

Acemoglu Refutes Claim He Is with The Karapetyan Campaign

In a brief comment to Agos publication in Istanbul, Nobel Prize-winning economist Daron Acemoglu this week denied that he is involved with the campaign of Our Way movement, founded by oligarch Samvel Karapetyan, who is currently under arrest by the Armenian authorities.

The story, which appeared last week in several major reputable outlets, named the MIT professor as an advisor to the campaign. In his statement to Agos, he said, “I sent a message for their conference, but I have no connection with the party.”

Before Acemoglu’s speech, Narek Karapetyan, one of the movement’s leaders, announced that Acemoglu would participate as an advisor and expert in the movement’s work on Armenia’s economic development program. In his speech, Acemoglu emphasized that ‘artificial intelligence and the opportunities it will bring are particularly important for Armenia’s development, and that the establishment of inclusive and accountable institutions is essential.’

Responding to Agos’s question on the matter, Acemoglu said, “I am not working with any party in Armenia or Turkey. I sent a message for their conference, but I have no connection with the party.”



Members of In Our Way movement rally outside the Echmiadzin cathedral of the Armenian Apostolic Church, October 19, 2025

Armenian Church ‘Unshaken’ By Arrests of More Priests

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Armenian Apostolic Church is undaunted by the arrests of two more of its priests, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II said on Sunday, October 19, after a law-enforcement agency opened a new criminal case which could land him in jail.

Karekin struck a defiant note as he addressed hundreds of members and supporters of a new opposition movement who gathered at his Echmiadzin headquarters in a show of support for the supreme head of the church. They prayed with him at the historic Echmiadzin cathedral before holding a candlelight vigil around it.

“Despite the reprehensible anti-church actions of the authorities, our Holy Church remains unshaken and strong — sustained by the faith and devotion of her people,” Karekin said after the prayer service. “With the same zeal, it continues to fulfill its God-given mission, striving to safeguard the interests of our nation and Homeland.

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PM Pashinyan Meets Pope Leo XIV At the Vatican

VATICAN CITY (Public Radio of Armenia) — As part of his official visit to the Holy See, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan met with His Holiness Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican on October 20.

The Pope welcomed Pashinyan’s visit and his participation in the canonization ceremony of Archbishop Ignatius Maloyan and six other Blessed. The Pope emphasized the close relations established between the Holy See and Armenia, particularly highlighting the role of the Mkhitarist Congregation of Venice in strengthening these ties.

Pashinyan congratulated Leo XIV on his election as pope and expressed confidence that under his leadership, the tradition of close dialogue between the Holy See and Armenia would continue.



Pope Leo XIV meets with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

During the meeting, the sides also discussed regional developments, including efforts to achieve peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as humanitarian issues. The Pope welcomed the progress made toward peace and expressed hope that lasting stability in the region would mark the beginning of a new phase of cooperation and development.

Pashinyan reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to peace and prosperity for Armenia and the region.

Gyumri Mayor Arrested on Corruption Charges Amid Standoff with Government

YEREVAN — Armenian authorities have arrested the Gyumri Mayor Vardan Ghukasyan on corruption charges following a tense day-long standoff at city hall, where police surrounded the building and clashed with Ghukasyan’s supporters.

The Anti-Corruption Committee announced on Monday, October 20, that Ghukasyan and seven others were accused of soliciting and receiving bribes, including a payment of 4 million drams (\$10,000) to legalize an illegally built see CORRUPTION. page 20

Appeal in Light of New Worrying Developments in Armenia: Time for All to Get Serious

Formal reconciliations with centuries-old enemies are extremely fragile and easily broken if we do not unite and strengthen the inherent potential of our entire nation.

At this point, the situation in Armenia has turned outrageous. The authorities must stop the unprecedented and unacceptable attack unleashed against the clergy of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, an attack which is unprecedented in scope and in kind in the entire history of our people.

The Armenian Apostolic Church, in turn, must remain out of domestic political disputes and further motivate the faithful to morally support Armenian statehood.

The authorities must prioritize, most importantly, strengthening internal solidarity as well as doubling the military capabilities of the Armenian Army, regardless of the fragile agreements signed or to be signed, which in time of crises, remain only written on paper.

The authorities must organize and meaningfully carry out the work of making the best use of the diaspora’s capabilities for the benefit of the homeland.

The diaspora, in its turn, must use its worldwide presence in a purposeful manner to promote pro-Armenian or favorable positions on an international scale.



unprecedentedly difficult days faced by our homeland and people, we are all accountable, for what we have done as much as for what we have not done, to God and history, today and in the future.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party
Coordinated Press
October 17, 2025

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New Book Portrays How Women Experience War
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AYC Golf Fore Kids Classic Makes History with First Hole-In-One Winner
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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia in Talks with Russia to Extend Truck Drivers' Stay

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia has formally asked Russia to extend the maximum stay of foreign nationals in the country from 90 to 180 days, Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan told lawmakers on Tuesday, October 21.

According to Papoyan, Moscow has given an initially positive response, and a draft legislative proposal is already under internal consideration in Russia. The issue is expected to be discussed at the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) meeting on October 24.

The move follows protests by Armenian truck drivers against a recent change to Russia's migration rules. Under amendments to Article 115 of the federal law, foreign citizens are allowed to remain in Russia for only 90 days within a year. Drivers say the restriction unfairly affects those involved in freight and passenger transport, leading to fines and bans on re-entry.

Over recent weeks, truckers have staged demonstrations to secure an exemption or an extension to the 90-day limit.

World Bank: Inflation Hits 3.7 Percent in September

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — According to the World Bank's latest monthly economic update on Armenia, inflation in September 2025 stood at 3.7 percent year-on-year, with a month-on-month increase of 0.1 percent compared to August.

The report states that the rise was mainly due to higher prices for food and non-alcoholic beverages, which saw a 5.8 percent annual increase.

Inflation was also influenced by price growth in health services (up 3.5 percent) and transportation (up 4.1 percent), both of which are key components of Armenia's consumer basket.

Lawyer Decries Karapetyan Detention

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Lawyer Aram Vardevanyan on October 21 accused authorities of pursuing a politically motivated prosecution against Samvel Karapetyan, who has been in detention for more than 120 days.

"Samvel Karapetyan has been unlawfully detained for over 120 days on politically motivated charges," he wrote on Facebook.

Vardevanyan said the sole basis for Karapetyan's detention is a statement he made on June 17, in defense of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, which investigators allege amounted to a call for the seizure of power in Armenia.

No credible evidence supports the additional economic charges he said. He noted that rallies in July and October 2025, organized in support of Karapetyan, took place peacefully.

Armenian Church 'Unshaken' By Arrests of More Priests

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"We call upon all our faithful children to stand firm, not to lose heart in the face of hardships and trials, but to move forward with apostolic courage, 'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.'"

Like other Armenian opposition groups, the In Our Way movement led by jailed billionaire Samvel Karapetyan has strongly condemned Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's continuing efforts to depose Karekin. The opposition says that the October 15 arrest and prosecution of two clerics is part of that campaign.

Bishop Mkrtich Proshyan, the primate of the church diocese in Armenia's central Aragatsotn province, and a parish priest were among at least local 13 clergymen rounded up by law-enforcement authorities that day. The Investigative Committee claims that Proshyan, who is a nephew of Karekin, forced his subordinates to attend opposition rallies held in the run-up to 2021 parliamentary elections and interfered with their "electoral rights." He denies the accusations.

The Catholicos condemned on Sunday the "false and fabricated charges" brought against the two men as well as Archbishops Bagrat Galstanyan and Mikael Ajapahyan, who were arrested on separate charges in June.

"Our love and prayers are with them," he said. "We believe that with God's help, justice will prevail and our brothers and sisters unlawfully deprived of their freedom will be released."

In what is widely seen as a related development, pro-government news websites publicized on Friday, October 17, purported audio of a 2023 phone conversation between an Echmiadzin-based archbishop and

a now defrocked priest who claimed that Karekin told him to attend anti-government rallies along with his relatives. The priest also complained about the Catholicos' decision to relocate him from Echmiadzin to a parish in the northern city of Vanadzor described by him as too remote.

the inquiry as a prelude to Karekin's arrest and prosecution.

Following the October 15 arrests, Pashinyan dismissed opposition claims that he declared war on the church at the behest of Azerbaijan, whose top Shia Muslim cleric has repeatedly condemned its top clergy in



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II is greeted by members of the In Our Way movement, Echmiadzin, October 19, 2025.

The church's Mother See did not deny the authenticity of the recording while accusing the authorities of seeking to discredit the clergy. It also said that the phone call was wiretapped illegally and cannot be used as incriminating evidence. Condemnations also poured in from opposition figures and other critics of Pashinyan.

Nevertheless, the Investigative Committee swiftly launched a formal inquiry under the same articles of the Armenian Criminal Code that were used against the arrested Bishop Proshyan. As of October 20, the law-enforcement agency did not name any suspects in the case. Some legal experts critical of the government regard the launch of

recent months. The premier began attacking the clergy in late May just as Karekin accused Azerbaijan of committing ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, destroying the region's Armenian churches and illegally occupying Armenian border areas during an international conference in Switzerland.

Pashinyan threatened to forcibly remove the Catholicos from his Echmiadzin headquarters on June 26. In a July 20 appeal, the premier urged supporters to be ready to "free" the Mother See. Opposition leaders warned Pashinyan against trying to seize the seat of the Catholicos. They also told their own supporters to be ready to gather at the Mother See in support of Karekin.

New CivilNet series 'House Culture' Visits Armenia with Host Christopher Atamian

In Armenia, a land of breathtaking landscapes, ancient traditions, and a history that stretches back millennia, culture is not just celebrated, it is lived. In "House Culture," writer and filmmaker Christopher Atamian takes viewers inside the intimate spaces where some of Armenia's most revered artists and writers once lived, creating a vivid portrait of a nation's soul through its house museums or doon tankarans.

From the sleek, modern Saryan House Museum in Yerevan's bustling Kentron district, to the folkloric 19th-century home of the avant-garde Aslamazyan sisters in Gyumri, Armenia's second-largest city, these museums are more than archives — they are living testaments to creativity, memory, and legacy.

Discussing the project's outcome, Atamian commented: "It gives me great pleasure to present the lives of renowned Armenian writers and artists to audiences who may never have heard of them before or only know snippets of works memorized in school or elsewhere."

Although shooting in a foreign country can sometimes be challenging, Atamian credited the CivilNet team for their dedication: "CivilNet made talented people available to me throughout, especially

producer and researcher Hasmik Hovhannisyan, and our amazing editor and camera person Ani Balayan. We wrote and shot the five films in about two months — which is quite a clip. But ultimately it is thanks to the team in Yerevan that they turned out so well."

Across five short films, Atamian explores stories of genius and resilience. The journey begins with three of Armenia's literary giants: Yeghishe Charents, Paruyr Sevak, and Avetik Isahakyan.

Charents, the country's literary rebel, lived fast and wrote fiercely, drawing comparisons to Russia's Mayakovsky. Sevak, born in the humble village of Zangakatur near the Iranian border, rose to national prominence through his unmatched poetic mastery. Isahakyan, inspired by the mysticism of Persian poets Hafez and Rumi, crafted some of Armenia's most romantic and enduring verses.

From the poetic, the series moves on to the cinematic: the Parajanov Museum, perched above a gigantic gorge in Yerevan, honors Sergei Parajanov, the visionary filmmaker often called the "Fellini of the Caucasus." Though he passed away before the museum's completion, Parajanov's singular vision continues to inspire

— from avant-garde cinema circles to pop icons like Lady Gaga.

Finally, viewers step into the Lusik Aguletsi House Museum, dedicated to a woman displaced from her ancestral village of Agulis in Nakhichevan. A self-taught anthropologist and artist, she preserved over a thousand artifacts — from traditional garments and puppets to intricate silverwork — ensuring that a threatened cultural legacy endures.

Armenia has given the world some of its most exceptional poets, artists, and filmmakers. In these five short films, Christopher Atamian invites viewers into houses of memory, celebrating the creators who shaped the soul of this extraordinary nation. This is more than a series—it is a cinematic journey into the heart of a culture where art, history, and life converge.

Experience all five films in the series on YouTube:

In addition to Atamian (Writer, Producer, Narrator), the following people worked on the films: Hasmik Hovhannisyan (Producer); Maria Yeghiazaryan (Producer); Ani Balayan (Editor and Camera); Tigran Margaryan (Camera); Gevorg Haroyan (Camera) and Salpi Ghazarian (Supervising Producer).



ARMENIA

FAR Board Members Visit Armenia

By Elizabeth Yekhtikian

YEREVAN — The Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) Board of Directors returned to Armenia this fall for a visit that blended reflection, renewal, and faith in the country’s next generation. It was a journey that Board Chair Randy Sapah-Gulian described as a moment to measure both time and progress — before and after the COVID-19 pandemic and the Second Artsakh War.

“A lot has changed,” Sapah-Gulian said. “I have probably been to Armenia 35 or 40 times, and there is nothing more pleasant than seeing the development over the years with each visit and realizing that you have your small contribution, your small share

services, and economic development. “By 2004 or 2005, we realized this mission was greater than construction or infrastructure,” Sapah-Gulian said. “We needed to build the spirit of people so they could grow and establish themselves from within.”

The delegation began in the western province of Armavir, touring the James and Marta Batmasian Vocational Training Center in Parakar. Revitalized in 2019, the center enables students with and without disabilities to learn side by side in fields such as mechanics, carpet weaving, culinary arts, hairstyling, and gardening.

Later, in Tavush Province, Board members visited sites supported through FAR’s Breaking the Cycle of Poverty Program (BCPP), made possible by Board Member

Edward Mardigian and the Mardigian Family Foundation. The group also met with local entrepreneurs who were beneficiaries of FAR programs and displayed their handiwork. Many of these merchants were displaced from Artsakh and are actively establishing a new life in their communities.

At ACT College in Yerevan, the Board celebrated the opening of new technology labs. Board Member Sandra Shahinian, who inaugurated the new lab



Board Member Sandra Shahinian cuts the ribbon at the opening of the new technology lab at ACT College in Yerevan



Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan admires a painting during the Board’s visit to the Vanadzor Art School

of participation in all of this, to develop your historical heritage.”

Since its founding in 1993, FAR’s mission has evolved from rebuilding basic infrastructure to strengthening the spirit of the Armenian people through education, social services, healthcare, child protection

named in her honor, reflected on FAR’s focus on youth and innovation.

“I feel that the young people FAR are nurturing here are the roses of Armenia that will grow, flourish, and bloom,” she said. “Seeing this project come to fruition is truly remarkable. The emphasis is on technol-

ogy — to use it for the future and to build skills for students who can go out into the world and immediately launch a career.”

The board made several other stops, including the Mardigian Child Protection Center in Yerevan, the Vanadzor Old Age Home — where the group celebrated the International Day of Seniors — and the Vanadzor Art School, where the Gyumri Octet performed for guests and students.

Each stop along the route began with a prayer and blessing from Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, president of FAR and Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

“As we gather here today with the FAR Board of Directors, we are reminded of a profound truth — that material resources are never merely material,” Parsamyan said at the Vanadzor Art School. “They are infused with spirit. That spirit we see in your love for art, for our culture, and for

our sacred homeland.”

Reflecting on the trip, FAR’s executive director, US Headquarters, Bree Carriglio, noted, “FAR’s work isn’t just about what we build or the projects we sponsor, but it is really about the people we empower. Seeing our board connect with the people whose lives they’ve changed was deeply inspiring.”

The trip concluded at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, where Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, welcomed the delegation and offered his blessings, expressing gratitude for FAR’s decades-long service in uniting Armenia and the diaspora.

Before departing, Shahinian shared a sentiment that captured the visit’s purpose. “We will not be here anymore, but what we are doing is sending a message to the future,” she said. “The children are cared for by the most skillful hands and the deepest, most compassionate hearts. Thank you for taking care of the children of Armenia.”

