

## Trump Said to Host Armenian, Azeri Leaders

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia’s government pointedly declined to refute on Monday, August 4, a report saying that US President Donald Trump will meet with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Washington on Friday.

“Multiple sources confirm to me that Armenia and Azerbaijan are poised to announce their intention for peace later this week in Washington,” Alex Raufoglu, an Azerbaijani journalist based in the US capital, said in a post on X (the platform once known as Twitter), earlier in the day.

“Trump is expected to host both Nikol Pashinyan and Ilham Aliyev in the White House on Friday, sources tell me,” he wrote without giving further details.

There have been no official statements to that effect yet by the White House or the US State Department.

Pashinyan’s office said that it “can neither confirm nor deny” the information “at the moment.”

“At this point, as you know, we have not released any official statement, and we therefore ask you to consider the information about the visit [to Washington] confirmed only after the official statement,” it told the Armenpress news agency.

There was no immediate reaction from Baku. Pashinyan and Aliyev most recently met in Abu Dhabi on July 10. They discussed, in particular, the possibility of initialing an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty finalized by the two sides in March. Baku continues to make the signing of the treaty conditional on a change of Armenia’s constitution.

Speaking a week after the Abu Dhabi talks, Trump stated that Armenia and Azerbaijan are “pretty close” to striking a peace deal. But he did not elaborate.

Also on the agenda of the talks was a US proposal to let an American company manage the transit of people and cargo from Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave through Armenia’s Syunik province.

Pashinyan has indicated his readiness to accept the proposed arrangement strongly opposed by his domestic critics. They say that it would undermine Armenian sovereignty over Syunik and satisfy Azerbaijan’s demands for an extraterritorial corridor to Nakhichevan.

Washington has also proposed a 100-year US lease on the corridor. Pashinyan and his political allies have made conflicting statements on the idea.

## Russia Sends 140 Tons of Humanitarian Aid to Karabakh Refugees in Armenia

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Russia has sent more than 140 tons of humanitarian aid to displaced Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, which is intended to be provided to about 30,000 people.

The announcement of aid was made on Thursday, July 31, at a press briefing held at the Russian state-run media outlet Sputnik’s press center in Armenia. The aid is intended to be carried out within the framework of the ‘Russia is with you’ project implemented by Eurasia and Russian Humanitarian Mission civil society organizations, under the auspices of the Russian House (Rossotrudnichestvo).

The “main mission” of the Russian House, according to their website, is “to strengthen Russia’s humanitarian influence in the world,” with countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) being their priority area for their activities. As

with other Russian government organizations, it was sanctioned by the EU after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. It has also been accused of being a hub for espionage and other nefarious activities.

The aid package includes food and personal hygiene items, as well as additional kits for families with young children, which includes baby food and care products.

The primary target group are vulnerable people, such as families with many children, families that lost their breadwinners during the conflict, families with disabled people, and single elderly people.

The aid will be handed over starting from August from distribution points operating



The Russian humanitarian aid sent to the displaced Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian refugees. Photo: Russian House.

in various locations in Armenia and with the help of volunteers. The aid will be delivered to the houses of people in case they are unable to travel to the set distribution points.

Arseny Pronin, the head of the Russian Humanitarian Mission in Armenia, said during the briefing that his organization had been involved in the humanitarian aid mission since 2020 — the year in when Armenia lost the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, with a portion of the region remaining under Armenian control at that time, with the presence of Russian peacekeepers. The situation remained relatively static until September 2023, when Azerbaijan launched its last offensive. At that time, virtually the entire Armenian population fled the region within a week.

In turn, Alena Arshinova, a Russian MP and chair of the Council of Eurasia, noted that the aid was also provided with the cooperation of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

According to News.am, Arshinova said that similar humanitarian initiatives provide not only aid, but also build bridges of trust.

The news of the aid first appeared in late May, when Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova announced in her press briefing on 27 May about “a major new humanitarian initiative.”

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The Gorky Monument as it was being created

## Watertown Celebrates ‘Passage’ Mural Dedicated to Arshile Gorky

WATERTOWN — The city of Watertown held a reception for “Passage,” the vibrant new mural honoring the profound legacy of artist Arshile Gorky, on June 10 at the Grove Street underpass.

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## Armenian Government Reportedly Pays \$6 Million for Jennifer Lopez Concert

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Two years after controversially allocating \$6 million for US rapper Snoop Dogg’s concert in Yerevan, Armenia’s government is spending the same amount of money on American pop singer Jennifer Lopez’s up-show in the Armenian capital.

Lopez performed at Yerevan’s Republican Stadium on Sunday, August 3, as part of her ongoing “Up All Night” con-

cert tour. Tickets for the concert cost from 25,000 to 180,000 drams (\$65-\$468).

Although the concert was announced this spring, it was not until July 31 that the Armenian government admitted financing it and released details of the funding, which is very large by Armenian standards. That includes a performance fee of \$2.6 million to be paid to the 56-year-old pop star.

The government said that it is the same

sum which it provided for Snoop Dogg’s concert and then reclaimed due to its cancellation.

The rapper’s show was originally scheduled for September 23, 2023. It was canceled two days after Azerbaijan launched on September 19, 2023 a military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh that forced the region’s entire population to flee to Armenia.

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In Thessaloniki, Armenians, Like Jews, Keep Their Culture Alive

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A Summer Season of Camps & Conference

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**BOSTON**  
Cellist Aristakesyan And Co. Entrance at Berklee Concert

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenian Student Wins Silver at Geography Olympiad

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Sati Hayrapetyan, a student from Armenia’s Quantum College, earned a silver medal at the 21st International Geography Olympiad held in Bangkok, July 26 to August 1.

The Olympiad brought together 179 students from 47 countries.

Armenia’s national team included 12th-grade students Sati Hayrapetyan, Nare Poghosyan and Hayk Antonyan from Quantum College and Vahagn Aloyan from Ayb School.

The team was led by Vardan Asatryan (National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Quantum College) and Gor Aleksanyan (Yerevan State University).

Armenia, US to Hold Joint Military Drills

YEREVAN (Panoram.am) — In preparation for participation in international peacekeeping missions, the Armenia-US joint exercise EAGLE PARTNER 2025 will be held in Armenia from August 12 to 20, the Armenian Defense Ministry reported on August 2.

Servicemembers from the peacekeeping brigade of the Armenian Armed Forces, US Army Europe and Africa, and the Kansas National Guard participate in the exercise.

The exercise will focus on preparation and execution of peacekeeping operations with a strong emphasis on medical evacuation procedures.

Ombudsman Suggests Wildfires in Artsakh Were Set Deliberately To Erase Heritage

YEREVAN (Panoram.am) — For more than 10 days, wildfires have been raging across Azerbaijani-occupied Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), with no effective firefighting efforts in place. According to Artsakh’s Cultural Heritage Ombudsman Hovik Avanesov, the fires have been deliberately ignited and intentionally left uncontrolled by the Azerbaijani authorities.

Speaking to Panorama.am on Friday, Avanesov claimed the wildfires are being used as a tool to destroy evidence of systematic vandalism against Armenian cultural and historical sites, clear land for unauthorized development and erase all traces of Armenian heritage under the guise of natural disaster.

“One of the most insidious methods of committing cultural genocide is to disguise it as a natural calamity,” Avanesov said, adding that more than 100 significant historical and cultural monuments are near the fire zones.

He also pointed to Azerbaijan’s “restoration” programs targeting Armenian churches, claiming they are used to erase Armenian traces from them.

Unique Smart Power Platform Crafted by Lt. Gen. Kotanjian

By Benjamin Poghosyan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

As the world order continues its transformation from a unipolar system to a more complex multipolar configuration, Armenia faces multifaceted challenges amplified by its defeat in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, the military takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan in 2023, the forced displacement of Armenian population and the continued assertive policy of Azerbaijan, which promotes the concepts of so-called “Western Azerbaijan” and a “Zangezur Corridor.”

The war in Ukraine and the complete rupture of Russia-West relations adds complexity to Armenian foreign policy, as Yerevan navigates the great power com-



Lt. Gen. Hayk Kotanjian

petition. In this context, the successful continuation of the cooperation between Armenian National Defense Research University (NDRU) and the US National Defense University (NDU) could be an

efficient platform for intellectual debates about the future development of Armenia.

The NDRU was established in 2005 as the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) by Lieutenant-General Hayk Kotanjian, a doctor of political science and professor. Its primary task was to study the principles of activity of the US NDU that nourished the top US military-political leadership with the products of its academic research and provided the top leadership with interagency security education, and to develop the project of establishing its sister organization by localizing NDU’s model in Armenia. The project of the Armenian INSS-NDRU was elaborated by Dr. Kotanjian during his graduate studies and further fellowships at the US NDU, Harvard University and other important centers.

During its activities, the INSS, as an academic basis of the future NDRU, has taken steps towards creating a quality professional environment necessary for defense security studies in Armenia. It incorporated regional security studies; the establishment of strategic gaming and cybersecurity groups aimed at the gradual development of the research component; and transformation of the research results into a form accessible to broader audiences after the launching of the educational component and opening of the NDRU in 2016.

Given the ever-growing role of artificial intelligence in every aspect of human activities, the cooperation between Armenian NDRU and the US NDU College of Information and Cyberspace is of utmost importance for ensuring Armenian national

interests in this vital sphere.

As Lt. Gen. Hayk Kotanjian celebrated his 80th anniversary a few days ago, the activities of the Armenian NDRU and continuation of the cooperation with the US NDU are a vivid example of how one person’s vision and relentless efforts can make a long-term impact on the future of state and nation.

(Benjamin Poghosyan is a former vice president for research at the Armenian National Defense Research University.)

Catholicos Says Unity, Faith Will Help Armenians Overcome Trials

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On August 4, at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II received pilgrims from the Armenian community of Highpoint in the Boston area, part of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. They were accompanied by their spiritual pastor, Reverend Father Vart Gyozyan.

In his address, His Holiness reflected on the challenges facing Armenia and expressed confidence that “the Armenian people, through unity and strong faith, will overcome the current difficulties and trials.”

Blessing the pilgrims, the Catholicos stressed that the diaspora’s bond with the homeland and the Mother See highlights their commitment and devotion to national and spiritual values. He also underscored the vital role of clergy serving in the diaspora in preserving these ties.

At the conclusion of the meeting, he urged the pilgrims to maintain their national identity and to foster love and devotion toward the homeland and the Armenian Church.

During a recent press conference, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, when asked how he plans to “liberate the Catholicosate,” responded: “It will be liberated the same way Armenia was freed from Serzh Sargsyan in 2018.” He later called for preparations for a “Great Spiritual Gathering in Etchmiadzin’s central square.” On Facebook, Pashinyan laid out his vision for changes at the Mother See, including removing the Catholicos, appointing a morally upright priest as a temporary leader who cannot be a candidate for the throne, and delaying new Catholicos elections until the Church Canon is revised.

Oppositionist Freed from House Arrest

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An opposition figure close to former President Serzh Sargsyan was released from house arrest on Friday two years after being detained on corruption charges rejected by him as politically motivated.

Armen Ashotyan was charged in November 2022 with abuse of power and money laundering in connection with his past chairmanship of the Board of Trustees of Yerevan’s Mkhitar Heratsi Medical University. The accusations stem from a number of property acquisitions carried out by the university administration on his alleged orders.

Armenia’s Investigative Committee also charged Ashotyan with “waste” of public funds following his arrest in June 2023 which it attributed to his alleged attempts to obstruct its inquiry. The oppositionist, who is a deputy chairman of Sargsyan’s Republican Party (HHK), has accused the

investigators and the judge presiding over his trial of executing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s orders.

The judge moved Ashotyan to house arrest last September. He has since repeatedly refused to release Ashotyan pending a verdict in the trial.

The higher Court of Appeals ultimately ended the house arrest while putting some restrictions on Ashotyan’s freedom of movement.

“The prison + house arrest lasted for a total of 777 days,” one of the defense lawyers, Ruben Melikian, said in a social media post. He expressed hope that “all other political prisoners” will also be set free soon.

Ashotyan, 50, was an influential figure during Sargsyan’s rule, serving as education minister from 2012-2016 and subsequently heading the Armenian parliament’s foreign relations committee. He has been a vocal critic of Pashinyan.

Azerbaijani Troops Target Roadwork Vehicle in Syunik

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On August 4, at approximately 1 p.m., units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces opened fire in the direction of an excavator involved in the construction of interpositional roads near the village of Verishen in Armenia’s Syunik Province, about 4,500 meters northeast of the settlement. The incident was reported by Armenia’s Ministry of Defense.

No injuries were reported as a result of the shooting.

“The Azerbaijani side is urged to investigate the gunfire incident and provide public clarifications,” the statement reads.



The excavator shot at by Azerbaijani forces





## ARMENIA

# Strengthening National Security: Institute for Security Analysis Launches Resilience Programs in Gyumri

By Bella Ishanyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GYUMRI, Armenia — The Institute for Security Analysis (ISA), a national security think tank based in Yerevan, hosted two conferences in Gyumri from July 8 to 12.

The first, a complete five-day security curricula for aspiring professionals, or Conflict Awareness School (CAS), hosted speakers who discussed relevant pillars of Armenian national security such as strategic communications, military strategy, digital warfare, state capture, energy security and Russian hybrid operations.

The second, on July 8 and 9, was a “Security Governance and Transformation Seminar.” Through sessions led and attended by security professionals and academics, the seminar was open for professionals to strengthen the alignment between national interests and defense planning.

While separate events, the CAS and seminar both aimed to enhance strategic awareness and promote critical thinking on defense modernization and institutional transformation. The week was sponsored by UK International Development, a network through the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office that fortifies diplomatic, development and consular work around the world.

In the wake of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and 2023 offensive, resulting in Artsakh’s occupation by Azerbaijan, the forums aimed to analyze the conflict from an internal and external perspective in order to more effectively address current and future threats to Armenian borders and sovereign-

ty. Participants heard from speakers based in Armenia, the Caucasus, the US, Canada, and the UK, including Dr. Neville Bolt, founder and director of the Symposium Institute for Strategic Communications and editor-in-chief of NATO’s Defense Strategic Communications journal, Major General (Retired) Ed Dorman of the US Army,

senior advisor at the Irregular Warfare Center, and Brigadier-General of the Canadian Army Ernest Beno (retired). ISA founding board member and organizer Ara Araz said, “The idea for these seminars came from a self-generated proposal that we organize national security literacy classes, and the idea is to increase and widen the level of discourse dealing with security issues, ... to bring more stakeholders, and have more of the population, whether they be analysts, students, professors [or] journalists participating in these discussions.”

These national security issues identified by the ISA are most urgently defined by elements linked to state capture, or political corruption where private interests significantly influence a state’s decision-making process.

They include “human talent, accountability, good governance, political alternatives, and an unresponsive political elite,” said an ISA representative. “Without fixing our internal issues, we can never face our external issues.”

CAS speaker and research associate at the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab, Givi Gigitashvili, discussed Open Source Intelligence capabilities and how researchers can use data to influence and disseminate strategic communications and military operations.

“One of the biggest threats is information warfare and coordinated campaigns to spread false narratives, inflame ethnic tensions, and undermine trust in institutions,” he said. “This kind of manipulation doesn’t just distort reality; it fuels conflict. The most effective countermeasures are open-source

that after the 2020 war, 2023 offensive, and the loss of Artsakh, it’s hard to improve policy strategy within Armenia’s weakening security architecture.

