

**Chakalian Throws His Hat
In the Ring for Congress**

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YUCCA VALLEY, Calif. — Paul Chakalian is running to represent the 23rd Congressional District in California and replace the current representative, Jay Obernolte, a Republican. The election is slated to take place in November 2026.

In a recent interview, Chakalian, a Democrat, spoke about why he has decided to enter the race as well as how he ended up in the mostly rural district, which includes a good portion of the



Paul Chakalian and his wife, Hana, and their two sons

Mojave Desert and the Joshua Tree National Park and encompasses most of San Bernardino County, a portion of Kern County and a small part of Los Angeles County.

Paul and his wife, Hana, live in Yucca Valley with their two young sons. His wife is a physician who works at San Gorgonio Memorial Hospital in Banning. He is the founder and CEO of Joshua Tree Distilling Company.

The 33-year-old has just been endorsed by the Southern California Armenian Democrats.

see CHAKALIAN, page 9

**Armenian Hostages Languish
In Azerbaijan in Face of
Opaque Judiciary**

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

As the case of the Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan continues, many are worried. The ominous pronouncements by the Azerbaijani government and the relative silence of the regime in Armenia

are causing worry for the loved ones of the former political top echelon in Artsakh (Karabakh), including Ruben Vardanyan, whose case is separated from the others. One person intimately involved with the fate of those arrested is international attorney and regular contributor to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* Philippe Raffi Kalfayan. He recently answered questions about how he thinks their cases are going.



The Armenians on trial in Azerbaijan

How are you involved with the defendants?

I am involved at three levels. As an attorney, I co-represent the interests of some families of prisoners before the European Court of Human Rights, in association with attorneys from the Republic of Armenia (under the coordination of Siranush Sahakyan). As a strategist, I participate in a coalesced group of lawyers

see HOSTAGES, page 2

**Jailed Archbishops Reaffirm Support for
Catholikos of All Armenians Karekin II**

By Susan Badalian & Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Two jailed archbishops have strongly condemned a dozen of their colleagues who have effectively joined Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s efforts to depose the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicos Karekin II.

Eight of the rebellious bishops and archbishops met with Pashinyan on November 27 after issuing a joint statement that accused Karekin of covering up a sex scandal involving another archbishop, who is loyal to him and highly critical of Pashinyan. In another statement issued at the weekend and also signed by two other senior clerics, they urged Karekin to “voluntarily retire” to spare the church “unnecessary upheavals.”

Karekin’s entourage and other priests rejected the appeal, saying that its signatories have been either co-opted or forced into submission by Pashinyan.



Archbishops Mikael Ajapahyan (right) and Bagrat Galstanyan

Archbishops Mikael Ajapahyan and Bagrat Galstanyan, both of whom are vocal critics of Pashinyan, condemned them in even stronger terms in a joint statement issued from prison.

see ARCHBISHOPS, page 4

**New MFA Director
Terjanian Brings Vast
Experience to Role**

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — The Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston is among the top 20 largest art museums in the world-and since this summer, it has a new director, Pierre Terjanian. A seasoned fundraiser, he was appointed Ann and Graham Gund Director and CEO after working at the museum as its chief of Curatorial Affairs and Conservation for about a year and a half. He is known as an important scholar on arms and armor, and previously worked curatorially at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Terjanian’s current position entails both administrative and leadership functions. He said recently: “I define leadership as dealing with the unknown when you don’t have a playbook and it’s not just management.”



Pierre Terjanian at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, April 7, 2025 (photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

His primary duties are to lead the institution and plan for it, while working with its board and overseeing all museum operations. This includes setting programs up for audiences and responsibility for the collecting work, exhibitions, and educational initiatives. “Ultimately,” he said, “it’s the job of bringing together the talent, energy and interest of the staff, the board, volunteers and partners in the entire community.”

Increasing Engagement

Terjanian observed that unlike audiences decades ago, ready to accept whatever narrative a museum proffered as authoritative, today people want to engage with art on their own terms, coming from their own interests. Most museums today therefore present their collections in a different way.

see TERJANIAN, page 16

**ADLP Press Appeals to Halt Rapid Deterioration in
Relations between Armenian Church and Government**

For some time now, informed Armenians have been closely following the serious deterioration of relations between the authorities in Armenia and the leadership of the Armenian Apostolic Church – the Mother See of Holy Echinadzin.

This situation, unprecedented in our centuries-old history, is all the more worrying today, especially when we know that, unlike all other peoples, the Armenian Apostolic Church has given our people in the past, and continues to give them today, irreplaceable moral

fortitude for defending our existence.

The most painful and condemnable aspect of the loathsome current atmosphere is the crude street talk that has turned into completely spurious expressions and, moreover, the “revelations” of secret recordings, whether false or authentic, which serve only to destroy the deep reverence our people have for the Mother Church, and therefore, also the authority it ultimately has in favor of our supreme national interests.

see APPEAL, page 20



MASSACHUSETTS

**Kev Orkian
Returns to AMAA’s
Boston Child Care
Event**

Page 7



ARMENIA

**Alexander
Grebeshko:
Capturing Armenia
In a Realistic Palette**

Page 12



UTAH

**Weaving a
3,500-Year-Old
Dragon Rug
Back to Life**

Page 12





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Envoy Meets Trump’s Economic Advisers

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On December 1, Armenia’s Ambassador to the United States Narek Mkrtchyan met with Alexander Taits, Chief of Staff of the Council of Economic Advisers under U.S. President Donald Trump, Deputy Chair Kim Ruhl, and Special Adviser Hugo Danté, the Armenian Embassy reported.

Mkrtchyan highlighted August 8 as a milestone in Armenia-U.S. relations and referenced the memoranda of understanding signed between the two countries.

On August 8, a trilateral meeting at the White House involving Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, U.S. President Donald Trump, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev concluded with a joint declaration.

Government Releases Karabakh Documents

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Armenian government this week released a number of documents related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict negotiations.

“Below are published a number of documents available in state departments related to the negotiation process for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, which provide an idea of the content of the negotiation process that took place until 2020. A number of publicly available documents are also posted that are directly related to the first group of documents,” the government said, sharing the links of the negotiation papers.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan vowed to release key negotiation documents related to the Karabakh conflict by the end of the year, following the interview remarks of former President Serzh Sargsyan.

OSCE Completes Minsk Group Closure

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) announced on December 1 that it has finalized the closure of the Minsk Process, as requested by Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“The OSCE finalized the closure of the Minsk Process and its related structures at 23:59 on November 30, 2025, in line with the Ministerial Council decision MC.DEC/1/25 adopted on 1 September 2025, following a Joint Appeal from Armenia and Azerbaijan to the Finnish Chairpersonship of the OSCE,” the OSCE Secretariat said in a press release.

“The completion of all necessary administrative procedures marks the conclusion of the closure process. This process implemented the 1 September consensus decision of all 57 OSCE participating States in the wake of the historic Joint Declaration signed in Washington D.C. on August 8, 2025

Armenian Hostages Languish in Face of Opaque Judiciary

HOSTAGES, from page 1
and former ombudsmen from Armenia and Artsakh that elaborates and coordinates the strategic litigation and related advocacy. As an advocate for the collective cause of prisoners, I initiated and took the lead for advocacy within the OSCE and by its participating states for the triggering of the Moscow Mechanism. That one enables in principle to send an expert mission in a country to investigate specific aspects of the administration of justice when there are blatant and severe violations like in the present case if ten countries make the request for it.

How many people exactly are on trial?

There are 23 prisoners: 16 are on trial. The other 7 have already been condemned and sentenced.

Why did the Azerbaijani prosecutors separate the case of Ruben Vardanyan from the others?



Philippe Raffi Kalfayan.

We don’t really know. We can build assumptions but not assert them. I prefer to skip that question.

Vardanyan in particular remains very outspoken about Artsakh. Why do you think he is risking it?

The recent statement of Ruben Vardanyan, while he rejected any service from a lawyer, is enigmatic and we have no direct explanation about the meaning of his message. To whom is this message addressed: To Azerbaijan, to Armenia, to both? In the context, I commend his remarkable courage, which is in line with his decision to settle and stay in Artsakh at the risk of being detained with the other leaders. I just hope that it is not an act of despair and depression because his handover to Afeyan family on the occasion of the last Aurora awards ceremony felt like a farewell message.

How do you think the trials will end? The prosecutor has called for lengthy sentences but do you think the trials will end with them getting long sentences?

The Azerbaijani authorities are proceeding with their pre-determined plan without hesitation or magnanimity. The verdict in the ongoing trials against the 15 + 1 (Ruben Vardanyan being separated) will be known at the end of 2025 or beginning of 2026. It is unclear whether all the initial charges will be upheld by the military tribunal, but the convictions are certain and will be heavy since the goal is to deter once for all any idea of “revanchism” (this is the word Azerbaijan uses). The defense lawyers, who are court-appointed, have requested an acquittal for six of the prisoners on trial but this is a tactical move by the Azerbaijani judiciary which seeks to simulate respect for the right to fair trial. There is no doubt that all will be condemned but with slight differences according to the status of

the prisoner: whether they were military personnel, civilian, or former leader of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Given that they are all hostages, although not recognized as such by Azerbaijan, their fate will depend both on the progress of the peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Bayramov stated that the signing would take place in the first half of 2026 if all goes according to plan, meaning the fulfillment of Azerbaijani demands), and on the domestic politics in Armenia in the lead-up to the parliamentary elections of June 2026. It is in the Armenian Prime Minister’s interest to secure the release of hostages, but not too soon. Their release would be a political gift from Azerbaijan to Nikol Pashinyan to ensure his re-election. The leaders of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Republic are therefore doubly held hostage by the political agendas of both Azerbaijan and Armenia.

How can we in the diaspora support them?

The diaspora should continue to raise awareness about those prisoners, denounce the violations of fair trial principles, domestically and internationally. The government of Armenia says they are using a gentle tone in order not to jeopardize the fragile peace process. To counter this argument, every one shall argue by third parties that: 1. those trials are unfair and aim only at humiliating the defeated Armenians and in particular the former leaders of the Republic of Artsakh. 2. This approach is not serving the building of a sustainable peace, since the humiliation of the defeated, as history shows repeatedly, can only lead to new wars.

From that perspective, the advocacy for the cause of Artsakh and of the 23 prisoners and the violations of international law rules they are victims of, must continue at any rate by the respective domestic Executive and Legislative but also in international forums such as the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Silence is synonymous with indifference, disrespect, and impunity.

What are the best and the worst scenarios these people could expect?

There are several possible scenarios in my humble opinion. The military personnel will be considered prisoners of war by the Azerbaijani authorities and may be released unconditionally if the peace treaty complies with their demands. Those considered “mercenaries” (Lebanese national Vicken Euledjian, for example) are in an uncertain situation. The bad health condition of Euledjian may force the Azerbaijani authorities to release him. Meanwhile, his conviction was a message sent to all diaspora Armenians by Azerbaijan. The case of the former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh is also uncertain since their fate depends on the geopolitical bargain and on the domestic politics in both countries. Some may be released but not all. They may also potentially be deported to Armenia on the condition that they serve their sentences in Armenia. That political arrangement would satisfy both the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders. Personally, I do consider the release of Baku’s prisoners to be the absolute priority, regardless of the cynical games being played out behind the scenes by both parties.

Are European or regional observers at the trials?

The transparency of the hearings is limited

to official images showing packed courtrooms and broadcastings relaying some statements from either the defendant or the defender. But what is its value in a dictatorship where there is no justice and no independent civil society, and where 392 political prisoners are registered according to the Freedom for Political Prisoners of Azerbaijan Union, an Azerbaijani NGO in London, that published it on October 7, 2025? Foreign media, diplomats and international NGOs are not present at the hearings. There was some surprise when the US State Department responded to the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) solicitation that “US embassy staff, when possible, attend court hearings in Baku.” After cross-checking, it is likely that employees were invited to one or two hearings, most probably at the beginning of the trial. But, more factually, I can share my own experience as attorney. A French colleague and I requested permission from the Azerbaijani Embassy in France to go and visit one of our clients, who has already been convicted and has been serving his sentence. After a long silence, a terse mail reply advised us to apply for a visa through their consular service in Paris. Considering that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommends that French citizens not travel to Azerbaijan, this response is pure cynicism.

Some people call them POWs or hostages. Why are those labels not correct?

Both are correct labels.

The term “hostage” under international law is defined indirectly. It is the act of taking hostages that determines hostage status. The International Convention against the Taking of Hostages defines the hostage-taking (Art. 1) as “the act of seizing or detaining a person (the hostage) with threats to kill, injure, or continue to detain them in order to compel a third party, namely a State, an intergovernmental international organization, a natural or legal person, or a group of persons, to perform or refrain from performing any act as an explicit or implicit condition of the hostage’s release.”

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) adds another dimension: the required conduct of the third party could be a condition not only for the hostage’s release but also for their safety. Hostage-taking is characterized by the specific intent behind it; this is what distinguishes it from the deprivation of liberty of another person, a human rights concept.

Although the prohibition of hostage-taking is specifically included in the Fourth Geneva Convention and is generally associated with the detention of civilians, Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages do not limit the scope of the offense to civilians alone, but apply it to any person protected by the Geneva Conventions.

Several well-known facts allow us to state unequivocally that Armenian prisoners, regardless of their status (military, civilian, or former leader), are hostages. Recall that to secure Armenia’s support for hosting COP 29, Azerbaijan, “guided by the values of humanism and as a gesture of goodwill,” released 32 prisoners of war (Joint Declaration of the Armenian Prime Minister and President Aliyev on December 7, 2023). Prior to this, between 2020

continued on net page



ARMENIA

from previous page

and 2023, prisoners of war were released by Azerbaijan in exchange for Armenia providing maps of minefields. It's important to remember that the mutual and simultaneous withdrawal from interstate proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice is also one of the eighteen points of the draft peace treaty. Azerbaijan insists on this point because it is the only area where Armenia has a real chance of securing a judgment against Azerbaijan, particularly regarding the issue of prisoners. Finally, the Prime Minister's statement of November 12 concerning prisoners is unequivocal. He said: "If resolving the issue of peace is essential, then I would say that the more favorable the climate, the more quickly and effectively this problem will be resolved." The status of hostage could not be clearer.

What is the legal status of the former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh: leaders of an unrecognized entity, prisoners of war, civilians protected by international humanitarian law? Can the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war apply in this case?

As for these former military and political leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, they are first and foremost political prisoners according to the definition adopted by the Council of Europe. Resolution 1900 (2012) of the Parliamentary Assembly states: "A person deprived of their individual liberty must be considered a 'political prisoner' if at least one of the following criteria is met: violation of fundamental rights, purely political reasons, disproportionate punishment, discrimination, manifest irregularities in the procedure."

These leaders were arrested not during hostilities but after the dissolution of the Republic of Artsakh, for manifestly political reasons, since they are accused of having held a political and military office in a republic considered illegal because "separatist", even though we all know that this political entity was created by the will of the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh to exercise their right to self-determination in a valid constitutional framework, that of Soviet Union. Two criteria are therefore relevant: the purely political reasons for their arrest and trial, and the manifest irregularities of the procedure.

Those leaders also benefit from the protection of international humanitarian law due to any civilian or prisoner of war, particularly when they are hostages. In addition to the provisions mentioned above, practice shows that the prohibition of hostage-taking, firmly established in customary international law, is considered a war crime. According to the Statute of the ICC, hostage-taking constitutes a war crime in armed conflicts, whether international or non-international. The Statutes of the ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals (former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone)

considered it as such. In the Blaškić case in 2000, the ICTY found the accused guilty of hostage-taking as a violation of the laws and customs of war, and of taking civilians hostage as a grave breach of the 4th Geneva Convention. In other words, they are also prisoners of war.

Are there negotiations happening behind the scenes, especially by Armenia or the United Nations, for example?

The behavior of the Armenian authorities is changing. Initially, they made damaging statements against the prisoners. Some supporters of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan continue claiming that one should not forget that the Artsakh leaders have failed ruling the Republic of Artsakh and they are responsible for their situation. That kind of inappropriate and treasonous remarks only strengthened Azerbaijan's resolve to try and convict them. Generally speaking, everything said by the Prime Minister and

everyone knows perfectly well that a genuine peace cannot be signed while hostages are being held.

For the past two months, the prime minister has no longer avoided the issue of the prisoners. He seems to have finally understood that securing their release would be a considerable asset on the domestic political front as the elections approach. Which is a positive step if the prisoners are released within the next months.

The lawyers in the US especially seem to want to connect the case of the Armenians on trial with an anti-Muslim, conservative Christian agenda, cozying up to people like Tucker Carlson or Franklin Graham. Do you think that is a good strategy?

I fully understand the opportunism of lawyers and lobbying organizations to step into this Trumpist wagon, which claims to want to defend Christians everywhere in

services to Armenian prisoners. These services are usual practices in international relations and they are essential in the absence, since June 2025, of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which had to cease its mission in Azerbaijan at the request of the authorities. The Armenian Foreign Affairs officially replied to us in writing why they don't envisage to take that step.

There are measures proposed in Europe and the US in their support, most recently a letter sent to Secretary of State Marco Rubio asking for sanctions against Azerbaijan and the release of the prisoners. Are any of them effective?

They are mainly appeasing messages to those requesting for help. But in reality, the stakes of USA and Europe are much different: they are of mercantile and geo-strategic nature. The foreign policy of Trump Presidency II clearly and openly aims at securing strategic interests for the USA: control and access to rare minerals and fossil fuels and their transport toward the West. In order to reach that goal, they are ready to sacrifice small nations, such as the three South-Caucasian countries, but also Ukraine. US is trying to find an agreement with Russia at any rate. The unique obsession of the USA is to counter the growing power of China on all continents.

Turkey and Israel are the two key allies of the geopolitical game of Washington in this region. This game is played on the US side by very close allies of President Trump, who are primarily businessmen.