Generation AI Expands Nationwide as FAST and Armenia’s Education Ministry Bring AI Education Regions

YEREVAN — The Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST), in partnership with Armenia’s Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS), has announced the nationwide scale-up of the Generation AI program across public high schools in all regions of Armenia.

FAST and the ministry brought together a broad community of Armenian and international partners, beneficiaries, and supporters to review the results of the program’s second year — piloted in Armenia’s public high schools since 2023 — and to outline the next stage of its expansion, with Generation AI set to reach up to 45 high

schools across Armenia by 2026.

Launched in 2023, Generation AI provides free, advanced education in AI, mathematics, and Python programming to high school students across Armenia.

By the 2025-26 academic year, the program has expanded to 23 high schools nationwide, bringing AI learning opportunities to more than 400 new 10th graders and reaching over 1,000 students since its launch.

Opening the event, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Zhanna Andreasyan highlighted the program’s growing international recognition.

“We started with small steps, and today our experience is being shared on global platforms. This is a testament to the exemplary partnership between MoESCS and FAST. The state must be able to hear bold, innovative ideas and turn them into systemic change — and today, we’re doing that together.”

FAST Executive Director Suzanna Shamakhyan emphasized Armenia’s forward-looking approach to education in the era of AI:

“Around the world, education systems are trying to adapt to the AI and technological revolution. It’s no coincidence that the Generation AI model has attracted such strong international interest. No single in-



stitution could have achieved this alone — it’s the result of co-creation among the public and private sectors, the diaspora, international partners, teachers, and a vast expert community.”

At the heart of the event were Generation AI students, who shared their experiences and showcased first AI-driven models during the student project expo.

Rozi Havanjyan, a 12th grader at Gyum-

ri Economic College who will soon be among the program’s first graduates, said:

“The most important thing this program has given me is confidence in my knowledge and in my competitiveness,” she said.

“Learning in this field has taught me not to fear challenges or new ideas, and to think like a creator. Now, whenever I see a problem, I automatically think about how it could be solved with data or AI.”



André Andonian, Chair of the Board of Trustees, FAST



ARMENIA

Armenia's Teacher Certification System Faces Praise and Criticism

By Shoghik Mikayelyan & Nina Abgaryan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GYUMRI, Armenia — In 2021, Armenia introduced a system of voluntary certification for teachers, designed to assess subject knowledge and reward those who demonstrate excellence. Those who achieve top results can see their salaries rise to 300,000 drams (roughly \$783) — about two and a half times higher than the average teacher's pay. The goal was to encourage self-education and raise professional standards across the country's schools.

At first, the initiative was welcomed as a long-awaited opportunity to motivate teachers and modernize the education system. It offered a sense of fairness and merit: those who worked hard, learned and improved their skills would be recognized and rewarded. Yet, as the program enters its fourth year, it continues to provoke mixed feelings. Many teachers appreciate the incentive to grow, while others view the process as inconsistent, stressful, and at times unjust.

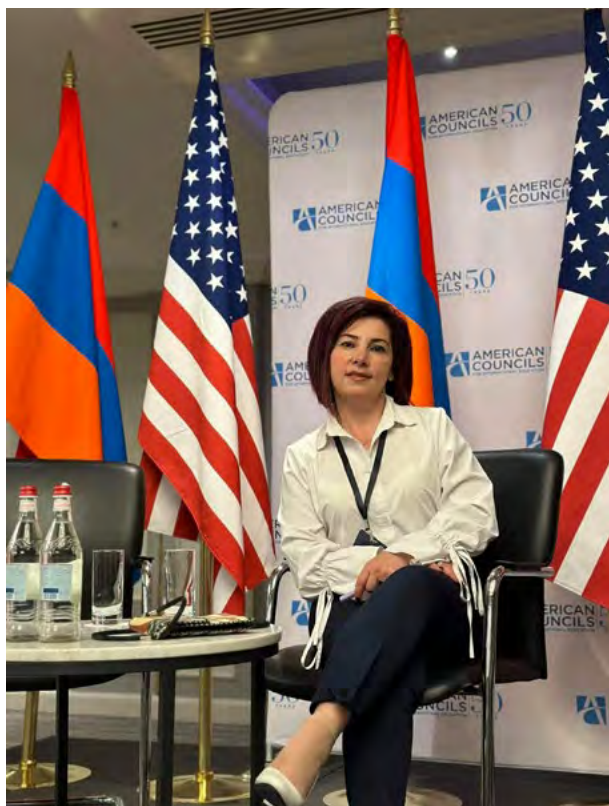
One recurring concern is the lack of equivalence across subjects. Teachers report that exams in some areas are easier than in others, raising questions about fairness. Another issue is the growing tension between the system's original promise of voluntariness and its current enforcement mechanisms. Although the initiative began as optional, teachers who fail to demonstrate sufficient progress over two years risk losing their jobs. This paradox has discouraged participation; not taking the test now feels safer than risking potential dismissal.

Data from the Ministry of Education shows that participation remains low. Only around 5,600 teachers have applied since the system began, and many of them are repeat participants or not currently employed in schools. In some years, up to 40 percent of those who registered never showed up for the exam.

Beyond the numbers lies a deeper question about what kind of teacher Armenia hopes to cultivate. While the certification process focuses primarily on subject knowledge, the realities of today's classrooms demand far more. Teachers are not only transmitters of information. They are mediators, mentors, and often the first responders to complex emotional and social issues among students. Bullying, discipline, and conflict resolution are pressing challenges in many schools, yet these dimensions are not addressed in the current assessment framework.

An Experienced Teacher's Point of View

Ohanna Avetisyan, an English language teacher and founder/CEO of EDUZone Language Center in Gyumri with over 23 years teaching experience, is co-author of Armenia's new Grade 11 and Grade 12 English textbooks. She has played a key role in modernizing English instruction nationwide and has been a Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement Fellow (USA, 2022) and two-time Best Teacher of the Year in Armenia (2017, 2024). She has worked extensively with the British Council as a trainer and international facilitator and given various conference presentations, including at International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Edinburgh (2025).



Ohanna Avetisyan at an American Councils for International Education event



Ohanna Avetisyan at EduZone, her language center

Avetisyan has taken part in the certification process every year since its inception. She has consistently achieved high results and views the initiative as fundamentally positive — if implemented fairly. “A teacher, like an athlete, must constantly train his/her mind,” Avetisyan says. She continues: “Certification, if done right, motivates us to keep learning, to test ourselves, and to grow professionally.”

Avetisyan recalls the initial uncertainty surrounding the program. “In the beginning, not all subjects were included, and many teachers didn't understand what to expect. Even though it was voluntary, there was a lot of fear and tension.” The fear was not unfounded. Over time, the government's policy adjustments made the process feel less voluntary and more obligatory. The situation reached a breaking point when it was announced that 136 English teachers could lose their jobs for failing to meet the required threshold. The news sparked outrage, protests and widespread anxiety within the teaching community.

Avetisyan was among those who joined in voicing concerns, though she herself passed the exam. Following the backlash, the Ministry of Education and the State Educational Service formed a working group to review the system. As a result, the teachers who had failed were given the opportunity to retake the certification — a small but significant victory for fairness and dialogue.

This year, the process moved online, introducing both improvements and new complications. While the electronic system reduced some bureaucratic delays, it also created new obstacles. Many teachers encountered unstable internet connections and software glitches during the tests. The stress of navigating technical issues, combined with the high stakes of the exam, left many unable to perform at their best.

“Many teachers failed not because they lacked knowledge,” Avetisyan explains, “but because of technical problems. The stress of the process and the online format made it very hard to focus.”

In previous years, when exams were administered on paper, different challenges emerged: unclear instructions, lack of time, and confusion about how to fill out answer

sheets. In both cases, technical difficulties rather than professional incompetence led to poor outcomes.

Another issue lies in the test design itself. Some of the tasks are adapted from international exams such as the British Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT). While this approach raises the standards of teacher assessment, Avetisyan believes it also creates inequality. “An ordinary teacher from a small town may not even know what the TKT methodology is,” she says. “We must ensure that all participants are equally prepared. Otherwise, we're not measuring ability — we're measuring access.”

Despite these shortcomings, Avetisyan believes that the system can be an important stimulus for growth. “Many teachers, after going through this process, started taking their work more seriously,” she reflects. “They attend trainings, study independently, and take pride in improving their teaching. In that sense, the system has achieved part of its goal.”

At the same time, she insists that certification should never become a threat. “Voluntary certification should not be a punishment or a reason for dismissal,” she says firmly. “It should be an opportunity for self-development, not a test of survival.”

Her words capture the dilemma at the heart of Armenia's education reforms: how to encourage excellence without fostering fear. Teachers, like their students, need support, trust, and fair conditions to thrive. Motivation built on anxiety is rarely sustainable.

As the government continues refining the system, many educators hope that future reforms will emphasize not only subject knowledge but also the broader human dimensions of teaching — empathy, communication, and emotional intelligence. After all, the quality of education depends not only on what teachers know, but also on how they connect, inspire, and guide the next generation.

The certification system, for all its flaws, has sparked a national conversation about what it means to be a teacher in Armenia today. It is both a symbol of progress and a reminder that true educational reform requires more than exams. It requires trust, fairness, and a shared vision for the kind of schools and society Armenia wants to build.



INTERNATIONAL



Several of the former officials of Artsakh on trial in Baku

Armenian Prisoners Resisting Sham Trial In Baku as Much as Possible, MP Says

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Opposition MP Tigran Abrahamyan said that Armenian prisoners held in Baku are resisting Azerbaijan's fabricated charges during the ongoing show trial.

In a social media post on Monday, October 20, the Pativ Unem faction secretary revealed that former Artsakh officials Levon Mnatsakanyan, David Ishkhanyan and Davit Babayan had rejected allega-

tions based on interviews, online sources and social media statements.

"Obviously, Azerbaijan is acting according to a pre-planned script. However, the Armenians held hostage there are resisting as much as possible and exposing the misery of the Azerbaijani accusations and the falsifications during the sham trial," the MP wrote.

He added that Ishkhanyan had demand-

ed the disclosure of an alleged classified order attributed to former Artsakh Defense Army commander Kamo Vardanyan, which the court had read but not authenticated.

Abrahamyan stressed the Armenian government's silence on the Baku trial "has given Azerbaijan free rein to fabricate accusations" against numerous Armenian military and political leaders.

EU Investments in Armenia To Reach €2.5 Billion

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The ongoing investments by the European Union in Armenia, implemented through various programs, are ultimately expected to reach 2.5 billion euros, the head of the EU Dele-

he said at a press briefing in Syunik province.

He elaborated that the €2.5 billion in investments include the "Green Yerevan" initiative, the purchase of 87 MAN-brand buses as part of Yerevan's public transport reform, the renovation of 50 kindergartens in the capital, as well as investments aimed at improving power transmission lines between Armenia and Georgia — a project that is "crucial for opening up Armenia's electricity market and enabling more green energy initiatives and investments in the coun-



Ambassador Vassilis Maragos

try." Maragos said on Friday, October 17.

Maragos described the investments as a "significant commitment that the European Union has undertaken since 2021."

"These are projects that are either already being implemented or are in the preparation phase. For example, the Sisian-Kajaran highway, including the tunnel, is part of these initiatives. These are investments we are making through the EU budget, in the form of loans taken by the Government of Armenia, as well as investments from other partners within the framework of the "Resilient Syunik – Team Europe" initiative,"

try."

"Armenia has tremendous potential in the field of electricity generation through solar photovoltaic panels, and the opening of regional connections — which will hopefully take place within the framework of the peace process — will create numerous new opportunities. These are not just opportunities for business; they are opportunities for the Armenian people, for Armenia's economy, and for the creation of more and better-quality jobs," the EU Ambassador said.

Maragos emphasized that the European Union stands shoulder to shoulder with Armenia to help the country become "more

'Rising Leaders Armenia' Launches Graduate Development Program

YEREVAN — Initiated by Corporación América S.A., Armenia International Airports CJSC is launching the Graduate Development Program Armenia, aimed at repatriating students with an Armenian background and the desire to work in Armenia.

As part of the "Rising Leaders Armenia" initiative, the program offers a unique opportunity for recent Armenian graduates and early-career professionals to gain hands-on experience at Zvartnots International Airport, followed by an international assignment at one of the companies within the Corporación América Airports global network — in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Italy or Uruguay.

Upon completion of the program, participants return to Armenia to continue their professional journey, contributing to the development of the country's aviation and infrastructure sectors.

To learn more about the program, visit <https://risingleadersarmenia.am/gdpa2025-po-en> and to apply: <https://risingleadersarmenia.am/gdpa-2025-en>. The application deadline is October 31.

resilient and more sovereign."

Maragos also highlighted the role of the EU Monitoring Mission in Armenia (EUMA) in contributing to peace in the South Caucasus and to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

INTERNATIONAL

Germany Supports US-Brokered Peace Deal

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Germany is ready to support the Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements reached in Washington on August 8, the German Ambassador to Armenia, Claudia Busch, said on October 17.

Speaking to reporters in Syunik province, Busch said that Germany had significant involvement in the Armenian-Azerbaijani talks.

"We have held meetings in Berlin and carried out various efforts, for which the leaderships of Armenia and Azerbaijan have expressed their gratitude. Now, we need to look toward the future and understand what the next steps should be. We have seen progress in the measures taken in Washington. The German government is ready to support these efforts. This is a long journey, but we have already witnessed a prolonged period of peace without clashes," Busch said.

Ambassador Donates Books to Athens School

ATHENS (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia's Ambassador to Greece, Tigran Mkrtchyan, visited the International Metropolitan School at the invitation of the school's administration on October 21.

Mkrtchyan was welcomed by the head of the school and member of its Board of Directors, Konstantina Valsamidou, and the school librarian, Ioanna Xenaki. Accompanied by them, he toured the new secondary school building in the Alkimos district, which was inaugurated in 2022.

During the visit, Mkrtchyan presented the school with a collection of books on Armenian history and culture.

Austrian Churches Express Support for Armenian Counterpart

VIENNA (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria issued a statement expressing full solidarity with the Armenian Apostolic Church and the entire Christian community of Armenia, on October 21.

The council noted that after expressing concern in early July over the arrest of high-ranking clergy, the situation has only worsened. Two archbishops (Mikael Ajapahyan and Bagrat Galstanyan), one bishop (Mkrtich Proshyan), and a parish priest (Garegin Arsenyan) have since been detained.

The letter reads in part, "Archbishop Mikael Ajapahyan has already been sentenced to two years in prison, while the other clergy remain in pre-trial detention. These developments have caused deep disappointment and sorrow among many believers in Austria and around the world.

"The arrest, detention, and sentencing of high-ranking clergy clearly pose a challenge to religious freedom. We are concerned that this approach is incompatible with the principles of the rule of law and human rights."

New Book Portrays How Women Experience War

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

FRANKFURT, Germany — Armenia was present again this year at the Frankfurt Book Fair (FBF), the most important such exhibition worldwide, with a new, expanded display. The enlarged stand provided ample space to showcase new titles, in Armenian as well as foreign language translations. And on Friday, October 17, the third day of the five-day fair and the first open to the public, Armenia presented a new book to visitors.

An estimated 200,000 people came to the fair this year. In addition to the pavilions hosting 4,000 publishers from 90 countries, as well as the guest country — this year, the Philippines — the FBF offers exhibitors the opportunity to let authors talk about their latest creations in open foyers located between the large pavilions.

The new release presented by Arevik Ashkaroyan of the ARI Literature Foundation, *Last Night on Earth: War through Women's Gaze: Stories from Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine*, is a graphic essay, a format which has been rapidly gaining popularity. The authors are Armenian Ani Asatryan, Georgian Ekaterine Togonidze, and Ukrainian Vira Kuryko. Illustrators Astghik Harutyunyan, Luka Lashkhi, and Sofia Pokorchak, from the three countries, respectively, were chosen through a competition. They, as well as editor Mikheil Tsikhelashvili were present at the round table.