“Armenia’s strength is that we still have Syunik, which is a major geographic ob-



Dr. Neville Bolt leads presentation on strategic communications (photo ISA)

stacle for the Turkic world to be united. We should grasp it [tightly] because that would give us a hope to live here and simultaneously restore ourselves,” he said. “Armenia’s weaknesses are that we don’t have Artsakh anymore and we have a pro-Turkish and pro-Azerbaijani government, which is not helping our state. A lot of things are being done internally to destabilize our nation and weaken our army.”

Areg Khachatryan, an AUA Master’s graduate and CAS participant, also said that it is important to recognize the weaknesses of our current national security, and that in this age of digitization, Armenia needs to adapt.

“One of the crucial points of Armenian security that has to be developed more is the digital part of it and digital open source research, especially nowadays when everything is on the internet,” he said. “Using open source information to detect enemy positions and to analyze those things, helps us try to forecast what will happen on the frontline. It’s crucial. Especially since its independence, Armenia has been on the defensive and that’s the main issue due to our problems in the southern part of Armenia, specifically in Syunik and Vayots Dzor.”

Alen Galukyan, a junior ISA member and CAS organizer, said that it was valuable to gain outside perspective on how international scholars perceive both their own security, as well as Armenia’s. This perspective fosters new ideas in the next generation of security experts on how to reform current actions.

“It was very interesting to learn about the issues concerning the borders of Armenia,

as well as foreign general concern regarding Armenia, because it shows that there is a lot that needs to be done,” he said. “But our curiosity levels and the people that have shown interest gives us hope. It shows our determination to invest in and protect our country and statehood.”

Vahag Gasparyan, an ISA Senior Researcher based in Switzerland and lead organizer of the Governance Seminar, said that his discussion topic with CAS participants merges Western theory with Armenian case studies, aiming to incite creative and analytical thinking.

“I’ve tried to introduce moral disengagement theory, which is well known in the West but unfortunately not so much in Armenia and Armenian society and academia,” he said. “I also linked moral disengagement theory with political manipulations, particularly within the local Armenian context, and tried to use examples for how theory could be practically used for political and social manipulations.”

One CAS participant was Serena Hajjar Bakunts, editorial manager at AUA’s Office of Communications. She was born and raised in Boston before moving to Armenia a couple years ago. She said that Armenian national security currently possesses a narrow mindset and that internal development and interests should be prioritized.

“A threat is the [Armenian] victim mentality,” she said. “As a small state we need to strategically position ourselves amongst neighbors and the world powers, but that doesn’t mean that we need to entirely outsource our security. We have the power to take steps ourselves and we need to start looking internally first.”

Gojabashyan said productive and honest communications is critical to the implementation of Armenian national security. Without it, Armenian independence and sovereignty will continue to face severe threats.

“If we do not tell the truth to the people that we should always speak about Artsakh and that we should always have the hope and perspective of going back, Armenia will always be weak, Armenia will always be involved in wars, and Armenia will not be able to recover fully,” he said. “And every time it will try to stand up, it will again be beaten. War is not over yet, and we need to stand up and fight again, whether it’s through diplomacy or in the mountains.”

(Bella Ishanyan is a sophomore undergraduate student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst studying Political Science, Economics, and Information Technology. She is a junior analyst fellow at the Institute for Security Analysis.)



Conflict Awareness School Participants (photo ISA)

verification, strong independent media, regional cooperation on cybersecurity, and public education about how manipulation works and who benefits from it.”

These issues are felt and identified outside of the ISA as well. Hovhannes Gojabashyan, a student at the American University of Armenia (AUA) and CAS participant, said

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Despite that, Snoop Dogg and his production team received at the time a performance fee of about \$3 million. An Armenian official said in February that the rapper had returned the money.

The rest of it was paid to the Armenian organizer of the open-air concert, a little-known company called Doping Space. The latter was hired for organizing Lopez’s Yerevan concert as well, a fact which was also disclosed only on July 31.

The government spending on the concerts exceeds the annual budgets of most rural communities of Armenia. Critics condemned it in 2023 as reckless extravagance aimed at distracting Armenians

from grave national security problems facing their country. Government officials insisted that the money is worth it because Snoop Dogg will raise Armenia’s international profile and attract thousands of foreign tourists.

The money for the failed concert was allocated from a special Ministry of Education fund designed to promote music and arts with a “national basis.” The ministry never explained how this relates to the American rapper who has had a history of using drugs.

### Musical Tourists

On August 2, the government announced that thousands of people had arrived in the country from other nations to attend the

August 3 concert.

Doping Space, the organizer of the concert, said that the number of foreigners alone attending the concert was 15,000.

“That’s why hotels are sold out in Yerevan for the coming days. Some of the guests arriving in Armenia have been accommodating in hotels in Tsaghkadzor and Sevan. There’s a large flow of visitors coming to Armenia in the Bagratashen checkpoint, which has caused congestions,” organizers said.

Minister of economy Gevorg Papoyan in a post on Facebook concurred, adding that the visitors have brought in huge sums of money.

“In 2024, the Ministry of Economy pub-

licized the ‘visit study’ of the Italian-Armenian consortium, according to which those who have a tour package spend an average of \$888 when coming to Armenia. Therefore, based on this study, we can claim that for the \$6 million spent on this concert, we have received more than \$13.3 million. Moreover, this does not include many other results, such as, for example, the effects resulting from the country’s publicity. I think it would be great if there were several performances by such stars in Armenia every year,” added Papoyan.

(Stories from Azatutyun, Armenpress and News.am were used to compile this report.)



## INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL

## Number of Iranian Tourists Growing

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The number of Iranian tourists visiting Armenia has been growing every year, according to authorities.

Tourism Committee President Lusine Gevorgyan said at a press conference on August 4 that 180,000 Iranian tourists visited Armenia in 2024, 30,000 more than in 2023. Furthermore, compared to 2021, the number of incoming Iranian tourists has doubled.

“We can confidently say that the number of tourists visiting Armenia from Iran has been growing by over 10 percent every year. The data of the first half of 2025 indicates a continuous positive trend — in the same period of 2024 we had 69,000 tourists from Iran, whereas this year we already have 77,000,” Gevorgyan said.

The tourism official attached importance to the role of event tourism, which, in her words, is especially appealing for Iranian tourists.

## UK Ambassador and Environment Minister Discuss COP 17

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Minister of Environment Hambarzum Matevosyan has met with UK Ambassador to Armenia John Gallagher to discuss the organizational matters pertaining to the upcoming Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17) which will take place in Armenia in 2026.

In a post on social media, Matevosyan said he discussed with the ambassador the entire organizational process of COP17, including the financial, technical and partnership components.

The meeting also addressed the National Biodiversity Strategy and Armenia’s steps toward implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework.

## Turkey Starts Supplying Azerbaijani Gas to Syria

ISTANBUL Istanbul (AFP) — Turkey on August 2, turned on a supply of natural gas from Azerbaijan to Syria, whose infrastructure was ravaged by civil war, with annual deliveries expected to reach up to two billion cubic meters.

Syria’s Islamist authorities, who toppled Bashar al-Assad in December, are seeking to rebuild the battered country where power cuts can last for more than 20 hours a day.

Speaking at a ceremony attended by Syria’s energy minister, Azerbaijan’s economy minister and the head of Qatar’s development fund, Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said the initiative would help normalize Syria.

“In the initial phase, up to two billion cubic meters of natural gas per year could be exported to Syria,” Bayraktar said at the ceremony in the southern province of Kilis near the Syrian border.

Damascus has said the gas would be used to generate electricity.

## Critics Question Vatican-Azerbaijan Interfaith Pact

By JD Flynn

VATICAN (The Pillar) — The Vatican signed last month a memorandum of understanding on interreligious dialogue with Azerbaijan, alarming critics who accuse the Azeri government of ethnic cleansing and practicing “caviar diplomacy” by exerting cultural and economic influence to shape Vatican policy in the South Caucasus region.

The agreement was signed July 25 by Cardinal George Koovakad, prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, and Azeri authorities.

The memorandum commits the signatories to hosting joint events that promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and cooperating in the field of religious education.

The development comes less than two years after a military offensive by Azerbaijan led to the dissolution of the self-declared Republic of Artsakh in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, an area internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but

puted control of Nagorno-Karabakh with neighboring Armenia, a Christian-majority country with fewer than 3 million citizens.

Historically, Armenia has deep Christian roots. In 301, the Kingdom of Armenia was the first country to become an officially Christian nation.

Fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but had been governed by ethnic Armenians since the 1990s, has erupted frequently since the end of the Soviet Union.

Many churches, religious sites, and cemeteries were reportedly destroyed or desecrated in the aftermath of the 2023 offensive.

Church watchers have expressed concern about the Vatican’s willingness to engage publicly with the Azeri government, suggesting it could be falling prey to “caviar diplomacy,” a term used to describe the Azeri approach of using cultural restorations, economic investments, and other strategies to curry favor with foreign officials.

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, ecumenical director of the Eastern Diocese of the

practice that critics term “Church-washing.”

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation, run by Azerbaijan’s First Lady and the president’s top political aide, is considered by critics to be the “caviar diplomacy” arm of Azerbaijan. It lists the Vatican Apostolic Library and the Vatican Museums among its partners.

The foundation’s website lists several restoration projects that it is supporting at the Vatican.

The list includes the Roman Catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter, the Catacombs of Commodilla, and the Catacombs of San Sebastiano, the restoration of a statue of Zeus in the Vatican Museums, the restoration and translation of more than 3,000 books and 75 manuscripts in the Vatican Apostolic Library, the restoration of a bas-relief with the encounter between Pope Leo the Great and Attila the Hun in St. Peter’s Basilica, and the restoration of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

According to Italian outlet Irpi Media, the donations amounted to 640,000 euros (around \$730,000). But an Azeri official said publicly in 2020 that the figure was “over 1 million euros.” Many of the restoration works came after 2020, suggesting the actual sum could be even higher.

One of the largest restoration projects was unveiled in 2024, when the Vatican City State Governorate announced an agreement between the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation.

Observers suggest links between the Vatican and the former Soviet republic were strengthened thanks to Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, who is now prefect of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches.

Gugerotti was the apostolic nuncio to Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia from 2001 to 2011.

The 2011 bilateral agreement between the Holy See and Azerbaijan was negotiated by Gugerotti. Azerbaijan then appointed an ambassador to the Holy See.

During Gugerotti’s service as nuncio, Azeri authorities began to have frequent meetings, both in Azerbaijan and the Vatican, with Holy See officials, among them then-Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, and Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, the then-president of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

According to Irpi Media, Ravasi is another central figure connecting Azerbaijan and the Vatican.

Ravasi opened the doors to Azeri-funded restoration projects in the Vatican with a 2012 agreement to restore Roman catacombs, as well as another to translate and restore manuscripts in the Apostolic Library.

## Russia Sends 140 Tons Of Humanitarian Aid to Karabakh Refugees

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At the time, she also noted that the Russian Humanitarian Mission, after the displacement of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians in October 2023, provided “six tons of food and personal hygiene items” to the refugees.

The aid comes as Armenia and Russia continue to have disagreements regarding a number of issues, however the relations have shown signs of improvement in the recent months, which saw high level contacts and visits from both sides.

Previously, a freefall started as Armenia accused Russia and its Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) of inaction in the face of Azerbaijani attacks on Armenia in 2021 and 2022.

(This article originally appeared on the website [www.oc-media.org](http://www.oc-media.org) on August 1.)



Cardinal George Koovakad, prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, pictured on Dec. 7, 2024. © Mazur/cbcew.org.uk.

historically populated and controlled by ethnic Armenian Christians until 2023.

The 2023 offensive prompted the flight of more than 120,000 ethnic Armenians and left hundreds dead. Human rights groups and Armenian leaders have described the exodus as a case of ethnic cleansing.

In his remarks to Azeri authorities at a July 28 ceremony, Koovakad referred to a landmark 2011 bilateral agreement between Azerbaijan and the Holy See. He described the agreement as “a valuable instrument for promoting the principle of religious freedom,” which demonstrated “respect for a minority religious community and how Christians and Muslims can live together in harmony.”

Referring to the 60th anniversary of Nostra aetate, Vatican Council II’s declaration on religious freedom, Koovakad said that “new areas of shared commitment have emerged, such as the desire to care for and protect the environment and the need for an ethical use of artificial intelligence.”

“Concrete gestures of cooperation on such important issues will contribute to the construction of a more peaceful world, a desire that resides in the heart of every man and woman of good will,” said the cardinal, who was appointed prefect of the interreligious dialogue dicastery in January.

Despite the conflict with Armenia, Koovakad praised the Azeri government for fostering interreligious cooperation, and thanked President Ilham Aliyev — widely regarded as an authoritarian ruler — and Ramin Mammadov, the country’s commissioner for religious affairs, for supporting the dialogue initiative.

Azerbaijan, a Muslim-majority country of about 10 million people, has long dis-

Armenian Apostolic Church of America, told The Pillar in April: “The Vatican has been receiving money from Azerbaijan for some time — the main example being the restoration of St. Paul Outside the Walls, which was funded by Azerbaijan.”

In contrast, Azeri officials present their outreach to the Vatican as an effort to strengthen bilateral relations and demonstrate Azerbaijan’s commitment to interreligious and intercultural dialogue. They characterize the country’s support for Vatican restoration projects as an expression of respect for humanity’s common heritage.

This is not the first time the Vatican’s links to Azerbaijan have drawn attention.

In August 2024, L’Osservatore Romano published an article that repeatedly described traditionally Armenian regions, churches, and monasteries as “Caucasian Albanian,” a term referring to an ancient Christian culture in the region, used by Azerbaijan to justify its historical claims over Nagorno-Karabakh.

“The article denied the fact that there were any Armenian churches in Karabakh, which is simply a lie. Armenians, including Armenian Catholics, got furious, but things haven’t changed,” Bishop Aykazian told The Pillar.

Months before the 2020 offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan’s First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva was awarded the Order of Pope Pius IX at the Vatican.

Ilqar Mukhtarov, Azerbaijan’s ambassador to the Holy See, received the same distinction on April 3, 2025.

Critics claim that Azeri money flows to the Vatican as a way of garnering papal support and diffusing Catholic objections to Azeri activity in Nagorno-Karabakh, in a





INTERNATIONAL

# In Thessaloniki, Armenians, Like Jews, Keep Their Culture Alive

By Larry Luxner

THESSALONIKI, Greece — Fronting the Mediterranean Sea in this bustling Greek port stands a haunting monument to the city’s roughly 50,000 Jews who were rounded up by the Nazis in 1943 and deported to Auschwitz. Each year on Holocaust Remembrance Day, local dignitaries and Jewish leaders make speeches and lay wreaths at the monument in their memory.

One of those dignitaries is Akis Dagazian, Armenia’s honorary consul in Salonika (also known as Thessaloniki). He says the ethnic Armenian presence in this ancient city dates back to the Byzantine era, while the Jewish presence goes back even further, to Roman times. And like the Jews, the Armenians have long dominated commerce and trade, and have excelled in professions such as law and medicine.

Sadly, the Armenians share something else with their Jewish brethren: the collective trauma of a genocide 110 years ago that is still often dismissed as a consequence of the First World War.