That's why the fate of prisoners is of little interest to those States. The so called "Trump Route" matters. In recent bilateral diplomatic discussions in Warsaw at the occasion of OSCE plenary sessions, we, attorneys or NGOs, have been told that "prosperity" is the goal, and the priority is then to establish peace. Therefore, the violations of human rights and international humanitarian laws concerning the prisoners are downgraded in the conduct of international relations. "Peace" and "Prosperity" matter at the expense of people and humanity. On 29 November Prime Minister Pashinyan declared that the starting point of the soon to come "new economical doctrine" is that the national interest of Armenia lies in economic development. The high-profile businessmen conducting the negotiations in the name of Trump either in the Middle East or in South-Caucasus, be they Tom Barrack (US Ambassador in Turkey and Special Envoy in Syria and Lebanon) and Stewe Witkoff (main negotiator of alleged peace deals in Israel-Gaza, Russia-Ukraine and Armenian-Azerbaijan) don't understand or don't care that peace is not cease-fire. Peace is not even the end of war. A lasting peace, means a sustainable peace, is not an event but a process, which might take long, take years, but really brings peace to the peoples and the society. Respecting the humanity and dignity of Armenians, primarily that of prisoners, is central to such peace



The Armenians on trial in Azerbaijan

his lieutenants on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is detrimental to the prisoners. In recent months, the rhetoric has shifted. Is the pressure from civil society and the media, or our advocacy efforts (attorneys and advocacy groups) with foreign governments, intergovernmental institutions (UN, EU and OSCE) and foreign parliaments having an effect? Even Donald Trump raised this issue on August 8, catching the Armenian Prime Minister off guard. The prime minister now claims that his government is working on it daily! In the diplomatic field, I can say that the Armenian government has been inactive in multilateral forums, even obstructing the progress of our advocacy. While Armenian ambassadors and the minister claim to regularly raise the issue in bilateral contacts, which is partly true, they are obstructing efforts undertaken with intergovernmental institutions. For example, we had been working within the framework of the OSCE to convince states to launch an investigation into the conditions of arrest, detention, and trial of prisoners. We consistently encountered the same response: we cannot take any initiative unless the Armenian government requests for it. The priority given to the peace treaty is presented as an excuse for inaction, even though

the world. It is true that it was indeed President Trump who addressed the issue of Armenian Christian prisoners during the bilateral meeting on August 7-8 in Washington.

However, the "Christian" characterization of prisoners and any qualification with religious connotation of facts and events seems to me inappropriate in Europe and with intergovernmental organizations or international NGOs because those are not accepted either in practice or in the principles. I also consider that it is false because prisoners are discriminated not for religious reasons but for ethnic reasons. It is also dangerous: it is not and has never been in the interest of the Republic of Armenia and the Armenians to antagonize the Arab and/or Muslim world, an environment in which we have many friendly countries, such as Iran, Lebanon, former Syria, Egypt, but also for 20 years the monarchies of the Gulf. Finally, highlighting this religious character is contrary to the current policy of rapprochement between the Armenian government and Turkey.

The Red Cross (Crescent) has been expelled from Azerbaijan. Who can be an impartial witness?

The Armenian government refuses to solicit third countries to provide consular

Armenia Cuts One-off Birth Payments as Birth Rate Hits 10-Year Low

YEREVAN (Panorama) — Armenia plans to sharply reduce one-off birth payments for third and subsequent children even as the country records its lowest number of births in a decade, prompting criticism from demographers.

At a recent cabinet meeting, the government approved amendments to the laws on state benefits and pensions that would set a lump sum birth allowance of 500,000 drams per child starting September 1, 2026. Under the current system, parents receive 300,000 drams for their first and second child, 1 million drams for the third and fourth, and 1.5 million drams for the

fifth and each subsequent child.

The change also comes despite an existing program launched in 2022, under which families receive a monthly allowance of 50,000 drams until a child turns six for every third and subsequent child born after January 1, 2022. The government has now made this program permanent.

Critics say the new flat payment represents a substantial cut for larger families at a time when Armenia faces a deepening demographic decline. According to the Statistical Committee, 23,698 children were born in the first nine months of 2025, the lowest figure for that period in the past ten

years.

Former labor and social affairs minister Mesrop Arakelyan called the equalized grant "unacceptable", arguing that poverty rates rise sharply in families with three or more children.

"While general poverty is around 25%, in families with three children it is twice as high," Arakelyan told Panorama.am on Tuesday. "When a family has three children, expenses increase, so state support should also be higher. First- and second-child families need this assistance far less than families with three or four children, from whom 500,000 to 1 million

drams are effectively being cut."

He said that if the government wanted equal support per child, it could have raised the payment for all families to 1 million or 1.5 million drams rather than lowering the amount for larger households. He stressed that social assistance "must be targeted."

Demographer Ruben Yeganyan said declining birth numbers reflect a combination of demographic, economic and social factors, including a distorted sex ratio in reproductive-age groups, fewer marriages and persistent economic uncertainty.

"Forming a family is a serious step and having a child even more so," he said.



ARMENIA

‘Golden Apricot’ Showcases Parajanov’s Films at International Film Festivals

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival (GAIFF) is presenting the films of Sergei Parajanov at major international film events around the world. As part of the celebrations dedicated to the 100th anniversary of renowned filmmaker, a special focus has been placed on promoting his cinematic legacy beyond Armenia’s borders.

These screenings serve as a platform to introduce Parajanov’s invaluable body of work to new audiences, including younger generations across different countries.

In Shiraz, Iran, a photography exhibition titled “Ashugh Ghareeb: The Lost Backstage” was held on the sidelines of the prestigious Fajr International Film Festival until December 2. The exhibition is one of the events organized within the framework of the memorandum of cooperation signed between the Republic of Armenia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, further strengthening the partnership between Golden Apricot and the Fajr International Film Festival.

Additionally, Iran’s Cinema Museum hosted three days of screenings and discussions dedicated to Parajanov’s films. “The Color of Pomegranates,” “The Legend of the Suram Fortress,” and “Ashugh Gha-



Sergei Parajanov

reeb” were screened, followed by discussions featuring film critic Robert Safaryan, GAIFF Director Karen Avetisyan, and filmmaker Anahid Abad.

Another symbolic moment took place in Argentina, where Parajanov’s films were screened in a retrospective at the Mar del Plata International Film Festival. In

1965, Parajanov’s “Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors” received the Special Jury Prize at the same festival, though the director was unable to attend at the time. Nearly six decades later, thanks to the efforts of GAIFF and the Mar del Plata festival team, his works returned to those historic screens, with screenings held in two of the city’s landmark cinemas.

Celebrations continued in Serbia, where the 30th Author Film Festival in Belgrade hosted a series of events marking Parajanov’s centenary. The opening of the “Ashugh Ghareeb: The Lost Backstage” exhibition—presented by GAIFF and Rambalkoshe—was followed by a packed screening of “Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors.”

The events organized across these three countries were not only tributes to Parajanov’s artistic legacy and his centennial but also significant steps toward enhancing the global visibility of Armenian cinema and deepening Armenia’s cultural presence worldwide. The initiative reaffirmed that Parajanov’s art continues to inspire, connect, and spark dialogue across cultures.

Sergei Parajanov remains one of Armenia’s most powerful cultural brands, and the continued presentation of his legacy on international platforms plays a vital role in the country’s cultural diplomacy.

Aragatsotn Diocese Affirms Loyalty to Catholicos Karekin II

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The clergy of the Aragatsotn Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church on December 2 issued a statement in response to “unprecedented attacks and encroachments” against the Church in recent months, both externally and internally.

In their declaration, the clerics reaffirm their “absolute loyalty to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and its Catholicos, His Holiness Karekin II.”

The statement is printed in its entirety below:

“Bowing before the Almighty, we re-

main unconditionally faithful to our sacred oath, the doctrine of the Armenian Apostolic Church, its hierarchical structure, canons, and principles. We are loyal to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and its Pontiff, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

We strongly condemn the deliberate omission of references to His Holiness during the Divine Liturgy. Such actions are non-canonical, disrespectful toward the Church’s hierarchical leadership, and a divisive manifestation.

Given the current situation, we see it as our duty to publicly reaffirm our allegiance with great responsibility, pledging to abide by the laws of the Church, to follow the truth of the Gospel, and to serve God in ho-

liness and righteousness for the glory of the Church. We commit to devotion through our words and deeds.

Above all, we must show obedience and humility, be followers of God’s word, care for the Church, and engage in unceasing prayer. We must remain irreproachable in our priestly and monastic vocations.

We once again affirm and sign this declaration with spiritual clarity and courageous conviction,” the statement reads.”

This declaration follows criticism from a group of senior Armenian Church officials — archbishops and bishops — who accused Catholicos Karekin II of covering up actions involving Archbishop Arshak Khachatryan, Chancellor of the Mother See, citing video evidence.

Jailed Archbishops Reaffirm Support for Catholicos Karekin II

ARCHBISHOPS, from page 1

“Before our eyes and in our presence, each of [the 10 bishops] had not missed a chance to flatter and cozy up to His Holiness the Patriarch, under whose paternal care they had received the highest titles and positions in the church despite being absolutely unworthy of that, of which their shameful behavior is a telling testimony. If His Holiness made a mistake in anything, it was in fact his trust in them,” read the statement published on Monday.

“It is possible and perhaps even necessary to disagree with His Holiness the Patriarch on everything — something which they have never done in the past 26 years [of Karekin’s rule] and, on the contrary, have sucked up to him —whereas we have done it many times, subjecting ourselves to the Patriarch’s rebuke and discontent,” it said.

Ajapahyan and Galstanyan went on to urge Karekin to dismiss “the schismatics,” most of whom head various church dioceses. They also said they suspect that the latter “played a role in our imprisonment.”

Galstanyan, who led massive anti-government protests in Yerevan last year, and 17 of his supporters were arrested on coup and “terrorism” charges on June 25, the day before Pashinyan threatened to forcibly remove Karekin from the church’s Echmiadzin headquarters. Ajapahyan was arrested and charged on June 27 with calling for violent charges. He was sentenced to two years in prison on October 3. Both archbishops, who are kept in the same prison cell, reject the accusations as politically

motivated.

Meanwhile, the Mother See announced later on Monday, December 1, that Karekin has decided to convene on December 10 an emergency meeting of bishops that will “examine the latest developments surrounding the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church.” The ancient church, to which the vast majority of Armenians around the world belong, has at least 55 bishops and archbishops.

It was not immediately clear whether the 10 clergymen seeking Karekin’s resignation will attend the gathering. Their unprecedented revolt was supposedly sparked by a sexually explicit video posted by a government-linked account on the Telegram social media platform in early November. It purportedly featured Archbishop Arshak Khachatryan, the head of the church’s Mother See Chancellery close to Karekin.

The dissident bishops accused the Catholicos last week of “trying at all costs to cover up Arshak’s sacrilegious act” by torpedoing an internal inquiry launched after the release of the footage. The Mother See strongly denied the accusations.

Khachatryan on December 1 again dismissed the video as fake. Speaking at a news conference, he said he still has no plans to resign or ask Karekin to suspend him.

The archbishop also claimed that “various officials” from Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) tried in vain to bully and blackmail him into taking “certain actions” before the scandal. He did not elaborate.



Honorary Consulate to Open in Punta del Este, Uruguay

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (Armenpress) — Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Uruguay Mariam Gevorgyan visited the state of Maldonado on December 1 and met with Mayor Miguel Abella, the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Uruguay said in a statement.

The sides discussed opportunities for cooperation in various fields and the implementation of joint programs.

During the meeting, they noted that an honorary consulate of the Republic of Armenia will be opened in Punta del Este, Maldonado, in the near future.



INTERNATIONAL

EU Accuses Russia of Pre-Election ‘Disinformation’ in Armenia

BRUSSELS (Azatutyun) — The European Union accused Russia on Tuesday, December 2, of spreading “disinformation” in Armenia ahead of next year’s Armenian parliamentary elections as it pledged to deepen ties with Yerevan through a new “strategic agenda.”

The EU’s foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, and Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan signed the document after talks in Brussels. Kallas also announced 15 million euros (\$17.4 million) in additional EU aid designed to make the South Caucasus nation “more resilient.” She said part of it will be used for countering the alleged Russian interference.

“Russia and its proxies are already ramping up disinformation campaigns in Armenia ahead of the next year’s parliamentary election,” Kallas told a joint news conference. “We see the same networks that we saw deployed in Moldova that were active, so the playbook is identical. Our EU funding will also cover detection, analysis and response to foreign interference.”

Mirzoyan did not explicitly echo her accusations. He only spoke of “new engagements to counter hybrid threats” facing his country.

“The message of today’s meeting is clear: the Armenia-EU partnership is entering a new and more ambitious phase with a shared vision and responsibility to further deliver meaningful results for our citizens,” added Mirzoyan.

In his words, the document signed by him and Kallas will “complement” and go “far beyond” the Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed by Brussels and Yerevan in 2017. It was not immediately clear whether it says anything about the possibility of Armenia’s future membership in the EU.

Amid heightened tensions with Russia, the Armenian government pushed through the parliament this spring a law declaring the “start of a process of Armenia’s accession to the European Union.” But it has yet to submit a formal membership bid. Nor have any EU member states officially welcomed such a prospect.

Russian officials have repeatedly warned Yerevan of severe economic consequences of its desire to eventually join the 27-nation bloc. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan appeared to defy those warnings in September, saying that his administration will step up “efforts aimed at Armenia’s accession to

the European Union.”

According to official statistics, Russia accounted for over 35 percent of Armenia’s foreign trade in the first half of this year, compared with the EU’s 12 percent share. Armenia also buys the bulk of its natural gas from Russia at a price that is set well below international market-based levels.

Kallas declined to say how the EU would help Armenia in case of Russian retaliatory measures that could prove devastating for the Armenian economy.

“We had extensive discussions about these issues today,” she said. “The world order is clearly changing, and that’s why the strategic alignment of the common foreign and security policy for our partners is extremely important: with whom you really are.”

Moscow has sought to downplay the tensions with Yerevan in recent months. Russian President Vladimir Putin said in September that Russian-Armenian relations are growing “in all areas.” He pointed to increased trade between the two countries which reached, according to Russian government data, a new record high of \$11.7 billion last year.

Azerbaijan Opposition Leader Ali Karimli Detained Amid Political Crackdown

BAKU (RFE/RL) — A court in Baku has ordered pre-trial detention for the leader of Azerbaijan’s main opposition Popular Front Party (AXCP), three days after he went missing following a police raid of his apartment.

The Sabail District Court on December 1 remanded Karimli in custody until February 13, 2026, after he was charged with plotting to overthrow President Ilham Aliyev - a crime that carries a potential life sentence, his lawyers report.

Mammad Ibrahim, a member of the party presidium, has also been arrested. Other party officials say their homes have been searched and several colleagues have gone missing.

National Council Chairman Jamil Hasanli said in a post on Facebook that he

was summoned for questioning by the State Security Service over an ongoing criminal case against Ramiz Mehdiyev, head of the presidential administration from 1994 to 2019.

Mehdiyev was placed under house arrest in October on various charges, including for an attempt to illegally seize power. The arrests of Karimli and Ibrahim are reportedly tied to that investigation.

The AXCP strongly denies any connection to Mehdiyev, who was a longtime ally of the late President Heydar Aliyev, who led Azerbaijan until shortly before his death in 2003.

“The government understands that they themselves worked with Ramiz Mehdiyev, and this accusation can’t be pinned on us,” Seymur Hazi, Karimli’s deputy, told RFE/

RL’s Azerbaijani Service.

“The purpose of these arrests is clearly to damage Ali Karimli’s reputation. Criticizing this government requires risk and bravery — and society sees those who do it as defenders.”

In a statement on November 30, the AXCP condemned what it called a “new large-scale repression campaign launched by the family-based ruling power against national-democratic forces.”

Karimli, 60, has been barred from leaving Azerbaijan due to a longstanding refusal by the authorities to issue him an international passport. He also says his Internet connection is completely restricted.

Meanwhile, the whereabouts of Gultakin Hajibeyli, an Azerbaijani activist and member of the National Council’s Coordinating Center, remain unclear after she reported being detained in Istanbul on November 28. Pro-government media have suggested she may be deported to Azerbaijan.

Aliyev’s Crackdown On Dissent

Ilham Aliyev, who succeeded his father in 2003 in oil-rich Azerbaijan, has been widely accused of suppressing dissent, jailing journalists, opposition figures, and civil society activists.

Rights activists outside the country have warned that government moves to curb freedoms are being ignored by the international community, making it easier for officials to clamp down on the opposition.

“Inaction by the international community leads to further repression,” said Florian Irminger, president of Progress & Change Partnerships and manager of the Campaign to End Repression in Azerbaijan.

The government insists, however, that fundamental freedoms are respected and that no one faces persecution for their political views.

“The president has strong will, global leadership, and the status of the victorious leader,” said Zahid Oruj, a pro-government member of parliament.

Media close to the ruling party have recently floated the idea of suspending AXCP and Musavat, another major opposition party.

INTERNATIONAL

Parliament Chief Visits Greece

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On December 2, Armenian Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan, on an official visit to Greece, met with Parliament Speaker Nikitas Kaklamanis.

The issues regarding the development of inter-parliamentary relations and cooperation of friendship groups, as well as different topics of bilateral interest were at the core of the interlocutors’ discussions. Separate reference was made to regional developments and the peace process established between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Speaker Simonyan proposed his counterpart to take steps to elevate the relations between the two countries to the level of strategic cooperation, the Parliament’s press service said in a readout.

Simonyan discussed the problem of the captives, illegally held and considered missing persons in Azerbaijan.

At the end of the meeting Simonyan invited his counterpart to Armenia, which was gladly accepted by Kaklamanis.

UNESCO Backs Digital Tools for Heritage Preservation

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On December 1, at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the 16th meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict unanimously adopted a resolution authored by Armenia. The resolution is titled “Strengthening the Protection and Restoration of Cultural Heritage Through the Use of New and Emerging Technologies.”