The book is the product of the EU Creative Europe Programme, a consortium of partners from the three countries. This project, dedicated to development of the comic genre, is titled Visual Stories from Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. Open to comics artists and writers, it seeks to develop the genre through seminars and training sessions in all aspects of the production process, from writing and illustration, to financing and marketing. This book, as its title shows, aims at depicting the experience of women in war, their role in it and how it impacts their lives.

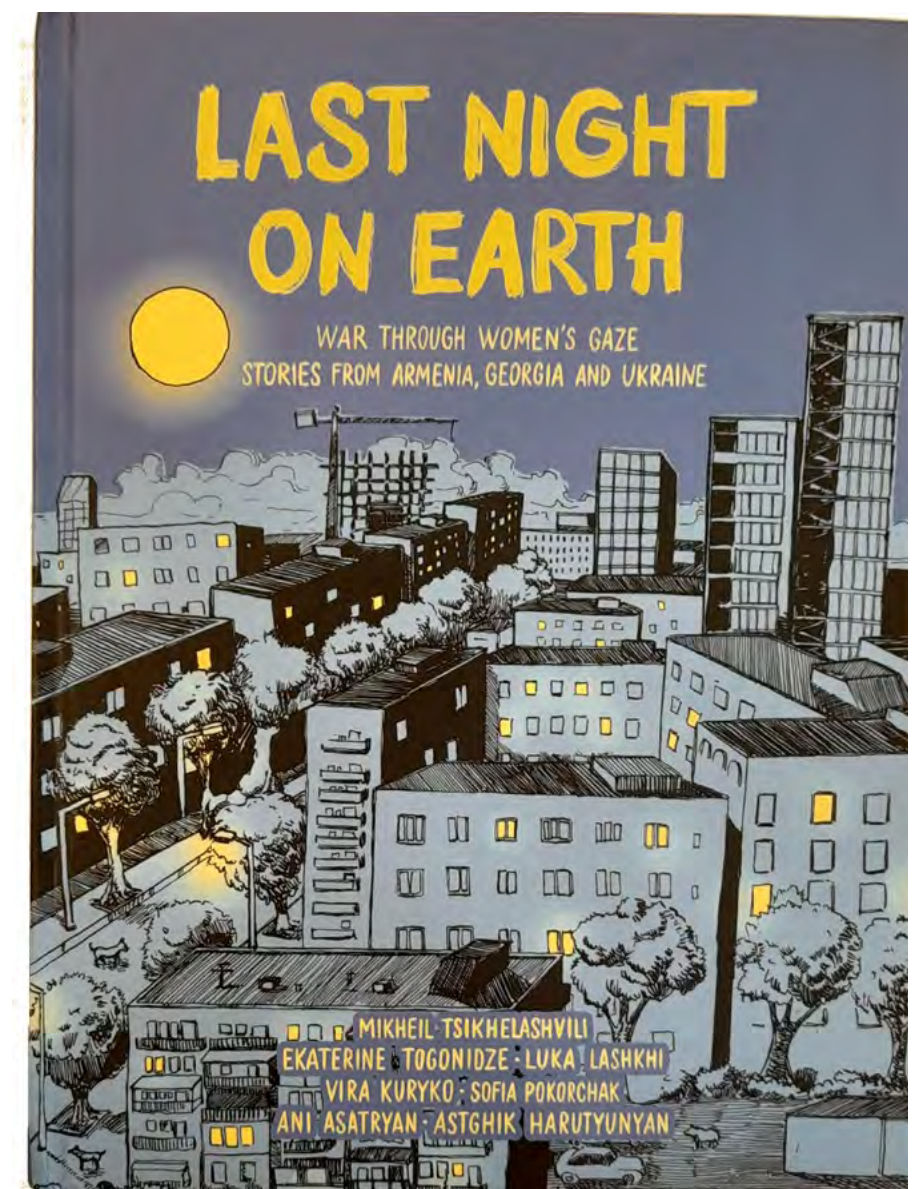
"The River of People," by Georgian writer Ekaterine Togonidze, was, as il-

lustrator Luka Lashkhi said, "inspired by real people, and shows what chaotic lives they had to lead in times of war." The author's aim was to present "a slice of life" in wartime.

Ukrainian illustrator Sofia Pokorchak also stressed that her country's contribution was based on real life events. Entitled, "Last Night on Earth," it tells the story of a woman whose husband was on the front lines. At intervals, she would travel from the city to see him at a meeting point near the front. That was safe at the time, a year or so ago, but now the front lines have changed and it is no longer possible to meet there, because the entire area has been reduced to ruins.

Many in the audience were surprised when they heard editor Tsikhelashvili say that none of the three authors had been readers of graphic literature before they joined the project. This meant that considerable discussion would be required. "They were used to writing works of 200 pages or more!" he noted. "And now we were asking them to turn in a manuscript of no longer than 30 pages." He related how Ukrainian writer Vira Kuryko told him she was not an author at all, and asked if she could simply tell him her story and he would write it down. This he did. Then, as far as the illustrators were concerned, they faced the challenge of translating the narratives into images. The final publication has already appeared in print in several languages, including English and those of the authors.

Moderator Arevik Ashkaroyan, who admitted she had not been a comics reader either and discovered that the genre dealt with serious issues, asked the contributors about the situation in their respective countries. "What impact do these comics have in your countries?" she asked. The Ukraine-Russia conflict is well known internationally, but "what about Armenian and Azerbaijan? What do Georgians think about the conflicts in Abkhazia and Ossetia?" According to Pokorchak, the situation in Ukraine had changed radically in the last two years. Areas that earlier were safe are now danger zones. She cited the case of a musician who had been used



to performing in concert halls, and now found himself in battle. The graphic essays, she said, "are effective in depicting the war the reality of war in an uncomplicated, easy manner."

Lashkhi added that the story from Georgia begins with the Abkhazia war in the 1990s, then deals with the conflict in 2008. The story is presented in parallel to the political conflict and chaos being played out on Georgia's domestic front.

Editor Tsikhelashvili said the last war in 2020 led to a process of readjustment. He stressed that nearly all Armenians come from families of survivors of the

1915 genocide and, as a result, their experience of current day conflict evokes memories of the past. In Armenia, he noted, comics were non-existent until recently, but now they are slowly becoming popular.

To understand the situation in present day Georgia, Lashkhi said, "One must realize that for the last 30 years we have been living under authoritarian rule. There are demonstrations occurring daily, and for us it is a matter of being an active part of this protest process, being engaged in the opposition."

This unique book represents a first-hand account of how women have experienced conflicts involving their nations. And the fact that the editor himself is a descendant of witnesses and participants in the Second World War has given him a special insight into their experiences. In his Preface, Tsikhelashvili recalls hearing from his grandmother about her father's fate: a prisoner of war in Italy, he was later returned to the USSR, where he was arrested as an "enemy of the people," and died soon thereafter. And yet, he writes, "This book is not a war diary. You will rarely hear the rattle of gunfire or the shattering of homes. This book is about the emotional memory and the scars war leaves in the mind — suffocating flashbacks, strange breakfasts during sieges, newborns on overcrowded migrant boats turned into myths, war's poison spiraling through the DNA like a generation's genetic curse. And love and empathy — irrational, desperate, but the last forces keeping us alive in war's tight grip. For many of us, making this book was survival itself. We clung to these stories as the world around us collapsed and betrayed every one of us."

The book is available from www.komorabooks.com.



From left, Arevik Ashkaroyan, Mikheil Tsikhelashvili, Astghik Harutyunyan, Luka Lashkhi, Sofia Pokorchak



Community News

Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence Topic of October Event

WATERTOWN — This Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Armenian Relief Society Cambridge “Shushi” Chapter and the Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center are joining forces to host a free community event on Monday, October 27, 6-8:30 p.m., at the Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center, 75 Common St.

According to the CDC’s National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, About 41 percent of women and 26 percent of men experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and reported a related impact. In Boston alone, the 2024 Police Crime Statistics Report showed 903 incidents of domestic aggravated assault, a rise of 43 cases from the previous year. Yet too often, victims suffer in silence.

This event aims to break the silence by creating a safe space for education, dialogue, and access to resources and support.

The evening will feature four speakers: Wendy Murphy, Peter J. Koutoujian, Lauren Nackel and Rita Cleary.

Murphy is an adjunct professor of sexual violence and law reform at New England Law in Boston, where she also co-directs the Women’s and Children’s Advocacy Project (WCAP) under the Center for Law and Social Responsibility.

Middlesex County Sheriff Koutoujian, is a former prosecutor, legislator, professor and law enforcement leader who has worked on leading issues in public safety and public health and previously on the board of REACH Beyond Domestic Violence.

Nackel, SHRM-CP, is the director of operations and human resources at REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, a comprehensive domestic violence service agency serving 6,000 people a year through a combination of intervention and prevention services.

Cleary is the co-coordinator of the Watertown Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center and has been teaching and practicing Raja Yoga Meditation for over 30 years. She is the founder of the Visions of a Better World Foundation and the Learning Circle, a management consulting company.

The program will include guided discussions on understanding patterns of control and abuse, recognizing both covert and overt indicators of harm, exploring what keeps people in harmful relationships, and identifying available resources and support systems. The evening will also feature a spiritual response to violence and guided meditation.

The evening will start with a light reception at 6 p.m., with the program starting at 6.30 p.m., followed by a question-and-answer session, a guided meditation, concluding at 8.30 p.m.

The event is free and open to the public. Registration is requested by October 25. For more information or to register, email Seda.Aghamianz@gmail.com.



The tree-planting ceremony

Solemn Tree-Planting Ceremony in Yerevan Honors Legacy of AMAA’s Rev. Janbazian

PARAMUS, NJ – A solemn fir tree-planting ceremony was held on September 25, 2025, at the courtyard of the Armenian Missionary Association of America’s (AMAA) Yerevan Headquarters on Baghramyan Ave. 18 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the passing of Rev. Dr. Movses B. Janbazian, a deeply respected spiritual leader and visionary who served as AMAA Executive Director from 1987 to 2000.

The ceremony marked a moment of reflection on Rev. Janbazian’s life, ministry, and lasting legacy, honoring his profound contribution to the spiritual, national, and humanitarian life of Armenian communities in Armenia and the Diaspora. A memorial plaque was also installed in his memory.

The event was led by Serge D. Buchakjian, AMAA CEO/executive director, and attended by members of the AMAA community, leadership, clergy, AMAA Armenia Branch staff, and Louisa Janbazian, the late Reverend’s wife.

In his opening remarks, Buchakjian stated, “From vision to reality, the tree is in memory of a devout Christian, honoring his foresight and the foundation he laid for our presence in Armenia.”

Gary Phillips, Esq., President of the AMAA Board, recalled how in the mid-1990s Rev. Janbazian personally invited him to join the Board. He reflected on Rev. Janbazian’s vision and devoted service to the Association until his untimely passing. Paying tribute to Rev. Janbazian’s enduring spiritual and institutional legacy, Mr. Phillips remarked, “May the roots of this tree grow deep, like the roots that Rev. Janbazian planted when he first arrived in Armenia — roots of faith, vision, and service that continue to sustain and guide the AMAA’s mission to this day.”

Rev. Dr. René Léonian, president of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of Eurasia, shared memories from the years when he served as AMAA’s Representative in Armenia, highlighting Rev. Janbazian’s forward-looking vision and dedication to the Association’s mission in the Homeland.

Rev. Dr. Krikor Youmshajekian, president of the Armenian Missionary Association of Australia, recalled Rev. Janbazian’s 1999 visit to Australia and his role in establishing the Association’s branch there.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Janbazian expressed her gratitude to Buchakjian and the AMAA leadership for honoring her husband’s memory through this meaningful act of tree planting.

Rev. Janbazian joined the AMAA in 1980 as its first Field Director and, after seven years, he succeeded Rev. Dr. Giragos Chopourian as Executive Director. His leadership played a key role in the establishment of the AMAA Armenia Branch and in advancing its mission through numerous programs that continue to this day.

One of the foremost figures in the Armenian Evangelical community, Rev. Janbazian was widely respected for strengthening the AMAA’s spiritual and humanitarian impact, both within Armenia and throughout the Diaspora.

Following the devastating 1988 Spitak earthquake, he acted swiftly to organize and deliver humanitarian aid, often hopping on cargo planes to personally oversee the transportation of relief supplies and coordinate international assistance to meet the urgent needs of the Armenian people.

Rev. Janbazian was also the principal founder of AMAA’s Avedisian School in Yerevan, which for decades has provided quality education rooted in Christian and national values. His spiritual vision extended to Artsakh as well. He was among the first to help revive church life in Armenia and Artsakh and initiated youth and children’s camps, offering spiritual, moral, and material support to generations.



Rev. Dr. Movses B. Janbazian

TUMO Free Afterschool Technology & Design Program Comes to LA

LOS ANGELES — City Councilmember Adrin Nazarian welcomed an overflow crowd to the grand opening of TUMO Los Angeles, the first U.S. beachhead for the free afterschool program that lets teens drive their own learning process and prepare for the creative economy of the 21st Century.

On the afternoon of Saturday, October 18, Councilmember Nazarian, U.S. Representative Luz Rivas, Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martinez, and LAUSD Board President Scott Schmerelson joined TUMO’s founders and board members to introduce the larger community to TUMO’s revolutionary approach to design and technology education.

“They’ve found that secret sauce that takes curious young minds and teaches them not only the language of technology, but how to manage their time, how to become leaders,” said Councilmember Nazarian. Founded in Yerevan, Armenia in 2011, TUMO has grown to open branches in Portugal, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Argentina and Japan.

“What began as a dream to offer teens in Yerevan, Armenia free access to technology and a space to express themselves creatively is now a global movement engaging more than 35,000 students weekly,” said Sam Simonian, tech entrepreneur and founder of TUMO. “I am incredibly proud and grateful to announce that we are now here in Los Angeles, ready to change lives once again.”

As a member of the California State Assembly, Adrin Nazarian discovered TUMO on a trip to Armenia and resolved to bring the innovative design and technology program to Los Angeles. Nazarian secured over \$23 million in funding from the State of California, in addition to support from the City of Los Angeles, for TUMO to acquire a vacant office building on Lankershim Boulevard in Studio City.

Multiple work rooms with banks of computers, a design studio, and a music studio are among the tools at the disposal of junior high and high school-age students who attend TUMO free of charge.

“I’ve opened TUMO centers all over the world and I’m blown away by the engagement of our students here in North Hollywood,” said Sawyer Hescok, Regional Director of TUMO Center for Creative Technologies. “These teens are Los Angeles. They come from every background, bringing their creativity and hard work every day. TUMO is honored to support these incredible, creative minds.”

“In a time when access to opportunity depends so much on privilege, TUMO asserts its commitment to equity and excellence,” said Nazarian. “To every young person in Los Angeles, this space belongs to you.”



COMMUNITY NEWS

St. Leon Church Welcomes 300 Youth for ACYOA Juniors Sports Weekend

FAIR LAWN, N.J. — Columbus Day weekend saw a memorable ACYOA Juniors Sports Weekend , as some 300 ACYOA Juniors (age 13 to 18) and 50 chaperones, representing 18 parishes across the Eastern Diocese, gathered under the theme, “Hye Rooted.”

The weekend began on the evening of Friday, October 10, with visitors arriving at host parish St. Leon Church in Fair Lawn, NJ, for check-in, prayer, and some introductory activities.

On Saturday, October 11, the games began in earnest with classic team sports like volleyball and basketball; individual competitions including chess, backgammon, and ping pong; and a popular new addition: pickleball. The evening saw social activities, a dance, and chances for the youth to mingle.

Saturday was also the day when St. Leon Church was hosting a unique con-celebrated Divine Liturgy, involving six bishops of the Oriental Orthodox churches leading the liturgy together. Among them was Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, who was delighted to spend the day among the young visitors. Many of the ACYOA Juniors were able to take part in the service among the faithful of the visiting sister churches.