“This is the recent official Turkish narrative. At least they admit something happened in 1915,” Dagazian said over breakfast Tuesday, July 29, at the waterfront Café Mazu, a few blocks from the Holocaust memorial. “According to Ottoman statistics, before the Balkan wars, more than two million Armenians were living in the Ottoman Empire. Now there are only 50,000. I want someone to tell me what happened to the rest of them.”

By most accounts, the Ottoman Turks are believed to have killed about 1.5 million Christian Armenians during World War I. Romania was among the first countries to welcome Armenian refugees after the genocide, but for economic and strategic reasons, Romania — like Israel — has yet to officially recognize that genocide.

The first nation that did was Uruguay, in

the two ethnicities dating back to antiquity.

Dagazian, 50, belongs to one of the older Armenian families in Greece. His forefathers arrived some 300 years ago, settling in Komotini, about 240 kilometers east of Thessaloniki. They were part of the first [modern] wave of Armenians — merchants and craftsmen who thrived in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, as well as the island of Crete.

The second wave consisted of Armenians fleeing first the genocide, and then the collapse of the Greek front in 1922 in what came to be known as the Asia Minor catastrophe. That brought another 80,000 to 100,000 Armenians to Greece. Yet from the mid-1920s to around 1948, most of these later arrivals returned to Armenia — by then a Soviet republic — while a significant number also emigrated to Europe and the Americas.

The community rebounded in 1991 after the breakup of the USSR, when 40,000 Armenians — the third wave of immigrants — relocated to Greece, most of them settling in Athens.

Dagazian, who like many other Greek Armenians is in the jewelry business, can read and write Armenian, though he is not fluent in the language of his ancestors.

What keeps the community together is religion. Armenian cultural life revolves around the Armenian Apostolic Church, a denomination that dates from the year 301 CE, when Armenia became the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion.

For more than 120 years, the focal point of community life here has been the Armenian Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary, located on Dialeti Street less than a mile from the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki. In 1888, the community purchased land for the church, which was designed by the renowned Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli.

Inaugurated in 1903, the church is a sin-

gle-aisle basilica with a vaulted roof, and a three-story bell tower topped by a square pyramid. The church survived the great fire of 1917, which sadly decimated most of the city, including its historic Jewish quarter.

1991. Among other things, the community supports an Armenian school that offers language and history classes to some 100 students each Saturday. “Our interest is to preserve our traditions, language and identity, and to support the Armenian state, and to stand strong in the difficult international environment,” he said. “We do this through cultural activities, dance groups, musical events and

solid ethnic majority that has been living there for 1,700 years continuously and uninterrupted.”

Dagazian noted that in some ways, it was the genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks against the Armenians that made the Holocaust possible. He cited a 1939 speech by Adolf Hitler, who justified his plan to exterminate the Jews with the comment: “Who, after all, remembers the annihilation



Akis Dagazian is Armenia’s honorary consul in Thessaloniki, Greece

fundraising.”

Ties to their ancestral homeland are paramount among the Armenians here.

Although he no longer has family in Armenia, Kasparian has been there several times. His first visit was in 1991 — shortly after Armenia’s independence — to accompany a plane carrying 40 tons of aid for families displaced by a catastrophic earthquake three years earlier. He went again in 1993 with Foreign Ministry officials to help acquire the building that now houses the Greek Embassy in Yerevan.

In total, about 50,000 Armenians live in Greece today, according to Dagazian.

“Being a Christian in another Christian country, it’s much easier to assimilate after four or five generations,” he said. “In the case of Jews, having a different religion is what keeps your community isolated from the others. This actually presents a threat, in that right now, the rate of mixed marriages between Greeks and Armenians is 95 percent, which means that in a few generations, our kids will be Hellenized.”

Despite his deep respect for Judaism and admiration for the modern state of Israel, Dagazian is disappointed with the behavior of some ultra-Orthodox Jews who have lately humiliated priests and even spit on them in the Old City of Jerusalem.

“The attitudes of these Jews do not correspond to the values of the Talmud or the Jewish religion,” he said. “They are targeting mostly us simply because we are the only Christians living there. The presence of all the other Christian denominations in the Holy Land consists mostly of just clergy are just priests, but in our case, ethnic Armenians form a

of the Armenians?”

This, he said, is why global recognition of what really happened to his ancestors is so important.

“We feel so close to the Jewish community because we have experienced similar tragedies, and we face similar challenges as well,” he said. “This threat of assimilation is something we both face—not only now, but through the ages, especially the Jews, because they have been 2,000 years away from their motherland, but also the Armenians. Since Byzantine times we have been relocating to other territories. That’s why I believe we are the only ones who can really understand what it means to be a Jew — but more importantly, remain a Jew — in the diaspora.”



Armenian Community Center in Thessaloniki, Greece

1965. Greece followed in 1996 and went a step further.

“In 2014, the Greek government criminalized denial of the Armenian genocide under the same law that criminalizes denial of the Holocaust,” Dagazian said. That’s not surprising, given that Armenians have been living among Greeks for centuries, and that Armenians are also mentioned in ancient Greek literature, with ties between

gle-aisle basilica with a vaulted roof, and a three-story bell tower topped by a square pyramid. The church survived the great fire of 1917, which sadly decimated most of the city, including its historic Jewish quarter.

Agkop Kasparian is president of the Armenian Community of Thessaloniki. He said that about 5,000 Armenians live in Thessaloniki, of which 1,000 are from the older established group; the rest came after



A khachkar, or Armenian religious symbol typically found in church yards and cemeteries, guards the entrance to the Armenian Cultural Center in the Greek port city of Thessaloniki





## INTERNATIONAL

# Iran Reaffirms Support for Armenian Vision of Unblocking Regional Transport Links

By Shant Khlgatyan

TEHRAN (Armenpress) — Iran has reiterated support for the Armenian government's Crossroads of Peace project, emphasizing that the unblocking of regional transport links must be implemented with adherence to internationally recognized borders and without violating national sovereignty or territorial integrity of any state in the region.

In an interview with Armenpress, Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei commented on the ongoing discussions around the unblocking of economic and transport links in the region, the Armenian proposals in this regard, as well as the Azerbaijani narratives about an extraterritorial corridor, something Yerevan has categorically rejected citing international law.

The interview was conducted in-person in Tehran on July 29.

Baghaei also spoke about Iran's position regarding Armenia's deepening ties with the West, the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process, as well as the recent call between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Iran, when the Iranian president called on the Azerbaijani leader to investigate reports alleging that Israel used Azerbaijani airspace for its attacks on Iran.

**Armenpress: In the context of unblocking transport and economic communications in the South Caucasus, Armenia has proposed the "Crossroads of Peace" project, taking into account the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, jurisdiction, and reciprocity, while Azerbaijan continues to make extraterritorial demands from Armenia to connect with Nakhichevan. What is Iran's position on this issue?**

Baghaei: Let me put it this way. First, we value our bilateral relations with both Republic of Azerbaijan and Republic of Armenia.

They are our neighbors and we are determined to continue our good neighborliness policy with both states. We have bonds of friendship with both states, with both Republic of Azerbaijan and Republic of Armenia.

As far as Armenia is concerned, we have a very dynamic and important Armenian community in Iran. We are proud of them.

It is very important for us to ensure peace and stability in South Caucasus because we regard peace and security in that region as part of peace and security for ourselves, for Iran. We will make every effort to make sure that there is peace between the two nations.

As far as the transportation routes are concerned, we have always supported that because we think connectivity is needed for economic development and welfare of Armenians and Azerbaijanis as well as Iranians. We do hope really that these initiatives will yield fruit. We have supported Armenia's initiative of "Crossroads of Peace" and we think it's good for the whole region.

At the same time, we have clarified that any transportation routes must be implemented or must be devised while respecting internationally recognized borders and without violating national sovereignty or territorial integrity of any state in the region. So while we support expansion of transportation routes and connectivity between the nations of the South Caucasus and Iran, we have to be careful really. First, not to change internationally recognized borders, not to in any way make any transgressions against national sovereignty or territorial integrity of any member states.

At the same time, one particular thing is very important for us and I think should also be appreciated by all countries of the region and that's the importance of not allowing third parties, non-regional actors to intervene in the affairs of South Caucasus because I guess it would simply complicate the issues. It would not be in the interest of the states of the region. So that's a principle position that we have always declared and we are determined to continue that.

**Armenpress: Armenia and Azerbaijan have announced that they have reached an agreement on a peace treaty. The Armenian side has stated that it is ready to sign the agreement at any time; however, Azerbaijan continues to present new preconditions. What do you think — is peace possible in the near future under these circumstances?**

Baghaei: Sure it is. If there is will, there is way and not only one way to do that.

So they say when there is a will, there is a way to do that. And as far as Armenia and Republic of Azerbaijan is concerned, we understand the background, we understand that they were in conflict.

So we understand the complicities and complications that may prolong the peace process, the negotiations. But I think we should see the positive side and be optimistic. The positive side is that they have managed to craft a peace agreement.

I know that still there needs to be some time to finalize it. But the fact that you have done it, the bulk of the agreement is done and both states are keen to go along with that peace plan. We have encouraged both Armenia and Republic of Azerbaijan to finalize the agreement, the peace agreement and to sign it.

I was with Minister Araghchi when he traveled to Yerevan and I also was present when he met with his Azeri counterpart. On both occasions, he really encouraged both ministers to please accelerate the process and finalize the deal because that would be a guarantee for lasting peace in South Caucasus.

**Armenpress: Armenia has adopted a balanced and balancing foreign policy course, and in this context, is strengthening its relations with the EU and the US. Some have groundlessly claimed that Armenia's policy is directed against Iran and is unacceptable to Tehran. Could you please clarify what Iran's position is on this issue?**

Baghaei: Armenia wants to diversify their policies with respect to their relations with other states. So Armenia wants to follow diversification of its relations or to have good relations with other states. That's fine of course. We have good relations with Armenia. We are good friends.

We have a history of trust-based relations with Armenia and I think both Iran and Armenia should appreciate that basis. Because I'm sure both Armenia and Iran want to preserve their friendly relations because it's in the interest of our nations. What is a matter of importance for us is that any neighbor's relations with other states would not be used or abused against Iran.

And I think this is coming from a rule of

international law that prohibits the use of any state's territory or capabilities for making trouble for another member state. And I think Armenia very well understands this important principle. So the important thing for Iran as a neighbor is that its neighbor's relations with other actors would not be in any way or any form whatsoever be abused against our interests.

**Armenpress: One more question in this context. A month ago, the President of Iran had a phone conversation with the President of Azerbaijan and urged him to investigate the publications claiming that Israel used Azerbaijani airspace to carry out an attack on Iran. Does Iran have any evidence that Israel used Azerbaijani airspace, and do you have any information on whether the Azerbaijani side has investigated these reports?**

Baghaei: As I said we have the same expectation from Azerbaijan as we have from Armenia or any other neighboring state. That call was not specifically aimed at raising that issue. It was a telephone call between the two presidents. They discussed a range of issues, bilateral and regional. And in the meantime, of course, President Pezeshkian raised that issue. And as I told you, it was not to suggest that Azerbaijan has been involved in Israeli attack against Iran. It was simply a reminder that we, as member states, we have certain obligations under international law not to let our territories be abused by any third party against each other. And again, this is coming from the fact that Israel has a long history of abusing other states territories.

We may raise the same concern with other member states, with other neighbors, because we know that Israel has also used other territories in their attack against Iran. So it was not to suggest that the Republic of Azerbaijan was involved in that unlawful attack. Simply, as I told you, it was a reminder.

And that's, of course, a general reminder to each and every member states, our neighbors, that please be careful because we are facing an enemy that has no regard for international law, that has no regard for rule of law. And it requires us all to be careful not to let them spoil our relations.

## Former German Lawmaker Convicted of Taking 4 Million Euro Bribe from Azerbaijan

MUNICH (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A former member of Germany's Social Democratic Party, Eduard Lintner, has been convicted by the Munich Higher Regional Court for bribery in the case widely known as the "Azerbaijani affair." The court imposed a nine-month prison sentence, which was suspended. The trial lasted about six months, according to a report by Panorama.am citing ZDF.

According to the charges, Lintner used his political role to promote positions favorable to Azerbaijan. Munich prosecutors stated that he attempted to bribe other politicians using funds from Azerbaijani sources. He admitted to aiming to secure pro-Azerbaijani votes in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

Between 2008 and 2016, Lintner reported-

ly received nearly four million euros through several shell companies. He served as a Bundestag member for 33 years and was a PACE delegate until 2010.

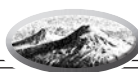
Another Social Democratic Party member, Karin Strenz of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, was also implicated in the case. She too was a PACE delegate and known for her support of Azerbaijani interests. Her name is linked to a vote in which she opposed a report concerning political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

Since joining the Council of Europe in January 2001 — a body committed to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law — Azerbaijan has repeatedly tried to influence the assembly's voting outcomes to its advantage.



Eduard Lintner





# Community News

## UCLA Promise Institute Awards Grants

LOS ANGELES — The UCLA Promise Armenian Institute (PAI) is pleased to announce the selection of the following individuals to receive research support during 2025-2026. PAI grants and fellowships are designed to support research across all academic fields, with an emphasis on or connection to Armenia or Armenians.

### PAI Postdoctoral Fellowships

Aram Ghoogasian (PhD, Princeton University 2025) will pursue a research project entitled, “The Printer’s Progress: Transformations in Modern Armenian Book History.”

Under the mentorship of Dr. Sebouh Aslanian, the UCLA Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History, Dr. Ghoogasian’s research will focus on studying Armenian print culture in the mid-nineteenth century. Drawing on book history scholarship and using Armenians as a case study to rethink print culture not as the mere presence of print matter but as a complex of associated practices enabled or otherwise altered by printing technology, as well as the beliefs that invested it with meaning.

Marianna Hovhannisyan (PhD, University of California, San Diego, 2022) will pursue a research project entitled, “Double Assimilations, Empty Fields, and Orphan Objects: Armenian Archival Imaginaries.”

Under the mentorship of Dr. Anne J. Gilliland, professor in the UCLA Department of Information Studies, Dr. Hovhannisyan’s research will situate Armenian modern-era art and culture in relation to acts of epistemic violence committed through forced displacement, archival silences, and cultural appropriations.

Robert Sukiasyan (PhD, RA National Academy of Sciences, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2019) will pursue a research project entitled, “The Armenians of Sivas: From Flourishing to Dispersion – A Socio-Political and Cultural History.”

Under the mentorship of Dr. Peter Cowe, the UCLA Nareketsi Professor of Armenian Studies, Dr. Sukiasyan’s research will present a comprehensive socio-political and cultural history of the Sivas Armenian community from the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution to the 1960s. Exploring the community’s vibrant pre-genocide life, its systematic dismantling through violence, deportations, and policies of ethnic homogenization, and the long-term consequences of these events.

### AGRP Postdoctoral Fellowships

Gevorg Vardanyan (PhD, North Carolina State University, 2023) will pursue a research project entitled, “Remembering Genocide: Ottoman State Violence and Armenian-Americans, 1890s–1965.”

Under the mentorship of Dr. Taner Akçam, director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program of the PAI, Dr. Vardanyan’s research will focus on how Armenian-Americans remembered the late Ottoman state  
see GRANTS, page 9



Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan interacts with young people attending Diocesan camps this summer.