It highlights the importance of applying modern technologies for the documentation, monitoring, preservation, and protection of cultural heritage, particularly during and after conflicts.

The resolution urges UNESCO to promote international cooperation for the broad application of such technologies in heritage protection and emphasizes the need to strengthen institutional and expert capacities.

Its goal is to enhance UNESCO’s toolkit by integrating law, cutting-edge technology, creative approaches, and global cooperation to safeguard, preserve, and restore cultural heritage.

This initiative reaffirms Armenia’s commitment to cultural heritage protection and to advancing the goals of UNESCO and the 1954 Hague Convention.

Following the 44-day war, Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh has faced widespread destruction. Entire villages, districts, and Armenian churches have been razed or repurposed, inscriptions erased, or rebranded as “Caucasian Albanian” when removal is impossible. No compensation has been provided to displaced Armenians.

Armenian Officials Visit Azerbaijan For More Border Talks

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An Armenian government delegation headed by Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan visited Azerbaijan on Friday for fresh talks on the delimitation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry gave few details of the talks held in the Azerbaijani town of Gabala.

“The parties exchanged detailed views on organizational and technical issues related to delimitation measures,” it said in a statement. “Draft guidelines on the procedure for implementing delimitation work were also discussed.”

Grigoryan also held a separate meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart Shahin Mustafayev on “issues of mutual interest,” the statement added without elaborating. The two men head their governments’ respective commissions on the delimitation process.

Negotiating teams led by them have previously met at the border or nearby loca-

tions. Their next meeting will be held in “one of Armenia’s cities,” according to the Foreign Ministry.

An Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty initialed in Washington in August does not specify any mechanisms for the border delimitation. Pashinyan has downplayed this fact.

The Armenian government insisted until this year that Soviet military maps drawn in the 1970s should be the main blueprint for delineating the long and heavily militarized frontier. Grigoryan indicated in October 2024 a change in this position after it was rejected by Baku.

Pashinyan’s government unilaterally handed over four border areas to Azerbaijan earlier in 2024, sparking massive anti-government demonstrations in Yerevan. Statements made by the premier in recent weeks have been construed by Armenian opposition leaders as a sign that Pashinyan is intent on ceding more territory to Azerbaijan without receiving anything in return.



INTERNATIONAL

Pope Leo XIV Calls on Lebanese Leaders to Be Peacemakers as He Seeks to Bring Message of Hope

BEIRUT (AP/Vatican News) – Pope Leo XIV challenged Lebanon’s political leaders on Sunday, November 30, to be true peacemakers and put their differences aside, as he sought to give Lebanon’s long-suffering people a message of hope and bolster a crucial Christian community in the Middle East.

Leo arrived in Beirut from Istanbul on the second leg of his maiden voyage as pope. He came to encourage the Lebanese people to persevere at a precarious moment for the small Mediterranean country as it faces economic uncertainty, deep political divisions and fears of a new war with Israel.

Leo is fulfilling a promise of his predecessor, Pope Francis, who had wanted to visit Lebanon for years but was unable to because of its many crises and as his health worsened.

Lebanon’s political system, based on

At the Beirut airport, where his plane landed with a Lebanese military jet escort, Leo was greeted first by President Joseph Aoun, then by Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam.

He moved through the streets of the Lebanese capital in a closed popemobile, a return to the past after Pope Francis eschewed closed popemobiles. Lebanese troops deployed on both sides of the road and a helicopter flew overhead.

The Vatican spokesman, Matteo Bruni, had declined to discuss the types of vehicles Leo would use in Lebanon, and whether they would be bulletproofed. The visit came just a week after an Israeli strike in Beirut killed five people, including a top Hezbollah official.

In Turkey, Leo marked an important Christian anniversary. In Lebanon, Leo was

pope to express his “rejection to injustice and aggression” that the country is being subjected to, referring to the Israeli strikes.

The group also urged its supporters to line up along the papal convoy route. Hundreds of them did so, waving the flags of Lebanon and the Vatican.

Mounir Younes, the leader of a Hezbollah-affiliated scout troupe, said they aimed to send a message about “the importance of coexistence and national unity.”

“Muslim-Christian coexistence is a great wealth that we must hold onto,” he said.

Hezbollah – a primarily Shiite group – has allied with several Christian political groups in the country, including the Free Patriotic Movement and Marada Movement. However, the Christian party with the largest parliamentary bloc, the Lebanese Forces, is an opponent of Hezbollah and has criticized

Pope Leo expressed his gratitude for the growing fraternal bonds that unite the Apostolic Armenian Church and the Catholic Church.

He recalled that the first joint declaration between a Pope and an Oriental Orthodox Patriarch was signed in May 1970 between Pope Paul VI and Catholicos Vasken I.

“Since then, by God’s grace, the ‘dialogue of charity’ between our Churches has flourished,” he said.

Pope Leo said his visit to Turkey celebrates the Nicene Creed, as the Church marks the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, saying it calls to mind the unity that existed between East and West in the early centuries of the Church.

“We must also take inspiration from the experience of the early Church in order to restore full communion, a communion which does not imply absorption or domination, but rather an exchange of the gifts received by our Churches from the Holy Spirit for the glory of God the Father and the edification of the body of Christ,” said Pope Leo XIV.

He expressed his hopes that the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches may soon be able to resume its work to seek full communion.

The Pope pointed to the 12th-century Armenian Catholicos St. Nerses IV Shnorhali and his tireless work to “reconcile the churches in order to fulfil Christ’s prayer that ‘they may all be one’.”

“May the example of Saint Nerses inspire us and his prayer strengthen us on the path to full communion!” he prayed.

In conclusion, Pope Leo XIV thanked Armenian Patriarch Sahak II for his warm welcome to the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

“May we receive this gift from above with open hearts,” he said, “so that we may be ever more convincing witnesses to the truth of the Gospel and better servants of the mission of the one Church of Christ.”

Armenian faithful welcome Pope’s visit

Several children lined the aisle of the Cathedral as Pope Leo entered in procession with Patriarch Sahak II and the priests of the Armenian Apostolic Church, as a choir sang, instruments rang out and incense filled the air.

Above the entrance to the Church, those present could see a man standing on a ledge through the window, sounding the Cathedral’s bells.

One woman in the crowd wiped tears from her cheeks as the procession passed by. The children stood excitedly next to one another with scarves draped around their necks featuring the papal visit’s logo.

“We are the largest Christian community in Türkiye, so to welcome the Pope in our Church is very significant for us,” said Dr. Drtad Uzunyan, Archpriest and Member of the religious council.

“I hope this will bring an even closer ecumenical relationship between the two Churches. It is already very good, but I hope that it will increase in the future.”

He remembered that, although Pope Leo XIV is the fourth Pope to come to the Cathedral—after Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XIV—in 2014, Pope Francis visited the Armenian Patriarch at the time, who was sick in the hospital in Istanbul.

“So Pope Leo is the fourth Pope in the Cathedral but fifth Pope with the Armenian community,” Archpriest Uzunyan said, smiling.



Pope Leo XIV with Archbishop Sahak Mashalian in Istanbul on November 30 (Vatican media photo)

sectarian power-sharing, has been prone to deadlock with lengthy power vacuums and regular stalemates over controversial issues, including the investigation into the deadly 2020 Beirut port explosion.

Most recently, the country has been deeply split over calls for Hezbollah, a Lebanese militant group and political party, to disarm after fighting a war with Israel last year that left the country deeply damaged.

“You have suffered greatly from the consequences of an economy that kills, from global instability that has devastating repercussions also in the Levant, and from the radicalization of identities and conflicts,” Leo said. “But you have always wanted, and known how, to start again.”

He told Lebanese leaders to seek the truth and engage in a process of reconciliation with “those who have suffered wrongs and injustice” if they truly want to be considered peacemakers.

A culture of reconciliation, he said, must come from the top with leaders willing to put their personal interests aside and “recognize the common good as superior to the particular.”

For many people, Leo’s mere presence was a message.

“It shows that Lebanon is not forgotten,” said Bishop George, archbishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Beirut.

seeking to encourage Lebanese who believe their leaders have failed them, and to call on Lebanese Christians to stay or, if they have already moved abroad, to come home.

A Muslim-majority country where about a third of the population is Christian, Lebanon has always been a priority for the Vatican, a bulwark for Christians throughout the region. After years of conflict, Christian communities that date from the time of the Apostles have shrunk as families have moved abroad for safety and better lives.

In his welcome speech, Leo said “much good can come” from the Lebanese diaspora. “However, we must not forget that remaining in our homeland and working day by day to develop a civilization of love and peace remains something very valuable,” he said.

Despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire last year that nominally ended a two-month war between Israel and Hezbollah, Israel continues to launch near-daily airstrikes that it says aim to stop the militant group from rebuilding. The war killed more than 4,000 people in Lebanon and caused widespread destruction.

The pope “is coming to bless us and for the sake of peace,” said Farah Saadeh, a Beirut resident walking on the city’s seaside promenade. “We hope nothing is going to happen after his departure.”

Before Leo’s arrival, Hezbollah urged the

the group for pulling the country into a war with Israel. The country is now deeply divided over calls for the group to disarm.

In neighboring Syria, hundreds of thousands of Christians fled during the country’s 14 years of civil war. A delegation of some 300 Syrian Christians traveled to Lebanon to join a meeting between Leo and youth groups and pray in a public mass on Beirut’s waterfront.

“We are in need of someone like the pope to come and give us hope as Christians” at a time of “fear of an unknown future,” said 24-year-old Dima Awwad, one of the delegation members. “We wish that the pope would come to visit Syria as he visited Lebanon, to reassure the people and to feel that we are present as eastern Christians and that we need to be in this place.”

Visit to Turkey

On the fourth and final day of his Apostolic Journey to Turkey, Pope Leo XIV began the day with prayer at the Armenian Apostolic Cathedral in Istanbul.

In his address, the Pope sent his greetings to Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and the entire Armenian Apostolic community in Türkiye.

He thanked God for the “courageous Christian witness of the Armenian people throughout history, often amid tragic circumstances.”



Community News

Professor Maranci Talk to Highlight NAASR Christmas Open House

BELMONT, Mass. — Dr. Christina Maranci, the Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, will present a special illustrated lecture as part of NAASR's Christmas Open House on December 18, at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

Maranci's talk bears the intriguing title "A Curious Connection: Worcestershire Sauce, Yeghishē T'adēvosyan, and an Unpublished Armenian Hymnal [sharaknots'] at Harvard." Her presentation will begin at 7:00 p.m. Eastern / 4:00 p.m. Pacific and will be given in-person at NAASR and streamed live on Zoom and on NAASR's YouTube channel. (Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/48ldizp>).

Light refreshments will be offered prior to the 7:00 program. There will be a one-day-only 20% discount for in-store and online sales of all items in the NAASR bookstore. All are welcome to attend both the open house and the lecture.

What connects Lea and Perrin's famous condiment, the great modern painter Yeghishē T'adēvosyan, and a fourteenth-century Armenian manuscript? This lecture will address the question, debuting a new acquisition at Harvard's Houghton Library of an Armenian book of hymns, or sharaknots'. The manuscript bears several full-page images, including a full-page portrait of its remarkable patron, Manuēl, the Bishop of Bjni, whose long colophon reveals an expansive network of family, friends, and fellow churchmen. The text closes with an acrostic diagram indicating the admiration of his scribe, Yovhannēs. This talk will also present research-in-progress concerning the manuscript's movement from Sanahin to Germany, England, and finally to the United States. Known previously only through the indirect report of Garegin Hovsep'yan, and thought to be lost to scholars by 1921-1922, the manuscript is presented here for the first time to the public.

Maranci is the Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, appointed in both the Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the History of Art and Architecture. She is the author of four books and more than 100 articles and essays on medieval Armenian art and architecture, including most recently, *The Art of Armenia* (Oxford, 2018). Her 2015 monograph, *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia* (Brepols, 2015) won the Karen Gould Prize for Art History from the Medieval Academy of America as well as the Sona Aronian Prize for best Armenian Studies monograph from the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). She is co-founder of *East of Byzantium*, a workshop and lecture series designed to support doctoral students working on the Christian East.

Admission is free and all are welcome.



Kev Orkian entertains the guests

Kev Orkian Returns to AMAA's Boston Child Care Event

By Christopher Abidian

WELLESLEY, Mass. — On the evening of November 21, the Wellesley Country Club pulsed with a special kind of energy. The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) returned to host its one-of-a-kind event in support of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan.

Called "Hyeminds," the event's name serves as a rallying cry — an invitation to stand behind Armenia's bright and deserving children, offering them the opportunity for an excellent, tuition-free education, and a helping hand.

The evening began with a mezze and cocktail hour where guests mingled and caught up with old and new friends. The room carried an extra buzz — perhaps because the event felt like the unofficial start of the holiday season, or perhaps due to the anticipation surrounding the return of Kev Orkian and his famously energetic humor.

During the reception, the AMAA Boston Child Care Committee and Volunteers circulated through the crowd, showcasing live-auction items including stunning diamond earrings donated by Long's Jewelers in Burlington, a Boston weekend getaway at the Wyndham Beacon Hill, a golf foursome, and more.

When the lights flickered, guests made their way into the elegantly appointed ballroom. Event Co-Chairs Stephanie Stepanian and Donna Boole Yerganian welcomed everyone and offered a brief history of the Avedisian School — highlighting its remarkable distinction as the first (and only) LEED-certified school in Armenia, operating with maximum efficiency, and following global green-building standards.

They extended heartfelt thanks to Committee Co-Chairs Phyllis Dohanian and Susan Adamian Covo, as well as the hardworking AMAA committee members and volunteers. Yerganian also offered a touching tribute to her and Ms. Stepanian's

see AMAA, page 11



AMAA CEO/Executive Director Serge D. Buchakjian addresses the guests

Holy Martyrs' Thanksgiving Fellowship Honors Bayside Pastor

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — On Sunday, November 23, the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs in Bayside, Queens, celebrated a bountiful Thanksgiving Fellowship in honor of its pastor, Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan, marking the 15th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Some 200 parishioners and friends filled the church auditorium to celebrate the occasion and to express their love and appreciation for Fr. Abraham.

Joining in the Divine Liturgy and fellowship were Fr. Yeghishe Ksachikyan, pastor of St. James Church of Sacramento, CA, and Dn. Levon Altiparmakian, member of the Eastern Diocese's Diocesan Council. In his heartfelt remarks, Fr. Yeghishe



Fr. Yeghishe Ksachikyan and Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan

warmly recalled meeting Fr. Abraham years ago, when both were young deacons preparing for the sacred calling of the priesthood.

A generous Thanksgiving table was prepared by dedicated parishioners. Special thanks were extended to Ernest Karaev and his crew for barbecuing, Siran Kilicyan for preparing the pilaf, and Tamar Kayserian for organizing the table. Deep gratitude was also expressed to Berjouhi Yagliyan for leading a successful bake sale, and to Lucy Krikorian and a devoted team of volunteers who baked and donated a wide assortment of sweet and savory Armenian treats.

During the luncheon, parish council chair Donna Siouranian offered remarks of appreciation, thanking Fr. Abraham for his 13 years of humble, dedicated service to Holy Martyrs. As a token of the council's gratitude, Fr. Abraham was presented with the exquisite coffee table book: *Khatchkar*, featuring over a thousand images of Armenian cross-stones by renowned photographer Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

The talented youth of Holy Martyrs warmed the hearts of all in attendance with a delightful cultural program. The Dzirani Dance Group opened with traditional Armenian dances, followed by enthusiastic recitations of Vahan Tekeyan's poem "The Armenian Church" (Yegeghet-zeen Haygagan) by students of both the Sunday School and the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School. The Day

see BAYSIDE, page 8



OBITUARY

Elizabeth Hovsepian

Daughter of Genocide Survivors, Active in Philadelphia Community

COLLINGSWOOD, N.J. — Elizabeth (“Bette”) Hovsepian of Collingswood, NJ, 99 years of age, passed away peacefully on Sunday evening, September 7, 2025.

Bette was the beloved wife of the late Zaven Hovsepian (1999), and the loving mother of daughters Djonee Dilkes (Jeff) of Wichita, Kansas, Verene Torres of Collingswood, New Jersey, Serene DiCaprio (David) of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and Nané Arpajian (Ralph) of New Hope, Pennsylvania. She was the caring grandmother of 6 grandchildren and the cherished great grandmother of 7 great grandchildren.

Bette was born in 1926, during a Massachusetts snowstorm, to Hagop and Antaram Harootunian in Millbury. Millbury was a farming and mill town situate about 40 miles southwest of Boston. Bette’s parents, both survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, raised Bette on their farm located along the Blackstone River.

The Armenian community in and around Millbury was vibrant. In the prelude to

World War II, a number of young Armenian men were recruited for the Tufts University Foreign Service WWII program in Boston. These men were to train for U.S. diplomatic service during and after the war. When the Harootunians learned of this, they hosted these young Armenian men — being away from their own families — for Sunday dinners at the farm. Among them, was a young, handsome, soldier from Collingswood — one Zaven Hovsepian.

Zaven and Bette became pen pals at first. Then, as the story has been told, Bette proposed to Zaven in the cornfield in Millbury, with her father a few rows away.

Bette and Zaven were married in 1953 in Philadelphia and thereafter resided at Zaven’s family home in Collingswood. However, throughout her entire life, Bette’s heart remained with the farm and her parents in Millbury.

Zaven and Bette were well known and active in the Philadelphia Armenian community. Zaven was among the founding



fathers of the ACYOA, and was Chairman of the first ACYOA Central Council. On September 18, 1966, the newly-built Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church in Cheltenham, Pennsylvania, was consecrated by then-Diocesan Primate, and former pastor, Archbishop Torkom Manogian. Archbishop Torkom was a close friend of the Hovsepians. Zaven and Bette were among those who were instrumental in establishing the church in Cheltenham, and remained as members throughout their

lives. The stained glass windows in the dome of the new church were donated by them.