On Sunday, the ACYOA Juniors participated in the badarak at St. Leon Church. Fr. Aghan Gogchyan, the visiting Chancellor of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, was the guest celebrant and homilist, delivering a stirring sermon on what it means to be an Armenian Christian in the diaspora, and to hold onto one’s roots. Young souls filled the sanctuary and served at the altar, providing a heartwarming testimony to the Armenian Church’s continuing vitality in America.

Competition resumed after church, with the exciting final matches taking place (see below for the results of the weekend’s games). The awards banquet that evening began with a heartfelt speech from St. Leon ACYOA Juniors chair Aram Chamesian, who touched on the significance of the weekend’s “Hye Rooted” theme. Referencing St. Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians,



and the Eastern Diocese express gratitude to everyone involved, for their support, commitment, and ministry to the ACYOA Juniors of our parish communities.

ACYOA Juniors Fall Sports Weekend (Oct. 10-13, 2025)

The participating parishes were: St. Leon Church, Fair Lawn, NJ (host parish); Armenian Church of Our Saviour, Worcester, MA; Holy Archangels Church, Haverhill, MA; Holy Martyrs Church, Bayside, NY; Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge, MA; Holy Trinity Church, Cheltenham, PA; Soorp Haroutiun Church, Orlando, FL; St. George Church, Hartford, CT; St. Gregory the Enlightener Church, White Plains, NY; St. James Church, Watertown, MA; St. Mary Church, Washington, DC; Sts. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church, Wynnwood, PA; Sts.



Sahag and Mesrob Church, Providence, RI; Elberon, NJ; St. Thomas Church, Tenafly, NJ and Sts. Vartanantz Church, Chelmsford, MA

Three Primates of North America Meet in New York

NEW YORK — Leaders of the three Armenian Church dioceses of North America held their latest meeting on Tuesday, October 14, 2025, at the New York headquarters of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese; Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, Primate of Canada; and Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese, met to discuss mutual concerns ranging from spiritual matters to practical issues of church administration. The three bishops gather formally at least twice a year, in one of their respective diocesan centers.

Topics under discussion at this most recent meeting included collaboration and resource-sharing among the three dioceses; pastoral and educational initiatives; advances in youth and lay ministry; and current challenges in Armenia.

Fr. Hratch Sargsyan, director of Ministries for the Eastern Diocese, joined the bishops for part of the meeting to describe the department’s activities in Christian and Armenian education, youth ministry, and digital outreach.

In addition, clergy from several parishes in the New York-New Jersey region enjoyed lunch with the bishops.

The meeting continued on Wednesday

with presentations at St. Nersess Seminary in Armonk, NY, focused on theological education, clergy formation, and strengthening ties across the North American dioceses.

To conclude their meeting, the Primates issued a joint statement, expressing “our profound concern regarding the recent arrests of clergy in Armenia.”

They also offered prayers for the peace and security of the homeland and the people of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as for the prosperity the Armenian Church in North America, Armenian faithful worldwide, and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

COMPETITION WINNERS

Team Sports

Boys’ Basketball:

St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ

Girls’ Basketball:

St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ

Volleyball: St. Mary, Washington, D.C.

Pickleball: Nina Asatryan & Suren Makichyan

Individual Sports

Advanced Backgammon: Armen Avetisyan

Beginners’ Backgammon: David Gevorgyan

Advanced Chess: Vahagn Gyulnazaryan

Beginners’ Chess: Mark Krikourian

Boys’ Ping Pong: Armen Sharoyan

Girls’ Ping Pong: Nina Asatryan

Samuelian Sportsmanship Award:

Boys category: Allen Arjona

Girls category: Taleen Stephens

he emphasized how each member of the church community is unique and individually called to reflect the faith, but each part becomes united in Christ.

Organizing the exceptional weekend was the work of many hands at the host parish, led by St. Leon pastor Fr. Diran Bohajian, parish youth directors Susan Chamesian and Saynik Chilingirian, and a vibrant ACYOA Juniors Board. Bishop Mesrop



Pictured (seated l-r); Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, and Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, leaders respectively of the Western, Eastern, and Canadian dioceses, joined by clergy from the Eastern Diocese, in St. Vartan Cathedral in New York. (Photo: Mano Baghjajian)



COMMUNITY NEWS

AYC Golf Fore Kids Classic Makes History with First Hole-In-One Winner

ROCKVILLE, Md. — The Armenian Youth Center (AYC) of Greater Washington, D.C. hosted its 8th Annual Golf Fore Kids charity outing at Norbeck Country Club, drawing a sold-out field of golfers, families, and supporters from across the United States. The event made history with the tournament's first-ever hole-in-one, which earned the winner a \$10,000 prize and delighted attendees during a memorable day of sport and service.

Since its inception, the Golf Fore Kids Committee has distributed more than \$100,000 to local Armenian-American youth organizations, including Armenian language and Sunday schools, sports teams,

bors in need.

"We never imagined how quickly this would become a national gathering for our community," said Charles Yessaian, Co-Chairman and Co-Founder. "This year's first hole-in-one was a thrilling milestone, and we're grateful to our sponsors, volunteers, and players whose generosity powers our impact."

What began in the spring has become a beloved first-Monday-in-October tradition, with participants traveling from California, Massachusetts, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Florida, Colorado, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Save the Date: 2026 — Organizers an-



Team spirit: A foursome celebrates a great round under blue skies. (Talar Festekjian photo)



Champions' circle: Winners display framed Masters memorabilia after the awards program. (Talar Festekjian photo)

scouting, dance groups, and musical ensembles. A portion of proceeds continues to support plans for a brick-and-mortar Armenian Youth Center — a lasting home for cultural and educational enrichment in the D.C. area.

For the second consecutive year, the outing partnered with Operation Homefront, helping provide essential support to military families. The committee's expanding mission reflects a simple goal: to uplift youth, strengthen community ties, and serve neigh-

nounced that next year's event—now renamed the AYC Golf Fore Kids Classic—will return to Norbeck Country Club (Rockville, Md.) on Monday, October 5, 2026.

The AYC is a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit serving the Greater Washington, D.C. area. Its Golf Fore Kids fundraiser supports local Armenian-American youth organizations, fostering camaraderie through cultural, social, educational, and athletic endeavors.



Giving back: AYC presents a donation to the St. Mary ACYOA Juniors. (Talar Festekjian photo)

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COMMUNITY NEWS

NAASR Announces Endowments Expanding Its Activities

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) celebrated its 70th anniversary in a grand way with a gala banquet at Boston's Fairmont Copley Hotel on October 4. The program highlighted new endowments allowing NAASR to increase the scope of its activities, honored a number of important intellectuals, and featured as keynote speaker Dr. Anthony Marx, president of the New York Public Library (NYPL).

Two masters of ceremonies, Thomas Simsarian Dolan and Nora Lessersohn, kept the evening's program moving with their lively banter. Dr. Dolan, a faculty fellow in Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies at Emory University, is writing an institutional history of the AGBU, editing a volume on the 2020 Artsakh war, and consulting with Los Angeles County's Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative. Dr. Lessersohn is a lecturer in history at the University of Southern California's Washington D.C. campus who has written about her Armenian great-grandfather Hovhannes Cherishian, and now is completing a manuscript on Christopher Oscanyan, a 19th-century Armenian-American figure involved in politics and entertainment.

The two hosts revealed that they each had benefited from NAASR's support over the course of their careers. They invited Very Rev. Fr. Hrant Tahanian of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church of Watertown, MA, to say a few words before blessing the table. Fr. Tahanian asserted that NAASR was an irreplaceable institution.

Dr. Sharon Chekijian was then introduced by Dolan. Co-chair of NAASR's gala committee, together with Margaret Mgrublian, Chekijian recently had been appointed Chair of Emergency Medicine at the National Institute of Health of the Republic of Armenia. She observed that though it is physically



Dr. Sharon Chekijian (photo Ken Martin)

located in the Boston area, NAASR has created a community throughout our virtually connected world, especially in the post-Covid era.

She thanked the evening's sponsors, the NAASR board of directors, the executive committee, and gala committee for all their work — including Nancy Kolligian, Joan Kolligian-Hovigian, Phyllis Dohanian, Marc A. Mamigonian, and Ara N. Araz — and Monique Balayan and treasurer Brian Ansbigian.

Exciting Developments

Araz, chair of the NAASR Board, took the floor to make several important announcements. First was the creation

of the Edward and Pamela Avedisian Building Endowment Fund. Araz said, "This mission-liberating gift ensures that we will never divert resources from our programming or rely on crisis fundraising to care for our building. With this endowment, NAASR can focus fully on its bold initiatives, new partnerships, and the expansion of our mission."

Second was the creation of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian Scholar Endowment Fund, which, Araz said, "will nearly double NAASR's grant-giving capacity and strengthen the stellar work of our Educational Advisory Committee." NAASR is creating dedicated endowments for grant-making, Araz said, as lasting resources to grow, sustain, and multiply the impact of Armenological scholarship.

When planning began for the NAASR gala, its national endowment stood at \$3.6 million. Araz declared that thanks to all of the guests in the room who have supported



Henry Theriault (photo Ken Martin)

NAASR's sponsorships, it now stood at \$6.7 million.

Thirdly, Araz launched a campaign to reach \$10 million by NAASR's 75th anniversary. He said that as part of this process, it would be possible to endow and name key positions such as the Director of Academic Affairs, and funds would then be freed for hiring more specialists, innovative programming, purchasing more materials for NAASR's Mardigian Library, and accelerating preservation and digitization efforts.

Lessersohn then introduced Dr. Henry Theriault, vice chairperson of NAASR, and a professor at Worcester State University who is a two-time past president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) and a founding editor of the journal Genocide Studies International.

Theriault started by relating how transformative his interactions with NAASR have been throughout his life, including helping him learn Armenian, obtain guidance while facing an aggressive Turkish student organization at the University of Massachusetts that denied the Armenian Genocide, getting the topic of his dissertation from a talk by Richard Fry of Harvard University at the 1992 NAASR annual assembly, and attending a 1994 seminar led by Vahakn Dadrian, Roger Smith and Ara Sarafian. The friendship with Smith led the latter to encourage Theriault to present at the IAGS conference and eventually become its first Armenian president.

Theriault reminisced about the personal side of his NAASR connection too and concluded that future generations deserve this same institution that can help Armenian identity to thrive.

Among some of the new ways to ensure this, Theriault said, was to launch

an Armenian Studies summer university program for credit. This, he said, could spark new generations of Armenian Studies scholars.

The NAASR board, he added, is developing a strategic plan for the next era, including exploration of how artificial intelligence can enhance operations.

Lessersohn proceeded to introduce NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs, Marc A. Mamigonian, as "a prolific and indefatigable author and impresario in Armenian Studies — and a master of the swift email reply."

Mamigonian quoted from a speech by Richard Fry in 1954, calling for Armenians to recognize the value of their own history and take special responsibility to foster and encourage scholarship and research. NAASR cofounder Manoog Young helped raise money to found a chair in Armenian studies at Harvard.

Today, Mamigonian said, there are



Ara Araz (photo Ken Martin)

crises in American universities, including institutions where Armenian Studies is most active and visible, and this means that the Armenian Studies field is also threatened. Mamigonian said that the wisdom of NAASR's founders, who invested in permanent chairs and programs, has been proven once again.

"Without that permanence," Mamigonian concluded, "does anyone doubt that Armenian Studies would be on the chopping block today?"

Tribute to Excellence in Service

Mamigonian then spoke about seven remarkable individuals who were being honored that night in a "Tribute to Excellence in Service." The first six are scholars and intellectuals, starting with Dr. Anny Bakalian, who has, for many years, served as associate director of the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She is a distinguished scholar, teacher, and mentor to many younger academics and the author of the groundbreaking study *Armenian Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian*.

Dr. Kevork Bardakjian is the Marie Manoogian Professor Emeritus of Armenian Language and Literature and the former director of the Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He founded, directed, and taught at the University of Michigan Summer Armenian Institute in Yerevan, and has mentored several generations of scholars. He has served multiple terms as president of the Society for Armenian Studies and for many years on NAASR's Academic Advisory Committee. Among his published books are *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920*, *A Textbook of Modern Western*

Armenian, *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide*, *Eastern Armenian: A Textbook*, and *The Historical Figures and Events in Some of Hagop Baronian's Allegorical Works* (Baikar Press, in Armenian).

For more than 60 years, David Kherdian, Mamigonian said, "has engaged in a courageous and deeply personal journey of exploration through his poetry, memoirs, translations, and children's books." His works include *Homage to Adana*, *The Road from Home*, and *Letters to My Father*, as well as collaborations with his late wife, the artist and writer Nonny Hogrogian, and the anthology *Forgotten Bread: First-Generation Armenian American Writers*. He continues to write and, in his 90s, says he is producing some of his best work.

Dr. Robert Mirak was a scholar, businessman, community leader, and philanthropist. He wrote the definitive and groundbreaking book, *Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I*. Dr. Mirak's father, John Mirak, was a NAASR founding member, and Dr. Mirak himself joined NAASR as a student in 1959.

The first three scholars mentioned could not be present that evening, and sadly, the fourth, Dr. Mirak, passed away on July 17. However, his daughter, Julia Mirak Quesada, was in the audience.

Two of the scholars who were being honored were present in person — Ruth Thomasian and Dr. Khachig Tölölyan. Thomasian is the founder of Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, established in 1975 and based in Watertown. She is a photo archivist and social historian who began what has become a collection of more than 100,000 original photographs and ephemera documenting the Armenian diaspora worldwide at a time when few saw the historical or aesthetic value in such materials. Mamigonian observed that "More than any other individual, Ruth has shown us that the visual documents of our community have dignity and value."

Tölölyan is one of the founders of the field of diaspora studies and the founding editor in 1991 of the award-winning journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*. He has examined the mobility of populations and cultures, exploring how migration and dispersion create new diasporas and how these reshape the literature, culture, and politics of host societies.

Mamigonian declared that the final person honored, Sandra Jurigian, "served NAASR with extraordinary distinction and devotion in multiple capacities over more than 50 years, most notably as administrative director. Sandra was not a scholar, author, or founder of a field, but she was indispensable to NAASR — and, by extension, to Armenian Studies. ... Whatever task she was presented with, she executed it with skill and grace. It is no exaggeration to say that without Sandra, NAASR might not have survived certain difficult periods. Sandra's intelligence, graciousness, tireless persistence, and selfless dedication were driven by her deep commitment to NAASR's mission."

NAASR's Vartan Gregorian Building features a hand-painted manuscript titled "Illuminators of the Future of Armenian Studies." Mamigonian announced that the names of the aforementioned six scholars will be added to that manuscript while in the near future, a room in the Vartan Gregorian Building will be dedicated to Sandra Jurigian.

Meanwhile, while the guests were eating dinner, a slideshow was screened spanning NAASR's 70 years.

continued on next page

COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

**Keynote Speaker New York Public
Library President Anthony Marx**

Lessersohn introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Anthony W. Marx, who is president of the New York Public Library (NYPL), the nation's largest library system and the most used research library in the world. Marx previously served as



Anthony Marx (photo Ken Martin)

president of Amherst College from 2003 to 2011. A noted scholar, he is the author of *Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960–1990*; *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil*; and *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*.

Marx praised NAASR, declaring: “For seventy years, NAASR has been the leader in creating and nourishing Armenian Studies in the United States and beyond... your work has built an extraordinary foundation. With your important holdings, fellowships, and events, you have created not just an academic field, but a vibrant community of scholarship. Through preservation of history and sharing of memory, you have become a repository of the accumulated knowledge of Armenia

and Armenians — here in the United States and across the world.”

He went on to exclaim: “You have helped shape the pride, culture, and identity of Armenians everywhere, and of all those touched by the Armenian story.”

Marx spoke about his own work, transfixed by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and the work of the NYPL. The NYPL is not only the largest library system in the US but the most used research library in the world. Marx said, “Like NAASR, we connect the public to their history — our shared history. We preserve materials and ensure access to truth. That mission has never been more important than it is today.”