## A Summer Season of Camps & Conferences

This summer Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan has been on a whirlwind tour of youth camps and summer conferences.

On July 23, Bishop Mesrop visited St. Vartan Camp at the Ararat Center in upstate New York, to be among the campers of Session “B.” As he did during his prior visit to the camp’s Session “A” (on July 8), Bishop Mesrop spent a delightful day among the young campers and the dedicated clergy and staff, engaging them in conversation, prayer, and play on the expansive Ararat Center grounds.

“I send my heartfelt thanks to all the amazing people who made my visit — and the entire St. Vartan Camp experience — so special this season,” he said.

Bishop Mesrop made one of several summer visits to St. Nersess Seminary on July 25, this time to join the participants in the High School Summer Conference. Earlier in the month (July 10), he spent time with young choir singers taking part in the seminary’s Yn. Diane Chevian Memorial Youth Choir Workshop.

“It was a blessing to be among these young souls, to share recollections of my own spiritual journey, and listen to their own experiences,” he said, “and to answer their questions about faith and life.”

see SUMMER CAMPS, page 10



## Vasken Yardemian Appointed To County Commission

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA) recently announced the appointment of its member and former president Vasken Yardemian to the Los Angeles County Citizens’ Economy and Efficiency Commission. Yardemian’s appointment was confirmed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on July 1 following his nomination by Supervisor Kathryn Barger. He brings extensive experience and a steadfast dedication to civic leadership and community engagement to this prestigious and impactful advisory body.

The Citizens’ Economy and Efficiency Commission serves as an independent advisory group to the board of supervisors, tasked with evaluating and improving the efficiency, effectiveness and fiscal accountability



Vasken Yardemian

of Los Angeles County government operations. This 21-member Commission is composed of leaders from the public, corporate, academic and legal sectors, playing a vital role in driving systemic improvement across county departments.

With more than three decades of professional and civic leadership, Yardemian is well-qualified for this role. During his 32-year tenure with the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), he led key initiatives to advance air quality and environmental compliance throughout Southern California. His earlier engineering roles with Parsons Corporation and Bechtel Corporation further demonstrate his technical and managerial expertise. He holds a Bachelor of Science in civil/environmental engineering and a Master of Science in environmental studies from California State University, Fullerton.

“I am deeply honored to be appointed to the Los Angeles County Citizens’ Economy and Efficiency Commission,” said Yardemian. “I  
see YARDEMIAN, page 8



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# A Good Time and Good Weather at Milwaukee Armenian Fest

By David Luhrszen

MILWAUKEE — The clouds cleared and the sun came out just in time for this year's Milwaukee Armenian Fest on Sunday, July 20, resulting in ideal summer weather for Southeast Wisconsin Armenians and non-Armenians who could then enjoy a showcase of Armenian culture and heritage.

This year's festival featured traditional music by Chicago's Hye Vibes, as well as contemporary Armenian pop sung by Joka. The colorfully costumed Siragan Armenian Dance Company of Chicago also performed, and their graceful movements inspired festivalgoers to dance to the Hye Vibes' kef music. The culture booth did a thriving business in T-shirts, hats and mugs as well as wine, beer and other products from Armenia. A second booth displayed Armenian antiquities. Children's art activities and guided church tours were also available.

As always, first-time festivalgoers and familiar faces were delighted by the food. Business was brisk for the kebab dinners, lahmajoun, beoreg and yalanchi sarma and a variety of homemade desserts. New this

year was the iced Armenian coffee, available at the outdoor beverage station.

As well as its role as a fundraising

event and an opportunity to share Armenian culture with the public, Milwaukee's Armenian Fest continued to be a com-

munity builder with the area's Armenians working together as a team to organize the successful annual event.



Members of the Siragan Armenian Dance Company of Chicago perform.

## Vasken Yardemian Appointed To County Commission

YARDEMIAN, from page 7  
look forward to working collaboratively with fellow commissioners to strengthen government operations and ensure accountable service to our communities."

Yardemian's commitment to civic engagement is further demonstrated by his prior service on the City of Pasadena Planning Commission, as well as his elected positions on the Crescenta Valley Town Council and the Crescenta Valley Water District board of directors, where he served two terms as president. He also represented the La Crescenta community on the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District Board, appointed by the LA Board of Supervisors.

"AESA extends its warmest congratulations to Mr. Yardemian on this prestigious appointment," said Dr. Aida Bareghamyan, president of AESA. "His leadership, technical expertise, and lifelong commitment to public service will undoubtedly enhance the work of the Commission and promote good governance across Los Angeles County."

Founded in 1983, the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America is a non-profit, non-partisan, and non-sectarian philanthropic organization headquartered in Glendale, California. AESA is primarily focused on promoting science and technology among the Armenian nation and the Diaspora communities. AESA's mission is to address the professional, technical, and scientific needs of fellow Armenians throughout the world.

# ARMENIA FEST

## 2025

*Embracing Our Past,  
Building the Future...*

Proceeds from ARMENIA FEST benefit the  
**Knights of Vartan  
Economic Sustainability Program (ESP)**

The purpose of the ESP is to create jobs and promote  
self-employment in the Republic of Armenia.





## Royal Oak Farmers Market ★ Sat. Aug. 23rd

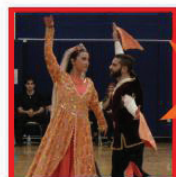
**5pm - 10pm**

**316 E. 11 Mile Road (just east of Main Street)**

Live Music by

**THE ARMENIA FEST ALL-STAR BAND**

Performances by  
**The Hamazkayin  
Arax Dance Group**



**More Food Vendors to try!**

**Kabob Dinners, Armenian Pastries,  
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**Beer & Wine Garden**  
featuring American and Armenian selections

**NEW Outdoor Cigar Bar**  
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**The 2025 GREAT CHOREG BAKE OFF!**  
All are welcome to enter their best Choreg!

**Opening Ceremony with  
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- Open to the Public
- Children's Face Painting, Balloon Art and more...
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- Raffles and more...



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pavilion & tents on site*

*Limited tables & chairs.  
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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# NAASR 70th Anniversary Gala to Feature Keynote Speaker New York Public Library Anthony Marx

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will celebrate its 70th anniversary with a gala on Saturday, October 4, at the Fairmont Copley Plaza in Boston.

Celebrating NAASR's seven decades building the future of Armenian Studies, the gala will feature a keynote address by Dr. Anthony W. Marx, president of the New York Public Library. Two long-time supporters of NAASR, Pamela Avedisian and Yervant Chekijian, will be the honorary chairs of the gala, which will be emceed by Dr. Nora Lessersohn and Dr. Thomas Simsarian Dolan.

NAASR was founded in 1955 and began its first major project of raising funds for the establishment of a chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University. In 1959, the goal of \$300,000 was reached and a "Victory Banquet" attended by more than 1,000 people was held at Harvard's Memorial Hall. The campaign for a second chair in Armenian Studies followed, at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and also met with



NAASR Founders (partial), March 1955: **Back row, left to right:** K. Merton Bozoian, Thomas T. Amirian, Richard N. Frye, G. John Gregory, Jack Guveyan; **Front row:** Arra S. Avakian, J. Mark Kolligian, Manoog S. Young, William L. Langer, Haig Der Manuelian.

success due to NAASR's fundraising efforts.

After 70 years, NAASR remains focused on supporting and advancing studies and research through educational pub-

lic programming, assisting scholars with research grants and access to materials through its Mardigian Library, and acting as a bridge between the academic world and the Armenian-American community,

benefiting scholars, authors, researchers, and the general public. For information about sponsorship and purchasing tickets please go to <http://naasr.org/gala70> or for questions email, [gala@naasr.org](mailto:gala@naasr.org).

## UCLA Promise Institute Awards Grants

GRANTS, from page 7

violence from the 1890s to 1965 in their public life, going beyond a survivor-centric understanding of genocide memory by recognizing and examining the contributions of communal elites and institutions in the memory process, while also situating genocide memory within the dynamics of American culture.

### Post-Candidacy PhD Fellowships

Natalie Kamajian (Doctoral student, UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance) will pursue her doctoral research entitled, "Dancing on the Border of Whiteness: Armenian-American Choreographies of Racial Identity in the Diaspora."

Under the mentorship of her advisor, Prof. Anurima Banerji of the UCLA Department of World Arts & Cultures/Dance, Kamajian's dissertation focuses on Armenian dance in America as a vehicle for staging racial identity. She identifies three Armenian dance genres that negotiate whiteness in different ways across the US, employing an interdisciplinary methodology that combines history/historiography, (auto) ethnography, discourse analysis, and choreographic analysis. This project unites dance studies with Armenian, diaspora, and ethnic studies, which often overlook the role of performance in negotiating power relations.

### Faculty Research Grants

Sarah Abrevaya Stein (Distinguished Professor of History and Viterbi Family Chair in Mediterranean Jewish Studies,

Department of History, UCLA) will pursue a PAI-funded research project entitled, "Non-Muslim Tastemakers of Islamic Art: Armenian Christian, Jewish, and Baha'i Dealers from the Middle East and North Africa and 'Persomania' Between the Wars."

This research examines the role of Armenian Christian, Jewish, and Baha'i dealers from the Middle East who were crucial to the rise and flow of the global market for art and antiquities from Iran during the interwar period. These men (and some women) supported a market with imperialist roots that furthered Iranian/Pahlavi nationalist myths. This project pays heed to a wide variety of dealers, including Armenian Christians Dikran Kelekian, Krikor Minassian, and Hagop Kevorkian, Jewish dealers Ayoub Rabenou, and Baha'i dealer Rafi Y. Mottahedeh.

### PAI Student Travel and Research Grants

Narod Arisian (Undergraduate Student, UCLA History) received a travel research grant to present her research project entitled, "Anjar's Urban Fabric and the Stranger Within: Tracing the Evolution of Armenian Diasporic Consciousness and Transnationalism," at the Yale Undergraduate Research Conference.

This study explores how Anjar's urban development was instrumental in influencing Musa Dagh Armenians' ability to preserve their cultural heritage, adapt to socio-economic realities, and maintain

political resilience through the end of the Lebanese Civil War.

Sofia Gevorgian (Undergraduate Student, UCLA Political Science/Middle Eastern Studies) received a travel research grant to pursue a research project entitled, "Repatriates and Social Cohesion: The Case of Returning to—and Staying in—Armenia."

This study will analyze Western-Armenian-speaking repatriates' social cohesion and integration in Armenia. Applying Oral History, Linguistic Anthropology, and Transnational Identity Theory, this research will explore how dialect variation creates structural and ideological barriers in government, education, and society.

Christine Mavilian (Medical Student, UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine) received a travel research grant to pursue a research project entitled, "Familial Psychosocial Impact of Cochlear Implantation

in Armenia."

This study will analyze how social determinants of health impact access to essential support for the families of the children and young adults who have received cochlear implants through the Armenian International Medical Fund (AIM Fund) and identify barriers and facilitators to early pediatric cochlear implantation and explore changes in familial dynamics post-implantation.

Lori Der Sahakian (Doctoral Student, UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology) received a travel research grant to pursue a research project entitled, "The Marketing of Identity in 1960s and '70s Armenian-American Popular Music."

This study will examine Armenian-American popular music from the 1960s and '70s in relation to the issues of racialization and the construction of ethnic identity in the music market.

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

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COMMUNITY NEWS



A group photo of staff and campers

# A Summer Season of Camps & Conferences

SUMMER CAMPS, from page 7

Over the weekend of July 26-27, Bishop Mesrop ventured to AGBU’s Camp Nubar to visit with the campers and celebrate the Divine Liturgy. “It was a weekend filled with laughter, joy, and the beautiful presence of our youth coming together in faith and fellowship,” Bishop Mesrop said. “I’m grateful to the AGBU leadership, the Camp Nubar board, staff, and campers, for their warm hospitality.”

July 28-29 found Bishop Mesrop in Inglestide, IL, visiting the Diocese’s summer youth program in the Midwest region, Hye

Camp. It was a chance to tour the campus, observe the campers’ routine, and join them in sports and other activities. The Hye Camp community organized a splendid bonfire and barbecue to celebrate the Primate’s evening among them.

“Spending time with those amazing campers was a true blessing. Their enthusiasm for our Christian faith and Armenian heritage warmed my heart,” he said.

Summing up his July visits, Bishop Mesrop added: “Until next summer — shine on, all of our young campers and conference participants!”



Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan at a session with young campers







COMMUNITY NEWS

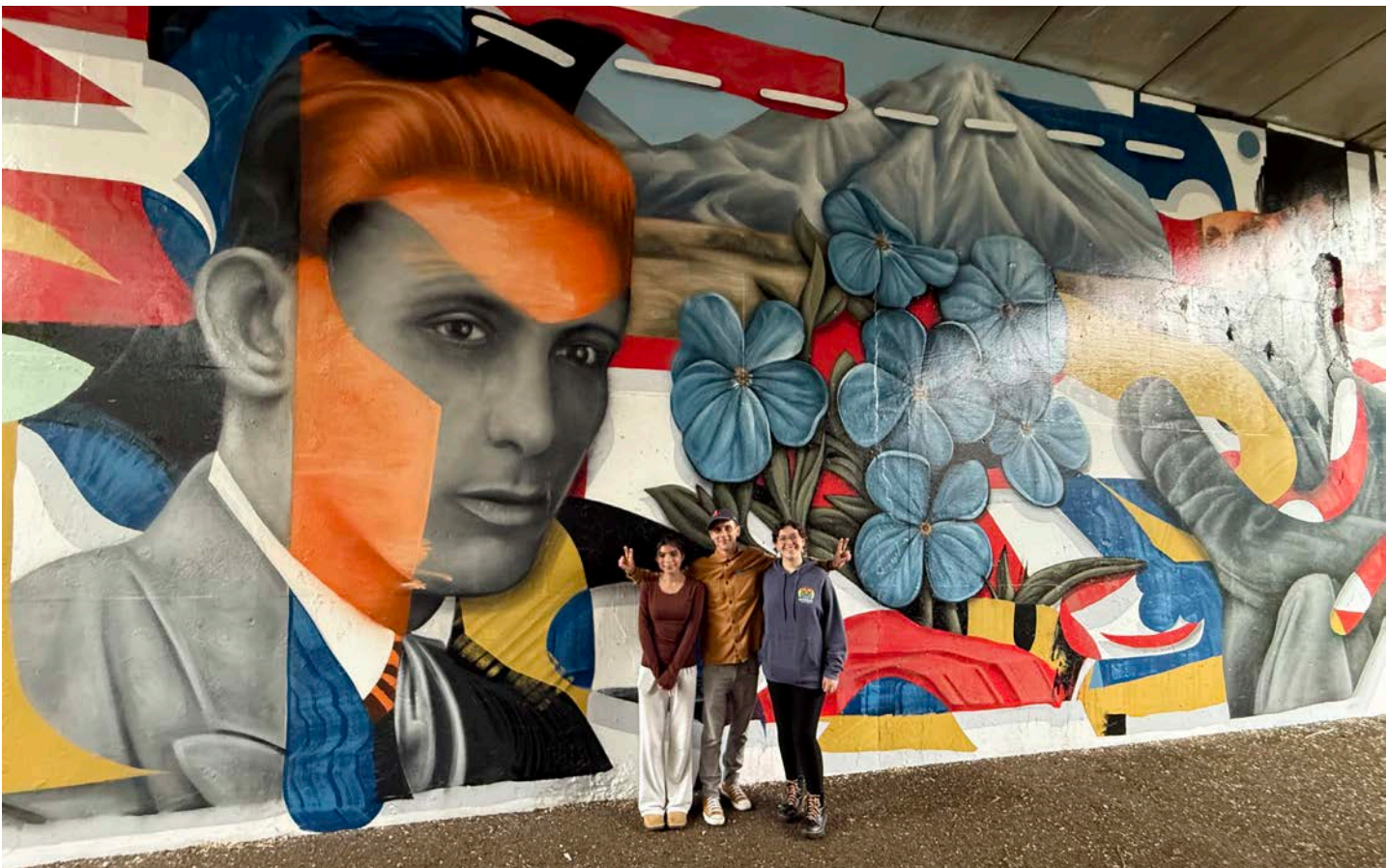
# Watertown Celebrates ‘Passage’ Mural Dedicated to Arshile Gorky

GORKY. from page 1

Inspired by Gorky’s dynamic palette and flowing forms, the “Passage” mural by Brandon Gaia Marshall is a powerful visual tribute to Gorky’s life and work, and to the resilience of those impacted by the Armenian Genocide. The mural serves as a poignant reminder of displacement and trauma, expressed through a shared language of color, abstract shapes, and representational imagery. We were especially proud that high school assistants Isabelle Gorham and Charlotte learned spray painting techniques directly from Marshall during the project, highlighting the educational impact of this public artwork.