Bette and Zaven shared a wonderful life together, enjoying their time with their daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren at every opportunity. Her entire life, Bette was active and an avid athlete and sports fan (Red Sox and New England Patriots, of course!). Bette (“ShootHoops Harootunian”)’s particular skill was in basketball, well before the WNBA was a thing. In later life, she was also a member in 2 women’s bowling leagues - this on top of being a fabulous cook. Her yalanchi and rosemary flatbread were like no other!

Bette was always looking to help and encourage. She was adored by all who met and came to know her. Her bright smile and cheerful personality will be missed.

A small, private family celebration of life was held on Friday, October 10, 2025, at Locustwood Memorial Park, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, where Bette was laid to rest next to her husband.

Memorial donations may be made to Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, 101 Ashmead Road, Cheltenham, Pennsylvania 19012; (<https://holytrinity-pa.org/donation/>).

Simon Javizian

Funeral Director, Family Man, Musician

BOCA RATON, FL — Simon Javizian passed away peacefully on November 23 in Boca Raton, Florida, just a few weeks prior to his 92nd birthday. One of five children, he was the devoted son of Armenian Genocide survivors Barkev and Pergrouhi (Pearl) Javizian. He was born in Detroit, Michigan, on December 28, 1933.

Simon graduated from Cass Technical High School, where he participated in the school’s symphonic and marching bands while working in his first job developing film for customers at a local drug store. He went on to graduate from Wayne State University with a degree in Mortuary Science.

Simon met his wife, the late Alice (née Mamassian) at age 20, when he was playing in his Armenian band at an ACYOA dance. They married a year later in 1955 and soon after were blessed with two children — Lynn and Semon. Because family always came first, Simon was a devoted husband, a loving father, grandfather and sibling. He was selfless, hard-working, generous, and kind-hearted, qualities that made him an exemplary Funeral Director for nearly 70

years. Families and community members always found comfort in Simon during difficult times and he cherished those relationships for as long as he lived.

Beyond his professional life, Simon had an equally colorful and busy personal life with several hobbies and passions.

He expressed an interest in music at a young age and became an accomplished musician, proficient in many instruments including clarinet, piano, saxophone, trumpet, dumbeg as well as vocals, to name a few. While in high school, he played in Detroit’s annually televised Thanksgiving Day Parade, which was a joy to watch for his family. Simon founded the popular Armenian band Ardziv and toured many cities throughout the Midwest, shaping the sound of the genre for decades to come. He enjoyed attending Detroit Symphony performances and operas with friends.

Simon was an active member of the Knights of Vartan for over 65 years. He was honored to have been elected Grand Commander of the organization, surely



Holy Martyrs’ Thanksgiving Fellowship Honors Bayside Pastor

BAYSIDE, from page 7

School students continued with the poem Aypoopen Hayotz and joined the Language School students in a selection of Armenian songs.

Among the highlights of the day was second grader Felix Arutiunyan of the Saturday Language School, who eloquently recited Barouyr Sevag’s beloved poem Menk keech enk, payts Hye enk with poise and maturity beyond his years. The cultural program concluded with a beautiful solo performance of “Zepuryoori Nman” by Victoria Stepanian, a student of Yeretzgin Karine Malkhasyan.

In his remarks, Fr. Abraham congratu-

lated all the students who performed with such talent and joy and thanked the many volunteers who contributed their time and energy to make the celebration truly special.

Reflecting on his ministry at Holy Martyrs, he noted the community’s growing needs — highlighted by a auditorium filled with parishioners from Queens, Brooklyn, and Long Island — and spoke of the need for a larger hall to accommodate the parish’s expanding programs. He offered thanks to the parish council, all auxiliary groups, and the organizing committee: Dn. Carl Bardakian, Dr. Lynn Cetin, Zarmi Megherian and Ben Saraydarian.

a testament to the respect and admiration perceived by his peers toward him. During his term from 1997 to 1999, Simon went to Armenia every six months, often with the Knights of Vartan leadership at the time, including Armenian Schools Service Project (ASSP) committee members and a large group of Knights and Daughters. His Avak Tivan donated over \$440,000 to ASSP raised by their own Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge. Simon’s contributions to the Knights of Vartan were numerous and felt especially in Armenia.

He was a life-long member of St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit, serving as an active member of the ACYOA, Komitas Choir and Men’s Society as well as being elected to the Parish Council and as a Diocesan Delegate representing his

parish in the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church.

All those who knew Simon will remember him for his captivating stories. He was a skilled master of ceremonies and a vibrant orator who could spin an average story into a thrill-seeking adventure. He leaves behind a legacy of laughter and appreciation of life to its fullest.

Simon is survived by his daughter Lynn (William) Ring, son Semon (Suzan), grandchildren Kelsi Ring, Alexander Javizian, Dylan Ring and brother Garry (Patti) Javizian as well as many nieces, nephews, relative and friends.

Funeral services were held at St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit on Monday, December 1, with entombment at Boca Raton Mausoleum.

James “Jack” Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME

576 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472, Tel: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400

**Aram Bedrosian
Funeral Home, Inc.**

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS
Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543
(781) 891-9876 www.NEMonuments.com



COMMUNITY NEWS

Chakalian Throws His Hat in the Ring for Congress

CHAKALIAN, from page 1

He first came to the area in 2005, when his father and uncle bought a house in the Morongo Basin. “We took it down to the studs and rebuilt it,” he said.

Chakalian said the district is an “R plus 8” according to the Cook Partisan Voting Index. That means that the district skews a little Republican.

“It’s a really interesting district. By registration it is one third, one third and one third – Democratic, Republican and independent,” he said. “Neither major party can win without getting a plurality of the independent vote. Historically we have tended to elect Republicans.”

He added, “That does not mean that it is a safe Republican district. That means the Democratic party has not been fielding candidates that can speak to those independents.” Otherwise, they would have registered as Republicans.

“What really unites us out here is lowercase-conservative frontier culture. There are thousands of 40-acres-and-a-mule homesteads, thousands of families on hauled water,” he explained.

Another part of the district, however, he explained, is an exurb of Los Angeles. The Victorville/Hesperia area behind Los Angeles. Yet another part is the Redlands/Loma Linda district.

The recent redistricting measure adopted in California has not affected the district much, he explained.

“Our district was kind of ignored, as is often the case in Sacramento [the capital]. Some of the lines changed block by block,” he added. “But the macro numbers haven’t changed much.”

Background in Academia

Chakalian, who was born in Pasadena, earned a graduate degree from Columbia University, and a PhD from Arizona State University in environmental sciences, before working at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) in Norman, Okla, located on the campus of the University of Oklahoma. He ended up there because his wife was attending medical school in nearby Arkansas.

“My reason for going in academia was to try to improve my community and society,” he explained, saying that “environmental justice” was very important to him. He wanted to see “how we can build a fairer, more equitable and more functional society that worked better and delivered better outcomes for everyone.”

He added, “I hoped to help create that world through scientific research. The longer I was an academic the clearer it became to me that people who had the power to effectuate change were either policymakers directly or very wealthy individuals who could fund that kind of change and had sway over policymakers.”

Chakalian said he realized that by the time most people got into office, they had a solidified position on the issues and did not consult experts like him at NOAA.

“They would come to us and say ‘this is what we want to do, and what does your science have to say about that?’ If the science supported what they wanted to do, great, but if it didn’t, they just kind of moved on,” he explained. “It didn’t really seem like it was an effective way to make a positive impact.”

At the same time, he said, being in academia was very competitive and bruising, with fewer and fewer tenured positions available.

“That wasn’t going to work for me and my family,” he said.

Norman was “a bad cultural fit,” he

said, especially during Trump’s first administration. As a result, after a few months there, he quit on the spot.

One of the issues was his political beliefs, which he revealed with a Bernie Sanders pin during his time there, during the first Trump administration.

He explained, “Part of the issue with the Bernie Sanders pin was that I asserted I had academic freedom as a research faculty member of the university and they said it was a violation of the Hatch Act because I was in a federal workspace,” he said. “I said when I took this job I didn’t sign any paperwork that said I was going to be subject to the Hatch Act. Not to mention this was Trump’s first term and he had already put the Hatch Act in the shredder in every way.”

Other colleagues, he said, had pro-life posters, with six-foot-high pictures of dead babies, but they were never reprimanded. He stressed he did not have an issue with the others expressing their viewpoints but was unhappy that the sentiment was not mutual.

Then he decided to focus on his growing family, making sure to have a flexible enough job that could balance that of his wife, who had a rigid schedule as a new doctor, allowing for childcare. The ideal solution was starting his own company.

“When I decided to leave NOAA, this is the place that made the most sense because it was where I had resources and connections and it was somewhere I could afford. The cost of living is incredibly reasonable compared to California,” he said.

He comes from a long line of entrepreneurs, he said. His paternal grandparents were both descendants of Genocide survivors, immigrants who came to the US in the 1940s from German Displaced Persons camps. His paternal grandfather was born outside of Moscow and after WWII ended up in Germany. That grandfather’s mother, in turn, had taken her son to Russia after the Genocide. His paternal grandmother was born in Kiev, Ukraine, again taken by her mother in the wake of the Genocide.

During World War II, the families slowly moved further and further west, until they arrived in Stuttgart, Germany and went into the DP camp. Both families were sponsored to come to the US. His grandmother came through Philadelphia and grandfather through New Orleans but eventually moved to California.

“In a relatively few years, they made their way to Montebello, where they got married. They knew each other in the camps but were apart for several years,” he said.

The couple, Mike and Susan Chakalian, eventually had three kids and bought a burger joint, Basket Burger, in East Los Angeles. All the kids worked for the restaurant, he said, getting up before dawn to peel potatoes.

“My grandfather did that for decades and sold that business,” he recalled. After he sold the business, he and his wife did catering for several years.

The income was good enough to provide them with a comfortable life and luxuries like a second home in Hawaii. They would take the kids to Palm Springs monthly for fun.

His mom’s side of the family has been in the US since the late 1800s. She is half Armenian and half Italian. Her parents met in New York and came out to Fresno. Her father, George Mason, started the California Courier newspaper. He had a knack for business and eventually ended up on the board of MGM. He eventually

sold the paper and moved to Encino.

Mason worked as an executive for Kirk Kerkorian’s Tracinda Investment Co. for several years in the 1970s before joining Bear, Stearns & Co. in Los Angeles in 1973. Mason was a senior managing director at Bear, Stearns & Co. from 1973 until his death.

Paul’s parents, now divorced, are Ralph Michael Chakalian and Dina Mason

of this, such as Qatar giving Trump a gold-plated jet,” he said.

“All these countries have outfits whose whole purpose is to finance a lot of the thinktanks and provide grants and get their own people to write op-eds to influence our foreign relations,” he added.

“A lot of people are upset in this country, myself included, with the unchecked consolidation across industry. It is one of



Paul Chakalian

Chakalian Amado. They are on very good terms and even run a bookstore (Alexandria II) together in Pasadena, he said. They divorced when Ralph came out of the closet.

He also has a younger sister.

“My younger sister was adopted from Yerevan in 2002. That was an interesting experience. That is when I discovered my dad spoke Armenian,” he said. Because of his grandfather, they got “significant hospitality” from the upper echelons. “We pulled off the adoption in two weeks, which was unheard of.”

His father lives in Yucca Valley and his mother has a second home in the area. Other family members are also living in the area.

His stepfather, David Amado, is a Guatemalan immigrant. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, Chakalian said, “strike really close to home. He has been anxious and scared for months” even though he is a citizen.

Political Positions

Chakalian has details about his political positions on his website. One of the statements on his website notes that he intends to “vote with constituents and not with party.” When asked what that means, he explained, “Even the Democrats here don’t want big government. They don’t want the government to tell them how and where to dig their wells. Culturally, most of the people here, regardless of party preference, don’t want anyone to tell them what to do. They want to be left alone.”

He also singles out foreign influence and big money as negatives he wants out of the government.

“There is a lot of fact-based reporting about the way Russia has meddled in our elections, as well as China. But there is a lot of influence that happens though the DC blob. The Gulf States are big examples

the biggest reasons for the affordability crisis,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if it is grocery stores or pharmacies. That drives up prices and makes it harder for small businesses to succeed and increases the ability of those private interests to have a very large influence on our government.

“Obviously the fact that minimum wage hasn’t been raised is an issue” as well, he added.

He also expressed his dissatisfaction with the job the incumbent, Obernolte, is doing.

“Our current representative isn’t doing the job. Nobody has literally seen him in about a year. He doesn’t respond to calls or letters. He hasn’t delivered anything in the seven years he has been in office,” he said. “There is a lot of needs here. I often say this is one of the most unique districts in the country. It is where two deserts meet with alpine lakes and two large military bases and a huge national park and huge exurbs and urban areas and rare flora and fauna. Yet we have one of the most generic representatives who does anything unique.”

He concluded, “I think the reason to vote for me is we deserve somebody who is going to show up and listen and try to make an effort to represent us and deliver all the things we need,” he said, including “a lot of infrastructure, flood control and wildlife and fire control and four-year universities,” he added. The only four-year universities are in Loma Linda which cannot serve people in further parts of the geographically large district. At least half live at least an hour from any hospitals or any medical offices. “There are a lot of needs in this community,” he added.

“That’s the reason to vote for me. The current guy doesn’t deserve the job.”

The general election will take place on November 3, 2026.

COMMUNITY NEWS

AECP Gala Raises Money for Equipment for Two Hospitals

COSTA MESA, Calif. — It was a magical evening as hundreds of guests gathered at the Armenian EyeCare Project's (AECP) sold-out Gala on Saturday, November 15, in Costa Mesa. This year, AECP's annual fundraiser was held at the St. Mary Armenian Church's newly constructed Stambolian Hall, which was transformed with twinkling lights, lush florals and ambiance to create an enchanting experience for all who came out to support.

Most importantly, friends and supporters who attended the event were able to celebrate AECP's incredible accomplishments over the past year and recognize the immense impact that the organization's sight-saving work has in Armenia. It was a true celebration of the magic of sight.

At this year's event, AECP had a goal to raise enough funds to purchase two pieces of critical surgical equipment for two hospitals in Armenia: 1) the Marie-Nubar Ophthalmology Clinic, Armenia's first pediatric ophthalmology clinic located at Yerevan State Medical University and 2) the AECP Mobile Eye Hospital, a mobile clinic with a state-of-the-art surgical suite that travels throughout Armenia to provide eye care to those living in remote



Zeiss' Vice President of US Sales, Head of Ophthalmic Devices Mr. Chad Miles (center) with AECP Vice President Dr. John Hovanesian and AECP Founder and President Dr. Roger Ohanesian

extremely supportive of the organization's sight-saving efforts in Armenia: Zeiss, the American Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgery (ASCRS), and the Vanitzian Family.

Zeiss and the ASCRS Foundation were jointly highlighted as AECP's Corporate Co-Honorees of the Year. In early 2025, Zeiss donated an invaluable piece of medical equipment to AECP: a brand-new Zeiss OCT-5000 machine to be utilized in AECP's Regional Eye Center in Spitak within the Lori province of Armenia. The donation of this

piece of equipment has been critical in strengthening regional eye care development in Armenia. The OCT 5000 was installed in the Spitak Regional Eye Center to replace the existing equipment that was in use since the establishment of the Center in 2016; the previous OCT was in need of being replaced with a newer version in order to continue providing quality eye care to residents in the region.

The American Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) and its philanthropic arm, the ASCRS Founda-

tion, was also honored due to its key role in helping AECP secure the recent and invaluable medical equipment donated by Zeiss. With AECP expressing its need for new medical equipment to continue to service its sight-saving initiatives in Armenia to the highest degree, the ASCRS Foundation graciously and enthusiastically acted as a conduit between AECP and Zeiss. The Foundation helped to generate a strong connection and relationship between AECP and Zeiss at a critical time and made an immeasurable impact in Zeiss' in-kind donation.

The Vanitzian Family was highlighted as AECP's Family Honoree of the Year. The family's contributions to AECP in the past several years have been instrumental in the development of both sight-saving and life-changing initiatives in Armenia. This includes the development of the Don H. and Vardi Vanitzian Diagnostic Eye Clinic in Armavir in 2022 as well as the sponsorship and launch of the Sarkis and Shushan Mnatzaganian Glaucoma Project in 2025.

Fully outfitted with advanced eye care equipment including resources needed for diabetes care, the Don H. and Vardi Vanitzian Diagnostic Eye Clinic offers a sustainable, long-term solution that solves the issue of accessibility and affordability of eye care for the entire population of the Armavir province and its surrounding areas. The Sarkis and Shushan Mnatzaganian Glaucoma Project is a pioneering, three-year initiative in Armenia designed to combat glaucoma, a leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide. It is Armenia's first-ever nationwide glaucoma screening project and marks a significant step forward in the country's fight against preventable blindness.

Among those singled out for thanks by AECP are: Michael and Elizabeth Aghajanian; Diane Barsam; Mark Derderian; the Armen and Gloria Hampar Family Foundation; Dr. John and Tanya Hovanesian; and David Keligian, along with the many other event and table sponsors.



ASCRS Foundation Executive Director Ms. Abigail Markward with AECP Vice President Dr. John Hovanesian and AECP Founder and President Dr. Roger Ohanesian

regions of Armenia who are in need of services. Motivated by kindness, compassion and generosity, guests passionately raised their bid paddles to contribute. The evening's fundraising goal was reached and surpassed, which means that two eye care facilities in Armenia will be outfitted with new, cutting-edge surgical equipment, which will translate to thousands of lives impacted and sights saved.

While raising money to continue its impactful work in Armenia, AECP also honored three groups that have been



AECP Country Director Dr. Nune Yeghiazaryan delivers a program update from Armenia



AECP Gala guests



COMMUNITY NEWS

Key Orkian Returns to AMAA’s Boston Child Care Event

AMAA, from page 7

mothers, who decades earlier had modeled the importance of volunteering together. “And here we are now, more than 50 years later, volunteering side by side.” It was a moving moment of legacy and gratitude.