He criticized the rise of restrictions on free speech in the US, declaring: “As the son of German Jews who had to flee their homeland, it is unthinkable to me — and yet here we are — to witness again censorship, book banning, and rising intolerance in our own country.”

Consequently, he said, “In an age when truth itself is questioned, when misinformation spreads through powerful technologies, the work you do at NAASR — and the work we do in libraries — becomes ever more essential.”

Marx said that he came to the NAASR gala in part to honor the memory of Dr. Vartan Gregorian, whom he met when the latter was provost at the University of Pennsylvania, and Marx was a 21-year-old student. He said, “I swear, on a campus of 20,000 students, he knew every one of them by name. It was astonishing – and humbling. He became a lifelong friend and mentor.”

Marx said he watched in awe as Gregorian saved the NYPL during the 1980s budget cuts, and stated that his legacy endures not only in NAASR's Vartan Gregorian building, but also in NY's Vartan Gregorian Center, at the heart of the NYPL, where, he said, "Vartan Gregorian's vision lives on in every reader, scholar, and student who walks through our doors."

Marx concluded: “May we all continue to ensure that our children inherit a world



Standing, from the left: Mark Momjian, Marc Mamigonian, Ani Hovannisian Kevorkian, Sharon Chekijian, Armine Mirzabegian, Jirair Balayan, Nancy Kolligian, Houry Boyamian, Mary Papazian, Jerry Papazian, Yervant Chekijian, Henry Theriault, and Ara Araz. Kneeling, from left: Jirair Christianian and Ara Arakelian (photo Ken Martin)

shaped by learning, truth, and compassion. It is a privilege to share in this celebration.”

Honorary Gala Chairs

Thomas Dolan then introduced Nancy R. Kolligian, the second NAASR board chair (2001-2010), who has become NAASR's longest serving board member, having joined in 1986. Kolligian recalled that NAASR cofounder Manoog Young told her three years after joining as a regular member that it was time for her to join the board, following in the footsteps of her great-uncle, J. Mark Kolligian.

Kolligian declared: “I would not be here if this were not something I believed in deeply. Many of us in this room share Armenian heritage, and it is vital that we keep it alive. We have wonderful scholars, and we’ve awarded countless grants. I especially want to speak to the young scholars who are here with us tonight — you are the future. Please remember that and do all that you can to perpetuate Armenian Studies in your institutions, colleges, and universities.”

She went on to speak about the two honorary chairs of the 70th anniversary gala: Pamela Wood Avedisian and Yervant Chekijian. Chekijian had been a member since 1963 and served on the board for nearly a quarter of a century before becoming its chair. Even before that, he spearheaded the creation of NAASR's Leadership Circle, which supports many of the important programs of the organization.

It was under Chekijian's chairmanship, beginning nearly a decade ago (2016-2022), that NAASR embarked on an ambitious fundraising effort which led to the design and construction of NAASR's new headquarters, the Vartan Gregorian Building. Kolligian said, "And when I say 'led,' I mean that he threw himself into it with determination, skill, and tireless energy. Through sheer perseverance and vision, he drove the project forward to completion. Yervant, thank you for all you have done for NAASR."

Kolligian then said that it was the transformative leadership gift from Pamela and the late Edward Avedisian that made possible the fulfillment of this vision for a new, modern, and beautiful building, which remains a source of pride for NAASR, for the Armenian community, and for the broader academic world. Together, she said, Pam and Ed were a remarkable team. Out of humility, they chose not to have the building bear their names, but they instead dedicated it to Gregorian out of profound respect.

She concluded: “Pam, whose humanity, kindness, modesty, strength, and integrity are truly remarkable. She understands what it takes to make things happen — and for that, we are deeply grateful.”

Kolligian invited both honorary chairs to the lectern, where they were met with great applause.

Pamela said, “I don’t need to tell any of you what an extraordinary person Ed Avedisian was, about his remarkable vision or his extreme generosity. When it became clear that constructing a new building was the best option, Ed, once again, stepped up to the plate, in the hope that it would encourage others to do the same. I have tried to continue supporting those organizations that were important to Ed, as NAASR certainly was.”

Moreover, Pamela continued, her husband's mother, Shooshanig, would have expected this support, and that was why the scholarship fund was named in honor of her and her husband Khoren.

She concluded: “Now, more than ever, it is important for us to share Armenia’s rich history with the world to educate others unaware of what the Armenian people have contributed throughout the centuries and to hopefully counter any false narratives being presented by others. I hope this special anniversary serves to further enrich and preserve Armenian history, culture, and identity for generations to come.”

Chekijian in turn declared: “I share these honors with all the individuals I have had the privilege of working with at NAASR — our dedicated Board members and our devoted staff. I thank them deeply for their commitment and for making our successes possible. They deserve this recognition as much as I do.” He added, “When I retired, I asked the next generation to build upon the accomplishments of those who came before us — including my own. I am very pleased to see that today’s board is composed of an exceptionally accomplished group of individuals with a tremendous wealth of knowledge, and I am confident they will do just that. Thank you very much, and I ask for your continued support of NAASR’s mission.”

All banquet guests received a 44-page booklet NAASR prepared for this occasion about its work and history, entitled, “Celebrating 70 Years: Building the Future of Armenian Studies.”

Entertainment during the evening included the John Baboian Trio during cocktail hour and the band La Vie en Rose, which played Aznavour pieces during an afterparty.

The gala banquet was preceded on October 2 and 3 by the Pamela and Edward Avedisian Graduate Symposium in Armenian Studies, held at NAASR headquarters in Belmont, MA and cosponsored by the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University.

To support NAASR, visit <https://naasr.org/pages/gala70> or reach out to Ara Araz


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Scan for more info

Saturday, October 25, 2025
6:00 PM – Cocktail Reception 7:00 PM – Dinner
SHERATON HOTEL, 39 Dalton Street, Boston, MA
Parking at the Prudential Center Garage



Arts & Culture

Pulitzer Prize-Winner Peter Balakian to Speak At NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host an in-person event with Dr. Peter Balakian, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, titled “From Manhattan to Der Zor,” in which he will read from and discuss his newly published book *New York Trilogy*, on Thursday, November 6, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern), at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

Dr. Balakian’s appearance is co-sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter and the Belmont Public Library.

In an inventive, elliptical language, *New York Trilogy* explores one man’s journey from the late 1960s to the twenty-first century, as he moves through a series of experiences centered in New York City and the surrounding New Jersey Palisades. Throughout this long poem in three parts, the protagonist’s life is impacted by historical events including the



Peter Balakian

Armenian Genocide, the bombing of Hiroshima, the Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, the attacks of September 11th, the US war in Iraq, and the climate crisis.

Comprised of three multi-sequence poems originally included in Peter Balakian’s collections *No Sign*, *Ozone Journal* and *Ziggurat*, the sections of *New York Trilogy* come together to form a poetry that embraces interior and aesthetic experiences, celebrates human intimacy, and bears witness to history. The historical power and psychological depth of Balakian’s work expands on the tradition of the American long poem with a lyrical narrative that weaves intimate personal moments into the vastness of shared history.

Balakian is the Donald M. and Constance H. Rebar Professor of the Humanities in the department of English at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. He is the author of many books, including *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response*, winner of the Raphael Lemkin Prize; *Black Dog of Fate*, winner of the PEN/Albrand Award for Memoir; and *Ozone Journal*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

For more information about this program, contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



Attorney Marie M. Hayrapetian, the granddaughter of eminent writer Stepan Alajajian (photo TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter)

An Evening of Remembrance In Glendale for Writer Stepan Alajajian

By Jane Partizpanyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDAL — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter (TCA) hosted a program on Sunday, October 5 in remembrance of the Armenian writer, prosaist and translator Stepan Alajajian at the Glendale Central Library auditorium.

The event featured remarks from family members and a broad array of Los Angeles Armenian community leaders, including an homage by the Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, under whose auspices the event took place.

Founded in 1947 and named after the “prince of Armenian poets,” Vahan Tekeyan, TCA’s mission stands firm in the aim to preserve Armenian culture and heritage through community events, educational programs and cultural experiences. Spotlighting the life and cultural contributions of Alajajian is one way in which TCA continues to intellectually enrich its local communities.

Alajajian was born in Aleppo, Syria on January 3, 1924. He studied at American Aleppo College and the American University of Beirut, later further pursuing higher education at the Philological Faculty of Yerevan State University and Moscow State University, respectively, after immigrating to Soviet Armenia in 1946.

In 1966, he was elected Secretary of the Writer’s Union in Soviet Armenia and was awarded as an “Honored Worker of Culture of the USSR” in 1970.

Stepan Alajajian was highly engaged in politics in his lifetime, remaining mostly active as an Armenian Democratic Liberal (Ramgavar) Party member.

Alajajian is the author of many Armenian-language works, including *In the Desert*, which was published in 1953 during his years as a student, *Defeat*, *Phoenix*, *Without a Homeland*, and *The Reeds Did Not Bow Down*. He has also



Architect Aram Alajajian, nephew of the eminent writer Stepan Alajajian (photo TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter)

Nevdon Jamgochian

‘My Armenian Heritage is Central to My Art’



By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Nevdon Jamgochian (born May 3, 1971, San Francisco) is an American multidisciplinary artist and writer, who has lived in Indonesia, Germany, Thailand, Senegal, China, Malaysia and India. Trained initially as a painter, his practice now spans photography, installation, text, and performance. He trained both under his family’s guidance and at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Jamgochian has exhibited internationally in Germany, Thailand, Turkey, Russia, Armenia, the United States and China. He is the recipient of the Richard Branson Mars 2025 Award from the Walden 3 Foundation. He writes for art publications such as *Hyperallergic* and *Artcore Journal* and his research interest includes futurism, intermediality and modernism in art history).

Nevdon, your work grapples with history and memory, often addressing themes such as genocide, animal extinction and the fragility of human legacy. As a teenager, I used to feel deep pity when looking at pictures of extinct animals. Later, I came to realize that many nations — each one a unique color in humanity’s mosaic — can also vanish, whether in the near or distant future. In your view, can art play a role in preventing such tragedies?

Art cannot prevent catastrophe in a direct, instrumental sense. Paintings, installations or performances will not stop a genocide or prevent a species from vanishing. Yet art can complicate collective memory, shape discourse and reveal the consequences of silence. When one sees an extinction or genocide in a work of art, or the fragments of an erased culture reconstructed in an installation, the encounter can generate empathy and awareness that policy papers or news cycles rarely sustain. Art lingers; it creates small cracks in certainty. While these cracks cannot prevent tragedy outright, they can create conditions where denial is harder to maintain, and forgetting is less possible. Art is also extremely cost effective. It is the least expensive why to get people to think and remember.

Art as memorial must work with the intricacies of human memory.
see JAMGOCHIAN, page 20

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page translated several works of William Shakespeare, H.G. Wells and William Saroyan into Armenian.

Due to deteriorating health, Alajajian moved to Los Angeles in 1991 and died in 2010.

The evening kicked off with an nostalgic photographs from the Alajajian family’s personal collection, featuring images of Alajajian standing shoulder to shoulder with Armenian literary and artistic greats, such as Paruyr Sevak, Silva Kaputikyan, Lusine Zakaryan, Khoren Balian and Sos Sargsyan.

TCA Los Angeles Chapter Vice Chair Sevan Deirbadrossian served as the master of ceremonies, setting the tone for the memorable evening ahead.

Dr. Karen Israelyan, Consul General of Armenia to Los Angeles, in attendance with his wife Anna, led the tributes that continued throughout the evening. Israelyan emphasized Alajajian’s many talents and the importance of remembering him.

His speech was followed by a musical performance by pianist Ripsime Rshtuni, who brought to life compositions of Alexander Arutunian (Karouna) and Arno Babajanian (Vagharshapat Bar).

Literary expert and reciter Nune Avetisyan read excerpts from Alajajian’s works. She described Alajajian as a man with an “honest heart.” Avetisyan also read a poignant tribute to Alajajian by literary critic and longtime TCA leader Lilit Keheyan.



Master of Ceremonies and Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter Vice Chairlady Sevan Deirbadrossian (photo TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter)



Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles Dr. Karen Israyelyan addresses the crowd (photo TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter)



Pianist Ripsime Rshtuni performs for guests (photo TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter)



Keynote Speaker Hratch Sepetjian (photo TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter)

The keynote speaker was Hratch Sepetjian, who stressed the importance of preserving Armenian culture with such events.

While each individual stood to speak, the images of Alajajian’s life continued to cycle on the big screen. However, the images that truly captured him at the heart were the ones with family.

Alajajian’s granddaughter, attorney Marie M. Hayrapetian, spoke about the memories of her grandfather and lifted the curtain on the man, husband, father and grandfather behind the name. “For his grandchildren, his legacy lives not only in his books and films,” she said, “but in the way he taught us to live.”

The architect of the Armenian American Museum and nephew of Stepan Alajajian, Aram Alajajian, surprised the crowd with a speech, saying, “he passed down to us what it means to love the homeland.” The younger Alajajian also gifted Stepan Alajajian’s daughter, Teresa Alajajian Hayrapetian, 10 pages of Stepan Alajajian’s handwritten personal work.

The event closed with words of fond



Renowned reciter and expert of Armenian literature Nune Avetisyan (photo TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter)

remembrance by Archbishop Derderian. Fr. Nzhdeh Keshishyan of the Western Di-

ocese of the Armenian Church concluded the evening with a benediction.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Artichokes Greek Style

Maria Loi, international ambassador of Greek gastronomy, restaurateur and public personality, is widely regarded as “the Martha Stewart of Greece.” When she chooses ingredients and creates recipes, she considers the ancient grains and flavors that continue to flourish millennia later. “These ingredients, as respected as the great Greek minds of Plato, Socrates and Hippocrates, are the pillars of a healthy, tasty Mediterranean diet: olive oil, Greek yogurt, grains, beans and freshly picked greens,” she says.

She has cooked at the White House for President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and over 250 guests. This is an area of expertise; her book on ancient Greek dining was the only official cookbook of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. Chef Loi’s food is about truth in flavor. Hers is a philosophy derived from the warm, scented Greek air and the sounds of loved ones around the table.

She opened Loi Estiatorio in the heart of Manhattan to rave reviews. Chef Loi takes pride in philanthropic work; she is a founder of Elpida, a foundation to support children with cancer. Loi Estiatorio is so authentically delicious that it even has its own Greek extra virgin olive oil brand, Loi Ladi, as well as Loi Meli Organic Greek Honey, Loi Pasta, Loi Dips, and other traditional items, which can be found at Whole Foods and other upscale retailers.



Chef Maria Loi

Chef Loi’s product lines follow her 3-pronged mission in life: tasty, healthy, easy. The charismatic Chef Loi wants to change the world one healthy Greek bite at a time.

“In ancient times, though artichoke consumption was geared towards the elite, there was recognition of certain health benefits it provided. Of course, the ancients knew what they were talking about, as artichokes do, in fact, have many health benefits. They are a great source of vitamin C and other minerals, high fiber, and full of antioxidants. They have been shown to potentially lower bad cholesterol, may reduce blood pressure and inflammation, and may protect the liver from damage and help with detoxification. They also have the potential to help with overall digestive health and may aid in lowering blood sugar. As always, before adding anything to your diet, it’s important to ask your doctor,” says Loi.

“One of my favorite ways of celebrating artichokes in the spring, is by using a recipe that was first introduced by a popular 20th century Greek chef, Nicholas Tselementes. It is called Aginares a la Polita (artichokes of the city). Nicholas took a traditional artichoke recipe that originated in Constantinople, and then gave it his own personal twist. It is a simple to make, one pot recipe, that can be made year-round using fresh or frozen artichokes, but I do love making it fresh in the springtime.”