While the reception has passed, the spirit of “100 Years of Arshile Gorky” continues! We encourage everyone to experience the impact of this seminal artist on Water-

THE “100 YEARS OF ARSHILE GORKY” COMMEMORATION WILL CULMINATE WITH A HIGHLY ANTICIPATED EXHIBITION AT THE ARMENIAN MUSEUM OF AMERICA, OPENING IN DECEMBER 2025.



Artist Brandon Marshall and his high school assistants, Charlotte and Isabelle, at the opening reception for the mural “Passage” on June 10, 2025 (photo courtesy of the City of Watertown)




Granite markers at Coolidge Hill Rd and Dexter Ave.

town by embarking on a self-guided tour, created with support from Watertown Savings Bank and project partners.


Begin your journey at the stunning “Passage” mural on the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway at the Grove Street underpass. From there, venture to Coolidge Hill Road and Dexter Avenue, where you can find granite markers near Gorky’s former homes. Be sure to visit the intersection of Dexter Avenue and Hazel Avenue, now officially named “Arshile Gorky Square,” a permanent tribute to his time in our community. See the full route online through StoryMaps: <https://arcg.is/04bOWS>

The “100 Years of Arshile Gorky” commemoration will culminate with a highly anticipated exhibition at the Armenian Museum of America, opening in December 2025. This exhibition will serve as a powerful capstone to our year-long celebration, offering a deeper dive into Gorky’s life and artistic contributions. We look forward to sharing more details about this exciting event as the opening approaches.



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](mailto:Tcadirector@Aol.com).
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: [Tcadirector@Aol.com](mailto:Tcadirector@Aol.com),
- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **September 30, 2025**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2025** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winners will receive their awards in **November, 2025**
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, July 14, 2025





COMMUNITY NEWS

# St. Mark Readies for Annual Armenian Fest Sunday, August 31

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — St. Mark Armenian Church will host its Annual Armenian Festival on the church grounds on Sunday, August 31, from 12 to 7 p.m. on the church grounds, at 2427 Wilbraham Road.

The festival, which has become a favorite in the Greater Springfield area, has been the parish’s biggest event for nearly 30 years and will feature hot meals, a live Armenian band, dancing, authentic Armenian baked goods and pastries, artwork and handmade items from Armenia, a raffle, and more.

The St. Mark Armenian Festival draws more than 1,000 people from Springfield, surrounding suburbs and throughout

New England that enjoy great food, entertainment and a wonderful social atmosphere. Everyone is welcome to be a part of the culture and enjoy all that is offered.

The Ed Melikian Ensemble will play Armenian folk music from noon to 5 p.m., and new this year, the festival will extend to 7 p.m. with additional entertainment by DJ Gena with Armenian and international dance music beginning at 5pm. The extended hours aim to offer attendees the opportunity to stay for dinner.

The festival involves dozens of parishioners lending their time and talents to put on this annual one-day event, which is the parish’s largest annual fundraiser. Attendees can enjoy an array of ethnic baked goods, sweets and Armenian coffee. Baking workshops take place at the Church over the summer, including the preparation of Choreg (Armenian sweet rolls), Cheese Boreg (phyllo dough triangles filled with cheese); Spinach Pie (phyllo dough squares filled with spinach and cheese); Armenian String Cheese; Gata (a sweet pastry); and much more. Workshops will continue up to the time of the festival.

Traditional Armenian meals, including various kebabs, will be served.

Back this year, there will be an Ancestry booth organized by parishioner Kristen Fraser, where attendees can learn about the family histories of St. Mark parishioners through old photos and short stories. There



will also be a cultural booth with handmade Armenian jewelry and other items made in Armenia, artwork by Armenian artwork by Suzanne Anoushian, and a raffle.

Also new this year, Armenian wine will be available for purchase to take home. Armenian wine comes from one of the oldest wine producing regions of the world, and winemaking is part of the fabric of the country. St. Mark will be holding an Armenian Wine Tasting under the tent the night before the FEST, in partnership with Storica Wines, on Saturday, August 30, from 7-9pm. For details about that event and to purchase tickets, visit <https://stmarkwinetasting.eventbrite.com>.

All proceeds from the Fest benefit the ministries of St. Mark Armenian Church. Sponsorship opportunities are also available, and donations can be made through the Church Donation Form link on the church website, [stmarkarmenianchurch.org](http://stmarkarmenianchurch.org) (select “Festival Sponsorship” from the dropdown). More information about the Fest can be found on the Facebook event page, on the church website, [stmarkarmenianchurch.org](http://stmarkarmenianchurch.org).

Admission to the festival and parking are free. The event will be held rain or shine (All booths and seating are under tents). St. Mark is located at 2427 Wilbraham Road, Springfield.



# Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection to Host Festival on Aug. 24

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. — The Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection will hold its annual church festival on Sunday August 24, from noon to 5:00 p.m. on the church grounds at 1910 Stanley Street.

The festival is open to the public with free admission and takes place rain or shine. Each year, the event is attended by a large number of people, both Armenian and non-Armenian alike, many who stay the whole afternoon and some who just drop in for a taste of the food and activity.

Among the highlights of the event are freshly prepared traditional Armenian foods, in addition to other Middle Eastern foods.

A particular crowd favorite is the bake sale featuring an extensive assortment of Armenian pastries and other delicacies.

In addition, there will be raffle prizes, corn hole and other games and the Armenian Vendor offering a wide variety of Armenian goods, wares books and CDs.

The event is the culmination of months of tireless planning and hard work by the festival committee and countless members

of the congregation, both young and old.

Sharon Sherwood, this year’s festival chairperson, urged all in the local community and beyond to “please join us on August 24 and become part of our family for a day through Armenian food, music, dance and legendary New Britain Armenian hospitality.” She thanked all who worked on the planning and execution of the event.

The festival has a rich and storied history and has been held for decades during the local church’s 84 year existence. It has seen many venues, including once active Armenian run farms in the area but has been especially successful and well attended on the church grounds at 1910 Stanley Street in New Britain.

A centerpiece of the festival is always the live Armenian band providing captivating Armenian music throughout the afternoon. The music will be provided by the popular Harry Bedrossian Ensemble featuring Harry Bedrossian on oud and vocals, Mike Kassabian on clarinet, Kevin Magarian on guitar and Gary Hovhanessian on dumb-

eg. Many enjoy the music as background during the day’s activities while others spontaneously join in with others in the very popular group Armenian dances.

The afternoon presents an opportunity for wholesome entertainment and comradery for an individual, a couple, a group or an entire family, in a very welcoming atmosphere.

Father Haroutiun Sabounjian, pastor of the church stated that “Our annual Armenian festival is truly one of the major highlights of our parish calendar. I am deeply appreciative of the dedication of our volunteers who take their family traditions passed down from generations before and share this Armenian cultural heritage with the wider New Britain community.”



Young dancers at last year’s Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection Festival



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**Tekeyan Cultural Association**  
**Metro Los Angeles Chapter**

**FAMILY FUN DAY**



VS



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**Zelle: [info@tekeyanla.org](mailto:info@tekeyanla.org)**  
**Call or text: 818.730.1100**





# Arts & Culture

## Armenian American Museum to Host Heritage Gala on November 22

GLENDALÉ — The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California's most anticipated evening of the year, the Heritage Gala, is set for Saturday, November 22, at the InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown, with reservations, sponsorships, and program book ad opportunities now open.

Guests will enjoy an elegant evening featuring live on-stage entertainment, an inspiring program recognizing distinguished honorees, and a celebration of a historic milestone as the museum nears completion. With the structural framework now standing and the curation of the Permanent Exhibition officially underway, the gala will mark a transformative chapter for the cultural and educational landmark.

The Permanent Exhibition will celebrate the story of the Armenian people from ancient beginnings to the modern-day contributions, offering an immersive look at the resilience,



Armenian American Museum Elevates First Structural Steel Beams. January 2024

influence, and cultural identity of the Armenian American community.

"We are excited to invite you to the Heritage Gala, a celebration that reflects the rich heritage and enduring legacy of the Armenian American community," stated Executive Chairman Berdj Karapetian. "As the museum's framework stands tall and the curation of the Permanent Exhibition begins, we see more than a building taking shape. We see a symbol of our shared history, culture, and the profound contributions Armenians have made to the world, rising as a testament to resilience and unity."

Following the formal program, guests will transition to a lively post-reception featuring a live DJ, and a cigar bar to close the night.

The Armenian American Museum is a world class educational and cultural institution that is currently under construction in the museum campus at Glendale Central Park. The museum will offer a wide range of public programming through the Permanent Exhibition, Temporary Exhibitions, Auditorium, Learning Center, Demonstration Kitchen, Archives Center, and more.

Learn more and RSVP for the Heritage Gala at [ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org/Gala](http://ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org/Gala).



From left, Grigori Balasanyan, Maria Aristakesyan, and David Ju (photo Aram Arkun)

## Cellist Aristakesyan and Company Entrance at Berklee Concert

By Aram Arkun

*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

BOSTON — Cellist Maria Aristakesyan of Armenia, with Grigori Balasanyan on the keyboards and three other Berklee School of Music students, charmed an early evening audience at a celebration of Armenian culture and music and fundraiser organized by Berklee's Armenian Scholarship Fund on July 30.

Aristakesyan is enrolled in Berklee's five-week Aspire Summer Program. In Armenia, she studies at the Yerevan State Conservatory. She put together the band in about only three weeks after having just met the other members.

In addition, she performs with the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra. She has collaborated with acclaimed artists such as Sergey Khachatryan, Yuja Wang, Lucas Debargue, Alban Gerhardt, Tigran Suchyan, Norayr Kartashyan, and Augustin Hadelich.

Maria's first band, Artsakhikner, explored musical fusion, and she has since performed with the Dialog Music Project and Menua Band at Göteborgs Konserthus in Sweden. She has recorded and performed with the Artsakh State Jazz Orchestra and Three Bottles of Wine, as well as Artyom Manukyan, Arto Tunçboyacıyan and members of Roby Lakatos's group.

Balasanyan, a composer and pianist originally from Armenia, just graduated from Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where he was the student commencement speaker, and is about to start his master's program there in the fall. His first opera, "Silent Tears," became one of the few fully-staged student operas in the history of the conservatory, and tells the story of a 13-year-old Armenian girl he met during the 2020 war in Armenia.

The other performers are, like Aristakesyan, in the Aspire program, including vocalist Aimilia Chalkia from Greece, David Ju on the electric guitar from Australia and percussionist Riccardo Quell de Riso Paparo of Italy.

The group performed five pieces, starting with a free improvisation based on Armenian intonations. The second piece was Ashnan Kisher, a dance-song from the Shadakh region of Van, followed by Khio-Khane, a traditional Armenian work song from the Van region, and the concert concluded with Nor Hars Ellim, a dance song from the Hamshen.

All the pieces were arranged for the group of five performers, and each of the latter had a solo.

Berklee Senior Director of Major Gifts and Campaign Planning Ginny Fordham welcomed guests at the start of the program and explained that Berklee alumna Christina Azarian, jazz pianist and composer Tigran Hamasyan and former president Roger Brown of Berklee had the idea of raising money to bring Armenian students to Berklee for a five-week summer program and so founded the Armenian Scholarship Fund at Berklee in 2017.

Azarian then recalled how she and Hamasyan, who was then visiting Berklee, thought that there should be more Armenians benefiting from the exposure at Berklee. At the time, she was the only Armenian on campus, while her father David Azarian, a jazz pianist, had come to the US from Soviet Armenia many years earlier and had taught at the campus.



Maria Aristakesyan (photo Aram Arkun)

## Project Save Celebrates Golden Anniversary

By Harry Chakmakian

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

WATERTOWN — To mark its golden anniversary this year, Project Save Photographic Archive is celebrating with a series of events.

The organization has compiled more than 100,000 original images and is helmed by Arto Vaun.

"In addition to our annual summer and year-end appeals, we'll be holding events, donor salons, and offering naming opportunities for major initiatives. We've also launched a new and improved website that makes it easier than ever to support us — whether through one-time gifts, monthly donations, or sponsoring specific programs," Vaun said.

All of this is to help build them towards the future.

"Our focus is on building long-term sustainability — ensuring we have the resources to properly staff our operation, care for the archive, and expand public access to the stories we preserve," Vaun said in an interview.

Vaun noted that he believes that archives play an important role for the Armenian community, and that they can help diasporan discover their heritage in a new way.

He noted, "What means the most is watching someone discover a face that looks like theirs, a place that feels familiar, or a story that mirrors their own. Photography collapses time. It helps us feel seen, known, and connected. Project Save isn't just about the past; it's about how we claim history and belonging in the present, especially for communities whose stories have been neglected or erased."

When asked about the goals of this special year, Vaun stressed Project Save was focused on the future, and bringing a focus on the archives across the community.

"As we mark our 50th anniversary, this is a transformative moment for Project Save. Our focus is on building long-term sustainability—ensuring we have the resources to properly staff our operation, care for the archive, and expand public access to the stories we preserve. We've already seen an incredible outpouring of support, and we're working to build on that momentum by inviting others to invest in the future of this one-of-a-kind institution."

Talk by Nigol Bezjian

On June 26, Project Save hosted filmmaker Nigol Bezjian, in their new space on Pleasant Street.

Bezjian, a co-founder of the Arab Image Foundation, has donated thousands of photographs to Project Save. His collection spans family archives, production stills from his films, and personal artistic work. "Photographs preserve memory and identity—they contain astronomical amounts of cultural and historical information,"

see ANNIVERSARY, page 17

see MARIA, page 15





ARTS & CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine  
Vartanian Datian



## Houshamadyan’s Pagharch, or Kata without Filling

“Houshamadyan is non-profit association founded in Berlin, Germany, in 2010. It has a basic mission: to reconstruct and preserve the memory of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire through research. The Houshamadyan Association has determined that this website, [www.houshamadyan.org](http://www.houshamadyan.org), will be the most suitable means to showcase the results of the Association’s work. For this reason, Houshamadyan Association’s primary aim is to maintain, finance, develop, expand, finalize, and enrich this website. At present, Houshamadyan is primarily financed by individual gifts and donations. We hope that many of our visitors will be encouraged to make a small donation to show their appreciation for our work.”