Clergy then took the stage to offer prayers, led by Father Ghazar Bedrossian of the Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church. He was followed by Rev. Fr. Arakel Aljalian of St. James Armenian Apostolic Church, Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian visiting pastor at Armenian Church of the Martyrs, and Pastor Aram Bedrossian of the Armenian Memorial Church.

Dohanian then offered a tribute to the late AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian, noting that every sorrow brings new joy, this joy being the introduction of the new AMAA CEO/Executive Director Serge D. Buchakjian. Upon receiving warm applause, Buchakjian spoke about the privilege of being present at the event and the opportunities ahead for the AMAA. Speaking about Avedisian School, he said: “In the past several years, every single graduate has gone

see AMAA, page 7

AMAA, from page 7

on to attend university — every one of them. This is not just an achievement; it is a statement. A statement that when you invest in young people, when you lift them up, when you remove barriers, they rise. They excel. They lead.” Then he introduced a video narrated by proud Avedisian School graduate Susana Boghossian, filmed on location and offering an authentic and touching glimpse into the school’s mission.

Following the video, Jeanmarie Pape- lian, a member of the “Armenian Educa- tion” Educational Foundation and AMAA committee, extended her welcome and gratitude to Pamela Avedisian and ac- knowledged generous supporters including the Bilizekian family, the Mirak family, and the Chekijian family. She encouraged guests to consider continuing their support through sponsorships and other opportuni- ties.

After dinner, Stepanian shared the AMAA’s appreciation for those who spon- sored Avedisian School students and sup- ported the school’s operational needs that evening. She then introduced the night’s special guest, the incomparable Kev Ork- ian. Back by popular demand, the Brit- ish-Armenian Kev is an award-winning actor, musician, motivational speaker, and stand-up-comedian.

Orkian kept the room laughing heartily, as he treated the audience to his signature varied entertainment mix that included an- ecdotes of trips to Armenia, his experience performing for King Charles, meeting El- ton John, a most humorous conversation he had with his Armenian mom, and his extraordinary piano talents. Once again, a highlight was his original piano piece, Freedom, which he dedicated to the people of Artsakh.

He then seamlessly shifted into auction- eer mode, creating a lively, fun, and rau- cous bidding atmosphere. One that drove not only laughs with his unique brand of “motivation” to bidders, but also amazing generosity. A perfect finale to an evening that was already a smashing success for the Avedisian School.

As the evening concluded, everyone present felt proud to have participated in something far more meaningful than just a night out for a worthy cause. They had become part of a mission to support Ar-

Hermine Adamian, Peter and Susan Covo, John and Michèle Simourian, and Phyllis Dohanian.

To donate, visit <https://amaa.org/khoren-and-shooshanig-avedisian-school/>. Pro-



Guitarist/composer John Baboian

menia’s bright young thinkers — its “Hye- minds” — as they reach for the stars.

Special thanks to John Baboian for musi- cal entertainment, photography services by Andrew Janjigian and Melissa Rivard, and to grand benefactors Pamela Avedisian,

ceeds from this special event will bolster the school’s programs and endowment fund, sustaining a high-quality, tuition-free education for years to come. All contribu- tions exceeding the value of goods and ser- vices received are tax-deductible

Tekeyan Cultural Association

Sponsor a Teacher in Armenia

Since its inception in 2001, The TCA Sponsor A Teacher program has raised \$838,700 and reached out to 7,386 teachers and school staff in Armenia and Artsakh. Yes, I would like to sponsor TCA school teacher(s) in Armenia, as well as teachers who fled Artsakh and continue teaching in Armenia schools, to continue helping them to work, and educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher(s)’s name(s) and address(es).

Yes, I would like to sponsor TCA school teacher(s) in Armenia, as well as teachers who fled Artsakh and continue teaching in Armenia schools, to continue helping them to work, and educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher(s)’s name(s) and address(es).

☐ \$240 ☐ \$480 ☐ \$700 ☐ other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Make check payable to: Tekeyan Cultural Association
Memo: Sponsor a Teacher 2025
Mail your check to:
TCA Sponsor a Teacher
5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056

If you prefer to donate by credit card, please go to:
givebutter.com/0g6lky

Your donation is tax deductible.



Arts & Culture

Weaving a 3,500-Year-Old Dragon Rug Back to Life

For artist Davit Mirzoyan, weaving this rug was not merely a hobby — it was an act of resurrection. For ten years, his mind and hands worked tirelessly, guided by an inner voice and the weight of a mission he felt chosen to carry out. On June 15, 2025 — his elder son’s birthday — he finished weaving a monumental Dragon (Vishap) rug. This moment marked not merely a project’s end, but a sacred delivery: a gift from ancestors, a bridge across centuries of loss, and the passing of a tradition on the brink of disappearance.

Mirzoyan’s rug is the latest incarnation of an ancestral flat-woven Dragon rug, a treasure rescued from the ashes of the Armenian Genocide and brought to present-day Armenia in the early 1920s.

From early childhood, Davit listened to his grandmother’s stories



The Dragon (Vishap) rug by Davit

about the heinous atrocities she witnessed during her ordeal and the pandemonium of the genocide she was forced to endure. Yet, he could not have imagined then what important task fate had prepared for him.

It was as a student in the Art Department of the Armenian State Pedagogical University that Davit truly understood the rug’s significance. He realized it was not just a utilitarian object or a piece of antique tapestry, but the core of his identity, passed down through generations. He felt this with every fiber of his being, a conviction stemming from the deepest layers of his self. This realization grew gradually, eventually igniting a powerful, almost genetic urge to continue the cycle. That urge later solidified into a mission: to recreate this Dragon rug, which by then was dangerously close to disintegration.

This conviction, however, came

see RUG, page 13



Alexander Grebeshkov

Capturing Armenia in a Realistic Palette

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Russian photographer Alexander Grebeshkov was born in Moscow in 1984. He practiced karate, entered a sports college after the ninth grade, and later continued his education at a university’s sports faculty. However, he never worked in that field and soon took up photography. At first, he shot portraits, clubs, and social events. In 2010, he made his first documentary series — photographs of an Orthodox mercy service. With those works, he won second place in a competition held by the Moscow House of Photography, earning a two-month trip to Paris. Since 2022, Alexander has been living and working in Yerevan. His personal website is: <https://www.grebeshkov.net/>.

Dear Alexander, let’s begin our conversation with the words of photographer Gisèle Freund, who said: “Photography can be both a document and a work of art.” How do you view your own photographs?

I don’t see much sense in such labeling. What is a document and what is art? It’s all subjective — especially when it comes to art. Photographs are simply photographs; I rather see them as messages, as visual texts. A photograph can be weak, mistaken, propagandistic, truthful, and so on — and always subjective! So, for me, both my own and others’ photographs are means of communication. The same can be said of art — we communicate using these tools. In the end, I think the real question is different: does what the author creates carry any meaningful message?

It seems you prefer black-and-white photography. The American musician Jack Antonoff once said: “Black and white creates a strange dream world that color can never achieve.” Do you agree with that?

Not quite. I often choose black and white because cities usually aren’t rich in bright colors — or they create a mess of pastel tones that blend together and

see PHOTOGRAPHY, page 13



Scenes from Armenia by Alexander Grebeshkov

Balakian’s New York Trilogy Presents Rich Layers of Poetry

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Peter Balakian continues to write poetry in a complex modernist and post-modernist tradition. He gives his take on life in today’s complicated world, both sophisticated and earthy, while connecting to multiple realms of history and culture, including the Armenian heritage. His new book, *New York Trilogy* (University of Chicago Press, 2025), republishes three long poems, each of which appeared in one of his three last books: *Ziggurat* (2010), *Ozone Journal* (2015), and *No Sign* (2022).

At first glance, *New York Trilogy* is just a republication, but in fact bringing the three poems together completes a story or experience. Balakian said, “I always wrote them with the idea that this would be one long poem in three sections. I began the first poem ‘A-Train Ziggurat Elegy’ in 2003.”

Balakian said, “The poem is anchored by a persona, an invented character — distinct from me, though based on many of my own experiences — who is undergoing a journey over a sixty-year period. I like to use the word persona so that readers don’t think that this is just autobiographical.” In other words, like other writers, Balakian has drawn on personal experience, but the poem itself is a work of fiction. He develops the character that he created through the three poems, which together present a journey over the course of around half a century.

There is an Armenian dimension to the poems based on personal experience which he transforms with the imagination. Balakian said that his trip with the “60 Minutes” crew to the Der Zor desert where many Armenians died during the Genocide is one example which has become an important part of the “Ozone Journal” poem.

Balakian’s writing draws on varied spheres of life, from literature to art to jazz to Armenian history and beyond, so it is complex and requires time and even sometimes research to fully understand and enjoy. He observed, “My model for this poem emerges from literary modernism, in which the mythic method, a technique that the [Erzra] Pound - [T. S.] Eliot era inaugurated, is an assumption about how the imagination inhabits history.”

Balakian stressed that modernism brought a new kind of intertextuality into poetry, and though it made the poem more challenging to some readers, it was key to making a poem richer, more layered and complex and, he said, “also, I hope, fun and exciting. The modernist poem opened up poetry to a wider world of knowledge and language.” Endnotes at the conclusion of *New York Trilogy* can provide at least some assistance to readers seeking sources of allusions and clarifications.

see POETRY, page 15

Alexander Grebeshko: Capturing Armenia in a Realistic Palette

PHOTOGRAPHY, from page 12

don't express much. Their combinations often convey nothing. Black and white eliminates the unnecessary. Although sometimes I've managed to make color shots with muted tones that worked well — but that doesn't happen often. Most of my color photographs aren't about color; I use it only to convey atmosphere.

I also love black-and-white images. But it seems that you see Armenia mostly without its colors. Is that so?

If we're talking about the city, then yes. If color doesn't fit compositionally and says nothing, it's usually better to do without it. But for me, black and white are by no means depressive or gloomy shades — they're a very natural, realistic palette.

Like many other Russian migrants, you've probably already told the story of how you ended up in Armenia more than once. But could you share it once again for our readers?

I flew here on March 5, 2022, as soon as I could find an affordable ticket. I was in panic and shock. I had no savings at all — my choices were limited, and I thought Armenia would be a very good option. It wasn't about a beautiful relocation; it was literally about survival. But as it turned out, I feel more than fine here — I think I drew a lucky ticket!

What has your photographic eye noticed in Armenia that, in your opinion, often goes unseen by most?

I'm still not very familiar with what local documentarians are shooting — though there are some I really admire. But to answer briefly: I think topics that go against traditional conservative values are often avoided. LGBTQ issues, prostitution, violence against women — one must admit, photographing



Scenes from Armenia by Alexander Grebeshkov

such themes is difficult anywhere. It's also not easy to work on social topics — poverty, disability. Organizing and arranging such shoots is harder, and people in difficult situations are often reluctant to cooperate.

Many Russian migrants have already returned home or moved to other countries. How is it today for a Russian artist to live in Yerevan?

I'm a craftsman — it's easier for me. I can earn money from commercial reportage and staged shoots. I didn't make a single ruble from my creative photography even back in Russia... That's for the financial part. Otherwise, if a person is communicative, they'll find company, support, and conversation partners — among Russians, Armenians, or anyone else. There are plenty of wonderful people here.

If you had the chance to take only

one photograph of Armenia — one that would be preserved for future generations — what would you choose to capture?

A single photograph is something unique. There are iconic images of great events — wars, victories, catastrophes. Even then, we've later learned that some of those were staged. But one single shot of everyday life... Is that even possible, when our daily existence mostly consists of

Weaving a 3,500-Year-Old Dragon Rug Back to Life

RUG, from page 12

later. From his first years of university, Mirzoyan felt strongly drawn to Armenian folk art and carpet weaving. His research revealed nothing similar to his ancestral rug, leading him to understand he had inherited something unique. By comparing available designs and applying logic to vast historical data, he concluded this was not mere folk art. It had ancient origins, stemming from knowledge possessed by ancient temple priests at least 3,500 years ago — a time when dragon worship was abruptly and violently terminated in Armenia. He theorized that these priests must have gone underground, keeping the Dragon rug weaving alive in secret, passing the designs and skills to their descendants through the generations.

Davit also discovered that since wool rugs are perishable and easily lost to time, each generation would weave an exact copy of their ancestral rug. With reverence, they would then retire the worn-out one, thus preserving the design for the future. This act of recreation was essential for safeguarding the rug's iconography. Upon realizing how old, unique, and important this iconography was, Davit saw clearly the value of the millennia-old chain of recreations and the immense mission placed upon his shoulders. This rug now stands as a witness to the most recent performance, in 2025, of a millennia-old sacred ritual. It keeps the design alive and passes it on. It is a contemporary masterpiece that is simultaneously an ancient artifact—the most recent link in an un-

broken chain that nearly snapped in 1915.

The Ancient Lineage of the Dragon

Dragon worship in Armenia was violently suppressed approximately 3,500 years ago, but the tradition of Dragon rug weaving did not die. Surviving temple priests secretly kept it alive, and their

est test in 1915. The Armenian Genocide sought to erase our people and our culture. It nearly succeeded. Almost all of Western Armenia was annihilated, and very few bearers of this tradition survived. They carried with them their most precious possessions—not gold or jewels, but their

A close-up of the Dragon (Vishap) rug by Davit Mirzoyan

descendants continued the practice into the 20th century. The tradition survived empires, the rise and fall of religions, and countless wars. But it faced its great-

stories and symbols. This particular Dragon rug was among the treasures saved, a survivor of our stolen heritage.

At first glance, you see a unified legion



of dragons, woven in rows based on the sacred proportions of 5, 6, and 11. These are not random numbers, but a coded language—a sacred geometry from the cosmology of our prehistoric ancestors. Looking closer, you'll see that each dragon is a guardian, cradling a unique 'Tree of Life' symbol within its form. Each tree, with its distinct shape and colors, represents a different facet of creation. In the spaces between the dragons, rows of vibrant fertility symbols create a tapestry of life protected by dragon power.

The composition stems from "vishap" worship in Armenia — a spiritual tradition that was the heart of our land long before empires rose and fell.

Woven with pure sheep's wool on a cotton warp (330cm x 130cm), the rug is a map of an ancient spirituality. The weaving is executed with such flawless mastery that it would make our ancestral weavers proud.

This rug's value lies not just in its impeccable craftsmanship or stunning visual impact, but in its unbroken lineage. It is one of the last physical ties to Armenia's oldest spiritual tradition, a dragon's echo that refused to be silenced. It is a spiritual art form nearly erased by history, now reborn. This rug doesn't just depict dragons; it is a dragon itself—a mythical power guarding the sacred tree of life that is Armenian culture itself.

Davit Mirzoyan is an artist with a master's degree in art and art theory from Brigham Young University. View his work at www.davitmirzoyan.com.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



PHOTOS COURTESY AT THE IMMIGRANT’S TABLE

At the Immigrant’s Table’s Pistachio Chocolate Cake Tart

This layered gluten free no-bake chocolate pistachio cake recipe is like a fancy ganache tart that requires no baking.

At the Immigrant’s Table is a food and travel blog with hundreds of healthy, family-friendly international recipes and gluten-free recipes perfect for breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, or brunch time. Readers will discover Jewish recipes, Middle Eastern cuisine, Russian recipes, Colombian recipes, helpful guides, plus vegetarian, vegan, plant-based, sourdough baking, canning, fermentation, air fryer recipes, and more.

At the Immigrant’s Table is a food and travel blog with hundreds of healthy, family-friendly international recipes and gluten-free recipes perfect for breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, or brunch time. Readers will discover Jewish recipes, Middle Eastern cuisine, Russian recipes, Colombian recipes, helpful guides, plus vegetarian, vegan, plant-based, sourdough baking, canning, fermentation, air fryer recipes, and more.

Ksenia Prints, At the Immigrant’s Table’s creative blogger who is enthusiastic about this Pistachio Chocolate Cake Tart:

“First, if you decide to make this recipe in a 6-inch cake pan, you will create a tall, layered chocolate pistachio cake that serves at least 6 people. Each slice is so rich, you may only want a small slice. But if you use a 9-inch cake pan or tart pan, it’s shorter — therefore, it will be more like a chocolate pistachio tart. You make a no-bake chocolate crust, too — so that’s another advantage point for a pistachio tart. With the layering that happens between the base, the pistachio cream layer, and the vegan chocolate ganache, it ends up like an incredible, beautiful layered cake. I’ve decided it doesn’t really matter what you call this gluten-free pistachio chocolate creation — the most important thing is that you must taste it to believe how really good it is — while being good for you.”

“It’s best to use high quality, unsweetened Dutch cocoa powder for the best taste and color. I love to use organic cocoa powder,” she adds.



Ksenia Prints, creator, writer, food and travel blogger, photographer and storyteller

EQUIPMENT:

- 6 or 9-inch springform cake pan
- Mixing bowls
- Spatulas

INGREDIENTS:

- Low-carb chocolate tart crust (gluten-free):
- 1 cups almond flour
 - 1 cup pistachios, finely ground
 - 4 tablespoons cocoa powder
 - Pinch of salt
 - 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup

Pistachio layer:

- 1 cup pistachio spread cream OR store-bought vegan pistachio butter OR Jell-O pistachio pudding

Chocolate ganache:

- 1 1/4 cup coconut milk, full-fat, chilled if possible
- 10 oz. dark chocolate
- Pinch of sea salt

For topping:

- 1/4 cup chopped pistachios

PREPARATION:

- Line the base of cake or tart pan with a removable bottom with parchment paper.
- In a large bowl, mix together the almond flour, ground pistachios, cocoa powder, sweetener, and salt, until you get a soft dough. Press the dough into the bottom of a cake pan covered with parchment paper, using a measuring cup to flatten it.
- Pistachio layer: Pour pistachio cream into the bottom of the chocolate tart crust. Transfer to refrigerator to cool for at least 2 hours.
- Chocolate ganache: Open the coconut milk without shaking. Remove the coconut creamy part up top, then top with enough of the coconut water to get to 1 1/4 cups in total volume. Microwave the coconut milk in 30 second batches until it is hot and simmering, about 1 1/2 minutes in total.
- Transfer chocolate to a heatproof bowl. Top with heated coconut milk and set aside for 5 minutes until chocolate has fully melted. Gently whisk the ganache, working in small circles from the center and spreading outwards, until the whole ganache is glossy and dark. Do not rush or whisk overly vigorously, or your ganache will not be evenly tempered.