“The centerpiece are artichoke hearts, sauteed lightly in olive oil to bring out the flavor, and joined by a flavorful combination of diced potatoes, peas, diced carrots, scallions, garlic, onion, more olive oil, and lemon to add brightness. Then add a little vegetable stock and rice (if you like) to bring it all together, and finish with

more lemon and dill to bring that grassy, bright, spring flavor to the forefront. Now, if this recipe feels a tad too ambitious, by all means, keep it simple. You can boil, grill, braise, stuff and bake artichokes, but they are also quite tasty when simply steamed and dressed with lemon and olive oil.”

INGREDIENTS:

10 artichokes
1 lemon
1 onion, finely chopped (in a food processor or by hand)
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 1/2 cups green peas
8 red bliss potatoes, cut into 1/4” pieces
8 carrots, cut into 1/2” rounds
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 bay leaves
2 lemons, juiced
3 cups of water
2 tablespoons fresh dill, finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
1 tablespoon corn starch
1/2 cup of water

PREPARATION:

The first thing that needs to be done is preparing the artichokes — to do so, remove their hard outer leaves by pulling them down towards the stem. When you reach the softer inner leaves, cut the hard top off them and remove the ‘hairy’ innards with a teaspoon. Cut the stem off, leaving 1/2” at the bottom, and slice the artichokes in half. Place them in a bowl filled with water and squeeze the juice from one lemon in it — this will help avoid discoloration of the artichokes.

In a medium-sized pan over medium heat, sauté the onion and garlic in extra virgin olive oil for approximately 7-9 minutes, until caramelized and golden. Then, add your peas, potatoes, carrots, and 1/4 cup of extra virgin olive oil, and continue cooking for another 6-7 minutes, until the carrots begin to become tender.

Add your artichokes stem side up to the pot, and pour in the rest of the extra virgin olive oil, lemon juice, water, bay leaves and season lightly with salt and with pepper to taste. Bring the pot to a simmer, cover with a lid, and continue cooking on the stovetop for approximately 45 minutes, or until all the vegetables have softened. If necessary, feel free to add some more water or a splash of wine.

Once all your vegetables are tender, in a separate bowl combine the corn starch with 1/2 cup of water to make a slurry. Add your slurry along with the dill to the pot on the stove, and using the handles of the pot, gently shake it to combine with the ingredients. Continue simmering on the stove top for an additional 4-5 minutes, until the liquid has thickened.

Remove from the heat, serve and enjoy.

For this recipe and more, go to: <https://content.sph.harvard.edu/wwwhsph/sites/143/2016/10/Chef-Maria-Loi-Firefighter-Recipes-2016.pdf>

Also see: <https://totalfood.com/peeling-back-the-leaves-the-almighty-artichoke/>

Science and sensuality meet in The Greek Diet, your guide to losing weight while looking and eating like a deity, from the “Martha Stewart of Greece,” world-famous Chef Loi, and health journalist and former Olympic athlete Sarah Toland. Harper-Collins, February 23, 2016 - Health & Fitness - 304 pages.

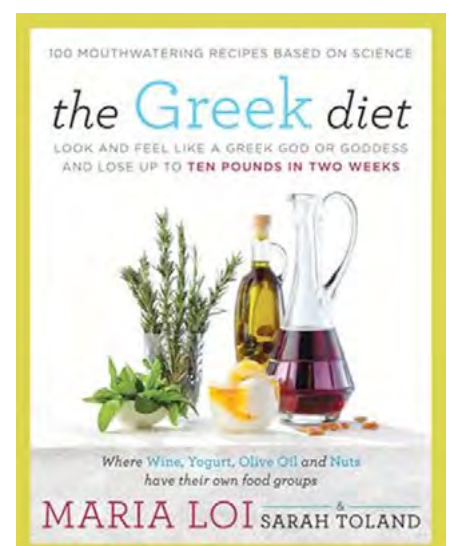
“Grounded in the Mediterranean lifestyle and developed by world-renowned Chef Loi, The Greek Diet combines classic Mediterranean ingredients like olive oil, yogurt, and honey in delicious, healthy recipes that satisfy the soul and the palate. New research shows that the Mediterranean diet is the healthiest food plan in the world, and is especially noted for its positive effects on heart health. With The Greek Diet, you eat to enjoy yourself, just like the ancient Greek gods. There is no starving, no long, grueling hours at the gym, and no restrictive plans eliminating carbs, dairy, caffeine, or alcohol.”

“Structured around the 12 food pillars of the traditional Greek diet, The Greek Diet includes 100 healthy, authentic, sensual Greek recipes that use delicious unprocessed ingredients, as well as tips for incorporating easy exercises and improved sleep—both metabolism boosters—into your Greek lifestyle. Sprinkled throughout the book are charming and insightful anecdotes from the authors that add flavor and fun. There are also several different meal plans to personalize your journey and help you lose the weight you need while enjoying the foods you love, including a kick-start plan to shed pounds quickly and safely and jump-start your journey to a slimmer, healthier, happier you.”

To purchase The Greek Diet by Chef Loi, go to: <https://www.loiestiatorio.com/the-greek-diet/>

Also see: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0062334441?tag=authorweb-20>

Chef Loi is not just a chef; she’s an author of 34 cookbooks, beloved TV personality, and a passionate advocate for wholesome, delicious meals that nourish both body and soul. For product information, go to: <https://www.loibrand.com/>





ARTS & CULTURE

Mkrtichian Preserves Cultural Memory in ‘There Was and There Was Not’

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — Emily Mkrtichian’s important and timely documentary feature, “There Was and There Was Not,” tells the recent and tragic history of Artsakh through the lives of four remarkable women whose attempts to bring progress to their communities abruptly end with they must flee because of the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Azerbaijan.

Rather than show bombs and wartime violence, Mkrtichian delves deep into the lives of minesweeper Svetlana Haratunyan, aspiring politician Siranoush Sargsyan, feminist activist Gayané Hambardzumyan, and world-class judo competitor Sose Balasanyan. Four women different in age, background, and profession, but who all share one thing in common: an unshakable love for Artsakh.

The film recently had a one-week New York theatrical run at the DCTV Firehouse Cinema.

“There Was and There Was Not” derives its much of its strength from the director’s inspired choice of protagonists. Mkrtichian lived in Artsakh and she wisely chose these women over time: “It happened organically, as I spent more and more time in Artsakh. I met Sveta, Gayané and Siranush through mutual friends. And Sose I met while teaching a filmmaking workshop at the TUMO center in Stepanakert. My students chose her as the subject of their short documentary, and I immediately knew that I wanted to spend more time with her.”

Mkrtichian has kept in close touch with the four women, and notes that three of them are now living in Yerevan, Armenia, while Siranush is currently pursuing a degree in



A still from “There Was and There Was Not”

Human Rights at NOVA University in Lisbon. Rather than shoot a follow up documentary on their lives today, Mkrtichian’s next project focuses on building what she calls a participatory archive of Artsakh: “a living record of memory, maps, and stories from those who were displaced.”

Mkrtichian grew up in Seattle, where the Armenian community was quite small. She studied creative writing and later complet-

ed a graduate program at Fordham University before deciding to join Birthright Armenia.

She noted, “That was supposed to be a three-month stay. I took an internship with Bars Media Film and three months quickly turned into six years. I became immersed in nonfiction filmmaking, working full-time at Bars before branching out to make my own films.”

Mkrtichian experienced the 2020 war in Artsakh firsthand and spent the following years filming there. But as she explained, “Once the blockade began, it became impossible to return — so while I wasn’t there during the final exodus, much of my heart and community were.”

After living mostly in Armenia for about a decade, Mkrtichian accepted a teaching position at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, where she now lives with her partner and one-year-old son, Alik.

“There Was and There Was Not” has received several international prizes and kudos all-around. Not surprisingly perhaps, the film was acquired by Watermelon Pictures, with Suncatcher supporting its North American theatrical release. It’s the only Arab-owned distribution company in the U.S., specializing in films from the SWANA region and which resist erasure in the public sphere.

“From our first conversation,” Mkrtichian said, “they immediately understood the heart of ‘There Was, There Was Not’ — why it mattered, and why it needed to reach a broader audience. It’s been a truly values-aligned partnership.”

Mkrtichian described the process of making the film as a personal odyssey: “It’s been a long journey — and one that has changed me profoundly. I released the film just a month or two before having my first child, which made the festival circuit an adventure.”

The most impactful moment for Mkrtichian however, may have been premiering the film at the Golden Apricot Film Festival in Armenia, where the film won both the FIPRESCI Prize (International Critics Award) and a Special Jury Mention.

“Sharing that screening with the four women in the film — and holding my two-month-old son in the audience — was unforgettable,” said the director. “I’ve been deeply moved by the response, both from



Emily Mkrtichian

Armenian audiences and international ones. The festival run reached a wide audience abroad, but I’m especially excited for the upcoming theatrical and digital release to bring the film home to our community.”

Mkrtichian stressed that at its core, it is a film about memory — how it lives in people, in stories, and in the land itself. “For me, it’s also a love letter to Artsakh and to the women who carry its spirit forward in their daily lives, even after losing everything material that once defined home,” she said. “I made this film as a way of preserving something that was at risk of disappearing, but also as an invitation for others to remember — to think about the places, people, and histories that shape them.”

In conclusion, the director’s message is universal: “I hope that audiences who watch the film feel a sense of connection, even if they’ve never heard of Artsakh before, and understand that these stories—of loss, love, and resilience—belong to all of us.”

St. James Armenian Church, Tekeyan Cultural Association
Boston Chapter & Society
of Istanbul Armenians of Boston
present
NY's TCA Mher Megerdchian
Theatrical Group
in
Anton Chekhov's
The Marriage Proposal
A comedy directed by
Harout Chatnajian
*performed in Armenian
with English subtitles*
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Armenian Museum of America Announces Groundbreaking Arshile Gorky Exhibition

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America recently announced the opening of a landmark exhibition, “Arshile Gorky: Redrawing Community and Connections,” on December 11. This is the first exhibition of Gorky’s work in an Armenian museum, and it caps off a series of programs initiated by the “100 Years of Arshile Gorky” Committee in the City of Watertown.

The exhibition is curated by Kim S. Theriault, author of *Rethinking Arshile Gorky* published by Penn State University Press, and it is sponsored by the JHM Charitable Foundation.

“We aimed high in the planning of this show dedicated to an Armenian artist who immigrated to Watertown in the aftermath of the Genocide, like so many of our compatriots,” explained Executive Director Jason Sohigian. “Our success was driven by the partnerships, especially from the Arshile Gorky Foundation and its director Parker Field, which were behind us from the start.”

The exhibit includes 25 works from lenders across the country, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Housatonic Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery and the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America. Many of the works have never been seen publicly, providing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for visitors to experience works long hidden in private collections and rarely displayed by museums.

“Arshile Gorky: Redrawing Community and Connections” explores key phases in Gorky’s artistic evolution, as it came to transform the trajectory of modern art in

America during the first half of the 20th century. The exhibition illustrates how Gorky worked to forge a new life and artistic identity in the wake of exile and profound personal loss.

This exhibition serves as a fitting finale to the yearlong celebration, “100 Years of Arshile Gorky,” by the City of Watertown, where he lived after his escape from the Armenian Genocide. “This collection of works highlights the largely self-taught artist’s resilience, determination, and remarkable ability to create both art and community in his adopted home,” said Development Director Sarah Hayes.

At its heart, the exhibit emphasizes the relationships that sustained Gorky both personally and artistically. A highlight is his tender drawing of his beloved mother, Shushan Der Marderosian Adoian, whom he lost to tragedy, a work that many will recognize from his most famous painting and the iconic photograph of mother and son which served as its inspiration. On loan from the Whitney Museum of American Art, this delicate portrait is rarely on view and will be seen for the first time in Boston.

Portraits of lost family and new friends, as well as portraits of Gorky created by his contemporaries, feature prominently. The paintings in the exhibit range are from 1927 to 1945.

“This exhibition presents a fresh lens on Gorky’s legacy by emphasizing his artistic innovations and the deep human connections that informed his life and work,” said Curator Kim Theriault. “To see these rarely exhibited works gathered together — many long hidden in private homes — is a profound treat for the public. They remind us

that Gorky’s journey was as much about forging relationships as it was about creating art, and his story continues to resonate today.”

“Redrawing Community and Connections” underscores the devotion of Gorky’s community of friends, family and collectors who safeguarded even the simplest sketches,” added Dr. Theriault. “Their efforts ensured that his vision and humanity would endure. By focusing on the expressive and emotional qualities of Gorky’s work and its ties to community, the exhibition reintroduces him as a profoundly connective figure whose modernist vision continues to shape art history.”



Arshile Gorky, “Self-Portrait,” 1923–1924, oil on canvas board, 16 x 12 inches, private collection.

Watertown has long been a haven for Armenian immigrants. The “100 Years of Arshile Gorky” Committee in the City of Watertown has been collaborating with community stakeholders throughout 2025 to commemorate the life and work of the artist Arshile Gorky (b. c. 1902–4 –1948) whose distinctive practice was instrumental in forging the birth of Abstract Expressionism in the United States. After surviving the Armenian Genocide of 1915, Gorky (born Vostanik Manoug Adoian) arrived in Watertown in February 1920 as part of a third wave of Armenian immigrants escaping persecution. He lived in Watertown periodically with his sisters until 1924–1925, when he moved to New York City. Gorky’s impact on art history and his continued influence on contemporary art cannot be overstated.

The Committee is led by resident Jack Dargon and Public Arts and Culture Planner Liz Helfer, in collaboration with the Armenian Museum of America, Mosesian Center for the Arts, and the Historical Society of Watertown. The project is supported by Mount Auburn Cemetery, the Arshile Gorky Foundation, Watertown Cultural Council, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Watertown Community Foundation, and Watertown’s Public Arts and Culture Committee. For more information, please visit:

The Armenian Museum of America is located at 65 Main Street, Watertown. Its galleries are open from Thursday through Sunday from 12:00 to 6:00. For more information, visit www.ArmenianMuseum.org/arshile-gorky.



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ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

OCTOBER 25 — FallFest at first Armenian Church, 380 Concord Ave., Belmont, noon to 7 pm. All the kebabs, plus homemade pastries, string cheese, and eetch.

OCTOBER 25-26 — Save the dates! First Anniversary Celebration of Holy Archangels Armenian Church Sanctuary Consecration presided by Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan. Saturday, October 25, at 4 p.m.: Worship and acknowledgment of Godfathers of the Church; 5 p.m. Mezza and Wine Reception. Sunday, October 26, 10 a.m.: Holy Badarak; 2 p.m. Banquet & Program including St. Vartan Award Recipients. Ordinations throughout the weekend

OCTOBER 26 — TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group presents Chekhov’s “The Marriage Proposal” in Western Armenian at St. James Armenian Church, a cosponsor along with Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter and the Society of Istanbul Armenians, 4 p.m. Tickets \$75/person at themarriageproposal.eventbrite.com

OCTOBER 27 — Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence: Awareness, Understand and Resources. A community awareness event cohosted by the Armenian Relief Society Cambridge Shushi Chapter and the Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center. Monday, 6 to 8.30 p.m. Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center, 75 Common St., Watertown.

NOVEMBER 1 — Debut performance of the Massachusetts Chamber Music Artists. Program. Music by Frank Bridge, Komitas, Mendelssohn. Haig Hovsepien and Michael Fisher on violin, Yeh-Chun Lin on viola, Edward Aron on cello and Dina Vainshtein on piano. First Parish in Bedford, 75 Great Road, Bedford. 6 to 7.30 p.m. Tickets \$24 to \$30. Visit www.mcmartists.org.

NOVEMBER 1 — New England Couple’s Ministry, supported by New England Armenian Clergy offers “Restored by Grace: Forgiveness that Renews Marriage.” Speaker: Kevin Sanders, executive director and counselor, Boston Center for Biblical Counseling. 5 p.m. \$75 per person, includes catered buffet, First Armenian Church, 380 Concord Ave., Belmont.