“Our research encompasses all aspects of the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, including social history, the history of daily life, local microhistories, dialects, music, literature, tangible culture, and more. We are especially interested in collecting and preserving culturally valuable artifacts of all kinds produced by Ottoman Armenians, including musical recordings of historical value, old photographs, old film footage, and more. Equally important to our work are documents pertaining to Ottoman Armenian history, such as printed books, periodicals, and archival materials; as well as papers in individual collections, such as correspondence, unpublished notes, official documents, autobiographical details, etc. The contents of such collections can be scanned at high resolution and submitted to our editorial team for review. Moreover, we are highly interested in chronicling and documenting oral history by recording interviews and testimonies.”

“Once this website takes its final form, the Houshamadyan Association will organize scholarly conferences, lectures and exhibitions focusing on the above-mentioned themes pertaining to the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. Our future work will also include the publication of specialist works on relevant themes. Materials already published on our website will be selected, re-edited, and enriched for publication.”

“This website will be pivotal to Houshamadyan’s mission. We are convinced that the internet is the most practical, influential, and direct means of carrying out the wide scope of work required to reconstruct Ottoman Armenian memory. Moreover, it is our aim to create a collaborative site where each individual visitor can have the ability to make comments or submit memory objects that are in his or her possession – photographs, books, memoirs, etc. Thus, the website can grow and thrive collaboratively. Visitors will be able to electronically submit materials to our editorial team.”

### Sassoun – Cuisine

Author Sonia Tashjian featured this traditional recipe at Houshamadyan on May 16, 2018. It was translated by Vahe Habeshian: “Sassoun is a district of the state of Aghtznik [of historical Great Armenia]. The plain to its south is the broad basin of Diarbekir, which the locals refer to as the Lower Plain, and to the north is the Plain of Moush, termed the Upper Plain. Along with the rest of Daron province, Sassoun has an abundance of water: It has large and small lakes, and because of copious amounts of rain and snow many rivulets form in the mountains, and myriad streams and rivers flow down their high peaks. Some of those flow through the territory of Sassoun, including Meghraked [Honey river], Dalvorig river, Sousanna river, Khodzodzvanki chour [Water of Khodzodz Monastery], Zandous stream, Khlhovid stream, Khoutachour [Water of Khout], etc.”

“Sassoun also has a wealth of dense, large forests. The most common trees are species of oak; also abundant are poplars and willows. The higher elevations are void of fruit-bearing trees, but in the southern regions many types of fruit orchards and vineyards are abundant.”

“In the spring and summer months, the women gather wild mushrooms and varieties of greens (gangar [artichoke], khavurdzil [rhubarb], sbidgoug [possibly, white eremurus], mandag [parsnip chervil], skhdoroug [crow garlic], etc.), some

of which they sell; with the remaining wild greens they prepare fritters, salads, and soups, as well as pickling them or drying them for use during the long winters. For home use they extract oil from linseed, hemp, and the tree called mrgit, and for cooking they extract oil from walnuts and the berries of the nettle tree (hackberries).”

“Sassoun cuisine boasts an abundance of kata (a soda bread) assortments and appellations. Katas are prepared on all occasions — holidays, happy or sad events, during summer migrations, and for daily consumption. They vary from each other only slightly; for example, there are those without khoriz (filling), those that are salty, those that are sweet, etc. Havtousi is the kata the filling of which is layered. Tzagh kata is a type that has embroidery-like decorations and is brought as a gift by wedding guests who visit the groom for yeresbak [“face-kiss”]. Goghadz [“sided”] kata is a type baked against the scorching-hot internal wall of a tandoor.”

“The summer-residence cuisine is unique. On the first day there, they prepare a halva called chacharoun, and in the fall, when they will return the flocks home, they cook harisa [a meat and grain porridge]. Every day, the women prepare kva by heating milk and adding whipped yogurt to it; the boiling milk curdles, and they then add the curds to a pouch or sack to drain. The resulting kva is eaten in lieu of daily bread. Also delicious is poshe [powder] kata [a type of soda bread with a flour-based sweet filling], which the lady of the house bakes in the ashes of the outdoor oven/stove.”

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup clarified butter
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 2-3 cups flour
- 1 egg (for egg wash)

#### PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 350°F with the oven rack in the center.  
Mix the yogurt, baking soda, and vinegar, then beat together with the butter; gradually add the flour in small amounts, mixing and kneading until a soft dough forms that doesn’t stick to the fingers. Place the dough in a baking pan, apply egg wash, and bake.

### Sweet Kata

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 12 cup clarified butter
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 2-3 cups flour
- 1 egg (for egg wash)

#### For the filling:

- 1/2 cups flour
- 1/3 cup clarified butter
- 1/3 cup beet syrup (or honey)

#### PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 350°F with the oven rack in the center. Line baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.  
Mix the yogurt, baking soda, and vinegar, then beat together with the butter; gradually add the flour in small amounts, mixing and kneading until a soft dough forms that doesn’t stick to the fingers. Also prepare the filling, combining the ingredients and using the fingers to rub and mix them together. Divide the kata dough into two portions; roll out the dough with a rolling pin, add and distribute the filling on one disk of dough, cover with the other disk, apply egg wash, and bake.

Houshamadyan donations: Make checks payable to:Houshamadyan Educational Association  
38228 Lana Drive  
Farmington Hills, MI 48335

Website: <https://www.houshamadyan.org/home.html>  
Email: [houshamadyan@gmail.com](mailto:houshamadyan@gmail.com)  
To support: <https://www.houshamadyan.org/support-us.html>  
For the Open Digital Archive, go to: <https://www.houshamadyan.org/oda.html>  
Partners: <https://www.houshamadyan.org/partners.html>  
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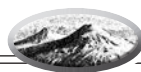
#### Acknowledgements from Sonia Tashjian:

“I’m indebted to the following women who have roots in Sassoun and live in Armenia’s Ashnak and Katnaghbiur villages, which are populated by Sassountsis. With enthusiasm and fondness, they vividly described the food culture of Sassoun they have inherited from their predecessors.”

#### Including:

- Knarik Haroutiounian (roots in Sassoun’s Jrtnig village; father-in-law, from Mushkegh)
- Valia Kirakosian (Shenig village, the granddaughter of the fedayi Cholo)
- Siranoush Mkhitarian (Krmav village)
- Sofia Mkhitarian (Krmav village)
- Arous Mesropi Hovhannisian Asatrian (whose ancestor was Agha Korke Dzour of Sassoun’s Jman village)





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Books

## Life's Joy, Life's Pain: Aram Mrjoian's *Waterline*

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

All of the characters in Aram Mrjoian's debut novel *Waterline* (Harpevia, 2025) read Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* at some point in their lives. Werfel's novel tells the story of the five thousand inhabitants of the six villages at the base of Musa Dagh, in the Vilayet of Aleppo in the Ottoman Empire, who, in April 1915, refusing the Turkish government's orders to evacuate, ascended to the top of the mountain and put up a heroic resistance until they were rescued by the French Navy in September 1915. The repeated references in the novel to Musa Dagh clearly suggest the mountain as a symbol of survival. "We dispersed across nations and oceans, we lost languages ... but we built communities, shared food and music and never stop[ped] echoing where we came from. We are still the mountain," writes Mrjoian under the heading "What Is a Mountain?"

Both in the real-life world of the historic struggle on the high plateau in Syria and in the contemporary fictional world of the great-grandfather Gregor Kurkjian survival is inevitable. Fiction and history do in fact merge in *Waterline*. Gregor lives on Grosse Ile, a small island outside Detroit, with his grandsons Karo and Edgar and their families, but he was born miles away on Musa Dagh and was the leader of the resistance on the mountain. Gregor was the last man to flee Musa Dagh, his "home," he tells his



Author Aram Mrjoian

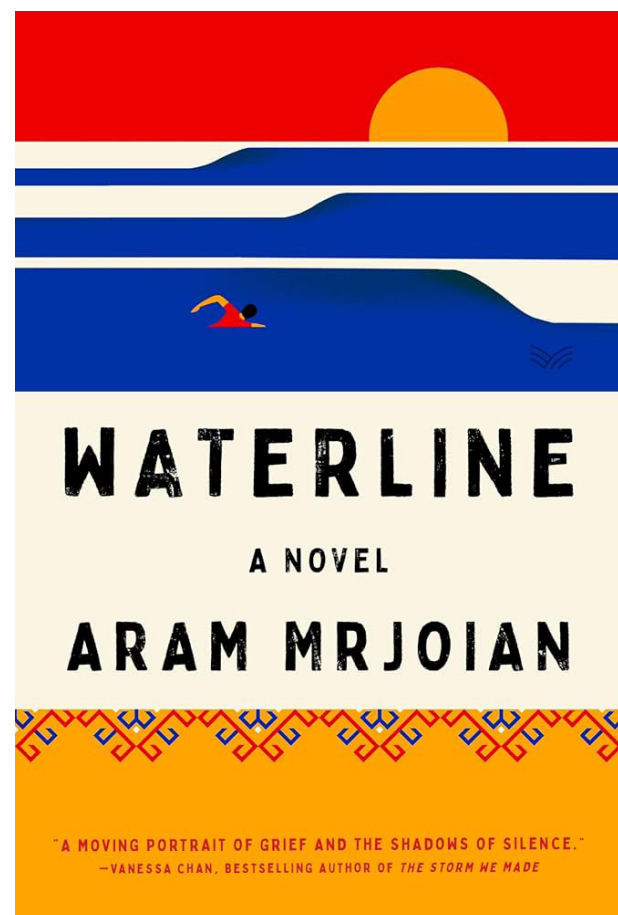
great-grandchildren who come to visit him in the old folks home in Dearborn, Mich.

There is much to be joyful about in the world of the extended Kurkjian family. The brothers have a wonderful closeness. Only a lawn separates their two houses. They eat, drink, work out and have picnics together. When there is no more room in their refrigerator; the leftover food from Karo's daughter Mari's memorial is stored in the fridge next door and carried back and forth. One gets the feeling that all difficulties can be worked through. Unwanted teenage pregnancies and excessive drinking are openly discussed. As he watches his great-grandkids having fun in the warm spring sun at the nursing home, Gregor knows "his family was thriving ... and even if he was not there to witness it, he was certain they would be fine."

Notwithstanding, Karo's only daughter Mari swims to her death in the deep waters of Lake Michigan. On the eve of her death Mari stays up late to finish reading Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, a novel in which the protagonist Edna Pontellier walks into the sea to be liberated from her society's restrictive expectations. Even if Mari is encouraged to end her life by Edna's suicide, one wonders about the juxtaposition of the two novels in the context of Mrjoian's story. Unlike Edna, Mari had independence and freedom and, to all appearances, had lived her life with few restrictions, blessed with everyone's support. While her final note does reveal inner conflicts and struggles — "I'm too tired of life's immense disappointments and anticipatory grief ... I will swim until I find my way home" — it also seems to offer suicide as a choice. "Many of the authors I admire chose to end their lives ... everyone has a choice," muses Mari as she peruses the books on the shelves in her condo on the final morning of her life.

Death may indeed be another way to "survive," yet the pull towards life in Mrjoian's novel remains. Even as her family comfort themselves with, "Mari had always loved the water ... there was no other way for her to go," they all wonder if the loss of their precious daughter, niece, cousin could have been prevented. Uncle Karo, for one, pledges to pay more attention to Joseph and Talin, his nephew and his niece, to make sure death does not become "a choice" for them as well. One wonders if a similar fate awaits Talin, who is in a hurry to read *The Awakening* right after her cousin's death.

One does not read literature for clear-cut answers. In fact, good literature helps us ask the right questions so we can make sense of the world. With his vivid descriptions and meticulously chosen details Mrjoian draws the reader into a world of family togetherness, of picnics and bar-



becues, but also of pain as a natural and inseparable part of that world. The Kurkjian's willingness to face the pain and to "fight back" — even when it feels like the world is crumbling around them "with all the grief" — may just be the best strategy for survival. *Waterline* "gives life inevitability," to borrow William Saroyan's comment on *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. A copy of the first edition of Werfel's novel, with Karo's extensive marginal annotations, sits on the coffee table in the Kurkjian living room.

Great-grandfather Gregor finally decides to tell his grandchildren and great-grandchildren gathered around him at the nursing home "the truth" about "starving on Musa Dagh and about fighting back," even as he withholds telling them about the atrocities. "I'm not ready to give them the full burden. They are still young enough to believe in happy endings," he tells his grandson Karo who, in his turn, tells his family, "We can't hide from the water forever," as they prepare to go camping on the beachfront, so reminiscent of their recent tragedy.

Aram Mrjoian is the editor of the 2023 *We Are All Armenian: Voices from The Diaspora*, an anthology of personal essays, both by established and emerging Armenian authors, that reflect on Armenian identity and belonging in the diaspora in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide.

I would like to add that to say that *Waterline* "brings readers deep into the heart of the Armenian Genocide," or that the characters "navigate life living in the shadows of the Armenian Genocide" can be misleading. The characters' past and their memories of that past are certainly an important part of who they are, but not everything they experience in the novel can be traced to the trauma of the Genocide.

## Cellist Aristakesyan and Co. Entrance at Berklee Concert

MARIA, from page 13

Azarian observed that Aristakesyan was the fourth student they had brought to the summer program and every time the new student exemplifies the virtues of the scholarship. She encouraged support for the next round of students, and presented a video by Hamasyan, who praised Aristakesyan.

Dr. David Bogen, Berklee's executive vice president for academic affairs and provost, stated that Berklee has a strong Armenian connection, not just to Hamasyan but also a longstanding relationship with the Zildjians of cymbal fame. In addition, many Armenian musicians have visited and performed at Berklee.

Bogen pointed out that the Scholarship Fund was established to honor Christina's father, the late David Azarian. He read from the official statement of the fund that it had "the mission of raising scholarship funds for talented students who are financially

and academically deserving, and who possess a broad and meaningful understanding of Armenian history and culture with the potential to make a significant contribution to society through music."

Currently, he said that it has raised over \$42,000. A silent auction of a painting of Aristakesyan by artist Masha Keryan and tickets to Hamasyan's upcoming show next March took place as part of the effort to support the fund.

At the end of the event, Aristakesyan expressed her gratitude to everyone who made it possible for her to be at Berklee.

To support Berklee's Armenian Scholarship Fund, go to <https://www.berklee.edu/giving/active-scholarship-initiatives> and note that it is for this fund. Checks may be sent to Berklee, P.O. Box 24231, New York, NY 10087-4231, with Armenian Scholarship Fund written in the check memo.



The band performing





ARTS & CULTURE

# Angela García López Khachatryan

## *The Spanish Daughter of the Armenian Nation*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN/FRANKFURT AM MAIN — Angela García López Khachatryan is a musician, educator, researcher and mindfulness practitioner dedicated to empowering people through music, through critical thinking and conscious living. Born in Spain (Córdoba) and raised in France and Belgium, she studied politics before moving to London to pursue music. Her journey later expanded into yoga, meditation, and mindful parenting. She is certified in child psychology, naturopathy, and mindfulness education, and has developed two early-childhood programs: Little Music Educators and MusiYogi, blending classical music with yoga and emotional awareness. Angela is also the creator and host of “Miamit Hartser” (Naïve Questions), a podcast produced by Ardean Broadcast, where she interviews inspiring Armenian professionals. She is married to violinist Sergey Khachatryan, and the couple has three children.