ASSEMBLE THE CAKE:

- Pour ganache into chocolate tart crust, right above the pistachio cream layer. Top with crushed and ground pistachios. Transfer to the refrigerator to cool completely, at least 4 hours.
- To make this into a vegan chocolate pistachio cake, replace 1 cup of pistachio cream filling with 1 cup of store-bought pistachio butter. If you prefer to go the DIY route, you need to soak and then grind 1 cup of shelled pistachios with 2 tablespoons of maple syrup in the food processor for 5-10 minutes. If you want to increase the green color, add a teaspoon of matcha powder. If you want to ensure your crust is paleo, you can use maple syrup or agave syrup. To get a keto chocolate crust, use a sugar-free liquid sweetener of your choice. Use high quality, unsweetened Dutch cocoa powder for the best taste and color. Ksenia uses organic cocoa powder.

- For this recipe, go to: <https://immigrantstable.com/no-bake-chocolate-pistachio-cake/>
- Ksenia Prints is a fifth-generation immigrant who was born in the former Soviet Union, grew up in Israel and now lives in Montreal, Quebec, and whose food is a mélange of many cultures and traditions. She spends her time cooking, writing, and photographing food for At the Immigrant’s Table and other freelance publications. She has over 10 years of experience blogging, photographing, and writing about food at immigrantstable.com and various freelance publications. Her recipes have been featured in TimeOut, Thrillist, BuzzFeed, HuffPost, Yahoo Foods, Food Network, and other online and print outlets. Prior to switching to food writing, Ksenia worked as a professional writer, journalist, and editor.
- Middle Eastern Small Plates e-book is comprised of 11 vegetarian Middle Eastern recipes, some of them incredibly simple, others slightly more involved — but all go great with a glass of good wine and some friends. To order, go to: <https://immigrantstable.com/the-middle-eastern-small-plates-e-book/>
- For recipes, go to: <https://immigrantstable.com/recipe-index/>
- For Middle Eastern recipes: <https://immigrantstable.com/middle-eastern-cuisine/>
- For Middle Eastern Lavosh Crackers (vegan): <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/vegan-recipe/middle-eastern-lavosh-crackers/>
- For Ma’amoul Date Pie: <https://immigrantstable.com/maamoul-pie/>
- For Walnut and Pomegranate Chicken: <https://immigrantstable.com/pomegranate-chicken/>

Ksenia adds, “Food is the ultimate connector — and nothing brings people together like a food workshop. Bring your audience to the virtual world and allow them to connect over a guided, interactive and fun experience. Bring your team, audience or followers together through an interactive, beautiful virtual workshop. We will cook, chat and connect over your brand and products. Whether you’re lactose-free, gluten-free, paleo, candida-friendly, vegetarian, vegan, or just a picky eater, chances are you’ll find something among these pages.

COPYRIGHT © 2024 KSENIA PRINTS AT THE IMMIGRANT’S TABLE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



ARTS & CULTURE

Books

A Quest to Unravel a Mystery and Attain Redemption

A new book, *At the Turning of the Wall*, draws its inspiration partly from the wonders of Machu Picchu. The magnificent megalithic structures at Peru’s Machu Picchu form the background inspiration for this new fantasy by Australian-Armenian author Arthur Hagopian.

A thousand years ago, a mysterious people set about building a megalithic city within a city, and named it Quatzatollen.

Driven by the urge to unravel its secrets Golod, a popular teacher and accomplished builder, embarks on a quest, trailed by Miraqanda, an accidental traveler, a lost, victimized youth seeking redemption.

The trek turns out to be far from a walk in the park, each milestone and signpost leading them into greater serendipity, the serendipity helping forge the bond between the two disparate characters.

Golod and Miraqanda will eventually stumble upon the city, but find out that its massive gate is opened only once a year, its access restricted to children.

And birds. They can fly at will over the walls: who can stop them?

Miraqanda proves a fascinating, though sometimes difficult companion, a challenge for Golod who takes it upon himself to point the way for him to recognize himself

and uncover his hidden talents.

And when the other three motivated people appear on stage, the road is paved for Golod and Miraqanda to attain their mission in life.

Bonnaseret the Dean of the College, Akapea the shrewd artist and businessman, and Johan the master builder, all join in facilitating the attainment of the two seekers’ vision.

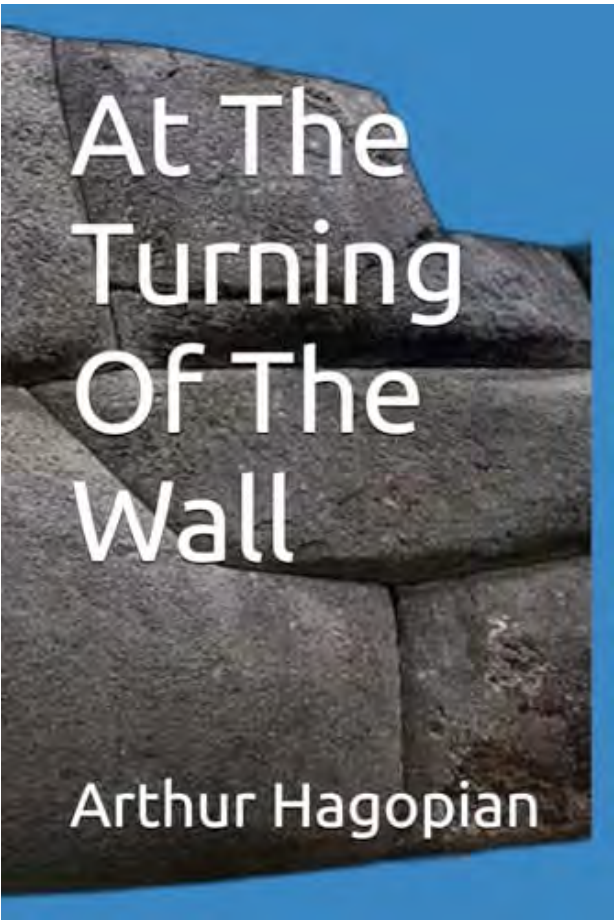
As an architect, Golod’s unbridled vision is translated into concrete reality with the creation of a skylight on the roof of the Big City museum, an unheard of feat at the time.

As a teacher, he helps his students soar to new heights of creativity, and inculcates in them the concept of sharing and human-kindness, in the process winning over the rudderless class bully and entrusting him with the care and protection of his blind classmate.

For himself, he desires very little, his footsteps raising not even the slightest plume of dust as he traverses his highway of life.

It is this intrinsic abiding humanity of the characters that comes most into focus, and pervades the undertone of the book.

As when Golod helps a developmentally disabled child to climb out of darkness into the fascinating world



of reading and books, and Miraqanda saves the life of a homeless girl, and an itinerant healer prevents the death of the wolf sharing her cave.

Perhaps one of the most endearing characters in the book is Golod’s blind student to whom the trees speak of their joys and fears as he walks barefoot in the forest.

Balakian’s *New York Trilogy* Presents Rich Layers of Poetry

POETRY, from page 13

His poetry incorporates the sad and tragic as well as bright dimensions of life. Balakian described this aspect of his writing as follows: “I am a sensualist, a realist, immersed in the significance of history, like many poets in a modern tradition from [W. H.] Auden, [William Butler] Yeats, [Robert] Lowell, and [Adrienne] Rich. But the impress of history doesn’t preclude moments of transcendence, of sensual joy and pleasure, and love, and immersions in art and literature and music. I hope there is a fullness of the human experience in this poem.”

Writing Horizontal

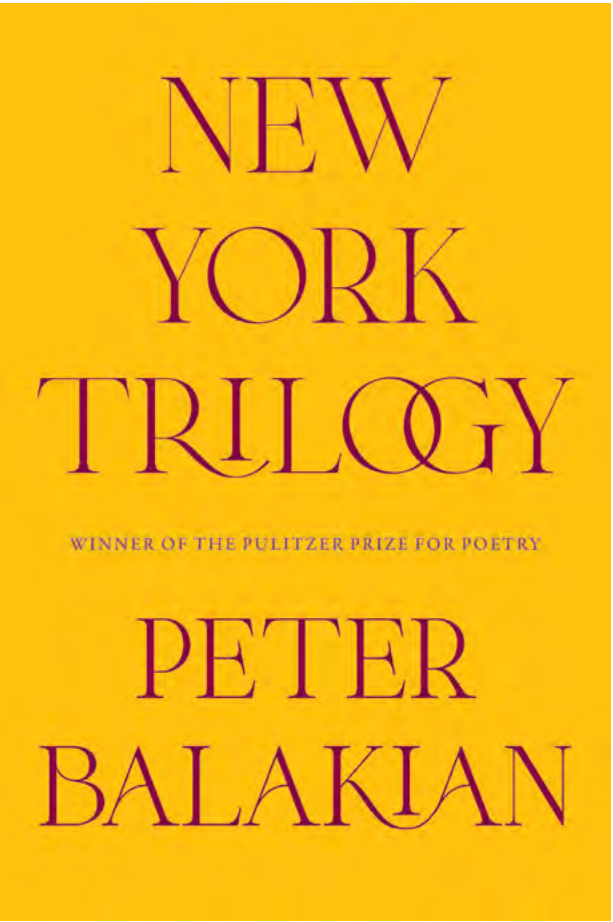
His latest work reflects his interest in the American long poem tradition that comes out of Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Adrienne Rich and others. Balakian said, “I feel that this is a journey for me into an idiom and form in American poetics that has energized me for a long time.”

The structure of *New York Trilogy* is multisectioned and multisequenced. Balakian explained in a note he wrote for a friend: “This long poem works by sections and sequencing. By sequencing, I mean that in each of the three sections there are four threads or quasi-narratives, and the reader must shuttle back and forth with them and gather each thread and attach it to its antecedent. In that way, metaphor deepens, transformation occurs in many ways, and the images accrue layers as they unspool into extended metaphors.”

His first foray into the long poem was “The Claim,” published in *Sad Days of Light* (Sheep Meadow Press, 1983), in which he used his grandmother’s human rights lawsuit against the Turkish government that she filed in 1920 through the US State Department as documentary material around which he worked several layers of lyric language.

The multisequencing in the *New York Trilogy* though makes it much more complex and intricate than Balakian’s first effort. The first and last sections have 45 parts while the middle one, “Ozone Journal,” has 54 parts.

In his essay “Writing Horizontal: Notes Toward the Poem as Space,” published in his collection *Vise and Shadow* (University of Chicago, 2015), Balakian calls his approach “writing horizontal.” He states there (p. 261): “Writing horizontal was for me not an aesthetic program, but rather a way of opening up space both linguistically and in the mind. The horizontal poem, I felt, could still hold on to the verticality of the conceit’s self-reflexiveness, the idea that the germ at the beginning of the poem could unfurl in ways that could be surprising and still connected to a source, the way the poems of Donne, Marvell, Herbert,



and the Metaphysicals were always a source and form of invention. Verticality could keep the horizontal poem rooted in itself, giving the poetic field a disciplined center. But horizontalness allowed for nuanced feeling and perception that could skitter along mental wires and optical alleyways. It was liberating to play more with splicing and shifting in ways that advanced a larger consciousness of the poem, a spaciousness that meant more opportunities for movement — the music of rhythm could glide into the image in unsettling ways.”

Balakian explains in that essay that a series of experiences in 1988, while he was living in London, moved him into this approach, including broader global trends and events (one of which was the Armenian earthquake that December). He writes: “For various reasons that had something to do with this sense of the world and some inner needs of my own, I wanted to find my own ways for the poem to have a broader reach, to be a wider net, to have a more spacious

arena to absorb stuff, things, ideas, voices, bric-a-brac, a bit like a Rauschenberg combine. The idea of what I was privately calling ‘writing horizontal’ was nothing more than an instinct, a personal orientation, a way of feeling and pushing the poem for more space and layers and flexibility” (*Vise and Shadow*, p. 259).

Changing Times

When asked how to reach and interact with readers in the new digital world, where mentalities and thought processes seem different compared to 30 or 40 years ago, Balakian pondered a moment and then responded: “In one sense, in the digital age, we can communicate with large numbers of people very quickly, and there has been a whole new phenomenon that started in 2020 with the Covid lockdown of Zoom readings.” While he saw a lot of potential for reaching the wider world in the digital age, he said that the irony or contradiction is that, broadly speaking, the book is less important in the digital age when people are preoccupied with streaming movies, posting on social media and living on TikTok.

He said that the way people think is different now, maybe more visually oriented, but the place of poetry for a young generation maybe both enhanced by the digital age and hampered; it’s hard to tell. A bigger question, he said, is how fundamental is literature to the wider culture in the 21st century. In the pre-screen era a book with pages was your primary text. Now there are hundreds of competing texts. Consequently, he said, “It strikes many of us writers that literariness has less of an impact on the general culture than it did 50, 60, 70 years ago.” Balakian concluded: “If that’s true then it’s a worse world in my view for literature and it’s a worse world for democracy.”

At the same time, he said, “We live in a digital era where societies also live with language in many forms and forums and that can be important for making serious language a vital part of human consciousness and thought. And, of course, the place of literature also has to do with education, and systems of education. Poetry is our most ancient literary form — it is inextricable from chant, prayer, song, and dithyramb; it’s the foundation of many social and cultural forms and literary genres. And, if poetry is taught with some seriousness in the secondary school curriculum, it will make a big difference in how literature is grounded in any society.”

Meanwhile, Balakian said he was not working on more long poems but on a new book of poems, many in shorter lyric forms, as well as another family story in nonfiction, and a book of essays.



ARTS & CULTURE

New MFA Director Terjanian Brings Vast Experience to Role

TERJANIAN, from page 1

Terjanian has been thinking about refreshing the MFA's approach to its permanent collection to generate a broader engagement with the arts. He wants to be able to appeal to both people who want to experience art as purely aesthetic and to those who want to get more of a learning experience out of art. Museums like the MFA are caught in between because they want art to be appreciated for its capacity to take us out of context, yet, he said, oftentimes, the art is a product of a particular context or experience.

He gave as an example of this tension the current Martin Puryear exhibition, where, he said, beautiful objects have very limited text around them: "You can walk around them. You experience them on their own terms of sculptures." However, you can also read panels which provide context for an exploration, and the titles also sometimes provide context. So, he said, "The question is, will you need to read the label to appreciate the object, or whether we can present the collection and the objects in a way that your first immediate response is an emotional one, which is, oh, this is grand, or this is beautiful, or this is unfamiliar and disconcerting, and then create the curiosity that leads you to wanting to learn."

How the museum might increase emotional connection or exploration through more points of entry, Terjanian said, is still an idea being explored. One approach concerns how to stage an object. "Do you give enough space? Do you get enough aura for it to breathe?", he said. "If you go to some museums in Korea, you have a circular room, and there's just one moon jar in the center. And it's more or less on a pedestal. It's intriguing. You're thinking there is something about it. And then you go to the next room, and there are 20 of them." In other words, lighting, presentation, placement and breathing room around objects are all important.

While some people come to museums to learn about something, knowledge of art history is not necessary to be moved by art. "To the degree that everybody has experienced frustration, or hope, or loss and grief, everybody has gone through rites of passage. I feel that there is a potential for a wide range of objects in the collection that are currently just speaking to their own culture and moment to be functioning together more as a cohort, to speak to these kind of experiences that are relatable," Terjanian said. "And then what might be interesting is to see how similar feelings moved either a community or an artist to create something that you have not expected based on your own culture."

Effects of Shifting Role of Government

The US government has cut public funding for the arts, and many other fields, drastically. Terjanian noted that as a private institution, the MFA does not require federal financial support, though from time to time, it seeks such funding for projects. Consequently, it continues to rely on its endowment and ongoing fundraising, including annual giving from donors.

The Trump administration also has been pressuring federal museums like the Smithsonian to change wording and exhibits that it deems "ideologically driven" or "divisive." Public and private universities have felt great pressure too, as have various other institutions, in reaction to this broader changing environment in the US.

When asked how the MFA is reacting under these circumstances, Terjanian said, "The practical implications are that we're attuned to our environment, so we are, at all times, thinking about the economic circumstances and the general landscape in which we operate, both in terms of audiences and in terms of what the stakeholders are. We are, in that regard, able to maintain our programs [and] our values."

A lot of museum projects are carried out in partnership over long periods of time, so that much of the MFA's programming, Terjanian said, is a continuation of commitments made a long time ago. "Perhaps where we're looking more carefully is what is the scale ... of what we present to the public. Do we need to do everything as big as we would like?," Terjanian said, adding that there is "a question perhaps also of tone."

Terjanian said that though museums as institutions have their own voice and views, "our chief role is not to use our own voice. Our chief role is to be the impresario for the artists' voices. And so when we think about our mission, at all times we're thinking about being a place that brings multiple perspectives. They can be divergent, they can be convergent, but it's not just our own voice. It's the voices of the artists."

Part of what museums do, he said, is to restore complexity, ambiguity and nuance, leaving room for explo-

ration, interpretation and dialogue. In other words, he said, "I think our inherent mission is to continue to ask questions and not always to answer them, and to have the audience participate in defining what the response is. So to the degree that asking questions can be seen as disruptive or controversial, then maybe we're disruptors. But I think we have to remind ourselves what authority we have to answer these questions. And sometimes questions are more interesting than the answers."