NOVEMBER 3 —St. James Men’s Club Monthly dinner and fellowship; Guest Speaker, Sportswriter Steve Buckley, a sportswriter for more than 45 years and has been a columnist with The Athletic since 2018. Prior to that he was the columnist with the Boston Herald for 23 years. He also covered baseball for the Hartford Courant, Tacoma News Tribune and Portland Press Herald. Monday, St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Social hour 6;15 [mezza]Dinner 7;00pm Losh and Kheyma. \$25 per person.

NOVEMBER 7 — Showing of “There Was, There Was Not” documentary, Friday at 7 p.m. West Newton Cinema, 1296 Washington Street, West Newton. Following the screening, filmmaker Emily Mkrtichian will join a Q&A discussion moderated by Paul Boghosian, President of Harbor Side Films. Reception hosted by anoush’ella follows. For tickets: \$20/person, westnewtoncinema.org

NOVEMBER 9 — GIVING THANKS: COMING TOGETHER. ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY, Boston. 2pm. View the new Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture. Meet & Greet. Cider & Sweets. Refreshments. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

NOVEMBER 15 — Annual Fall Bazaar 12-6 PM. Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael & St. Gabriel. Delicious Armenian Food! Chicken Kebab, Losh Kebab and Kheyma Dinners; Delicacies & Pastries; Cuisine Table, Hayastan Table & Anoush Honey. Gift Baskets Raffle. 1280 Boston Rd., Haverhill, MA 01835 Phone (978) 372-9227 or email ArmenianChurchAtHy-ePointe@verizon.net for additional information.

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. (Individual Tickets will commence at a later date). For more info visit: <https://amaa.org/hyeminds-boston2025/>

NOVEMBER 22 — Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church Food Festival. 11 a.m. – 6 p.m., 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford, MA. Eat-in or Take-out. The Food Festival menu includes lamb, chicken, and losh kebab dinners, and a vegetarian platter; a country store with a variety of Armenian specialties and deserts. The festival also features a jewelry table and gift items from Armenia as well as a Tavloo Tournament at 1:30 p.m. For further information, see the church website at www.stsvartanantz.com or call the church office at 978-256-7234.

DECEMBER 7 CANDLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday at 4:45pm. Meet & Greet. Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth Walk. Enjoy Hot Chocolate & Sweet Treats. RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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.

RHODE ISLAND

NOVEMBER 1 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church presents a “Spiritual Music Festival”, dedicated to the memory of Maestro Khoren Mekhanejian featuring the Choirs & Soloists of Rhode Island Orthodox Churches. Special guests: Hasmik Mekhanejian, mezzo-soprano (NY), Anahit Zakarian, soprano (NY). In the Sanctuary of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church at 3 p.m. 70 Jefferson Street, Providence. Donations Gratefully Appreciated. Refreshments will be served

NOVEMBER 15-16 — Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church Food Fair and Bazaar. Saturday, 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Delicious Armenian food and pastries, including lamb shish kebab, losh kebab, baked half chicken, kheyma, lahmajoon, boreg, yalanchi, choreg, cream khadaif and more. Lunch, dinner or takeout. \$1,000 raffle. Kids activities, Nazeli Dance Group, silent auction and vendors. 70 Jefferson St., Providence.

To send Calendar items to the *Mirror-Spectator* email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the “calendar” section under the heading “More” or mail them to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication.

Award-Winning Soprano Isabel Bayrakdrian to Perform in Boston in November

BOSTON — Internationally renowned soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, joined by musicians Ellie Choate (harp), Rayo Furuta (flute) and Mher Mnatsakanyan (duduk), will perform at a concert titled “Ancestral Songs, Prayers & Lullabies,” at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, November 15, at the Scottish Rite Museum and Library in Lexington.

Featuring a curated selection of music, the performance celebrates Armenian cultural heritage and artistic expression through music. The program includes works by Komitas Vartabed and Mihran Tumajan, with pieces ranging from medieval hymns and Marian chants to traditional children’s songs and lullabies from historical Armenia.

Born in Lebanon and raised in Canada, Bayrakdarian is a celebrated musician in both the classical and music worlds, first winning the Metropolitan Opera National

Council Auditions within months of graduating from the University of Toronto, cum laude, in biomechanical engineering.

Appearing with premier orchestras from Boston to New York to Vienna under the batons of such legendary conductors as Seiji Ozawa, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Christopher Eschenbach, her artistic and musical versatility ranges from premiere operatic roles to featured vocal performances on Grammy Award-winning soundtrack of a blockbuster film “The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers,” on the soundtrack of Atom Egoyan’s award-winning “Ararat” and on the BBC-produced documentary “HOLOCAUST – A music Memorial Film.”

She also starred in a Gemini-nominated film, “Long Journey Home,” which documented her first visit to Armenia. The winner of numerous additional prestigious awards, including four consecutive Juno

Awards, a Marilyn Horne Foundation Award, and Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee and Diamond Jubilee Medals, among others, Bayrakdarian has also received the Republic of Armenia’s highest cultural award, the Movses Khorenatsi Medal, and holds an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Conservatory of Music and an Honorary Doctorate from Canada’s Wilfrid Laurier University.

A passionate advocate for preserving and sharing her cultural heritage through music, Bayrakdarian is a professor of voice and head of the voice area and Opera Outreach Program at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB).

This event is hosted by the Boston-based Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS).

Tickets for this performance are \$85 and \$65 and are available online at www.facsbboston.com.



Caption: Isabel Bayrakdarian (Zach Mendez Photo)



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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Restoration of All Regional Communications Is Only Viable Path to Lasting Peace in South Caucasus

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Will the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) set to connect Azerbaijan with Nakhijevan and Türkiye via Armenia help establish lasting peace and prosperity for all? Interestingly, if the Washington Declaration speaks about restoration of all communications, with reciprocal benefits for Armenia, the spotlight has been about the TRIPP and only about it. This oversight misses a vital point necessary for lasting peace and stability in the region.

The launch of TRIPP alone will not establish real regional connectivity in the South Caucasus, or create the economic interdependence between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Türkiye needed to cement lasting regional peace and stability. Instead, focusing on the TRIPP and only the TRIPP will maintain Armenia’s isolation, restrict its geopolitical and geoeconomic flexibilities, while keeping the door open for future escalations over the longer term.

The sole launch of TRIPP without the restoration of other intra-state communications, such as Armenia’s access to Iran via Nakhijevan and to Russia via mainland Azerbaijan and, most importantly, the opening of the Armenia–Türkiye border, will not achieve what it intends to do. It will keep Armenia isolated, will retrain Armenia’s foreign policy possibilities, will not create economic interdependencies to foster stability and, perhaps most importantly, will maintain Armenians’ feeling of being under permanent threat from Azerbaijan and Türkiye. All this does not predict the establishment of international peace and prosperity but rather a recipe for long-term regional instability.

If we jump back 35 years, to the waning days of the Soviet Union, Armenia was a regional transportation hub. You might reach Russia via railroad either through Georgia (Yerevan–Tbilisi–Sukhumi/Abkhazia–Russia), or Azerbaijan (Ijevan–Ghazakh–Russia), Türkiye (Gyumri–Kars) and Iran (Yerevan–Yeraskh–Nakhijevan–Iran). There was even a railroad from Yerevan to Baku. You could even reach Kars from Baku via Armenia. All these connections (except for one) closed immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the start of the Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazian conflicts. Azerbaijan and Türkiye imposed a blockade on Armenia, as a means of hampering Armenia’s economic development and forcing Yerevan to accept their terms in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijan even funded the construction of the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, launched in 2017, to reach Türkiye without going through Armenia.

After the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, as Armenia and Azerbaijan began working toward a peace agreement and Armenia and Türkiye relaunched the normalization process, restoration of communications was an integral part of the negotiations. The issue of restoring all inter- and intrastate communications was included in the November 2020 and January 2021 Armenia–Azerbaijan–Russia trilateral statements and in the multiple documents adopted during the negotiations facilitated by Brussels and was a key part of the Washington Declaration.

From an economic perspective, launching the Yerevan–Yeraskh–Nakhijevan–Iran railroad is the cheapest and shortest way to start the process of restoration of communications in the South Caucasus and create transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which will also contribute to regional stability and security. There is a functioning Yerevan–Yeraskh railroad and an existing rail system in Nakhijevan up to the Julfa station along the Nakhijevan–Iran border. According to several Armenian experts in logistics, with investments of around \$10 million and construction time of just a few months, the missing 1–2km railroad to connect Yeraksh with Nakhijevan could be renovated and the

Yerevan–Yeraskh–Nakhijevan–Iran railroad might work again. The corridor could be used not only by Iran but also potentially by India, bringing Indian goods to Europe. During their consultations in September, the Indian and Armenian foreign ministries stressed their joint efforts to expand and deepen cooperation, especially in utilizing the strategic position of the Chabahar port in this regard.

The second low-hanging fruit route where diplomatic efforts should be at work, is the one connecting Baku to Kars via the Armenian town of Gyumri. Azerbaijan aims to finish the construction of a railroad in mainland Azerbaijan along the Araks River by summer 2026, bringing the route as far as the Armenia–Azerbaijan border. The Armenian government established a working group on the restoration of the Yeraskh–Nakhijevan border and Syunik railroad sections in January 2022. The head of the working group, Artashes Tumanyan, stated in February 2022 that restoration of the railway in Syunik would take three years. According to Armenian Center for Socio-Economic Studies assessments done in 2025, the renovation of 43km of railroad in Syunik, the short section of railway from Yeraskh to the Nakhijevan border, and the Gyumri–Kars rail section will cost around \$360 million. This will create additional Baku-Kars railroad connection with relatively small investments, which can be utilized if complications emerge in Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad, or if it is not able to handle the volumes of cargo.

The third route would be the Baku–Meghri–Nakhijevan–Kars railroad. In August 2025, Turkey started construction of the Kars–Nakhijevan railway, which will cost around \$2.8 billion and take four to five years. This route will connect Baku with Kars directly via Nakhijevan, using only around 43km of Armenian territory. The length of the route will be around 890km. This route is the most expensive and requires the longest period of construction, while effectively continuing to maintain Armenia’s isolation. Indeed, once they have established access with one another, Azerbaijan and Türkiye are likely to lose incentive to restore additional communications with Armenia, including the opening of the Armenia–Türkiye border and the launch of the Armenia–Iran route via Nakhijevan.

As argued above, the launch of TRIPP alone will not establish regional connectivity in the South Caucasus, will not create economic interdependence between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Türkiye, and will not contribute to a lasting regional peace and stability. On the contrary, it will maintain Armenia’s isolation, restrict Armenia’s geopolitical and geoeconomic flexibilities, while keeping the door open for future escalations.

The Armenian government, and anyone interested in lasting peace in the South Caucasus, should insist on the simultaneous restoration of all communications in the region. On the same day that the first train enters Syunik from Azerbaijan to reach Nakhijevan, the first train from Yerevan should enter Nakhijevan to reach Iran and the first train from Gyumri should enter Kars. Anything else could undermine the full implementation of the Washington Declaration and the efforts of the United States, European Union and other countries to bring lasting peace and stability to the South Caucasus and will plant the seeds of future conflicts.

(Benjamin Poghosyan is a Senior Fellow on foreign policy at APRI Armenia and the founder and Chairman of the Centre for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan. He is also a regular columnist for the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. This commentary was originally appeared on www.commonspace.eu On October 16.)

STEM Training More Important than Ever

By Richard Ohanian

Sometime in late 1780s, a math teacher in an elementary school in Brunswick, Germany, asked his students to add up the numbers from 1 to 100 to keep them occupied for a while so he could attend to other things. To the teacher’s surprise, a boy raised his hand and shouted the right answer to the problem very quickly. The boy was none other than Carl Friedrich Gauss, a math prodigy who years later earned the title “The Prince of Mathematics” for his contributions to mathematics, astronomy and other fields. The young genius solved the problem by identifying a pattern in adding two numbers from the beginning and

end of the series, 1 and 100, 2 and 98, 3 and 97... and calculated the solution quickly. Indeed, pattern recognition is a fundamental attribute of a genius.

Fast forward to 21st century, when Artificial Intelligence is a hot topic in science, technology, educational and entrepreneurship circles. Every discipline is scrambling to adopt and adapt AI and the opportunities it presents to do things more efficiently. For example, AI excels at data processing, where it identifies recurring patterns in data to classify, categorize, and understand it. Question is, with adoption of AI, what role would the geniuses or the average workforce of the future play? Will the adoption of AI turn everyone into a genius

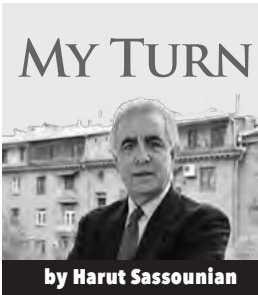
in future? Or will the adoption of AI render the STEM fields irrelevant?

Many predict massive workforce unemployment and the need for an agile workforce to continuously (re)learn and (re)invent itself to remain employable. Question is, what should a STEM curriculum focus on today, given the complexities of the problems of the future as well as the opportunities and the challenges that AI presents for the educators and the students alike, so the students of today become the effective and agile workforce of the future who can tackle the complex problems of their time.

One can argue that the fundamental principles of critical and interdisciplinary see STEM, page 20



COMMENTARY



Will People in Armenia Finally Wake Up When Pashinyan Orders Catholicos’ Arrest?

Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has spent the past several months trying to pressure Catholicos Karekin II into resigning, thereby violating Armenia’s constitution which forbids government officials from meddling in the Church’s internal affairs.

When the Catholicos refused to resign, Pashinyan found another approach to force him out, using the cover of legality. He is now making the spurious excuse that the Catholicos violated an Armenian law by urging clergymen to participate in an anti-Pashinyan protest. This cannot be a criminal act; on the contrary, it is protected freedom of expression which is one of the pillars of democracy.

Pashinyan recently boasted in Parliament that, since the people are not rising up to oppose his policies, they must be in agreement with him. The fact is that those in Armenia who protest or disagree with him are fired from their jobs, arrested, and jailed, while his opponents who live in the diaspora are banned from entering Armenia. He first silences them and then claims that the people support him. This is the “democracy” that he has brought to Armenia.

Pashinyan is forgetting that over 90 percent of Armenians, both in the homeland and the diaspora, are followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which means the millions of church supporters far outnumber his dwindling number of backers.

In recent months, Pashinyan ordered the arrests of two archbishops, the philanthropist Samvel Karapetyan, and several others on fabricated charges. Earlier this month, Archbishop Mikael Ajapahyan was sentenced to two years in jail for allegedly calling for a coup. Last week, Pashinyan also arrested Bishop Mkrtich Proshyan, the Primate of the Aragatsoth Diocese and nephew of the Catholicos, and a dozen priests and staff members, following searches of church properties and their homes on the unfounded accusation of a disgruntled clergyman who claimed that the Bishop had urged him to participate in an anti-Pashinyan rally in 2021. These arrests aim to discourage others from opposing Pashinyan.

The Armenian Apostolic Church condemned last week’s illegal arrests, describing the government’s actions as “repressions on the Armenian Church,” and likening them to “typical totalitarian regimes.” The three Primates of Canada and the Eastern and Western United States issued a joint statement criticizing the Armenian government for arresting Bishop Proshyan and ex-

pressing support for the Catholicos.

With parliamentary elections planned for next June, the Prime Minister is clearly attempting to eliminate potential rivals and clear the field of opponents.

In Armenia, the courts are not independent of the government; the judges carry out Pashinyan’s orders. We should not forget that when Pashinyan first came to power in 2018, he arrogantly declared, “Is there such a judge who will not do what I say?”

To make matters worse, Pashinyan’s circle is urging the government to arrest Robert Amsterdam, a well-known US-based international lawyer, who is in Armenia to defend Samvel Karapetyan. Amsterdam had stated: “We will carry out an attack against Armenia every day until they release Samvel Karapetyan.” He later clarified that he meant international legal and political pressure, not physical actions. Meanwhile, the Armenian government arrested last week Alexander Kochubaev, the lawyer for jailed Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, for criticizing the judiciary. The International Commission of Jurists strongly condemned his arrest.