**Dear Angela, through your “Naïve Questions” podcast, you conduct very interesting conversations with Armenian professionals. Now it’s my turn to talk with you — posing both naïve and not-so-naïve questions. First of all, I’d like to say that you are a deeply positive person. As an advocate of conscious living, have you arrived at this positivity through life experience, or is it something innate?**

My parents like to say that I was a very happy baby. I grew up surrounded by a really big family, love and nature. All the travels and moving around we did with my family taught me to see life through other people’s eyes. That perspective and that amount of love has really enriched me in life. I have been really, really lucky. I think positivity often goes hand in hand with a genuine curiosity about life and about people.

**What is the focus of “Miamit Hartser”?**

“Miamit Hartser” was born from a wish to inspire



Angela García López with Sergey Khachatryan (photography by by Zaven Khachikyan).

growth through meaningful conversations with brilliant minds. I wanted to explore the topics that fascinate me and share them through dialogues with some of the most accomplished Armenian professionals — remarkable individuals both in their fields and as human beings. From the very beginning, I had a clear vision of what I wanted “Miamit Hartser” to be. That vision found new life when I spoke with Vasken Brudian, CEO of Ardean. Together, we joined forces, and today, “Miamit Hartser” is proudly produced by Ardean Broadcast. This project highlights not only deeply interesting people but also professionals driven by a genuine desire to share their knowledge. They



want to see our society grow — become more conscious, more connected. I carry a profound admiration for every one of these professionals. Their passion, insight, and generosity continue to inspire me — and I hope they inspire you too.

**Musical education has been highly valued in Armenian society since the 19th century and also during the Soviet period, as a means of general development and strengthening intellectual capacities. However, today it seems rather difficult to connect Generation Alpha to music.**

Studies indicate that early musical preferences are heavily shaped by what children hear regularly, and classical music now features less prominently in schools and media. Additionally, the fast-paced, visually driven content that Gen Alpha consumes often favors contemporary music with quick hooks over slower, larger and more complex classical compositions. The benefits of classical music from the very beginning are immense, and I explore many of them in my early music education method, “Little Music Educators.”

**Both my wife and I consider parenthood to be one of the greatest positive aspects of life. In the past, Armenians had many children despite difficult conditions, whereas today, under far better circumstances, the attitude of younger generations toward parenthood has unfortunately changed. Many consider it unnecessary. As a promoter of positive parenting, what are your thoughts on this?**

Society is always a mirror of its time. Today, we live in an era deeply centered on the self, and at the same time, I believe we are failing to create or nurture the conditions that would truly support younger generations in choosing to have children: in terms of expectations, financially...

**Many Europeans who marry Armenians make no effort to learn the Armenian language. Yet your knowledge of Armenian is impressive. You are able to hold conversations in literary Armenian on various topics. How did you reach this level of fluency, and what advice would you give to those who wish to learn Armenian?**

Speaking Armenian fluently came from a deep, heartfelt wish to understand my husband and his culture more intimately. I wanted to communicate with him in a way that felt natural and true to who he is. I grew up learning languages and through them, I was enriched by many different cultures and ways of thinking. I fell in love with the Armenian language: its graceful letters, its unique soul, and specially, with the tenderness with which

my husband, his family, and my teacher shared it with me.

**How do your children, growing up in a multilingual environment, manage the issue of languages?**

From the beginning, my husband spoke to them in Armenian and I spoke to them in Spanish. Children need context to use a language, and this is how we’ve naturally kept both alive at home.

**The ballet scholar Hasmik Markosyan has written: “We Armenians respond very emotionally to Spanish dances. It may be the temperament, or the raw emotions, or the energizing rhythm, but the traditional Armenian fascination with Spanish folklore doesn’t fade.” Do you agree that Armenians and Spaniards have similar temperaments?**

Absolutely. We share a deep sense of family, warmth, and emotional expressiveness. But more than anything, we share what Federico García Lorca — and my own culture — call *duende* (soul, a heightened state of emotion, expression, and heart). Lorca’s *duende* is a cry for authentic art, a fierce courage in the face of love, loss, and mortality. Though rooted in Andalusian soul and flamenco, its essence transcends borders — emerging wherever art rises from the depths of human struggle.

And isn’t that profoundly Armenian, too?

**Oh yes! I’ve attended many of Sergey Khachatryan’s concerts. The first time I heard him perform in Yerevan, tears of emotion filled my eyes. The second time was in Detroit, in a mostly non-Armenian setting, and they were tears of pride. Over the years, does he still manage to move you emotionally? And in general, what is Sergey Khachatryan like at home?**

Sergey performs every concert as if it were his last, making sure to space them out so he can be fully present — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. His approach to life inspires me deeply. At home, he is a hands-on father who cares deeply for our children and stays closely connected to our family’s needs and growth. He does his best to be involved while also giving his all to his art. We’re truly fortunate to have him as both a father and a husband.

**And finally, what would you like to wish Armenian music lovers, young parents, and non-Armenians married to Armenians?**

My wish for them is to remain ever curious, ever evolving — bold in exploring the depths of their own being and the world that surrounds them. Though our time may seem fleeting, there is a vast expanse within those moments to learn, to grow, to give, and to weave beauty into life.





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Project Save Celebrates Golden Anniversary

ANNIVERSARY, from page 13

Bezjian says. “Donating to Project Save is my way of continuing that mission. I hope this inspires other Armenian creatives to preserve their visual legacies.”

The Aleppo-born Bezjian moved to Boston at a young age. It was here that he began to take filmmaking more seriously. Throughout his life he has produced many films including “The Same Gate” (2014) and “Chickpeas” (1992), which was nominated for Best Feature Film at Torino International Festival of Young Cinema.

Bezjian and Vaun met through their fathers who were good friends.

He added, “Arto is a close family friend...one of my motivations is to gather everything, to sort out and make sure they’re out of the way and given to a good place.”

Bezjian said he knew that his work was better in an archive than sitting around where it could be damaged or lost, “I feel more free for what I am doing. The weight of all this is with me, on me, in my head, on my shoulders, you know. So when I give it away, I’m really in a good place.”

To learn more about Project Save, visit their website at <https://www.projectsavet.org>.



Garabedian, Dingilian and Haigazian families. Constantinople, Ottoman Empire, 1910 (Photo courtesy of Project Save)

## Project Save Receives \$500,000 in Donations As Well as Major Archival Gifts

WATERTOWN — Project Save Photographic Archive, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit dedicated to preserving the global Armenian experience through photography, has secured \$500,000 in new financial gifts along with significant archival donations, marking major milestones for the organization’s 50th anniversary.

“These transformational investments in Project Save’s future affirm the urgency and impact of our mission,” said Executive Director Arto Vaun. “They help ensure the continued preservation of Armenian social history and culture for generations to come.”

An anonymous donor has pledged \$400,000 to Project Save. In addition, New York-based philanthropist Sabine Hrechdakian has made a \$50,000 gift. She joins Project Save as a founding member of its newly restructured Board of Trustees. An anonymous New York-based donor has contributed \$50,000 in memory of Michael and Katherine Halebian. All the gifts are unrestricted, providing crucial flexibility to expand the archive’s operations and outreach.

Vaun notes these contributions are the result of a focused 50th anniversary initiative to raise awareness of Project Save’s work among a broader network of individuals who share a stake in Armenian cultural preservation, photography and immigrant stories in general. He says funds will support more expanded outreach, bolster fundraising, enable key technological upgrades, and create a new full-time archivist position.

“These gifts are the beginning of a larger effort to build long-term sustainability,” Vaun said. “They offer a powerful invitation to everyone who cares about Armenian heritage, cultural memory, and the immigrant experience to rally around Project Save’s mission.”

In addition to financial gifts Project Save recently received significant archival donations:

Dr. Carolann Najarian, a physician and humanitarian, has donated decades of photographic documentation from her and her husband’s more than 50 humanitarian missions to Armenia and Artsakh between 1989 and 2012.

“We took photos of village life, medical missions, and the people we met,” said Najarian. “For years, I held onto these pictures, unsure what to do with them—until Project Save grew into the extraordinary archive it is today. Now they become part of a preserved history and ensure that researchers, students and future generations



Dr. Carolann Najarian and Monte Melkonian (Project Save photo)

# CALENDAR

## OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

### CONNECTICUT

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

### MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 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](http://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](mailto:alin@mirrorspectator.com) or [alin.gregorian@gmail.com](mailto:alin.gregorian@gmail.com). You can also visit our website, [www.mirrorspectator.com](http://www.mirrorspectator.com), and find the “calendar” section under the heading “More” or mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must**

can witness a vital part of Armenian and humanitarian history. Project Save gives these photos a second life.”

“These donations are treasures of Armenian cultural history,” said Vaun. “We are humbled by the trust that Dr. Najarian, Nigol Bezjian and hundreds of families have placed in us to preserve their legacies.”

Founded in 1975 by Ruth Thomasian, Project Save began as a grassroots effort to document the stories of elderly Armenian immigrants through photographs. Over five decades, the organization amassed more

than 100,000 original images from Armenian families and communities around the world. Upon Thomasian’s retirement, Vaun became executive director and led the creation of Project Save’s first permanent public home, complete with offices, climate-controlled storage, and gallery space.

“I’m thrilled to see the ambitious new direction Project Save is taking,” Thomasian said. “These donations reflect decades of hard work and validate both our mission and Arto’s vision for the archive’s future.”

Project Save acknowledges attorney Karnig Kerkonian and the team at Kerkonian Dajani LLP for their generous assistance in facilitating the \$400,000 anonymous gift process.





COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN  
**MIRROR  
SPECTATOR**  
— SINCE 1932 —



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# As Scholars of Genocide, We Demand An End to Israel’s Atrocities

By **Taner Akçam, Marianne Hirsch and Michael Rothberg**

The world has stood by as Israel has murdered tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, wounded more than double that number, buried countless more under the rubble and devastated civilian infrastructure. The territory’s survivors, displaced repeatedly by the Israeli military, are in a state of enforced starvation and utter precarity. Despite Israel’s ban on international journalists, witnesses and victims are livestreaming unbearable images and videos of emaciated children and adults shot while desperately seeking aid. Israeli officials have proposed the construction of what would be concentration camps and the deportation of surviving Palestinians.

Motivated by our deep scholarly and ethical engagement with political violence and mass atrocity, including the Nazi genocide of Jewish people, we helped found the Genocide and Holocaust Studies Crisis Network in April. More than 400 scholars of genocide and Holocaust studies from two dozen countries joined within weeks of its launch. The rapid growth of the group testifies to the urgency of this moment. Today, along with hundreds of humanitarian organizations, dozens of governments, and millions of protesting students and citizens across the globe, we call for immediate concrete measures to prevent further atrocity crimes and to protect civilians.

Since the October 7 massacre, Israeli officials and their accomplices have justified genocidal violence against Palestinians by equating Hamas with Nazism, instrumentalizing the memory of the Holocaust to advance, rather than prevent, mass violence. Meanwhile, too many governments materially support the genocide in Gaza while silencing protest. Even as the tone of some official statements has become more critical of Israel in recent weeks, many states continue to supply Israel with lethal weapons, shield Israeli leaders from international arrest warrants and fuel investment in the Israeli war economy. International pressure can work, but we need much more of it.

The emergency is in front of us. And yet, some prominent scholars of the Holocaust continue to engage in open denialism or outright approval of mass atrocities perpetrated by Israel. Scholarly associations, universities and institutions dedicated to Holocaust research, education and commemoration not only

remain silent in the face of Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza but provide ideological cover for Israel’s blatant violations of international law. Institutions such as Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum adhere to a “Palestine exception” when opposing genocide and mass atrocity. At the same time, organizations dedicated to combating prejudice, such as the Anti-Defamation League, use spurious accusations of antisemitism to silence or discredit those who dare to speak out.

We are determined to challenge this moral and political capitulation.

We created the Genocide and Holocaust Studies Crisis Network to do just that. We pledge to support Palestinians as they exercise their rights to education and cultural heritage in the face of massive destruction of their schools, archives and memory sites. We commit to pressuring our institutions to confront the contra-

dictions between their stated commitment to “never again” and their silence or complicity in the face of Gaza. In light of ongoing genocidal violence and the return of authoritarian regimes, we will provide new resources and syllabuses in order to teach rigorously about the past in the context of our ever more vulnerable present. We will offer solidarity and support to our students

and colleagues who run grave personal and professional risks for speaking out.

We contest the widespread “conspiracy of helplessness” and the normalization of mass violence and starvation in Gaza. We have learned from history that there are many ways in which states can take action in response to crimes against humanity. We urge all states who signed the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to fulfill their responsibilities under international law: demand and enforce a permanent ceasefire, an arms embargo, the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip, unimpeded distribution of humanitarian aid, and equality and self-determination for all Palestinians.

As members of the Genocide and Holocaust Studies Crisis Network, we say: it is not too late to save lives. End the genocide now.

(Taner Akçam, Marianne Hirsch and Michael Rothberg are founding members of the Genocide and Holocaust Studies Crisis Network. This editorial first appeared in the Guardian on July 29.)

THE EMERGENCY IS IN FRONT OF US.  
AND YET, SOME PROMINENT SCHOLARS  
OF THE HOLOCAUST CONTINUE  
TO ENGAGE IN OPEN DENIALISM  
OR OUTRIGHT APPROVAL OF MASS  
ATROCITIES PERPETRATED BY ISRAEL.

## LETTERS

### Armenia and Diaspora Should Start Drone Project for Future of Country

To the Editor:

Armenia stands on the edge of a precipice. Besieged by an emboldened and militarized Azerbaijan, and abandoned by former allies, the small republic now faces the gravest threats to its survival since independence in 1991. The brutal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh in 2023 — displacing over 100,000 Armenians — was not only a humanitarian catastrophe but a violent severing of Armenia from its historic identity. Today, Azerbaijan openly lays claim to Armenia’s southern provinces of Syunik and Vayots Dzor, while Turkey lends full political and military support. Meanwhile, Russia — the once-reliable security guarantor — has all but retreated from its responsibilities.

Internally, Armenia is fractured and demoralized. The government is accused of appeasement, while political polarization deepens. The youth are losing hope, emigration accelerates, and national morale is in freefall. The so-called “peace process” is being weaponized to demand corridors of control, territorial concessions, and silence for the displaced. If Armenia yields, it faces dismemberment. If it resists, war may follow.

This is more than a geopolitical crisis — it is a spiritual one. Armenia’s very existence is under siege. The time has come not only to mourn what has been lost but to prepare for what must be defended.

As a long-time supporter of the Armenia Tree Project (ATP), I was deeply moved to learn that over nine million trees have been planted since 1994 — a remarkable act of national renewal. That effort began in a time of crisis. Now, a different kind of seed must be planted: one for survival.

To the leaders and visionaries of the Armenian Diaspora, I propose the Armenian Drone Project (ADP) — a bold initiative to harness our collective resources and expertise to establish a domestic drone defense industry in Armenia. Just as ATP planted forests to restore life, ADP must build the aerial shield to protect it. In modern warfare, victory belongs to those who possess smarter, faster, and more abundant drones. Armenia must be drone-ready — not tomorrow, but now.