If museums can be called progressive, Terjanian said, it is in the sense of revisiting familiar subjects through new lenses. He said, "I wouldn't say that in that sense that we are leaning to any particular position, but we don't want to repeat what has already been said."

He gave as an example the Rachel Ruysch exhibition ongoing at the MFA. She is a Dutch woman painter of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. "It could have been couched as a project that is first and foremost about a woman artist, but it's not. It's a show about a great artist whose gender is a woman. And this is part of the story, but it's not front and center. Front and center are the unique things that she brought to her art... This is an example where, in my view, we're trying to provide a broader spectrum for looking at her art and her career."

He noted another duality in general in the role of museums, stating: "I'm very interested in knowing whether the museum can be both a place for engagement with the issues of our time, and at the same time also be a place that relieves you from the world — where you can find a bit of contemplation, a bit of regeneration. And I don't know that we've been quite intentional about the seasonality of what we offer and how we can ensure that at all times, the museum is also a place where you can remove yourself for a moment from the day-to-day and from the news, and you can regenerate."

International Relations and Provenance

Some of the changes in international relations that have taken place under the current US administration might have implications for the MFA. Terjanian said that there has been a decline in international tourism by 10 percent in the museum's 2025 fiscal year, though it is hard to attribute precise causes to this.

On the other hand, he said that there has been a surge of interest in international partnerships with the MFA by foreign or international museums. Terjanian said, "In my view, museums at all times are designed to build bridges. So we build bridges with our communities, we build bridges with other museums in the nation, but we also build bridges internationally. ... The danger of the time is to forego the opportunities that we have to be part of a larger conversation than the national one."

Another issue which is in part international is that efforts by various nations or ethnic groups to claim items held by museums have increased in recent years. Terjanian said, "Historically, we've been committed to reviewing all claims that are submitted to the museum and to proactively review the collection as well, identifying potential issues with a missing gap in the history of the object, or something else — red flags. And we were one of the first museums in the country to have a Department of Provenance that would specifically address those questions. It's actually a responsibility for the entire institution to consider those things that started with Holocaust-era restitution, and it's expanded to other areas."

A number of factors come into play in such an investigation that also might concern Greek, Armenian or Urartian items in museums. Terjanian said, "The first thing I would say is that when we examine the claim of something that would be unlawfully exported or unlawfully removed, we're looking at the land, at the region, and at the state that is the sovereign state of the space at this time. In many cases, when it comes to archaeological items, the find spots are not known. So not all Greek objects are to be found in Greece. A lot of them travel. And so, in the absence of a find spot, it's very hard for us to engage in a meaningful review of a claim and a restitution."

On the other hand, the MFA did return a number of items to Turkey that were created prior to the arrival of "Turks" to the region. Terjanian explained that in these instances, "you can trace the objects directly back to the soil to a specific era, in this instance, [in] Turkey. And therefore, yes, even if they were made before the land became Turkey, this is the sovereign state today over those lands, and that's who we engage in conversation with."

Labelling such items can also be complicated. Terjanian said, "This debate continues. You have a Ukrainian artist who has spent most of her career in Russia. So is her art Russian, or is it Ukrainian?"

Furthermore, some institutions have moved away from giving a nationality to the objects and just give the place of birth and death of the artist. That is easier when artists are well-documented or still living. However, ancient objects usually are unassigned to a specific creator, said Terjanian, and then may have traveled a lot between the time they were made and the place where they were found (assuming that the latter is known). Instead, historical designations are assigned.

Terjanian said that today, Alsace, where he grew up, is considered French, but an artwork made there in the 15th century would not have been considered French so that labelling it as such would have been wrong.

If there is an Urartian object, for example, Terjanian said it would not be called Armenian because, though very contiguous with historical Armenia, the latter was from a later historical stage. He said, "We tried to go to the historical names rather than the modern state names" and go from the larger units to the smaller ones. For that reason, the Urartian object would probably be labelled as Eastern Anatolian first, and then Urartu would come second.

A carpet created in medieval times bearing an Armenian inscription in the territory that might be called Eastern Anatolia today would first be cited with its location, such as a Turkoman principality, and then, due to the inscription, be ascribed to Armenian culture, Terjanian said. He gave a second example of an Armenian swordsmith or metalworker working in St. Petersburg in the 19th century. The latter would create an object which would be made in Russian but considered Armenian too.

Armenian Items at MFA, Including Terjanian

When you search on the MFA website, 69 items show up under Armenian and 28 items under Armenia, with the latter mostly duplicates of the former.

When asked how complete these lists were, he replied that as a former curator, he could state that cataloging is a never-ending job. Some of the information online was taken from card catalogs compiled decades ago. There are half a million objects in the collection of the MFA and a limited staff only reviews such listings usually when working on a project concerning a particular cluster of objects. Therefore, the database reflects an imperfect and always



Silver bangle with engraving, 1882 (gift of Natalie Bandeian-Zoll in honor of Richard Healer and in memory of Khoren Hagop Hakemian (Harry Healer), photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



Blinker from a horse harness, 10th–9th century B.C., bronze, Anatolian, Urartu: A winged lion-centaur at a flying gallop shoots a bow at a beardless sphinx with wings splayed and frontal face protruding in unusually high relief (William Stevenson Smith Fund, photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

changing state of knowledge and is not comprehensive.

There is the question of designation, as to whether an object had been categorized as Armenian, and the consistency of it. At times, for example, the photographer Yousuf Karsh may have been labelled as Armenian, and at times not.

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 5-6 — Holy Trinity's Annual Christmas Bazaar. Friday, 12:00pm – 9:00pm and Saturday, December 6, 2025, 11:30am – 7:00pm. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Details at: <https://htaac.org/event/2025-christmas-bazaar/>

DECEMBER 7 — Christmas Candlelight Concert, Sunday, 6 p.m. Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 200 Lexington St., Belmont. Join us for a beautiful concert in the Sanctuary. Purchase tickets at the entrance. A reception will follow the event.

DECEMBER 12-APRIL 26, 2026 — The Armenian Museum of American is proud to announce the opening of a landmark exhibition, "Arshile Gorky: Redrawing Community and Connections." This is the first exhibition of Arshile 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. Twenty-five works from lenders across the country including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Housatonic Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, and many private collections. The exhibition is curated by Kim S. Theriault. Sponsored by the JHM Charitable Foundation. Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Hours: Thurs.-Sun., 12pm-6pm. Please visit <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/arshile-gorky> for more information.

DECEMBER 13 — 130th Anniversary of the Lowell ARF. Program and showing of the award-winning film, "My Sweet Land," the story of the fall of Artsakh thru the eyes of an 11-yr old boy. Holy Archangels, Saint Michael and Saint Gabriel Armenian Church, 1280 Boston Rd., Haverhill.

6:00 p.m. Refreshments to follow. Reservations requested. Call or email Armen Jeknavorian, 978-265-9479; armenjeknavorian@gmail.com. or Ara Jeknavorian, 617-803-2612, ara.a.jeknavorian@gmail.com. Adults - \$25. Students - \$15.

DECEMBER 13 — Feast of St. Barbara, Saturday, 6 p.m. Holy Mass in English followed by a festive dinner and children's masked celebration at 7 p.m. at Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Nishan and Margrit Atinikian Hall, 200 Lexington St., Belmont.

DECEMBER 14 — Erevan Choral Society Christmas Concert, Sunday, 7 p.m. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Details at: <https://htaac.org/event/erevan-choral-society-christmas-concert-2/>

DECEMBER 14 — Celebrate Valentine's Day, Saturday, February 14, Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, Nishan and Margrit Atinikian Hall, 200 Lexington St., Belmont. 7 p.m. An evening of love, laughter, and entertainment (surprise!). Details to follow.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2026 — Save the Date! Celebrating Contributions! Gala to benefit the Armenian Heritage Park at the InterContinental Boston.

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 12 — The Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church presents Christmas Concert - "O Holy Night" Featuring Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, Soloists, The Junior Choir. Refreshments following Concert in Egavian Hall. Art Exhibition of the Arts Education Program. Special performance by NAZELI Dance group. 7 p.m., in the Sanctuary of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Donations greatly appreciated.

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.

from previous page

Then there is the matter of expertise needed, meaning, he continued: "If you don't have an inscription on the object, and you do not know where it was found, you sometimes need another colleague who's visiting, who said, but there is one that has an Armenian inscription in this other place. And then you realize you have the presence of an Armenian object."

Asked to highlight what items might be considered as particularly significant in the MFA collection connected to Armenians, Terjanian mentioned the large important body of photographs hosted in the MFA's Karsh archives, a hanging textile (altar curtain), which he called "a very glorious piece of textile," some Urartian material "not found everywhere," and some carpets.

Terjanian related about his own Armenian ancestry that he does not have much information. His paternal grandfather Bedros Terjanian, born in Gesaria or Kayseri, immigrated to France in the early 1920s after the Genocide with a cousin as young boys. They made the decision to assimilate.

He said, "I have an awareness of this heritage, but I don't have a lot of substance that came with that heritage. So because of the awareness, I've read about Armenian history. I'm always intrigued, but I have not been exposed to it as much as I would like."

"I recently bought a photograph of a semi-destroyed Armenian church that is in my living room, which is sort of a marker of my identity," Terjanian noted. "But I've never seen it in the flesh, this great religious architecture."

He said he has the ambition to go and visit Armenia one day, as one of his sisters has done, but he planned to do it during his vacation time, which with his new position at present is limited. He said, "I believe in exposure, so if I were to go to Armenia, it would be transformative." His two children, in their early 20s, are aware, he said, that their surname often invites curiosity and discussion, so he has encouraged them to educate themselves and read about the history of Armenia and its contributions.

Career Choices and Achievements

In an interview earlier this year, Terjanian had mentioned that his first early contact with art was his exposure to Persian carpets when he worked in the summers for his father, but he ended up going to law school and then getting a business degree. When reminded of this, he said, "All those things are true.... It was only over time that I realized that there were possibilities beyond what had been familiar to me. In my environment, I did not imagine it was possible to work in a museum. It had never occurred to me."

In a 2013 interview conducted by Florence Avakian, Terjanian related that his attraction to art studies began



"Good Hope Road," 1945, by Arshile Gorky (Vosdanik Manoog Adoian), oil on canvas (partial gift of William H. and Sandra B. Lane and Museum of Fine Arts purchase with funds by exchange; © The Arshile Gorky Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS); photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

when he was studying law in France and bought some woodcuts showing people in 17th century costumes, including armor, as decorations. He was curious and could not find serious scholarly books on armor, leading him to do some research on his own. He went on to get a graduate degree in history at the University of Metz and then did further history coursework at the University of California, Berkeley.

He said to the *Mirror-Spectator*: "I felt that as a lawyer or somebody with a business degree, I could make a contribution, but I didn't know how unique it would be. And when I saw an opening in the arts in a field that is understudied, I actually felt that I could really make a dent. I could have an impact."

So he pursued this and learned what it is like to be a curator, starting in 1997 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Before coming to Boston, he worked for more than a decade at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York as the Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Curator in Charge of Arms and Armor.

If he had to choose his most significant achievements, he said he would have to cite two things: "One of them, in my view, has been to expand an audience for what seems to be, at first sight, a niche area of arts." As a curator of arms and armor for some time, he found various topics that could speak to different people. He suggested that "It could be about the technology. It could be about the relation of armor and fashion, or it could be about history of diplomacy and exchanges of lavish gifts, which often include weapons, or it is about trophies and memories and time capsules like churches or temples decorated

with things taken from the enemy...and of course, all the decorative arts, different styles and movements, and the fact that some of these things were prized above what we consider art today."

Terjanian gave the example of Philip II, king of Spain, writing in his last will and testament that tapestries and armor were the most important things that belonged to the crown of Spain, not paintings, and these could not be sold or dispersed. This indicated a different hierarchy of values than what exists today, and Terjanian said, "part of my work was always to restore what people view in their own times about those things in which I am interested."

The second achievement is that, Terjanian said, "for a very long time, I thought my job was to restore the credit to artists that were once known and have become anonymous... I've always found that very fulfilling – to pull people out of obscurity and bring back their name."

He gave as one example a recent MFA exhibition of the drawings of landscape artist Hyman Bloom (1913-2009), whose fame had faded over time.

AI and a Question for Readers

It seems as if all aspects of life are being affected by the advances in artificial intelligence. As far as its role in museums, Terjanian said, "It's too early to say. It's clear enough that it can help us to be an efficient organization, like any organization and then there are art historical specific things that AI can help us do. But I think in terms, particularly, of combing data, identifying patterns, and then raising questions about how to harmonize them, this needs to be done manually, where you have to review everything for consistency."

For assigning fields in the cataloging of items for things like region and state, AI could fill in gaps that would improve searchability, Terjanian said, and AI is also pretty good now at reading iconography. Traditionally people would describe the contents of a work, like a tree, a house, or a horse in the picture, but now AI can do this and improve the searchability of a museum collection.

Terjanian posed a question for readers of the *Mirror-Spectator*: "It would be of interest to me to know how this museum can be a museum for the Armenian community of greater Boston. There's obviously an Armenian museum. One museum is never enough, right?" He pointed out that the MFA's vastness may make its specific materials more diluted, but on the other hand, it might be able to tell stories differently, through its different kinds of collections.

So Terjanian said that it would be very interesting to know what the MFA could do to create mutual engagement and, he said, "I think that has to come from the community."

For more on the museum itself, see mfa.org.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Atamian, Artsvi Bakhchinyan,
Florence Avakian, Christine Vartanian
Datian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Philippe
Raffi Kalfayan, Ken Martin, Gerald
Papasian, Benjamin Poghosyan, Suren
Sargsyan, Harut Sassounian, Hagop
Vartivarian

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Ani Duzdabanyan-
Manoukian, Kevork Keushkerian,
Michelle Mkhlian
YEREVAN: Raffi Elliott
BERLIN: Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
PARIS: Jean Eckian
SAN FRANCISCO: Kim Bardakian
Demirjian
CAIRO: Maydaa Nadar

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.A.	\$100 one year
Canada	\$150 one year
Other Countries	\$230 one year

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

Is the European Path an Option for Armenia?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

For many years in Armenia — decades, actually — there has been a debate about whether it is possible to integrate into the European Union or become a member of NATO. Armenia's relations with NATO and the EU have generally developed quite positively.

Before the change of power in 2018, this issue was not part of Armenia's foreign policy agenda. The justification for its absence was that Armenia was not particularly expected to join the EU. It did not share a common border with the EU and was a member of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). After the change of regime, however, the environment changed significantly, and the authorities of Armenia began to look toward Europe, hoping that Europe, in turn, would one day look toward Armenia and that such integration might become possible. This would be a very complex process.

We should not forget that Georgia, Ukraine, and a number of other states have traversed a very long and difficult path but have still not managed to become EU members, largely because of Russia's fundamental opposition. Russia has viewed European integration as potential NATO membership and has consistently opposed the expansion of NATO's borders toward its own. The Russian-Georgian and Russian-Ukrainian wars, tensions, and complexities in relations stem from this. These examples have often been cited in Armenia by opponents to integration attempts, who explain that if Armenia chooses this path, problems may arise in its relations with Russia.

Russia's policy in this regard is quite revealing. In the case of Georgia, it separated Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia and created a kind of buffer zone for itself so that if Georgia were to one day become an EU/NATO member, Russia would not share a larger and longer border with Georgia and there would be a buffer zone between NATO and Russia. The same applies to Ukraine: Russia seeks create a buffer zone between Luhansk and Donetsk and the rest of Ukraine so that, in any scenario, NATO and Russian borders would not touch. Belarus also serves as such a buffer state for Russia. It is noteworthy that the total land border between the world's largest country and the world's largest military bloc amounts to only about 2,600 km., which is extremely small given the size of Russia and the NATO countries. This calculation includes the border with Finland, which became a NATO member only in 2023.



But, unlike Georgia and Ukraine, Armenia does not share a common border with Russia. From this perspective, Armenia's potential EU/NATO membership cannot be seen as a direct threat to Russia. However, Russia views Armenia as part of its historical sphere of influence and considers that its influence in the South Caucasus must be fully restored. This is especially true since as a result of the 2020 war, Russia lost much of its influence over both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and its relations with Georgia remain strained.

Therefore, Russia will view Armenia's possible European integration not as a direct threat, but rather a problem from the perspective of its regaining influence in the South Caucasus. Russia could strengthen its influence in the region if it manages to keep at least two of the three South Caucasus states within

its orbit. However, today both Azerbaijan and Armenia have almost completely broken free from Russia's historical influence, and Georgia, despite some warming in relations, continues to maintain a significant distance from Moscow.

It should be taken into account that Armenia does not share a common border with the European Union, which will make such integration difficult to achieve. However, Armenia does share a border with Turkey, and the opening of that border could play a significant role in Armenia's potential integration into NATO and the EU. On the other hand, all of Armenia's neighboring states are oriented toward other integration directions — particularly toward cooperation with China, as well as membership or closer engagement with BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

From this perspective, Armenia stands alone in the South Caucasus in its European

aspirations. This reality will further complicate both the prospects and the feasibility of such integration. Therefore, in the short term, Armenia is unlikely to be able to initiate such an integration process, especially when the interests of its neighbors — particularly Russia and Iran — are taken into account.

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

Azerbaijan's Entry Turns Central Asia's C5 Into A Geopolitical Heavyweight – Analysis

By James Durso

On November 16, 2025, at the Seventh Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia, the presidents of the "C5," the Central Asia republics of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, announced the Republic of Azerbaijan would join the group, now christened the "C6."

In October 2023, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan attended the Fifth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia and noted, "Azerbaijan is a reliable transit country along the route to the markets of Türkiye and Europe. Not least significant is the transit in the opposite direction. Our brothers in Central Asia know that Azerbaijan's entire transportation and logistics infrastructure is available to them."