The government’s anti-Church actions appear to be a prelude to bringing criminal charges against the Catholicos himself in order to replace him with a more submissive clergyman. Meanwhile, Azeris are applauding the arrests of high-ranking Armenian clergymen, whom they label “revanchists.” The Azeri attacks on the Armenian Church are spearheaded by Azerbaijan’s Sheikh-ul-Islam, Allashukur Pashazadeh.

Haykakan Jamanak, a newspaper owned by Prime Minister Pashinyan, disclosed last week a recording of a 2023 phone call between the former staff-bearer of the Catholicos and Archbishop Nathan Hovhannisyan in which they discussed the alleged pressure exerted by the Catholicos on clergy to take part in an anti-Pashinyan rally.

Following the release of that recording, the government’s Investigative Committee announced that “Criminal Proceedings” have been initiated.

I would like to make two observations:

1) Since this phone call was recorded in 2023, why did the government keep it for two years and is releasing it only now? The answer is: It was waiting for the optimum opportunity to use the phone call as evidence against the Catholicos.

2) Secretly recording anyone’s phone conversation is illegal; I am not aware of any court order.

If the Catholicos is arrested and imprisoned in the near future, will the people in Armenia finally wake up and defend the Church, or will they remain in their self-imposed coma?

Those who are urging Armenians to do nothing and wait for next year’s parliamentary elections are running the risk that, by then, Armenia may cease to exist.

All those who are now violating the laws and engaging in anti-Armenian activities should be held criminally responsible and punished by the next patriotic government of Armenia.

Kocharyan’s Sexist Attack on Pashinyan Reflects the Misogyny That Permeates Our Politics

By Zaruhi Hovhannisyan

In political discourse, sexism often serves as a strategy to humiliate opponents, while the image of a woman becomes a tool of political insult. The most recent and blatantly misogynistic remark came from former president Robert Kocharyan during a press conference, when he stated:

“Let’s give [Nagorno-Karabakh] to Aliyev, whatever Erdoğan wants — give that too. Tomorrow, Macron will ask for something, then Trump. This man [Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan] is acting like Mother Teresa at Armenia’s expense. Fortunately, he wasn’t born a girl — it would have been a national disgrace.”

For Kocharyan, and perhaps for some segments of the public, this was intended as “criticism” of Pashinyan’s allegedly conciliatory policies. Yet beneath the surface, the comment exposes one of the ugliest layers of patriarchal thinking: the idea that calling a man a woman is the ultimate insult.

In Kocharyan’s rhetoric, being a woman is the same as being a “national disgrace” — a symbol of weakness, shame, and unfitness for state leadership. This reveals a worldview in which femininity is synonymous with inferiority and incompatibility with public or political life — a mindset that has historically excluded women from decision-making spaces.

However, this is far from an isolated incident. Armenian politics has repeatedly seen women turned into targets and passive sexual objects in men’s verbal battles. A striking example came months earlier from Pashinyan

himself, who, in a social media post directed at a cleric, wrote: “*Srbazan*, keep banging your uncle’s wife. What’s your problem with me?”

In this statement, Pashinyan not only attacked the cleric but also exposed identifiable details about his alleged female partner, reducing her to a passive sexual object for political ridicule.

Sexually demeaning and misogynistic language — regardless of political motive — uttered by men at the highest levels of power perpetuates gender stereotypes and normalizes disrespect toward women.

Notably, even women politicians who attempt to counter such rhetoric often fail to recognize its deeper gendered

AS LONG AS SEXIST AND MISOGYNISTIC LANGUAGE IS NOT CONDEMNED AT A SOCIETAL LEVEL, IT BECOMES NORMALIZED, REINFORCING PATRIARCHAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE.

dimensions and may themselves resort to sexist framing.

For instance, ruling Civil Contract MP Hasmik Hakhobyan responded to Kocharyan’s remarks by writing: “I wonder what kind of women surround Robert Kocharyan, including in his faction, that he only perceives women as subjects [to be given away].”

Such reactions demonstrate that even women in politics can internalize patriarchal logic — holding women responsible for men’s behavior, lacking solidarity, and failing to challenge the underlying misogyny of political discourse.

This dynamic reveals that in Armenia’s political sphere, sexism continues to be viewed as an acceptable — even effective — form of political speech, serving to preserve male dominance in power structures. Sexist language is not treated as a systemic issue reproducing gender inequality, but rather as an individual insult.

Yet this is not mere crude humor or verbal aggression — it is a form of cultural violence. By normalizing the

degradation of women through language and symbols, political speech legitimizes social inequality and reinforces the patriarchal notion that power belongs to men, while women remain secondary, passive, or instrumental actors.

Are there mechanisms to resist this pervasive discourse? Very few. Small groups of activists and human rights defenders attempt to challenge the misogynistic culture of politics, yet sexism remains dominant in public communication.

Armenian society must develop a clear and consistent response to sexist and misogynistic statements made by politicians to de-normalize such discourse and exclude it from the public sphere. In particular, it is essential to cultivate a culture of public rejection — expressed through social media, the press, and civil society platforms. Every such statement should be subject to criticism and public accountability, regardless of whether it comes from representatives of the government or the opposition. Non-governmental organizations, the media, and academic institutions should play a key role in raising public awareness about the dangers of sexism, emphasizing that such rhetoric not only offends women but also undermines democratic values and the healthy development of political culture. Only through consistent public rejection and education can a social environment be formed where sexism is no longer perceived as “humor” or “political strategy,” but as unacceptable behavior that contradicts the principles of human rights and human dignity.

As long as sexist and misogynistic language is not condemned at a societal level, it becomes normalized, reinforcing patriarchal systems of governance.

(Zaruhi Hovhannisyan is a human rights defender, gender expert, and publicist, whose texts and articles are published in newspapers and analytical magazines in Armenia and abroad. She is a member of the Prison Monitoring Group Armenia, and has conducted training courses on the topics of domestic violence and discrimination against women at the invitation of reputable international organizations. For her civic activities, she has received the Amalya Kostanyan Award, Young Women’s Peace in the Caucasus Award, and Moth Political Art Award. This commentary originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on October 21.)



Gyumri Mayor Arrested on Corruption Charges Amid Standoff with Government

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structure in the city. According to investigators, Ghukasyan and the city's chief architect allegedly demanded money from a local resident in exchange for re-classifying a 1,500-square-metre unauthorized construction as legal, promising to falsify official documents to show it had been demolished and rebuilt.

The committee said the case was uncovered through extensive surveillance and undercover operations, revealing a pattern of kickbacks and abuse of office within the municipality. Officials also claimed that members of the alleged network attempted to blackmail unfriendly members of the city

council to maintain political control.

Tensions flared in Gyumri on Monday morning as law enforcement entered the city hall and blocked staff from entering or leaving. Riot police and red-bereted special forces were later deployed as crowds gathered outside to support the mayor. At least one person was detained, and several were reportedly injured in the scuffles.

By early afternoon, Ghukasyan emerged briefly from his office, telling staff: "We'll go, we have no problem, we've done nothing wrong." He was later taken into custody and transferred to Yerevan for questioning, his lawyer confirmed.

Ghukasyan's legal team has insisted the

charges are politically motivated, which his lawyer Aramayis Hayrapetyan saying that the Anti-Corruption Committee's statement misrepresented the evidence and that none of the published wiretaps directly implicated the mayor.

"There is not a single mention of a bribe connected to Vardan Ghukasyan," Hayrapetyan told reporters. "This is a political show directed by the ruling party."

He further accused pro-government lawmakers of leaking details of the investigation before it was made public.

"When all Civil Contract MPs knew about the case and were posting with joy, it was already clear this was not a legal pro-

cess but a political one," Hayrapetyan said.

The Anti-Corruption Committee has not commented on the allegations against them, maintaining that the investigation uncovered multiple instances of bribery, extortion, and falsification of property records involving city officials.

Ghukasyan recently criticized Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his government for its crackdown against the Armenian Apostolic Church, with the authorities, in turn, promising a crackdown on him.

Ghukasyan served as mayor of Gyumri from 1999 to 2012 and was a member of the Republican Party from 2006 to 2017.

Nevdon Jamgochian: 'My Armenian Heritage is Central to My Art'

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Direct and unflinching depictions of atrocity are necessary, but they cannot stand alone if remembrance is to remain active and meaningful. What endures in collective consciousness is a layering of approaches — solemn monuments alongside satire, stark documentation alongside subtle gestures. The Holocaust demonstrates this most clearly: its memory is preserved not only through official memorials but also through cultural forms, from Mel Brooks' humorous film *The Producers* to the quiet *Stolpersteine* project. This multiplicity of approach has made it one of the most widely recognized events of modern history. By contrast, genocides in Armenia, Rwanda, or Cambodia remain less present in popular imagination, in part because their memory has too often been confined to factual documentation, without the broader range of artistic interventions that make history emotionally resonant as well as intellectually known. Memory requires both gravity and invention to survive. My research into global memory sites — from the visitor logs at Tuol Sleng to the slave castles of Ghana — revealed a critical gap in how we engage with historical trauma. One thing we need to foreground is the universality of our experience. We cannot, as many Zionists did, say this can never happen again to us only. Genocide can never happen to anyone.

In 2014, you created 1,500,000 commemorative medals, each inscribed with "1 Armenian," in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. You also initiated the Bagradian Project — a fictional autobiography of the central character from Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* — designed to confront the denial of the Armenian Genocide? How did that project unfold?

My novel (finished after 11 years as of two weeks ago, looking for publisher!) constructs a counter-historical tapestry, premised on the question of what the world would look like if the Armenian Genocide never happened. The narrative's conceptual genesis is rooted in the implications of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code — the statute criminalizing "insulting Turkishness" through genocide recognition. The book imagines an alternate twentieth century where the Armenian intellectual and artistic milieu survived, recentring the axis of modernism within Anatolia.

The point of departure is Franz Werfel's book, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. In this universe, the young protagonist, Stephen Bagradian, escapes his literary fate of death at fifteen. Surviving to adulthood, he evolves into a seminal artistic figure, altering the geography of cultural modernity. Without the catastrophic deracination of its ancient peoples, Constantinople retains

its historical primacy as a cosmopolitan capital, which it was from the fall of Rome until the modern era. Consequently, the gravitational pull of the avant-garde never shifts to New York; instead, modernism finds the studios of Constantinople and the landscapes of Anatolia. Historical figures are reimagined within this milieu: Arshile Gorky lives under his birth name, Vosdanig Manoug Adoian, Gomidas, saved from his historical fate, appears briefly, restored to his creative life. The narrative is populated by an array of historical and invented personalities, from Ukrainian Futurists to established icons like Duchamp, Picabia and Loy, all drawn to this new epicenter of artistic innovation.

The plot follows Bagradian's odyssey through a politically reconfigured Near East, a region shaped by the Wilsonian proposed map of the region. His journey navigates the nascent Armenian Democratic Republic, whose capital is rising from the ruins of Ani; an independent Greek Pontic state; the Hebrew Anarcho-Syndicalist commune on Rhodes; and various fragile mandates for Syrian and Kurdish territories. This meticulously researched landscape is supported by original cartography, visually grounding the reader in this unfamiliar world.

Narrated in the first person, Bagradian is crafted as a deliberately flawed anti-hero — pompous, petty, yet sympathetic — a conscious rejection of heroic archetypes. The fiction is substantiated through an extensive paratextual body of fabricated archival material. I have created dozens of paintings in the authentic modernist style of the 1910s and 20s, all attributed to Bagradian, which have been exhibited in physical galleries with myself listed as the curator. This elaborate world-building extends to a website, philatelic artifacts, and fictional museum catalogs, all designed to erode the boundary between historical record and speculative fiction. The "photographs" of Bagradian are of my great-uncle, Malcolm Malconian, a childless relative who loved posing.

Each chapter is punctuated by a "Radio Yerevan"-style joke — 57 so far — which exists entirely outside the novel's diegesis. These interjections, rooted in the sober reality of our own world's history, serve as a metatextual commentary to remind the reader that the genocide destroyed what could have been. They help create a humorous tension between the imagined counter-history and un-remedied trauma of the historical experience. The book is supposed to be part one of a five-part autobiography, which of course, is not in the making.

This project is speculative memorialization. While the work is explicitly not about the Armenian Genocide, it seeks to foreground the cataclysm's void by constructing a radical counter-narrative of

what might have been. Its central themes interrogate the fallibility of memory, the monopoly of victors over historical narrative, and the essential, humanity of victims — a humanity that includes not only profound potential but also fallibility. The genocide denied us the possibility of both our greatest achievements and our inevitable mistakes; this narrative reclaims that holistic, relatable, and therefore more profoundly tragic past.

The theme of loss seems to be central to your art. I wonder if this connects to your Armenian heritage. Could you share a bit about your family background?

Yes, my Armenian heritage is central to my art. My great-grandfather, Avedis Jamgochian, indeed translated *Paradise Lost* into Turkish. For this, he was exiled shortly before most of his family was murdered in Akn. He migrated to Manchester and then moved to Glendale to become the first Armenian family there. He sent his son, my grandfather, back to Constantinople as he believed (along with many Armenians) the lies of the Young Turks. My grandfather escaped the genocide and joined the US army hoping to fight the Turks in WWI but ultimately being confined to a sick bed due to influenza during the war. I am fortunate to have been born in a creative family which gave me the tools to creating forms through which memory can remain alive.

I recall your 2015 installation *Pantheon on the Moon at the Modern Art Museum of Yerevan*, which raised urgent questions about the destruction of both humans and animals. Have you had the chance to acquaint yourself with the contemporary Armenian art scene? And what are your most vivid and unique experiences in Armenia?

Engaging with the contemporary Armenian art scene has been both humbling and transformative. What strikes me most is its breadth: practices that move fluently within global conversations, alongside works rooted in the particular textures of Armenian history and experience. My most vivid encounters in Armenia have been less in formal exhibitions than in conversations with people. To be welcomed into these exchanges is a privilege, and I remain grateful for the generosity with which Hayastantsis have allowed me to part of their world.

I've lived in seven countries and there are Armenians everywhere. I have often encountered unexpected Armenian presences — even in places where the community is nearly invisible. The Armenian story is one of dispersal, of nodes of memory in unlikely places. Whether in a street name, a lone church, or a family archive, these fragments testify to the persistence of a people whose survival often escapes notice.

STEM Training More Important than Ever

STEM, from page 18

thinking, focused and creative problem-solving, and communication skills that students learn in STEM fields become even more relevant, no matter the advancement of AI in everyday life. A successful workforce of tomorrow will use AI and other intelligent tools, but they would still need to focus their attention, think interdisciplinary, analyze and synthesize solution sets, and collaborate and solve problems. More importantly, the successful workforce of tomorrow should be able to collaborate and communicate with each other effectively to solve the complex problems of their time.

This raises the bar for educators of STEM fields in today's schools and universities to put more emphasis on the core STEM concepts. If students can feed their science or math problems to AI and solve them quickly or use AI to write their essays, then the STEM educators should push their students even more to learn how to focus on a problem and apply critical thinking, problem-solving and effective teamwork and collaboration to solve problems. Also, STEM educators should emphasize the importance of communication skills so the students can better learn how to communicate with others, crucial skills that an agile workforce will require for continuous adaptability to (re)learn and (re)invent themselves and be able to work with others.

The schools and education centers will acquire advanced AI based technologies or labs/tools to continue teaching students STEM disciplines; however, the main enabler will still be the STEM educator who will teach the fundamental STEM concepts to the students and students will still have to learn the sciences, math and technology to be able to use AI effectively. Moreover, a student will still have to learn how to communicate and collaborate with others to tackle challenging problems. Average students will learn how to find solutions to complex math/science problems, perhaps faster than Gauss, but the core skills to frame and analyze a problem, synthesize a solution, and communicate it effectively with others will still be needed.

One can argue that in a future where AI helps solving problems more efficiently, the master enabler will still be the intelligent human, who is trained in STEM disciplines and knows how to collaborate with others. To be able to design a robot, an engineer must start with a blinking LED.

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