Call to Action: The Armenian Drone Project (ADP)

A Homeland Defense Initiative Inspired by the Spirit of ATP

Mission: Fund, design, and operate forti-

fied drone manufacturing hubs in Armenia — capable of producing both reconnaissance and strike drones for defense and deterrence.

Initial Goals (2025–2027):

Secure protected production sites

Assemble a Diaspora-led engineering alliance in AI, robotics, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) systems

Launch a \$10M seed fund

Partner with universities to train Armenia’s next generation of drone specialists

Core Objectives:

Drone Production, defense self-reliance, creating a surveillance fleet to garner real-time intelligence on hostile movement, strike capability, rapid response deterrence, STEM training, building domestic expertise, diaspora mobilization to unify talent and funding worldwide.

The urgency is real. Azerbaijan’s demands are escalating. Russia has stepped aside. Armenia must not stand undefended.

Just as ATP sowed trees to heal the land, ADP must plant wings to defend it. This is not a dream. This is a necessity.

Let us build. Let us fly. Let us defend.

Armen Dedekian  
Arlington, MA





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Pashinyan is Doing Everything Possible To Obstruct Foreign Investment in Armenia

This article analyzes the consequences of the decision of the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce (SCC) regarding the Armenian government's nationalization of the privately owned Electric Networks of Armenia.

I recalled the axiom: “Armenians do not need enemies; they are their own worst enemies” after witnessing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan inflict immense damage not only on Armenia's security and territorial integrity but also on its economy.

The latest financial fiasco began on June 17, when prominent businessman Samvel Karapetyan, a dual Armenian-Russian citizen, criticized the Armenian government for waging an anti-church campaign, saying that he would interfere “in his own way” to put an end to the controversy. Overreacting to Karapetyan's words, the prime minister unleashed his dictatorial powers — despite his claimed allegiance to democracy — and ordered Karapetyan's arrest and pretrial detention.

Pashinyan then ordered the nationalization of the Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA) in which Karapetyan and his partners had invested \$700 million when they purchased it in 2015.

Pashinyan's actions have several negative repercussions for Armenia:

— He violated Armenia's laws by interfering in the judicial system, which falls outside his jurisdiction.

— On June 18, he urged his parliamentary majority to pass legislation enabling the expropriation of ENA.

— On Pashinyan's instructions, the police entered Karapetyan's Yerevan home seizing unspecified items. However, a judge ruled that the search was illegal.

— He directed the arrest of several ENA executives on fabricated charges and the detention of a Karapetyan family member.

— On July 18, he appointed an inexperienced individual as ENA's interim manager, risking serious financial losses, disruptions to electricity supply, and higher fees for consumers.

— The Karapetyans (Samvel, Eteri, Sarkis, and Karen) and their Cypriot partner, Liormand Holdings Limited, referred their dispute to the SCC — as previously had been agreed with the Armenian government. However, Pashinyan is now ignoring that agreement.

The SCC's Emergency Arbitrator issued the following interim decisions on July 22:

“ORDERS the Respondent [Armenian government] to refrain from enforcing the Expropriation Laws (i.e. Law of the Republic of Armenia On Amendments to the Law ‘On Energy’ and Law of the Republic of Armenia On Amendments to the Law ‘On Public Services Regulatory Authority’) and taking any

of the following further steps aimed at expropriating ENA:

- Changing members of ENA's management bodies;
- Amending ENA's articles of association;
- Appointing an interim manager (administrator) for ENA or, if appointed, empowering him to act as ENA's executive body;
- Revoking ENA's licenses;
- Announcing and organizing auctions on selling ENA's shares;
- Seizing or disposing of ENA's assets;
- Otherwise limiting ENA's usual business operations.”

— Even though the Emergency Award is binding, ENA's owners will ask the SCC for a final determination within 30 days. Should Armenia lose the final arbitration and confirm the expropriation, the government will have to pay ENA's owners nearly one billion dollars — an obligation Armenia's Justice Minister has said the government will honor. Unfortunately, Armenian taxpayers — not Pashinyan — will foot the bill.

— Furthermore, Armenia's justice minister, contrary to the SCC decision, incorrectly asserted that the government need not comply with the arbitration's ban on changing ENA's management, claiming it “falls outside the scope” of the SCC ruling!

— The government then declared that the arbitration decision would be valid only if an Armenian court endorsed it — an assertion that defies its prior agreement that the tribunal's award is final and binding. Trust in Armenian courts is eroded when judges carry out Pashinyan's orders.

— Pashinyan's campaign against Karapetyan stems not from economic concerns but from a political vendetta. Karapetyan, who is now forming an anti-Pashinyan political movement from prison, has seen his approval ratings surge ahead of the June 2026 parliamentary elections.

— As a result of Pashinyan's illegal and reckless actions, no foreign company will risk investing in Armenia, knowing that the government can nationalize his assets and ignore arbitration awards. Because the ENA has a Cypriot partner, its expropriation violates the Cyprus-Armenia Bilateral Treaty on Encouraging and Protecting Investments (BIT) which will strain Armenia's relations with the government of Cyprus.

If the Armenian government fails to comply with the SCC's final Award, Armenia's foreign assets could be frozen.

In addition to deterring new investors, Armenia cannot afford to lose billions of dollars in these pending arbitration cases:

— Walnort Finance Limited, a Cypriot company, is seeking from Armenia \$1.2 billion in damages over a mining dispute.

— Sanitek, a Lebanese company, is seeking \$25 million, alleging that Armenia violated its investment rights in waste management.

— UAE's Air Arabia claims that the Armenian government mismanaged its multi-million-dollar investment.

— Former shareholders of Lydian International Limited, headquartered in the United States, are reportedly seeking up to \$2 billion in compensation over significant financial losses in gold mining.

The Armenian government cannot continue operating in such a fiscally reckless and unlawful manner. There are seasoned experts among diasporan Armenians who stand ready to offer strategic advice and guidance. All Armenia's leaders need to do is ask and listen.

## Why Is the UAE Positioning Itself as a Hub for International Diplomacy?

By Saahil Menon

Having accepted the Armenia-Azerbaijan dossier after failed attempts at hosting ongoing Russo-Ukrainian peace discussions or indirect nuclear negotiations between Iran and the United States, Abu Dhabi's credentials as an honest broker remain highly questionable.

On July 2, 2025, the London-based online news outlet Middle East Eye reported that the heads of state of arch-foes Armenia and Azerbaijan were set to meet each other imminently in Dubai for normalization talks. Sure enough, this came to pass a mere eight days later — albeit under the aegis of Abu Dhabi's ruling elite as opposed to the far less politically active House of Maktoum. Yet unlike previous encounters in Moscow, Brussels and Washington, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azeri President Ilham Aliyev were left to their own devices this time around for a five-hour long tête-à-tête with no third-party oversight or involvement. It is not clear why the agenda-driven Emirati leadership agreed to a strictly bilateral format that would deny them bragging rights had a major breakthrough been achieved on their soil.

Nonetheless, the fact that pro-Aliyev think tanks like the Topchubashov Center and the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center) appeared exceedingly bullish on the choice of venue goes to show how Abu Dhabi is anything but the impartial and well-meaning arbiter it masquerades as. The Azeri dictator, for his part, is something of an equal opportunity provocateur who managed to make as much an enemy of the West in recent years as he has key Global South players including Russia, India and Iran. Thanks to its so-called “zero problems” foreign policy doctrine and relative proximity to the South Caucasus, the UAE was deemed a mutually palatable destination for

a summit of such magnitude to take place. That said, there is no denying the Trump administration's outsized role in handing the Emirati government this much-needed PR win against the backdrop of burgeoning intra-GCC competition.

Upon assuming his second term in office, US President Donald Trump established an unwritten quid pro quo with the Persian Gulf monarchies whereby they would get to share the spoils of restoring world peace in return for ploughing hundreds of billions — if not trillions — of dollars into the American economy. From the standpoint of an image-conscious UAE, indulging in high-stakes diplomacy to gloss over its less than stellar human rights record and military misadventures across the MENA region makes eminently good sense — no matter the asking price. During an official visit to the White House four months ago, Emirati National Security Advisor Tahnoun Bin Zayed Al Nahyan announced plans to invest \$1.4 trillion in the United States over the next decade while an additional \$200 billion worth of commercial deals were clinched when Trump frequented the UAE last May.

With Saudi Arabia likewise proposing a \$600 billion capital injection and Qatar playing into Trump's vanity by gifting him a \$400 million luxury jet on top the \$500 billion its sovereign wealth fund had allocated to the U.S. market, the GCC's most influential member states have found themselves in a bidding war of sorts for preferential treatment from Uncle Sam. Admittedly, these lofty financial commitments did earn Trump's Middle Eastern patrons a seat at negotiating tables they would otherwise have probably never been a part of — whether it be the three rounds of Russia-Ukraine ceasefire talks held in Riyadh and Jeddah at Washington's behest or the peace declaration Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

signed last week in Doha following three months of Qatari-mediated deliberations.

Despite initiating untold Russo-Ukrainian prisoner exchanges and a senior presidential aide personally delivering Trump's letter to the Iranian supreme leader in mid-March as a goodwill gesture, the UAE's diplomatic intervention was sought by neither Moscow and Kyiv throughout the course of Vladimir Putin's “special military operation” nor Tehran and Tel Aviv at the height of their 12-day conflagration this summer. Both rivalries expose the limits of Abu Dhabi's international relations double-dealing and how resultant conflicts of interest preclude it from serving as a universally trusted go-between. Being a massive beneficiary of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there is no genuine desire on the sheikhdom's part to bring about an end to the biggest flare-up in Europe since World War II or facilitate a Moscow-Washington détente that would inevitably pave the way for Western sanctions relief.

The Kremlin's post-war isolation has seen Russian oligarchs ejected from Euro-Atlantic capitals purchase expensive real estate, dock their yachts and set up shell companies galore in business-friendly Dubai — not to mention worldly, middle-class Muscovites leveraging the glitzy city-state's extensive flight network to skirt around an EU-wide airspace ban imposed on Russian carriers and access mainland Europe or head even further afield. A similar argument holds vis-à-vis Iran and in particular, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) whose surrogates and frontmen have come to rely almost exclusively on Dubai as their de facto back door to the West amid Trump's continued “maximum pressure campaign.”

Notwithstanding an existing territorial dispute over three Iranian-administered Persian Gulf islands — Abu Musa, see DIPLOMACY, page 20



# Why Is the UAE Positioning Itself as a Hub for International Diplomacy?

DIPLOMACY, from page 19

Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb — the UAE is the Islamic Republic’s second largest trading partner after China, with Emirati exports to Iran increasing nearly four-fold from \$6 billion to \$22 billion since the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was scrapped. Needless to say, the Emiratis are more than happy to throw Iran’s beleaguered clerical establishment an economic lifeline and in effect, underwrite their own occupation for the sake of insulating themselves from the kind of kinetic action Qatar faced shortly after the Fordow nuclear enrichment facility was stuck by US-made “bunker buster” bombs.

Whereas Abu Dhabi’s cozy ties with Moscow have gone largely unnoticed in Western corridors of power to the extent that it was removed from the Financial Action Task Force’s (FATF’s) grey list in February 2024 and the EU’s “dirty money blacklist” last month, playing footsie with an equally radioactive Iran may be a bridge too far. Helping Yerevan and Baku reach an enduring settlement after nearly forty years of hostility is a golden opportunity for the oil-rich federation to claw its way back into the United States’ good graces given its full-fledged BRICS membership coupled with the sheer number of Emirati shipping firms and UAE-domiciled individuals sanctioned by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) over their links to Iran’s illicit shadow fleet network.

Applying the finishing touches to what is widely considered a done deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan — barring one or two sticking points — will also remind the international community of Little Sparta’s strategic relevance at a time when Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MbS) is convinced that his Vision 2030 modernization push can only be realized by cutting the Kingdom’s “inconvenient” neighbours down to size and leaving them with no real *raison d’être*. This dangerous zero-sum mentality could see the 39-year-old killer prince, who has a history of shafting those close to him, turn his back on once-mentors UAE President Mohamad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MbZ) and Dubai ruler Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum (MbR) if push comes to shove. With PIF-backed giga-projects like NEOM and Qiddi-

ya afflicted by construction delays, budget overruns and mass layoffs, a vindictive MbS may simply find it more expedient to vent his frustration at the UAE instead of assessing what went wrong.

However keen the Emiratis may be to carve out a niche for themselves as indispensable bridge-builders, there is a very real risk of optics and prestige taking precedence over actually getting a sustainable Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty across the finish line. Worse still, Armenia should harbor no illusions about the UAE being a good faith interlocutor and not having a dog in this fight. As an opaque, family-run petrostate that deprives its citizens

MINDFUL OF IRAN’S VEHEMENT  
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INTO TOTAL SUBMISSION ON  
AZERBAIJAN’S BEHALF.

of the most fundamental civil liberties, subjects women to a patriarchal guardianship system and ranks 164th out of 180 countries in the latest press freedom index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Abu Dhabi represents the complete antithesis of the open, meritocratic and self-correcting society Yerevan happens to be.

It is no secret that the power-hungry Bani Fatima brothers regard Eastern Europe and the wider post-Soviet space as a testing ground for their “authoritarian stability” blueprint. The lavish infrastructure projects Eagle Hills - an

Abu-Dhabi-headquartered property developer with links to the Al-Nahyan royals - has undertaken in the likes of Hungary, Serbia, Albania and Georgia serve as cases in point of the Emiratis propping up like-minded, hybrid regimes through “vulture capitalism.” Azerbaijan’s dynastic and brutally repressive governance model all but mirrors that of the UAE, as does the Caspian nation’s penchant for greenwashing and bandying about its pseudo-tolerance of religion minorities to curry favor with the West.

Beyond Ilham Aliyev’s ideological alignment with fellow genocidaire strongman MbZ, Baku has been tipped as a frontrunner to join the decaying Abraham Accords and in doing so, breathe new life into the “circle of peace” Abu Dhabi is experiencing buyer’s remorse over rushing headlong into. Armenia, on the other hand, recognized the State of Palestine in June 2024 as a knee-jerk reaction to Israel’s robust defense and intelligence-sharing partnership with Azerbaijan. By virtue of the latter’s victory in the 44-day Second Karabakh War, Aliyev has refused to budge on his maximalist demands for a lasting resolution — chief among which is the opening of the Zangezur Corridor that would connect Azerbaijan proper to its Nakhichevan exclave.

Mindful of Iran’s vehement opposition to the “redrawing of borders” in the South Caucasus, there is every reason to believe the UAE, out of spite and hubris towards the anti-monarchy Iranian mullahs, will do weaponize its unprecedented investments in Armenia and coerce Pashinyan into total submission on Azerbaijan’s behalf. Ultimately, mediating a conflict that has no security implications for the UAE or the Arabian Peninsula writ large amounts to little more than a ‘reputation-laundering’ exercise aimed at sweeping the Emirati royals’ copious ill deeds under the rug - from kidnapping and disappearing their estranged daughters to foisting the world’s worst humanitarian crises upon Yemen and Sudan. Freedom-loving Armenia would be wise to see through Abu Dhabi’s nefarious motives behind playacting peacemaker and temper its expectations accordingly.

(Saahil Menon is a Dubai-based freelance writer specializing in the former Soviet Union.)



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