Armenia agreement signed on August 8th); only a corridor connecting different parts of Azerbaijan. The election campaign will now be dominated by the prospect of a coerced constitutional change. This will be deeply unpopular in Armenia and will hurt Pashinyan further.

This is a shame. Pashinyan has been a courageous, far-sighted leader. A weak and Moscow-dependent Armenia, or one polar-

ized like neighboring Georgia, will almost certainly not live up to the hard compromises needed for peace. And an Armenia that cannot uphold the agreement will be vulnerable to intervention by Moscow or Baku.

Russia’s Shadow

The White House ceremony did send a strong message to Moscow, which has long regarded the south Caucasus as its zone of influence but is now weakened by Ukraine, sanctions and harsh disagreements with both Yerevan and Baku.

However, this is an incremental and may-be only a transitory benefit. Trump seems to be in a hurry to find an accommodation with Vladimir Putin. Sanctions relief, a ceasefire with Ukraine or any understanding with the US president will give Moscow latitude, money and military might to intensify its engagement in the Caucasus — especially in Armenia, where it already has (weak) proxies and security bases.

While anti-Russia sentiment in Armenia is now highly prevalent, Russia has learned in campaigns in Moldova, Romania and Georgia how to help its preferred candidates while avoiding backlash — and will certainly apply these lessons in Armenia’s election. Additionally, after the upcoming Trump-Putin Alaska summit, I believe Putin will almost certainly claim (perhaps privately to the regional leaders) that he secured an understanding from Trump that the south Caucasus is in the Russian sphere. The US and Europe will need to clarify immediately that this is untrue.

No Business without Turkey

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan was neither present nor mentioned in Washington. The problem is that the corridor’s success depends on accessible routes to global markets, with Turkish ports the only scalable option. Turkey, then, will decide whether the corridor lives up to its promise. But the border between Armenia and Turkey remains closed and is likely to stay that way until a final peace deal is signed — and

the price is likely to go up if Armenia does not change its constitution.

Until the promised regional super-highway opens, the only real costumer for this short corridor is Baku. Given this uncertainty, early entrants in this project may pursue short-term benefits to themselves, such as taking exorbitant loans on favourable terms, using construction contracts to obtain more loans from interested banks, or quickly selling the concession to unknown third parties. Each step in this cut-and-run capitalism will create opportunities for graft, inefficiency and manipulation.

European money can be the key to guarantee the corridor’s success. With their knowledge of the issues and the preparatory work they have done already, Europeans can ensure transparency, which will be critical to avoiding capture by predatory states. Fossil fuel states from the Arab Gulf and central Asia may have deep pockets, but they have little ability to hold off Russia and Iran, while from my experience in both government and the private sector it seems very unlikely that the US Development Finance Company could quickly commit enough funds to support a project on this scale.

If the corridor fails to develop into a global network soon, it will then be of interest almost exclusively to Azerbaijan. This will tempt Moscow-dependent and hardline Armenian officials to use it as leverage in relations with Azerbaijan. Things could come to this point in a year or two, when Azerbaijan might claim US acquiescence in securing the corridor.

This points to a final problem: the responsibility to protect the corridor seems to be falling through the cracks among the multiple players. Based on private conversations, US troops might be deployed to protect US commercial interests there, if they exist by then. While this sounds like the late-19th-century gunboat diplomacy that appeals to Trump, such a move seems unlikely. It would be unwise for a business

to assume that an anti-intervention president would send US troops into territory where Russia, Iran, Turkey and now the twice-victorious Azerbaijan can escalate quickly.

European Capital(s)

Even though London, Berlin and Paris have been active behind the scenes, Washington has now taken center stage on this issue. The reality is that Baku and Yerevan do not see Europe as enough counterweight to Russia.


This should lead Europe to reassess its tools for engaging with conflicts on its borders. European gas purchases from and arms sales to Azerbaijan far outweigh the assistance, tentative enlargement offers and arms sales to Armenia. Even Paris, which has strongly supported Armenia, sought to soften its posture toward Azerbaijan this year.

If peace is achieved and the corridor opens, however, then Europe’s experience with economic integration will become increasingly relevant, as will its newfound military strength.

The Washington ceremony is a material step toward peace. It crystallizes American involvement and highlights the two countries’ aspirations for peace — two things that had been known but not fully acknowledged. But the underlying cause of the conflict has not been resolved, just postponed, and the event excluded parties who will try to get what they want in the meantime.

US special envoys Tom Barrack and Steve Witkoff will need to work quickly. Europe can play a key role in designing and financing the corridor, positioning itself to help mitigate some of the risks identified here.\

(Jim O’Brien is a distinguished visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. At ECFR, he works on identifying issues that can form the basis of a renewed and sustained transatlantic partnership.)



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