Central Asia's GDP is USD570-580 billion and Azerbaijan will add USD79 bil-

lion, and it will be the third largest economy in the group, behind Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The C5 population is about 84 million, and Azerbaijan will add over 10 million.

What are the advantages of Azerbaijan joining the C5?

Strategic connectivity: Azerbaijan sits on the Caspian Sea and is a key hub in the Middle Corridor (Trans-Caspian International Transport Route). Its inclusion would give Central Asia direct access to European and Turkish markets without relying on Russia or Iran.

In March 2025, Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed to a peace treaty so tensions and geopolitical risk will decline, though Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) connecting mainland Azerbaijan with its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, may attract retaliation from Iran in a conflict.

Energy & infrastructure synergies: Azer-

baijan's oil, gas, and pipeline networks (e.g., Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (oil) and the South Caucasus Pipeline (natural gas)) complement Central Asia's energy exports, creating stronger bargaining power in global energy markets.

Turkmenistan, with the fifth-largest natural gas reserves in the world, will be able to expand natural gas shipments to Europe and Türkiye, reducing its reliance on sales to China.

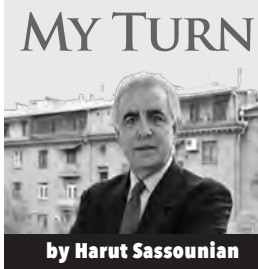
Geopolitical Balance: Azerbaijan maintains equidistance between Russia, the West, and China. Now that the Karabakh conflict is resolved and its territorial integrity is restored, Baku's participation in the C6 could help Central Asia diversify partnerships and reduce overdependence on any single external power.

The C5 have healthy relations with China and in the first half of 2025 received USD25 billion in loans and investments

see C5, page 20



COMMENTARY



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan and Rebellious Clergy Versus the Catholicos

Several critical developments took place last week that further complicated the confrontation between the Armenian Church and the government.

Since June, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has sought to depose the Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II, and replace him with a more compliant clergyman, thereby violating the constitutional separation of Church and State.

Even though Pashinyan's stated purpose is to cleanse and reform the Church, his real objective is patently political. He wants to neutralize all opposition forces that could be obstacles to his remaining in office after next year's parliamentary elections.

Whatever Church reforms are necessary, none of them are the Prime Minister's business. These are internal matters that Church leaders must resolve in accordance with long-standing canonical procedures.

Since Pashinyan has not succeeded in pressuring Karekin II to resign, he has switched to "divide-and-rule" tactics, trying to create a split inside the Church.

The latest crisis erupted recently when a secretly recorded video was made public allegedly showing the Chancellor of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Archbishop Arshak Khachatryan, in a room with one of his female relatives. Many suspect that the recording was made by the National Security Service. A criminal investigation has been launched against the government for "violating the secrecy of the Archbishop's private life by using a special technical device intended to secretly collect information."

After this latest disclosure, the Catholicos appointed a committee of high-ranking clergymen to review the video, the accusations against Archbishop Khachatryan, and make recommendations. On November 25, nine of the 13 committee members signed a statement confirming the authenticity of the video and criticizing the Catholicos for "attempting at all costs to cover up the sacrilegious act of Srpazan Arshak [Khachatryan], thus becoming the sponsor of the sacrilege.... Karekin II was found to be unfaithful to the oath he undertook at his consecration as Catholicos — to lead the Armenian Church faithfully according to doctrine. His behavior is incompatible with the canonical law and doctrine of the Armenian Church." They added: We "strongly condemn the misguided path taken by Catholicos Karekin II." This internal Church document was leaked to the public by one of the Committee members and posted on Facebook by Arayik Harutunyan, the prime minister's chief of staff.

Pashinyan, pleased with the Committee members' statement critical of the Catholicos, invited them to meet with him. Eight of the 13 members of the Committee came to the Prime Minister's office the same day, on November

27, even though some of the members themselves have had past scandals, both moral and legal. Pashinyan "welcomed the guests and thanked them for their publicly expressed principled position." Afterward, a press release issued by the Prime Minister's office reported only what he told the clergymen without mentioning what they said to him. Whether we agree or disagree with the Committee member's statement, no one could fault them since they are addressing an internal Church matter. However, they made the mistake of leaking their internal report to the public and then meeting with the Prime Minister.

The Supreme Spiritual Council of the Church then issued only an informal statement — since several members were absent due to their meeting with Pashinyan — rejecting the Committee's accusations against the Catholicos, by describing them as "entirely unfounded and fabricated and that the targeted harassment and formation of prejudiced opinions against His Eminence, the archbishop [Khachatryan], are entirely unacceptable." The Supreme Spiritual Council urged the Committee members to "return to the canonical framework and express their concerns solely within the Church's highest governing bodies."

Regrettably, the series of accusations and counteraccusations did not end there. In a much harsher statement issued on November 29, 10 high-ranking clergymen, including Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western US Diocese, called on Catholicos Karekin II "for the love of our Church and our people...to voluntarily retire, thus making it possible to organize new elections." This statement was first published by *Haykakan Jamanak*, newspaper owned by Pashinyan's family. Excerpts of the above statement were posted on Facebook by Pashinyan's chief of staff, Arayik Harutunyan.

In their November 29 statement, the 10 high-ranking clergymen made several highly critical statements about the Catholicos. They began by questioning the fairness of his election: "All this might not have happened if the 1999 Catholicosate election had been fair, without intimidation." They then added: The "intensified crisis is a result of the mismanagement of the Armenian Church.... The unjustified, anti-canonical defrocking of numerous devoted clergy has often occurred unjustly by the absolute, unilateral decisions or coercion of the Catholicos. Often, mediocre individuals, those with questionable moral behavior, unworthy people, and henchmen have been preferentially awarded spiritual degrees and appointed to positions. As a result of the Catholicos' erroneous, arbitrary governance -- orders, appointments, unjust punishments, unnecessary interventions, and defrockings — our dioceses and individual pastorates and church units in the Diaspora are often shaken, sometimes having to sever ties with the Mother See.... The current course of the Mother See and the Catholicos of All Armenians is anti-canonical, dangerous, harmful, and destructive and cannot continue any longer."

In response, various individuals and organizations urged the Catholicos to immediately defrock all the clergymen who called for his resignation.

In the coming days, it remains to be seen what the actions and reactions of the Catholicos, Armenian government, clergy, and Armenians worldwide will be. Should the Catholicos refuse to resign, the Pashinyan government may resort to the unthinkable step of arresting him on trumped-up charges.

Trump's Azerbaijan-Armenia 'Peace Deal' Won't Hold: Why the Caucasus Needs Indian Peacekeepers Now

By Michael Rubin

Taking charge of a peace mission in the Caucasus would promote peace more than Donald Trump's empty ceremonies, bolster India's diplomatic influence, and further cement its markets as its influence grows in Armenia. India's proven peacekeeping role could offer real stability to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border where Trump's declarations have fallen short.

On August 8, 2025, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met US President Donald Trump in the Oval Office. According to the White House press release, the three leaders "signed a historic joint declaration for peace after decades of bitter conflict and scores of lives lost — a landmark achievement for international diplomacy that only President Trump could deliver."

In reality, peace remains distant. Whether his Gaza peace plan, the peace between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, or his much-ballyhooed claim that he ended the "1,000-year-old" India-Pakistan conflict in a mere 24 hours, the reality is that Trump's declarations of peace are akin to holding a grand opening ribbon-cutting for a building whose foundation is not even completely dug.

Trump's antics can cost lives. Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's pro-Turkey dictator, uses the mantle of peace to launder his image, but he appears to be prepping for war. To drive along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, adjusted after the Nagorno-Karabakh War, is to witness not an embrace of peace but preparations for war. While Armenia constructs simple two-story border posts — the ground floor for passport and customs processing and the second floor as lodging for officials assigned to those sometimes-remote areas — Azerbaijani posts less than a kilometer away come with helicopter landing pads, soldiers' dormitories, and mortar emplacements. Despite border demarcation using Soviet maps, Azerbaijan still occupies more than 200

kilometers of Armenian land. Azerbaijan has shown hostile intent with cross-border sniping and artillery attacks, sometimes even targeting American investment projects and wounding Indian workers.

To protect itself from further Azerbaijani encroachment, Armenia invited European Union observers to monitor its borders and document Azerbaijani violations. In Kapan, capital of the Syunik province, the monitors observe the landing and take-off of aircraft at the airport which abuts the province, lest Azerbaijan shoot down a passenger plane, claiming it strayed a meter or two into its airspace.

The presence of observers there has likely saved dozens of lives and prevented an incident that could have quickly become a pretext for war. Nevertheless, Aliyev has complained that such border and air traffic monitoring missions are illegal because they occur without his approval, but this just shows his disdain for Armenian sovereignty. After all, why should Armenia seek Azerbaijan's permission for unarmed activity that occurs within its sovereign territory? Nevertheless, Aliyev has demanded Pashinyan remove European monitors as a condition for peace.

Here, India can play a role befitting its readily coalescing status as a global diplomatic and economic superpower. If European monitors must depart, Delhi should send Indian peacekeepers in their place. No United Nations mandate is necessary. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi deployed the Indian Peace Keeping Force to Sri Lanka in 1987 solely with the agreement of Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene.

Perhaps the most successful peacekeeping force of the late 20th and early 21st centuries has been the Multinational Force of Observers in the Sinai Peninsula, monitoring the 1978 Camp David Accords that cemented peace between Israel and Egypt. This too had no United Nations mandate due to the recognition at the time that a UN mandate would require involving the Soviet Union in the peace, and that, in the Cold War context, Moscow was more likely to act as a spoiler.

India would be a natural partner for observation. Indians are among the most capable and practiced peacekeepers on earth. India fields approximately 5,400 peacekeepers in UN missions at any given time, making it the fourth-largest contributor of UN peacekeepers, after Nepal, Rwanda, and Bangladesh. Alongside Nepalese, Indians are best suited for Armenia's mountainous terrain. Patrolling the Armenia-Azerbaijan border is remarkably similar to the India-Pakistan frontier and would be easy for those accustomed to even higher altitudes alongside India's Line of Actual Control with China.

Diplomatically, Indians alone can win trust in a region of conflicting superpower interests. While Trump, rather hypocritically, can castigate Prime Minister Narendra Modi for India's trade with Russia, the fact remains that India is one of the few countries whose presence in Armenia does not and will not upset Russia. Indeed, India is already increasingly involved in Armenia's military supply, a trade for which it has both US and Russian support.

Azerbaijan and Turkey, of course, will complain, but they should not. A desire for peace does not motivate Turkey's growing involvement with Pakistan in the run-up to the Pahalgam massacre. Pakistan, meanwhile, did not ask Armenia's permission as it began training Azerbaijani forces. Indeed, Pakistan is the only country in the world that does not recognize Armenia's statehood.

From its days leading the Non-Aligned Movement until today, India has long viewed itself as a force for peace in the world, and it has proven a willingness to bleed for that goal. Augmenting or even taking charge of an Armenia peace mission would promote peace more than Trump's empty ceremonies, bolster India's diplomatic influence, and further cement its markets as its influence grows in Armenia, which itself has long been the crossroads between empires and a civilizational state in its own right.

(This opinion piece first appeared at aie.org on December 2, 2025. Michael Rubin is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.)

Azerbaijan’s Entry Turns Central Asia’s C5 Into A Geopolitical Heavyweight – Analysis

C5, from page 18

from China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). They are also interested in transit corridors through Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran to avoid over-reliance one export route.

Russia is still a top trade partner, though it has been displaced by China.

In November 2025, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan joined a 6-nation rail-transit agreement that will “shift a larger share of the 60 million tons of annual China–Europe rail freight through Iran.”

Turkic solidarity: Azerbaijan is active in the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Joining the C5 would deepen cultural and linguistic ties, reinforcing a Turkic identity across Eurasia, though the C6 states will want to minimize interference by the “big brother” in Ankara.

Diplomatic elevation: Expanding to a “C6” would give the bloc more weight in negotiations with external powers, making it a more resilient regional structure.

What are the disadvantages and challenges of inviting Azerbaijan to the group?

Identity dilution: The C5 is defined as the five Central Asian republics. Azerbai-

jan is geographically in the South Caucasus which is commonly regarded as part of Europe, and is currently part of the European Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership and the Council of Europe, so Baku’s inclusion could blur the group’s identity.

But recently Azerbaijan has looked to the East, and Eastern-oriented groups – the OTS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Economic Cooperation Organization – as well as strategic partnerships with China and Vietnam.

Balancing external powers: Azerbaijan’s close ties with Türkiye and its role in Western-backed corridors may create friction with Central Asian states wanting to avoid appearing aligned against Russia or China, especially as the Middle Corridor is usually promoted as avoiding Russia, not because it is more economical than the Northern Corridor through Russia (it isn’t) The Central Asian states have been part of someone else’s empire since the first Russian explorers appeared in the early 1700s and place a priority on non-alignment and friendly relations with all, though “all” includes Iran, Afghanistan, and Russia, Washington’s favorite sanctions targets. And the Azeris,

who were also colonized by Tsarist Russia, are justifiably proud for founding the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920), the first secular, democratic republic in the Muslim world, and are keen to avoid the embrace of the big powers.

Azerbaijan allowed Israeli aircraft to use its airspace to attack Iran in June 2025. Israel supplies Azerbaijan with advanced drones, loitering munitions, and missile system. The C5 have diplomatic relations with Israel and Iran and won’t want to be drawn into a conflict if Baku’s close relations with Tel Aviv may cause retaliation from Iran.

Possible ways a C6 might evolve are:


A transport corridor alliance focused on infrastructure, logistics, and trade routes. Azerbaijan will be the western anchor of the Middle Corridor, linking Central Asia to Türkiye and Europe. Benefits include streamlined Caspian Sea transport agreements; coordinated investment in rail, ports, and pipelines; and reduced reliance on Russian transit routes. Risks include competition with alternative corridors (e.g., via Iran or Russia); heavy capital investment that depends on and political stability.

A Turkic cultural and political bloc focused on shared identity and soft power as the C6 aligns more closely with the Organization of Turkic States. The bloc would have a stronger collective voice in global forums; easier coordination on education, media, and cultural exchange; and reinforced ties with Türkiye as the bloc’s patron.

A geopolitical counterweight focused on security and strategic autonomy, as the C6 positions itself as a neutral but cohesive bloc balancing Russia, China, Europe, and the US. The group will enjoy greater bargaining power; collective resilience against external pressure; and the ability to mediate between Eurasian powers. However, it will be difficult to maintain neutrality if members’ foreign policies diverge.

The republics would best focus on the economic benefits of more and more resilient transit corridors. Then, their economies reinforced, they will be better able to build more security and strategic autonomy.

(This commentary was originally published on www.oilprice.com. James Durso served in the US Navy for 20 years and has worked in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Central Asia.)



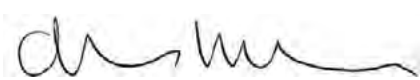
To Our Readers:

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US from 1932. Readers can learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

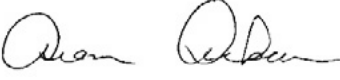
The *Mirror-Spectator* has covered the violence and political uncertainty affecting Armenia and Artsakh, supported efforts at humanitarian fundraising, and continued to provide periodic video reports online. Send us your email if you wish to receive our weekly updates.

We continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year’s wishes, and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. In case you wish to give gift subscriptions of the *Mirror-Spectator* for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in the newspaper as well as one below. Your support is what keeps us going and we always enjoy hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Alin K. Gregorian
Editor



Aram Arkun
Managing Editor

I/We would like to make a contribution __ \$10,000 __ \$5000 __ \$2000 __ \$1000 __ \$500 __ \$300 __ \$200 __ \$100 __ other By check __ By Credit Card __ Name

Billing Address.....City..... State.....Zip.....

Card Number.....Expiration date: Month.....Year..... Security Code.....

Your Christmas Message:

Please make checks payable to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and mail this voucher in the enclosed envelope. The deadline for receiving the messages is Dec. 19, 2025. For gift subscriptions fill out the credit card information above, OR send a check, for: __ \$100 US __ \$150 Canada __\$230 International and write: __ Yes, I/We would like to gift a subscription to: NAME -----

ADDRESS -----

ADLP Press Appeals to Halt Rapid Deterioration in Relations between Armenian Church and Government

APPEAL, from page 1

As evidence, the measures adopted by the authorities to “reveal” secret recordings, in addition to being considered illegal according to international understanding, unavoidably and justly raise the question in the minds of everyone, especially clergymen, whether they may also be subject to the threat of release of the same type of recordings, though set aside for the time being. Such an unhealthy atmosphere is unacceptable and condemnable.

We have stated in the past and we emphasize today that the Armenian Apostolic Church is not an exception to all other Armenian institutions, including political and state structures, which naturally need reforms. The Armenian Apostolic Church, thanks to its clear and firm bylaws, has the legal structure and means to carry out these reforms. It is through the Armenian National Ecclesiastical Assembly, the Episcopal Assembly and other canonically envisioned means, that this reform work must be initiated, while respecting all the provisions of the Constitution of Armenia. Any other approach leads to the creation of a morally and objectively chaotic situation and consequently is unequivocally destructive and absolutely unacceptable.

The unhealthy atmosphere created in the homeland these days can only please the centuries-old enemies of our people and our homeland, who still call Armenia “Western Azerbaijan.”

Our fraternal appeal is addressed to the authorities, while our filial appeal is directed to the Mother See, asking both to make every effort to mitigate and suppress the atmosphere of fratricidal hatred prevailing in Armenia today, in the name of the supreme interests of the Armenian people.

The only acceptable and safe alternative is the just and meticulous application of lawful measures: For the Church, to regularly convene a National-Ecclesiastical Assembly or an Episcopal Assembly, and for Armenia’s authorities, to stop the current unacceptable practice of detaining clergy or citizens without full investigations as accepted in international law.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party
Coordinated Press
November 29, 2025